

# Herbs of Bitterness

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Exodus 12; Colossians 3:19

As the children of Israel prepared to depart the land of Egypt, God gave them very specific instructions regarding the institution of the Passover (Exodus 12). Each household was to roast an unblemished male lamb of the first year and eat it with unleavened bread and bitter herbs. It was to be eaten with haste, which explains the roasting and the unleavened bread. But why bitter herbs? It has been suggested that the bitter herbs were representative of the sorrow and toil they endured while enslaved in Egypt. The sweetness of the lamb of their Passover was to overcome this bitterness. At each subsequent observance of this feast, the reminder of hard times and their deliverance was brought before those who ate.

One thing is certain, when sweet and bitter flavors are mixed together, a great contrast is present. With some foods, this can be an appealing combination. Depending on the desired taste, one of the flavors is allowed to overpower the other. The aftertaste leaves behind a reminder of that which was dominate. To many, acquiring such a combination is regarded as a form of art.

Such contrasts are evident between people, as well. In any relationship, the emotions of sweetness and bitterness may not only be intermixed, but they may serve as regular reminders of good and bad times gone by. Some even strive to bring these reminders (especially those of bitterness) to the attention of the senses whenever possible. Things that should be allowed to pass from memory are brought forth, be it constantly or occasionally, as a bitter aftertaste of memory.

This sort of attitude is a possibility (and sadly, often a reality) between friends, neighbors, coworkers, and families. The “herbs of bitterness” possess the ability to dominate the fruits of love, joy, and peace and to ultimately destroy any union of kindness. Particularly hard hit are marriages.

Perhaps this is why Paul wrote in Colossians 3:19: *“Husbands, love your wives, and be not bitter against them.”* It is a devastating shame when families are torn asunder by bitterness while displaying the façade of lovingkindness. The gentle prompt toward affection and devotion is aimed at overcoming these caustic temptations.

The flavors of charity and forgiveness ought to be promoted as governing influences. As long as the “herbs of bitterness” keep being thrown into the recipes of relationships, the forgiving spirit of God and His lovingkindness will be perpetually overshadowed.

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“Hatred stirreth up strifes: but love covereth all sins” (Proverbs 10:12)