

**November 11, 2018 - Lev. 23:1–44 - The Feasts of the Lord**  
**Torah Reading: Leviticus 23:1–44 - The Feasts of the Lord**  
**Psalm 87**  
**Haftarah: Joshua 5:11 – 6:4, 27**

**Leviticus 23:1-2** - "And the LORD spake unto Moses, saying, Speak unto the children of Israel, and say unto them, Concerning the feasts of the LORD, which ye shall proclaim to be holy convocations, even these are my feasts."

Besides these stated reasons for the festivals, each one points to Christ in some way, and He fulfilled them all. The seven major feasts plus the Sabbath (and Hanukkah, which was established much later) correspond to events in the life of Christ and to spiritual events in the life of believers.

### **The Sabbath**

**Leviticus 23:3** - "Six days shall work be done: but the seventh day is the sabbath of rest, an holy convocation; ye shall do no work therein: it is the sabbath of the LORD in all your dwellings."

Rashi - Why does the Sabbath [designated by God,] appear here amidst the festivals [designated by the Sanhedrin]? To teach you that whoever desecrates the festivals is considered [to have transgressed as severely] as if he had desecrated the Sabbath, and that whoever who fulfills the festivals is considered as if he has fulfilled the Sabbath, [and his reward is as great]. — [Be'er Basadeh ; Torath Kohanim 23:144]

Rashi - If God, Whose work is accomplished without any toil or fatigue, rested on the Sabbath, surely people, whose work is accomplished only with hard work and fatigue, must rest on the Sabbath.]-[from Mechilta]

Jesus fulfilled the Sabbath by keeping it perfectly in the grave.

The Sabbath, like Wisdom, is personified as feminine in the language of the synagogue. The coming of the Sabbath was perceived as a wedding:

Rabbi Hanina would wrap himself in his garment and stand at nightfall on Shabbat eve, and say: Come and we will go out to greet Shabbat the queen. Rabbi Yannai put on his garment on Shabbat eve and said: Enter, O bride. Enter, O bride. (Babylonian Talmud, Sabbath 119a)

The idea is to embrace and become one with that rest.

- **Hebrews 4:11** - "Let us labour therefore to enter into that rest, lest any man fall after the same example of unbelief."

**Leviticus 23:4** - "These are the feasts of the LORD, even holy convocations, which ye

shall proclaim in their seasons."

"feasts" = *mow`ed* - a set time, a season, and by implication an assembly of those gathered at that time

The same word is used by Jeremiah for the natural instinctual times of bird migration:

- **Jeremiah 8:7** - "Yea, the stork in the heaven knoweth her appointed times; and the turtle and the crane and the swallow observe the time of their coming; but my people know not the judgment of the LORD."

This is a great comparison - the feasts bring us "home," spiritually. Our physical presence at a feast reminds us of where we've come from, who we are and where we're going. All males were required to appear at three of these feasts every year - Passover, Pentecost and Tabernacles. The "migration" was pictured as the pilgrims made their way up to Jerusalem, singing the Psalms of Ascent, and then the Hallel on their arrival in the Temple.

"convocation" = *miqra'* - from *qara'* (to call out) a convocation, or assembly, but also a recitation or reading

"proclaim" = *qara'* - see above

After Nehemiah and Ezra returned with the people from exile and rebuilt the wall around Jerusalem, they called an assembly of the people to read the Law.

- **Nehemiah 8:8** - "So they read (*qara'*) in the book in the law of God distinctly, and gave the sense, and caused them to understand the reading."

The feasts are usually intertwined with reading and understanding the Torah.

A similar word in the Greek - *ecclesia* - means "called out ones," referring to the church congregation.

## Passover

**Leviticus 23:5** - "In the fourteenth day of the first month at even is the LORD'S passover."

## Unleavened Bread

**Leviticus 23:6-8** - "And on the fifteenth day of the same month is the feast of unleavened bread unto the LORD: seven days ye must eat unleavened bread. In the first day ye shall have an holy convocation: ye shall do no servile work therein. But ye shall offer an offering made by fire unto the LORD seven days: in the seventh day is an holy convocation: ye shall do no servile work therein."

"servile work" - implies a less strict abstinence from labour than was demanded by the corresponding rule for the sabbath (**Leviticus 23:3**) and the Day of Atonement (**Leviticus 23:28**).

Servile work was defined during the second Temple to consist of building, pulling down edifices, weaving, reaping, threshing, winnowing, grinding. Needful work which was allowed was killing beasts, kneading dough, baking bread, boiling, roasting, &c. For violating this law the offender was not to be stoned to death, as in the case of violating the sabbath, but to receive forty stripes save one. - *Ellicott's Commentary*

See expanded instructions for the offerings for these festivals in **Numbers 28:16-25**

### **First Fruit Offering**

**Leviticus 23:9-11** - "And the LORD spake unto Moses, saying, Speak unto the children of Israel, and say unto them, When ye be come into the land which I give unto you, and shall reap the harvest thereof, then ye shall bring a sheaf of the firstfruits of your harvest unto the priest: And he shall wave the sheaf before the LORD, to be accepted for you: on the morrow after the sabbath the priest shall wave it.

Christ was taken down from the cross as the sheaf of barley was cut down. He lay in the tomb as the grain was being winnowed, parched and ground. He was resurrected as the First Fruit Offering was being lifted up in the Temple.

Barley was the lowest kind, fit only for animals. It reflected Christ's humility.

- **1 Corinthians 15:20** - "But now is Christ risen from the dead, and become the firstfruits of them that slept."

**Leviticus 23:12** - "And ye shall offer that day when ye wave the sheaf an he lamb without blemish of the first year for a burnt offering unto the LORD."

**Leviticus 23:13** - "And the meat offering thereof shall be two tenth deals of fine flour mingled with oil, an offering made by fire unto the LORD for a sweet savor: and the drink offering thereof shall be of wine, the fourth part of an hin."

**Leviticus 23:14** - "And ye shall eat neither bread, nor parched corn, nor green ears, until the selfsame day that ye have brought an offering unto your God: it shall be a statute for ever throughout your generations in all your dwellings."

### **Pentecost / Feast of Weeks**

**Leviticus 23:15-16** - "And ye shall count unto you from the morrow after the sabbath, from the day that ye brought the sheaf of the wave offering; seven sabbaths shall be complete: Even unto the morrow after the seventh sabbath shall ye number fifty days; and ye shall offer a new meat offering unto the LORD.

"And ye shall count" - This is the Counting of the Omer until Pentecost. The rabbis saw it s passing through 49 gates of impurity to prepare Israel for receiving the Torah which happened on Pentecost.

**Leviticus 23:17** - "Ye shall bring out of your habitations two wave loaves of two tenth deals: they shall be of fine flour; they shall be baked with leaven; they are the firstfruits unto the LORD."

"your habitations" - rather out of the grain of your own land. During the second Temple this clause was taken to denote "ye shall bring out of, or from, the land of your habitation," that is, from Palestine (Numbers 15:2). This was a single communal offering for the nation, so everyone did not bring out two wave loaves.

This was from the wheat harvest. The wave loaves were to be leavened, not unleavened.

It presents a different type and story from the unleavened bread (*matzoh*) of Passover. In this picture, leaven is good - it represents the kingdom of God that inexorably multiplies like the yeast throughout the dough and makes the bread rise.

The unleavened matzoh was a memorial of the bread hastily prepared at their departure, while these loaves were a tribute of gratitude to God for their daily food, which was leavened.

No leaven could ever be burnt on the altar (**Leviticus 2:4**); every other meal/grain offering was unleavened; therefore no part of these loaves was to be burnt on the altar, but only "waved" before God and then the whole of them fell to the share of the priests to consume.

- **John 6:35, 48** - "I am the bread of life" Jesus was here not the matzoh, but the artos - the greek word for regular bread, from a root that means "raised," and more akin to the Manna.

Each loaf or cake, according to Maimonides (in Hilchot Tamidin, &c. c. 8. sect. 10.), was seven hands' breadths long, four hands' breadths wide, and four fingers high.

The two loaves could signify the Bride and the Bridegroom at the wedding supper of the lamb. Pentecost was seen as a betrothal between Israel and God.

Also, these two loaves are like the First Fruit Offering of the barley harvest - in that they are a first fruit of the wheat harvest. If the First Fruit Offering of barley prefigured the resurrection of Christ in history, this Pentecost first fruit offering prefigured the spiritual resurrection of Christ in us, identified with the outpouring of the Holy Spirit in **Acts 2**.

**Leviticus 23:18-19** - "And ye shall offer with the bread seven lambs without blemish of the first year, and one young bullock, and two rams: they shall be for a burnt offering unto the LORD, with their meat offering, and their drink offerings, even an offering made

by fire, of sweet savor unto the LORD. Then ye shall sacrifice one kid of the goats for a sin offering, and two lambs of the first year for a sacrifice of peace offerings."

**Leviticus 23:20-21** - "And the priest shall wave them with the bread of the firstfruits for a wave offering before the LORD, with the two lambs: they shall be holy to the LORD for the priest. And ye shall proclaim on the selfsame day, that it may be an holy convocation unto you: ye shall do no servile work therein: it shall be a statute for ever in all your dwellings throughout your generations."

"Waving" - The offering was "waved" i.e. lifted away from and back toward the priest, side to side, upwards and downwards, and towards the four quarters of the world, showing that the fruits of the earth were owing to the providential goodness of God everywhere.

### **A Reminder About Gleanings for the Poor**

**Leviticus 23:22** - "And when ye reap the harvest of your land, thou shalt not make clean riddance of the corners of thy field when thou reapest, neither shalt thou gather any gleanings of thy harvest: thou shalt leave them unto the poor, and to the stranger: I am the LORD your God."

Rashi - Scripture repeats it once again, [so that one who disobeys] transgresses two negative commands. Rabbi Avdimi the son of Rabbi Joseph says: Why does Scripture place this [passage] in the very middle of [the laws regarding] the Festivals - with Passover and Atzereth (Shavuoth) on one side and Rosh Hashanah, Yom Kippur, and the Festival [of Succoth] on the other? To teach you that whoever gives gleanings, forgotten sheaves, and the corners, to the poor in the appropriate manner, is deemed as if he had built the Holy Temple and offered up his sacrifices within it. — [Torath Kohanim 23:175]

### **Rosh Hashanah**

**Leviticus 23:23-25** - "And the LORD spake unto Moses, saying, Speak unto the children of Israel, saying, In the seventh month, in the first day of the month, shall ye have a sabbath, a memorial of blowing of trumpets, an holy convocation. Ye shall do no servile work therein: but ye shall offer an offering made by fire unto the LORD."

Rashi - A memorial/remembrance - [On this Rosh Hashanah day,] a remembrance [before God of the Jewish people is evoked through the sounds of the shofar. And in order to enhance this remembrance, our Rabbis instituted the recitation] of Scriptural verses dealing with remembrance and Scriptural verses dealing with the blowing of the shofar (R.H . 32a), through which the remembrance of the binding of Isaac is recalled for them, [whereby Isaac was willing to be sacrificed as a burnt-offering according to God's words (see Gen. 22:119), and] in whose stead a ram was offered up [whereby the shofar alludes to that ram's horns, by which it was caught in a tree, thus making its appearance as Isaac's replacement (see Gen. 22:13)]. — [Sifthei Chachamim, Gur Aryeh; R.H. 16a]

## Yom Kippur

**Leviticus 23:27** - "And the LORD spake unto Moses, saying, Also on the tenth day of this seventh month there shall be a day of atonement: it shall be an holy convocation unto you; and ye shall afflict your souls, and offer an offering made by fire unto the LORD."

Rashi takes the first word "and" to mean "but" - Wherever the word "but," or "only," appear in the Torah, they denote an exclusion. [Thus,] Yom Kippur atones for those who repent, "but" it does not atone for those who do not repent. — [Shev. 13a]

**Leviticus 23:28** - "And ye shall do no work in that same day: for it is a day of atonement, to make an atonement for you before the LORD your God. For whatsoever soul it be that shall not be afflicted in that same day, he shall be cut off from among his people."

**Leviticus 23:29-32** - "And whatsoever soul it be that doeth any work in that same day, the same soul will I destroy from among his people. Ye shall do no manner of work: it shall be a statute for ever throughout your generations in all your dwellings. It shall be unto you a sabbath of rest, and ye shall afflict your souls: in the ninth day of the month at even, from even unto even, shall ye celebrate your sabbath."

Rashi - "Ye shall do no manner of work" - this prohibition is repeated several times here, so that one who disobeys] transgresses many negative commandments, or to warn against work at night [that it is forbidden just] as [performing] work during the day [of the tenth of Tishri]. - [Yoma 81a; see Mizrahi and Divrei David]

## Feast of Tabernacles

**Leviticus 23:33-36** - "And the LORD spake unto Moses, saying, Speak unto the children of Israel, saying, The fifteenth day of this seventh month shall be the feast of tabernacles for seven days unto the LORD. On the first day shall be an holy convocation: ye shall do no servile work therein. Seven days ye shall offer an offering made by fire unto the LORD: on the eighth day shall be an holy convocation unto you; and ye shall offer an offering made by fire unto the LORD: it is a solemn assembly; and ye shall do no servile work therein."

## Summary

**Leviticus 23:37-38** - "These are the feasts of the LORD, which ye shall proclaim to be holy convocations, to offer an offering made by fire unto the LORD, a burnt offering, and a meat offering, a sacrifice, and drink offerings, every thing upon his day: Beside the sabbaths of the LORD, and beside your gifts, and beside all your vows, and beside all your freewill offerings, which ye give unto the LORD."

## Supplementary Instructions for Tabernacles

Another reason for this feast is explained, which was to give thanks for the fruits of the earth that were gathered in. This passage might have originally formed a distinct document.

**Leviticus 23:40** - "And ye shall take you on the first day the boughs of goodly trees, branches of palm trees, and the boughs of thick trees, and willows of the brook; and ye shall rejoice before the LORD your God seven days."

"Boughs" - The word boughs in the Hebrew means "fruits" of goodly trees, which led to the practice of carrying in the left hand an ethrog (the fruit of goodly trees), and in the right hand myrtles, palms, and willows. Among the later Jews the *lûlâb* (Jos. Ant. iii. 10. 4) consisted of a myrtle, willow, and palm branch, and an *ethrôg* fruit ( a citron or possibly a pomegranate)

**Leviticus 23:43** - "That your generations may know that I made the children of Israel to dwell in booths, when I brought them out of the land of Egypt: I am the LORD your God."

Especially on the first day, when the Israelites camped in booths at Succoth (**Exodus 12:37**) which means "booth."

Rashi - "booths" - [These were] the clouds of glory [with which God enveloped the Jewish people in the desert, forming a protective shelter for them against wild beasts and enemies.] [See Numbers 10:34]- [Sukkah 11b]