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## Stories of Solidarity :: Passover

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by michael j. kimpan

The Passover was near... a time when the spirit of YHVH hovering over God's people was palpable, resurrecting memories of the first moments of creation, and the deliverance that followed in the story of their great exodus.

The days leading up to the feast always brought a bittersweet mixture of trepidation and rigidity. In order to participate in the commemoration of their liberation from Egyptian slavery and bondage, one had to ensure their entire household was free of any impurity. Even the cracks of the floor were scrubbed to rid the house of *chametz* - and anything made with *chametz* was either consumed or thrown out and burned prior to the celebratory passover seder.

Pure sacrifices were to be made at the Temple - and these each had to be found acceptable in the eyes of the chief priests.

Most often, monies had been saved since the previous year's Passover to purchase an unobjectionable sacrifice, made available to those entering the Temple. The tables to make these transactions were set up in the space where the Gentiles were permitted to gather, just outside of the inner court.

Because of the commotion of years past, the disciples expected the commotion they encountered as they approached the courtyard.

Every year it seemed ever increasing numbers of faithful Jews came streaming into the Holy

City from all over the known world, some traveling hundreds - if not thousands - of miles. The busyness of the week brought with it a sense of wonder, as these elect - *YHVH's chosen people* - gathered to celebrate the liberation of past oppression and together hope for the deliverance to come.

Outside the gate of the Temple, their symbol of today's oppressors stood by in the official garb of Roman soldiers, ready to quench any sign of a rebellion or disturbance.

*'Deliver us, YHVH.'*

Inside the Temple walls, the money changers offered their services - for a small fee - of changing the standard currency of Greek and Roman coins for the Hebrew shekels used in the Temple transaction. Many weary travelers still needed to purchase an acceptable sacrifice, as what livestock they owned carried imperfections unsuitable for a Passover sacrifice to the Most High God.

Their sacred scriptures demanded perfection : a blameless, spotless sacrifice. These sanctioned traders of the Temple provided what the chief priests would find admissible.

Others set up tables at the fringes of the courtyard, where the poor - who could not afford the appropriate sacrifice of a lamb - could purchase doves instead.

These smaller, more humble offerings were slightly less expensive, but carried with them the stigma of being unable to offer a truly acceptable sacrifice to YHVH. Still, the opportunity to offer any sacrifice in the Temple at all was better than the fate of the blind and lame beggars who were *not even permitted to enter* into the Temple court - their very existence was considered unacceptable for worship in the inner courts.

As the disciples followed Jesus into the courtyard, they sensed - perhaps a few even anticipated - his righteous indignation. Jesus had used harsh words to describe the teachers of the Law, even warning against the *chametz* of their teachings.

*But they weren't expecting what happened next.*

Jesus charged right up to a table of the money changers, took their coin box, and in an act of divine defiance poured its contents out onto the table. A collection of both Gentile and Jewish coins scattered across the foundation of the Temple floor.

The disciples looked nearly as surprised as the moneychangers.

*'Couldn't he get in trouble for this?'*

Next, Jesus gripped the underside of one of the tables and in his rage *flipped it over*. More miscellaneous coins flew through the air as doves burst out of their cages in a welcomed yet unanticipated freedom from their sacrificial death.

Already the other traders were scurrying in a prophetic realization that they were next on the holy hit list. The rebellious Rabbi had somehow already crafted a scourge and wielded it in their direction, inciting the once two very separate crowds of Jews and Gentiles to incorporate in an unintentionally collaborated effort to escape his wrath.

*'Get out of here! Take all of this with you! Stop making my Father's house a business - it is to be a house of prayer - yet here you are, making it a robber's den.'*

Jesus drove them all out, turning over tables and scattering the doves and coins and livestock and moneychangers in one brazen display of righteous indignation. Already the Temple guards had gathered near Jesus, with the Chief priests and the scribes behind them for their own protection. They were amazed at his actions - and astonished at his audacity.

Yet what happened next was *even more* astonishing.

From outside, the beggars, emboldened by Jesus' turning of the tables, had crossed the threshold of the Temple gate and made their way into the courtyard. They carefully approached

the one who was called Emmanuel - *God with us*.

Each of the disciples, well versed in the stories of the Hebrew Scriptures, recalled the declaration by King David regarding this very Temple as recorded by the Prophet Samuel :

*'The blind and the lame shall not come into the house.'*

What would the chief priests do?

What would the Temple guards do?

*What would Jesus do?*

He welcomed them.

Breaking the rules of tradition and cultural codes of conduct, Jesus refused to run these unacceptable worshippers out as he had done to the businessmen deemed worthy by the religious elite. The disciples were nearly as stunned as the scribes and the chief priests - the scene unfolded in what seemed to be slow motion.

As the 'unworthy' outcasts made their way to Jesus, *something miraculous took place*. These whose bonds had been broken were mended; their infirmities and diseases healed; their very being now made complete and whole.

*They were made worthy.*

When the chief priests and the scribes saw the wonderful things he had done, they became indignant. This would cost them their livelihood.

And from the inner courts of the temple, children began shouting his praise.