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Hag ha'Matzah (Unleavened Bread)

Leviticus 23: 6-8

Hag ha'Matzah DIG: How does this feast bring to mind the work of Messiah? How would this festival help to maintain a close relationship with YHVH? What is the significance of the matzah being striped and pierced? What would it mean to be cut off from the people?

REFLECT: What does it mean for believers to celebrate this festival today? Is there anything wrong with Gentiles celebrating this festival? How is our fellowship with the Lord broken? How do believers purge the leaven out of our lives today? Who can you tell today?

Hag ha'Matzah was fulfilled by the sinlessness of Yeshua's sacrifice.



Hag ha'Matzah, or the Feast of Unleavened Bread, is recorded in Leviticus: On the fifteenth day of Nisan is the festival of matzah; for seven days you are to eat matzah. On the first day you are to have a holy convocation; don't do any kind of ordinary work. It was considered a Shabbat day. Bring an offering made by fire (on the bronze altar) to ADONAI for seven days. On the seventh day is a holy convocation; do not do any kind of ordinary work (23:6-8). This is the biblical name for this feast found in **Exodus 23:15**, and emphasizes the necessity of the absence of **leaven** (also see **Matthew 26:17**;

Mark 1 and 12; Luke 22:7 and John 1:9). This day started the counting of **the omer** (see [Eb](#) - **Counting the Omer**).

Hag means *pilgrimage*, and whenever this term is used to characterize **a festival**, it refers to an actual pilgrimage, either to a nearby or to a faraway site. The duty to undertake a pilgrimage is known in a number of other religions, most notably in Islam, where the Arabic term *hajaton*, is similar to the Hebrew *hag*, and designates a holy pilgrimage (see a video presentation of **Hag ha'Matzah** by clicking [here](#)).

This means that any festival called **hag** could not be fully celebrated at one's home, but required one's presence at the Temple in Jerusalem. In earlier times, before the Temple was built, the pilgrimage might have brought a family to a nearby altar, but subsequently **Deuteronomy 12** ordained that all sacrificial offerings were to be brought to one, central Tabernacle/Temple, which necessitated a much longer pilgrimage for most **Israelites** (see the commentary on **Deuteronomy Ct** - **The Place to Worship ADONAI**).⁴²⁹ Three times a year, every able-bodied Jewish man was to make the pilgrimage to Jerusalem to celebrate the **three** pilgrimage **feasts** of **Hag ha'Matzah**, **Hag Shavu'ot**, and **Hag Sukkot** (see the commentary on **Exodus Eh** - **Three Times a Year Celebrate a Festival to Me**).

The Biblical Practice: It is quite simple and two things should be noted. First, it is a feast that lasts for seven days immediately following **Passover**. No **leaven** can be eaten for these seven days. **Hag ha'Matzah** is mentioned several times in the TaNaKh and one time in the B'rit Chadashah. **Exodus 12:15-20** introduces **Hag Ha'Matzah** in conjunction with **the Passover** since the two **festivals** come back-to-back. Not only were **the Israelites** forbidden to eat any **leaven**, they were forbidden to have it in their homes. The punishment for anyone who ate **leaven** or failed to clean **it** from their homes was to **be cut off from the community of Isra'el (Exodus 12:19)**. **In rabbinic literature the penalty is called *karet*, or "cutting off."** **In priestly literature, the penalty of *karet* was understood to include a series of related punishments at the hand of God, ranging from the immediate death of an offender, to his premature death at a later time, and even to the death of his descendants. In Mishnah Sanhedrin 9:6 and Mishnah Keritot 1:2, this penalty was characterized as *mitah biydei shamayim*, or "death at the hands of heaven."**⁴³⁰

Dear Heavenly **Father**, It is so comforting to think of **Your** chesed, steadfast love. But that is only one part of your character. Another very important and very crucial part of **Your** character is **Your holiness**. **[Seraphim] One called out to another,**

*and said: **Holy, holy, holy, is ADONAI-Tzva'ot! The whole earth is full of His glory (Isaiah 6:2a and 3). Your perfect love and holiness work together to redeem for Yourself a family who loves and obeys You. He who has My commandments and keeps them is the one who loves Me. He who loves Me will be loved by My Father, and I will love him and reveal Myself to him (John 14:21).** No one can say they believe in **You** and then go off and do whatever they want. Believing in **You** includes loving obedience. **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 14:23).** Your forgiveness is wonderful but it does not give me the right to **sin** any time I feel like it. **You** hate **sin** and have given **Your Holy Ruach** to live inside of me and to convict me of **sin (John 16:8-9)**. I love **You** and delight in following **Your** holy ways in joyful obedience. In **Yeshua's** holy name and power of **His** resurrection. Amen*

Exodus 23:14-15 declares this one of the three pilgrimage festivals. Actually, it is **the Passover** which is the pilgrimage festival but because **the Feast of Unleavened Bread** immediately follows **Pesach**, the Jew would still be in Jerusalem when this feast began.

Deuteronomy 16:3-8 emphasizes the necessity of a total absence of **leaven**.

Second Chronicles 39:23-27 records how King Hezekiah kept **the feast**.

Ezra 6:21-22 states that **it** was also kept in the days of **Ezra**.

Ezeki'el 45:21-24 prophesies that it will be observed during the Messianic Kingdom. Not all the festivals will be observed during the thousand-year reign of **Messiah**, but this one will. It is mentioned only one place in the B'rit Chadashah where **Yeshua** observed it: **Now the Passover and the Festival of Unleavened Bread were only two days away, and the chief priests and the Torah-teachers were scheming to find a way to arrest Yeshua and kill him (Mark 14:1).**

Pesach, Hag ha'Matzah, and Resheet came rapidly, three days in a row; Friday, Saturday and Sunday. All three point to **Yeshua Messiah**. **Pesach points to the death of the Lamb of God; Hag ha'Matzah 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'Matzah** had become the same in accordance with the Pharisaic view.⁴³¹ **On the fifteenth day of the same month is the festival of matzah** (another name for **Pesach**). **For seven days you are to eat matzah (Leviticus 23:6).**

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

Pesach (or the Festival of Matzah)

Day 1 Shabbat

Hag ha'Matzah (Unleavened Bread)

Day 2 Shabbat

Resheet (First Fruits)

Day 3 Shabbat

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 Fc - 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).** It is considered a Shabbat. 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'Matzah**, or **the Festival of Matzah**, 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: Two things should be noted. First, it follows the biblical practice of not eating **leaven** for **seven days**. There are specially prepared foods

made for this occasion containing **unleavened bread**. The **first, sixth, and seventh days** were considered more **holy**, and they would only cook as much food as was needed, not more. Secondly, there is a liturgy that is followed with specific scriptures to read each day.

The first day of Unleavened Bread (more **holy**), the full Hallel is said.
Leviticus 22:26-23:44 that deals with **seven holy** seasons
Numbers 28:16-25 that deals with the sacrifices
Second Kings 23:1-9 and **21-25** that deals with **the Passover** of Josiah

The second day of Unleavened Bread, the first intermediate day
Exodus 13:1-16 that deals with the laws of **unleavened bread** and the first born
Numbers 28:19-15
and a shortened version of the Hallel is said.

The third day of Unleavened Bread, the second intermediate day
Numbers 28:19-25
and a shortened version of the Hallel is said.

The fourth day of Unleavened Bread, the third intermediate day
Numbers 28:19-25
and a shortened version of the Hallel is said.

The fifth day of Unleavened Bread, the fourth intermediate day
Numbers 28:19-25
and a shortened version of the Hallel is said.

The sixth day of Unleavened Bread (more **holy**)
Exodus 13:17-15:26, the crossing of the Sea of Reeds
Numbers 28:19-25
Second Samuel 22:1-51 (see my commentary on [the Life of David Eh - David's Song of Praise](#)),
and a shorter version of the Hallel is said.

The seventh day of Unleavened Bread (more **holy**)
Deuteronomy 15:19-16:17
Numbers 28:19-25
Isaiah 10:32-12:6
and a shorter version of the Hallel is said.⁴³²

The Messianic Significance: Whenever the word **leaven** is used symbolically in Scripture it is *always* a symbol for **sin**. That is why **God** would not even allow this symbol of **sin** to be eaten by the Jewish people during this feast or to have it in their homes or to have it anywhere in the land of **Isra'el**. Only **Passover matzah** that is **striped** and **pierced** is considered kosher (see the commentary on **Isaiah Jb - Yet We Considered Him Punished and Stricken by God**).

The Feast of Unleavened Bread is fulfilled by the offering of **the sinless blood** of **Messiah**. When **Yeshua** was offered up as a sacrifice and shed **His sinless blood**, the moment **His blood** was spilled outside **His** body, **the Feast of Unleavened Bread** was fulfilled. **Hebrews 9:11-10:18** emphasizes the sacrifice of the innocent, **sinless blood**. The point here is that **the blood** of goats and bulls could never take away **sin**, but required human **blood** that was innocent. Only one **Person** had **sinless**, innocent **blood** - **Yeshua Messiah**.

This **blood** needs to be applied and sprinkled somewhere. It could not be sprinkled in **the Most Holy Place** of earthly Tabernacle, or the Temple, for that was merely a copy of the original. The writer to the **Hebrews** says it was necessary to cleanse the heavenly Tabernacle. As a result, at some point, **Yeshua** sprinkled the heavenly Tabernacle for the purpose of cleansing it. Whereas the earthly Tabernacle could be cleansed with **the blood** of animals, the heavenly tabernacle required something more - **sinless** human **blood**. This accomplished three things. First, the heavenly Tabernacle was cleansed; secondly, the **sins** of the Righteous of the TaNaKh (the Old Testament saints) were removed before leading the captives to heaven (**Ephesians 4:8**); thirdly, the **sins** of the New Covenant believers are forgiven and removed permanently upon faith in **Yeshua**, we are justified.

Another implication of **the Feast of Unleavened Bread** is in **First Corinthians 5:6-8** where it is stated that believers are to keep **it** by a **holy** walk. Believers should purge out the **leaven** in our lives because **Messiah**, our **Passover Lamb**, was sacrificed for us. Again, **leaven** is a symbol of **sin**. Even believer's **sin**, this **leaven** in our lives, must be purged. When a person accepts **Jesus** as his or her **Passover** sacrifice in fulfillment of **the First Feast**, and is at the moment **born again (John 3:3)**, he or she experiences the regenerating work of **the Ruach Ha'Kodesh (the Spirit of God)**, is baptized into the body of **Messiah**, and placed into the family of **God** (see my commentary on **The Life of Christ Bw - What God Does For Us at the Moment of Faith**). Once a believer is in the family he or she can never be disowned. However, fellowship within the family can be broken by **sin** or by **leaven** in the believer's life. The means of purging out the **leaven** is

confession: **If we confess our sins, He is faithful to forgive us our sins and purify us from all unrighteousness (First John 1:9b).** By means of confession we can purge our lives of **leaven**. In that way, we can keep **the Feast of Unleavened Bread** in its spiritual sense.⁴³³

The Feast of the Passover was fulfilled by the death of the Messiah; the Feast of the Unleavened Bread was fulfilled by the sinlessness of His sacrifice.

A Practical Guide for Believers in Messiah: Those who desire to enter into the full celebration of **the holy day** begin before the arrival of the Seder by cleansing all **leaven** from the house. Floors are swept, vacuumed and mopped. Cupboards are cleared of **leavened** products and cleaned. Pots and dishes are thoroughly washed to remove any possible fragments of **leaven**. The spirit of the Torah is to remove all **leaven** from our houses (**Exodus 12:19-20**). This is also symbolic of the spiritual cleansing of our hearts (**First Corinthians 5:6:8**).

My suggestion, in that spirit of freedom, is to adapt the preparation to a comfortable degree. For some, this may mean all of the above cleaning. For others, it may mean a cursory cleaning to merely symbolize the truth of **the Passover**. Let everyone be convinced in his or her own mind (**Romans 14**).

After the general cleaning in the first weeks of **Nisan**, the attention becomes more focused as the day of **Pesach** approaches. After sundown on **the fourteenth of Nisan**, a special ceremony called *bedikat khameytz* (the search for **the leaven**) takes place in the home. The last little bits of **leaven** are found and removed. The details are intriguing. Since the house has previously been cleaned, the leader of the house must purposely hide some **leaven** (bits of cookie or bread) in various places. Then the leader takes a feather, a wooden spoon and a lighted candle, and the family begins searching for **the final leaven**. This can be a great time to get children or grandchildren involved because it's a game like hide-and-seek.

The spiritual lessons are quite striking, however. **The leaven (sin)** must be cleansed from our dwellings (and **hearts**). The method itself is informative. The light of the candle (**the Word of God**) illuminates our **sin**, **"I have hidden Your Word in my heart that I might not sin against You"** (**Psalms 119:11**). **The leaven** is scooped onto the wooden spoon for removal (like the wooden cross of **the Messiah**). The following morning, this last bit of collected **leaven** is burnt outside the home (in a can or bag) to symbolize its final destruction. This



symbolizes **Messiah's** destroying **sin outside the camp (Hebrews 13:12-13)**, and making freedom from the power of **sin** available for all who believe.

On the day of **the fourteenth of Nisan**, as the first day of **Passover** approaches, final preparations for the Seder must be made. By now, the preliminary arrangements, such as shopping for "Kosher for **Passover**" products (**Matzah**, wine or grape juice, and any other **unleavened** food substitutes) should be completed. These customs may seem strange to the uninitiated, but the deep spiritual truth will be evident to discerning believers in **Yeshua**. Even something as unusual as the search for **the leaven** can become a meaningful ceremony for those whose hearts have been cleansed by **the Messiah**.⁴³⁴