

2 Chronicles 30 — The Passover of the Gathered and the Unclean — Hezekiah's Letters to the Remnant, the Mockers and the Humbled, and the Prayer That Weighed the Heart Above the Rite

2 Chronicles 30: Early in his reign, Hezekiah writes to all Judah and sends posts with letters into Ephraim and Manasseh, inviting the scattered northern remnant to keep the Passover at Jerusalem; kept in the second month by accommodation, it becomes a feast of re-gathering and mercy, and Hezekiah prays for the many who ate unclean. Hezekiah of Judah, c. 715–686 BC, this Passover soon after the fall of Samaria (secular chronology c. 715 BC; the northern kingdom fell c. 722 BC).

Hezekiah has just torn open the doors of the house of the LORD and cleansed it (chapter 29), and the very first thing he does with a reopened temple is send out invitations. Not a coronation, not a military review — a Passover. And not a private, Judah-only Passover, but a letter carried by royal couriers into territory that is no longer even his to govern: the wreckage of the northern kingdom, Ephraim and Manasseh and Zebulun, the tribes whose capital Samaria has just fallen to Assyria and whose people have been dragged into exile or scattered into the hills. Hezekiah writes to the survivors. He calls the remnant home.

Hebrew Word Studies

shuv (H7725) (שׁוּב) — **to turn, turn back, return, restore vv. 6 (twice), 8, 9 (twice).** This is the verb the whole invitation turns on, and its two-directional grip is the theology. *Shuv* is the plainest Hebrew word for turning around — and it is the standard prophetic word for repentance, because in Hebrew the two ideas are identical: to repent is simply to turn back. Hezekiah's letter deploys it in both directions at once: "*turn again* unto the LORD... and he will *return* to the remnant of you" (v. 6), and again, "if ye *turn again* unto the LORD... he will not turn away his face from you, if ye *return* unto him" (v. 9). One verb, and it swings both ways — the sinner's turning and God's returning named with the same word, because they are two halves of one reconciliation. It is the word behind Malachi's "Return unto me, and I will return unto you" (Mal. 3:7), and behind Zechariah's "Turn ye unto me... and I will turn unto you" (Zech. 1:3). The Book of Mormon runs the same current: "if they would repent and turn to the Lord... he would deliver them" (Mosiah 29:20), and the whole invitation of Alma to "come unto Christ" (Omni 1:26). Every gathering God has ever called is built on this verb: he does not chase; he waits, already turned toward us, for our face to come around. The distance closes from both sides the instant it closes from ours.

kana (H3665) (כָּנָע) — **to be humbled, to bend the knee, to bring low, to subdue oneself v. 11.** "Divers... *humbled themselves.*" *Kana* is not a gentle word — its root sense is to be *bent down*, brought low, made to bow. In the passive-reflexive form used here, it is what a person does *to himself*: he bends his own neck, subdues his own pride, brings himself low before God rather than waiting to be broken. Chronicles loves this verb; it is the book's diagnostic test of a king's heart, and it is the exact hinge of the LORD's most famous promise to Solomon: "If my people, which are called by my name, shall *humble themselves*, and pray, and seek my face, and turn from their wicked ways; then will I hear from heaven" (2 Chr. 7:14). The mockers of verse 10 stiffened the neck; the "divers" of verse 11 bent it — the same choice the invitation of verse 8 laid out ("be ye not stiffnecked... but yield yourselves"). Stiff neck or bent knee: those are the only two answers to grace, and this verse is where the north splits between them. The Book of Mormon makes the bent knee the whole condition of blessing — "because thou hast done this, and hast *humbled thyself*... thou shalt be made strong" (cf. Ether 12:27's "if men come unto me I will show unto them their weakness... then will I make weak things become strong"). To humble oneself is to volunteer for the lowering that pride otherwise has to be forced into. The humble walked to Jerusalem; the proud stayed home and laughed.

kun (H3559) / darash (H1875) (כִּנּוּן / דָּרַשׁ) — **to prepare, fix firm, establish, make ready / to seek, seek out, inquire after, resort to v. 19.** Two verbs carry the whole mercy of this passage: the one that *prepareth* the heart, and the one that *seeks* God. *Kun* means to set firm, to establish, to make ready and steady — the same verb behind "let thine heart *keep* my commandments" and the Psalmist's "my heart is *fixed*, O God" (Ps. 57:7). To "prepare" the heart is not a passing mood; it is to *set* it, to fasten it in a direction and hold it there. And *darash* is the verb of the deliberate seeker — not a glance but a search, "seek out," "inquire diligently after," the word for consulting the LORD when you mean it (behind "seek the LORD, and his strength: seek his face" in the neighboring Chronicler's psalm, 1 Chr. 16:11). Put them together and you have Hezekiah's whole criterion: God pardons "every one that *prepareth* (kun) his heart to *seek* (darash) God." Not the one who achieves ceremonial perfection, but the one who has fixed his heart and set out to find him. It is the promise of Jeremiah made a condition of the Passover itself: "ye shall *seek* me, and find me, when ye shall *search* for me with all your heart" (Jer. 29:13);

and Alma's whole experiment on the word rests on the same two motions — a heart made ready to receive, and a soul that seeks. God, this verse insists, reads the prepared and seeking heart before he reads the ledger of the rite. The direction of the soul outweighs the state of the body.

***rapha* (H7495) (ר.פ.א) — to heal, cure, make whole, mend v. 20.** The quiet miracle of the chapter hides in this one verb.

Hezekiah prayed that the LORD would *pardon* the unclean; the text reports that the LORD *healed* (*rapha*) them — a stronger and stranger answer than the request. *Rapha* is the verb of mending what is broken and curing what is sick; it is the name God takes for himself in Exodus, "I am the LORD that *healeth* thee" (Ex. 15:26, where the participle is *rophe*), and the word behind Psalm 147's "He *healeth* the broken in heart, and bindeth up their wounds." By using it here, the Chronicler quietly reframes the entire purification system: ritual uncleanness was never merely a legal status to be cleared but a woundedness to be cured, and the God on the far end of the Passover is a Physician, not only a Judge. This is the thread that runs straight to Isaiah's suffering servant — "with his stripes we are *healed*" (Isa. 53:5) — and to the Savior the Nephites met, who invited "all ye that are... afflicted in any manner" to come and be made whole (cf. 3 Ne. 17:7, "have ye any that are sick... bring them hither and I will heal them"). The prepared heart that sought God imperfectly did not merely get a pardon stamped on its record; it got *well*. That is the difference between a courtroom and a hospital, and 2 Chronicles 30 insists the sanctuary was always the second thing.

From the Chapter's Architecture

I won't force a chiasm here; the chapter is a line, not a mirror — a straight ascent from scattered letters to a prayer in heaven, with the mercy at its middle. The artistry is the ascent.