

MICHAEL A. DAISE

Feasts in John

*Wissenschaftliche Untersuchungen
zum Neuen Testament 2. Reihe*
229

Mohr Siebeck

Wissenschaftliche Untersuchungen
zum Neuen Testament · 2. Reihe

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229



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Jewish Festivals and Jesus' 'Hour'
in the Fourth Gospel

Mohr Siebeck

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e-ISBN PDF 978-3-16-151572-9

ISBN 978-3-16-149018-7

ISSN 0340-9570 (Wissenschaftliche Untersuchungen zum Neuen Testament, 2. Reihe)

Die Deutsche Nationalbibliothek lists this publication in the Deutsche Nationalbibliographie; detailed bibliographic data is available in the Internet at <http://dnb.d-nb.de>.

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The book was printed by Laupp & Göbel in Nehren on non-aging paper and bound by Buchbinderei Nädele in Nehren.

Printed in Germany.

To Leslie

Preface

This monograph is less a revision of my dissertation than a second work spun from it. That dissertation, written under James H. Charlesworth for Princeton Theological Seminary, treated of traditio-historical and theological issues raised by the *logia* in John 7:37-39, set during the Feast of Tabernacles. Closely related to (and completed simultaneously with) it was a mémoire on formal citations in the Fourth Gospel, written under the late (and missed) Marie-Émile Boismard for the École Biblique et Archéologique Française de Jérusalem. On the subsequent advice of Professor Dr. Martin Hengel, I began to consider how to set the dissertation on John 7 in a larger framework; and, as I did, I alighted on a concept which has proven thesis enough to develop in a single monograph. Consequently, though the hypothesis I present here was conceived after the one on which I received my doctorate, I offer it first.

The gist of its method is to look at the Gospel of John through the lens of Second Temple Jewish festal protocol. From my recent research on Second Temple Jewish ritual I have begun to accrue a *halakhic* grid, of sorts, through which I have noticed features in the Fourth Gospel I had not done before. Two of them – key to this monograph – are the calendrical violation implied by the consumption of barley prior to Passover in John 6:1–15 and the possibility that the Passover in question at John 6 could be, not the First Passover, prescribed in Exodus 12, but the so-called ‘Second’ or ‘Lesser Passover,’ prescribed in Numbers 9. Drawing upon certain plausible, albeit debatable, conventions in Johannine studies (such as the prior inversion of chapters 5 and 6), I discerned a larger scenario on the feasts in the narrative that seems to yield a more fundamental purpose for which they were designed; namely, to serve the motif of Jesus’ “hour” by quantifying its imminence.

For the ability and resource required to write this book I am deeply indebted to numerous people and institutions. To Professor Charlesworth and Father Boismard, for the impetus and nurture, respectively, to pursue Johannine studies. If my review of Fr. Boismard’s specific theory on feasts is somewhat critical, let it also be noted that the very approach I take to the issue in this monograph – that is, as a puzzle to be solved – is *homage* to the methodology I learned from him. Further thanks are due to Professor Dr. Hengel, for counsel on developing my initial work; to series editor

Jörg Frey, for encouragement and flexibility in receiving its end result; to colleagues Christophe Rico of the University of Strasbourg/École Biblique and Crispin H.T. Fletcher-Louis of St. Mary's Bryanston Square, London, for constructive critiques of earlier drafts; and to all members of the Department of Religious Studies at the College of William and Mary, for the supportive context in which I was able to complete the work.

The Israel Antiquities Authority granted me permission to access *11QTemple Scroll* and several other Qumran fragments on 10 and 14 July, 2003; and, for that research, the College of William and Mary offered me a Faculty Summer Research Grant in the same year. Dr. Henning Ziebritzki and the editorial staff at Mohr Siebeck furnished the most careful assistance in preparing the final manuscript. The Interlibrary Loan staff of Earl Gregg Swem Library at the College of William and Mary consistently succeeded in accessing my (sometimes obscure) requests for bibliography. And David Grant Smith, a William and Mary alumnus currently at Harvard Divinity School, skillfully formatted the manuscript and prepared its indices.

My deepest debt, however, is owed my wife, Leslie, whose genuine faith in God, unfailing love for me and constant sacrifice of herself have made our home, itself, a temple "in spirit and in truth." To her I dedicate this volume.

Pentecost XVI, 2006

M.A.E.D., Williamsburg

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Chapter 1

Introduction

1.1 Further on the Feasts

In this inquiry, I will argue that the feasts in John once served a purpose yet unnoticed in Johannine scholarship.

This is not to deny what has been noticed about them. Six feasts are listed in the Fourth Gospel: a (first) Passover, introduced at 2:13; an anonymous festival at 5:1; a (second) Passover at 6:4; the Feast of Tabernacles at 7:2; the Feast of Dedication at 10:22–23; and a final Passover at 11:55. No less than nine exegetes have made proposals about the collective significance and purpose of these feasts; and, from these proposals have come several enduring insights – that they furnish commemorative symbolism for Johannine christology¹; that, from a *halakhic*/calendrical point of view, they are of a piece with the Fourth Gospel’s Sabbath episodes²; and, most recently, that they enjoy an interface with the motif of Jesus’ ‘hour’ as a tandem form of periodization.³ My contention, rather, is that, alongside these (and other) purposes served by the festivals – and in an earlier phase of the Fourth Gospel’s composition history – lay a more fundamental aim, now eclipsed by the current form of the text.

¹ Mollat 1953; 1960; 1973.

² Yee 1989.

³ Destro and Pesce 1995a; 1995b; 1997; 2000; Pesce 2001. For further detail on all three of these views, see Chapter 3, ‘3.1.2 ‘Les jalons de ce récit,’ Donatien Mollat’; ‘3.1.4 Johannine ‘*Takkanot*,’ Gale A. Yee’; and ‘3.3 Anthropological Theory: ‘*Tempo Sociale*’ to the ‘*Tempo Diverso*’ of Jesus’ ‘Hour,’ Adriana Destro and Mauro Pesce,’ respectively. In that chapter, these and other hypotheses are rehearsed and assessed in more detail.

1.2 Guiding Assumptions, Points of Departure and Thesis

1.2.1 Guiding Assumptions

I build my hypothesis on several *a priori* exegetical decisions. First, that, in an earlier stage of the Fourth Gospel's compositional history, chapters 5 and 6 were inverted.⁴ Debate over the Gospel of John's diachronic development has generated a plethora of theories – accidental displacement, unfinished editing, the compilation of sources, a succession of editions, a final redaction⁵; and all things being equal, I share the agnosticism expressed by some about ever determining which of these hypotheses, if any, is correct.⁶ I am, however, willing to entertain any proposal (or part of a proposal) if other factors from the text strongly lend themselves to it; and, with the case I am about to make below, I find such factors present for the prior inversion of John 5 and 6.

Second, I assume that, in its earlier stage(s), the Fourth Gospel was written from a perspective astutely knowledgeable about Judaism. That is, however Hellenized or theologically removed from Judaism its final editor(s) may have been or become, the Fourth Gospel's earliest author – the Evangelist – knew the religion of Judaism intimately and integrated that knowledge deeply into his narrative. James H. Charlesworth conceives this early awareness (quite plausibly) within a diachronic hypothesis of two editions, putting the turn between the earlier Judaic and later phases during the siege of Jerusalem circa 68–70 C.E.⁷ But, whether the literary development of the Fourth Gospel came through successive editions or other means – and whether a turning point can be circumscribed so precisely to the end of the First Jewish War against Rome or not – I assume as my second guiding principle that, in its earlier phase(s), the Gospel of John was crafted within a Jewish/Palestinian milieu by an author intimately acquainted with Judaism.

Further, I assume that this awareness of Judaism lies latent in the narrative unless otherwise indicated; and, similarly, that it extends as much to *halakhoth* as it does to ideology. That is to say, except for cases in the text where a breach is made and stated – such as Jesus' breaking of the Sabbath

⁴ Details on scholarly discussion about this reversal follow in Chapter 2, under '2.2 The Unnamed Feast and a Second Passover (John 5:1–6:71).'

⁵ See on this the review by Werner Kümmel 1973:167–83.

⁶ See Kümmel's further comments on what can(not) be concluded from transposition and redaction-critical theories; 1973:177. Cf. also the doubts expressed by Jörg Frey over the degree of disunity actually created by *aporias* (whatever their source), as well as over the justification for ascribing extensive passages in the Fourth Gospel to anyone but the Evangelist himself; 2002:183–86.

⁷ Charlesworth 2002b:73–77, 89–94, 102–109. Charlesworth allows that both editions may have been written by the same author (p. 77).

in chapters 5 and 9 – I expect that the author has cast Jewish life more or less as Judaism prescribed it, and that this Jewish life embraces, not only belief, but praxis.

1.2.2 Points of Departure

1.2.2.1 Barley and Passover

From these assumptions I take two points of departure. The first is a temporal tension that arises in the feeding of the five thousand episode (6:1–15) when the Passover at 6:4 is read as a regular Passover, observed on 14 Nisan. As that episode begins, its Passover is introduced, not as having arrived, but as being imminent: “And the Passover, the feast of the Jews, was near” (6:4). The bread used to feed the five thousand, however, is distinctly described as having been baked from barley: unlike Synoptic counterparts to the story, which make no mention of the type of grain used, the Johannine account has Andrew specifically saying, “There is a youth here who has five barley loaves (πέντε ἄρτους κριθίνους) and two fish. But what are these for so many?” (6:9).

The problem is not agricultural – fresh barley would have been available (and in fact was harvested) in Nisan. Rather, it is *halakhic*. According to the law of *ḥadaš* (new produce), prescribed in Leviticus 23:11–15, new barley (or any new produce) could not be consumed for non-cultic purposes until its first sheaf had been offered at the temple; yet, in the Jewish liturgical year, the day of that offering – the Waving of the ‘Omer – would have necessarily post-dated Passover. The Waving of the ‘Omer was slated for “the day after the Sabbath” following Passover; and, though there was some debate over which precise Sabbath was in view, all possible options follow, rather than precede, 14 Nisan. Since, in John 6, barley is already being used for such non-cultic purposes (baking), yet Passover has not yet come but is only “near,” a calendrical conflict emerges; and this, in turn, begs for resolution.

Several solutions present themselves (to be reviewed below); but I will suggest that the least problematic among them is to read the Passover at 6:4, not as a regular Passover, observed on 14 Nisan (the first month of the Jewish calendar), but as the Passover prescribed in Numbers 9:9–14, observed on 14 'Iyyar (the second month of the Jewish calendar). In Qumran and Rabbinic sources, this Passover is dubbed the ‘Second’ (פסח שני) or ‘Lesser Passover’ (Hebrew/קטן פסח; Aramaic/זעירא פסח); but, in Numbers 9 (and Philo Judaeus), it is simply called ‘Passover,’ distinguished from the regular Passover only by the month in which it is celebrated. Reading John 6 thus pushes the date of its Passover back one month into 'Iyyar, allowing the regular Passover and the Waving of the

‘Omer to have already passed and, thereby, legitimating the secular (non-cultic) use of barley at 6:9.

If this seems a thin basis on which to predicate such a novel reading, it is buttressed by three further features of the Passover in 'Iyyar that also fit snugly with the Johannine context. First, the Priestly tradition implicitly associates Passover in 'Iyyar with the manna tradition, on which John 6 largely turns: the Exodus manna episode dates the first giving of manna to Israel “on the fifteenth day of the second month from their going out from the land of Egypt” (Exodus 16:1). Second, the conditional observance of Passover in 'Iyyar accounts for the absence of any mention of Jesus making pilgrimage in John 6. Passover in 'Iyyar was a contingent festival, only to be observed if the First (regular) Passover was missed (due to impurity or distance from the cult). Rabbinic tradition, in fact, discouraged such attempts. If Jesus had already celebrated Passover in Nisan (as is readily inferred), there would be no need for him to do so again in John 6. Third – and the factor that leads to my thesis on the larger purpose of feasts – when John 5 and 6 are inverted (and 6:4 is read as Passover in 'Iyyar), the feasts in John arrange themselves into a chronological schema that implies intent. The full order of feasts (and their times) would now be: the Passover at 2:13 (14 Nisan), the Passover at 6:4 (14 'Iyyar), the unnamed feast at 5:1 (???), Tabernacles at 7:2 (15–22 Tishri), Dedication at 10:22–23 (25 Kislev) and Passover at 11:55 (14 Nisan). As for the unnamed feast at 5:1, the temporal proximity required between the events of John 5 and those of John 7 (to be elaborated below) suggests that, whatever its precise identity may have been, it is more likely than not to have occurred within the several month period that would have passed if the Tabernacles after it (Tishri) followed the Second Passover before it ('Iyyar) in the same year. This effectively puts the feasts into a chronological sequence, spanning a single year – a design, which, in turn, implies intent.

1.2.2.2 Feasts and Jesus' 'Hour'

My second point of departure is an insight made by University of Bologna professors Adriana Destro and Mauro Pesce; namely, that, in John 2–12, the temporal rhythm designated by the feasts has an interface with the temporal rhythm designated by Jesus' 'hour.' The motif of Jesus' 'hour' operates dynamically in chapters 2–12: though it arrives during the last Passover, in John 12 (12:23, 27; 13:1; 17:1), it is introduced as being imminent just before the first Passover, in John 2 (2:4); and, between the two, it is cast as growing increasingly so near as to have essentially already come (4:21–23; 5:25; cf. 16:31–32). Destro and Pesce see the relationship of this 'hour' to the feasts as part of a grand dialectic operating between the rites of the Jesus and Johannine movements, on the one hand, and those of John

the Baptist, the Samaritans and, especially, the Jews, on the other.⁸ In this dialectic, Jesus' 'hour' represents an "alternate time" (*tempo diverso*) to the "social time" (*tempo sociale*) of the Jewish festivals; and, as it progresses toward its culmination, this "alternate time" of Jesus' 'hour' ushers Jesus' followers away from the "social time" of the feasts into itself.⁹

I am persuaded of this interface seen by Destro and Pesce; but, given the peculiar features of the festal sequence reconstructed above, I modify it in two ways. First, since the feasts included in that sequence do not represent all (major) festivals of the Jewish calendar, the schema is better explained as a chain of temporal indicators, marking months and seasons, than as a full liturgical calendar. And second, since those festivals unfold sequentially during the same period in which Jesus' 'hour' is said to be growing ever nearer, their relationship to that 'hour' is better understood as service than as dialectic. More precisely, I will argue that, in this earlier stage of the Fourth Gospel's development (when chapters 5 and 6 were reversed), the feasts fundamentally functioned to accentuate Jesus' 'hour' by quantifying its imminence till it arrived.

1.3 Caveat and Outline

1.3.1 *The Force of the Argument*

It is not lost on me that many premises in this argument will prove contestable. At almost every exegetical turn I have been painfully aware that there are other options available than the ones I have chosen – not all of them so improbable (or less preferable) as to render my interpretive decisions necessary. John 5 and 6, for instance, may not have been inverted in an earlier stage. Or, to anticipate other decisions, the "nearness" of the Passover at 6:4 may connote "just passed" rather than "imminent"; the barley loaves at 6:9 may represent old rather than freshly harvested grain; John 6 may not, in fact, have Exodus 16:1 in view; and 4:35 may date the Samaritan episode to Kislev rather than 'Iyyar.

But, if my thesis is not compelling in its parts, it is suggestive as a whole; and therein, I hope, will lie some contribution to Johannine studies. Its premises may not be necessary, but neither are they implausible; and,

⁸ Destro and Pesce 1995a:79–106; 1995b:89–99; 2000:6–24.

⁹ Destro-Pesce 1995a:77–82, 100–106; 1995b:87–88; 2000:5–12, 16–21, 118–20; Pesce 2001:55–56 (cf. Destro and Pesce 1997:112–26). The full hypothesis of Destro and Pesce is treated in detail in Chapter 3, '3.3 Anthropological Theory: *'Tempo Sociale'* to the *'Tempo Diverso'* of Jesus' 'Hour,' Adriana Destro and Mauro Pesce,' and Chapter 5, '5.2.3 Destro and Pesce Revisited.'

when bound together into the scenario argued here, they may prove apt to catalyze constructive discussion.

1.3.2 *The Development of the Argument*

I will develop this thesis in four major steps. First, I will review the feasts themselves, as they appear in the narrative (Chapter 2). I will examine all six explicitly mentioned feasts, as well as two implicitly operative ones (the Feast of Unleavened Bread and the Waving of the 'Omer). And, for each, I will give particular attention to (a) the extent of episodes covered (that is, the duration of each feast in narrative time) and (b) the diachronic issues affecting that coverage in the current text and in putative earlier strata.

Second (Chapter 3), I will examine the array of theories thus far proposed for the purpose(s) of the feasts. Here, I will only treat efforts that have engaged all six feasts (not merely, for instance, those that deal with the feasts between John 5–12). And, as I do, I will find them to reflect three distinct conceptions of the role feasts play: (a) literary, in which the feasts are alleged to function as structuring or hermeneutical devices for the narrative; (b) liturgical, in which the feasts are thought to calibrate the narrative to Johannine worship; and (c) anthropological, in which the feasts are understood to represent and facilitate the Jewish institutional matrix from which Johannine Christianity emerged.

Third (Chapter 4), I will develop the thesis just proposed in greater detail. The temporal tension surfacing in John 6, some options for resolving it, the possibility of reading 6:4 as the Passover in 'Iyyar and the corroboration such a reading enjoys from the Johannine narrative – all will be elaborated, with particular attention given to attestations of the Second Passover in Second Temple and Tannaitic sources.

Finally (Chapter 5), I will apply the sequence reconstructed in Chapter 4 to the purpose of feasts in John as a whole. I pause to note the implication of this sequence for an issue plaguing studies in Christian Origins – the *Praedicatio Domini*: the one year span of that sequence offers a more text-critically viable hypothesis than has been done for aligning the Johannine chronology of Jesus' public ministry with the chronology implied in the Synoptics and espoused by early Christian writers. I devote the lion's share of attention, however, to working out the implications of this sequence for the purpose of feasts in John. I note their role as temporal markers, trace the motif of Jesus' 'hour,' then show the one (feasts) to have functioned in service to the other ('hour'): feasts brought Jesus' 'hour' into relief by quantifying its growing imminence in John 2–12. I end by rehearsing four ramifications this thesis carries for reading the feasts in the current state of the text: the Second Passover at 6:4 remains such in the final version; but

the single year chronological sequence is now reconfigured, the feast at 5:1 no longer has moorings by which it can be identified and much of the temporal momentum that once drove the theology of Jesus' 'hour' has now been weakened.

1.4 Sources and Style

1.4.1 Israelite and Tannaitic Data

Before I begin, several notes on certain sources, editions and editorial choices.

First, on two ostensibly anachronistic sources. If the final redaction of the Fourth Gospel dates to the late first century C.E., the period in question for this work (which includes earlier strata) spans circa 60–95 CE.¹⁰ In the course of discussion, I cite two sets of information that may seem out of range for such a span: agricultural data from Iron Age Israel¹¹; and both agricultural and *halakhic* data from Tannaitic tradition. The second of these two does not typically pose a problem for Johannine studies, since it is generally accepted that John came to its final form in the first decades of the Tannaim and, further, that it was likely written in the face of their reforms. But, inasmuch as this study reaches back to earlier (pre-70) strata in John – and given that (primarily) Tannaitic literature may still postdate the late first century (and even include Amoraic tradition) – the question of relevance obtains.

On the first – agricultural data from the Iron Age – the evidence I cite by and large concerns agricultural *conditions*, not agricultural *practices*, in ancient Israel: while the latter would have changed somewhat between the tenth century B.C.E. and the first century C.E., the former would not have¹² and, so, remain relevant into the period of this inquiry. Moreover, the (relatively modest) points I make from these earlier data will all be corroborated by both Second Temple and Rabbinic sources – from direct research into primary texts and from the important work of Yehuda Feliks, *Agriculture in the Land of Israel in the Period of Mishnah and Talmud* (1963/Hebrew).

As for Tannaitic sources, four observations on their usage: (1) as just mentioned, the agricultural data I cite from them will enjoy corroboration reaching back into the Second Temple period; (2) similarly, with a few ex-

¹⁰ Here I follow the dates circumscribed by Charlesworth 2002b:73–91.

¹¹ Specifically, from Oded Borowski's work (1987).

¹² See Zohary 1982:15, 36, 41; Borowski 1987:xxi; Scott 1993:20, 198n41. My thanks to Professor Oded Borowski for confirming this point in a personal communication, 24 May, 2005.

ceptions (for instance, references for the intercalation of a “second ‘Adar”), the *halakhic* passages I cite – for the Waving of the ‘Omer, the law of *hadaš*, the Passover in ‘Iyyar – will also enjoy confirmation from Second Temple sources; (3) these *halakhic* traditions, further, will all be found to presuppose a standing temple and cult, thus, arguably predating 70 C.E.; and, (4) even if some of the passages I reference represent late second century (or Amoraic) tradition, I offer enough data for each item that the general point being made should still hold.

1.4.2 Translations and Editions

All translations of non-English texts, ancient and modern, are mine. Editions of non-biblical texts will be cited in footnotes with their first usage. And, as for editions of biblical texts, for the Masoretic text (MT), I use Elliger and Rudolph 1983; for the Septuagint (LXX), Rahlfs, Ziegler and Wevers 1931–(1993) where editions are available, Rahlfs 1979, where they are not; and, for the New Testament (NA²⁷), Aland, Aland, Karavidopoulos, Martini and Metzger 1993.

1.4.3 Editing Choices

Except where passages in the Gospel of John can be confused with those of other works, I cite them only by chapter and verse. Further, though I am aware of the ambiguity and nuance attending the term οἱ Ἰουδαῖοι in the Fourth Gospel, I am also persuaded that its broad usage (for Galileans [6:41, 52] or common folk, not just leaders [8:30–31]) precludes it being translated narrowly as “Judeans” or “Jewish authorities”; and, so, for the sake of consistency and clarity, I gloss it simply as “the Jews.” Moreover, unless I am engaging terminology used by someone else, I have chosen to reference the feasts, not by their Hebrew titles, but by their Hellenistic or Anglicized designations: Passover for *Pesaḥ*; the Feast of Unleavened Bread (or Azyma) for *Maššot*; Pentecost for *Šavu‘ot*; Tabernacles for *Sukkot*; the Day of Atonement for *Yom Kippurim*; and the Feast of Dedication for *Hanukkah*. I also indicate the first of the seventh month as the Feast of Remembrance, not *Ro‘š Haššanaḥ*.

Chapter 2

Feasts in the Narrative of the Fourth Gospel

2.1 The First Passover (John 2:13–3:21)

To provide context for the ensuing discussion, I will first rehearse the Johannine feasts as they appear in the narrative. My interest is two-fold: to demarcate episodes that, in narrative time (not literary structure), occur within the observance of those feasts; and to articulate redaction-critical issues attending those episodes.¹

The first feast to appear in the narrative is a Passover. Introduced at 2:13, it furnishes the backdrop for Jesus' activities at least through 2:13–25. While it is “near,” Jesus makes pilgrimage to Jerusalem (2:13), protests vending in the temple (2:14–17) and addresses opposition to that protest (2:18–22); and while it is in process – that is, “during the feast” – he performs signs that evoke faith among many (2:23–25). This context likely penetrates further, however, into Jesus' interview with Nicodemus in chapter 3. No evident hiatus occurs between that interview and the events of chapter 2 before it; and the signs at which Nicodemus marvels in 3:2 best refer to those Jesus was said to have been doing during the feast at 2:23–25:

And as he was in Jerusalem during the Passover, during the feast, many believed on his name, beholding his signs, which he was doing (αὐτοῦ τὰ σημεῖα ἃ ἐποίησεν). . . (Nicodemus) came to him by night and said to him, “Rabbi, we know that you have come from God as a teacher; for no one can do these signs which you are doing (ταῦτα τὰ σημεῖα. . . ἃ σὺ ποιεῖς) unless God is with him.”²

This would mean that Jesus' observance of the Passover in Jerusalem extended to Passover proper and perhaps beyond the first day of Unleavened Bread (15 Nisan), into the seven day observance that immediately followed.

¹ For the full complex of recognized aporiahs in the Fourth Gospel, on which much of the discussion in this chapter depends, see the summaries by Menoud 1947:12–13; Howard 1955:111–14; and Kümmel 1973:170–71.

² John 2:23; 3:2.