

The Festival of Unleavened Bread Part 2

Part 2: The Festival of Unleavened Bread

Introduction

The question arises have the rules for observance of the week of unleavened bread changed post Mashiach? Let us remind ourselves of what is stipulated in the Torah,

Seven days you shall eat unleavened bread. Indeed on the first day you cause leaven to cease from your houses. For whoever eats leavened bread from the first day until the seventh day, that being shall be cut off from Israel. (Exod.12:15).

Seven days you shall eat unleavened bread, and the seventh day shall be a festival to YHWH. Unleavened bread shall be eaten seven days; and no leavened bread shall be seen with you, and leaven is not to be seen with you within all your border. (Exod.13:6-7).

There first passage bans the presence of leaven from the home whereas the second passage goes further banning leaven from anywhere within Israel's territory for a complete week. If we are to comply with YHWH's decree, we need to understand exactly what leaven is and from YHWH's concept. What we can say is that leaven is not unclean, if this were the case there would be a complete prohibition against it. From a modern perspective leaven is defined as: a substance that causes fermentation and expansion of dough or batter. Leavening agents are yeast, baking powder, baking soda (sodium bicarbonate) and potassium bicarbonate. Other ingredients that are sometimes confused with leaven include brewer's yeast, yeast extract, torula yeast, autolyzed yeast, cream of tartar and corn-starch. None of these are leavening agents.

In the Scriptures the term 'leaven' is generally used in a negative sense, reflecting unrighteousness or false doctrine. But this is not always the case, in Matt.13:33 Mashiach compares the kingdom of heaven to leaven. Here Mashiach is comparing the expansion qualities of leaven with the growth of His kingdom. However, insofar as the 'Feast of Unleavened Bread' is concerned leaven is used in the negative sense,

Therefore, let us keep the feast, not with old leaven, neither with the leaven of malice and wickedness but with the unleavened bread of sincerity and truth. (1Cor.5:8).

But both Mashiach and the apostle are talking in spiritual terms, which does not appear to be the case in the earlier passages from Exodus. So, how are we to interpret Exodus 13 post Mashiach, has this decree taken on a different application for Believers? The crux of the matter is, was there always a spiritual context concerning the term 'leaven, or was this context introduced by Mashiach?' This would appear to be the case. Because wherever the term leaven is used in the Torah (Law) it is used in a literal sense. So today, how should we interpret the term 'leaven' literally, spiritually or do both concepts apply?

If we apply a wholly spiritual concept to the week of unleavened bread it would permit us to eat the Pesach with leavened bread, there would be no need to purge the home of any material leaven and no need to change our diet for this festival. In fact, we would have reduced this festival to a single meal and nothing more and that seems hardly credible. Can the above verse from 1 Corinthians be interpreted to mean this? Is Paul really eliminating the removal of all material leaven from the home as is Jewish custom? I don't believe this to be the case, rather, I feel the apostle is clarifying the spiritual meaning of leaven and stipulating what is a correct character for participating in this festival. Paul cannot be changing the rules for this festival because what is described in the above verse is the 'lifestyle' all Believers should be following. Thus, the verse cannot apply just for this one week of the year. This fact alone detracts from the understanding that the rules for removing leaven as given in the Torah have changed post Mashiach. Paul is not introducing anything new with this verse, he is merely reiterating what is and has always been, the proper manner for executing this festival. Nowhere within his epistles does the apostle advocate a change to the common interpretation and Jewish custom requiring the removal of all material leaven from the home for the week of this festival.

A Week of Matzah (Unleavened Bread)

But what is the reason for the week of matzah and why is it specifically seven days? Whilst Scripture explains the relevance of leaven and tells us how we are to spend this week of unleavened bread, Scripture fails to explain the relevance behind this command. I can only therefore provide my own belief and leave it for the reader to come to his/her own decision.

Blessed and set-apart is the one having part in the first resurrection, they shall be priests of Elohim and of Mashiach, and shall reign with Him a thousand years. (Rev.20:6).

Resurrection is referring to Mashiach gathering His body at the end of this age and not the resurrection of the dead at the end of the millennium described in 1Cor.15:20-28 and 1Thess.4:16-17. This verse in Revelation correlates with the words of the apostle

But you are a chosen race, a royal priesthood, a set-apart nation, a people for a possession, that you should proclaim the praises of Him who called you out of darkness into His marvelous light. (1Pet.2:9).

I believe, for us, the week of unleavened bread is associated with our ordination as priest under the Malkizedek priesthood in accordance with the rules set by YHWH for the anointing of priests,

“And you shall anoint Aharon and his sons, and set them apart, to serve as priests to Me. (Exod.30:30).

“And so, you shall do to Aharon and his sons, according to all I have commanded you. Seven days you shall ordain them, (Exod.29:35).

Leviticus chapter 8 describes the ordination of Aharon and his sons as the priests of Israel, but it is YHWH's instructions to Aharon in verse 33 we need to examine,

“And do not go outside the door of the Tent of Meeting for seven days, until the days of your ordination are completed – for he fills your hands for seven days. YHWH has commanded to do, as he has done this day, to make atonement for you. “And stay at the door of the Tent of Meeting day and night for seven days. And you shall guard the duty of YHWH and not die, for so I have been commanded.”(Lev.8:33).

It is my opinion that this was a week of purification specific to the priesthood and applicable to all entering the priesthood. Could it be that the seven days was a time of spiritual cleansing for the priests to attain the special level of holiness entitling them to enter the sacred parts of the temple (The holy Place and the Most Holy Place)? This premise finds support in a passage from Hebrews,

For by a single offering, He has brought to the goal for all time those who are being set apart for Elohim and made holy. And the Ruach HaKodesh (Holy Spirit) too bears witness to us; for after saying, “This is the covenant which I will make with them after those days,” says YHWH, “I will put My Torah on their hearts and write it on their minds.” He then adds, “And their sins and their wickedness I will remember no more.” Now where there is forgiveness for these an offering for sins is no longer needed. So, brothers, we have confidence to use the way into the Holiest Place opened by the blood of Yahusha. (Heb.10:14-18)

Only the priests were holy enough to enter the ‘holy place’ in the temple, thus they had to be the holiest of all Israel. It is no different for us as Malkizedekian priests of Mashiach. Unlike Aharon who commenced his priestly duties straight away we remain in a state of apprenticeship until Mashiach collects us into the land. Until we receive our rejuvenated bodies (Isa.65:17, 20, 22), not received until we enter the land, we are susceptible to the flesh and therefore need to undergo spiritual cleansing/purity and a refreshing of ordination annually. As priests we are to be most holy and a passage from Luke is most relevant,

For everyone to whom much is given, from him much will be required; and to whom much has been committed, of him they will ask the more. (Luke 12:48).

Conclusion

The 'Week of Unleavened Bread' is symbolic of the purification of the priesthood and we (Torah keeping Believers- the true 'body of Mashiach) are to be a 'nation of priests 1Pet.2:9. This will not be until the return of the high priest Himself. Upon His appearance at the culmination of this age Mashiach will collect His 'body of Believers and transport them to His place of safety whilst YHWH pours out His wrath upon the earth. The result of YHWH's wrath will be the removal of all unrighteousness and a completely renewed earth. Then Mashiach will supernaturally bring His 'Body' back and locate them in the Land where they will reign with Him for a thousand years as His nation of priests. The week of unleavened bread is an annual reminder of our destiny.

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