

Prophetic Feasts of Israel - Spring Feasts

Rich Jacobs, M.D.

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I. Passover (Pesach) - (*Exodus 12; Leviticus 23:5*)

A. Commemorated the deliverance of Israel from over 400 years of bondage in Egypt.

1. Ancient feast that is over 3500 years old
2. On the 10th day of the 1st month (Nisan), each family to select a perfect, year-old male lamb, keep it until the 14th day, but kill it publicly that evening. The blood of the lamb was to be applied to the doorposts of the house as a sign of their faith in the Lord as their Savior. The Death Angel passed over the houses that obeyed this command. (*Exodus 12*)

B. Passover dinner

1. Three (3) symbolic foods required by God to be eaten (*Exodus 12:8*)
 - a) the lamb - defect-free, male - symbolizing the innocence of Christ
 - b) *matzah* (unleavened bread) - symbolizing free from guilt and sin
 - c) bitter herbs - symbolizing the suffering Savior
2. Those who could not observe Passover for reasons beyond their control (*i.e.* touched a dead body, on a long journey, *etc.*), could celebrate it on the 14th of the second month
3. Modern elements of the Passover dinner, or *Seder* (pronounced SAY-der, from the Hebrew word meaning "order"). Very lengthy evening.
 - a) Household rid of all leavened bread and related products
 - b) *Haggadah* - telling of the Passover story, prayers, songs, narrative readings
 - c) Seating
 - (1) Leader sits at the head of the table
 - (2) Youngest sits at the right of the leader. He would often recline on the leader. This the apostle John did at the "last supper" (*John 13:23*)
 - (3) Guest of honor sits to the left of the leader
 - (4) Empty chair for Elijah
 - d) Mother begins the feast by lighting the Passover candles, followed by reciting a Hebrew blessing.
 - e) Father, at the beginning of the *Seder*, pours the First Cup of wine and recites the *Kiddush* (prayer of sanctification).
 - (1) Jesus was the leader at His last Passover supper
 - (2) Jesus said the *Kiddush*, giving thanks (*Luke 22:17*)
 - f) Washing of hands - a symbolic ceremony of purification. Recall that Jesus washed his disciples' feet (*John 13:4, 5*)
 - g) The *Karpas* (green vegetable) is dipped into salt water and eaten to remind them Passover was in the spring and took place amidst tears and suffering.
 - h) Three *matzahs* in a linen napkin. The middle *matzah* is broken and hidden.
 - (1) After the meal is eaten, the children are sent to find the hidden *matzah*.
 - (2) The broken middle *matzah* is called the *afikomen* -- not a Hebrew or Aramaic word and of unknown meaning to Jews. It is a form of Greek past tense (Second Aorist) meaning "I came!"

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- (3) Everyone is required to break off a small piece of the *afikomen* and eat it.
 - i) Four Questions - recited by the youngest child - these questions would have been asked of Christ by John, at the last supper.
 - (1) Why is this night different from all other nights?
 - (2) Why do we eat only unleavened bread on this night?
 - (3) Why do we eat only bitter herbs on this night?
 - (4) Why do we eat reclining on this night?
 - j) The Second Cup is poured, followed by a recitation of the Passover story. This is followed by reciting much of the history of ancient Israel leading up to the Moses receiving the Law from God.
 - (1) A small amount of wine is poured out at the mention of each plague to commemorate sorrow felt for the suffering Egyptians
 - (2) The *Hallel* (***Psalms 113-118***) are recited as praise.
 - k) *Matzah* dipping
 - (1) Second hand washing session
 - (2) Each person eats a piece of the *matzah*, after being dipped in horseradish and *haroset* (apple mixture)
 - (3) Jesus gave a piece of broken, dipped *matzah* to Judas Iscariot, the man who betrayed him. (***John 13:21-27***) Judas left to betray Jesus after this and was not present at Communion, after the dinner.
 - l) The dinner is served, consisting of roasted lamb, served with bitter herbs and *matzah*. Modern seders include more tasty dishes.
 - m) After dinner, came the third cup of wine, called the "Cup of Redemption" - the holy communion taken with Jesus at the last supper (***Luke 22:20***).
 - (1) After the 3rd cup, a child is sent to the door to see if they must welcome the prophet Elijah. (***Malachi 4:5***)
 - (2) Many eschatologists believe one of the two messianic witnesses of ***Revelation 11*** will be Elijah.
 - n) Fourth Cup of Wine, or the "Cup of Acceptance", or "Praise". It is this cup which Jesus said He would not drink until He drank it with the disciples in the Kingdom (***Matthew 26:29***)
 - o) Closing hymn. Matthew said the disciples left the Last Supper singing a hymn as they went (***Matthew 26:30***).
 - (1) These hymns come from the latter half of the *Hallel* (***Psalms 115-118***)
 - (2) ***Psalm 118*** was sung to Jesus at the time of His Triumphal Entry (***Matthew 21:9***)
- C. Passover fulfilled in Jesus
- 1. Christ is symbolized by the passover lamb
 - 2. Christ will rescue the remnant of Israel from Antichrist at the close of the 70th Week of Daniel
 - 3. His death atones for our sin so that we may escape eternal death. Our salvation is symbolized by Passover.
 - 4. Jesus was crucified on Passover

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II. Unleavened Bread (*Hag Hamatzot*); **Leviticus 23:6**

- A. A reminder to Israel of her miraculous delivery from Egypt as there was no time even to allow the bread to rise when baked (**Exodus 12:39; Deuteronomy 16:3**)
- B. Begins on the 15th day of *Nisan* and lasts seven (7) days..
- C. First of three annual pilgrim feasts, when all Jewish males had to come to the Lord's Temple, in Jerusalem (**Exodus 23:14-17; 34:18-23; Deuteronomy 16:116; 2 Chronicles 8:13**)
- D. Biblical requirements for the Feast of Unleavened Bread
 1. Sacrifices had to be offered at the Temple each day of the feast (**Leviticus 23:8; Numbers 28:18-24**)
 2. The first and seventh days were to be free from all work. (**Exodus 12:16; Leviticus 23:7-8; Numbers 28:25; Deuteronomy 16:8**)
 3. Leaven was strictly forbidden (**Exodus 12:14-20; 13:6-8; 23:15; 34:18; Leviticus 23:6; Deuteronomy 16:3, 8**)
 - a) Notice the many references to the ban on leaven.
 - b) Leaven is symbolic of corruption, or sin (**Matthew 16:6-12; Mark 8:15; Luke 12:1**). In Hebrew, leaven is called *hametz*, which means "sour"
 - c) Israel was not even allowed to have any leaven "in all your land" during this time! (**Deuteronomy 16:4**)
 - d) Paul taught about the powerful effects of sin (**1 Corinthians 5:6-8; Galatians 5:9**)
 4. Modern Jews prepare for Passover and Unleavened Bread by painstaking activities.
 - a) The entire house is scrubbed clean
 - b) The night before Passover, the mother of the house will place a few pieces of leavened bread in a few obvious places in the home so some leaven can be found and eliminated.
 - c) Later, in the night before Passover, the father of each home performs the "Search for Leaven" ritual (*Bedikat Hametz*).
 - (1) The father searches the home with a wooden spoon and a goose feather. Whenever leaven is found, he sweeps it into the spoon with the feather. The crumbs of leaven are put in a bag.
 - (2) The children of the home follow the father as part of the excitement of the evening
 - (3) The bag is burned the next morning, thus destroying all the leaven
 5. Jesus fulfilled the Feast of Unleavened Bread
 - a) Jesus, though dead from his crucifixion, did not experience corruption in the grave, even though He bore our sorrows and iniquities (**Isaiah 53:4, 6, 10**)
 - b) Since we have been delivered from the power of sin through Christ, we have the power to walk in holiness. Unleavened bread symbolizes our life of sanctification that follows salvation.

III. First Fruits (*B' Koriym*); **Leviticus 23:10, 11**

- A. A celebration of the cereal grain harvests in Israel -- Barley being the first grain to ripen, as it was sown in the winter months. (**Deuteronomy 26:1-10**)

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- B. Celebrated on the 16th of Nisan, on the third day after the beginning of Passover.
- C. A sheaf (Hebrew: *omer*, or “measure”) of the harvest was to be brought to the priests at the Temple, who would wave it before the Lord for acceptance.

(Leviticus 23:9-14)

- D. Other sacrifices and offerings followed, including an a one-year old, male lamb, a drink offering of wine, and a meal offering of barley flour, usually mixed with olive oil.

- E. Israel not allowed to use any of the harvest until after the first fruits offerings.

(Leviticus 23:14) The traditional ceremony was very stylized.

1. A barley field was sown and managed according to all rabbinical teachings.
2. The national First Fruits offering came from this field.
3. In the days leading up to Passover, several sheaves of barley were cut and prepared for gathering for national ceremony of Israel. A three-man delegation from the Sanhedrin would gather one ephah (about 2/3rds bushel) of marked sheaves of barley at sundown.
4. The gathered grain was threshed with rods in the Temple court, and then it was parched over open fire and winnowed to remove the chaff.
5. On the morning of *Nisan* 16, one omer (about 5 pints) of barley flour, mised with ¾ pint of olive oil and a small amount of frankincense was offered to the Lord as a First Fruit offering.
6. Beginning on the day of First Fruits, Israel begin the countdown to the Feast of Weeks (Pentecost).
 - a) Called *Sefirat Ha-Omer*, or “Counting the Omer”
 - b) Forty-nine days after First Fruits, on the 50th day, Israel would celebrate its last spring feast, Pentecost. **(Leviticus 23:15, 16)**

- F. Modern observance of First Fruits

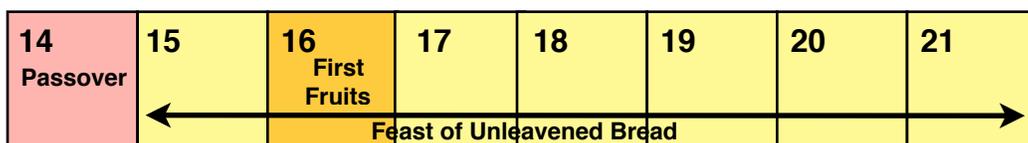
1. No Temple, so there is no First Fruits offerings, but the process of Counting the Omer is still observed.
2. Otherwise, there is no other real celebration of First Fruits in Israel today.

- G. Prophetic fulfillment

1. Jesus was resurrected on the 3rd day after His crucifixion. Since He was crucified on Passover, His resurrection was on First Fruits.
2. Jesus was called the First Fruits of the dead (**1 Corinthians 15:20-23**).
3. Christians are counted among the First Fruits offering of the Kingdom of God (**James 1:18**)
4. Christians, when saved, also receive the First Fruits of the Spirit (**Romans 8:23**)
5. The First Fruits analogy is used to argue that all of Israel (the national remnant) will be saved when Christ returns (**Romans 11:16**)

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IV. The Feast of Weeks, or Pentecost - (*Shavuot*); **Exodus 34:22**

- A. Feast has several names, some of which might be confusing
 - 1. *Shavuot*, or Hag *Hag Shavuot* - Weeks, the Feast of Weeks -- because this feast occurred 7 weeks after First Fruits
 - 2. Celebration of the firstfruit offerings of the summer wheat crop -- sometimes called *Yom Ha B'Kurim*, the "Day of First Fruits" (Do not confuse this with the Feast of First Fruits, for the barley harvest).
 - 3. Feast of Harvest, or *Hag Hakatzir*, reflecting the beginning of the summer harvest season
 - 4. *Atzeret*, meaning "Conclusion", because the feast was viewed as the conclusion of the 7-month Passover season.
 - 5. Pentecost, because it takes place 50-days after First Fruits. (**Leviticus 23:15, 16; Deuteronomy 16:9, 10**)
- B. Celebrated on *Sivan* 6, in late May or early June in our calendar.
- C. Was a "solemn feast" (**Exodus 23:14-17; Deuteronomy 16:16; 2 Chronicles 8:13; Exodus 34:22, 23**) during which all Jewish men were required by law to make personal offerings at the Temple, in Jerusalem.
- D. Temple patterns and requirements were similar to First Fruits.
 - 1. Unique *Shavuot* offering consisted of two loaves of leavened wheat bread that was waved before the Lord ("wave offering" - **Leviticus 23:17**)
 - 2. Two lambs also offered as peace offerings
 - 3. Formed the basis of a feast for the priests, later in the day
- E. Modern observance
 - 1. Was changed in 140 A.D. because of the destruction of the Temple in 70 A.D. and the failed Bar Kochba rebellion in 135 A.D..
 - 2. Focus taken away from the harvest theme and was refocused on Israel receiving the Law of Moses, although the Bible never made this association
 - 3. Results in another name for *Shavuot*, which is *Zeman Mattan Toratenu*, or "the Time of the Giving of Our Law"
 - 4. Some customs celebrated by the Jews at Pentecost include
 - a) decorating the synagogue with flowers and greenery
 - b) Scripture readings in the synagogue to describe the brightness of God's glory. **Habakkuk 3:3-5** and **Ruth** are usually read, along with others.
 - c) Dairy products are eaten as a reminder that the Law is like milk and honey
 - d) Various other foods are eaten as part of the feast, which still include the two loaves of *hallah* bread, which the Jews believe represent the two tablets of the Law.
 - e) Stay up all night studying and discussing the Law, including many who stand all night praying at the Western Wall, in Jerusalem (*Amidah* prayer, or "standing prayer")
- F. Prophetic fulfillment
 - 1. Jews and gentiles united in Christ, represented by the two loaves of bread, leavened, to signify unglorified. (**Ephesians 2: 14, 15**)
 - 2. The day the church was filled with the Holy Spirit and became "gifted" (**Acts 2**)

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Refresher (Circle the right answer or fill in the blank)

1. The first Jewish feast of their calendar year is _____.
2. Three of the spring feasts occur in the Jewish month of _____, which corresponds to (Mar/Apr, Apr/May, May/Jun) in our calendar.
3. The first Passover was observed when (Israel was exiled to Babylon, at the time of the exodus from Egypt, when Israel returned to their homeland from Babylon).
4. The three symbolic foods required by God for the Passover dinner include _____, _____, and _____.
5. The middle piece on unleavened bread, which is hidden to be found later by the children, is called the *afikomen*, which in Greek, means _____.
6. The ceremonial dinner celebrated at Passover is called a _____.
7. Jesus was crucified on _____ (which Jewish feast?).
8. In the life of the Christian, Passover symbolizes (salvation, sanctification, resurrection).
9. These foods symbolize Christ in the Passover dinner: _____ and _____.
10. The feast observed the day after Passover is the Feast of _____.
11. How long does this feast last? (one month, one day, one week)
12. Leaven, in the Bible, symbolizes _____.
13. The Feast of Unleavened Bread was to remind Israel that (leaven causes heart disease, the exodus from Egypt was in haste, crackers tastes better than bread).
14. Jesus prophetically fulfilled the Feast of Unleavened Bread when He (was crucified, went to the grave but did not decay, rose from the dead).
15. In the life of the Christian, the Feast of Unleavened Bread symbolizes (salvation, sanctification, resurrection.)
16. The Jewish Feast of _____ is held on the third day of the Passover season.
17. First Fruits celebrates the harvest of the _____ crop.
18. Jesus fulfilled the Feast of First Fruits when He (was crucified, went to the grave but did not decay, rose from the dead). Explain.
19. In the life of the Christian, First Fruits in anticipated in (salvation, sanctification, resurrection).
20. Fifty days after First Fruits, Israel celebrates the Feast of _____.
21. Shavuot celebrates the harvest of the _____ crop.
22. The Feast of Weeks occurs in this Jewish month (Nisan, Sivan, Tishri).
23. Pentecost, also called the Feast of Weeks, was when the _____ came to fill each Christian, and was manifested by speaking in other tongues, wind, and fire.
24. The two loaves of leavened bread waved before the Lord on Shavuot symbolize (Israel has enough to eat, Christians and Jews are one in Christ, a bigger offering to the priests is required on Shavuot).
25. Modern orthodox Jews observe Shavuot by (staying up all night to debate the law, eating another Passover dinner, exchanging gifts for 8 nights).