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**SPIRIT OF LIFE MINISTRIES INTERNATIONAL
MINISTRY SCHOOL
SESSION 44 BIBLICAL FEASTS PART 1
PASSEVER, UNLEAVENED BREAD AND FIRSTFRUITS**

THE FEASTS OF PASSEVER AND UNLEAVENED BREAD

Passover and Unleavened Bread are also known as *Pesach* (Passover) and ***Hag HaMatzot (Unleavened Bread)***

Passover is observed on the 14th day of Nisan which occurs either in March or April. The scriptural basis comes from Leviticus 23:4-5 and Exodus 12:1-4. The feast of Unleavened Bread is celebrated on the 15th through 21st days of Nisan either in March or April. The Biblical basis for it is Leviticus 23:6-8 and Exodus 12:15-20.

Passover and Unleavened Bread commemorate God's deliverance of Israel out of Egypt. Pesach (Pr PAY-sahk) means to "pass over." The Passover meal, seder (Pr Say-der), commemorates the Israelites' deliverance from slavery in Egypt. The Lord sent Moses to lead the children of Israel from Egypt to the Promised Land. When first confronted by Moses, Pharaoh refused to let the people go. After sending nine plagues, the LORD said the firstborn males of every house would die unless the doorframe of that house was covered with the blood of a perfect lamb. That night, the LORD "passed over" the homes with blood on the doorframes. The tenth plague brought death to the firstborn sons of Egypt, even taking the life of Pharaoh's own son. Finally, Pharaoh let the children of Israel go. Passover was to be a lasting ordinance for generations to come. In Leviticus, the LORD said that on the fourteenth day of the first month (of the religious new year) the LORD'S Passover was to begin at twilight.

In Leviticus 23, Hag HaMatzot (PR Hawg Hah MAHT zot) or Hag HaMatzah, also known as the **"Feast of Unleavened Bread,"** is mentioned as a separate feast on the fifteenth day of the same month as Passover. Today, however, the feasts of Pesach, Unleavened Bread, and First Fruits have all been incorporated into the Passover, and reference to Passover means all **three feasts**. Passover is celebrated for eight days, Nisan 14-21. The LORD said that for seven days the children of Israel must eat unleavened bread. This bread, made in a hurry without yeast represents how the LORD brought the Israelites out of Egypt in haste.

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In scripture, leaven also represents sin. Orthodox Jews believe that not only is eating bread with leaven unlawful during the Feast of Unleavened Bread, but even having leaven present in one's house or apartment is forbidden. Today, cleansing the house before Passover is often a symbolic search to remove any hypocrisy or wickedness. Unleavened Bread is one of the three pilgrimage feasts when all Jewish males were required to go to Jerusalem to "appear before the LORD." (Deuteronomy 16:16).

Jesus (Jeshua) and the Passover: Jesus ate the Passover with his disciples, saying that he had eagerly desired to eat this Passover with them before he suffered and that he would not eat it again until the kingdom of God comes. (Luke 22:7-16)
After the Passover meal, they sang a hymn and went to the Mount of Olives. (Matt 26:30) The hymn sung during the Passover is the **Hallel** which includes Psalm 118:22. "The stone the builders rejected has become the cornerstone." Jesus is the cornerstone that the builders rejected. (Matthew 21:42, I Peter 2:7) Jesus was crucified on Passover Day as the **"Lamb of God who takes away the sin of the world."** (John 1:29) The Lord's Supper is a remembrance of his sacrifice as the perfect Passover Lamb and the fulfillment of the new covenant between God and man. (Luke 22:20; I Cor 5:7; Eph. 2:11-13) Prophecy of the sacrifice is found in Psalm 22. The Hebrew prophet Isaiah also spoke of the sufferings and sacrifice of the Messiah, and how that sacrifice would be the ultimate atonement for the sins of God's people. (Isaiah 53)

Matzot is plural for matzah. Unleavened bread (matzah) is a symbol of Passover. Leaven represents sin. (Luke 12:1; I Corinthians 5:8) Matzah stands for "without sin" and is a picture of Jesus, the only human without sin. Jesus said the "bread of God is he who comes down from heaven and gives life to the world" and that he (Jesus) is the "bread of life," the bread that came down from heaven," the living bread" which a man may eat and not die. (John 6:32; 35, 41, 48)

While leaven is a symbol of sin, the Messiah is "unleavened" or sinless. He conquers the grave with his resurrection because he is not a sinner under the curse of death. Jesus was scourged and pierced at his crucifixion. As the prophet Isaiah proclaims, "By his stripes we are healed." (Isaiah 53:5) All of the festivals instituted by God, including Passover and unleavened Bread, are "shadows of things to come." (Colossians 2:17)

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Facts about Passover and Unleavened bread

1. Jesus' parents traveled to Jerusalem yearly to celebrate Passover. At age 12, Jesus went with them (Luke 2:41-50)
2. The Passover lamb must be a perfect male with no spot or blemish (Exodus 12:5)
3. The cup of the Lord's Supper is the third cup of the Passover seder, the cup of redemption. The bread of the Lord's supper is the afikomen. It is the matzah that is broken, hidden, found, bought for a price, and then eaten to end the meal. Afikomen means "I came" in Greek.
4. A hymn is usually sung at the end of the Passover service, as was the case with Jesus and his disciples (Matthew 26:30)

Passover is found in the Old Testament in Ex. 12; Numbers 9; 28-16-25; II Chronicles 35:1-19; Ezra 6:19; Ezekiel 45:21.

Passover is found in the New Testament in: Matthew 26; Mark 14; Luke 22; John 6:4, 11, 13; 19; and I Corinthians 5:7

FIRSTFRUITS

Offerings are given for the spring barley harvest

The Feast of Firstfruits is on Nisan 16 which is in March or April

On Yom HaBikkurin (Pr Yome Hah-Bee-Koo-REEM) people offered the first ripe sheaf (firstfruits) of barley to the LORD as an act of dedicating the harvest to him. On Passover, a marked sheaf of grain was bundled and left standing in the field. On the next day, the first day of Unleavened Bread, the sheaf was cut and prepared for the offering on the third day. On this third day, Yom HaBikkurim, the priest waved the sheaf

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before the LORD. Counting the days (omer) then begins and continues until the day after the seventh Sabbath, the 50th day, which is called **Shavuot or Pentecost** (the next feast on the calendar).

Jewish people rarely celebrate Yom HaBikkurim today, but it has great significance for followers of Jesus as the most important day of the year, the day of Jesus' resurrection. Yom HaBikkurim is a picture of Jesus' resurrection. Jesus rose on the third day of Passover season, Nisan 16, the day of Firstfruits. That event gave new meaning to this agricultural holiday. The apostle Paul, a Jewish believer and rabbi, wrote, ***"But now is Christ risen from the dead, and become the firstfruits of them that have slept. Since by man came death, by man came also the resurrection of the dead. But every man in his own order: Christ the firstfruits; afterward they that are Christ's at his coming."*** (I Corinthians 15:20, 22, 23,) Jesus' resurrection is the promise of the future resurrection of the believer's body from the grave. (John 5:28, 29)

Although most believers in Jesus have never heard of Yom HaBikkurim, they celebrate it as Resurrection Day, or as the world calls it Easter.

Biblical Events that happened on YomHaBikkurim (Firstfruits):

1. The manna, which God provided from heaven as food for the Israelites while they wandered in the wilderness, stopped after they crossed the Jordan River into the Promised Land. (Joshua 5:10-12)
2. Queen Esther risked her life to save the Jewish people from annihilation (Esther 3:13-5:7)
3. Jesus rose from the dead on the third day. (Luke 24:44-47)
4. Since the Temple was destroyed in 70 AD, Firstfruits sacrifices and offerings are no longer offered on this day. Today, Jews use this date to begin the counting of the days (omer). On the 33rd day of counting the omer, a minor rabbinical holiday called Lag B'Omer is celebrated where campfires are built and people roast potatoes and sing songs.

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A PASSOVER SEDER

Remembering Jesus as the Passover Lamb

Candle Lighting:

Women or older girls light the candles, then reads this blessing:

“Blessed are You, O LORD our God, Ruler of the universe, who has set us apart by His Word, and in whose name we light the festival lights.”

Cup of Blessing:

The Leader holds the glass of juice and explains that this is the first of four cups, the cup of blessing. Everyone lifts his/her cup and reads the blessing:

“Blessed are You, O LORD our God, Ruler of the universe, who creates the fruit of the vine.”

All drink a little

Parsley:

The leader holds up parsley and says:

“This parsley represents life, which God gives us.

The he holds up the bowl of salt and water and says: This salt water represents the tears of the Israelites because of the suffering they endured as slaves in Egypt. Blessed are You, O LORD our God, Ruler of the universe, who creates the fruit of the earth.”

Everyone takes a piece of parsley, dips it in salt water, and eats it.

The Four Questions:

The leader says: We celebrate Passover to remember how God brought the Jewish people out of Egypt, and we review the story by asking and answering four questions.

A child reads the following:

On all other nights we eat bread or matzah. On this night why do we eat only matzah?

On all other nights we eat all kinds of vegetables. On this night, why do we eat only bitter herbs?

On all other nights we do not dip our vegetables. On this night, why do we dip them twice?

On all other nights we eat sitting or reclining. On this night, why do we eat only reclining?

Leader says: On Passover we eat only matzah, flat bread without yeast, because the Israelites didn't have time for their bread dough to rise when they left Egypt. Leaven, or yeast, symbolizes sin, which we want to get rid of.

He holds up the plate with three matzah, takes out the middle piece, breaks it in two, wraps half in a napkin, and says:

This bread of affliction reminds us that Jesus suffered for our sins.
He then reads Isaiah 53:5 and Zechariah 12:10 out loud.

He then says, I'm going to hide this broken piece of matzah, called the afikomen, which means dessert. Later the children will look for it. The one who finds it gets a prize.

Children close their eyes while someone hides the afikomen. Then the leader takes a piece of the other half of broken matzah and passes the rest around for everyone to take a piece. All eat.

Leader says: On Passover we eat bitter herbs to remember the Israelites' terrible life of slavery in Egypt.

Everyone takes a piece of matzah, scoops horseradish onto it, and eats.

The Leader says: On Passover we dip vegetables twice. We have already dipped parsley in salt water to remind us of the Israelites' tears. But we also dip our vegetables in sweet kharoset (pr. Khah-roh-set). This reminds us that even in slavery, the Israelites had hope in God.

Everyone takes another piece of matzah, scoops kharoset (a paste made of several or all of: raisins, figs, dates, walnuts, apple, honey cinnamon and grape juice) and horseradish onto it, and eats.

Leader says: On Passover we recline, or sit comfortably, as free people. In contrast, the Israelites at the first Passover meal standing, ready to leave any minute.

The Passover Story

The leader summarizes the story of Passover from Exodus 1-7

Cup of Plagues:

Leader says: Pharaoh refused to let the Israelites go, so God sent ten plagues to change his mind. Now we have the second cup, the cup of plagues. Instead of drinking it, we're going to name the plagues, dip our fingers in our cups, and drop juice on our plates each time a plague is named.

Everyone does so, reading each plague three times: blood, frogs, lice, flies, cattle disease, boils, hail, locusts, darkness, and death of the firstborn.

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Passover Lamb:

The leader holds up the bone and says: this bone reminds us of the Passover lamb that was killed. He briefly summarizes Exodus 11-12.

Then he says: Jewish people can no longer sacrifice a lamb on Passover because the Temple was destroyed. But, no one needs to do this because Jesus died as the Passover Lamb to take the punishment for our sin.

The leader holds up the egg and says: The egg symbolizes mourning and reminds us that the Temple was destroyed, a sad event for the Jewish People.

Dayenu (Pr. die-ay-noo):

The Leader says: At this point in the seder, people sing “Dayenu,” a Hebrew song about how good God is to His people.

Everyone drinks some of the second cup, the cup of plagues.

Passover Meal:

Eat the dinner: (possibly roasted lamb or glazed chicken, gefilte fish (poached mixture of ground deboned fish), matzah ball soup, stuffing, potatoes, vegetables, fruit, and sponge cake)

Afikomen:

Children look for the matzah that was hidden earlier, and the leader gives the one that finds it a little money. (a dollar)

Leader says: When Jesus celebrated the last Passover before his death, he took the afikomen, broke it, and blessed it.

All read: Blessed are You, O LORD, our God, Ruler of the universe, who brings forth bread from the earth.

Leader says: Then Jesus gave some of the matzah to his disciples and said, "This is my body given for you: do this in remembrance of me" (Luke 22:19). He breaks off a piece of the afikomen and passes it around for everyone to take a piece.

All eat.

Cup of Redemption:

Leader says: Then Jesus took the third cup, the cup of redemption, and said the blessing.

All read: Blessed are You, O LORD our God, Ruler of the universe, who creates the fruit of the vine.

Leader says: Then Jesus said, "This cup is the new covenant in my blood, which is poured out for you." (Luke 22:20)
Everyone drinks some juice

Cup of Elijah:

Leader holds up the cup from Elijah's place and says: This cup is for Elijah the Prophet, who will come before Messiah returns.

Read Malachi 4:5. Jewish people look for Elijah on Passover, so they set a place for him at the table and open the door to welcome him. A volunteer opens the door.

Cup of Praise

Leader says: After Jesus and his disciples ate the afikomen and drank the third cup, Matthew 26:30 says they sang a hymn, probably Psalm 136.

All read Psalm 136 together.

The Leader lifts his cup and says: The last cup is the cup of praise. Let's read the blessing together: Blessed are You, O LORD our God, Ruler of the universe, who creates the fruit of the vine.

All drink.

Leader says: The seder ends with a traditional wish for celebrating the next Passover: Saying: Next year in Jerusalem!

Preparation for the Seder

The Passover celebration remembers Jesus as the Passover Lamb. Make ready the following things:

Kharoset: Mix 1 finely chopped apple, ½ cup of chopped walnuts, ½ tsp of cinnamon, 1 tsp of honey, and 1 tsp of grape juice. (This mixture represents the mortar used to set bricks during slavery in Egypt.)

Set places for everyone, plus an extra place for Elijah. It is believed that Elijah will be sent to announce the coming of the Messiah.

On each table put the following:

A large plate with:

1. A hardboiled egg (boiled in dark tea or coffee)
2. Parsley springs
3. Lamb or chicken bone
4. Kharoset
5. Horseradish (bitter herbs)

Two spoons for the kharoset and horseradish

A bowl of salt water

Bottle or two of grape juice

Plate of matzah

At the Leader's place put the following:

Plate with three whole matzah stacked with opened napkins

Extra napkin

Dollar Bill or small amount of money

Two candles in candlesticks and matches