

Lesson 8: Open Assignment

JUST WHAT DO YOU MEAN...”FEAST”?

By John Wheeler (slightly modified from original edition)

INTRODUCTION:

Passover and Unleavened Bread are almost upon us. These begin the yearly cycle of Feasts mentioned in Leviticus 23.

- What you may not know – and what few if any Bible translations make clear – is that more than one Hebrew word is translated “feast” in Leviticus 23 and other Old Testament passages.
- Moreover, one of the words translated “feast” actually has more than one meaning.

SPS:

In this speech, I will discuss those words and make clear just what the Bible means when it talks about “feasts”.

BODY:

We’ll begin with **Genesis 1:14** and **Psalms 104:19**, which discuss the astronomical basis of the calendar.

- **Genesis 1:14:** “Then God said, ‘Let there be lights [the sun, moon and stars] in the firmament of the heavens to divide the day from the night; and let them be for signs and *seasons*, and for days and years...’”
- **Psalms 104:19:** “He appointed the moon for *seasons*; the sun knows its going down.”
- The Hebrew word translated “seasons” in these verses is *mo`adim*, the plural of *mo`ed* (“appointed time”).
- These verses refer not to the “seasons” as we usually think of them, but to the *appointed times* set by the lunar months combined with the solar seasons. The “feasts” that are commanded in Leviticus 23 are by extension the *religious days or periods* that are observed during these “appointed times”.

Now let’s go to **Leviticus 23**, which lists in order the days God commands us to observe.

- **Leviticus 23:1:** “And the LORD spoke to Moses, saying, “Speak to the children of Israel, and say to them: “The feasts [*mo`adim*] of the LORD, which you shall proclaim to be holy convocations, these are My feasts [*mo`adim*].” These include the Sabbath and all the other Festivals and Holy Days.
- **Leviticus 23:4:** “These are the feasts [*mo`adim*] of the LORD, holy convocations which you shall proclaim at their appointed times [*mo`adim*].”

Later in the chapter, however, a different word is used: *chag*, meaning “pilgrimage feast”.

- **Leviticus 23:6:** “And on the fifteenth day of the same month is the Feast [*chag*] of Unleavened Bread to the LORD; seven days you must eat unleavened bread.”
- *Chag* is used in **Leviticus 23**, **Deuteronomy 16:16**, and parallel passages to describe the Feast of Unleavened Bread, the Feast of Firstfruits or Weeks (Pentecost), and the Feast of Tabernacles.
- Passover is also called a *chag* in **Exodus 12:14:** “So this day shall be to you a memorial; and you shall keep it as a feast [*chag*] to the LORD throughout your generations. You shall keep it as a feast [*chag*] by an everlasting ordinance.”
- Passover, being connected with Unleavened Bread, obviously had to be a “pilgrimage feast” as well.
- So every “pilgrimage feast” is an “appointed time”, but not every “appointed time” is a “pilgrimage feast”.
- This doesn’t necessarily mean Trumpets and Atonement were kept away from “the place which the LORD your God shall choose”.
- Those feasts called *chag*, however (particularly Unleavened Bread, Pentecost and Tabernacles) were originally celebrated in part by sacred processions and dances (*The New BDBG Lexicon*, pp. 290b-291a). This set them apart from the other “appointed times”.
- We see similar celebrations (eating, drinking and dancing) in other feasts called *chag* – even the one before the Golden Calf (Exodus 32:5-6) and that held by the Amalekites (1 Samuel 30:16).

CONCLUSION:

I hope this brief discussion will add to your knowledge of the Festivals and the significance of their names.