

The Feast of Unleavened Bread

Name	Scriptures	Time / Date	Purpose	Fulfillment
Unleavened Bread	Ex. 12:15-20, 13:3-10; Lev. 23:6-8; Num. 28:17-25; Deut. 16:3-8	15 th day of Nisan (March/April); continues for seven days	To commemorate the hardships of Israel's escape from Egypt	<u>Sanctification:</u> Christ's burial; His body did not suffer decay (John 6:30-59; 1 Cor.11:24)

Background

The Feast of Unleavened Bread, also known as Hag HaMatzah, is a reminder to the Jew of God's miraculous deliverance from Egyptian bondage. When the Jews fled captivity in the middle of the night, they were instructed to take only unleavened bread because there was no time for bread dough to rise (Ex. 12:39; Deut. 16:3).

The Feast of Unleavened Bread is a seven-day holiday, beginning the day after Passover. Together, Passover and the Feast of Unleavened Bread are sometimes called the "Eight Days of Passover" in Scripture.

Unleavened Bread is the first of three annual pilgrim feasts. For each of these feasts – the other two are Weeks and Tabernacles – all Jewish men were required to present themselves before the Lord in the Temple (Ex. 23:14-17, 34:18-23; Deut. 16:16; 2 Chron. 8:13). At age 12, Jesus traveled to Jerusalem for this feast and confounded the scholars with His understanding of Scripture (Luke 2:41-50).

The Biblical Observance

To properly prepare for the feast, leaven, or yeast, must be removed from the house and no leaven is to be eaten until the feast has ended seven days later (Ex. 12:15, 13:7; Deut. 16:4). In addition, this feast is considered a "high Sabbath," with an extra Sabbath besides the weekly Sabbath. No work is to be done the first day or the seventh day of the feast (Ex. 12:16). Finally, this feast is declared a memorial to be kept forever (Ex. 12:17).

The Modern Observance

Preparation for Unleavened Bread begins 30 days ahead of time. Walls are washed and painted, cooking utensils scalded, clothing washed and pockets turned inside out, carpets cleaned, and special dishes brought out. The women of the house begin removing all leaven, also known as chametz, from the house – even toothpaste if it has baking soda in it. According to Scripture, the Passover may not be celebrated if there is leaven in the house.

However, the woman of the house leaves 10 small pieces of bread with leaven hidden in various rooms. On the 14th day of Nisan, the night before Passover, the man of the house lights a candle, and takes a wooden spoon, feather and paper bag and searches the house until he has found all 10 pieces of bread.

He uses the feather to whisk the bread onto the wooden spoon, and then dumps the bread from the spoon into the paper bag. The bag is then taken outside and burned. Afterwards, he says the following prayer: “Any chametz which is in my possession which I did not see, and remove, nor know about, shall be nullified and become ownerless, like the dust of the earth.”

With that work completed, the family is ready to celebrate Passover and Unleavened Bread, with special worship services on the first and seventh days.

The household search for leaven represents the Messiah. For example:

- ☑ The candle symbolizes the Word of God (Jesus), who is the Light of the World.
- ☑ The feather represents the Holy Spirit, directing us to the cross.
- ☑ The wooden spoon represents the cross, upon which Jesus, who knew no sin, became sin for us.
- ☑ The paper bag represents the grave.
- ☑ The fire represents the full judgment of our sins.

Fulfillment

Leaven is a picture of sin in the Bible (Matt. 16:6-12; Mark 8:15; Luke 12:1; Gal. 5:9).

Leaven permeates the dough, contaminates it, and swells it to many times its size. The fermentation process operates because of the curse of death decreed by God when Adam sinned. That's why only unleavened bread was used in the Temple (Lev. 2:11).

Unleavened bread is a wonderful picture of Jesus the Messiah. The bread is without leaven, as He is without sin. It also is striped and pierced, as His body was beaten and pierced for our sins (Isa. 53:5; 1 Peter 2:24). In addition, the Feast of Unleavened Bread symbolizes Jesus' burial. His body was placed in the grave but did not see corruption as He rose on the third day (see Psalm 16:10; Isa. 53:9; Matt. 27:57-60, 28:1-10) and carried our sins away (Psalm 103:12; Heb. 9:26).

There are other symbolic markers in this feast:

- ☑ Jesus referred to Himself as the bread of life (John 6:35) and chose the bread of the Passover to be the symbolic memorial of His broken body (Luke 22:19).
- ☑ Jesus was born in Bethlehem, which means "house of bread."
- ☑ The Lord expects believers to put aside sin in our lives, as leaven is put aside during this feast (1 Cor. 5:7-8; see also Eph. 4:22-24 and Gal. 5:16-24).
- ☑ The seven days speak of satisfaction or fullness; believers are completely satisfied in Christ.

In summary, Passover and Unleavened Bread together picture the sacrificial, substitutionary death of Jesus – the Lamb of God who takes away the sin of the world – and the burial of His body, which God the Father raised on the third day before it decayed. The resurrection, as we'll see next week, is pictured in the Feast of Firstfruits.

