

It's High Time

The Month of Nisan

The Winter of 5786 from which we're now emerging has been, in more ways than one, unusually brutal. But, reliable as always, Yahweh gives us Spring. Heralded by choruses of busy birds and the inspiring sight of buds bravely emerging from the branches of naked trees, it's a time to branch out with courage toward new things.

It is the month of Nisan, the first month of the Hebrew spiritual calendar. The original Hebrew name for this month is Aviv, which simply means *Spring*. It is the month of the Passover. Yes, it was in the first days of Spring that the Children of Israel emerged from the bondage and abuse of Egypt toward the promise of freedom and blessedness.

Those of us who have embraced our Hebrew or Israelite identity hold divergent opinions on more than a few points of doctrine. But we all hunger for a clearer understanding of what it means to be *us*. We crave opportunities to love our Hebrew neighbors as ourselves—and to be loved. And, of course, *we all eat*.

We observe Pesach in countless different ways. Many who are new to Hebrew-ism will celebrate this high holy Feast of Unleavened Bread alone. Some must observe it against a backdrop of ham dinners and chocolate bunnies. But, whatever your situation, know one thing: You are a part of a growing family united by a common loving Father.

With this new publication, *The Hungry Hebrew*, we reach out to you in a monthly celebration of our daily bread. But not "bread alone." You'll also find a dash of Hebrew language, puzzles, and feature articles to nourish and inspire Family members of all ages. Hungry? Enjoy!



Roti, eastern Indian everyday unleavened flatbreads, are also eaten in some Caribbean countries.



Baker kneading bread dough. Kneading can be done with the heel of the hand or the knuckles. Whichever method you choose, it is the stretching and folding of the dough that gives it the smoothness and elasticity that results in good bread. (Getty images)

S. Cobb

Passover Feasting

For seven days we eat unleavened bread

The word feast typically conjures a banquet of succulent meats, special casseroles, salads and sides (and don't forget dessert!). But in biblical times, lavish meals were enjoyed only by royalty and the richest families. When we read "Give us this day our daily bread", we hear a hint at the basic food of a typical meal. It was bread.

For ages, bread has been a food staple for societies around the world. It begins as dough made from some type of flour and a liquid, usually water. While wheat flour is globally the most common grain for bread, any pulverized grain can be used to produce bread.

Barley was vital to the Hebrew people in biblical times because the crop was ready for harvest earlier than wheat. It was much cheaper than wheat and thus a daily provision for the poor. In John's gospel, the bread shared in the feeding of the multitude was described as barley loaves. Importantly, barley was harvested early in the month of Aviv near Passover, while wheat was ready at Shavuot, the holy feast seven weeks later.

For thousands of years Native peoples of North and South America produced breads from the corn they were experts at growing. Our enslaved ancestors adopted these corn breads, baking them in the work fields on various metal objects such as the garden hoe, giving rise to "hoe cakes". Rice flour has been used by Asians to make breads or cakes since ancient times.

The consistency of bread dough can be anything from firm and rubbery (as in bagels) to a loose batter (as in pancakes). Most breads contain a bit of salt for flavor. A little oil or butter adds richness and tenderness to the final product as does milk, eggs, or sugar. But a simple, delicious loaf can be crafted from four basic ingredients: flour, water, salt, and leaven (usually yeast). This last ingredient, leaven, is a focus of our weeklong feast, Passover or Pesach פסח

Whether the bread is shaped into a loaf, a bun, or a flatbread, it is leaven that gives it its fluffy, airy texture. Yeast also adds **Continued Pg 2**

Recipe: Easy Roti

R. Jacob

Start a new tradition this year! Making your own authentic unleavened bread for the Holy Days could hardly be easier. A skillet and three to four everyday ingredients are all you need!

Page 2

Puzzles/ A taste of Hebrew

Y. Alexander

This month's puzzle is about the first High Holy Days of the year. Plus, learn a bit about Hebrew letters and words in each issue. **All About Alef**

Page 3

Makin' It: Home Ec for Tough Times

S. Cobb



Page 4

S. Cobb

Passover Feasting

For seven days we eat unleavened bread

Continued from Pg 1

its own irresistible aroma and earthy, nutty flavor. Removing the yeast from the four-ingredient bare bones bread recipe gives rise to the simplest of breads that are quick to prepare. Civilizations have learned techniques to make them delicious despite the lack of leavening.

In Torah, the first mention of unleavened bread is in Genesis 19 which tells of when the Angels of Yahweh paid a visit to Lot and his family in Sodom. Lot rushed to prepare a meal to honor them including matz-ot מצות (rhymes with *pots oat*). In Nisan we celebrate the Exodus of the Children of Israel from Egypt. Our ancestors had no time to waste after the plague of the firstborn convinced Pharaoh to release them. Unleavened bread was the last food they ate in Egypt before they hit the road.

The yeast used for breads are living micro-organisms that become active when they are given water and nourishment. Flour and/or sugars are food for yeast. Once mixed into a moist flour dough, the yeast comes to life

and begins “exhaling” gases, creating tiny bubbles in the process. These bubbles cause the lump of dough to puff up. The air holes you see in finished bread represent the last gasps of the yeast before they are cooked to death. Active yeast also produces a small amount alcohol, the smell of which is a part of the enticing aroma that fills a home when yeast bread is baking.

Unleavened breads called *roti* or *chapati* are beloved daily breads in Asian countries including India, Pakistan, Sri Lanka, and Afghanistan. Chapati is also popular in east African nations including Kenya, Uganda, Tanzania, Burundi, and Somalia.



A vendor makes chapati in Kenya

Quick breads and pastries such as biscuits, pancakes, cornbread, muffins, cookies, and cakes are usually leavened with baking powder or baking soda. These pantry staples are called *chemical leavening agents*. They make these breads rise and become soft and airy, but they are also used to add crispiness to popular foods.

Crafting your own unleavened bread each day for the feast connects you to ancient Hebrew culture. Don't miss out by taking your Passover cues from church or synagogue traditions. They often use mass-produced boxed unleavened crackers labeled as *kosher matza* or special wafers purchased for communion or Lord's Supper services. Some churches just use regular old saltines or other familiar crackers—which almost always contain yeast or chemical leaven.

Homemade bread can be a daily treat. It's also very affordable and easier than you might think. *Pesach samaech!*

Easy Roti

R. Jacob

Savory satisfying stacks for Passover



Roti usually puffs with air as it cooks.



Roti, bitter radichio & arugula, lamb

Ingredients:

2 cups flour (whole wheat, atta, or white)
1 tsp salt (less if desired)
2 Tbsp olive or other vegetable oil
¾ cup very hot water

Blend the flour and salt in a mixing bowl. Add the oil and mix in using clean hands or a fork. Add the hot water and mix with a fork into a rough, sticky dough. Cover the bowl with a damp paper towel or plastic wrap and let the dough rest for about 15 minutes.

Knead and stretch the dough in the bowl for about 5 minutes until it is soft, elastic, and still a little sticky. Add more flour if it's super-sticky OR add more water one tablespoon at a time if it seems dry: Dry dough makes dry roti!

After kneading, cover the bowl again and let the dough relax for 45 minutes (or up to 2 hours). Divide the dough into 8 equal pieces. Roll each piece into a ball. Keep the dough balls covered to prevent drying.

Lightly flour a work surface and roll each ball into a perfect circular disc, keeping the roti evenly thin. Heat a heavy skillet to medium high.

One at a time, place a roti in the pan and cook for about a minute until blisters form on top. Then flip it and cook about 30 seconds. If you flip it again and press with a spatula, it may puff.

Brush with melted butter if desired and enjoy!

Roti is best eaten hot and fresh. It can be dipped into a “sop” as Yeshua and disciples did. Simple sops include olive oil seasoned with garlic and salt, or tahini sauce. It's also great served alongside stews or a simple bowl of beans, used as a wrap like a flour tortilla or alone as a snack.

No-no list for Passover

Common foods that contain leaven

Getting yeast and chemical leavens out of your diet and home for Pesach can be a challenge because they are found in unexpected places such as batter or breading on chicken or fish, crackers or even some French fries. They are also used in many breakfast cereals. On food labels, here are names for leaven ingredients to look out for:

- Yeast
- Baking Soda
- Baking Powder
- Monosodium Phosphate
- Sodium Bicarbonate
- Bicarbonate of Soda
- Leaven, Leavening
- Cream of Tartar
- Monocalcium Phosphate
- Potassium Bicarbonate
- Sodium aluminum phosphate
- Ammonium carbonate



Leaven is often found in unexpected places.

Y. Alexander

Hebrew Alefbet

The first letter



Aleph (א) is the first letter of the Hebrew alphabet and is one of the most important and noteworthy letters for a number of reasons, some spiritual and some practical. Since "Aleph (א)" is the first letter in the Hebrew alphabet, it therefore symbolizes oneness and unity. In the Hebrew faith, it is often associated with the oneness of monotheism.

Every letter in the Hebrew alphabet also has a numerical value, so naturally, the numerical value assigned to "Aleph" is one. The root of the word "Aleph" is also connected to many other words in the Hebrew language. The word "Eleph," for example, means a thousand. The word "Aluf," which also comes from the same root, means a (military) "general," or a "champion."

We thus see that despite the fact that the letter "Aleph" has a small numerical value of one, it has connotations of greatness.

The letter "Aleph" is formed with two "yuds" and a "vav". One "Vav" descends from the upper realm while the second one descends from the lower. The two meet and are met by a diagonal "Vav":



The letter Vav

The letter Yud



Hebrew words that begin with Aleph

Abba/Father - אבא

Ima/Mother - אמה

Athon/Donkey (female) - אתוך

Ayyal/Deer - איל

Aryeh/Lion - אריה

Oyev/Enemy - אויב

Asher, Esher/Happy - אשר

Amatz/Courage - אמצ

Ata/You (Male) - אתה

Anakhnu/Us - אנחנו

This advertising space is available!

Reach out to contact@hungryhebrew.com

for more information.

HH Staff creators

The Feast of Pesach – Word Search

B T H G I L I W T L A M B R P A
O M T P J Q D L O P D H G W W D
N W O C L W T V A L C A J I F V
D H O S G A A N R O B T S R I F
A Y U B H E G R L E P D O O L B
G S L R N E H U B F G D D U N R
E S U F V B O O E Z M Y W L N E
O O S Z Q C T A U S I Z P N E T
E P D T Y Y S L A D N A S T C T
I D E N E V A E L N U Y E D E I
J V H S T U Y Q U T K K M R Q B
R R L S T E E J X S R J R A Q Q
C C A K N A H S F J H I S Q U J
X E W I K C F H P H A R A O H N
F M W S S T S F S E V E N U W B
V J M I S R A E L B T T H W V S

Can you find these words?

UNLEAVENED
BREAD
BITTER
ISRAEL
LAMB
BLOOD
FIRSTBORN
BONDAGE
SEVEN
PHARAOH
MOSHE
PLAGUES
WINE
HYSSOP
TWILIGHT
FEAST
EGYPT

S. Cobb

MAKIN' IT

Look to your roots amidst rocketing food prices and strained budgets

For the price of dirt and a few packs of seeds, you can grow some groceries. If you find a gardening partner (or two) and you plan to grow only a few of each plant, you can even split the price of the seeds. If there is a farm supply store in your area, check and see if they sell seeds by the ounce so you don't have to buy more than you need.



You don't need a lot of space to grow a significant amount. The author grew all of the veggies and herbs pictured above (and more) in cheap containers on a sunny back porch.

Containers for a garden can be anything from five-gallon paint buckets (good for large plants like tomatoes, peppers, squash, and eggplant) to re-purposed gallon milk jugs (for small plants such as lettuce, cucumbers, bok choy, and green beans). Photo below.



Re-usable heavy fabric growbags come in sizes from 3 gallon to 25 gallon and larger. They are economical when purchased online in multi-packs. The handles help you more easily move them around your garden or porch if need be.



This pack of 12 large (5 gallon) bags from Walmart.com comes out to just \$1.67 each.

Dollar stores almost always carry pots and planters of all sizes at reasonable prices. But think outside the pot when looking for containers! Anything that can hold lots of soil is fair game. (Photo below, tires.)



One last word about containers: Other than growbags—which are naturally porous—all closed containers used to grow plants should have drainage holes in the bottom. Most plants will turn yellow and “drown” if the roots sit in water for a long time. Adding ½” to 1 inch of gravel or even twigs at the bottom of the container will prevent the soil itself from plugging the drainage holes.

Sun and water

Any area used to grow vegetables needs to receive at least 6 - 8 hours of full sun each day. Do a “sun study” of the spot in the yard or porch and add up the hours of direct sun it receives. If your plants are in containers, you have the option to move them to a sunnier area if necessary. But once filled with moist soil, planting containers are very heavy!

Speaking of soil, good dirt is vital to healthy plants. While bagged garden soil used to be dirt cheap, you may be dismayed by the cost today. Filling your containers with soil from the ground (free!) is an option, but sometimes microbes are present that will attack young seedlings in a container. An option is to half fill the container with free native soil or the cheapest bagged soil you can find, and then top it off with higher-quality bagged soil.

Plants should be watered at least weekly if there is no rain. During hot weeks, you may need to water every day, especially young plants. If you poke your finger 1” into the soil and it is dry, you should thoroughly water the plant. For container plants, that means adding water until it drains out of the holes in the bottom of the planter or pot.

Selena Cobb is a food writer, master gardener, avid baker, and registered dietitian with a background in public health nutrition.



To everything there is a season...

Finally, pay close attention to the planting dates and planting maps on the packets of seeds. Find out the planting zone where you live and do not plant before or after the dates on the map. You risk your work and seed investment getting destroyed by a late frost or by unseasonably warm temperatures.

Below are popular veggies that can be planted as seeds now, as long as the soil is not still frozen. (In many areas south of Virginia, it may be too *late* to plant many of these.) Broccoli and cauliflower are best started as seeds indoors and planted outside when at least 3” tall.

Now is a great time to start growing summer plants like tomatoes, peppers, and eggplant indoors from seeds. Paper cups, egg cartons, or purchased seedling flats are fine homes for baby plants. Now, go get those hands dirty!

Early Spring Vegetables and Herbs:

Mustard greens
Turnips
Green Peas
Carrots
Green onions
Sugar Snap & Snow Peas
Lettuce
Spinach
Arugula
Radish
Bok Choi
Kale
Beets
Dill
Mint
Parsley
Broccoli and Cauliflower (plants)
Potatoes (grow from seed potatoes)