

## CHAPTER 1

# PASSOVER: THE PATH TO LIFE BEGINS

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*Torah has in it a shadow of the good things to come...*

—Apostle Paul (CJB)

**P**ASSOVER WAS A first step down a path that saved Israel from mental and physical bondage under Pharaoh and from inescapable sin. Walking down that path began a journey toward God and His covenants of freedom and life. Passover continues to be a path leading to freedom and salvation for all God's people today.

Passover is the inseparable older brother to the Feast of Unleavened Bread, for with the two of them God brought Israel out of Egypt, and through their tutorship, God continues to teach sinners worldwide the path to freedom from Satan's clever deceptions, which lead to bondage and sin. The inadequate laws of society bring no lasting justice or peace. Through

the centuries, false religions have created confusion, blindness, and hopelessness among people all over the world. But God's holy festivals serve as a lighted path out of confusion to a meaningful life of hope and understanding. God's laws and feasts are a sensible part of a free life through Yeshua and are a gift to us all from our loving Father God.

Combining the sequential details of Israel's first life-saving Passover in Egypt with the truths revealed from Jesus and His disciples' Passover, reveals much. Together they paint an encouraging picture that reflects God's plan of salvation for both Jew and Gentile. We'll find in these Passover passages the instructive evidences on how and when to keep this most ancient yet forward-looking of God's holy feasts.

The freedom of God's truth protects us from being robbed or misled by blind guides (John 8:32), and rewards us with pearls of great price. As gold is better than a glittery facade and true riches better than the best of lies, so God's enlightening plan revealed through His feasts will enrich your soul and give you a new understanding and hope exceeding that of this world's religious holidays. The meanings behind God's festivals are a true wealth from heaven that will not leave you down—a gift of priceless pearls given by God to those who value them.

As God calls us, He enlightens us with His precious truth so that we may be comforted instead of hopeless, wise instead of foolish, healed instead of sick, visionary instead of blind, and thus able to teach

others from God's Word instead of being misled, weak in understanding, and feeble (Heb. 5:12).

We can glean incredibly meaningful and positive lessons through keeping God's holy feasts at their *appointed times* (Lev. 23:4) just like Jesus and His apostles did. It all begins with Passover.

Paul took time to teach the Gentile converts to the church of God at Colossae about God's holy days. He told them to let “**no one**” judge them regarding their keeping of God's holy Sabbaths, His holy feasts, or the new moons (Col. 2:16). Paul went on to explain why. It was because God's festivals, new moons, and Sabbaths were made in the image of the Son of God—like an image or shadow cast by the actions of His body. Please understand the clear words of Paul in this regard: “So let no one judge you in food or in drink, or regarding a festival or a new moon or Sabbaths, which are a shadow of things to come, but the substance [body, KJV] is of Christ” (Col. 2:16–17).

The apostle Paul likened God's festivals, new moons, and Sabbaths to an image or shadow of the body of our Messiah, picturing God's plan of salvation and pointing to our inspiring future in the kingdom of God! What a meaningful and beautiful truth. Let's explore this enlightenment briefly in summary before our deeper, rewarding journey into Passover, a type of Christ, the Lamb of God, who was slain for you and me.

Each of God's holy feasts is a reflecting foreshadowing of things to come. Like a detailed topographical map, they type and point to Messiah and the kingdom of God.

They are as much (or more) for the Spirit-led “Israel of God” (Gal. 6:16) in the new covenant era as they were for Israel physically. The most important circumcision is that of the heart through baptism (Col. 2:11–12).

The first of God’s festivals, revealed after the weekly Sabbath, to teach His plan of salvation for Israel, and all of humankind is Passover. When Passover is understood, we no longer wonder why Paul said it was a reflection or shadow of our Lord’s body, for Yeshua gave His very body to be our saving Passover sacrifice as the Lamb of God (John 1:29; Rev. 5:6).

Part of that first Passover included being loosed from religious and physical bondage in Egypt and given freedom within God’s law of love, just as Jesus does for anyone who comes in faith to Him today! Through the blood of our Passover Lamb, we are freed from the bondage of the sin and slavery to Satan’s deceptions. This is the most basic of truths! God’s plan of redemption is clearly portrayed through each and every one of His commanded holy feast days. Each one is like a satchet of gold coins that buys our passage from dark obscurity into His lighted path, and this path of salvation begins with Christ our Passover!

The second of God’s annual holy feasts is the Days (Feast) of Unleavened Bread (Ex.12:15–20; Lev. 23:5–6). Passover is closely connected to the Feast of Unleavened Bread, as the Feast of Unleavened Bread is tied to the Feast of Firstfruits or Pentecost. Let’s begin an exciting journey of truth beginning with Israel’s exodus out of Egypt. God recorded these enlightening events for our admonition in these latter days (1 Cor. 10:11).

Israel followed God out of Egypt in haste and departed before their bread dough was leavened (Ex. 12:34). The bread and dough they had on Passover day was also unleavened.

Paul taught us, like a pinch of leavening spreads through the whole lump (Gal. 5:9), so a little sin spreads until it infects all our lives and communities. Paul understood the importance of teaching the Gentile church at Corinth the vital lessons learned by keeping the Feast of Unleavened Bread, and putting away the leaven of sin. God's feasts are wonderful tutors from Him. Notice what Paul said to the Gentiles at Corinth:

*As the ore of fine gold must be sought and dug up to reward the miner, so the Words of the Lord are like a rich deep vein that is never exhausted—but it only rewards those who seek saying, “I do not have enough”—for truth and gold are found only through diligence.*

Your glorying is not good. Do you not know that a little leaven leavens the whole lump? Therefore purge out the old leaven, that you may be a new lump, since you truly are unleavened. For indeed Christ, our Passover, was sacrificed for us. *Therefore let us keep the feast*, not with old leaven, nor with the leaven of malice and wickedness, but with the unleavened bread of sincerity and truth.

—1 Cor. 5:6–8, emphasis added

As we turn to God and come out of “Egypt,” a type of this world, we must not bring the sin (symbolized by leavening) out of Egypt with us. We leave sinful practices and their influence behind. Otherwise we become leavened again and return to the bondage of sin, like a man returning to prison and a dog to its vomit.

Yeshua, our Passover sacrifice, was humbled and pierced like the piercings that keep unleavened matzos small and flat. Unleavened bread represents a humble, unpretentious, and sinless lifestyle, like the example given by our Messiah. He was unleavened, sinless, and He was beaten down and pierced for us (Ps. 22:13–19; John 19:34–37). But He was not conquered by sin, and neither will we be, through Yeshua our Passover. We are justified by His blood but saved by His life as we live anew with and through Him (Rom. 5:10). These are lessons taught by the Feast of Unleavened Bread. We too are told to put out the leavening (sin) from our lives and to eat unleavened bread during the Feast of Unleavened Bread (1 Cor. 6; Ex. 12:14–24). Unleavened bread is a type of the body of Yeshua, the Anointed One. This feast teaches us that we must “eat” Christ—the unleavened Bread of Life—daily (1 Cor. 10:1–4, 16; John 6:54–56). Not only do we see Christ and His disciples keeping the Feast of Unleavened Bread, but Paul also continued keeping the feasts of the Lord and even taught the Gentile churches to keep them as he traveled on his evangelistic tours (Acts 20:6; 1 Cor. 5:8, 1 Cor. 11:28). During the seven Days of Unleavened Bread we are to put all leavening out of our homes

and eat only unleavened bread (Ex.12:19). This is because leavening pictures lawlessness and hypocrisy (Mark 8:15; Luke 12:1). Paul wrote 1 Corinthians for the church of Corinth to read during the Feast of Unleavened Bread. In this letter Paul used leavening as a type of vanity, like being vainly “puffed up” (1 Cor. 4:6; 5:2; 13:4; 1 Tim. 3:6). Conversely, unleavened bread symbolizes a humble and repentant heart toward God and God uses it to symbolize coming out of sin to live a new life God’s way (Matt.16:6–12; 1 Cor. 5:8). Paul told the Corinthians to keep the Feast of Unleavened Bread as part of becoming a new creation in Yeshua our Passover: “Therefore let us keep the feast, not with old leaven, nor with the leaven of malice and wickedness, but with the unleavened bread of sincerity and truth” (1 Cor. 5:8).

I find it interesting that Paul both commanded the Gentiles he served to “keep the feast” of Unleavened Bread and taught them that leaven is symbolic of malice and wickedness, while unleavened bread symbolizes sincerity and truth. Paul kept and taught all of God’s holy days to the Gentile churches he served. Sadly, most of today’s churches that look up to Paul seem to have rejected his teachings on this subject. God’s truly enlightened people have always understood the symbolism of these days as annual reminders to separate from the sins of the world, while walking a godly path that brings us joy as we draw closer to God. These beautiful festivals are loaded full of golden gems of truth and they light a joyful path toward God.

In Ezra 6:21–22 we read,

Then the children of Israel who had returned from the captivity ate together with all who had *separated themselves from the filth of the nations of the land in order to seek the LORD* God of Israel. And they kept the *Feast of Unleavened Bread* seven days with joy; for the LORD made them joyful.

—emphasis added

God tells His people to come out of the world to avoid its punishments—right to the very end (Rev. 18:4).

Paul taught the Gentile converts about the New Moons, Sabbaths, and holy festivals because they teach valuable lessons and foreshadow the reality in Christ. The holy feasts are reflections cast from His body (Col. 2:17). Just like the body of Messiah on the cross brings hope, so these holy feasts and statutes of God depict, explain, and picture God’s plan of how He is saving humankind. Each Sabbath and holy day fits together to form a revealing picture of God’s plan. This is why Paul both kept and taught the weekly Sabbath and each of God’s seven annual Sabbaths and feasts to each of the Gentile churches. Further, he told them not to let anyone judge them about continuing to keep them: “So let no one judge you in food or in drink, or regarding a festival or a new moon or Sabbaths, which are a shadow of things to come, but the substance [body, KJV] is of Christ” (Col. 2:16–17).

Christ is the body that casts the shadow or reflection, and you can learn a lot from a shadow. For example, you can determine the source and direction of the light and body that is creating the shadow. Also, a shadow reveals the direction to and details about the body that is casting the shadow.

Remember, when Israel left Egypt, they were already unleavened—their bread dough was unleavened that they carried with them out of Egypt (Ex. 12:34). This is a type of taking Yeshua, the sinless Bread of Life, with us as we come out of the world and put away sin. Again, this makes Passover also a day we are to eat unleavened bread. If one reads God’s Word one will see that the Feast of Unleavened Bread is seven days in length (Ex. 12:15–17; Deut. 16:8; 2 Chron. 35:17), and God commands us to be unleavened for seven full days of the feast. However, God actually commands us to eat unleavened bread for *eight days!* Notice: “In the first month, on the *fourteenth day* of the month at evening, you shall eat unleavened bread, until the *twenty-first day* of the month at evening” (Ex. 12:18, emphasis added).

A simple count here, beginning with Abib 14 and continuing to the twenty-first, reveals eight days that we are to eat unleavened bread. Since the Passover is the fourteenth, it is also a day to eat unleavened bread! Counting from Exodus 12 quoted above we have the following:

Abib 14—day 1

Abib 15—day 2

Abib 16—day 3

Abib 17—day 4

Abib 18—day 5

Abib 19—day 6

Abib 20—day 7

Abib 21—day 8

We are to remain unleavened for seven days, but eat unleavened bread for eight days. That is because we are told to put out the leavening on Passover day—the day we begin eating unleavened bread. Then we will be unleavened for the next seven complete days. We are not to put out the leavening ahead of time; otherwise we misappropriate the meaningful lessons to the wrong day.

While the context of the next verse speaks of being unleavened for seven days, verse 18 speaks of eating unleavened bread for eight days. This is because Passover and the Feast of Unleavened Bread are intrinsically tied together, even though they are two separate feasts. This is not unlike the seven-day fall Feast of Tabernacles and the Last Great Day being two separate feasts that are kept together as one eight-day festival (Lev. 23:34–36; John 7:11–14, 37).

Why are we to eat unleavened bread on Passover as well as on the Feast of Unleavened Bread? Why start eating unleavened bread for eight days, seemingly one day early? Consider: Since Christ is our Passover whom we must also follow out of Egypt (the sinful ways of this world), we each need His guidance and strength to be able to leave “Egypt” behind!

Eating unleavened bread each day of God's feast is even more important than putting out leavening—just as “eating” and following Christ daily is more important than trying to conquer sin on our own.

Just as God created circumstances so that Israel ate unleavened bread on Passover day and then took their unleavened bread dough out of Egypt with them, so we too need the aid of Yeshua the Christ to redeem us, and then we need to follow Him out of this world toward our Father and God. Indeed, the lamb symbolizes the body of Christ, and He is the unleavened Living Bread, both of which God has given to redeem us from bondage.

Paul was right: Passover and the Feast of Unleavened Bread are shadows or images cast by the very body of our Lord Jesus (Col. 2:16–17). Christ is the Lamb of God who gave His life and body for us. How much more clear a reflection could we ask for?

One additional meaningful lesson is found through examining the death of all the firstborn. Let's look at God's revealing words about Passover, which Paul said were recorded for us on “whom the ends of the ages have come” (1 Cor. 10:11).

Exodus 12:29 says, “And it came to pass at midnight that the LORD struck all the firstborn in the land of Egypt, from the firstborn of Pharaoh who sat on his throne to the firstborn of the captive who was in the dungeon, and all the firstborn of livestock.”

As mentioned, Egypt symbolizes this world bound in its senseless sin and held captive against

its will by Satan, who is symbolized by a lying pharaoh (2 Tim. 2:26).

*Eating unleavened bread each day of God's feast is even more important than putting out leavening, just as "eating" and following Christ daily is more important than trying to conquer sin on our own!*

The lamb selected for Passover had to be without fault, for it was a type (symbol) of the true Lamb of God whose blood was spilled for the sins of all humankind (John 1:29; Rev. 13:8). The price of freedom from bondage and sin was the same as the penalty for sin: the death

of the firstborn. Just as each Egyptian household suffered the death of its firstborn, so the house of our heavenly Father also had One dead in it! The house of the Most High Father suffered the loss of His Firstborn Son, who willingly died as the sacrificial Lamb to free us all. Hallelujah! Let all the earth express grateful praise and bless God, for we are cleansed by Messiah's blood, reconciled by His death, and saved by His life (Rom. 5:10).