

The Feasts of Passover and Unleavened Bread

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A message exploring the origins and significance of Passover and Unleavened Bread and Firstfruits

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The First Passover & Unleavened Bread

- Slavery in Egypt
 - The Origins of the Feasts of Passover and Unleavened Bread go back to the time that the Lord rescued His Jewish people (Israel) from slavery in Egypt
 - The Lord called Moses when he was in Midian tending the flock of his father-in-law, Jethro (*see Exodus 3: 1-10*)
 - Moses was to go to Egypt and to ask Pharaoh to permit the Lord's chosen people Israel to go and hold a feast for the Lord in the wilderness – but Pharaoh refused
 - Later Moses was to tell Pharaoh to let the people of Israel go and return to their land – but even after miraculous signs and nine plagues Pharaoh still refused to release Israel
 - The tenth and final plague would be the death of the firstborn – of Pharaoh's family and in all of the families of Egypt, including the animals
 - The Lord told Moses that Pharaoh would not heed Moses' words – "Pharaoh will not heed you, so that My wonders may be multiplied in the land of Egypt." (*Exodus 11: 9-10*)
 - What preceded the tenth and final plague was the institution of the Passover – so that Israel would be spared from the tenth plague – and would be released from slavery by the Lord
- Passover Instituted
 - A New Calendar – the first month of the year was to be Nisan

'Now the Lord spoke to Moses and Aaron in the land of Egypt, saying, "This month shall be your beginning of months; it shall be the first month of the year to you.' **Exodus 12: 1-2**

- A New Festival – a lamb, a male, without blemish taken into the house on the 10th of Nisan and slaughtered at twilight of the 14th of Nisan

‘Speak to all the congregation of Israel, saying: ‘On the tenth of this month every man shall take for himself a lamb, according to the house of his father, a lamb for a household.’

‘Your lamb shall be without blemish, a male of the first year. You may take it from the sheep or from the goats. Now you shall keep it until the fourteenth day of the same month. Then the whole assembly of the congregation of Israel shall kill it at twilight.’ **Exodus 12: 3, 5-6**

- A New Statement of Law – the Ten Commandments, the most famous summary of the Law (*see Exodus 20*) – followed
 - The Blood on the Doorposts and Lintels
 - The Blood – a sign unexplained – but the key to Passover
 - The Flesh – Roasted and Eaten
 - The Flesh eaten in haste and the people clothed and ready to go!
 - It is the Lord’s Passover (*Exodus 12: 11*)
- The Lord Passes Over when He Sees the Blood
 - Judgement falls on those without the sign of the blood but the Lord passes over those who have the sign of the blood

‘For I will pass through the land of Egypt on that night, and will strike all the firstborn in the land of Egypt, both man and beast; and against all the gods of Egypt I will execute judgment: I am the Lord. Now the blood shall be a sign for you on the houses where you are. And when I see the blood, I will pass over you; and the plague shall not be on you to destroy you when I strike the land of Egypt.’ **Exodus 12: 12-13**

- It is a principle which applies for us today – the covering of Yeshua’s blood

The Lord’s Instruction for Remembrance

- A Memorial and an Everlasting Ordinance
 - The Lord instructs the Jewish people to keep this memorial always

‘So this day shall be to you a memorial; and you shall keep it as a feast to the Lord throughout your generations. You shall keep it as a feast by an everlasting ordinance. Seven days you shall eat unleavened bread.’ *On the first day you shall remove leaven from your houses. For whoever eats leavened bread from the first day until the seventh day, that person shall be cut off from Israel. On the first day there shall be a holy convocation, and on the seventh day there shall be a holy convocation for you. No manner of work shall be done on them; but that which everyone must eat—that only may be prepared by you. So you shall observe the Feast of Unleavened Bread, for on this same day I will have brought your armies out of the land of Egypt. Therefore you shall observe this day throughout your generations as an everlasting ordinance.* **Exodus 12: 14-17**

- A memorial – that the Lords Passover and His mercy may always be remembered
- An everlasting ordinance – always to be observed
- An everlasting ordinance – and indicating its eternal significance fulfilled when Yeshua became our Passover Lamb (the Lamb of God)

- **Unleavened Bread – a Seven Day Feast and Memorial**

- The Seven Days recalls the days of escape from Egypt
 - The Passover meal happening on the first evening (*Exodus 12: 8-11*)
 - Three days of escape to the Red Sea – as in the request made to Pharaoh (*Exodus 5: 3, 8: 27*)
 - A day of crossing over the Red Sea
 - Three days journey into the wilderness – to Marah where the bitter waters were made sweet (*Exodus 15: 22-25*)
 - A statute and ordinance of the Lord to Israel after 7 days

“There He made a statute and an ordinance for them, and there He tested them, and said, “If you diligently heed the voice of the Lord your God and do what is right in His sight, give ear to His commandments and keep all His statutes, I will put none of the diseases on you which I have brought on the Egyptians. For I am the Lord who heals you.””

Exodus 15: 25b-26

- The Lord declares that He is the one who heals – a clear indication that listening to the voice of God, doing what is right, keeping His Laws and His commandments and ...will lead to healing (spiritual and physical)
- **Eight Unique Features of the Feast of Unleavened Bread**
 - On the first day (Nisan 15), all yeast or leaven must be put away from their dwellings (*Exodus 12: 15*) – since the Feast of Unleavened Bread followed Passover on Nisan 14, bread without yeast was put away from their dwelling for a total of eight days.
 - For the Seven Days, no yeast must be in their dwellings (*Exodus 12: 19*) – the utensils must never have touched leaven - this interrupts the normal leavening process of using a lump from an old loaf as yeast when baking new bread – therefore, new leaven must be cultivated for their bread after the Feast of Unleavened Bread concludes
 - On the first day, there is to be a holy convocation (*Exodus 12: 16 and Numbers 28: 18*)
 - On the last day, there is to be a holy convocation (*Exodus 12: 16*)
 - Preparation of meals is allowed on the first and last days but is the only work permitted in contrast with a weekly Sabbath where no work was permitted (*Exodus 12:16*)
 - For Seven Days, bread without yeast will be made and eaten from Nisan 15 until Nisan 21 (*Exodus 12:15,18. Numbers 28:17*)
 - Nothing containing yeast could be eaten by anyone, under the penalty of being cut off from the congregation of Israel (*Exodus 12: 19-20*)
 - They were free to eat anything without yeast, which was also allowable under the Mosaic Law

Yeshua and Passover

- **John the Baptist Gives the First Clue**

- John, in His Gospel, records the words of John the Baptist

John bore witness of Him and cried out, saying, "This was He of whom I said, 'He who comes after me is preferred before me, for He was before me.' "

John 1: 15

- John the Baptist speaks of Yeshua – as is soon apparent
- Asked by the priests and Levites from Jerusalem who he was – John the Baptist made clear he was sent to prepare the way and he quoted the prophet Isaiah

The voice of one crying in the wilderness: "Prepare the way of the Lord; make straight in the desert a highway for our God.

Isaiah 40: 3

- John quotes from a prophecy which speaks comfort to the Jewish people and those in Jerusalem, announcing pardon for iniquity – a prophecy very much about the work of John the Baptist announcing the coming of Yeshua to bring salvation (*see Isaiah 40: 1-11*)
- The very next day after being questioned John sees Yeshua coming towards him, and says to those with him that Yeshua is the one of whom he has been speaking

"The next day John saw Jesus coming toward him, and said, "Behold! The Lamb of God who takes away the sin of the world! This is He of whom I said, 'After me comes a Man who is preferred before me, for He was before me.' I did not know Him; but that He should be revealed to Israel, therefore I came baptizing with water."

And John bore witness, saying, "I saw the Spirit descending from heaven like a dove, and He remained upon Him. I did not know Him, but He who sent me to baptize with water said to me, 'Upon whom you see the Spirit descending, and remaining on Him, this is He who baptizes with the Holy Spirit.'

And I have seen and testified that this is the Son of God."

John 1: 29-34

- John the Baptist calls Yeshua 'The Lamb of God' – a clear reference for the Jewish people of what they celebrate at Passover
 - At Passover a spotless male lamb was chosen to be sacrificed – in memory of Israel's escape from slavery by the Lord's leading
 - The lamb was to be slaughtered 4 days after being chosen – its blood daubed on their doorposts and lintels and its flesh eaten – and the lamb is said to be 'the Lord's Passover' (*Exodus 12: 11*)
 - The Lamb is a sacrifice for sin – its shed blood atones
 - The Lamb's blood is a covering of protection from the Lord's judgement
- John declares that he saw the Spirit descending from heaven like a dove and remaining upon Yeshua – another confirmation that Yeshua is God's lamb of sacrifice
- John also declares that Yeshua is the 'Son of God' – attesting to His divine nature

- So Passover speaks to us clearly of what Yeshua has done for us at Calvary
- In this one short passage we see the Triune Godhead
 - The Father – the one who sent John to baptize
 - The Son – Yeshua the Lamb of God and the Son of God
 - The Spirit – the Holy Spirit – with whom the Son will baptize believers

- **Yeshua’s Passover Seder with the Disciples**

- Yeshua and His disciples celebrated a Passover seder on the evening at the start of the preparation day for the Jewish Passover – for Yeshua knew His hour had come – there was no waiting for Nisan 15

‘Now before the Feast of the Passover, when Jesus knew that His hour had come that He should depart from this world to the Father, having loved His own who were in the world, He loved them to the end.’

John 13: 1

- Later that day at the sixth hour (noon) on the Preparation Day, Pilate presented Yeshua to the Jews saying “Behold your King!”, but they rejected Him and Pilate sent Him (‘the Lamb of God’) to be crucified (*John 19: 14-16*)
- The Passover Seder Yeshua celebrated with His disciples was very special time for Yeshua as he told His disciples

‘When the hour had come, He sat down, and the twelve apostles with Him. Then He said to them, “With fervent desire I have desired to eat this Passover with you before I suffer; for I say to you, I will no longer eat of it until it is fulfilled in the kingdom of God.”’ *Luke 22: 14-16*

- Jesus takes the Bread, breaks it and gives it to His disciples
- Yeshua says to them of the bread – “This is My Body”

‘And as they were eating, Jesus took bread, blessed and broke it, and gave it to the disciples and said, “Take, eat; this is My body.”’

Matthew 26: 26

- They are declared by Yeshua to be eating the flesh of ‘the Lamb of God’ just as they would at Passover
- He later takes the Wine and shares it with His disciples

‘Then He took the cup, and gave thanks, and gave it to them, saying, “Drink from it, all of you. For this is My blood of the new covenant, which is shed for many for the remission of sins. But I say to you, I will not drink of this fruit of the vine from now on until that day when I drink it new with you in My Father’s kingdom.”’ *Matthew 16: 27-29*

- Yeshua says it is His blood of the ‘new covenant’ – a reference to salvation in the new covenant being by God’s grace and obtained by sincere faith, not by Law
 - This cup is understood to have been the third cup of the Passover – the ‘Cup of Redemption’ – traditionally drunk after the meal and is directly connected to God’s promise, “I will redeem you with an outstretched arm” – this cup stands at the heart of Christian worship in the celebration of

Communion or the Eucharist, it is a symbol of God's ultimate act of deliverance through the sacrificial love of Christ

- It is the fourth cup, the Cup of Praise, of which Yeshua would not partake until he drinks it with his disciples (including you and me) in the Father's kingdom – this cup celebrates the fulfilment of God's promises and the establishment of a people in relationship with Him: "I will take you to be my people, and I will be your God" (see Exodus 6:7, Jeremiah 7: 23 and Ezekiel 36: 27-28)
- What follows this seder is arrest in the Garden of Gethsemane, trial by Pontius Pilate (who 3 times declares Yeshua to be faultless), and crucifixion at the behest of the Jewish authorities

Unleavened Bread and Us Today

- **The Feast of Pesach (Passover) as Celebrated Today**
 - The Feast of Unleavened Bread is celebrated for 7 days – as instructed by God (*Exodus 12: 15-20*), from Nisan 15 to Nisan 21
 - In the UK Jewish Calendars Pesach (Passover) in 2026 is from the evening of April 1st until nightfall on April 9th – effectively 8 days – the 8th day being called Matzot Day 8 (Outside of Israel)
 - Why this difference? Seven days commanded by the Lord God yet in Jewish Tradition the celebration of Pesach is for eight days (Jewish days beginning at sunset) – in 2026 from sunset on April 1 to sunset on April 9
 - I have no definitive answer – yet it seems to me that the timings are ordained by the Lord God
 - Yeshua celebrated a Passover seder with the disciples on Nisan 14 the preparation day for Pesach and was crucified in the afternoon of Nisan 14
 - He was taken down from the cross so that His body was entombed before the start of the seven days of the feast of Pesach (i.e. Nisan 15 to Nisan 21)
 - How amazing that the UK Jewish calendar has an 8-day memorial; beginning on the day of Yeshua's crucifixion and followed by seven days of Unleavened Bread
 - As we today celebrate communion we are remembering
 - Yeshua (the Lamb of God) – broken for us...the sacrifice for our sin
 - Our escape from slavery to sin through His shed blood
- **Lessons for Us from the Feast of Unleavened Bread**
 - All yeast or leaven must be put away from their dwellings (*Exodus 12: 15*) – yeast and leaven in scripture represent sin and rebellion against the Lord
 - The Lesson for Us is that we should turn away from all that the Lord says is unclean or sinful and live lives dedicated to Him
 - The utensils of bread making must never have touched leaven
 - A new and holy leaven must be cultivated for life - from our relationship with Him who is holy and from His Word (a utensil for making a holy life)
 - On the first day, there is to be a holy convocation – a celebration and memorial

- Right from the start of our relationship with Yeshua there should be a holy day – and if you remember the day you entered relationship with Yeshua then celebrate it annually!
- On the last day, there is to be a holy convocation – a celebration and memorial
 - Even at the end of our earthly days our relationship with Yeshua should be celebrated – I am struck by the joy that I sense when at a funeral of a faithful believer
- Preparation of meals is allowed on the first and last days
 - Our weekly lives should have a day of preparation (time with, and worship of, the Lord) – as should our last day!
- For Seven Days, bread without yeast will be made and eaten
 - Our lives each day should be characterised by avoiding those things that are unclean and pollute a holy life
- Nothing containing yeast could be eaten by a native-born or foreigner, under the penalty of being cut off from the congregation of Israel
 - The penalty for a life containing yeast (sin and uncleanness) is being cut off from the congregation of God's chosen (Believers and, ultimately, Israel)
- They were free to eat anything without yeast, which was also allowable under the Mosaic Law
 - We are free to take into our lives and spirits anything without yeast (sin and uncleanness) – but we should seek guidance from God's Word and the Holy Spirit within us to discern that which is allowable by the Lord

The Celebration of Firstfruits

- Today is Nisan 17
 - It is three days after Nisan 14, the day on which Yeshua was crucified
 - Nisan 15 is the beginning of the Feast of Unleavened Bread
 - Nisan 16 is the day of First Fruits, the second day of the Feast of Unleavened Bread
 - Depending when Shabbat falls – the day of Firstfruits could be on Nisan 17 – and this seems likely (according to many scholars) from Biblical understandings of scriptures for about the year in which Yeshua was crucified
- Firstfruits in Scripture
 - Firstfruits in scripture is not so much a feast but a celebration before the Lord in honour to Him
 - The Day of Firstfruits is, in Hebrew, *Yom HaBikkurim* it is an offering to the Lord of the first fruits of the Harvest – normally falling on Nissan 16
 - Starting on Firstfruits, instructions were given to count seven weeks, day by day, until the Feast of Weeks (Pentecost) – since the time of Moses, the 50th day has been a big party!
 - Because the wave offering of Firstfruits was given in the measurement of an "omer," these days are referred to as "Counting the Omer"
 - Shavuot is a feast celebrating the completion of the harvest, 50 days after Passover (the first Day of Unleavened Bread)

- The Lord's instructions for the day of Firstfruits are found in *Leviticus 23: 9-14*

And the Lord spoke to Moses, saying, "Speak to the children of Israel, and say to them: 'When you come into the land which I give to you, and reap its harvest, then you shall bring a sheaf of the firstfruits of your harvest to the priest. He shall wave the sheaf before the Lord, to be accepted on your behalf; on the day after the Sabbath the priest shall wave it. And you shall offer on that day, when you wave the sheaf, a male lamb of the first year, without blemish, as a burnt offering to the Lord. Its grain offering shall be two-tenths of an ephah of fine flour mixed with oil, an offering made by fire to the Lord, for a sweet aroma; and its drink offering shall be of wine, one-fourth of a hin. You shall eat neither bread nor parched grain nor fresh grain until the same day that you have brought an offering to your God; it shall be a statute forever throughout your generations in all your dwellings.'

Leviticus 23: 9-14

- A sheaf of the firstfruits of the harvest are brought to the priest who waves the sheaf before the Lord
 - Also on that day a male lamb, without blemish, is sacrificed as a burnt offering to the Lord
 - A grain offering is also given on that day
 - It is interesting that, as for Pesach, a spotless male lamb is sacrificed – prophetic yet again of Yeshua's sacrifice
 - It is worth noting that the grain offering, mixed with oil, is to be a sweet aroma to Him – as our lives should be
- **Firstfruits and Yeshua**
 - It seems very likely that in the year of Yeshua's death on Nisan 14, that Firstfruits fell on Nisan 17
 - Scripturally this is confirmed by the words of Yeshua to the Scribes and Pharisees when they asked for a sign – when He said that 'the Son of Man would be three days and three nights in the heart of the earth'

"Then some of the scribes and Pharisees answered, saying, "Teacher, we want to see a sign from You."

But He answered and said to them, "An evil and adulterous generation seeks after a sign, and no sign will be given to it except the sign of the prophet Jonah. For as Jonah was three days and three nights in the belly of the great fish, so will the Son of Man be three days and three nights in the heart of the earth."

Matthew 12: 38-40

- These words of Yeshua would seem to confirm that He would rise from the tomb on Nisan 17, having been crucified on Nisan 14
 - Jewish days begin and end at sunset
 - Some scholars say that in Jewish idiom a day can mean a part of a day – and that Yeshua rose on Nisan 16
 - However such an interpretation is difficult to square with Yeshua being in 'the heart of the earth' for 3 nights – which would have to be

the nights of Nisan 15, 16 and 17, with the resurrection early in the morning of Nisan 17)

- **We Too Are Firstfruits – Firstfruits to Christ**

- Paul, writing to the Corinthians, speaks of Yeshua as being the Firstfruits

‘But now is Christ risen from the dead, and become the firstfruits of them that slept. For since by man came death, by man came also the resurrection of the dead.

For as in Adam all die, even so in Christ shall all be made alive. But every man in his own order: Christ the firstfruits; afterward they that are Christ's at his coming.’
1 Corinthians 15: 20-23

- Paul says that In Christ we too shall be Firstfruits
 - Yeshua is the firstfruits of resurrection
 - By Him (Yeshua) we too shall experience resurrection...at His coming
 - It is why Paul speaks of a saint in Rome as being a ‘Firstfruit to Christ’ – see Romans 16: 5
 - Hence, believers today are ‘Firstfruits to Christ’ – we shall be raised because He has been raised

- **Lessons for Us from Firstfruits**

- We have the Firstfruits of the Spirit – so Hold onto your Hope and Keep Going with Perseverance

Not only that, but we also who have the firstfruits of the Spirit, even we ourselves groan within ourselves, eagerly waiting for the adoption, the redemption of our body. For we were saved in this hope, but hope that is seen is not hope; for why does one still hope for what he sees? But if we hope for what we do not see, we eagerly wait for it with perseverance.
Romans 8: 23-25

- Yeshua the ‘Firstfruit’ is holy – we are gentiles (wild olive trees) grafted into a holy root and the fatness (richness) of faith in a Jewish Messiah – so we should Support the Jewish People and Pray For Them to Know Yeshua

‘For I speak to you Gentiles; inasmuch as I am an apostle to the Gentiles, I magnify my ministry, if by any means I may provoke to jealousy those who are my flesh and save some of them. For if their being cast away is the reconciling of the world, what will their acceptance be but life from the dead?’

‘For if the firstfruit is holy, the lump is also holy; and if the root is holy, so are the branches. And if some of the branches were broken off, and you, being a wild olive tree, were grafted in among them, and with them became a partaker of the root and fatness of the olive tree, do not boast against the branches. But if you do boast, remember that you do not support the root, but the root supports you.’
Romans 11: 13-18

- We are ‘firstfruits to Christ’ – so we too should seek to Encourage Unbelievers that we know to Come to Yeshua and Become More Firstfruits to Christ

‘Greet Priscilla and Aquila, my fellow workers in Christ Jesus, who risked their own necks for my life, to whom not only I give thanks, but also all the churches of the Gentiles. Likewise greet the church that is in their house.

Greet my beloved Epaphroditus, who is the firstfruit of Achaia to Christ.’

Romans 16: 3-5

- Yeshua our Saviour and Lord is the firstfruit of those who died and are raised to life – so we should Hold Fast To That Truth of Yeshua Being The Firstfruit of the Resurrected Life
 - We should eagerly Look Forward to that Resurrection being true for ourselves – so keep Looking Up ↑ our Lord is coming soon!

‘But now Christ is risen from the dead, and has become the firstfruits of those who have fallen asleep. For since by man came death, by Man also came the resurrection of the dead. For as in Adam all die, even so in Christ all shall be made alive. But each one in his own order: Christ the firstfruits, afterward those who are Christ’s at His coming.’

1 Corinthians 15: 20-23

- We are Firstfruits of the Coming Kingdom by God’s Grace and Will – so we should Keep Looking Up and Forward in Full Trust in our Father God
- He will Fulfil His Purposes For Us
- So Trust the Lord in Everything – for we live by His power within us through the indwelling of the Holy Spirit

‘Every good gift and every perfect gift is from above, and comes down from the Father of lights, with whom there is no variation or shadow of turning. Of His own will He brought us forth by the word of truth, that we might be a kind of firstfruits of His creatures.’ ***James 1: 17-18***

- So we should Keep Looking Up and Forward – in Full Trust in our Father God
- He will Fulfil His Purposes For Us
- Trust the Lord in Everything – our Father Unchanging and He is Faithful
- We are to be Firstfruits to our Lord

AMEN