



MBS115

A MESSIANIC BIBLE STUDY FROM ARIEL MINISTRIES



# THE FEAST OF HAG HAMATZOT (UNLEAVENED BREAD)



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*Seven days shall ye  
eat unleavened bread;  
even the first day  
ye shall put away  
leaven out of  
your houses.  
Exodus 12:15*

The Feast of *Hag Hamatzot* or Unleavened Bread is the second holy season on the Jewish calendar. This feast will be covered in four major areas: the introduction, the feast of unleavened bread in the Old Testament, the feast of unleavened bread in the New Testament, and the messianic implications.

## I. INTRODUCTION

### A. The Name

The Hebrew name for this feast is Hag Hamatzot, which means the “Feast of Unleavened Bread.” It is also the biblical name found in Exodus 23:15.

### B. The Biblical Practice

The biblical practice was rather simple. Two things should be noted concerning the biblical practice. First, the Feast of Unleavened Bread lasted for seven days following the Feast of Passover, which is only one day. Since they are back to back feasts, there are actually eight holy days. This is the reason Jews often speak of “the eight days of Passover,” although technically, only the first day is Passover and the next seven days are the Feast of Unleavened Bread.

The second thing by way of biblical practice is that no leaven could be eaten during this period. While one did not have to go through a full-scale festival as on the first night of the Passover, during the seven days of the Feast of Unleavened Bread, one could eat nothing that contained leaven.

### C. The Jewish or Rabbinic Practice

Three things should be noted concerning the modern Jewish practice:

the date, the eating customs during this period, and the liturgy in the synagogue service.

**NOTES**

### 1. The Date

Exactly when the Feast of Unleavened Bread began was one of those major debating points between the Pharisees and the Sadducees. The conflict was: did the Feast of Unleavened Bread begin on the fifteenth day of Nisan and go on until the twenty-first day of *Nisan* or did it begin on the sixteenth day of Nisan and go on until the twenty-second day of Nisan? The position of the Pharisees was that it began on the fifteenth while the Sadducees opted for the sixteenth day of the month. Basically, the Pharisees made the Feast of the Passover equal to the first day of the Feast of Unleavened Bread, whereas the Sadducees separated the two. Biblically speaking, the Sadducees were correct and the Pharisees were not. Today, the rabbis follow the Pharisaic view.

The first and last days of the Feast of Unleavened Bread are considered as being especially holy. For example, Jewish shops close on the first day and on the seventh day, whereas they do not close on the days in between.

### 2. The Eating Customs During This Period

Orthodox Jews eat nothing that contains leaven for the entire seven days of the feast. On the Feast of Passover, it is obligatory by Jewish law and biblical law to eat unleavened bread. During the following seven days, one was not required to eat unleavened bread, but if he wishes to eat any kind of bread, it has to be unleavened. One could choose to totally abstain from any form of bread during these seven days.

Also by Jewish law, since the first, sixth, and seventh days are more holy, it is permissible to cook only as much food as is needed for those days and no more. There are also specially prepared foods for this week, all surrounding the eating of unleavened bread.

### 3. The Liturgy in the Synagogue Service

The main song during the Feast of Unleavened Bread is known as the *Hallel*, the Jewish name given to Psalms 113-118. The full *Hallel* is sung on the first day, but a shorter *Hallel* is sung from the second to the seventh day.

Every day of the feast there is a synagogue service in which certain Scriptures are read. These Scriptures all center around either the Feast of Passover or the Feast of Unleavened Bread or are in some way related to them.

On the first day of the Feast of Unleavened Bread, Leviticus 22:26-23:44 is read. This passage discusses all of the seven main festivals in

biblical practice. They also read from Numbers 28:17-25, which gives the details of the paschal offering. Another passage read on this day is II Kings 23:1-9 and 21-25, because it describes the Passover that was observed by Josiah, the good king. This is the second day of Passover. On the second day of the Feast of Unleavened Bread, Exodus 13:1-16 is read. This passage deals with the laws of unleavened bread and the law of the firstborn. Numbers 28:17-25, dealing with the paschal offerings, is read again. This is the first intermediate day and the third day of Passover.

On the third day of the Feast of Unleavened Bread, Exodus 22:24-23:19 is read. This passage discusses the Feast of Unleavened Bread, and Numbers 28:17-25 is read again. This is the second intermediate day and the fourth day of Passover.

On the fourth day of the Feast of Unleavened Bread, Exodus 34:1-26 is read, which discusses the pilgrimage festivals. These are festivals one must observe wherever the Tabernacle was located or where the Temple stood, which ultimately became Jerusalem. Once again, Numbers 28:17-25 is read. This is the third intermediate day and the fifth day of Passover.

On the fifth day of the Feast of Unleavened Bread, Numbers 9:1-14 is read. This passage also describes the laws of the Passover and again, Numbers 28:17-25 is read. This is the fourth intermediate day and the sixth day of Passover.

On the sixth day of the Feast of Unleavened Bread, Exodus 13:17-15:26 is read. This passage describes the crossing of the Red Sea, and is followed once again by Numbers 28:17-25. Because this day is considered more holy, II Samuel 22:1-51 is read, which is David's song of deliverance. This is the seventh day of Passover.

The seventh day of the Feast of Unleavened Bread is the eighth day of the Passover. If it is a Sabbath day, Deuteronomy 14:22-16:17 is the Scripture that is read. If it is a weekday, Deuteronomy 15:19-16:17 is read. In either case, it discusses the Passover and the pilgrimage festivals. Numbers 28:17-25 is read for the final time. Because the seventh day is considered a holy day, Isaiah 10:32-12:6 is the Scripture that is read, describing the Messianic Age.

One more thing about the liturgy is that if any one of those seven days falls on the Sabbath, on that intermediate Sabbath, they read Exodus 33:12-34:26, which discusses the pilgrimage festivals and the Feast of Unleavened Bread. Numbers 28:17-25 is read as usual. Ezekiel 37:1-14, which discusses the valley of the dry bones, and the Song of Solomon are also added.

As one may notice, the key passage that is read every day is the one

about the paschal sacrifice: Numbers 28:17-25.

NOTES

## II. THE FEAST OF UNLEAVENED BREAD IN THE OLD TESTAMENT

There are seven Old Testament passages that make reference to the Feast of Unleavened Bread.

### A. Exodus 12:15-20

The feast is introduced in conjunction with the Passover, because the two festivals come back to back. The law of the leaven is spelled out in verse 15: *Seven days shall ye eat unleavened bread; even the first day ye shall put away leaven out of your houses: for whosoever eats leavened bread from the first day until the seventh day, that soul shall be cut off from Israel.*

The law of the leaven is that, for a duration of seven days, only unleavened bread may be eaten and nothing containing leaven may be eaten. Not only were they forbidden to eat the leaven, they were even forbidden to have it in their homes; from the first day, all leaven must be put away from their houses. The punishment for anyone who ate leaven or failed to cleanse leaven from their homes was: *that soul shall be cut off from Israel.*

The sanctity of the feast is pointed out in verse 16: *And in the first day there shall be to you a holy convocation, and in the seventh day a holy convocation; no manner of work shall be done in them, save that which every man must eat, that only may be done by you.*

These days are days of sanctity, especially the first and seventh days. On the first day, they were to have a holy convocation; and on the seventh day, they were to have a holy convocation. While the feast itself was seven days long, the first day and the seventh day were especially holy. Furthermore, they were also to be days of rest; no work was to be done except for food preparation.

The reason for the feast is given in verse 17: *And ye shall observe the feast of unleavened bread; for in this selfsame day have I brought your hosts out of the land of Egypt: therefore shall ye observe this day throughout your generations by an ordinance for ever.*

The Passover itself was observed in Egypt and the Exodus occurred on the first day of the Feast of Unleavened Bread. On the day after Passover, they began their trek out of Egypt, so it was on the first day of the Feast of Unleavened Bread that the Exodus actually occurred. For that reason, the observance was mandatory.

The date of the feast is provided in verse 18: *In the first month, on the fourteenth day of the month at even, ye shall eat unleavened bread, until the one and twentieth day of the month at even.*

In biblical times, the first month was known as *Aviv* or *Abib*, but the modern Jewish name for the same month is Nisan. Then Moses wrote

that the eating of unleavened bread was to begin on the evening of the fourteenth with Passover, and to last until the twenty-first day of the month at evening, which included the seven days of the Feast of Unleavened Bread.

The law of the leaven is restated and the punishment for failure is given in verse 19: *Seven days shall there be no leaven found in your houses: for whosoever eats that which is leavened, that soul shall be cut off from the congregation of Israel, whether he be a sojourner, or one that is born in the land.*

The punishment was: *that soul shall be cut off from the congregation of Israel.* This statement has been made twice, here and in verse 15, which shows its importance. This rule applies whether one is merely a sojourner in the Land or one that is born in the land.

The preceding points are summarized in verse 20: *Ye shall eat nothing leavened; in all your habitations shall ye eat unleavened bread.*

First, *Ye shall eat nothing leavened.*

And secondly, *in all your habitations shall ye eat unleavened bread.*

### **B. Exodus 23:14-15**

The feast is instituted as a pilgrimage feast in verse 14: *Three times you shall keep a feast unto me in the year.*

Actually, the Passover is the pilgrimage festival, but because the Feast of Unleavened Bread immediately follows Passover, the Jews would still be in Jerusalem when this feast began. So in this passage, it is connected with Passover.

There are four specific laws concerning this feast mentioned in verse 15: *The feast of unleavened bread shall you keep: seven days you shall eat unleavened bread, as I commanded you, at the time appointed in the month Abib (for in it you came out from Egypt); and none shall appear before me empty.*

The first law is that the keeping of this feast was mandatory; it was not optional. Secondly, the length is seven days, and the action is: *you shall eat unleavened bread.* Thirdly, this is the date for the observation. Again, the month known then as Aviv is now known as Nisan. The reason being: *for in it you came out from Egypt.* And the fourth law is that it must be observed with an offering. The details of the offerings are given by Numbers 28:17-25.

### **C. Leviticus 23:6-8**

*And on the fifteenth day of the same month is the feast of unleavened bread unto Jehovah: seven days ye shall eat unleavened bread. In the first day ye shall have a holy convocation: ye shall do no servile work. But ye shall offer an offering made by fire unto Jehovah seven days: in the seventh day is a holy convocation; ye shall do no servile work.*

This passage speaks of five things to note. First, verse 6a gives the date: *the fifteenth day of the same month* as Passover, which is the month of Aviv or Nisan. According to this passage, clearly the Feast of

Unleavened Bread began on the day after the killing of the Passover lamb on the fourteenth day.

The second thing to note in this passage is the duration of the feast in verse 6b; they were to eat unleavened bread for seven days, from the fifteenth day until the twenty-first day and into the twenty-second day.

The third thing to note is the sanctity of the first day of the feast in verse 7: *In the first day ye shall have a holy convocation: ye shall do no servile work.*

The fourth thing to note is the offering in verse 8a: *But ye shall offer an offering made by fire unto Jehovah seven days; it was to be observed by means of an offering, described by Numbers 28:17-25.*

And the fifth thing to note is that the seventh day is also a sanctified day in verse 8b: *in the seventh day is a holy convocation; ye shall do no servile work.*

#### **D. Numbers 28:17-25**

The fourth Old Testament account of the Feast of Unleavened Bread is Numbers 28:17-25. This passage emphasizes the offerings for this occasion and can be broken down into five divisions.

The first division gives the date in verse 17a: *And on the fifteenth day of this month shall be a feast.*

Again, the date is on the fifteenth day of the first month, the month of Aviv or Nisan.

The second division records the duration in verse 17b: *seven days shall unleavened bread be eaten.*

That would be from the fifteenth day through the twenty-first day of the month.

The third division points out the sanctity of the first day in verse 18: *In the first day shall be a holy convocation: ye shall do no servile work.*

The fourth division is the largest one and spells out the daily offerings in verses 19-24. These offerings were to be offered up every day for all seven days. There were three different types of offerings.

The first offering was the burnt-offering in verse 19: *but ye shall offer an offering made by fire, a burnt-offering unto Jehovah: two young bullocks, and one ram, and seven he-lambs a year old; they shall be unto you without blemish.*

Every day the burnt-offering consisted of two young bullocks, one ram, and seven he-lambs or male lambs a year old, and all of these had to be without blemish.

The second offering was the meal-offering in verses 20-21: *and their*



*meal-offering, fine flour mingled with oil: three tenth parts shall ye offer for a bullock, and two tenth parts for the ram; a tenth part shall you offer for every lamb of the seven lambs.*

The content of the meal-offering was to be made up of fine flour mingled with oil; this was to be divided into three parts: three-tenths parts were offered with the bullock, two-tenths with the ram, and one-tenth part for every lamb of the seven lambs.

And the third offering was the sin-offering in verse 22: *and one he-goat for a sin-offering, to make atonement for you.*

The sin-offering was one male goat for the purpose of making atonement. This was the actual sin-sacrifice.

The importance of the additional offerings is pointed out in verses 23-24: *Ye shall offer these besides the burnt-offering of the morning, which is for a continual burnt-offering. After this manner ye shall offer daily, for seven days, the food of the offering made by fire, of a sweet savor unto Jehovah: it shall be offered besides the continual burnt-offering, and the drink-offering thereof.*

Verse 23 points out that these sacrifices were not in place of the regular daily sacrifices commanded by the Mosaic Law, but were to be in addition to them. And verse 24 reemphasizes that these sacrifices were to be offered on each of the seven days.

The fifth division is the conclusion of this passage concerning the Feast of Unleavened Bread in the Old Testament in which Moses once again pointed out the sanctity of the seventh day in verse 25: *And on the seventh day ye shall have a holy convocation; ye shall do no servile work.*

### **E. Deuteronomy 16:3-4, 8, and 16**

Four things are pointed out in the fifth Old Testament account. The first thing concerns the eating of the leaven in verse 3: *You shall eat no leavened bread with it; seven days shall you eat unleavened bread therewith, even the bread of affliction; for you came forth out of the land of Egypt in haste: that you may remember the day when you came forth out of the land of Egypt all the days of your life.*

This verse gives one of the names for unleavened bread: *the bread of affliction*. The reason is: *for you came forth out of Egypt in haste*. Again, it was on the first day of the Feast of Unleavened Bread that the Exodus occurred. This verse also points out the purpose of it all: *that you may remember the day when you came forth out of the land of Egypt all the days of your life*.

The second thing in the passage is the rule concerning the absence of leaven in verse 4: *And there shall be no leaven seen with you in all your borders seven days; neither shall any of the flesh, which you sacrifice the first day at even, remain all night until the morning*

Previously, two things were pointed out concerning the absence of leaven: first, they could eat no leaven during these seven days; and secondly, there could be no leaven in their homes. Here, a third thing

is added: there could be no leaven anywhere in all the borders of Israel, the entire country had to be cleansed of leaven.

The third thing in this passage is the sanctity of the seventh day in verse 8: *Six days you shall eat unleavened bread; and on the seventh day shall be a solemn assembly to Jehovah your God; you shall do no work therein.*

Just as on the first day, there was no labor permitted on the seventh day.

The fourth thing in this passage is that this, too, was a pilgrimage festival in verse 16: *Three times in a year shall all your males appear before Jehovah your God in the place which he shall choose: in the feast of unleavened bread, and in the feast of weeks, and in the feast of tabernacles; and they shall not appear before Jehovah empty.*

Actually, the Feast of Passover was the pilgrimage festival, but the Feast of Unleavened Bread is mentioned here because this feast immediately followed the Feast of Passover. So if one was in Jerusalem for the Feast of Passover, he would be there also for the Feast of Unleavened Bread.

#### **F. II Chronicles 30:23-27**

The sixth Old Testament passage records the observance of this feast by Hezekiah, the good king. Here, five things are brought out. First, they observed it for the seven days according to verse 23: *And the whole assembly took counsel to keep other seven days; and they kept other seven days with gladness.*

This is the seven days of the Feast of Unleavened Bread in addition to the Feast of Passover. They had already observed the Feast of Passover at this point and they were now determined to keep other seven days. Furthermore, it states that they kept other seven days with gladness.

The second thing in this passage describes Hezekiah's gifts to the assembly, the congregation of Israel, for the observance in verse 24: *For Hezekiah king of Judah did give to the assembly for offerings a thousand bullocks and seven thousand sheep; and the princes gave to the assembly a thousand bullocks and ten thousand sheep: and a great number of priests sanctified themselves.*

The reason the priests sanctified themselves was to be able to offer all of these sacrifices.

Thirdly, they observed this feast with rejoicing in verse 25: *And all the assembly of Judah, with the priests and the Levites, and all the assembly that came out of Israel, and the sojourners that came out of the land of Israel, and that dwelt in Judah, rejoiced.*

The feast was observed by both Houses of Judah and Israel along with the priests, the Levites, and the sojourners.

Fourthly, this was the greatest joy that Jerusalem had experienced since David and Solomon according to verse 26: *So there was great joy in*

*Jerusalem; for since the time of Solomon the son of David king of Israel there was not the like in Jerusalem.*

Fifth, on the sanctified seventh day, the blessing of the people by the priests and Levites occurred, and their prayers were heard by God according to verse 27: *Then the priests the Levites arose and blessed the people: and their voice was heard, and their prayer came up to his holy habitation, even unto heaven.*

### **G. Ezra 6:21-22**

*And the children of Israel that were come again out of the captivity, and all such as had separated themselves unto them from the filthiness of the nations of the land, to seek Jehovah, the God of Israel, did eat, and kept the feast of unleavened bread seven days with joy: for Jehovah had made them joyful, and had turned the heart of the king of Assyria unto them, to strengthen their hands in the work of the house of God, the God of Israel.*

The seventh passage relates how the Feast of Unleavened Bread was observed in the days of Ezra. Verse 21 states that it was observed by those who had returned from the Babylonian captivity. Verse 22 describes the observance itself. The rebuilding of the Temple was the means by which God made them joyful.

## **III. THE FEAST OF UNLEAVENED BREAD IN THE NEW TESTAMENT**

### **A. In the Gospels**

In the Gospels, the feast of Unleavened Bread is mentioned in reference to the Messiah's observance of this feast in Matthew 26:17; Mark 14:1, and 12; and Luke 22:7. In all of these passages, the Feast of Unleavened Bread is connected with the Passover because, by New Testament times, the Passover and the first day of the Feast of Unleavened Bread had become the same in accordance with the Pharisaic view. Even Josephus, who was a Pharisee and who wrote at the same time that the Gospels were written, used it in the same way. Because Pharisaism was the Judaism of the majority of Jews of that day, the first day of Passover is also spoken of as being the first day of the Feast of Unleavened Bread.

### **B. In the Epistles**

The only other place in the New Testament that the Feast of Unleavened Bread is mentioned is I Corinthians 5:8. The background to verse 8 is verses 6-7: *Your glorying is not good. Know ye not that a little leaven leavens the whole lump? Purge out the old leaven, that ye may be a new lump, even as ye are unleavened. For our passover also has been sacrificed, even Christ.*

Following his discussion of the Passover in verses 6-7, Paul discussed the Feast of Unleavened Bread in verse 8. What he said in verse 8 is based upon the principle of verse 6: *a little leaven leavens the whole lump.*

According to verse 7, the believers' obligation is: *Purge out the old leaven.*

The reason is: *For our passover has been sacrificed, even Christ.* Verses 6-7 speak of the Messianic implications of the Passover.

The Messianic implications of the Feast of Unleavened Bread are dealt with in verse 8a. Paul begins by exhorting: *wherefore let us keep the feast.* The reason that believers must keep the Feast of Unleavened Bread is because the Passover is done with; the Messiah, the Passover Lamb, has been slain once-and-for-all.

The application to believers is given in verse 8b: *not with old leaven, neither with the leaven of malice and wickedness, but with the unleavened bread of sincerity and truth.*

Today, the believer is not to keep the Feast of Unleavened Bread in the literal way as it was kept under the Mosaic Law, but in a spiritual way. This is to be observed both negatively with old leaven and positively with the unleavened bread of sincerity and truth.

Paul did not mean literal leaven, but *the leaven of malice and wickedness.* Nor did he mean literal unleavened bread, but *the unleavened bread of sincerity and truth.* The point which Paul makes is that believers must purge their lives of the “leaven of sin,” because the Messiah, their Passover, had already been sacrificed for them. In this context, he is dealing with a congregational sin. The way a congregation, a local church, purges leaven from their midst is by means of church discipline.

The individual believer must also purge his life of leaven. The way that a believer purges his life of leaven individually is by means of I John 1:9: *If we confess our sins, he is faithful and righteous to forgive us our sins, and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness.*

When one receives Yeshua (Jesus) as his Passover sacrifice, he is born again into God’s family. Having been born again into God’s family means that he can never fall out of that particular family. However, as in any family, fellowship within that family can be broken by sin. This sin, this leaven, must be purged by means of confession.

#### IV. THE MESSIANIC IMPLICATIONS

Whenever the word leaven is used symbolically in Scripture, it is always a symbol of sin. This is the reason God would not even allow this symbol of sin to be eaten by the Jewish people during this period or to have it in their homes or to have it anywhere in the Land of Israel.

While Passover itself was fulfilled by the death of the Messiah, the Feast of Unleavened Bread is fulfilled by the sinlessness of His blood-offering, according to Hebrews 9:11-10:18. In this passage, His offering of sinless blood accomplished three things: first, the cleansing of the heavenly tabernacle; secondly, the removal of the sins of the Old Testament saints; and thirdly, the application of the blood to the New Testament saints. ☆

#### NOTES

#### IF YOU ENJOYED THIS BIBLE STUDY, DR. FRUCHTENBAUM RECOMMENDS:

*MBS062, 114, 116, 117, 118, 119, 120, 122, 177, 178 and our series on Israelology.*

