

The Book of Exodus

Lesson 15

Chapters 23:14-32

Instructions Concerning the Feasts and Offerings

Part 36 – Celebrating of Feasts

Exodus 23:14 "Three times a year you shall celebrate a feast to Me.

The LORD then gives his judgment concerning three feasts that He will require the nation of Israel to celebrate. They are the Passover and the Feast of Unleavened Bread that followed the Feast of Harvest, and the Feast of Ingathering. Please take note that these are simply feasts where joyful celebrations occurred with all the offerings and foods that were required; none of these were the fasts that some have supposed them to be.

Unleavened Bread

Exodus 23:15 "You shall observe the Feast of Unleavened Bread; for seven days you are to eat unleavened bread, as I commanded you, at the appointed time in the month Abib, for in it you came out of Egypt. And none shall appear before Me empty-handed.

This feast began with the Passover and ended when the last morsel of unleavened bread had been consumed after they left Egypt in the month of Abib. At the time that this judgment was being revealed, only about 90 days had passed since they experienced the original Passover and seven days of eating the unleavened bread that was quickly cooked and eaten for the first seven days on their journey. Notice the restriction in this feast; everyone had to present an offering to the LORD at that time and none were exempt!

Harvest of First Fruits

Exodus 23:16a "Also you shall observe the Feast of the Harvest of the first fruits of your labors from what you sow in the field;

The Feast of Harvest is also called the Feast of Pentecost or the Feast of Weeks. The name Pentecost is a Greek word meaning 50th day. The book of Deuteronomy specifies the day that Pentecost is to be celebrated by the nation.

Deuteronomy 16:9 "You shall count seven weeks for yourself; you shall begin to count seven weeks from the time you begin to put the sickle to the standing grain."

This feast was one of two festivals that were not tied to a month and day on a calendar; it was tied to the day the sickle was put to the standing grain that was ready for harvest. The LORD allowed the people seven weeks to harvest the grain before the celebration was required.

Some commentators try to tie the feast of Pentecost to the 50th day after Passover and that might have worked in the year of the exodus and the year following but with each passing year the lunar calendar would move the month of Abib back 11 days through the solar year and eventually the first month of the year would have marched through all four seasons. For example, the sickle could not be put to the standing grain 50 days after Passover if the 15th of Abib occurred in the middle of summer and 50 days later landed in the middle of winter. We must remember that the days were tied to the rising and setting of the sun; the months were tied to the phases of the moon; the years were tied to the passing of 12 new moons. The seasons of the year were not tied to days, months or years in the Scripture which was entirely under the lunar calendar. The Israelites would not make the adjustments to their calendar to cause it to fall in line with the original Passover and the timing of the seasons until over 300 years after the resurrection of the LORD.

Ingathering

Exodus 23:16b *also the Feast of the Ingathering at the end of the year when you gather in the fruit of your labors from the field.*

The Feast of Ingathering is also called the Feast of Booths. It was a time of celebration to commemorate the time the Nation of Israel spent living in makeshift tents in their wilderness journey after the exodus. This celebration was to occur at the end of each year's planting and harvesting, just before the onset of winter when all of the produce of the crops were gathered and the land was prepared as much as possible for the beginning of the next planting season in the spring. In one case, for instance, the land was prepared and the wheat was planted because that crop needed to be in the ground to experience the cold of winter in order to sprout forth at the proper time in the spring. Moses says the following about this feast:

Deuteronomy 16:13-14 " You shall celebrate the Feast of Booths seven days after you have gathered in from your threshing floor and your wine vat; and you shall rejoice in your feast, you and your son and your daughter and your male and female servants and the Levite and the stranger and the orphan and the widow who are in your towns."

Part 37 – Appearance Before the LORD

Exodus 23:17 " Three times a year all your males shall appear before the Lord GOD.

All males in the nation of Israel were required to participate in the three festivals each year; none were excused.

Part 38 – Blood, Bread and Fat

Exodus 23:18 " You shall not offer the blood of My sacrifice with leavened bread; nor is the fat of My feast to remain overnight until morning.

Three things were not to be offered to the LORD at these three festivals. First was the "the blood of My sacrifice." The life of an animal was in the blood and it was to be shed during the sacrifice. The same act occurred at the sacrifice of our LORD on the cross. His blood was shed as the final atonement for our sins. Second, leaven was not to be used in the bread that was

offered. As previously discussed, leaven is a symbol of sin because it puffs up and distorts. Third, the “**the fat of My feast**” was to be consumed. We think of “**the fat**” as the parts of the meat that we often call the *marbling*. It melts during the cooking, giving flavor to the meat. However, that is not what the term means in this passage. The “**fat**” here means the meaty portions of the animal which were to be cooked in the offering and then eaten by the priests. Just as the manna was to be consumed on the day it was harvested and prepared, so, too, at these festivals, nothing offered to the LORD was to be left by the dawn of the following morning. Because the priestly order has not been set in place as yet in this story, the LORD is giving instructions that will have greater meaning when all His revelation is given to them while at the foot of Mount Sinai.

Part 39 – First Fruits

Exodus 23:19a “**You shall bring the choice first fruits of your soil into the house of the LORD your God.**

These three festivals were to include the best of the best of the fruits grown by the people. This product complemented the meats that were sacrificed to the LORD. When the priests were consecrated and set aside soon in this story, this instruction became clearer to the people.

Part 39 – Kid and Milk

Exodus 23:19b “**You are not to boil a kid in the milk of its mother.**

This judgment may have been clear to all the Israelites in that day as they stood at the foot of Mount Sinai, but the true sense of its meaning and intent has been lost. No commentator knows the reason for this judgment and everyone who has written about it has offered pure speculation. Therefore, take it as face value; the Israelites were not to cook the meat of a kid (lamb or goat) in milk of the mother that bore that kid. This judgment certainly opens the question as to whether a kid can be boiled in the milk of another which was not the biological mother. This judgment also opens the question as to whether a kid could be boiled in the milk of another species of animal. Does this judgment mean just the boiling process or could cheese made from the milk of the kid’s mother be added after the kid was placed on the plate for consumption? As can be seen, because we do not know the sense of this passage as it was given in the culture of the exodus, we are completely limited to determine its true meaning.

Instructions Concerning Israel’s Guard

Angel to Guard

Exodus 23:20 “**Behold, I am going to send an angel before you to guard you along the way, and to bring you into the place which I have prepared.** ²¹ “**Be on your guard before him and obey his voice; do not be rebellious toward him, for he will not pardon your transgression, since My name is in him.** ²² “**But if you will truly obey his voice and do all that I say, then I will be an enemy to your enemies and an adversary to your adversaries.** ²³ “**For My angel will go before you and bring you in to the land of the Amorites, the Hittites, the Perizzites, the Canaanites, the Hivites and the Jebusites; and I will completely destroy them.**

In the LORD's judgment, a messenger, called "an angel" will guide and guard the Israelites as long as they are in harmony with His instructions. If they rebel, He will not pardon them. We must not stumble on this passage thinking this angel is the LORD because the text says, "he will not pardon your transgression, since My name is in him." Only the LORD can pardon a transgression, no angel can do the same; therefore, in following the guidance of the angel as he guards the nation of Israel, they are not to look to him for remission of their sins and permission to forgo the instructions of the LORD. Next, we are not to assume that the angel is the LORD because the LORD says in this text, "My name is in him." This wording does not mean that the angel is the LORD because of the name. Taking on the name of someone or some organization means that you embrace the core values of that person or organization. In this case, the angel assigned to Israel is fully devoted to all that the LORD is, was, and shall ever be, serving Him specifically! Who is this angel? We must wonder if the nation of Israel ever knew his name. Long after the exodus and several years after the exile of the Southern Kingdom to Babylon, the LORD revealed this angel's name to Daniel three times; here are two.

Daniel 10:21 However, I will tell you what is inscribed in the writing of truth. Yet there is no one who stands firmly with me against these *forces* except **Michael** your prince.

Daniel 12:1 Now at that time **Michael**, the great prince who stands *guard* over the sons of your people, will arise.

The angel is Michael, one of the archangels. At the end of the forty years, Michael will be there to protect Israel from the old serpent, the dragon when it is time to bury Moses.

Jude 1:9 But Michael the archangel, when he disputed with the devil and argued about the body of Moses, did not dare pronounce against him a railing judgment, but said, "The Lord rebuke you."

In this judgment, he names six of the seven Canaanite nations they would face as they entered the Promised Land. However, three of the earliest translations of this passage, the Coptic, the Samaritan and the Septuagint listed the seventh nation. It is safe to say that the omission of the seventh nation was a result of a copy used by the English translators that included a handwritten error of omission.

Instruction Concerning Worship of Strange Gods

Part 40 – Worship of Other Gods

Exodus 23:24 " You shall not worship their gods, nor serve them, nor do according to their deeds; but you shall utterly overthrow them, and break their *sacred* pillars in pieces.

The gods of the Canaanite nations were numerous; they were also creations of the people. The LORD was and still is a jealous God and He does not allow the worship of any gods of any kind. Ever! The Israelites were not to worship like the Canaanites, act like the Canaanites, work like the Canaanites, dress like the Canaanites, speak like the Canaanites or be like the Canaanites in

any way. If they follow that judgment, the LORD's rewards will shower down on Israel and He will make sure that the Promised Land will be theirs. Be aware that the Israelites were not only to be different from the Canaanites in worship, they were to destroy all the signs, symbols and sanctuaries of their gods.

Instructions Concerning Faithful Service

Part 41 – Results of Faithful Service of the LORD

Exodus 23:25 "But you shall serve the LORD your God, and He will bless your bread and your water; and I will remove sickness from your midst. **26** "There shall be no one miscarrying or barren in your land; I will fulfill the number of your days. **27** "I will send My terror ahead of you, and throw into confusion all the people among whom you come, and I will make all your enemies turn *their* backs to you. **28** "And I will send hornets ahead of you, that they may drive out the Hivites, the Canaanites, and the Hittites before you. **29** "I will not drive them out before you in a single year, that the land may not become desolate, and the beasts of the field become too numerous for you. **30** "I will drive them out before you little by little, until you become fruitful and take possession of the land.

The LORD made preparation for the Israelites to take the land away from the Canaanites in increments. Just as the Israelites were led by the pillar of fire by night and the cloud by day while in the wilderness, when they entered the Promised Land, they would take the land as the LORD moved the people out. Here he warns that it would not happen quickly, as in less than a year, but rather it would be done "**little by little.**" As the Israelites would discover, when the Canaanites left (or died on) the land, it would be left in a desolate state. Depending on the state of the land the season of the takeover and the resources available, as much as a year might be needed to cultivate the land anew in order for it to be inhabitable as a tribal area. When studying the conquest, we find in Judges 1 that after the first parcel of land was taken by the Israelites, it took seven more years to obtain the tribal areas of the Promised Land.

Instructions Concerning Land Boundaries

Fixed Boundaries

Exodus 23:31 "And I will fix your boundary from the Red Sea to the sea of the Philistines, and from the wilderness to the River *Euphrates*; for I will deliver the inhabitants of the land into your hand, and you will drive them out before you.

Here we see for the first time the boundary lines of the Promised Land. It would stretch from the Red Sea to the Mediterranean Sea on the west and from the wilderness to the Euphrates on the east. These boundaries would not be totally under the control of Israel until the days of Solomon (1 Kings 4) and even then, the Israelite presence in the outlying areas was sparse at best. Quickly, upon the death of Solomon, the Promised Land boundaries would shrink because of Israel's actions, not the LORD's. These original boundaries would comprise the boundaries of Israel during the 1,000-year reign of the LORD spoken of in the book of Revelation.



Boundaries of the Promised Land

Instructions Concerning Covenants with Canaanites

Part 42 – No Covenant with Canaanites

Exodus 23:32 "You shall make no covenant with them or with their gods.³³ " They shall not live in your land, lest they make you sin against Me; for if you serve their gods, it will surely be a snare to you."

This stern warning and judgment of the LORD would be ignored by the Israelites. From north to south and east to west, Israel would make covenants with the Canaanites and would embrace their gods. They would not drive the Canaanites from the land and they would commit the same sins, serving their gods, sacrificing to their gods, bowing to their gods. Israel would be snared by the Canaanites and it would cause Israel to be exiled from the Promised Land for 2,500 years.