

International Bible Lessons Commentary
Leviticus 23:15-22

English Standard Version

International Bible Lessons
Sunday, February 14, 2016

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The **International Bible Lesson** (*Uniform Sunday School Lessons Series*) for **Sunday, February 14, 2016**, is from **Leviticus 23:15-22**. **Questions for Discussion and Thinking Further** follow the verse-by-verse *International Bible Lesson Commentary*. **Study Hints for Discussion and Thinking Further** discusses *Questions for Discussion and Thinking Further* to help with class preparation and in conducting class discussion: these hints are available on the [International Bible Lessons Commentary](#) website along with the *International Bible Lesson* that you may want to read to your class as part of your Bible study. If you are a Bible student or teacher, you can discuss each week's commentary and lesson at the [International Bible Lesson Forum](#).

International Bible Lesson Commentary

Leviticus 23:15-22

(Leviticus 23:15) “You shall count seven full weeks from the day after the Sabbath, from the

day that you brought the sheaf of the wave offering.

The feasts and festivals in the Law of Moses reflect a primarily agricultural society. For this reason, by the time of Jesus the Messiah, travelers from far away would buy the sacrifices they needed when they arrived in Jerusalem (which led to abuses that influenced Jesus to cleanse the temple: see John 2:13-17). The next big festival after Passover and the festival of Unleavened Bread was the Feast of Weeks, called Pentecost in the New Testament. In general, harvesting began after the feast of Unleavened Bread and ended with the Feast of Weeks. The sheaf of the wave offering was the first grain to be reaped from a harvest, which was also considered “first fruits.” The wave offering reminded the Israelites of the fact that God’s grace and blessing were the cause of their land being productive. By waving a sheaf of grain, they thanked God for their harvest. This wave offering was made on the Sabbath.

(Leviticus 23:16) You shall count fifty days to the day after the seventh Sabbath. Then you shall present a grain offering of new grain to the LORD.

Using a lunar calendar, God commanded the Israelites to count off fifty days from Passover and Unleavened Bread to celebrate the Feast of Weeks (seven full weeks plus a Sabbath: $7 \times 7 + 1 = 50$). The number seven represents a perfect number. In later Judaism, the Feast of Weeks celebrated the giving of the Law by God to Moses after the Exodus. After Jesus’ resurrection from the dead and

ascension into heaven, Jesus sent the Holy Spirit to His apostles and followers (about 120 people), which led to the salvation of 3000 people in one day: the Day of Pentecost (see Acts 2).

(Leviticus 23:17) You shall bring from your dwelling places two loaves of bread to be waved, made of two tenths of an ephah. They shall be of fine flour, and they shall be baked with leaven, as firstfruits to the LORD.

The Feast of Weeks was to be celebrated in Jerusalem; for that reason, many Jews from many nations were present and learned of the coming of the Holy Spirit upon the followers of Jesus, and many of these returned home as believers in Jesus the Messiah (see Acts 2:8-11). Notice: at this feast they did not wave a sheaf of grain; instead, they waved before the LORD two loaves of baked bread that must contain yeast (which made certain new yeast was used, because their old yeast would have been removed from their homes during the Passover celebration and Feast of Unleavened Bread). Yeast makes bread rise and pervades the entire loaf making delicious satisfying bread. When the Holy Spirit came upon Jesus' followers He cleansed them and filled them with the love, power, and guiding presence of the Lord Jesus Christ and through their testimony the Church began to grow and spread throughout the world even to this day.

(Leviticus 23:18) And you shall present with the bread seven lambs a year old without blemish, and

one bull from the herd and two rams. They shall be a burnt offering to the LORD, with their grain offering and their drink offerings, a food offering with a pleasing aroma to the LORD.

On the Feast of Weeks, also called the Feast of the Harvest, the first things they sacrificed were to the LORD — in thanksgiving for a bountiful harvest that the LORD had given them. They did not credit themselves or their hard work; they credited the true God. With thanksgiving, they offered to the LORD animals that provided food and clothing and bore their burdens. They also offered a portion of their crops. These types of offerings indicated symbolically that they were giving all they had and all they were in consecration to the true God. Later, prophets condemned the fact that some rebellious Israelites and Jews celebrated this feast and also sacrificed to the pagan fertility gods, even sacrificing their own children to these idols.

(Leviticus 23:19) And you shall offer one male goat for a sin offering, and two male lambs a year old as a sacrifice of peace offerings.

The male goat for a sin offering acknowledged the fact that they were unworthy to receive God's blessings and they had not earned a good harvest by their good behavior and labors. God blessed them because of His love and grace. Later, as punishment for their sins, God brought drought and pestilence upon their land and crops in order to lead them to repentance. The Fellowship or Peace Offering was

for the family and their friends to eat and enjoy at the one-day celebration, and indicated the celebrants had received the blessing, peace, and fellowship with God that accompanied their sacrifices.

(Leviticus 23:20) And the priest shall wave them with the bread of the firstfruits as a wave offering before the LORD, with the two lambs. They shall be holy to the LORD for the priest.

The priests received their food and sustenance from the offerings of the people. For this reason, some of the festivals, including this one, required the celebrant to come to Jerusalem. People brought bread and meat for the priests (and made offerings at the temple). The wave offering indicated that the animal and bread were presented first to the Lord with thanksgiving and were not wholly burnt. The offering was food for the priests and their families to eat at the festival. Everything was consecrated to the LORD.

(Leviticus 23:21) And you shall make a proclamation on the same day. You shall hold a holy convocation. You shall not do any ordinary work. It is a statute forever in all your dwelling places throughout your generations.

On this festive day, the Jews assembled for sacred purposes instead of pagan purposes and rituals that involved sin and rebellion against God. They were to do no work, but essentially to enjoy a time of rest after their busy

harvest season concluded — about fifty days after their harvest season had begun. God ordained or commanded this sacrificial feast for their benefit, and to remind them “from Whom all blessings flow.” In addition, they were to be reminded to care for the poor in their midst. The festival provided the priests with an opportunity to teach about God, God’s laws, and their sacred history.

(Leviticus 23:22) “And when you reap the harvest of your land, you shall not reap your field right up to its edge, nor shall you gather the gleanings after your harvest. You shall leave them for the poor and for the sojourner: I am the LORD your God.”

The Apostle Paul wrote that a necessary condition for eating was being willing to work, and this provision was made possible with this command, while also providing charity for the needy (2 Thessalonians 3:10). The poor were provided a way of working to support themselves and their families. In the Book of Ruth, Ruth fed herself and her mother-in-law from this provision in the law. Ruth was a foreigner (a Moabite) and her widowed mother-in-law was a poor Israelite. Boaz arranged for Ruth to be given more than she could glean in a day, which set an example for those who had no farms to find other ways to care for the needy from the material blessings that God had given them.

Questions for Discussion and Thinking Further

1. What major feast followed the Passover and the Feast of Unleavened Bread? When did it occur? What did the Christians name the feast in the Book of Acts?
2. What could be used for wave offerings according to Leviticus 23:15-22?
3. What kind of bread was used for Passover? What kind of bread was used for the feast in Leviticus 23:15-22?
4. How might you compare the work of yeast in bread and the work of the Holy Spirit in believers?
5. How were the poor and foreigners in the land to be cared for by farmers?

Begin or close your class by reading the short weekly
International Bible Lesson.

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