

CHAPTER 4

The Festival of Unleavened Bread (*Hag HaMatzah*)

The Feast of Unleavened Bread (*Hag HaMatzah*) is the fifteenth day of the month of Nisan, which is the day following Passover (*Pesach*). It is a seven-day festival to the Lord (Leviticus [*Vayikra*] 23:6-7; Exodus [*Shemot*] 12:7-8,14-17). On the fifteenth of Nisan and for the next seven days, God forbade the people to have any leavened bread in their houses.

The festival of Unleavened Bread can be found in Exodus (*Shemot*) 12:14-17, as it is written:

*Now this day will be a memorial to you, and you shall celebrate it as a feast to the Lord; throughout your generations you are to celebrate it as a permanent ordinance. Seven days you shall eat unleavened bread, but on the first day you shall remove leaven from your houses; for whoever eats anything leavened from the first day until the seventh day, that person shall be cut off from Israel. And on the first day you shall have a holy assembly, and another holy assembly on the seventh day; no work at all shall be done on them, except what must be eaten by every person, that alone may be prepared by you. You shall also observe the Feast of Unleavened Bread, for on this very day I brought your hosts out of the land of Egypt; therefore you shall observe this day throughout your generations as a permanent ordinance (Exodus [*Shemot*] 12:14-17 NAS).*

The Book of Exodus (*Shemot*), chapter 12, describes the Egyptian Passover. After the lamb was killed, the blood was to be put on the doorposts. The lamb was to be roasted in fire and eaten with *matzah* (unleavened bread) and bitter herbs (Exodus [*Shemot*] 12:7-8).

Purging Leaven From the House (*Bedikat HaMetz*)

God gave a ceremony of searching and removing leaven from the house prior to the festival of Unleavened Bread in preparation for the festival. In Hebrew, this ceremony is called *Bedikat HaMetz*, which means "the search for leaven" The ceremony is as follows:

The preparation for searching and removing the leaven (*Bedikat HaMetz*) from the house actually begins before Passover (*Pesach*). First, the wife thoroughly cleans the house to remove all leaven (*HaMetz*) from it. In the Bible, leaven (*HaMetz*) is symbolic of sin.

Spiritual Application (Halacha). Spiritually, the believers in the Messiah *Yeshua* are the house of G-d (Hebrews 3:6; 1 Peter 2:5; 1 Timothy 3:15; Ephesians 2:19). Leaven (sin) is to be cleaned out of our house, which is our body (1 Corinthians 3:16-17; 6:19-20; 2 Corinthians 6:15-18).

In cleaning the house, the wife is instructed to purposely leave ten small pieces of leaven (bread) in the house. Then the father takes the children, along with a candle, a wooden spoon, a feather, and a piece of linen cloth, and searches through the house for the ten pieces of leaven. By nightfall on the day before Passover (*Pesach*), a final and comprehensive search is performed. At this time, the house is completely dark except for the candles. Once the father finds the leaven (bread), he sets the candle down by the leaven and lays the wooden spoon beside the leaven. Then he uses the feather to sweep the leaven onto the spoon. Without touching the leaven, he takes the feather, spoon, and leaven, wraps them in a linen cloth, and casts them out of the door of the house. The next morning (the fourteenth of Nisan), he goes into the synagogue and puts the linen cloth and its contents into a fire to be burned.

Spiritual Application (Halacha). Spiritually, we are to cleanse the leaven (sin) from our houses (lives) by allowing the Holy Spirit (*Ruach HaKodesh*) to reveal to us, through the knowledge of *Yeshua* and the Scriptures, the sin that is in our lives. It is only through G-d's Word that we are able to identify sin in our lives as it is written in Psalm (*Tehillim*) 119:105, "Thy word is a lamp unto my feet, and a light unto my path." So the spiritual understanding of the candle is that it represents the Word of G-d. The feather represents the Holy Spirit (*Ruach HaKodesh*). Even though we have the Word of G-d, we need the Spirit of G-d (*Ruach HaKodesh*) to illuminate the entire Bible to us, including the Torah and the *Tanach* (1 Corinthians 2:11-14).

Messianic Fulfillment. The spoon represents the tree that *Yeshua* died upon (Deuteronomy [*Devarim* 21:22-23]). The leaven (*HaMetz*) (sin) was swept on the spoon (the tree) as part of the ceremony. Likewise, our sin was swept or cast upon *Yeshua* (2 Corinthians 5:21) when *Yeshua* died upon the tree. The leaven (*Yeshua* upon the tree) was then wrapped in linen and *Yeshua* was cast out of His house (His body) and went to hell, which is a place of burning (Luke 16:19-24). Thus He fulfilled the part of the ceremony where the father takes the linen cloth and its contents and casts it into the fire to be burned.

The Fifteenth of Nisan -- Purging Out of Sin

The fifteenth of Nisan (*Hag HaMatzah*) marks the beginning of a seven-day feast period when Israel was to eat bread without leaven (sin) in remembrance of their baking Unleavened bread in their haste to escape Egypt. The primary theme of this feast is the purging out of leaven (sin). Historically, there are two notable events that happened on this day.

1. **The Exodus journey beginning from Egypt** (Exodus [*Shemot*] 12:41). In Deuteronomy (*Devarim*) 16:3, the bread is referred to as "the bread of affliction."
2. **The burial of *Yeshua* after His crucifixion, who is the Bread of Life** (John [*Yochanan*] 6:35). In fact, the place of *Yeshua's* birth, Bethlehem, comes from two Hebrew words, *beit* and *lechem*. *Beit* means "house" and *lechem* means "bread." So, Bethlehem means house of bread. Therefore, *Yeshua*, who is the Bread of G-d, was born at a place called the house of bread.

The festivals are fixed appointments (*mo'ed*) of G-d specifying what He will perform and the exact time He will perform it. The Jews had to hurry to put *Yeshua's* body in the ground because the sabbath was drawing near. This sabbath was a high sabbath and the first day of Unleavened Bread (Nisan 15). This can be found in (John [*Yochanan*] 19:31). This would mean that *Yeshua* died on the fourteenth of Nisan, the day of Passover. *Yeshua* was in the sepulcher the day following His crucifixion, which was the fifteenth of Nisan, the first day of Unleavened Bread.

The Messianic Understanding of the Matzah in the Passover Seder

One of the 15 steps during the Passover Seder is a step called *Yachatz*. *Yachatz* is when the middle of the three *matzot* is broken into two. During the Passover Seder, there is a bag called the *matzatosh* which contains three pieces of *matzot*. The middle piece of *matzot* is removed, broken, wrapped in linen, and buried. This piece of *matzah* is the *afikomen*. During this part of the service, the *afikomen* was removed from sight (this represented *Yeshua* being buried) and it remained hidden until later in the service. *Yeshua* is the bread that was buried because He is the Bread of Life who came down from Heaven (John [*Yochanan*] 6:35). *Yeshua* was removed from between the two thieves who were crucified with Him (Matthew [*Mattityahu*] 27:38), wrapped in linen, and buried in the earth (Matthew 27:59-60).

Toward the end of the Passover Seder, the twelfth step to the service is called *Tzafun*. During *Tzafun*, the *afikomen* that was previously buried is redeemed and ransomed. At this point in the service, the *matzah*, previously characterized as the bread of affliction, is now transformed and redeemed. This is a perfect picture of *Yeshua*, who fulfilled the role of the suffering Messiah known as *Messiah ben Yosef*. He suffered affliction while dying on the tree, but was later redeemed when He was resurrected by G-d the Father. In the Passover Seder service, the *afikomen* is redeemed by the children. The children who find the buried *afikomen* receives a gift. This gift is known as "**the promise of the father**". Likewise, when G-d resurrected *Yeshua* after He was buried in the earth, those who believed upon Him by faith (*emunah*) are given gifts by G-d. When *Yeshua* ascended to Heaven, He gave gifts to men (Ephesians 4:7-8). These gifts included righteousness (Romans 5:17-18), eternal life (Romans 6:23), grace (Romans 5:12,14-15), faith (Ephesians 2:8-9), and other spiritual gifts (1 Corinthians 12:1,4). Some other gifts include wisdom, knowledge, healing, the working of miracles, prophecy, the discerning

of spirits, tongues, and interpretation of tongues (1 Corinthians 12:8-11), in addition to the gifts of helps and administration (1 Corinthians 12:28).

The Feast of Unleavened Bread in the Bible

1. **The Feast of Unleavened Bread was so much a part of Passover (*Pesach*) that the names of Passover and Unleavened Bread were used interchangeably or almost synonymously** (Luke 22:1).
2. **The feast was to be kept seven days** (Exodus [*Shemot*] 12:15-19). The number seven is the biblical number for completion or fullness. The believer who keeps this feast is to keep it fully unto the L-rd and set himself aside completely to Him. The Feast of Unleavened Bread speaks of complete separation from all things that are leavened (sinful) and feeding upon *Yeshua*, who is the believer's bread (John [*Yochanan*] 6:32-36,38).
3. **The Feast of Unleavened Bread (*Hag HaMatzah*) is a high sabbath day.** A high sabbath in Hebrew is called a *shabbaton*. During Passover, there is an extra sabbath besides the weekly sabbath. These sabbaths are called high sabbaths. The high sabbath of Unleavened Bread can be seen in John 19:31.
4. **Unleavened bread is used for consecration and separation.** It is also anointed with oil. The believers in the Messiah *Yeshua* are to be consecrated and separated to do the work G-d has called us to do and to live a life that is holy to Him. If we do this, the anointing of the Holy Spirit (*Ruach HaKodesh*) of G-d will rest upon our lives.
 - a) **The bread represents consecration** (Leviticus [*Vayikra*] 8:1-2,26-27; Exodus [*Shemot*] 29:2-23).
 - b) **It was included in the sacred vow of separation of the Nazarites** (Numbers [*Bamidbar*] 6:1-21).
 - c) **It was the food for the priests in the meal and peace offering** (Leviticus [*Vayikra*] 2:1,4,14-16; 6:14-18; 7:11-12).
 - d) **It marked Israel's divine separation from Egypt's (the world's) life of slavery and bondage** (Exodus [*Shemot*] 12:17,30-34).
 - e) **All leaven was to be put away** (Exodus [*Shemot*] 12:15,19-20). When leaven or yeast is placed in an unleavened batch of dough, the leaven puffs up the dough. Likewise, when we allow sin into our lives, it will puff us up in pride and arrogance.

In the Bible, G-d referred to the leaven of different groups of people. These are listed as follows:

1. **The leaven of Herod** (Mark 8:14-15; 6:14-18; Matthew [*Mattityahu*] 2:7-12).
2. **The leaven of the Pharisees** (Mark 8:15; Matthew [*Mattityahu*] 16:5-12; 23:1-3; Luke 11:37-44; 12:1).
3. **The leaven of the Sadducees** (Matthew [*Mattityahu*] 16:6-12). The Sadducees did not believe in the supernatural. They denied the existence of the Spirit of G-d, angels, and the resurrection (Mark 12:18; Acts 23:6-8).
4. **The leaven at Corinth.** The leaven at Corinth was sensuality, chiefly fornication (1 Corinthians 4:17-21; 5:1-13; 6:1,9-11,13,16-18; 8:1; 13:4; 2 Corinthians 12:20-21).

How to Keep the Feast

Spiritual Application (*Halacha*). Spiritually, the feast is kept in sincerity and truth. Sincerity involves purity and serving G-d with a pure heart. It involves putting away the sin in our lives, and separating ourselves from all evil that has a corrupting influence in the life of the believer in *Yeshua*. Historically, Israel learned that keeping the feast meant a complete separation from Egypt's religion, bondage, food, and slavery, as well as its worldly glory, wisdom, and splendor.

The children of Israel took the dough before it was leavened because they could not tarry in Egypt. There was no time to let the leaven get in and work up the dough (Exodus [*Shemot*] 12:34,39). As believers, we are to flee the world's ways and philosophies that are contrary to the Word of G-d. Sincerity (1 Corinthians 5:7-8) involves purity and sanctification, which means holiness and separation. The Bible uses water and washing to instruct us concerning sanctification and separation (Joshua [*Yehoshua*] 24:14; Ephesians 5:26; 6:24; Philippians 1:10; 1 Peter [*Kefa*] 2:2). To sanctify means to make holy, to purify, or to consecrate. The believers are sanctified by obeying the entire Word of G-d, including the Torah and the *Tanach* (John 17:17,19; Acts 20:32; 2 Chronicles 30:15; 35:1,6; Exodus [*Shemot*] 19:10,14; 28:39-41; Leviticus [*Vayikra*] 8:30; 11:44; 20:7; Hebrews 10:10,14; 1 Corinthians 1:2).

In First Corinthians 6:11, sanctification is connected to washing (Acts 22:16). Historically, after Israel celebrated the Passover, they were immersed (washed) in the water of the Red Sea (1 Corinthians 10:1-2). Likewise, after we accept the Messiah into our lives, we must immerse ourselves in studying the Bible and, by so doing, enable the knowledge of the Word of G-d to transform and change our lives.