

God's Spring Holy Days will soon be upon us!

By the time you read this, Passover and the Days of Unleavened Bread will be, at most, only a few weeks away. To God's true people, this season and all of God's Holy Days are deeply meaningful.

But how much meaning do they have for our children, those young ones whose teaching God says is our responsibility?

Do we ourselves deeply understand God's Holy Days? And, most important, do we set the proper example in observing these days? Do we take them seriously? Unless we do, how can we effectively express to our children the significance of God's master plan?

Ancient Israel's example

The ancient Israelites, in slavery in Egypt, certainly were forced to take God's plan seriously when God began to work with them.

Times of national crisis — war, economic depression, enslavement of one nation to another — are probably harder on children than on any other single group within a nation. Without a doubt this was true during ancient Israel's hard bondage in Egypt.

Imagine the plight of Israel's children during the months and weeks leading up to the Exodus:

Slavery no doubt broke up families. The people lived in extreme poverty. The Israelite children were not afforded good opportunities for education.

The hard labor, from which even the children were not excepted, must have claimed a heavy toll in terms of the children's physical and mental health. Nothing — not even human life — could stand in the way of the massive building projects Pharaoh pushed so obsessively.

Then God intervened. Keeping His promise to the patriarch Abraham (Gen. 15:13-14), God began to deliver Israel. Moses arrived on the scene and God, through miraculous and devastating plagues, drove Pharaoh to release God's nation. We know the story.

'Daddy, Why Do We Eat Unleavened Bread?'

By Dexter H. Faulkner

*To teach our children
about God's plan,
we need to first
understand God's
Holy Days ourselves.*



But think of the Israelites' children. While the grown-ups were no doubt bewildered by the course of events, the children must have been most confused — even fearful.

Israel followed God's instructions and prepared for the very first Passover and Days of Unleavened Bread

(Ex. 12:1-25). God struck down the firstborn in every Egyptian home and Moses began to lead Israel out of Egypt. These events would only have added to the children's wonderment.

But God is not the author of confusion (I Cor. 14:33). He wanted His people — every person, down to the youngest child who could understand — to know about His plan. So He provided a means for the children to learn about the events and ceremonies of these first Holy Days: Parents were to teach their children, then and for every generation thereafter.

Notice Exodus 12:26-27: "And it shall come to pass," God told Israel, "when your children shall say unto you, What mean ye by this service? That ye shall say, It is the sacrifice of the Lord's passover, who passed over the houses of the children of Israel in Egypt, when he smote the Egyptians, and delivered our houses."

God placed a heavy responsibility on parents. They were to teach their children about the things of God, including God's Holy Days, which show the plan of salvation.

One of the most effective ways for them to have done so was to have set the proper example of obedience in their own lives. Personal example goes much farther than words in setting a pattern of right living.

The Bible shows, however, the adult Israelites themselves failed to heed God's commands, let alone teach the younger generations. Therefore, God allowed every Israelite past the age of 20, except Joshua and Caleb, to die in the wilderness rather than enter the promised land.

And Moses, before Israel crossed the Jordan River into Canaan, had to repeat for the younger people, in Deuteronomy, things their parents had failed to teach them. Sad to say, this younger generation also failed to teach their offspring about the ways of God, and the record of Israel's unhappy history shows the result.

Our children are holy

What does this example from Israel's history mean to us today?

Photo by Roland Rees

Consider our children. Don't they also live in difficult, confusing times — one of the worst times in the history of the world?

Don't the pressures, temptations and enigmas of life in this world exact a high price in terms of our children's physical, emotional and — yes — spiritual health?

Aren't our children in a situation similar to the one the children of ancient Israel were in? We parents are coming out of sin (spiritual Egypt), and our children may be confused.

If we are truly called, begotten children of God's Family, our children are specially blessed by God (I Cor. 7:14). God wants them to know about His plan and His way of life, and God has provided a means by which they can learn.

That means is us! We are to teach them. And one of the most basic ways to explain God's plan is by explaining God's Holy Days, beginning with these Spring Holy Days just ahead of us now.

Notice the admonition God gave through Moses to Israel's younger generations, when Moses reiterated God's law to them: "And these words, which I command thee this day, shall be in thine heart: And thou shalt teach them diligently unto thy children, and shalt talk of them when thou sittest in thine house, and when thou walkest by the way, and when thou liest down, and when thou risest up [in other words, all the time!]" (Deut. 6:6-7).

The Israelites, without God's Spirit, failed to teach their children — failed to fulfill any of the instructions God gave them.

We, if we have truly repented, been baptized and had one of God's true ministers lay hands on us, have received God's Holy Spirit (Acts 2:38).

That makes our children holy. They can understand God's truth if we will teach it to them.

Are we doing so? Are we taking time throughout the year, and especially as we approach these spring festivals, to teach our children?

Children to be taught

Moses continued, in his instructions to the Israelites about to enter Canaan: "And you shall teach them

[God's commandments and God's plan] to your children, talking of them when you are sitting in your house, and when you are walking by the way, and when you lie down, and when you rise" (Deut. 11:19, Revised Standard Version).

These instructions apply just as readily to us today, for we, God's called-out people in this end time, are spiritual Israelites.

And teaching our children is not just a matter of speaking to them. As the verses quoted above show, teaching our children is a responsibility we are to be fulfilling constantly. As mentioned before, much if not most of our teaching is through the example we set.

We can, in short, talk to our children all we want, but in the final analysis they will be influenced far more by what they see us do than by what they hear us say. Properly teaching children is, indeed, a tough responsibility. Children really pick up on our cues.

Even if we don't have children, we have the same responsibility to teach. Teach whom? The people in the world around us — by example, if not by direct preaching. We are to be "lights to the world" (Matt. 5:14). Christ said, "Let your light so shine before men, that they may see your good works, and glorify your Father which is in heaven" (verse 16).

Are our children — and people in the world around us — receiving positive impressions of God's plan by the way they see us act?

How can we promote our children's understanding of God's Holy Days?

We should rehearse the history of the Exodus with our children, helping them imagine what it was like to be a child in Israel at that time. This will make the story more interesting to them.

We can explain what these days mean now, in New Testament times — their meaning is much more profound today, to Christians.

We can review the facts about sacrifice and what it means to us now, and what it will ultimately mean to our children and to the whole world.

We can describe what we do on the Passover evening, when we go to ser-

vices but our children can't come along, and tell them what the various symbols — the bread, the wine, the foot-washing service, the singing of the hymn — mean.

Perhaps we could involve the children in baking unleavened bread this year. If the children help to make unleavened bread, this symbol will have more meaning to them — and to us! — than if we buy all the bread from a store.

We should involve our children in cleaning the house and premises, all the while explaining to them why we are cleaning — to symbolize that we must put every last bit of leaven, the type of sin, out of our lives.

Personal review

The Holy Days depict God's great master plan, to which we have devoted our very eternity! Shouldn't we have a thorough grasp of these festivals?

Mr. Armstrong's booklet, *Pagan Holidays — or God's Holy Days — Which?*, offers, in detail, the background to the Holy Days in general and explains each one in particular.

Mr. Armstrong proves, from God's Word, that we are required to keep the festivals today (could we do so, if a skeptic asked us?), shows what each festival meant in both the Old and New Testaments and makes clear the meaning of the symbols associated with each Holy Day. The booklet also offers a handy Holy Day calendar for the next several years.

It would be a good idea to get out this important booklet and review it before the coming festivals of God. Rereading the information will make it fresh in our minds, and we will be better able to communicate it to our children.

(If you don't have the booklet, you may send for a *free* copy by using the literature request card in this issue or by writing to the *Good News* office nearest you.)

Let's determine to deeply understand and appreciate God's Holy Days this year, beginning with the Passover and Days of Unleavened Bread, occurring shortly.

And let's help our children learn about, enjoy and revere God's Holy Days by teaching our children as God commands us! □