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## Pesach (Passover)

### Leviticus 23: 5-8

**Pesach DIG:** Why is Pesach celebrated on the fifteenth and not the fourteenth? What is the Messianic significance of Pesach? How does the Jewish observance differ from the biblical practice today? What are some practical things believers can do to prepare for it?

**REFLECT:** Do you have a Messianic congregation near you? Do you think you could find it on the internet/YouTube? Why would a Gentile want to celebrate Pesach? Why do you think other Gentiles do so? Have you ever attended a Passover Seder? Why? Why not?

**The Feast of Passover is fulfilled by the death of Messiah.**

**The Biblical Practice:** In the first month of Nisan, on the fourteenth day of the month comes Pesach for ADONAI (Leviticus 13:5). It is considered a Shabbat. This is the dating system that was in use during much of the biblical period, especially in the information of official records and laws. The operative unit of time was the lunar month (Hebrew: *chodesh*), not the week; and the months of the year were designated by ordinal numbers: **the first month** . . . the seventh month, and so forth. The counting began in the spring of the year. There is both biblical and extra biblical evidence that other calendrical systems were also in use during the biblical period, but **Leviticus 23** does not refer to them.<sup>422</sup>



The entire community of Isra'el will slaughter the Passover lamb at twilight, between sundown and complete darkness, approximately one and one-third hours of duration (**Exodus 12:1-6**). There were two key elements. The first was the killing of **the lamb**. From the tenth to the fourteenth, the lamb was to be examined to make sure it was without spot or blemish (see the commentary on **The Life of Christ**, to see link click **[Ix - The Examination of the Lamb](#)**). The lamb would be slaughtered at twilight on the fourteenth, making sure no bones were broken (**Exodus 12:46**). The second element was the eating of the lamb (**Exodus 12:8**) with unleavened bread and bitter herbs. As the sun went down, the fourteenth of Nisan turned into the fifteenth of Nisan, and so the Passover meal was actually celebrated and eaten on the fifteenth of Nisan (see a video presentation of Pesach by clicking **[here](#)**).

Pesach, Hag ha'Matzot, and Resheet came rapidly, three days in a row; Friday, Saturday (Shabbat), and Sunday. All three point to Yeshua Messiah. **Pesach points to the death of the Lamb of God**; Hag ha'Matzot points to the sinlessness of His sacrifice, and Resheet points Messiah as being the firstfruits of those who would be raised from the dead. The Feast of the Passover would last one day, and it was followed immediately by the Feast of Unleavened Bread. By B'rit Chadashah times, Pesach and the first day of Hag ha'Matzot had become the same in accordance with the Pharisaic view.<sup>423</sup> On the fifteenth day of the same month is the festival of matzot (another name for Pesach). For seven days you are to eat matzah (Lev 23:6).

Here is what the seven-day festival every Nisan looks like:

<b>Pesach (or the Festival of Matzot)</b>	<b>Day 1 Shabbat</b>
<b>Hag ha'Matzot (Unleavened Bread)</b>	<b>Day 2 Shabbat</b>
<b>Resheet (First Fruits)</b>	<b>Day 3 Shabbat</b>

**Day 4**

**Day 5**

**Day 6**

**Day 7 Shabbat**

**On the first day of Pesach, you are to have a holy convocation; don't do any kind of ordinary work. Bring an offering made by fire** (on the bronze altar) **to ADONAI for seven days.** The additional sacrifices are described in **Numbers 28:17-25** (see the commentary on **Numbers Fg - The Hag ha'Matzot Offering**). **On the seventh day is a holy convocation; do not do any kind of ordinary work (Leviticus 23:7-8).** On the **first** and **seventh day** of the festival, **work** was forbidden. The community celebrated together. On the intervening days, however, **ordinary work** could be carried on, if necessary, but the celebration continued. Today in **Isra'el**, **Passover** is **the seven-day** holiday sometimes called **Hag ha'Matzot**, or **the Festival of Matzot**, with **the first** and **last days** celebrated as legal holidays and as **holy days** involving holiday meals, special prayer services, and abstention from work. Nothing that contains **yeast** is **eaten** during that **seven-day** period.

**The Jewish Observance: Pesach** (PAY-sahk) means *to pass over*. The **Passover** meal, Seder (SAY-der), commemorates **the Israelites'** deliverance from slavery in **Egypt**. There are two key elements. The first key element is **unleavened bread**. The Torah says the people should remove any leavened products from their households (**Exodus 12:15**). This was to remind them that they had to flee Egypt so quickly that **the bread** in their ovens did not have time to rise. Leaven is a symbol of sin so God would not permit the symbol of sin to be in the Jewish home. Not only that, according to Jewish law, a Jew may not even own leaven during **the Passover** season. It also had to be striped and pierced. A particularly intriguing element unwittingly added by the rabbis is called the afikomen (a Greek word meaning *that which comes last*) ceremony. Three **matzahs** are placed in a special **Passover** bag known as *the matzah tash* that is only one bag, but contains three pouches. A piece of unleavened bread is placed in each pouch. Before the Seder, **the** middle **matzah** is broken

in two and the larger half is wrapped in a white linen cloth and hidden away to be used later for *the afikomen* or the desert. The smaller half is used for the special benediction over **the matzah** just before **the Passover** starts. After the story has been told and **the Passover** ceremony is over, and in conjunction with the third and fourth cups of wine, the children try to find it and then it is removed from its hiding place, unwrapped, broken into small pieces the size of an olive, and distributed for all to **eat**. **Before 70 AD the rabbis taught that after the story has been told the Passover lamb was supposed to be the last thing eaten.** But after 70 AD there were no longer any "Temple approved" lambs, so the *afikomen* became the symbolic reminder of **the Passover lamb** and for this reason, it must be the last thing **eaten**. **The rabbis later added numerous other elements, including green vegetables, a roasted egg, and kharoset (apple/nut mix).**

The second key element is the wine. Each person will drink four cups of wine. First, the cup of blessing; second, the cup of plagues; third, the cup of redemption; and fourth the cup of praise with which the family sings **Psalm 113-118**. Later in history, the rabbis added a fifth cup called the cup of **Elijah (Malachi 4:5)**.<sup>424</sup>

The passage also indicates that on **the first and seventh day of the festival** are to be observed as **holy convocations**. In the original context the **holy convocation** is a reference to the Temple service prescribed for **the festival day**. Today, the Jewish observance, **the holy convocation, has** come to mean the assembling together for prayer, worship, and the public reading of scripture, in other words, a congregational assembly. In addition to the prescribed Torah reading, it is traditional to read **the Song of Solomon on the day of Unleavened Bread**. Believers might also read the passion narratives and reflect on them.

**In Chassidic communities, it has become a tradition to host a "Messianic Banquet" on the seventh day of the Festival of Matzot. The Messianic Banquet is celebrated in anticipation of Messiah's coming (ironic). Relevant verses from the prophets are studied as Chassidim rehearse the banquet that will inaugurate the reign of the Messianic King. In some renditions, four cups are consumed on the first night of Passover.**<sup>425</sup>

**The Messianic Significance:** This **feast** was fulfilled by the death of **Messiah**. **Isaiah 52:13-53:12** pictures **the Messiah** coming as a **lamb** to the slaughter (see the commentary on **Isaiah 53 - The Death of the Suffering Servant**). The New Covenant passages also clearly connect **Messiah** with **the Passover Lamb (John 1:29, 35-36; First Peter 1:18-19 and Revelation 5:12)**. Not only is **Yeshua** identified with **the lamb itself**, **Paul**

identifies **Him** with the whole **Passover Feast: For our Pesach lamb, the Messiah, has been sacrificed (First Corinthians 5:7)**. Thus, we have here an explicit confirmation that **the Passover** not only points specifically to **Yeshua the Messiah**, but that it also finds its most complete significance in **His** sacrificial death. Because **Yeshua** is the ultimate **Passover Lamb**, by believing in **Him** we participate and benefit from all the doctrines which are characteristic of the historical exodus from Egypt. In other words, the Brit Chadsahah confirms that **Messiah** redeemed us, set us free to serve **YHVH**, and saved and delivered us from sin.

Finally, what good does all of the head knowledge do us? The Torah bids us to participate in **the Passover** Seder every year. It is in the participation of **Pesach** that we are reminded - and renewed - every year of the precious redemptive truths of **Messiah** as well as the powerful acts **God** has accomplished for us in history.<sup>426</sup>

The afikomen ceremony also points to **Messiah**. One bag with three compartments portrays one **God** who exists in three **Persons**. In this ceremony **the** middle **matzah** is removed, a picture of the incarnation when **the Second Person of the Trinity** became man in the person of **Yeshua**. It is broken in two that pictures **His** death. When **Yeshua** came to this part in the ceremony, **he** said: **This is My body broken for you** (see the commentary on **The Life of Christ Kj - Breaking of the Middle Matzah**). It is then wrapped in white linen. The Gospels make it quite clear that when the body of **Messiah** was removed from the cross, **He** was wrapped in linen cloth. It is then hidden for a time, a picture of **His** burial. Then it is removed from its hiding place and unwrapped, a picture of the resurrection. Pieces are broken off and distributed to the members around the table, a picture of **John 6** where **Yeshua** said we must all partake of **His** body. In that same chapter **Yeshua** clearly interprets the "eating" of **His** body as believing that **He** is **the Messiah**.

Furthermore, in the Jewish observance there are four cups of wine. Luke does not mention all four cups but does mention two. The first cup is in **Luke 22:17-18**, the cup of thanksgiving over which **the Passover** observance begins. The third cup is mentioned in **Luke 22:20** (see the commentary on **The Life of Christ Kk - The Third Cup of Redemption**). For Jews it symbolizes the physical redemption brought about by the **blood** of **the Passover lamb** in **the Egyptian Passover** (see the commentary on **Exodus Bv - The Egyptian Passover**). Now it symbolizes our spiritual redemption from the tyranny of sin. **Yeshua** clearly identified **Himself** in terms of the Jewish observance of **the Passover**.<sup>427</sup>

**Therefore, the Passover is fulfilled by the death of Messiah.**

**A Practical Guide for Believers in Messiah:** On **the fourteenth of Nisan**, final

preparations for **the Passover** Seder must be made. A traditional Seder plate and ceremonial items will also be needed. *The zeroah* is a **lamb** shankbone representing **the lamb** sacrifice. If no **lamb** shankbone is available, a turkey or chicken bone that has been roasted by fire may be substituted. *The baytzah* is a roasted, hard-boiled egg representing the burnt offerings of the Temple period (see [Ai - The Burnt Offering](#)). *The maror* (bitter herbs) is usually horseradish, which is a reminder of the bitterness of slavery to sin. *The kharoset* (the sweet apple/nut mix) is a wonderful reminder of the sweetness of our redemption, and *the karpas* (parsley), a green vegetable, speaks of life. A kiddush cup (goblet) for each person plus the cup of Elijah with its own place setting is also needed to prepare the Seder table. A **matzah** tash (afikomen bag) and a ceremonial washing bowl of water are also essential items.

Each reading participant will need a *haggadah* (Hebrew: *the telling*) for the Seder, which is a Jewish instructional guide that sets the order and commemorates the Israelites' Exodus from Egypt. If the leader feels comfortable, it is possible to use a traditional *haggadah* available through any Jewish bookstore. Many believers, however, prefer to use a **Messianic** Jewish *haggadah*. These contain most of the traditional reading, but are also accompanied by relevant New Covenant passages and explanations. One recourse I recommend to **Messianic** believers is *The Messianic Passover Haggadah* by Lederer Messianic Ministries. It is a quality **Messianic** *haggadah*. Lederer also has a very helpful preparation guide for the Seder.

**Pesach** officially begins after the sun sets on **the fourteenth of Nisan** and **the fifteenth of Nisan** begins. In Judaism, the night precedes the day. Since most of the Jewish communities outside **Isra'el** celebrate the first two nights of **Passover** with a traditional Seder, many **Messianic** believers have different types of Seders each night. Many **Messianic** congregations have a large community Seder the first night of **Pesach** for their members and to reach out to those who need to hear the message of redemption. The second night is usually spent at a smaller, home Seder with family and close friends. But whatever your options, I encourage you to make plans to celebrate this wonderful festival.

The Seder is the focal point of the celebration of **Passover**, yet it is a **seven-day holy day**. The Torah says we are to remove the leaven from our homes and **eat matzah** during this time. For some, this might be the ultimate inconvenience. What? No bagels for **seven days**? Yet, when spiritually appraised, even something like **eating matzah** crackers for a week can be an uplifting experience.

Remember the symbolism. It is not just spring house cleaning; it is to remind us of our need for spiritual cleansing and repentance. Hence, every time we **eat a matzah** sandwich during

**Pesach**, we are reminded of the meaning of **the holy day**. Every time we long for a leavened cookie we are reminded of this great spiritual truth!

It is my prayer that **Pesach** will become a source of joyful celebration as believers experience **Messiah** our **Passover** in an intimate and practical way. **Therefore, celebrate the feast not with old hametz (leaven), the hametz of malice and wickedness, but with unleavened bread - the matzah of sincerity and truth (First Corinthians 5:8).**<sup>428</sup>

*Dear Heavenly **Father**, Thank **You** for not only loving and rescuing those who love **You** from sin's penalty, but **You** also bringing us into **Your** Kingdom (**Colossians 1:13**) and living within us now! **The Spirit of truth, whom the world cannot receive, because it does not behold Him or know Him. You know Him, because He abides with you and will be in you . . . Yeshua answered and said to him: If anyone loves Me, he will keep My word. My Father will love him, and We will come to him and make Our dwelling with him (John 14:17, 23).***

*Praise **You** for **Your** great love that knew how shameful and painful the cross would be, yet **You** went ahead and **suffered** because of the joy set before **You** (**Hebrews 12:2**). I desire to follow **Messiah's** example by scorning the trials and **suffering** that I have on this earth, and look ahead to the joy of worshiping **You** for all eternity! **For I consider the sufferings of this present time not worthy to be compared with the coming glory to be revealed to us. (Romans 8:18).** In the Name of the One who sits at **Your** right hand.  
Amen*