

## SABBATH THOUGHT 2026-03-14—PASSOVER IS A DAY OF UNLEAVENED BREAD?

May God bless you on His Sabbath day!

What are the biblical commands for Passover in regards to leavening and leavened bread? First note in Scripture that the Passover sacrifice shall be eaten with unleavened bread:

EXODUS 12:6, 8 ‘Now you shall keep it [*the lamb*] until **the fourteenth day** of the same month. Then the whole assembly of the congregation of Israel shall kill it at twilight. ... 8 ‘Then **they shall eat** the flesh on that night; roasted in fire, **with unleavened bread** and with bitter *herbs* they shall eat it.

NUMBERS 9:10-11 “Speak to the children of Israel, saying: ‘If anyone of you or your posterity is unclean because of a corpse, or *is* far away on a journey, he may still **keep the LORD’s Passover**. 11 ‘On **the fourteenth day of the second month**, at twilight, they may keep it. They shall **eat it with unleavened bread** and bitter herbs.

NOTE: This was referring to the second Passover.

But the biblical command goes beyond the sacrifice. Passover and the subsequent Days of Unleavened Bread are unique from each other but are both times in which **unleavened bread** is REQUIRED to be eaten. This is unambiguous:

EXODUS 12:18 ‘**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.**

The biblical directive for Passover and the Days of Unleavened Bread is “you shall eat unleavened bread” during the eight days from the 14th through the 21st. This includes the evening when the Passover service begins. But the question remains, is leavening and eating leavened bread prohibited on Passover? Notice:

EXODUS 12:15 ‘**Seven days you shall eat unleavened bread. On the first day you shall remove leaven from your houses. For whoever eats leavened bread from the first day until the seventh day, that person shall be cut off from Israel.**

Not only is unleavened bread is required to be eaten during all seven days of the Days of Unleavened Bread but all leaven shall be removed from the house and eating leavened bread is forbidden. This is repeated a few verses later<sup>1</sup>:

EXODUS 12:19-20 ‘**For seven days no leaven shall be found in your houses, since whoever eats what is leavened, that same person shall be cut off** from the

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<sup>1</sup> Exod. 13:3; 23:15.

congregation of Israel, whether *he is* a stranger or a native of the land. 20 **'You shall eat nothing leavened; in all your dwellings you shall eat unleavened bread.'** ”

In the strictest sense, the biblical command consists of three requirements:

- 1) **'You shall eat unleavened bread'** beginning at evening on the 14th (Passover) and continuing through the 21st day, the seventh Day of Unleavened Bread.
- 2) **'No leavened shall be found in your houses'** for all seven days of the Days of Unleavened Bread.
- 3) **'You shall eat no leavened bread'** for all seven days of the Days of Unleavened Bread.

What is specifically missing is any command against possessing leaven or eating leavened bread on Passover. Now notice:

DEUTERONOMY 16:1-3 “Observe **the month of Abib, and keep the Passover** to the LORD your God, for in the month of Abib the LORD your God brought you out of Egypt by night. 2 “Therefore you shall sacrifice **the Passover** to the LORD your God, from the flock and the herd, in the place where the LORD chooses to put His name. 3 **'You shall eat no leavened bread with it; seven days you shall eat unleavened bread with it, that is, the bread of affliction'** (for you came out of the land of Egypt in haste), that you may remember the day in which you came out of the land of Egypt all the days of your life.

The phrase “You shall eat no leavened bread with **it**; seven days you shall eat unleavened bread **with it, that is, the bread of affliction**” introduces significant uncertainty with the word *it*. What is *it*?

There are two ways to read these verses. In the first case, it switches from the Passover in verses 1 and 2 to the Days of Unleavened Bread in verse 3. In other words, verse 3 is not a continuation of the first two verses. The last part of the phrase in question in several other translations is **'seven days you shall eat unleavened bread therewith, even the bread of affliction.'** The word *therewith* means *with the thing mentioned*. What was mentioned? The seven days. A better rendering might be “seven days you shall eat unleavened bread [*during those days*], even the bread of affliction.” That is certainly in keeping with the other scriptures. Applying the same reasoning to the first part “You shall eat no leavened bread with **it**” means that *it* also points to the seven days of the Days of Unleavened Bread.

The other case is that the first part of verse 3 refers to Passover. This is even more complicated. What does *it* refer if not the seven days? There are two possibilities: the Passover *sacrifice* mentioned in verse 2 or the Passover *day* referred to in verse 1. So, the phrase “You shall eat no leavened bread with **it**” could be “eat no leavened bread with the [Passover sacrifice]” or “eat no leavened bread [*during*] the [Passover day].” But which one? Reread this:

**EXODUS 12:18 ‘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.’**

If unleavened bread is required to be eaten during the entire Passover *day*, would that mean that *it* in Deuteronomy 16:3 also refers to the entire Passover *day*? Again and still, Scripture is not clear.

So, it comes down to a personal choice. I remove all leaven before Passover evening and treat the entire day the same way as the Days of Unleavened Bread. However, I also recognize that there could be a legitimate reason for not treating Passover as a Day of Unleavened Bread. Allow me to explain.

Passover is not a holyday because the trial and crucifixion of Jesus Christ could not otherwise take place and then it became the day that God died—without God, nothing is holy. Therefore, it has no work restrictions. Again, I personally keep it as a day to remember and ponder the events that lead to the death and burial of Jesus Christ while others choose to work on that day. It is not a sin to work—the high priest and Pharisees worked when they held their tribunal to convict Christ. But working on Passover does take away from fully appreciating the sacrifice of Jesus Christ. Even His disciples spent the day witnessing the events that led to the crucifixion of Jesus—they did not “go a fishing”<sup>2</sup> as they did after His death.

Passover is also called a preparation day<sup>3</sup>. The fact that Passover is not a holyday and is a preparation day for the Days of Unleavened Bread would allow Passover to be the time that the ancient Israelites removed all leaven in preparation for the Days of Unleavened Bread.

NOTE: As a preparation day, the Passover is distinct from the Days of Unleavened Bread and that makes it difficult to find any additional clarity in the NT scriptures.

Because it is required to eat unleavened bread for eight days beginning with Passover evening and continuing the seven Days of Unleavened Bread, I have personally chosen to keep Passover the same as the Days of Unleavened Bread—purging leaven and not eating leavened bread. But I also accept that there is no specific command for it. In fact, it is possible that God intended Passover as the day to remove leaven in preparation for the Days of Unleavened Bread. The choice, as always with God, is yours, my brethren!

May God’s grace and peace be upon you!

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<sup>2</sup> John 21:3.

<sup>3</sup> Matt. 27:62; Mark 15:42; Luke 23:54; John 19:14, 31, 42.