

The Purpose of Israel's Annual Feasts

Timothy K. Hui
Attorney and Counselor
Thompson & Knight, Dallas, Texas

The feasts of the Lord were days of high importance for Israel.¹ They punctuated her calendar with seasons of joyous celebration, sharing in agricultural abundance, and reprieve from the daily routine.² But they were also religious events.³ Their importance is evidenced by the fact that three passages in the Mosaic legislation describe the feasts: Leviticus 23; Numbers 28-29; and Deuteronomy 16.

What was the significance of these annual religious festivals? Hulbert suggests that their significance was primarily eschatological and that they "were types which prophesied God's redemptive program in Israel."⁴ However, as Chafer points out, for a type to be valid, it must have "continuity of truth" in both testaments.⁵ So for

¹ J. Van Goudoever, *Biblical Calendars* (Leiden: E. J. Brill, 1961), p. vii. He introduces "day of 'high importance'" as an appellation for the various festivals.

² The idea of joyous celebration is particularly strong in the Deuteronomy account. See the discussion on Deuteronomy 16 in Gilbert George Braithwaite, "The Doctrine of the Central Sanctuary in Deuteronomy" (ThD diss., Dallas Theological Seminary, 1978), pp. 125-26. The abundance of the land, represented by the freewill offerings (Deut. 16:10, 17), was to be shared with the unfortunate (vv. 11, 14). For the reprieve from the daily routine, see the discussion later on the sabbatical rest.

³ The religious nature of these feasts may be seen in the Numbers account. Each individual feast had its own set of offerings. Furthermore these feasts were said to belong to the Lord (מִן עֲדָי יְהוָה).

⁴ Terry C. Hulbert, "The Eschatological Significance of Israel's Annual Feasts" (ThD diss., Dallas Theological Seminary, 1965), p. i.

⁵ Lewis Sperry Chafer, *Systematic Theology*, 8 vols. (Dallas, TX: Dallas Seminary

the annual cycle of feasts to have the eschatological significance that Hulbert proposes, it must first speak commemoratively to Israel of her past redemption before it can speak typologically of her future redemption. Hulbert recognizes this, but he gives little attention to the historical function.⁶ Both are needed, and the historical significance must be considered first. Stated in another way, before an Old Testament event can have a forward-looking typological function, its historical and retrospective significance must be seen.

How Do the Feast Passages Differ?

The three passages that describe the feasts differ in their emphases. Deuteronomy 16 stresses the pilgrimages to the feasts, Numbers 28-29 emphasizes the offerings, and Leviticus 23 focuses on the feasts themselves. Why are these emphases given?

DEUTERONOMY 16

In Deuteronomy 16 the pilgrimage (אָפּ) occupies a prominent place.⁷ That chapter mentions only the three pilgrimage-feasts, during which attendance before the Lord for all male Israelites was required.⁸ "These annual feasts would keep the people aware of the importance of the central sanctuary and of its role in maintaining their unique spiritual relationship with" the Lord.⁹ The recurring phrases, "the place which the Lord your God chooses" and "(appearing) before the Lord your God," readily identify the organizing prin-

Press, 1948), 7:309.

⁶ For example he states that "this retrospective idea was certainly valid, for the feasts involved true memorials, of deliverance from Egypt, or harvests, of past sins to be confessed, etc." (Hulbert, "Israel's Annual Feasts," p. 108; cf. similar statements on pp. 3, 109). He adds that from the premillennial point of view one must accord to these feasts "a genuine historical function" (*ibid.*, p. 17).

⁷ The verbal root אָפּ has the meaning of "making a pilgrimage" (Francis Brown, S. R. Driver, and Charles A. Briggs, *A Hebrew and English Lexicon of the Old Testament* [Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1955], s.v. "אָפּ," p. 290). It has an Arabic equivalent in *hajja* whose derivative, *hajj*, refers to the official pilgrimage to Mecca. Also see *Theological Wordbook of the Old Testament*, ed. R. Laird Harris, Gleason L. Archer, Jr., and Bruce K. Waltke, 2 vols. (Chicago: Moody Press, 1980), s.v., "אָפּ," by Carl Philip Weber, 1:261-63.

⁸ The three pilgrimage-feasts are the feasts of Unleavened Bread, Weeks, and Booths. Even though the Passover is mentioned in this chapter, that feast "and Unleavened Bread are in effect the two constituent parts of a single major festival," of which "the second part. . . [is] the center of attention" (Peter C. Craigie, *The Book of Deuteronomy* (Grand Rapids: Wm. B. Eerdmans Publishing Co., 1976), p. 242). Incidentally this is the same orientation found in Leviticus 23.

⁹ Braithwaite, "The Doctrine of the Central Sanctuary in Deuteronomy," p. 125.

ciple of this passage.¹⁰ Verses 16-17 conveniently summarize this literary unit. The pilgrimages of the people to the central sanctuary would contribute to national unity.

NUMBERS 28-29

Numbers 28-29 is a section of the Mosaic legislation whose purpose "is to define the periodical public offerings."¹¹ The inclusion of the list of the feasts of the Lord is only incidental.¹² These two chapters prescribe the kinds of offerings for various occasions--daily offerings (28:3-8), sabbatical offerings (28:9-10), and festive offerings (28:19-29:39). The literary clue for the whole section (hence also for the segment governing the feasts of the Lord) is in Numbers 28:2. The Israelites were instructed to "observe" (שָׁמַר) to present the offerings. The word שָׁמַר means "to exercise great care over."¹³ In Deuteronomy this word is used of the people's careful observance of the Lord's commandments.¹⁴ It is clear then that Numbers 28-29 contains an instructional manual for the priests on the offerings in the feasts of the Lord.

LEVITICUS 23

A cursory reading of Leviticus 23 reveals that no such convenient organizing principle may readily be found. The feasts are treated at various lengths, and various details are given for each of the feasts, as seen in this table:

<i>Feasts</i>	<i>Passage</i>	<i>Length</i>
Passover	23:5	1 verse
Unleavened bread	23:6-8	3 verses
Firstfruits	23:10-14	5 verses
Weeks	23:15-22	8 verses
Trumpets	23:24-25	2 verses
Day of Atonement	23:27-32	6 verses
Booths	23:34-43	10 verses

¹⁰ For the phrase "the place which the Lord your God chooses" see verses 2, 6-7, 11, 15. For the phrase "before the Lord your God" see verses 11 and 16 (without the preposition ל).

¹¹ George Buchanan Gray, *A Critical and Exegetical Commentary on Numbers*, International Critical Commentary (Edinburgh: T. & T. Clark, 1903), p. 402.

¹² Ibid., pp. 402-3. "Incidentally it also, and of necessity, contains a list of Jewish fixed feasts or sacred seasons."

¹³ *Theological Wordbook of the Old Testament*, s.v. "שָׁמַר," by John E. Hartley, 2:939. "Secondly it expresses .the careful attention to be paid to the obligation of a covenant, to laws, statutes, etc. This is one of the most frequent uses of the verb."

¹⁴ For a complete list see S. R. Driver, *A Critical and Exegetical Commentary on Deuteronomy*, International Critical Commentary (Edinburgh: T. & T. Clark, 1895), p. lxxxiii.

Even the instructions for the offerings differ in length (compare the instructions for the Feast of Firstfruits and the Feast of Weeks with the instructions for the other feasts¹⁵).

These differences in length have led critics to conclude that "this chapter is not a self-contained unity."¹⁶ Snaith, for instance, sees two sources for this chapter.

This chapter is composite, as is clear from the double introduction, verse 2 and verse 4. Scholars who carry literary analysis into minute details find they have to speak of more than one P-editor, apart from the allocation of verses between H and P. It is generally agreed that 1-8, 21, 23-38, 44 belong to P, though of different strata, and that 22, 39-43 are H, with the rest mixed, basically H but with P-elements of varying degrees of recognizability. Generally speaking, the agricultural emphasis is characteristic of H, and the ecclesiastical element of P. Indeed, it is these differences that are used as criteria.¹⁷

Elliger also sees at least two layers of material in this chapter, the second of which has its own special sources.¹⁸

Noth, on the other hand, feels that the various "incongruities are not easily explained by the literary-critical assumption of different 'sources.'"¹⁹ He attempts to explain the formation of this chapter along a historical line. He suggests that verses 9-21 have an earlier tradition that he calls the Jerusalem tradition. This tradition is then combined with "the threefold agrarian feasts still preserved in Deuteronomy." These all came together about the time of the Exile and remained so until after the Exile when they became normative (in Num. 28-29). So the Leviticus list occupies somewhat a middle position between the other two accounts.²⁰

¹⁵ Noth makes this point: "On the one hand there are fairly short regulations for the celebration of particularly and precisely dated times in the course of the year (so especially vv. 5-8; also vv. 23ff.); on the other hand there are very detailed precepts for carrying out festival customs on some not exactly dated occasions (so especially vv. 9-21; also vv. 40ff.)" (Martin Noth, *Leviticus: A Commentary* [Philadelphia: Westminster Press, 1965], p. 166).

¹⁶ *Ibid.*

¹⁷ Norman H. Snaith, *Leviticus and Numbers*, The Century Bible (London: Thomas Nelson and Sons, 1967), pp. 149-50.

¹⁸ These two layers are his Ph³ and Ph⁴. For the so-called "literary history" see Karl Elliger, *Leviticus*, Handbuch zum Alten Testament (Tubingen: J. C. B. Mohr, 1966), pp. 311-12.

¹⁹ Noth, *Leviticus*, p. 166.

²⁰ *Ibid.* Hulbert, on the other hand, puts the Leviticus account as the first historical account. He considers the other two accounts as "restatements and emphatic reminders given to the new generation on the plains of Moab as they prepared to enter the land." The addition of certain details peculiar to each of the other two accounts was because of "historical circumstances" (Hulbert, "Israel's Annual Feasts," p. 2). Perhaps it is

Kaiser points out that for hermeneutical exercises such pursuits of "hypothetical sources" are fruitless. He believes that the task of an exegete is not to investigate the "pre-history of the text" but to explain "the meaning of the present text."²¹ Pursuit of prehistory often leads to ludicrous dismemberings of the text.²² Wenham warns:

The tentativeness of all attempts to discover sources in Leviticus must be underlined. Even if one admits their presence it does not necessarily follow that they ever circulated independently of each other. Analyses which purport to distinguish between an original source and the work of later redactors should be treated more warily still. We do not know enough about the development of Hebrew language, law, and religion to make the elaborate analyses offered in some works anything more than conjectures.²³

The presupposition of the present writer is that Moses penned this chapter as well as the rest of the Pentateuch. Leviticus 23 is an original composition. From a careful examination of the text itself one can determine its unifying principle.

Does Leviticus 23 Emphasize the "Appointed Time" or "Rest" and "Gathering"?

Hulbert, in his typological study of Leviticus 23, suggests that the emphasis of this chapter revolves around the term "appointed time" (מוֹעֵד).²⁴ However, that would be a rather weak unifying center, as the Hebrew word "frequently designates a determined time or place without regard to the purpose of the designation."²⁵ This center is not only weak lexically, but it also fails to account for most of the divergences in length and in the amount of details.

A more likely unifying principle is suggested by Wenham. He states that "the whole emphasis lies on the days that must be ob-

better to say that the differences were due to differing purposes.

²¹ Walter C. Kaiser, Jr., "Evangelical Hermeneutics: Restatement, Advance, or Retreat from the Reformation?" *Concordia Theological Quarterly* 46 (April-June 1982): 174.

²² See the translation of Leviticus 23 by Elliger. In order to demonstrate the two layers and the various sources of each layer he employs seven different type faces (Elliger, *Leviticus*, pp. 302-3).

²³ Gordon J. Wenham, *The Book of Leviticus* (Grand Rapids: Wm. B. Eerdmans Publishing Co., 1979), pp. 7-8.

²⁴ "The Leviticus 23 account, on the other hand, was given in the form of a schedule of appointed observances. This is borne out by the four pointed occurrences of *moadim* in Leviticus 23:2, 4, 37, 44" (Hulbert, "Israel's Annual Feasts," p. 28).

²⁵ *Theological Wordbook of the Old Testament*, s.v. "מוֹעֵד," by Jack P. Lewis, 1:388.

served as days of sabbath rest."²⁶ This calendrical purpose is supported by the phrase "in their seasons" (בְּמוֹעֵדָם, v. 4). The lack of clarity as to the beginning of the 50-day period before the Feast of Weeks militates somewhat against this center.²⁷

Keil states that the annual cycle of feasts has "its centre and starting point in the Sabbath."²⁸ Wenham interprets Keil as saying that "the sabbatical principle informs all the pentateuchal laws about the festivals."²⁹ In this view Leviticus 23:3, set between the so-called "dual introductions," supplies the controlling idea(s) for this chapter. The repetition of the demonstrative pronoun אֵלֶּה which appears at the end of verse 2 and at the head of verse 4, indicates that verse 3 is a purposeful insertion.³⁰ The addition of the phrase "in their seasons" to verse 4 (but not in v. 2) makes that verse, perhaps, the introduction proper.

This sabbatical principle incorporates two ideas: the Sabbath is to be a time of rest (שַׁבָּת שְׁבִתוֹן), and the Sabbath is to be a time for religious gathering (מִקְרָא קִדְשׁ). If this is a valid center, then one should expect the literary clues (i.e., the details) of this chapter to expand these two concepts of rest and holy convocation.

²⁶ Wenham, *Leviticus*, p. 3.

²⁷ "On the day after the sabbath (vv. 11, 15, cf. v. 16)--the meaning of this phrase has been the subject of much controversy. Is the sabbath in question the ordinary sabbath, i.e., the first Saturday after the beginning of the festival of unleavened bread? Or is the sabbath the first day of unleavened bread when heavy work was forbidden? According to the first interpretation 'the day after the sabbath' means Sunday; according to the second it means the sixteenth day of the month.

"Orthodox Judaism and most modern commentators favor the second suggestion. Some Jewish sects, however, and a few modern writers favor the first suggestion. The exegetical arguments are finely balanced. It seems slightly more natural to equate 'the sabbath' with Saturday than with the first day of the feast. Furthermore, if one accepts that: Leviticus is based on the Jubilees Calendar, it would seem more likely that the first sheaf was offered on Sunday (the day after sabbath) than on Thursday (second day of the feast)" (Wenham, *Leviticus*, p. 304).

Van Goudoever suggests two additional ways of counting the 50 days: (1) count from the day after the week of Unleavened Bread, which ends with a Sabbath, or (2) count from the Sunday after the week of Unleavened Bread (*Biblical Calendars*, pp. 18-29).

²⁸ Carl Friedrich Keil, *Manual of Biblical Archaeology*, 2 vols. (Edinburgh: T. & T. Clark, 1887), 1:470.

²⁹ Wenham, *Leviticus*, p. 301.

³⁰ Keil feels that the repetition of the title points out the distinction between the "Sabbath" and the feasts. "As a weekly returning day of rest, the observance of which had its foundation in the creative work of God, the Sabbath was distinguished from the yearly feasts in which Israel commemorated the facts connected with its elevation into a people of God" (C. F. Keil and F. Delitzsch, *The Pentateuch*, 3 vols., Biblical Commentary on the Old Testament [reprint, Grand Rapids: Wm. B. Eerdmans Publishing Co., n.d.], 2:438).

Sabbatical Rest

The concept of the sabbatical rest is often associated with Creation.³¹ The Lord's rest from His creative activities is the reason behind Israel's keeping of the fourth commandment (Exod. 20:11). In the reiteration of this commandment (Deut. 5:15) a different reason is given: to commemorate Israel's redemption from the bondage of Egypt. The writer of Hebrews linked these two ideas as he spoke of the rest (שָׁבַת) in Genesis 2:2 and the rest (מְנוּחָה) in Psalm 95:11.³² In other words he associated this rest with the entrance of Israel into the Promised Land, which the Israelites (the first generation of the Exodus) forfeited because of their unbelief. Rest, in this context, was the repose of the Lord from His completed work; and He shared this repose with the nation of Israel in their entrance into the Promised Land. The sabbatical rest is then a commemoration of the Lord's finished work of redemption.

Viewing the sabbath as "a periodical memorial of Israel's deliverance from Egypt"³³ finds further support in the fact that some of the festive Sabbaths cannot fall on the weekly Sabbath. Instead of having significance in reference to Creation, these festive Sabbaths point to the completed work of redemption, which is a form of creation.³⁴

Of the seven feasts of the Lord described in Leviticus 23, five include a specific prohibition from work (עֲבֹדָה לֹא תַעֲשׂוּ). They are the first and the seventh days of the Feast of Unleavened Bread (vv. 7-8), the Feast of Weeks (v. 21), the Feast of Trumpets (v. 25), the Day of Atonement (vv. 28-31), and the first and eighth days of the Feast of Booths (vv. 35-36). During the Feast of Unleavened Bread the two Sabbaths are only six days apart. The Feast of Firstfruits takes place on the day after a Sabbath. The 50th day from that day can-

³¹ Ibid.

³² Hebrews 4:1-5. The writer of Hebrews used both the verb and the noun from the same root: **katapauw** and **katapausij**.

³³ Driver, *Deuteronomy*, p. 85.

³⁴ "The Exodus, too, was a type of creation and thus forms an analogy to the creation account in Genesis. The Exodus from Egypt marks in effect the creation of God's people as a nation, and the memory of that event was also a reminder to the Israelites of their total dependence upon God. Whereas at one time the Israelites had been slaves in Egypt, with no appointed day of rest from their continual and monotonous labor, God's deliverance made them potentially a nation, and the sabbath was to function as a day of rest in which the deliverance from the former bondage could be remembered with thanksgiving" (Craigie, *Deuteronomy*, p. 157).

not possibly be another Sabbath. Thus the Feast of Weeks would not be on a weekly Sabbath. Between the Feast of Trumpets and the Day of Atonement the interval was 10 days; thus one of them could not fall on a weekly Sabbath. The significance of the sabbatical rest went beyond the general commemoration of the Lord's repose from His completed work of creating the world to the specific commemoration of His completed work of redeeming the nation Israel.

Two of the seven feasts include no prohibition from work. They are the Passover and the Feast of Firstfruits. The Passover, according to verse 5, is basically an evening event. The next morning begins the first Sabbath of the Feast of Unleavened Bread. So the Passover is, in effect, the beginning of or the introduction to the Feast of Unleavened Bread. In the description of Deuteronomy 16 the "Passover and Unleavened Bread are in effect the two constituent parts of a single major festival."³⁵

The Feast of Firstfruits took place after a religious Sabbath (Lev. 23:10-11). There is no mention of a Sabbath observance or a prohibition from work in the instructions for this feast. There are some indications that this and the Feast of Weeks should be considered as "the two constituent parts of a single major festival" like the Passover and the Feast of Unleavened Bread. The Feast of Firstfruits marked the beginning, and the Feast of Weeks marked the end, of the harvest season.³⁶ Both included the wave offering (vv. 11, 17). In the first case what was waved is the sheaves, but in the second case what was waved is two loaves of bread baked with yeast (leaven). It signified the completion of the harvest and the leisurely preparation of meals. At the Feast of Firstfruits no such leisure could be offered. It began the harvest and no special time was taken for rest. A literary parallel to this phenomenon is in Genesis 1:7. At the end of the second day of Creation there was no pronouncement of approval. That did not come till the third day. It is suggested that the work performed on both days should be taken as a unit.³⁷

The feasts may be grouped into three units. The first two feasts belong together, as mentioned earlier. The second two feasts are also to be taken together. The last three would naturally be taken to-

³⁵ Ibid., p. 242.

³⁶ Van Goudoever, *Biblical Calendars*, pp. 15-18.

³⁷ "The words it was good were not appropriate at this state, in as much as the work of water had not yet been completed. The situation was not yet *good*; for had it been good, there would have been no necessity for another separation on the third day" (U. Cassuto, *A Commentary on the Book of Genesis*, part 1: *From Adam to Noah: Genesis I-VI* 8 [Jerusalem: Magnes Press, 1961], p. 34).

gether because they are in the seventh month. Some modifications of this group may be necessary as will be revealed in the study of the term "perpetual statute" (חֻקֵּי עוֹלָם). Only four of the seven are so designated in Leviticus 23: Feasts of Firstfruits, Weeks, Booths, and the Day of Atonement. The first two feasts--Passover and Unleavened Bread--are so designated in Exodus 12:14, 17. But the perpetual statute statement is really not necessary because they were instituted and kept before the Mosaic Law was given at Sinai. The Feast of the Trumpets is considered a memorial (זִכְרוֹן), not a perpetual statute (Lev. 23:24). It was not equal to the other six, because it was an introductory Sabbath for the Sabbath month (seventh month). Thus the feasts may be seen as three groups of two, with the third group having an introductory Sabbath.

Since the first two feasts are not mentioned as perpetual statutes because they were established before the giving of the Law at Sinai, what then is the significance of such a designation for the last two groups of feasts? One factor that seems to be common to them is that they could not be properly observed until the nation of Israel was in the Promised Land. Obviously they could not celebrate the beginning or the end of the harvest season so long as they lived a nomadic life in the Sinai wilderness. The feasts of Firstfruits and of Weeks would be meaningless if Israel continued the wilderness sojourn. The Feast of Booths commemorated the wandering of Israel and the living in tents during that period (Lev. 23:43). Such commemoration would be unlikely until the wandering itself had ceased and the nation was dwelling in houses and not tents. The Day of Atonement gives no indication one way or the other. Some sense of permanence seems to be indicated for the tabernacle in Leviticus 16. Taken together, the idea seems to point toward the completed redemption. The feasts of the Lord emphasize not the leaving of Egypt, but the entrance into the Promised Land, which completed the Lord's redemptive work for Israel.

Holy Convocation

The second concept of the sabbatical principle relates to the calling of a holy convocation. The purpose for such gatherings was religious—"for the worship of Jehovah."³⁸ They were special occasions for fellowship and communion between a holy God and His holy people. This concept is conveyed in the details that Leviticus 23 gives for the Feast of Firstfruits and the Feast of Weeks.

The following table summarizes their treatment:

³⁸ Keil and Delitzsch, *The Pentateuch*, 2:21.

<i>Feasts</i>	<i>Offerings Specified</i>	<i>Details</i>
Passover	None mentioned	None
Unleavened Bread	Offering (using the general verb קָרַב) ³⁹	Made by fire
Firstfruits	Wave offering	Sheaves
	Burnt offering	Yearling male lamb without blemish
	Meal offering	Two-tenths ephah of fine flour, mingled with oil, made by fire
	Drink offering	Fourth of a hin of wine
Weeks	Wave offering	Two loaves of bread made of two-tenths ephah of fine flour, baked with leaven
	Burnt offering	Seven yearling lambs without blemish
		One young bullock
		Two rams
		Made by fire
		Made by fire
Trumpets	Sin offering	One male goat
	Peace offering	Two yearling lambs
Atonement	Offering	Made by fire
Booths	Offering	Made by fire

The third and fourth feasts--the Firstfruits and the Weeks--receive extended treatment here. The regulations for the offerings during the other feasts are recorded in Numbers 28-29. However, one must consider the reason for singling out Firstfruits and Weeks in Leviticus 23 and the types of offerings that are prescribed. Four types of offerings were common to these two feasts. Wave offerings signify consecration or dedication.⁴⁰ The concept behind burnt offerings is multifaceted. In light of the event (harvest), one should consider

³⁹ This verb means basically "being or coming into the most near and intimate proximity of the object (or subject)." But it is also used technically to connote "every step man performs in presenting his offering to God," but without specifying the type of offering (*Theological Wordbook of the Old Testament*, s.v. "קָרַב," by Leonard J. Coppes, 2:"811-12).

⁴⁰ Wenham, *Leviticus*, pp. 126-27. Rainey sees a communal significance for the wave offering. But he feels that the "technical term (תְּנוּפָה) was applied to offerings other than communal sacrifices: . . . the sheaf of First Fruits (23:15), the two loaves at the Feast of Weeks (vv. 17, 20)" (*Zondervan Pictorial Encyclopedia of the Bible*, S.v. "Sacrifices and Offerings," by A. F. Rainey, 5:208).

them as dedicatory.⁴¹ The same notion probably also lies behind the third and fourth types of offering, the meal and drink offerings.⁴²

Numbers 28:26-31 also prescribes offerings for the Feast of Weeks, called the "Day of the Firstfruits."⁴³ When the two lists are compared, the last three of the above four types of offerings are common to both. The portions seem to be more generous in Numbers.⁴⁴

Leviticus 23 adds mention of sin and peace offerings. In Numbers 28:30 a male goat is specified for the purpose of making atonement. The type of offering, a sin offering, is not mentioned. Its emphasis is noteworthy. The concept of the removal of sin, or the requirement of holiness, on the part of the worshiper is clear. The fact that this type of offering is followed by a peace offering further clarifies that only after the removal of sin can one have communion or fellowship with the Lord.⁴⁵ This is the only occasion among the seven feasts when a peace offering was required. It spoke of the special relationship between a sanctified people and their Lord. This is further supported by requiring observance of the Feast of Booths by "all the native-born in Israel" (Lev. 23:42). The purpose of that feast was to instruct them that they were to have a special relationship with their Lord (v. 43).

The concept behind the holy convocation is not so much the sacredness of the occasion but rather the "sacredness" of the people. It is a holy convocation because of the "holiness" of the people gathered together. The precision with which they kept these feasts was not what the Lord sought if they persisted in sin.⁴⁶ Without a holy people, there could be no holy convocation.

In this section on the harvest feasts, the poor and the foreigners were not forgotten (v. 22). Perhaps this is an indication that Israel needed to be reminded of her own disenfranchisement in Egypt.⁴⁷ The

⁴¹ Ibid., p. 205.

⁴² Ibid., pp. 206-7.

⁴³ Keil considers that the Day of the Firstfruits is the same as the Feast of Weeks (Keil and Delitzsch, *The Pentateuch*, 3:221). The equation is rather evident in that the Day of the Firstfruits comes at the end of the weeks (Num. 28:26).

⁴⁴ The Numbers passage mentions two bulls. Numbers has only one ram instead of two. Numbers has at least five-tenths ephah of fine flour specified, plus several more tenths not specified.

⁴⁵ Though the significance of this is disputed, one may agree with Delitzsch, Stade, and Wellhausen in understanding it to be "fellowship between God and worshipers" (Brown, Driver, and Briggs, *A Hebrew and English Lexicon of the Old Testament*, s.v. "חֲלִיפָה," p. 1023). This notion is also the first of three given in *Theological Wordbook of the Old Testament*, s.v. "חֲלִיפָה," by G. Lloyd Carr, 2:930-32.

⁴⁶ Cf. Amos 5:21-22; Micah 6:6-8.

⁴⁷ Cf. Deuteronomy 24:19-22.

abundant harvest at the same time reminded them not only of the harvest's completion but also of the completeness with which the Lord had redeemed them.

Conclusion

Keil suggests that the Sabbath is the governing principle in the feasts of the Lord. The annual cycle of feasts, he says, had "its centre and starting point in the Sabbath."⁴⁸ The literary clues from Leviticus 23 vividly demonstrate this point. These feasts were to be "celebrated by a Sabbath cessation from work, and a special assembling for religious purpose."⁴⁹ This celebration was retrospective. The commemoration was made by a holy people who were the beneficiaries of the Lord's completed work of redemption.

Hasel points out that the work of Old Testament theology is not complete unless it is related to the New Testament.⁵⁰ One may also say that an exposition of an Old Testament passage is not quite complete without seeing how it relates to New Testament believers in their walk with the Lord. Because of the feasts' emphasis on the sabbatical principle, some may assume that the application is to the Lord's day--Sunday--and its various activities. However, since the Sabbaths involved in the Feasts were not the weekly Sabbaths, such a connection is weakened. The two ordinances of the New Testament church provide a better parallel. Both baptism and the Lord's Supper commemorate the completed work of redemption of Christ on the cross.⁵¹ The idea of cleansing is embodied in baptism, and the Lord's Supper calls for self-examination.⁵² But both also signify an identification with Christ.⁵³ So whenever believers gather for these events, they should look back, as a holy people, to the completed work of their Lord.

⁴⁸ Keil, *Biblical Archaeology*, 1:470.

⁴⁹ *Ibid.*

⁵⁰ "The Biblical theologian understands OT theology as being more than the 'theology of the Hebrew Bible.' The name 'theology of the Old Testament' implies the larger context of the Bible of which the New Testament is the other part. An integral OT theology must demonstrate its basic relationship to the NT or to NT theology" (Gerhard F. Hasel, *Old Testament Theology: Basic Issues In the Current Debate* [Grand Rapids: Wm. B. Eerdmans Publishing Co., 1972], pp. 94-95).

⁵¹ On baptism see Romans 6:1-10 and Colossians 2:11-13, and on the Lord's Supper see 1 Corinthians 11:24-26.

⁵² On baptism see Acts 22:16, and on the Lord's Supper see 1 Corinthians 11:28.

⁵³ On baptism see Romans 6:3, and on the Lord's Supper see 1 Corinthians 10:16.

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Dallas Theological Seminary
3909 Swiss Ave.
Dallas, TX 75204
www.dts.edu

Please report any errors to Ted Hildebrandt at: thildebrandt@gordon.edu