

THE BOOK OF LEVITICUS - LESSON 7

HEBREW FESTIVALS

Hebrew Festivals of Leviticus 23

The book of Leviticus gives regulations for feast days that are to be celebrated "with a sacred assembly," including the weekly sabbath (Lev 23:1-4) and seven annual feast days: Passover (7 days, incl. unleavened bread), First fruits, Pentecost or Weeks, the New Year, the Day of Atonement, the first day of Booths, and the eighth day of Booths (Lev 23:5-44)

Lev. 23:

1 The Lord said to Moses, 2 "Speak to the Israelites and say to them: 'These are my appointed festivals, the appointed festivals of the Lord, which you are to proclaim as sacred assemblies.

Festival - actual word is translated "appointed times" - set aside time. Not necessarily a "festival" as we understand the word (synonyms = fair, carnival, fiesta, jamboree, celebrations, festivities)

Feasts, Festivals etc. were quite common in the Hebrew lifestyle. Examples for reasons to have a feast, celebration.

- Weddings Gen. 29:22 (sometimes these celebrations lasted a full week or more)
- Weaning of a child Gen. 21:8
- birthday of the King Gen. 40:20
- the arrival or departure of guests Gen 19:3; 26:30
- dedication of the Temple 1 Kn 8:65 (this lasted 14 days!!!)
- Birthdays Job 1:4
- Holy Picnic Ex. 5:1
- many many others

These days were to be set aside as "**sacred assemblies**"

- "sacred" = *Ko-Desh* - Holy
- While the Israelites were to worship, revere and celebrate God all the time, there are special times that were set aside to focus on this even more.

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#1 The Sabbath - Lev. 23:3

3 “There are six days when you may work, but the seventh day is a day of sabbath rest, a day of sacred assembly. You are not to do any work; wherever you live, it is a sabbath to the Lord.

- Weekly - every 7th day = Saturday.
 - Sunset on Friday till
 - Sunset on Saturday.
- Failure to observe was punishable by death.
 - Ex. 31:14-17; 35:2
- During the Maccabean period (between the Testaments)
 - some of the Maccabean’s allowed themselves to be killed during battle rather than defend themselves on the Sabbath.
 - After this, the Maccabean’s allowed them to defend themselves on the Sabbath (1 Macc 2:38-41)— but not initiate and attack.
- **Exodus 20:8-11 the 4th of the 10 Commandments**

Remember the Sabbath day by keeping it holy. 9 Six days you shall labor and do all your work, 10 but the seventh day is a sabbath to the Lord your God. On it you shall not do any work, neither you, nor your son or daughter, nor your male or female servant, nor your animals, nor any foreigner residing in your towns. 11 For in six days the Lord made the heavens and the earth, the sea, and all that is in them, but he rested on the seventh day. Therefore the Lord blessed the Sabbath day and made it holy.

- Reflects back to **Gen 2:3**

Then God blessed the seventh day and made it holy, because on it he rested from all the work of creating that he had done.

Resting from work on the seventh day of the week is mandated in the Ten Commandments (Exod 20:8-11; Deut 5:12-15), and reinforced frequently throughout the Hebrew Bible (Exod 23:12; 34:21; Lev 23:3).

It is based on the story that God rested from his work after the six "days" of creation (Gen 2:1-3).

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However, Jews throughout the centuries have debated exactly what constitutes unlawful "work" (cf. Jer 17:19-27) and whether God does not do at least some essential life-sustaining "work" on the sabbath. This caused a lot of trouble even for Jesus

- Jn 5:9-18 When Jesus heals the lame man
- Jn 7:21-23 Jesus argues about what constitutes "work" on the Sabbath.
- Jn 9 with healing the man born blind
- Matt 12 when Jesus & disciples picked grain on the Sabbath.
- Matt 12 - healed man with crippled hand on Sabbath

Psalm 92 is said to be the Psalm for the Sabbath.

- :1-3

*"it is good to praise the Lord
and make music to your name, O Most High,
2 proclaiming your love in the morning
and your faithfulness at night,
3 to the music of the ten-stringed lyre
and the melody of the harp.*

- :12-15

*The righteous will flourish like a palm tree,
they will grow like a cedar of Lebanon;
13 planted in the house of the Lord,
they will flourish in the courts of our God.
14 They will still bear fruit in old age,
they will stay fresh and green,
15 proclaiming, "The Lord is upright;
he is my Rock, and there is no wickedness in him."*

What would be the real purpose of the Sabbath? What is God's "So That"?

The word "sabbath" means "rest". This isn't the kind of rest we need after a good workout. The word literally means 'the ending of activity'. God didn't rest on the seventh day because He was tired. God had finished creating the world, and so

He stopped. He didn't pick up where He left off the next day ...He was done. There was no more "creating" to be done. God's covenant with the children of Israel included a lot of religious activity, including the creation of a tabernacle, sacrifices of animals, and so on. This activity only stopped on the Sabbath.

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Now, remember: the Sabbath isn't about being tired...it's about being finished with your work. The priests couldn't stop working the way that God did in Genesis. They took a day off and went right back to it the next day. Why? Because the work wasn't finished.

They did the same things day after day, week after week, month after month, year after year, generation after generation. They were even forbidden to have chairs in the tabernacle because sitting down would suggest that their work was done! The idea as to instill in them the feeling that to be righteous on their own, the work is *NEVER* done.

The Exodus Sabbath was a symbol of God's rest in Genesis. It told the children of Israel that they would someday be able to stop working...to stop sacrificing for their own sins. When Jesus (The Messiah) died and rose again, that day had finally come. In **Hebrews 10:11-14** we see the comparison between the Jewish priests and Jesus:

Hebrews 10:11-14

Day after day every priest stands and performs his religious duties; again and again he offers the same sacrifices, which can never take away sins. 12 But when this priest had offered for all time one sacrifice for sins, he sat down at the right hand of God, 13 and since that time he waits for his enemies to be made his footstool. 14 For by one sacrifice he has made perfect forever those who are being made holy.

Jesus finished His work and rested — sitting down with God, just as we see God doing in Genesis.

What about us? How then should we view the Sabbath?

God rested when His work was done, and Jesus rested when His work was done. The ancient Jews never enjoyed that rest, but it's available to us today, as Hebrews 4:9-11 tell us:

Heb 4:9-11

There remains, then, a Sabbath-rest for the people of God; 10 for anyone who enters God's rest also rests from their works, just as God did from his. 11 Let us, therefore, make every effort to enter

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that rest, so that no one will perish by following their example of disobedience.

Let's look again at Colossians 2:16-17, which should erase any doubt about the nature of the Sabbath:

Col 2:16,27

Therefore do not let anyone judge you by what you eat or drink, or with regard to a religious festival, a New Moon celebration or a Sabbath day. These are a shadow of the things that were to come; the reality, however, is found in Christ.

From all of these verses we can see that the Sabbath, at it's core, clearly isn't a day of the week. It's neither Saturday nor Sunday!

We enter into the Sabbath rest when we stop working, and that only happens when we accept that Jesus' sacrifice was for each of us - he completed the work for us and His work is done, and He invites us to join Him - for a sit down!!!

By using the word "Sabbath-rest," Hebrews is saying that the weekly Sabbath symbolized the real rest that God wants his people to enter. Just as the Levitical sacrifices symbolized the work of Christ, the weekly Sabbath pictured our final salvation.

#2 The Passover (Pesach) and the Festival of Unleavened Bread (Mazzot)

4 “These are the Lord’s appointed festivals, the sacred assemblies you are to proclaim at their appointed times: 5 The Lord’s Passover begins at twilight on the fourteenth day of the first month. 6 On the fifteenth day of that month the Lord’s Festival of Unleavened Bread begins; for seven days you must eat bread made without yeast. 7 On the first day hold a sacred assembly and do no regular work. 8 For seven days present a food offering to the Lord. And on the seventh day hold a sacred assembly and do no regular work.”

The Hebrew calendar begins in the spring. The first holiday is Passover or, in Hebrew, Pesach. It occurs on the evening of the fourteenth of Nissan, which

normally falls sometime in April in our calendar. It is the defining holiday for Jews because it commemorates when God, through many miracles, called the

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Israelite nation out of slavery to be His people. To be excluded from the plague of the death of the first born, the Hebrews had to select an unblemished lamb on the tenth of Nissan, slaughter it on the fourteenth, and paint its blood on the frame of each door. This freedom from physical slavery foreshadowed God's freeing us from spiritual slavery approximately 1500 years later through Jesus.

It was originally celebrated in each family's house; an unblemished lamb was slaughtered and eaten, and its blood sprinkled on the doorposts with a branch of the hyssop plant (Exod 12:1-13, 21-28, 43-49; cf. John 19:29).

The lamb was slaughtered on the afternoon of the 14th day of the month of Nisan/Abib (called the "Day of Preparation"), and the Passover meal eaten just after sunset (the beginning of the 15th day, in the Jewish calendar).

The seven-day feast of Unleavened Bread is also related to the Exodus, when the Hebrews did not even have time to let bread rise as they were leaving Egypt (Exod 12:14-20; 13:3-10).

Both festivals combined became a major pilgrimage feast, with the people going to the Jerusalem temple to offer the sacrificial lamb (Lev 23:4-14; Num 9:2-5; 28:16-25; Deut 16:1-8).

On the tenth of Nissan of Jesus' 33rd year, He rode into Jerusalem. As Passover was a pilgrimage holiday, the city was filled with Jews from many lands. Each Jew chose an unblemished lamb for his family's sacrifice. Perhaps on that day, a multitude of Jews did unknowingly chose their unblemished lamb for their sacrifice —

Jesus. "A very large crowd spread their cloaks on the road, while others cut branches from the trees and spread them on the road. 9 The crowds that went ahead of him and those that followed shouted, "Hosanna to the Son of David!" "Blessed is he who comes in the name of the Lord!" "Hosanna in the highest heaven!" (Matt. 21: 8-9)

On the evening of the fourteenth, Jesus led the Seder service, as in every Jewish home throughout the world. On the table there were three matzos.

As in every Passover ceremony, He took the middle matzo, blessed it and broke it. Unlike in any other home that night or at any time since, He said in breaking that matzo, *"This is my body, which is for you; do this in remembrance of me."* (1Cor. 11:24)

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As in every Jewish family, Jesus lifted and blessed the fourth cup of wine of the Seder service, the Cup of Redemption. *"In the same way, after the supper he took the cup, saying, 'This cup is the new covenant in my blood, which is poured out for you.'" (1 Cor. 11:25)* He was referring to God's promise to Jeremiah hundreds of years before, *"The time is coming," declares the Lord, "when I will make a new covenant with the house of Israel and with the house of Judah."* (Jer. 31:31)

Our spiritual Passover was fulfilled when Jesus, our Unblemished Lamb, was sacrificed and died on the cross the next day. All those who submit to His call and are united with his sacrifice in faithful baptism are saved from the world and saved from Hell, just as the Hebrew families in Egypt were saved from the physical death of their first born by the blood of the lambs that they sacrificed.

This sacrifice was also a precursor to the whole sacrificial system that was to be introduced to them later — that we have been studying in Leviticus. The Passover Lamb was actually the first sacrifice introduced to the Hebrews.

In modern Judaism, the entire Song of Songs is read in the synagogue services during Pesach.

The church continued to observe what we call the Lords Supper, replacing the Passover feast, although many Jewish Christians still observed Passover as a part of their culture while Gentile Christians did not.

The early church observed the Lords Supper "feast" every Sunday as a celebration of the resurrection. It is probable that the Lords Supper was more of a full meal with the times of remembrance included rather than what we are used to today.

#3 Offering the Firstfruits

9 The Lord said to Moses, 10 "Speak to the Israelites and say to them: 'When you enter the land I am going to give you and you reap its harvest, bring to the priest a sheaf of the first grain you harvest. 11 He is to wave the sheaf before the Lord so it will be accepted on your behalf; the priest is to wave it on the day after the Sabbath. 12 On the day you wave the sheaf, you must sacrifice as a burnt offering to the Lord a lamb a year old

without defect, 13 together with its grain offering of two-tenths of an ephah of the finest flour mixed with olive oil—a food offering presented to

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the Lord, a pleasing aroma—and its drink offering of a quarter of a hin of wine. 14 You must not eat any bread, or roasted or new grain, until the very day you bring this offering to your God. This is to be a lasting ordinance for the generations to come, wherever you live.

Although only the Orthodox Jews celebrate the festival of First Fruits today, it is a Levitical holiday, celebrated the first Sunday after the first night of Passover. Many feel like this festival was absorbed into the Passover/Unleavened Bread festival. It was to consecrate the first of the harvest, looking forward with gratitude to the fullness of the harvest yet to come.

It was the day Jesus rose from the dead, our Easter Sunday.

As Paul wrote, *"But Christ has indeed been raised from the dead, the firstfruits of those who have fallen asleep"* 1Cor. 15:20.

The term "first fruits" is used many times in the New Testament.

- The Believing Jews would be the Firstfruits of salvation to the Jewish people **Rom. 11:16**
- To James, all believers were a kind of Firstfruits of all God's creation Jam. 1:18
- Those who follow the Lamb are called the Firstfruits of God in Rev. 14:4

God has always expected and deserved the First pick of all we have. This festival was to emphasize and celebrate this point. It is interesting to note that the sacrifice here is seen as a blessing and a reason to celebrate and not a reason to be saddened by the loss or sacrifice.

#4 The Festival of Weeks or Pentecost (Shavuot)

15 "From the day after the Sabbath, the day you brought the sheaf of the wave offering, count off seven full weeks. 16 Count off fifty days up to the day after the seventh Sabbath, and then present an offering of new grain to the Lord. 17 From wherever you live, bring two loaves made of two-tenths of an ephah of the finest flour, baked with yeast, as a wave offering of firstfruits to the Lord. 18 Present with this bread seven male lambs, each a year old and without defect, one young bull and two rams. They will be a burnt offering to the Lord, together with their grain offerings and

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drink offerings—a food offering, an aroma pleasing to the Lord. 19 Then sacrifice one male goat for a sin offering and two lambs, each a year old, for a

fellowship offering. 20 The priest is to wave the two lambs before the Lord as a wave offering, together with the bread of the firstfruits. They are a sacred offering to the Lord for the priest. 21 On that same day you are

to proclaim a sacred assembly and do no regular work. This is to be a lasting ordinance for the generations to come, wherever you live.

22 “When you reap the harvest of your land, do not reap to the very edges of your field or gather the gleanings of your harvest. Leave them for the poor and for the foreigner residing among you. I am the Lord your God.”

To many today, the term Pentecostal is associated with miraculous gifts — especially speaking in tongues. However this is not the meaning of the word.

It is named Pentecost because it is counted from the Sabbath of Passover to the day after the 7th Sabbath. (Lev 23:15-21; Num 28:26; Deut 16:9-12; 34:22) equalling 50 days, the word literally meaning 50th. The Pentecost would therefore fall on a Sunday - The First day of the week.

Later it also became a commemoration of the giving of the Torah on Mount Sinai (Exod 19-20).

In the NT it is called "Pentecost" since it is held "50 days" after Passover (cf. Acts 2:1; 20:16; 1 Cor 16:8).

In modern Judaism, the Book of Ruth is read in the synagogue services during the Feast of Passover. Why?

One way to look at the Book of Ruth is to see it as God's plan for redemption.

Naomi, the Jewish mother-in-law, wins such love and devotion of her Moabite, pagan, daughter-in-law, Ruth, that when Naomi's husband and two sons die and Naomi decides to go back to Jerusalem, Ruth declares, "Don't urge me to leave you or to turn back from you. Where you go I will go, and where you stay I will stay. Your people will be my people and your God my God. Where you die I will die, and there I will be buried. May the Lord deal with me, be it ever so severely, if anything but death separates you and me." (Ruth 1:16-17) Naomi represents the Jewish People. Ruth the non-believing gentile world.

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When they go back to Jerusalem, Ruth comes under the protection of a wealthy distant relative of Naomi. His name is Boaz and he represents God's protection. He eventually marries Ruth and through their marriage, Naomi is blessed and brought under Boaz' protection too.

For us ...

The Jewish apostles brought the Gospel to the gentile world. The gentiles who believed and became Christians were like a bride to Christ. Through their love, the Jews have been and will be brought under His protection and final covenant. Every Shavout (Pentecost) this story is read.

Because Pentecost is a pilgrimage holiday, on the Pentecost following the crucifixion tens of thousands of Jews from many lands were in Jerusalem (Acts 2:1,5). It was to these thousands Peter spoke. *"Repent and be baptized, every one of you, in the name of Jesus Christ for the forgiveness of your sins. And you will receive the gift of the Holy Spirit. The promise is for you and your children and for all who are far off—for all whom the Lord our God will call."* (Acts 2:38,39).

#5 The Festival of Trumpets Rosh Hasannah

23 The Lord said to Moses, 24 "Say to the Israelites: 'On the first day of the seventh month you are to have a day of sabbath rest, a sacred assembly commemorated with trumpet blasts. 25 Do no regular work, but present a food offering to the Lord.'"

In the Jewish Calendar the first day of the seventh month (the month of "Tishri" on the Jewish calendar - roughly in September) is celebrated with "sabbath rest" and a "sacred assembly" (Lev 23:23-25; cf. Num 29:1).

It's treated like a Sabbath day even if it doesn't fall on the 7th day - Saturday.

On this day, the burnt offerings were reestablished by the priest Ezra in the period after the Babylonian Exile (Ezra 3:6; cf. Neh 8:2).

Festivities include the blowing of the Shofar (a type of trumpet made out of a ram's horn).

This holiday is not given a name in the Bible.

There is no other reason given for the holiday in the Bible. Since the only other holiday on which we are commanded to spend time remembering was Shabbat

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(Sabbath), and on Shabbat we are to remember the creation, over time the Jews associated Rosh Hashannah (Which means "Head of the Year" in Hebrew) with the anniversary of the original creation.

Today Jews celebrate this holiday and date their years from the start of linking the holiday to creation, 5786 BCE in 2016.

Note that the Jewish Calendar has four different days called "New Year" (just as Westerners have "New School Year" and "New Fiscal Year" dates different from Jan. 1): Nissan 1 (in March) = new year for counting calendar months; Elul 1 (in August) = new year for tithing of animals; Tishri 1 (in September) = new year for years (increase year numbers); Shevat 15 (in February) = new year for trees (when fruit is ripe enough to eat).

#6 The Day of Atonement/Yom Kippur

Lev. 23: 26-32

26 The Lord said to Moses, 27 "The tenth day of this seventh month is the Day of Atonement. Hold a sacred assembly and deny yourselves, and present a food offering to the Lord. 28 Do not do any work on that day, because it is the Day of Atonement, when atonement is made for you before the Lord your God. 29 Those who do not deny themselves on that day must be cut off from their people. 30 I will destroy from among their people anyone who does any work on that day. 31 You shall do no work at all. This is to be a lasting ordinance for the generations to come, wherever you live. 32 It is a day of sabbath rest for you, and you must deny yourselves. From the evening of the ninth day of the month until the following evening you are to observe your sabbath."

An annual purification ritual, involving a sacrifice offered for the purification of the temple, the land, and the people (Lev 16:1-34; 23:26-32).

The New Testament does not directly mention this feast day, but adapts its imagery to speak of Jesus' death as an atonement for sins (Rom 3:25,26; Heb 2:17).

The Hebrews were instructed from Exodus through Ezekial that the priests must make atonement on their behalf for their sins, even for those sins committed unintentionally or unknowingly. (Lev. 4:1-35) These sacrifices were made on a daily basis as sin offerings and guilt offerings.

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Once a year, on the tenth of Tishri, (in late September or early October) the high priest, the first was Aaron, was to take two perfect animals, to be sacrificed. These were initially goats.

One goat was to be slain and its blood used as atonement for the sins of the whole of Israel. The other goat, after ceremonially having the sins of the whole nation transferred to it, was sent outside the camp to die.

Today Orthodox Jews ceremonially kill a chicken (I have no idea why a chicken was chosen). The other branches of Judaism spend the day in synagogues, fasting and praying as their sacrifice.

The sacrificial system only worked if the people were willing to give up their sins, to cast off their rebellious hearts and selfish ways so they could be transferred to the animal killed and to the “scapegoat”.

The high priest could go through the motions, but it was the faith and commitment of the people that was rewarded with forgiveness and cleansing. Again, it pointed to and foretold Christ’s atoning death.

The perfect animals represented Jesus. His blood was shed as our atonement and, like the scapegoat, He was taken outside the city to take upon Himself all the sins of mankind and die on Golgatha Hill. Just as with the original Yom Kippur, only those who are willing to cast off their sins, to repent and accept God’s forgiveness and surrender to His Lordship are cleansed by the blood of the sacrifice and are forgiven.

#7 The Festival of Tabernacles (Succoth)

The Festival of Tabernacles

33 The Lord said to Moses, 34 “Say to the Israelites: ‘On the fifteenth day of the seventh month the Lord’s Festival of Tabernacles begins, and it lasts for seven days. 35 The first day is a sacred assembly; do no regular work. 36 For seven days present food offerings to the Lord, and on the eighth day hold a sacred assembly and present a food offering to the Lord. It is the closing special assembly; do no regular work.

37 (“These are the Lord’s appointed festivals, which you are to proclaim as sacred assemblies for bringing food offerings to the Lord—the burnt

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offerings and grain offerings, sacrifices and drink offerings required for each day. 38 These offerings are in addition to those for the Lord's Sabbaths and in addition to your gifts and whatever you have vowed and all the freewill offerings you give to the Lord.)

39 "So beginning with the fifteenth day of the seventh month, after you have gathered the crops of the land, celebrate the festival to the Lord for seven days; the first day is a day of sabbath rest, and the eighth day also is a day of sabbath rest. 40 On the first day you are to take branches from luxuriant trees—from palms, willows and other leafy trees—and rejoice before the Lord your God for seven days. 41 Celebrate this as a festival to the Lord for seven days each year. This is to be a lasting ordinance for the generations to come; celebrate it in the seventh month. 42 Live in temporary shelters for seven days: All native-born Israelites are to live in such shelters 43 so your descendants will know that I had the Israelites live in temporary shelters when I brought them out of Egypt. I am the Lord your God."

44 So Moses announced to the Israelites the appointed festivals of the Lord.

For seven days beginning the fifteenth of Tishri (mid-October), the Hebrews were told to have a festival celebrating and thanking God for the harvest. They were instructed to build booths or tents, "Succoth", and dwell in them seven days.

This holiday was to have meanings in addition to being thankful for the harvest. "Live in temporary shelters for seven days: All native-born Israelites are to live in such shelters 43 so your descendants will know that I had the Israelites live in temporary shelters when I brought them out of Egypt. I am the Lord your God." (Lev. 23:42-43)

Living in temporary booths also reminds us of how temporary life is. Today some Jews build booths/tents/huts in their back yards and eat in them. The holiday has become a time of giving, especially food to the needy, sharing the bounty the Lord has given.

During Succoth we remember that God had the Israelites live as nomads — in temporary and mobile housing — when He brought them out of Egypt and that God freed them from physical slavery when He brought them out of Egypt.

Jesus freed us from slavery to sin when He died and rose again. God gave food and water to their physical bodies in the desert when he gave them manna and

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quail. Jesus said, "I am the bread of life. He who comes to me will never go hungry, and he who believes in me will never be thirsty."(John 6:35).

Chanukah (Hanukah) /Feast of Dedication.

Chanukah was not in the original nor is in the modern Hebrew Scriptures or our Bible. It comes from a group of eleven books which were added to the Jewish Scriptures during the reign of Ptolemy Philadelphus (284-247 BC.) when he brought 70 Jewish Scholars/Rabbis to Alexandria, Egypt, to translate the Hebrew Scriptures into Greek. These books are not included in our Bible.

The two books of Macabees tell of the uprising or rebellion of the Jewish people under Antiochus of Assyria who desecrated the Temple and ordered the Jews to worship him. The uprising began in the small town of Modin when a priest name Mattithias killed another Jew who had come forth to worship the idol put by the Assyrian soldiers in the center of town. It ended with the rededication of the Temple in 165 BC. It is a festival that celebrates God's protection and provision.

It is assumed that Jesus celebrated Chanukah because He was in the temple in Jerusalem during the Feast of Dedication when He declared that unbelief of those in the temple was caused, despite His miracles, because those there were not His sheep, that His sheep know His voice and follow it, and that He and the Father are both separate and one. (John 10:23-30)

There are two curious things about the celebration of Chanukah that point to Christ. First is not so much the celebration of Chanukah as the celebration of Christmas.

We know that for the shepherds to be out as they are described in Luke (2:8-15), it had to be spring. Yet, in 325 AD, when the Council of Nicaea decided to set a date to celebrate Christ's birth, (a celebration that is not commanded or alluded to in the Bible), they picked December 25. The curious thing is that our month of December roughly corresponds to the Hebrew month Kislev and that Chanukah, the Feast of Dedication, begins on Kislev 25.

How appropriate to tie the remembrance of our own fallen state, God's victory and our ability to dedicate ourselves to Him to the fallen state of the Jews under Antiochus, God's victory and their being able to rededicate the temple and themselves to Him.

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The other curious thing is in the celebration of Chanukah itself. The regular lamp stand used in Jewish ceremonies is called a menorah and has seven branches, symbolizing the seven days of creation. There is an enormous elaborately carved menorah in front of the Knesseth, Israel's capitol building, in Jerusalem. Seven branches for seven days, all branches equally sized and spaced.

The lamp stand used for Chanukah is called a Chanukiah, but is often referred to just as a menorah. Chanukah lasts eight days, but the chanukiah does not have eight branches. It has nine.

Where the standard, everyday menorah has branches of equal height and spacing, eight of the branches of the Chanukiah are of equal height and are equally spaced and the ninth is set apart, usually higher. This candle that is set above is called the shammash, the same as the title given to a helper in a synagogue, like a combination of a deacon and secretary.

This elevated candle, this shammash, is lit first and from its light the other eight candles are lit. The shammash, of course, is the light of the Messiah that enables the rest of us to become lights in a dark world. Each night of Chanukah, the first candle is lit, the shammash, then the number of candles corresponding to the day of Chanukah, is remembered that it is the Messiah's (Jesus) light that lights us.