

Why Do We Count Seven Weeks?

One of the arguments for a Sunday Pentecost is that it needs to be counted every year, because the date can vary from year to year. On the other hand, the sixth of Sivan is a fixed date and doesn't need to be counted. What is the real reason that we are commanded to count seven weeks? Is it just to determine the date? What is the meaning of the seven weeks?

Cutting a Covenant

The number seven is Strong's 7651. It is from 7650, "to seven oneself, i.e. to swear (as if by repeating a declaration seven times)." *The Brown-Driver-Briggs Hebrew and English Lexicon* translates it, "to seven oneself, or bind oneself by seven things." *Wilson's Old Testament Word Studies* says, "oaths were confirmed either by seven victims offered in sacrifice, or by seven witnesses and pledges." *The Ancient Hebrew Lexicon of the Bible* says, "A common practice was to make seven declarations when making an oath. This declaration can be making the oath seven times or doing seven things to show the sincerity of the oath."

When Abraham and Abimelech had a dispute over a well, "Abraham took sheep and oxen, and gave them unto Abimelech; and both of them made [3772, *cut*] a covenant [1285, *a compact made by passing between the pieces of the sacrifice*]" (Gen. 21:27). Abraham set seven ewe lambs off by themselves, and Abimelech asked, "...What mean these seven ewe lambs... And [Abraham] said, For these seven ewe lambs shall you take of my hand, that they may be a witness [5713, *testimony*] to me that I have dug this well. Wherefore he called that place Beer-sheba [from 875, *well*, and 7650, *oath*] because there they sware [7650] both of them. Thus they made [3772, *cut*] a covenant [1285] at Beer-sheba [*Well of the oath*]..." (vv. 29 -32).

The idea of passing between the parts of the sacrifice is that if one of the parties fails to keep the covenant, then the other party may do the same to them as was done to the sacrifice. We have an example of that in Jeremiah 34. King Zedekiah had "cut a covenant" with the people that they should let their Hebrew slaves go free (vv. 8, 9). The people agreed, and then reneged on the agreement (vv. 11, 12).

The Eternal said, "I will give the men that have transgressed My covenant [1285, *cutting a compact*], which have not performed the words of the covenant [1285] which they had made [3772, *cut*] before Me, when they cut [3772] the calf in twain [8147, *two*], and passed between the parts thereof...I will even give them into the hand of their enemies... and their dead bodies shall be meat to the fowls of heaven, and to the beasts of the earth" (vv. 18, 20). When you make an agreement, God says you are bound by the terms of that agreement.

The seven weeks that we are commanded to count are our declaration that we will keep the covenant. If a person willfully breaks the covenant, then they "...have trodden underfoot the Son of God, and **have counted the blood of the covenant, wherewith he was sanctified, an unholy**

thing, and have done despite [1796, *insulted*] to the Spirit of grace” (Hebrews 10:29).

The “Covenant of Promise” that the Eternal cut with Abraham is tied directly to Passover. Abram was told to take a heifer, a she-goat, and a ram, each of them “... three years old, and a turtledove, and a young pigeon. And he ... divided them in the midst ... but the birds he divided not ... And when the sun was going down, a deep sleep fell upon Abram ...” (Gen. 15:9, 10, 12). A “deep sleep” symbolizes death.

The “going down of the sun” is the time of the Passover sacrifice. On the 14th of Abib the people were to “... sacrifice the Passover at even, at the going down of the sun ...” (Deuteronomy 16:6). The sun begins going down just past noon, and continues going down until sunset. The “going down of the sun” is the same time of day as “between the evenings,” which corresponds to the ninth hour in the New Testament. It is mid-afternoon, and corresponds to the death of “Christ our Passover” at the ninth hour, the mid-point between solar noon and sunset. Abram, in this instance, is a type of the Messiah.

While Abram was in “deep sleep,” the Eternal said to him, “... thy seed shall be a stranger in a land that is not theirs, and shall serve them; and they shall afflict them four hundred years; and also that nation, whom they shall serve, will I judge: and afterward shall they come out with great substance” (Gen. 15:13, 14).

Continue with verse 17. “And it came to pass, that, when **the sun went down**, and it was dark, behold a smoking furnace, and a burning lamp that passed between those pieces. In that same day the LORD made [3772, cut] a covenant with Abram, saying, To thy seed I have given this land ...” (vv.17, 18). Notice that it was after “the sun went down, and it was dark,” which shows that the “going down of the sun” was prior to sunset. That night the Eternal God passed between the pieces of the sacrifices, confirming the covenant with Abram.

The promise to Abram points directly to the Passover observance in Egypt. “And it came to pass at the end of four hundred and thirty years, even the **selfsame day** it came to pass, that all the hosts of the LORD went out from the land of Egypt. It is a night to be much observed unto the LORD for bringing them out from the land of Egypt ...” (Ex. 12:41, 42). The “night to be much observed” is the “**selfsame day**” that God had made the covenant with Abram.

The “night to be much observed” is the night of the Passover ceremony. “And it came to pass, that **at midnight** the LORD smote all the firstborn in the land of Egypt...And Pharaoh rose up **in the night**...And he called for Moses and Aaron **by night**, and said, Rise up, and get you forth from among my people....And the Egyptians were urgent upon the people that they might send them out of the land in haste...” (vv. 29-31, 33).

The Eternal God confirmed the covenant with Abram after sunset, when it was dark, by passing between the parts, thus binding Himself to His promises. The sacrifices performed by Abram were on the 14th of Abib, and God passed between the parts after the sun had gone down, and it

was the night of the fifteenth day. The fifteenth is “the selfsame day” that the children of Israel passed between the parts.

When the people of Israel were in Egypt, they were to place the blood of the Passover sacrifice on the doorposts of their dwellings (Exodus 12:7). The Eternal said, “And the blood shall be to you for a token [226, *sign of an agreement between two parties*] upon the houses where you are: and when I see the blood, I will pass over you, and the plague shall not be upon you to destroy you, when I smite the land of Egypt” (v. 13). The blood was the sign of the agreement between God and Israel.

When Israel passed between the bloodied door posts, it typified passing between the parts of the sacrifice. The bloody door represented Jesus Christ. Jesus said, “I am the **door**: by Me if any man enter in, he shall be saved...” (John 10:9). After Jesus was dead, “...one of the soldiers with a spear pierced His side, and forthwith came there out **blood** and water” (John 19:34).

The “covenant of promise” with Abram and the covenant agreed to at Passover in Egypt are one and the same. The first part is the Eternal’s promise of the land, which is a type of our eternal inheritance and eternal life. The second part is the promise of the people to obey the terms of the agreement. Both parties are bound by the agreement, unless it is broken by one of the parties.

Counting the Days

Each year on the day after the Passover ceremony, on the sixteenth of Abib, we begin to count the days between Passover and Pentecost by reading scriptures pertaining to the covenant. Each day we are reminded of our agreement with the Eternal. Not only is Passover a time of thanksgiving for our redemption, but it is also a reminder of our agreeing to the Covenant.

The Covenant is a blessing, and something to be thankful for. “I have longed for thy salvation, O LORD; and your law is my delight [8191, *enjoyment, pleasure*]” (Psalm 119:174). The Eternal’s law guides us in the way that we should walk. “For the commandment is a **lamp**; and the **law is light**; and reproofs [8433, *correction*] of instruction the way of life” (Proverbs 6:23).

God’s law is light because “...God is light, and in Him is no darkness at all. If we say that we have fellowship with Him, and walk in darkness, we lie, and do not the truth. But if we walk in the light, as He is in the light, we have fellowship one with another, and **the blood of Jesus Christ His Son cleanses us from all sin**” (1 John 1:5-7).

Conclusion: Seven weeks (7 x 7) represent a binding agreement between God and man. As we count the days between Passover and Pentecost we are reminded of our agreement. “Let us hear the conclusion of the whole matter: Fear [3372, *revere*] God, and **keep His commandments**: for this is the whole duty of man. For God will bring every work into judgment, with every secret thing, whether it be good, or whether it be evil” (Ecclesiastes 12:13, 14).