



PITWM VERSE BY VERSE

Leviticus 23:15-22

LESSON: THE FEAST OF WEEKS — February 14, 2016

INTRODUCTION / SYNOPSIS:

23:1-4 God instructed Moses to announce to His people (Israel) to celebrate several annual festivals of the Lord. They are ordained by God to be holy convocations; ¹reserve certain dates on their calendar for national public worship and sacrifice. The Jews worked from sunrise to sunset and they counted the months by the different phases of the moon as they watched the seasons come and go. God had promised a seed time and a harvest, cold and heat, summer and winter, and day and night (Gen. 8:22). Now He is talking to them about special days called "*feasts*" for them to celebrate. "*Feasts*" did not mean just eating but appointed times to celebrate God's intervention in history or His daily care. Six days they were to work, but the seventh day is a Sabbath of solemn rest. "*Sabbath*" means rest. It was not one of the annual "*feast*" days, but was a very important day, and the Jewish people were expected to honor it. To dishonor it meant death (Num. 15:32-36).

FEASTS:

- **PASSOVER (23:5): CHRIST DIED FOR OUR SINS**

The first "*feast*" was the **Passover (23:5)** which marked Israel's deliverance from Egypt and a celebration that the lamb was slain and the blood sprinkled on the door posts of each Israelite home. It reminded the people of God's deliverance.

- **UNLEAVENED BREAD (23:6-8): SEPARATION FROM SIN**

The second "*feast*" day was that of **Unleavened Bread (23:6-8)**, which began the day after the Passover and continued for a week. It was a time when the Jews ate only unleavened bread with their meals and when they cleansed all the yeast from their homes. It reminded the people they were leaving the old life behind and entering a new way of living.

- **FIRSTFRUITS (23:9-14): CHRIST RAISED FROM THE DEAD**

During this time a "*sheaf of first fruits*" of barley was offered (**23:9-14**) as a **wave offering** before the Lord God and it symbolized the fact that it all came from Him. It reminded the people how God provided for them.

LESSON: I. THE TIME OF THE FEAST Leviticus 23:15-16a

- **THE FEAST OF WEEKS (23:15-21): later called in the New Testament, PENTECOST: BIRTHDAY OF THE CHURCH**

23:15 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:— This feast was to be celebrated counting from the next day after the Sabbath that the sheaf of the wave offering was brought counting off seven

¹ <http://www.family-times.net/commentary/leviticus-23-1/>
<http://www.pitwm.net/pitwm-sunday-school.html>

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Sabbaths complete; seven weeks after Firstfruits.

From verses 9-14 ²The "**wave sheaf**" is symbolic of Jesus Christ. The wave-sheaf offering was the forerunner of an additional offering brought later, on the Feast of Pentecost. As the wave-sheaf offering was the necessary forerunner of the Feast of Pentecost, so was Jesus Christ the necessary forerunner of God's people, who are His spiritual firstfruits. When the wave offering or sheaf was brought, the Jewish priests would bring it unto the Lord and present it by waving it before the Lord. The Israelites' harvest season could not begin until the wave sheaf offering was made to and accepted by God. In like manner, the Holy Spirit was not poured out on humanity until after Jesus returned to the Father (Acts 1:1-8; Acts 2:1-4). They were not allowed to eat of the harvest until the firstfruits had been given to the Lord. This special day—the Feast of Weeks or Pentecost is celebrated after the Feast of Firstfruits, showing joy and thanksgiving over God's bountiful harvest. The people recognized that the Lord is the provider of all crops

23:16 Even unto the morrow after the seventh sabbath shall ye number fifty days; Even the next day after the seventh week, they were to number 50 days (Pentecost).

II. THE NATURE OF THE OBSERVANCE **Leviticus 23:16b-21**

23:16 ...and ye shall offer a new meat offering unto the Lord. They were to offer the "**meat offering**" which is also translated as "**meal-offering**", where no blood of an animal is to be shed. The offering is composed of fine flour, baked cakes, or raw grain combined with olive oil, incense, and no yeast. The flour represents Jesus' sinless humanity. The oil represents the power of Holy Spirit, and the incense or frankincense represents the sweet fragrant savour of the Person of Christ's life.

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. From their homes they are to bring two loaves of bread made with a fifth of a bushel of fine flour and baked with leaven. In order to have loaves, the grain had to be ground into fine flour and the flour baked into loaves "**Leaven**" which is yeast in the bread, causes it to rise. Now, instead of the priest waving sheaves (vv.9-14) before the Lord, he waved two loaves of bread baked with leaven. We saw that ³the loaves used at the "**Passover**" (Exo.12:2-20; Lev.23:5) were unleavened bread (bread of affliction); but those presented at "**Pentecost**" were leavened. The difference is that, one was a memorial of the bread hastily prepared at their departure from Egypt, while the other was a tribute of gratitude to God for their daily food, which was leavened.

I was concerned about the word "**leaven**" when studying this verse, so I searched and found two takes on this.

One take on the leaven:

Leaven is a symbol of sin. ⁴The two loaves, baked with leaven, typify also the church. Sin is still there. Pure flour was in the loaves (the new nature), but baked with leaven (the old nature). The two loaves, no doubt, refer us to the Jews and Gentiles, which compose the new meal offering.

Another take on the leaven:

⁵Each of us is compared to a LOAF OF BREAD! "Two Leavened Loaves" of Bread presented and waved before the Father on Pentecost! The one loaf represents Christ in His fullness, the Perfect "Bread of LIFE." The other loaf represents the Church of God, -- the Bride of Christ -- brought to perfection through trial and testing! He rises

² <http://www.ucg.org/the-good-news/the-wave-sheaf-offering-a-ceremony-foreshadowing-salvation>

³ https://www.blueletterbible.org/Comm/jfb/Lev/Lev_023.cfm?a=113020

⁴ <http://www.jesusplusnothing.com/questions/leaven.htm>

<http://www.pitwm.net/pitwm-sunday-school.html>

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in us. God's Spirit works like leaven within us to change us into the image of God in character and true holiness! The leaven which causes these loaves to reach their fullness of perfection is the Holy Spirit of God within them. The priests must wave the loaves as first fruits in front of the Lord.

In the second illustration, it says that *God's Spirit works like leaven* not that it was leaven. In the first illustration, the Bible has always depicted leaven as a symbol of sin or seen in a negative light. Now we know that God puts in what He wants like the tare and the wheat.

23:18 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 savour unto the Lord. Along with the waving of the two loaves of bread, thirteen animal sacrifices were offered to the Lord—**seven** lambs without blemish, **one** young bull, and **two** rams. *The burnt offering* is a freewill offering involving a male animal wholly consumed by fire. The animal was killed and the priest collected the blood and sprinkled it about the altar (Num.28:1-8). The burning symbolized the worshipper's desire to be purged of sinful acts. Christ freely gave Himself as a sacrifice to God, symbolizing at this time, not for our sins, but, as a sweet savour. **The meat (meal) offering and drink offering** was similar in purpose to the burnt offering. "...*even an offering made by fire*" meant the "**grain offering.**" ⁶He (the worshipper) took a handful of fine flour (a token that the whole grain offering was given to God), poured oil on it, put incense on it and then molded it into a doughy cake before he took it to the priest. This cake was not cooked when the worshiper brought it to the priest, who would then burn it as a token of the whole grain offering on the altar, an offering made by fire, an aroma pleasing to ADONAI. Giving one's best grain during worship was part of a ceremony that represented removal of past sins. The meat (meal) offering and drink offering, even an offering made by fire was a sweet savour unto the Lord, reminding them that it all came from God.

23:19 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. Then **one** kid goat offered for a sin offering, and **two** more lambs are to be offered for a peace offering—a total of 13. The sin offering was given to reflect a repentant heart (whoever someone sinned). The "**peace offering**" was animal sacrifice to thank or express love to God. It included a ritual meal shared with God, the priests, and often other worshippers (Lev.3). It symbolizes Christ as Peace-Maker, thus God and man in communion and fellowship.

23:20 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. ⁷At this time the priest will not be waving sheaves, but they will wave two loaves of bread before the Lord, baked with leaven of the firstfruits as explained in verse 17. It was the end of the barley harvest and the beginning of the wheat harvest symbolizing spring harvest. And, also here there will be the two lambs waved. They shall be holy to the Lord for the priest.

23:21 And ye shall proclaim on the selfsame day, that it may be an holy convocation unto you: ye

⁵ <http://www.triumphpro.com/two-loaves.htm>

⁶ <http://jaymack.net/exodus-commentary/Ff-The-Grain-Offering.asp>

⁷ <http://www.family-times.net/commentary/leviticus-23-15/>

<http://www.pitwm.net/pitwm-sunday-school.html>

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shall do no servile work therein: it shall be a statute for ever in all your dwellings throughout your generations. A "*holy convocation*" is to be proclaimed the same day. That means a time in which all Jews were called together and refrained from any work. It shall be a ruling or stature forever in all their dwellings throughout their generations. An example was the Sabbath (Lev.23:1-3), Pentecost (Lev.23:15-21), and the Day of Atonement (Lev.23:24-28.) These times are set apart for calling together.

III. THE ATTITUDE OF THE WORSHIPPERS **Leviticus 23:22**

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 gleaning of thy harvest: thou shalt leave them unto the poor, and to the stranger: **I am the Lord your God.** When it's time for reaping the harvest, ⁸the Israelites should not just thank God for their harvest by means of a ceremony, they should thank God by means of the way that they harvested their crops. And that would include leaving some food in the fields so that poor people and foreigners would find something to eat. The Lord left room for the poor, and for the stranger to be fed.

SUMMARY:

God's instruction to the Israelites through Moses was to count from the day after the Sabbath, the day they brought the sheaf of the wave offering, count off seven full weeks. Count off fifty days up to the day after the seventh Sabbath, and then present an offering of new grain to the Lord (**23:15-17**).

From the places where they lived, they were to bring two loaves of bread for the Lord. The priest had to wave them as first fruits in front of the Lord. The loaves were baked with 4½ litres of good fine flour and yeast. And with the bread, they had to offer 7 lambs being one year old and perfect; also offer one young bull and two rams. They will be a whole offering to the Lord by fire; a burnt offering. With the offering of corn (meat/meal) and drink, and grain (fire), the smell of this offering will please the Lord. Also offered is one male goat, which will be a sin offering. And two lambs that are one year old offered as a peace offering. The priest will lift them up with the corn (meat/meal) that is just ripe. He will wave them in front of the Lord. It is a wave offering. He will offer the two young sheep. They will be holy to the Lord, and will belong to the priest. On the same day, a holy convocation is to be proclaimed. On that day, no work is to be done. This rule will always be important for all your generations, wherever they live (**23:18-21**).

When they gather the harvest from their fields, they must not gather completely from the corners of their fields; not to gather the fruits they've left behind. They had to leave them for poor people and for foreigners. God is I am, the Lord who is our God (**23:22**).

⁸ <http://www.easyenglish.info/bible-commentary/leviticus-23-27-lbw.htm>
<http://www.pitwm.net/pitwm-sunday-school.html>