

3.2.1 Elephantine Passover Papyrus: The Observance of Passover¹¹

The celebration of Passover at Elephantine in the fifth century B.C.E. already included many of the observances we recognize today—the eating of unleavened bread (matzah), the abstention from work, as well as the putting

11. Trans. S. Berrin from the Aramaic in B. Porten and A. Yardeni, *Textbook of Aramaic Documents from Ancient Egypt* (Jerusalem: The Hebrew University, Department of the History of the Jewish People, Texts and Studies for Students, 1986), p. 54 (Cowley 21).

away of all leaven and fermented substances such as beer. The second paragraph is for the most part a pastiche of biblical commands.



[To my brothers Je]daniah and his colleagues, the garrison of the Jews, (from) your brother Hananiah. May God [be concerned about] the welfare of my brothers [at all times.] And now, this year, year 5 of Darius the King (419 B.C.E.), from the king it has been sent to Arsa[mes. . .].¹²

And now, you shall count fou[rteen days in Nisan, and on the 14th day at twilight, observe the Passover.] And from the 15th day until the 21st day of [Nisan observe the holiday of unleavened bread. Seven days eat unleavened bread. Now,] be pure and be careful that you do no work [on the 15th day and on the 21st day of Nisan. All beer] you shall not drink and all matter of leaven you shall not [eat, and it may not be seen in your houses from the 14th day of Nisan] at sundown until the 21st day of Nisa[n at sundown. All leaven which you have in your houses] lock inside your storage rooms and seal it up between [these] days.