



# International Bible Lessons Commentary

Uniform Sunday School Lessons Series

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## Leviticus 2:14 & 23:9-22 English Standard Version May 13, 2018

The [International Bible Lesson](#) (*Uniform Sunday School Lessons Series*) for **Sunday, May 13, 2018**, is from **Leviticus 2:14 & 23:9-22**. **Questions for Discussion and Thinking Further** follow the verse-by-verse *International Bible Lesson Commentary*. **Study Hints for Discussion and Thinking Further** will 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. You can discuss each week's commentary and lesson at the [International Bible Lesson Forum](#).

**(Leviticus 2:14) “If you offer a grain offering of firstfruits to the LORD, you shall offer for the grain offering of your firstfruits fresh ears, roasted with fire, crushed new grain.”**

The LORD gave instructions for building a proper tent of meeting and rules for the priests in conducting worship, and the LORD also wanted the people to participate in providing for the tabernacle's construction and in worshiping the LORD. After they entered the Promised Land and when they harvested their grain (the barley first and seven weeks later the wheat — on Pentecost), they were to worship the LORD by taking the firstfruits to the LORD as an offering of thanksgiving. The land belonged to the LORD and He had given them possession of the land to meet their needs and fulfill His promise to Abraham. The firstfruits offering was an expression of appreciation and thanksgiving to the LORD for meeting their needs as well as a demonstration of trust in the LORD that He would continue to meet all their needs. The Israelites offered flour and bread in various offerings and

ways: crushed heads could become flour suitable for bread and roasted grain could be made into bread from proper roasting over a fire.

**(Leviticus 23:9) And the LORD spoke to Moses, saying,**

The LORD did not speak to the people directly, but through Moses as their leader and prophet. The LORD wanted Moses to teach them how to worship and prepare them to worship the LORD in the Promised Land.

**(Leviticus 23:10) “Speak to the people of Israel and say to them, When you come into the land that I give you and reap its harvest, you shall bring the sheaf of the firstfruits of your harvest to the priest,**

An “omer” (KJV) or “sheaf” is a bundle of grain stalks laid lengthwise and tied together after reaping. Compared to an entire crop, a sheaf was a small amount to offer the LORD, but it represented the fact that all they harvested had been made possible by the LORD who met all their needs. The first grain was from their first day of harvest and would have been the most fresh and desirable grain to give to the LORD. The LORD deserves the best we have to give, and we have received from the LORD all we have to give. Priests resided in every tribe and town throughout the Promised Land to receive the offering of firstfruits.

**(Leviticus 23:11) and he shall wave the sheaf before the LORD, so that you may be accepted. On the day after the Sabbath the priest shall wave it.**

The priest would wave (or ceremonially present) the sheaf before the LORD for God’s people. Following these instructions would make their offering acceptable. They were not to just wave the sheaf themselves in some perfunctory way in the field to get it over with; they were to make the effort to formally go to a priest and express before God and others their thankfulness to the LORD with grateful hearts. They were to do this the day after the Sabbath (on a Sunday). Jesus rose from the dead on a Sunday, and

in 1 Corinthians 15:20, Paul spoke of Jesus' resurrection in the context of firstfruits: "But Christ has indeed been raised from the dead, the firstfruits of those who have fallen asleep." Jesus often spoke of our work as evangelists, teachers, and believers as "harvest work." In Luke 10:2, we read, "He told them, 'The harvest is plentiful, but the workers are few. Ask the Lord of the harvest, therefore, to send out workers into his harvest field'" As a result of teaching the truth in "harvest work," the first new Christians in a new Church are sometimes called firstfruits. In 2 Thessalonians 2:13, Paul wrote, "But we ought always to thank God for you, brothers and sisters loved by the Lord, because God chose you as firstfruits to be saved through the sanctifying work of the Spirit and through belief in the truth"

**(Leviticus 23:12) And on the day when you wave the sheaf, you shall offer a male lamb a year old without blemish as a burnt offering to the LORD.**

In addition to offering the sheaf, they were to sacrifice a lamb as a burnt offering. The lamb was to be perfect rather than a worthless castaway no one would want. The sacrifice of the lamb would point to the perfect sacrifice of Jesus as the Lamb of God. In John 1:36, we read "When John saw Jesus passing by, he said, 'Look, the Lamb of God!'" When God the Father sent His Son into the world to sacrifice His life for us, God sent the very best He had to give to die in our behalf.

**(Leviticus 23:13) And the grain offering with it shall be two tenths of an ephah of fine flour mixed with oil, a food offering to the LORD with a pleasing aroma, and the drink offering with it shall be of wine, a fourth of a hin.**

In addition, they were to offer oil from their olive trees and wine from their grapes. A "hin" was a measurement, perhaps of Egyptian origin since the LORD gave these instructions to Moses after they left Egypt before reaching the Promised Land. The people were to give what the LORD required and

recognize the fact that all their blessings and provisions came from the LORD. Once again, the LORD emphasized that they were to give “the finest” flour. If they gave willingly and not under compulsion, their offerings would be a “pleasing aroma” to the LORD, for the LORD loves a cheerful giver.

**(Leviticus 23:14) And you shall eat neither bread nor grain parched or fresh until this same day, until you have brought the offering of your God: it is a statute forever throughout your generations in all your dwellings.**

The people were to bring their firstfruits offerings to the LORD before they ever took a bite for themselves. They were not to bring the LORD their “leftovers” or “only after they made sure their personal needs were met.” Their offerings involved faith and trust in the LORD.

**(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 Feast of Unleavened Bread lasts seven days and falls immediately after Passover. The firstfruits from the barley harvest were presented the day after Passover. The firstfruits from the wheat harvest were offered seven full weeks later during the Feast of Weeks, called Pentecost in the New Testament. Depending on the location and other factors, harvesting could begin before or after the feast of Unleavened Bread and end before or after the Feast of Weeks. As mentioned above, the sheaf of the wave offering was the first grain to be reaped from a harvest, which was also considered “firstfruits.” 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, and the offering was made the day after the Sabbath, the day Jesus rose from the dead. The firstfruits of the barley was offered; then seven full weeks later the firstfruits of the wheat was offered.

**(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). In the Bible, yeast does not always mean "evil" or "sin." The LORD would never require an offering that included sin or evil. Yeast makes bread rise and pervades the entire loaf making delicious satisfying

bread. When the Holy Spirit came upon and into 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 for their many blessings. 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. In Jeremiah 32:35, we read, “They built the high places of Baal in the valley of the son of Hinnom, to offer up their sons and daughters to Molech, though I did not command them, nor did it enter my mind that they should do this abomination, causing Judah to sin.”

**(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. In 2 Thessalonians 3:10, we read, “For even when we were with you, we gave you this rule: “The one who is unwilling to work shall not eat.” 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 farms to find additional ways to care for the needy from the material blessings that God had given them.

### **Questions for Discussion and Thinking Further**

1. When they harvested, what kind of grain were the Israelites to offer?
2. When were the Israelites to begin making offerings of barley and wheat?
3. Where did they take their sheaf offering?
4. What was done with the sheaf of firstfruits?
5. When could the Israelites eat the grain they harvested?

### **Bonus Questions**

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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