



**Josiah's Passover:  
A Time of Rededication and Renewal**  
Haftorah for the Second Day of Passover  
Kings 23:1 – 25

Josiah (639 – 609) was a young man when he ascended to the throne and became the king of Judah. He was responsible for bringing about a series of important reforms which made Jerusalem the spiritual capital of the Israelites, and banned all forms of idolatry and syncretism from Jewish worship. While refurbishing the Temple, a scroll was found that contained a code of law. The book of kings refers to this scroll as the “book of the covenant.” Most contemporary scholars believe that it is the book of Deuteronomy.

In today's *Haftorah* the king makes a series of enactments that begin the process of change and reform in the Jewish kingdom. First he calls all the elders and judgments together to hear “the entire book of the covenant.” He then ordered the priest to remove all idols and fetishes from the temple precincts and demolished all other areas of worship. And finally King Josiah commanded the people to observe the feast of Passover. The *Haftorah* ends by telling us that there was no king like Josiah who turned back to the Lord with all his heart and soul and might (sounds familiar, doesn't it).

**2 Kings 23: 21 - 23**

The king commanded all the people, “Offer the Passover sacrifice to the Lord your God as prescribed in this Book of the Covenant.” Now the Passover had not been offered in that manner in the days of the chieftans who ruled Israel or in the days of the kings of Israel and the Kings of Judah. Only in the eighteenth year of King Josiah was such a Passover sacrifice offered in that manner to the Lord in Jerusalem.

**Questions**

1. One of the least known books in the bible is the Books of Chronicles. These books at the very end of the Hebrew Bible contain a variant version of the Jewish history. Find a Bible and read chapter 34 and 35 of the Second book of Chronicles, and compare these chapters with 2 Kings, Chapter 23. In the Chronicles version Josiah has a religious awakening and orders the Temple repaired and while doing so discovers the book of the Covenant hidden in the Temple. In the Book of Kings Josiah finds the book of the Covenant and is deeply moved to reform the practices taking place in his kingdom. Which version seems more likely?
2. Why? Why do both versions conclude with the celebration of Passover? What is the connection between the celebration of Passover and national renewal? Would this have been just as meaningful if they had celebrated Shavuot or Sukkot?
3. Why is the Book of Deuteronomy referred to as the Book of the Covenant?
4. What do you think happened to the celebration of Passover for so many centuries between the time of Joshua and the time of Josiah? Why didn't the people celebrate this important holiday?
5. What were the political repercussions of Josiah's reforms? Who do you think he offended by making such radical changes? Why did he insist on allowing sacrifices and religious services only in Jerusalem?

Do you think this was a product of the Book of the Covenant that he found, or did the Book of the Covenant get written to justify the changes that he was making?

6. What can we learn from Passover today about our connection to one another as members of the Jewish people? Do you think of Passover as a celebration of our national identity or as an expression of social justice?
  7. Why do you think the sages chose these two Haftarah Portions for the first two days of Passover?
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