

FEAST OF UNLEAVENED BREAD

INTRODUCTION

The sacred assemblies of the Jews in the Old Testament are prophetic: they point to events in days to come. In this paper we explain what the Feast of Unleavened Bread symbolizes. Christians can apply that knowledge to their life and to their interpretation of the Scripture.

This study will incorporate the spiritual meaning of numbers to help identify the meanings of the feasts. By two or three witnesses every fact shall be established. When Scripture makes a clear identification there is no debate. When it does not we will look to other witnesses, such as spiritual numbers.¹

SUMMARY

The Feast of Unleavened Bread is prophetic of the celebration of the Lord's Supper.

SHOULD CHRISTIANS OBSERVE JEWISH HOLY DAYS?

Christians are strongly recommended not to observe the Jewish rituals and holy days.

There was a group in New Testament times who wanted to bring believers under obedience to the rituals and ordinances of Moses and the patriarchal rite of circumcision. Even some apostles drifted towards this way of thinking. This approach was condemned in the strongest possible terms by Paul: anathema! (Galatians 1:9) Anathema means 'accursed', devoted to destruction, or eternally damned. Regarding observing feasts and holy days Scripture says:

"But now that you know God – or rather are known by God – how is it you are turning back to those weak and miserable principles? Do you wish to be enslaved by them all over again? You are observing days and months and seasons and years! I fear for you that somehow I have wasted my efforts on you." (Galatians 4:9-11)

BIBLICAL INTERPRETATION

The Bible contains types and shadows. A type is an allegory, a figure of meaning. In Galatians Paul identifies Hagar, the slave woman, as representing the Old Covenant, and Sarah, the free woman, as representing the New Covenant.² In the same passage he connects Isaac with believers in Jesus, since we are born of the free woman. A shadow is a type with a prophetic fulfillment, speaking of things to come:

"Therefore do not let anyone judge you by what you eat or drink, or with regard to a religious festival, a New Moon celebration or a Sabbath day. These are a shadow of the things that were to come: the reality is found in Christ." (Colossians 2:16)

¹ For a complete presentation of spiritual numbers please refer to www.biblenumbersforlife.com The spiritual meanings of Bible numbers and the validation of those meanings is presented there.

² Gal. 4:21-31 "these things may be taken figuratively, for the women represent two covenants..."

SIMULTANEOUS PROPHETIC FULFILLMENTS FOR CHRISTIANS AND JEWS

A single prophetic event can have implications for both Jews and Christians. For example: when Christ died “**at that moment the curtain of the temple was torn in two from top to bottom.**” (Matt. 27:51) The New Covenant began when Christ’s blood was shed on the cross. The Old Covenant ceased at the exact same time. Many prophetic fulfillments of the appointed feasts and sacred assemblies apply to Jews in one way and to Christians in another way. Some feasts have no prophetic fulfillment for Jews, but often, prophetic events for Christians and Jews are linked. This is not a contradiction, this is the divine plan.

FEAST OF UNLEAVENED BREAD³

The seven days following Passover was the ‘Feast of Unleavened Bread’. It was an appointed feast and a sacred assembly. Three times a year all Jewish males appeared before the Lord: at the Feast of Unleavened Bread, the Day of Atonement, and the Feast of Tabernacles.

“[v17] **Celebrate the Feast of Unleavened Bread, because it was on this very day that I brought up your divisions out of Egypt. Celebrate this day as a lasting ordinance for the generations to come. [v18] In the first month you are to eat bread made without yeast, from the evening of the fourteenth day until the evening of the twenty-first day. [v19] For seven days no yeast is to be found in your houses. And whoever eats anything with yeast in it must be cut-off from the community of Israel, whether he is an alien or native-born. [v20] Eat nothing made with yeast. Wherever you live, you must eat unleavened bread.” (Exodus 12)**

“[v15] **Celebrate the Feast of Unleavened Bread; for seven days eat bread made without yeast, as I commanded you. Do this at the appointed time in the month of Abib, for in that month you came out of Egypt. No one is to appear before me empty-handed.” (Exodus 23)**

“[v6] **On the fifteenth day of that month the LORD’s Feast of Unleavened Bread begins; for seven days you must eat bread made without yeast. [v7] On the first day hold a sacred assembly and do no regular work. [v8] For seven days present an offering made to the LORD by fire. And on the seventh day hold a sacred assembly and do no regular work.” (Lev. 23)**

“[v8] **For six days eat unleavened bread and on the seventh day hold an assembly to the LORD your God and do no work.” (Deut. 16)**

The Feast of Unleavened Bread points back at Passover but it puts the focus on the unleavened bread part of the Passover meal. The Jews already had an appointed feast to celebrate Passover. To tack on another week long appointed feast to celebrate the unleavened bread consumed at Passover seems unusual. The reason for the extra week long festival is made clear when we understand the New Testament fulfillment.

The Biblical meaning of the Feast of Unleavened Bread is interpreted for us in Scripture:

³ See Exodus 12:15-20, Exodus 23:15, Leviticus 28:17-25, Deut. 16:8

“Get rid of the old yeast that you may be a new batch without yeast – as you really are. For Christ our Passover lamb has been sacrificed. Therefore let us keep the festival, not with the old yeast, the yeast of malice and wickedness, but with the bread without yeast, the bread of sincerity and truth.” (1 Cor. 5:7)

When Paul writes “let us keep the festival” he means to celebrate the Lord’s Supper. He explains that the yeast signifies sin in the heart of the believer. The condition of sincerity and truthfulness is likened to the unleavened bread. The believer is admonished in very serious terms to examine themselves prior to partaking in the Lord’s Supper: “A man ought to examine himself before he eats of the bread and drinks of the cup. For anyone who eats and drinks without recognizing the body of the Lord eats and drinks judgment upon himself.” (1 Cor. 11:28-29)

Later in Corinthians this is clarified:

“The Lord Jesus, on the night he was betrayed, took [unleavened] bread, and when he had given thanks, he broke it and said: ‘this is my body which is for you: do this in remembrance of me.’ In the same way, after supper he took the cup, saying: ‘this cup is the new covenant in my blood: do this, whenever you drink it, in remembrance of me.’ For whenever you eat this bread and drink this cup [i.e. celebrate the Lord’s Supper], you proclaim the Lord’s death until he comes.” (1 Cor. 11:23-26)

The body of Christ that was nailed to the cross became the body of believers in Jesus. As it is written: “Now you are the body of Christ and each one of you is a part of it” (1 Cor. 12:27). The Lord’s Supper proclaims the Lord’s death until he comes, but it also proclaims his body of devoted loving believers. We present ourselves to him in oneness of community and in the purity of our hearts. In the Feast of Unleavened Bread there must be no yeast in the house, and so there must be no conscious sin in the church gathering when the Lord’s Supper is celebrated.

The Feast of Unleavened Bread was a festival that continued directly following the Passover. To the Jews it was a reminder of the flight out of Egypt. It has no prophetic significance for them. At the Passover Israel became a nation in a day. At the cross believers were united in Christ’s death. Only the church can enter in to the prophetic meaning and celebration of the Feast of Unleavened Bread, because only the church of believers has had our sins taken away. The church is the unleavened bread.

The day will come when the Jewish nation repents and acknowledges Jesus as their Messiah. But by then Christ will already have his bride. The Jews who repent will become God’s servants, not his body. When people marry, the two become one flesh. Jesus will not have two wives. He will not have two bodies. The church will be his one and only pure and holy bride. The Jewish believers in Jesus will be her bridesmaids and the guests invited to the marriage supper of the Lamb.

MEDITATION

If you are a believer, you are called to ‘keep the festival’. This means three things:

(1) Self-examination and repentance from all sin;

(2) Fellowship with other believers in a face-to-face sincere Christian community;

(3) Celebrating the Lord's Supper.

Consider what Jesus said to the church of Ephesus:

“I know thy works and thy labor and thy patience and how you cannot bear them that are evil; and you have tried those that say they are apostles and are not and have found them to be liars...Nevertheless I have something against you, because you have left your first love [agape]⁴. Remember the height from which you are fallen and repent.” (Rev. 2:2-5)

The church at Ephesus was busy with activities and strenuous in defending the faith. But, love was missing. Christ is looking for love between believers: a face-to-face intimate community of mutual accountability and service. We are not to offer to Christ a pile of unleavened flour: we are to offer to Christ a baked loaf. We are meant to become connected to the lives of others in a fellowship. Early Christians met in homes, shared meals, shared belongings, and became bonded to each other.

What is the right size of a church? Probably no larger than the number of people you can closely relate to. Some say as many as you can fit in your living room. If you are like most of us, especially in Western countries, you will have great difficulty in finding face to face community, even in organized churches. Ask the Lord to lead you to another person with whom to have sincere community. Once that is established celebrate the Lord's Supper in the context of a love 'feast'.

Gematria Study:

This section looks at the gematria of verses in the Torah relating to regulations pertaining to the Feast of Unleavened Bread. Verses that make general statements such as “The Lord said to Moses” are excluded. Only verses with instruction related to the Feast are included.

There are five passages of 25 verses in the Torah relating to the regulations for this Feast:

<u>Passage</u>	<u>Gematria</u>	<u>Factors</u>
(1) Exodus 12:15-20	33,043	173 [40 th prime] x 191 [43 rd prime]
(2) Exodus 34:18	6,546	2 x 3 x 1091 [182 nd prime] [182 = 7 x 2 x 13]
(3) Leviticus 23:6-8	11,349	9 x 13 x 97 [25 th prime]
(4) Numbers 28:17-25	30,364	4 x 7591 [965 th prime] [965 = 5 x 193 [44 th prime]]
(5) Deuteronomy 16:3-8	<u>27,580</u>	10 x 14 x 197 [45 th prime]
Total:	<u>108,882</u>	2 x 9 x 23 x 263 [56 th prime]

The regulations concerning the Feast of Unleavened Bread teach: **“for seven days eat unleavened bread, the bread of affliction, because you left Egypt in haste”** (Deut. 16:3). The meaning of the gematria will

⁴ According to Strong's concordance 'Agape' means 'brotherly love, affection, charity, benevolence'. This is a love that is directed to others, it is not the love of God. The church at Ephesus did not depart from the love of God, it departed from selfless love towards others.

show the focus at the Lord's Supper is to be upon the afflictions of Christ. Passover celebrates the significance of the cross in matters relating to salvation and all the implications of that event to believers and to unbelievers. The Feast of Unleavened Bread is a memorial to the sinless purity and suffering of Christ while he dwelt among us. Meditation on these aspects of Christ's experience brings praise, honor, and glory unto him and humbles our hearts in his presence.

The spiritual meaning of the gematria of the passages above in order:

- (1) The meaning of 40 is "Testing" and the meaning of 43 is "Humiliation". Every day, every hour the Lord was tested. The first book of the New Testament is the 40th book of the bible. At the beginning of his ministry Jesus was tempted by the devil (Matt.4:1) and he was tested daily by the unbelief of those around him, by the rejection of the leaders of the Jewish religion, by the falling away of disciples at his hard teachings, and by many other things. The humiliation of the Lord must have been crushing. He came to those who were his own but they did not receive him. He was born in an animal shed. He was mocked for his regional accent and roots. He spoke the truth and the Jews in his home town were ready to throw him off a cliff. He healed the sick and gave sight to the blind, he fed the multitude, he answered the lawyers hard questions, but he was not heralded as the Messiah he was nailed to a cross beside convicted criminals;
- (2) The index of the prime number 1,091 is 182, which is $2 \times 7 \times 13$. This can be arranged as 7×26 . The meaning of 7 is "fullness" and the meaning of 26 is "gospel". The other factors in the gematria of the phrase are 2 and 3, or 2×3 equals 6. The meaning of 6 is "man". Putting all the meanings together we get: "O man! The fullness of the gospel". The purpose of the Lord's Supper is to proclaim the Lord's death until he comes. Paraphrased the gematria says "Men everywhere, pay attention! The Lord has shown us what a life filled with the Spirit of God looks like. Good news! We can be changed to be like that";
- (3) The meaning of 117 (9×13) is "Religious but Not Redeemed" and the meaning of 97 is "Fire Burns the Enemies". The Son of God walked into the holy land at a time when it was full of fervently religious people. The Pharisees were so fastidious about following God's laws they tithed the herbs that grew in their garden. The people who weren't Pharisees admired them. Part of the awful suffering and agony of the Lord must have been his compassion for these souls combined with the frightful awareness that they would not accept him and would therefore reap the consequences. Jesus wept for Jerusalem. He knew the destruction that would befall that city and he knew the eternal destiny of Christ rejecting souls;
- (4) The number 44 means "blood thirsty murderers", the number 5 means "life", and the number 4 means "message". When the elders and priests of the Jews decided to put Jesus on trial and condemn him, their goal was to destroy the leader of the Nazarene sect and scatter the followers. "Strike the shepherd and the sheep will be scattered" (Matt. 26:31). "Caiaphas was the one who had advised the Jews it would be good if one man died for the people" (John 18:14). "Then the chief priests and the elders of the people assembled in the palace of the high priest, whose name was Caiaphas, and they plotted to arrest Jesus in some sly way and kill him." (Matt. 26:3). How much did it pain the Lord to know he had performed miracles to bring the

Jews out of Egypt and had set aside a most privileged position for the priests. Here they were plotting to kill him. As time passed their intention became to wipe out his followers as well (Acts 8:1). The message we learn from these events is the Jewish religion presented itself to the world as the champion of righteousness and God's truth but in fact it had become a diabolical cloister of powerful men capable of taking the lives of innocent people to achieve its ends (Acts 7:51-53). They loved their position and their religion: they cared nothing for God. Jesus cared nothing for religion and position: He loved the Father to the uttermost;

- (5) The number 140 (10 x 14) means "Contention", and the number 45 means "Preserved". In spite of all the contention Jesus experienced he preserved his integrity to the end. They were for war but he was a man of peace. They came to him with swords, ravings and rage. Jesus repaired the hurt ear of the servant of the high priest and blessed his enemies.
- (6) The sum of the gematria of the five passages is 108,882. The prime factors are 2, 9, 23, 263 [56th prime]. This can be arranged as 9 x 46 x 263 [56]. The meaning of 56 is "hard heart", the meaning of 9 is "Judgment" and the meaning of 46 is "reconstructed man", i.e. a born again believer. Thus the spiritual meaning can be translated: "Reconstructed Man – Judge Thyself: Beware of a Hard Heart". This is entirely in the spirit of the teaching on observing the Lord's Supper (1 Cor. 11:28-29).

As a footnote to this study, we note there are exactly 25 verses in the Torah pertaining to regulations concerning the Feast of Unleavened Bread. The number 25 means "forgiveness of sins". The Lord Jesus has forgiven your sins. Any soul that has been saved and has observed the Lord's Supper is conscious that a precious life was given up to pay for those sins. In your Christian community, it is imperative that you forgive the sins of others, and that you do everything in your power to ensure there is no one in the body of Christ who has not forgiven you. There are 5 passages. The number 5 means "life". For life to thrive in the body of Christ there must be continual forgiveness.