

True Worship of the True God

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And **[Jesus] said** to them, “Well did Isaiah prophesy of **you hypocrites**, as it is written,
“This people honors me with their lips, but their heart is far from me;
in vain do they worship me, teaching as doctrines the commandments of men.”
(Mark 7:6-7 ESV)

Not everyone who says to me, ‘Lord, Lord,’ will enter the kingdom of heaven, but the one who does the will of my Father who is in heaven. (Matthew 7:21 ESV)

Jesus said to her “Woman **believe me**, the hour is coming when neither on this mountain nor in Jerusalem will you **worship the Father**. You worship what you do not know; we worship what we know, for salvation is from the Jews. But the hour is coming, and is now here, when **the true worshipers will worship the Father in spirit and truth**, for **the Father is seeking such people to worship him**. God is spirit, and **those who worship him must worship in spirit and truth.**” (John 4:21-24 ESV)

What does it mean to **worship God**? **What does God require** in such worship? How has the true worship of God been corrupted by the “**commandments of men**”? Who are the “**true worshippers**”? How does one “**worship in spirit and in truth**”? These questions are explored in this paper.

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1. Individual Worship in the Old Testament

The most important Hebrew word for worship is הִשְׁתַּחֲוָה - hish'tahawah. In secular usage, it means to “bow down” or “prostrate oneself” – usually in an act of respect. In relation to God, it means to “worship”.¹ We first come across the word in relation to Abram:

And **the LORD appeared to him by the oaks of Mamre**, as he sat at the door of his tent in the heat of the day. He lifted up his eyes and looked, and behold, three men were standing in front of him. When he saw them, he ran from the tent door to meet them and **bowed himself** [hish'tahawah] **to the earth** and said, “O Lord, if I have found favor in your sight, **do not pass by your servant**. Let a little water be brought, and **wash your feet**, and rest yourselves under the tree, while **I bring a morsel of bread**, that you may refresh yourselves, and after that you may pass on—since you have come to your servant.” (Genesis 18:1-5a ESV)²

Abram knew who this was – as soon as he recognized YHWH he bowed down to worship him. Abram implored YHWH to stay with him. **He served him with refreshments and food and waited to learn the purpose of the visit.** Abram was well acquainted with YHWH before this incident:

Now the **LORD said to Abram**, “Go from your country ...” Then the **LORD appeared to Abram** ... After these things the word of the **LORD came to Abram in a vision** ... When Abram was ninety-nine years old the **LORD appeared to Abram** and said to him, “**I am God Almighty** ...” (Genesis 12:1a, 7a, 15:1a, 17:1 ESV)

After living in Canaan for about forty-five years, Abraham experienced the most significant event of his life:

After these things **God tested Abraham** and said to him, “Abraham!” And he said, “Here I am.” He said, “**Take your son, your only son Isaac**, whom you love, and go to the land of Moriah, and **offer him there as a burnt offering** on one of the mountains of which I shall tell you.” ... On the third day Abraham lifted up his eyes and saw the place from afar. Then Abraham said to his young men, “Stay here with the donkey; **I and the boy will go over there and worship** [hish'tahawah] **and come again to you.**” And Abraham took the wood of the burnt offering and laid it on Isaac his son. And he took in his hand the fire and the knife. So they went both of them together. And Isaac said to his father Abraham, “My father!” And he said, “Here I am, my son.” He said, “Behold, the fire and the wood, but **where is the lamb for a burnt offering?**” Abraham said, “**God will provide³ for himself the lamb** for a burnt offering, my son.” So they went both of them together. (Genesis 22:1-2, 4-8 ESV)

Prior to this YHWH had led Abraham through many life experiences to teach him to “live by faith”.⁴ This test by God was designed to prove whether or not Abraham had learned to be “the father of the faithful”.⁵ **Abraham recognized it as a “worship” experience.** Isaac was probably around eighteen years old, so he was fully aware of what was going-on – **he observes there is no lamb.** Abraham prophetically replied “**God will provide for himself the lamb**”. The author of Hebrews has correctly assessed Abraham’s mindset in this situation:

By faith Abraham, when he was tested, offered up Isaac, and he who had received the promises was in the act of offering up his only son, of whom it was said, “Through Isaac shall your offspring be named.” **He considered that God was able even to raise him from the dead**, from which, figuratively speaking, he did receive him back. (Hebrews 11:17-19 ESV)

When they came to the place of which God had told him, **Abraham** built the altar there and laid the wood in order and **bound Isaac his son** and **laid him on the altar**, on top of the wood. Then Abraham reached out his hand and took the knife to slaughter his son. But **the angel of the LORD called to him** from heaven and said, “Abraham, Abraham!” And he said, “Here I am.” He said, “**Do not lay your hand on the boy** or do anything to him, for **now I know that you fear God**, seeing **you have not withheld your son, your only son**, from me.” And Abraham lifted up his eyes and looked, and behold, **behind him was a ram**, caught in a thicket by his horns. And Abraham went and took the ram and offered it up as a burnt offering instead of his son. So Abraham called the name of that place, “**The LORD will provide**”; as it is said to this day, “On **the mount of the LORD [he] shall be provided.**” (Genesis 22:9-14 ESV)

¹ See TWOT article 619, page 267; see also *Excursus 1 – hish'tahawah*

² Note that in Genesis 19:1-3 Lot shows similar difference to the two angels, although at the first he did NOT know they were angels.

³ Note the play on words: “provide” in verses 8 and 14 is from the root רָאָה ra'ah. The first two instances are ongoing active “will provide”; the third is passive “shall be provided” with a masculine suffix.

⁴ For a discussion of these experiences, section **3.2 To Live by Faith**, in the paper “**Covenants of Grace**” located on www.mikewhytebiblicalresearch.ca

⁵ See Romans 4:16, Galatians 3:7, 9, James 2:21

Note that Abraham had predicted that God would provide a “**lamb**”, whereas in fact the substitute for Isaac was a “**ram**”. Clearly the “lamb” was yet to come – **Jesus Christ the Lamb of God**.⁶

Later, when Abraham is 140 years old and Isaac is forty, Abraham sends his servant, likely Eliezer,⁷ to obtain a wife for Isaac from among his relatives. When the servant arrives in Aram-naharaim, he prays: And he said, “O LORD, **God of my master Abraham**, please grant me success today and show [hesed]⁸ to my master Abraham. (Genesis 24:12 ESV)

Soon the servant makes contact with Rebekah:

She said to him, “I am the daughter of Bethuel the son of Milcah, whom she bore to Nahor.”⁹ ... **The man bowed his head and worshiped** [hish^etaḥawah] **the LORD** and said, “Blessed be the LORD, the God of my master Abraham, who has not forsaken his [hesed] and his faithfulness toward my master. As for me, the LORD has led me in the way to the house of my master’s kinsmen.” (Genesis 24:24, 26-27 ESV)

When the servant explains his mission to Bethuel and his son Laban, he gets a positive reaction:

Then **I bowed my head and worshiped** [hish^etaḥawah] **the LORD and blessed the LORD**, the God of my master Abraham, who had led me by the right way to take the daughter of my master’s kinsman for his son. Now then, if you are going to show [hesed]¹⁰ and faithfulness to my master, tell me; and if not, tell me, that I may turn to the right hand or to the left.” Then Laban and Bethuel answered and said, “**The thing has come from the LORD**; we cannot speak to you bad or good. Behold, Rebekah is before you; take her and go, and let her be the wife of your master’s son, as the LORD has spoken.” **When Abraham’s servant heard their words, he bowed himself** [hish^etaḥawah] **to the earth before the LORD**. (Genesis 24:48-52 ESV)

The actions of the servant in worshipping God include **communication with God** to help the servant carry out the will of God, **deep appreciation** to God for assistance given.

When YHWH reveals himself personally to Moses on Mount Sinai, Moses is quick to comprehend the significance of YHWH’s beneficence. In worship, **Moses implores YHWH** on behalf of the people to forgive them and dwell among them:

And **Moses quickly bowed his head toward the earth and worshiped** [hish^etaḥawah]. And he said, “If now I have found favor in your sight, O Lord, **please let the Lord go in the midst of us**, for it is a stiff-necked people, and pardon our iniquity and our sin, and take us for your inheritance.” (Exodus 34:8-9 ESV)

Prior to the Battle of Jericho, Joshua was given a personal theophany. YHWH revealed himself as the Commander of the army of YHWH. Joshua only recognized YHWH as he spoke.¹¹ **Joshua immediately worships YHWH and requests instructions** from him:

When Joshua was by Jericho, he lifted up his eyes and looked, and behold, a man was standing before him with his drawn sword in his hand. And Joshua went to him and said to him, “**Are you for us, or for our adversaries?**” And he said, “No; but **I am the commander of the army of the LORD**. Now I have come.” And **Joshua fell on his face to the earth and worshiped** [hish^etaḥawah] and said to him, “**What does my lord say to his servant?**” And the commander of the LORD’s army said to Joshua, “Take off your sandals from your feet, for **the place where you are standing is holy**.” And Joshua did so. (Joshua 5:13-15 ESV)

Prior to the battle with the Midianites, Gideon is afraid. YHWH gives him a sign that indeed he will defeat the Midianites through Gideon and his 300 men. **As soon as Gideon receives the sign, he worships and is filled with courage** to accomplish the work given him by God:

That same night the LORD said to him, “Arise, go down against the camp, for I have given it into your hand. But **if you are afraid** to go down, go down to the camp with Purah your servant. And **you shall hear what they say**, and afterward **your hands shall be strengthened** to go down against the camp.”

Then he went down with Purah his servant to the outposts of the armed men who were in the camp. And the Midianites and the Amalekites and all the people of the East lay along the valley like locusts in abundance, and their camels were without number, as the sand that is on the seashore in abundance.

⁶ Jesus is called “the only son of God” (John 1:14, 3:16, 18, 1 John 4:9) and the “Lamb of God” (John 1:29, 36); see also Revelation 5:6, 8, 12, 13, 6:1, 16, 7:9, 10, 14, 17, 8:1, 13:8, 14:1, 4, 10, 15:3, 17:14, 19:7, 9, 21:9, 14, 22, 23, 22:1, 3.

⁷ See Genesis 15:2

⁸ There is no word in English to translate *hesed* – it means “covenant love”, the basis of God’s grace in dealing with human beings.

⁹ Nahor was the brother of Abram, see Genesis 11:26, 29.

¹⁰ Here *hesed* is expressed between human beings – it implies reciprocal respect between people who have a close relationship.

¹¹ Joshua had been Moses’ assistant from the beginning and had been spoken to by YHWH on several occasions, see Exodus 17:9-10, 24:13, 33:11, Joshua 1:1, 3:7, 4:1, 15.

When Gideon came, behold, a man was telling a dream to his comrade. And he said, “Behold, I dreamed a dream, and behold, a cake of barley bread tumbled into the camp of Midian and came to the tent and struck it so that it fell and turned it upside down, so that the tent lay flat.” And his comrade answered, “This is no other than the sword of Gideon the son of Joash, a man of Israel; God has given into his hand Midian and all the camp.” As soon as Gideon heard the telling of the dream and its interpretation, he worshiped [hish^etaḥawah]. And he returned to the camp of Israel and said, “Arise, for the LORD has given the host of Midian into your hand.” (Judges 7:9-15 ESV)

When David’s bastard child is born to Bathsheba, whom God has warned him will die, David implores God for mercy to let the child live:

And the LORD afflicted the child that Uriah’s wife bore to David, and he became sick. David therefore sought God on behalf of the child. And David fasted and went in and lay all night on the ground. And the elders of his house stood beside him, to raise him from the ground, but he would not, nor did he eat food with them. On the seventh day the child died. (2 Samuel 12:15b-18a ESV)

On the death of the child, David accepts God’s decision, cleans himself up, goes before God, demonstrates his faith by worshiping God, and prepares to go on with life:

Then David arose from the earth and washed and anointed himself and changed his clothes. And he went into the house¹² of the LORD and worshiped [hish^etaḥawah]. He then went to his own house. And when he asked, they set food before him, and he ate. Then his servants said to him, “What is this thing that you have done? You fasted and wept for the child while he was alive; but when the child died, you arose and ate food.” He said, “While the child was still alive, I fasted and wept, for I said, ‘Who knows whether the LORD will be gracious to me, that the child may live?’ But now he is dead. Why should I fast? Can I bring him back again? I shall go to him, but he will not return to me.” (2 Samuel 12:20-23 ESV)

When Job’s wealth and family are destroyed by Satan, he receives the news and in great grief worships YHWH, accepting his will:

Then Job arose and tore his robe and shaved his head and fell on the ground and worshiped [hish^etaḥawah]. And he said, “Naked I came from my mother’s womb, and naked shall I return. The LORD gave, and the LORD has taken away; blessed be the name of the LORD.” (Job 1:20-21 ESV)

These examples of individual worship identify some important characteristic of the way that God requires to be worshipped:

- Abram served YHWH
- Abraham carried out the command of YHWH recognizing it as an act of worship
- Abraham’s servant communicated with God by praying for his assistance, then showed deep gratitude when the assistance was given
- Moses implored YHWH to carry out his plan for Israel
- Joshua reverently waited for direction from YHWH
- Gideon was filled with courage to accomplish God’s work
- David accepted the will of God and demonstrated faith
- Job was grief stricken and accepted God’s will

2. Communal Worship in the Old Testament

When Moses and Aaron first came to the “elders of Israel” with God’s plan to liberate them from slavery, they responded favourably. The people believed that God would help them, and they collectively worshipped in gratitude:

Then Moses and Aaron went and gathered together all the elders of the people of Israel. Aaron spoke all the words that the LORD had spoken to Moses and did the signs in the sight of the people. And the people believed; and when they heard that the LORD had visited the people of Israel and that he had seen their affliction, they bowed their heads and worshiped [hish^etaḥawah]. (Exodus 4:29-31 ESV)¹³

In explaining the meaning of the Passover to the people, Moses elaborates that it is to be a “statute” forever and the meaning is to be passed-on from generation to generation. When the people comprehend the significance, they worship:

¹² The tent containing the Ark of the Covenant, see 1 Chronicles 15:1-15, 16:1-3, Psalms 15 and 68

¹³ See also Exodus 33:10

You shall observe this rite as a statute for you and for your sons forever. And when you come to the land that the LORD will give you, as he has promised, you shall keep this service. And when your children say to you, 'What do you mean by this service?' you shall say, 'It is the sacrifice of the LORD's Passover, for he passed over the houses of the people of Israel in Egypt, when he struck the Egyptians but spared our houses.' And **the people bowed their heads and worshiped** [hish*taḥawah]. (Exodus 12:24-27 ESV)

After the Ten Commandments had been spoken to all the people by YHWH, Moses and a group of others are called to come onto Mount Sinai. Moses is to go all the way up the mountain to receive more revelation from YHWH. **The others are to remain at a distance, but being in the presence of God, they are to maintain an attitude of worship:**

Then he said to Moses, "Come up to the LORD, you and Aaron, Nadab, and Abihu, and seventy of the elders of Israel, and **worship** [hish*taḥawah] **from afar**. **Moses alone shall come near to the LORD**, but the others shall not come near, and the people shall not come up with him." (Exodus 24:1-2 ESV)

When Moses comes down from the mountain, he performs the **Covenant Ratification Ceremony**. In the ceremony, the covenant blood is sprinkled on the people rendering them to **a state of "holiness"**. Now the same group can **worship directly in the presence of God** by participating in **a covenant meal**:

And Moses took the blood and threw it on the people and said, "Behold **the blood of the covenant** that the LORD has made with you in accordance with all these words." Then Moses and Aaron, Nadab, and Abihu, and seventy of the elders of Israel went up, and **they saw the God of Israel**. There was under his feet as it were a pavement of sapphire stone, like the very heaven for clearness. And he did not lay his hand on the chief men of the people of Israel; **they beheld God, and ate and drank**. (Exodus 24:8-11 ESV)

When the Israelites are in the **Plains of Moab** before crossing the Jordan into Canaan, Moses provides instruction on **Firstfruits**. **The ceremony is a worship service**. It included a **formal declaration** of YHWH's beneficence in delivering Israel and providing abundance:

When you come into the land that the LORD your God is giving you for an inheritance and have taken possession of it and live in it, you shall take some of the first of all the fruit of the ground, which you harvest from your land that the LORD your God is giving you, and you shall put it in a basket, and you shall **go to the place that the LORD your God will choose, to make his name to dwell there**. And you shall go to the priest who is in office at that time and say to him, '**I declare today to the LORD your God that I have come into the land that the LORD swore to our fathers to give us.**'

Then the priest shall take the basket from your hand and set it down **before the altar** of the LORD your God. And **you shall make response** before the LORD your God, '**A wandering Aramean was my father. And he went down into Egypt and sojourned there, few in number, and there he became a nation, great, mighty, and populous. And the Egyptians treated us harshly and humiliated us and laid on us hard labor. Then we cried to the LORD, the God of our fathers, and the LORD heard our voice and saw our affliction, our toil, and our oppression. And the LORD brought us out of Egypt with a mighty hand and an outstretched arm, with great deeds of terror, with signs and wonders. And he brought us into this place and gave us this land, a land flowing with milk and honey. And behold, now I bring the first of the fruit of the ground, which you, O LORD, have given me.**'

And you shall set it down before the LORD your God and **worship** [hish*taḥawah] **before the LORD your God**. And **you shall rejoice** in all the good that the LORD your God has given to you and to your house, you, and the Levite, and the sojourner who is among you. (Deuteronomy 26:1-11 ESV)

Prior to his death, David addresses the assembly of Israel on behalf of Solomon his son whom he has taken as coregent to ensure a smooth transition of power. **David prays that God will grant Solomon fidelity**, then David addresses the **assembly, who worship YHWH and offer sacrifices**:

Therefore **David blessed the LORD in the presence of all the assembly**. And David said ... "Grant to Solomon my son a whole heart that he may **keep your commandments, your testimonies, and your statutes, performing all**, and that he may build the palace for which I have made provision." Then David said to all the assembly, "**Bless the LORD your God.**" And **all the assembly blessed the LORD**, the God of their fathers, and **bowed their heads and paid homage** [hish*taḥawah] to the LORD and to the king. And **they offered sacrifices** to the LORD ... (1 Chronicles 29:10a, 19-21a ESV)

Once the Temple was constructed, **Solomon prayed at the dedication**, appealing to God on the basis of his **faithfulness to his covenant** and his **demonstrated hesed**, that God will **fulfill his promises** to David:

Then **Solomon stood before the altar of the LORD in the presence of all the assembly** of Israel and spread out his hands. ... and said, "O LORD, God of Israel, there is no God like you, in heaven or on earth, **keeping covenant and showing [hesed]** to your servants who walk before you with all their heart ... Now therefore, O LORD, God of Israel, **keep for your servant David my father what you have promised him**,

saying, 'You shall not lack a man to sit before me on the throne of Israel, if only your sons pay close attention to their way, to walk in my [torah]¹⁴ as you have walked before me.' Now therefore, O LORD, God of Israel, **let your word be confirmed**, which you have spoken to your servant David. (2 Chronicles 6:12, 14, 16-17 ESV see also 1 Kings 8:22-26)¹⁵

When the prayer is finished, **God demonstrates his acceptance by fire and his presence**, and **the people worship** taking up a refrain of thanks for the *hesed* of God. This refrain is often repeated in the Psalms:¹⁶

As soon as Solomon finished his prayer, **fire came down from heaven** and consumed the burnt offering and the sacrifices, and **the glory of the LORD filled the temple**. And the priests could not enter the house of the LORD, because the glory of the LORD filled the LORD's house.¹⁷ When all the people of Israel saw the fire come down and the glory of the LORD on the temple, **they bowed down** with their faces to the ground on the pavement **and worshiped** [hish*taḥawah] and **gave thanks** to the LORD, saying, "**For he is good, for his [hesed] endures forever.**" (2 Chronicles 7:1-3 ESV)

In the time of Jehoshaphat (870-849BC), an alliance of Moabites, Ammonites, and Meunites threatened Israel. Jehoshaphat calls for fasting and prays for YHWH's direction and assistance.¹⁸ YHWH moves a certain Jahaziel to prophesize YHWH's intervention, at which **Jehoshaphat and all the peoples in great relief spontaneously worship YHWH**. A group of **Levites vociferously praise YHWH**:

And **the Spirit of the LORD came upon Jahaziel** ... And he said ... "**You will not need to fight in this battle. Stand firm, hold your position, and see the salvation of the LORD** on your behalf, O Judah and Jerusalem.' Do not be afraid and do not be dismayed. Tomorrow go out against them, and the LORD will be with you." Then **Jehoshaphat bowed his head** with his face to the ground, and **all Judah and the inhabitants of Jerusalem fell down before the LORD, worshiping** [hish*taḥawah] **the LORD**. And the **Levites**, of the Kohathites and the Korahites, stood up to **praise the LORD**, the God of Israel, **with a very loud voice**. (2 Chronicles 20:14-19 ESV)

At the beginning of his sole reign in 715BC, Hezekiah cleaned out the temple and had the priests and Levites prepare themselves.¹⁹ Then they performed a rededication ceremony with **burnt offerings** and **much music** as had been specified by David. They **all worshipped YHWH with music and great joy**:

And he stationed the Levites in the house of the LORD **with cymbals, harps, and lyres, according to the commandment of David** and of Gad the king's seer and of Nathan the prophet, for the commandment was from the LORD through his prophets. The Levites stood with the **instruments of David**, and the priests with the **trumpets**. Then **Hezekiah commanded that the burnt offering be offered on the altar**. And when the burnt offering began, **the song to the LORD began** also, and the **trumpets**, accompanied by the **instruments of David** king of Israel. **The whole assembly worshiped** [hish*taḥawah], and the **singers sang**, and the **trumpeters sounded**. All this continued until the burnt offering was finished. When the offering was finished, the **king and all who were present with him bowed themselves and worshiped** [hish*taḥawah]. And Hezekiah the king and the officials commanded the **Levites to sing praises to the LORD with the words of David and of Asaph the seer**. And they **sang praises with gladness**, and they **bowed down and worshiped** [hish*taḥawah]. ... And **Hezekiah and all the people rejoiced** because God had provided for the people, for the thing came about suddenly. (2 Chronicles 29:25-30, 36 ESV)

After the exile when Ezra returned with Book of the *torah*, the people in Jerusalem gathered to hear the reading of the *torah*. There was a formal delegation with Ezra and people assigned to explain the reading to the people. **Ezra prayed**, the **people responded enthusiastically**, and **worshipped YHWH**. Then they listened carefully as the **torah was read and expounded**:

And **all the people gathered** as one man into the square before the Water Gate. And they told Ezra the scribe to bring the Book of the [torah] of Moses that the LORD had commanded Israel. So Ezra the priest brought the [torah] before the assembly, both men and women and all who could understand what they heard, on the **first day of the seventh month**. And he read from it facing the square before the Water Gate from early morning until midday, in the presence of the men and the women and those who could understand. And the ears of all the people were attentive to the Book of the [torah].

And **Ezra the scribe stood on a wooden platform** that they had made for the purpose. And **beside him stood** Mattithiah, Shema, Anaiah, Uriah, Hilkiah, and Maaseiah on his right hand, and Pedaiah, Mishael,

¹⁴ The Hebrew word "*torah*" means "teaching", "instruction", "direction" – it the English word "law" has almost no overlap of meaning with "*torah*". "Law" should NEVER be used to translate "*torah*". See *Excursus 8 – torah and nomos*

¹⁵ Until its destruction the Temple remained the central place of worship (Jeremiah 7:2, 26:2)

¹⁶ See, for example, Psalm 136 and Psalm 118:1-4

¹⁷ This is the same effect as when the Tabernacle was consecrated (Exodus 40:34-35).

¹⁸ See 2 Chronicles 20:1-12

¹⁹ See 2 Chronicles 29:3-24

Malchijah, Hashum, Hashbaddanah, Zechariah, and Meshullam on his left hand. And Ezra opened the book in the sight of all the people, for he was above all the people, and **as he opened it all the people stood.**

And **Ezra blessed the LORD**, the great God, and **all the people answered, “Amen, Amen,” lifting up their hands.** And they **bowed their heads** and **worshiped** [hish^etaḥawah] **the LORD** with their faces to the ground. Also Jeshua, Bani, Sherebiah, Jamin, Akkub, Shabbethai, Hodiah, Maaseiah, Kelita, Azariah, Jozabad, Hanan, Pelaiah, the Levites, **helped the people to understand the [torah]**, while the people remained in their places. They read from the book, from the [torah] of God, clearly, and **they gave the sense, so that the people understood the reading.** (Nehemiah 8:1-8 ESV)

A few weeks later, there is another gathering. This time the focus is **confession of sins** based on **reading the torah** resulting **in worship**. YHWH is extolled as **the Great Creator who is worshipped by all the “host of heaven”**:

Now on the **twenty-fourth day of this month** the **people of Israel** were assembled **with fasting and in sackcloth, and with earth on their heads.** And the Israelites separated themselves from all foreigners and stood and **confessed their sins** and the iniquities of their fathers. And they stood up in their place and **read from the Book of the [torah]** of the LORD their God for a quarter of the day; for another quarter of it they **made confession and worshiped** [hish^etaḥawah] **the LORD their God.** On the stairs of **the Levites** stood Jeshua, Bani, Kadmiel, Shebaniah, Bunni, Sherebiah, Bani, and Chenani; and they **cried with a loud voice** to the LORD their God. Then the Levites, Jeshua, Kadmiel, Bani, Hashabneiah, Sherebiah, Hodiah, Shebaniah, and Pethahiah, said, **“Stand up and bless the LORD** your God from everlasting to everlasting. Blessed be your glorious name, which is exalted above all blessing and praise. You are the LORD, you alone. **You have made heaven**, the heaven of heavens, **with all their host**, the earth and all that is on it, the seas and all that is in them; and you preserve all of them; and **the host of heaven worships** [hish^etaḥawah] **you**. ...” (Nehemiah 9:1-6 ESV)

Communal worship comprises both a **formal ceremonial** element and a **spontaneous** element. In Exodus chapter four, the people **spontaneously worshiped because they believed** the words of Moses that God would free them from slavery. Similarly, in Exodus chapter twelve when the people came to an **understanding of the meaning and significance of the Passover**, they spontaneously worshipped. In Exodus chapter twenty-four, when the group first went up the mountain, they were required to remain at a distance, but worship. In none of these instances are we told what the “worship” comprised. In the first two instance, an **attitude of appreciation of God’s beneficence** is implied. In the last instance, clearly an **attitude of “awe” and “reverence”**²⁰ is implied.

The second time the group went up the mountain in Exodus twenty-four, there is some information on what the worship comprised. Now that **God could account the people in a state of “holiness”** they were able to participate in **a formal worship service** which comprised **a traditional covenant meal**. At this service, God allowed the group **a theophany**.

The **Firstfruits ceremony** in Deuteronomy chapter twenty-six is laid out in great detail. It is NOT specified whether this was a onetime ceremony, like the Blessings and Curses on Mounts Gerizim and Ebal,²¹ or whether it was to be repeated. The succeeding context of the **use of the third-year tithe**,²² suggests that the ceremony was to be repeated. The ceremony was to be performed **“before the altar” in the Tabernacle** in “the place that the LORD your God will choose”. The curtains comprising the gate to the court would be open so that a large number of people could observe the ceremony. The description is such that **the ceremony could be performed by each individual Israelite**. More likely it was performed by **a delegation of the people on behalf of the whole congregation**. The spokesman of the delegation would make the required declarations. The first declaration is a formal acknowledgement that **YHWH has fulfilled his promise to Abraham**.²³

‘I declare today to the LORD your God that **I have come into the land that the LORD swore to our fathers to give us.**’ (Deuteronomy 26:3b ESV)

The second declaration sketches the history of Israel. **Jacob was a “wandering Aramean”** in that he spent about twenty years of his life in Padan-aram working for his uncle Laban. During this time, eleven

²⁰ See *Excursus 5 – Reverence*

²¹ See Deuteronomy 27:1-26, Joshua 8:30-35

²² See Deuteronomy 26:12-15

²³ See Genesis 12:7, 15:7, 18-20, 17:8, 19, 26:3, 28:4, 35:12

of the eponymous patriarchs of the tribes of Israel were born.²⁴ **Jacob “went down into Egypt”** with his family,²⁵ which greatly increased and was enslaved.²⁶ In order **to fulfill his promises to Abraham**, God rescued Israel from Egypt.²⁷ Israel was now in the Promised Land, and the **offering of Firstfruits became an acknowledgment of gratitude for God’s beneficence**. Having performed the ceremony, the assembled congregation **worshiped with rejoicing**. The act of worship is closely tied to the ceremony and the great meaning of the ceremony, but **the worship itself is mostly internal and attitudinal** on the part of the worshippers. The **“rejoicing”** reflects the inward joy of participating in the worship of YHWH.

The **transition of power from David to Solomon** was a complicated and dangerous exercise.²⁸ God had told David that Solomon would be king.²⁹ David had taken Solomon as coregent at some point earlier, but David was forced to do it again just before he died.³⁰ This is the context of **David’s address to the assembly** in First Chronicles chapter twenty-nine. **David’s public prayer** before the assembly is that Solomon will remain faithful the terms of the Sinai Covenant by obeying God and living by the teaching of God. David requests the assembly to **“Bless the LORD your God”**. The word “bless” is from בָּרַךְ - barak,³¹ which in relation of man to God means to “praise” or “salute”. So, **David is calling on the collected assembly to “salute” YHWH’s omniscience in favour of David’s son Solomon**, which they do in an act of worship. Note that the *hish’atahawah* is also directed as respect towards David. **In conjunction with the worship, sacrifices are offered.**

Solomon’s prayer at **the consecration of the Temple** is part of **an elaborate ceremony**. God’s response was no doubt **overwhelming to the people**. The **resulting worship was spontaneous and enthusiastic**. The “bowing down” suggests **introspection** and **reflection**, followed by a **formalized verbal response**, assuming the refrain was spoken by all the people. This is similar to the response of Jehoshaphat and the people to **Jahaziel’s prophecy**. After the act of worship, a group of Levites provide the verbal response. Similarly at **Hezekiah’s rededication of the Temple**, the worship is interspersed with **singing and instrumentation**.

In the time of **Nehemiah and Ezra**, the **ceremony had a more sombre character**. The remnant community had struggled for about a hundred years and fallen into many sins. Nehemiah had attempted various reforms but realized **a spiritual revival was necessary**. This was initiated by Ezra. Ezra’s reading from **the torah gave the people the direction they required**. They recognized their sins and verbally acknowledged the words of Ezra, then they worshipped. Again, **the worship is introspective and reflective** and prepared the people to listen more closely to the teaching. After a few weeks of teaching and internalization of the message, the people were repentant and even more ready to **confess their sins as part of worship of YHWH**. After this, the Levites led the people verbally extolling God, and pointing out the conclusion of general revelation, **the creation points to God in worship**.

These examples of communal worship identify some important characteristic of the way that God requires to be worshipped:

- Even in a group setting, worship itself is mostly **internal** and **attitudinal**
- Worship expresses **gratitude** for God’s beneficence and salvific actions
- There can be **formalized declarations** of God’s salvific actions
- The formal part of worship can take the form of a **ceremony**
- The worshipper maintains **awe** and **reverence** toward God
- When worship is solemn, **introspection** and **reflection** are required
- Worship services can reflect **great joy** with singing and instrumentation
- There can be **formalized verbal responses** from worshippers

²⁴ See Genesis 27:43, 28:1-5, 29:1-35, 30:1-43

²⁵ See Genesis 46:1-27, Exodus 1:1-7

²⁶ See Exodus 1:8-14

²⁷ See Exodus 2:23-25, and Exodus chapters 6 through 14

²⁸ See 1 Kings 1:5-12, 38-53, 2:1-9

²⁹ See 2 Samuel 12:24-25, 1 Chronicles 28:5-6, 9-10, 1 Kings 1:13-31

³⁰ See 1 Chronicles 28:1-21, 1 Kings 1:28-40, 1 Chronicles 29:22b

³¹ See Holladay page 49; TWOT article 285 page 132

- **Public prayer** and **group praise** of God can occur
- There can be both **formal** components and **spontaneous** components

3. Worship in Psalms and Prophets

Twice David makes a point of “bowing down” in worship towards **the Temple of God in eternity**:

But I, **through the abundance of your [hesed]**, will enter **your house**.

I will **bow down** [hish*taḥawah] toward your **holy temple in the fear of you**.

Lead me, O LORD, **in your righteousness** because of my enemies;
make **your way**³² straight before me. (Psalm 5:7-8 ESV)

I **give you thanks**, O LORD, with my whole heart;
before the [God Family] I **sing your praise**;

I **bow down** [hish*taḥawah] toward your **holy temple**
and **give thanks** to your name for **your [hesed]** and **your faithfulness**,
for **you have exalted above all things your name and your word**.

On the day I called, **you answered me**; my strength of [life] you increased. (Psalm 138:1-3 ESV)

In Psalm 5, David acknowledges that it is only through “**your hesed**” that **he is able to worship**: only through the covenant love of YHWH, **God’s calling**, can one be a “True Worshipper”. David enters “**your house**” (בַּיִת - bayith), the tent in which the Ark of the Covenant was located, and there prays. David **bows down and worships** toward “**your holy temple**” (הֵיכָל קֹדֶשׁ - hekal qodesh). Since there was not yet a physical temple, this can only be **the “spiritual” Temple in eternity**. David prays “**in the fear of you**” (יִרְאַה - yir’ah), in a worship context, “**reverence**”.³³ David request YHWH to “**lead me**” – this implies providing teaching and the ability to understand the teaching. David recognizes the need for “**your righteousness**”, the need to **become “holy” as God is holy**³⁴ - this can only occur at the resurrection, until the resurrection, **God accounts True Worshipers to be “righteous” or “holy” through faith**.³⁵ David prays that God will “**make your way straight**” – this is the life of a converted person, a True Worshipper, a Christian. Only God, through the **indwelling of the Holy Spirit**, can direct a person to live a life of growth in Christian character. This is the object of **true worship**: to allow God to lead a person in **the Way** (דֶּרֶךְ - derek) of life that teaches the person the necessary life lessons and brings the person to a state such that God can extend **the gift of eternal life at the resurrection**.

In Psalm 138, David again **bows down and worships** toward “**your holy temple**”. The worship entails “**giving thanks**” and “**praising YHWH**”. David specifically thanks God for revealing to David his nature, “**hesed**” and “**faithfulness**”. **God’s nature** is embodied in his “**name**”.³⁶ The **Plan of God** is embodied in his “**word**”.³⁷ **David in worship acknowledges God’s grace** in answering his prayer.

Later Psalmists express the same need for **True Worshipers to come before God**:

Oh come, **let us worship** [hish*taḥawah] and bow down; let us kneel **before the LORD, our Maker!**
(Psalm 95:6 ESV)

Exalt the LORD our God; **worship** [hish*taḥawah] **at his footstool!** Holy is he!

Exalt the LORD our God, and **worship** [hish*taḥawah] **at his holy mountain**; for the LORD our God is holy!
(Psalm 99:5, 9 ESV)

Let us go to his dwelling place; let us worship [hish*taḥawah] at his footstool! (Psalm 132:7 ESV)

David looks to the **working-out of the Plan of God** when the Kingdom of God is established and **all peoples in all nations over the whole world will worship the True God**:

All the ends of the earth shall remember and turn to the LORD,
and **all the families of the nations shall worship** [hish*taḥawah] **before you**.

For kingship belongs to the LORD, and he rules over the nations.

All the prosperous of the earth eat and **worship** [hish*taḥawah];

³² See Acts 9:2, 16:17, 18:25, 26, 19:9, 23, 24:14, 22

³³ See TWOT article 907 page 399; see also [Excursus 5 – Reverence](#)

³⁴ See Leviticus 11:44, 45, 19:2, 20:7, 26, 21:8, 1 Peter 1:15, 16

³⁵ See Genesis 15:6, Romans 4:22, Galatians 3:6, James 2:23

³⁶ See Exodus 33:19, 34:6-7

³⁷ See, for example, Isaiah 55:10-11, 24:3, 45:23, Jeremiah 1:12, Ezekiel 17:24, Psalm 147:15

before him shall bow all who go down to the dust,
even the one who could not keep himself alive.
Posterity shall serve him; it shall be told of the Lord to the coming generation;
they shall come and proclaim his righteousness to a people yet unborn, that he has done it.
(Psalm 22:27-31 ESV)³⁸

This theme is taken up by the prophets Isaiah, Zephaniah, and Zechariah:

From new moon to new moon, and from Sabbath to Sabbath,
all flesh shall come to worship [hish^etaḥawah] before me, declares the LORD. (Isaiah 66:23 ESV)

The LORD will be awesome against them; for he will famish all the gods of the earth,
and to him shall bow down [hish^etaḥawah], each in its place, all the lands of the nations.
(Zephaniah 2:11 ESV)

Then everyone who survives of all the nations that have come against Jerusalem shall go up year after year to worship [hish^etaḥawah] the King, the LORD of hosts, and to keep the Feast of Booths. And if any of the families of the earth do not go up to Jerusalem to worship [hish^etaḥawah] the King, the LORD of hosts, there will be no rain on them. (Zechariah 14:16-17 ESV)

David implores the “b^eni ‘elim” to recognize the greatness of God in worship:

Ascribe to the LORD, O [sons of Gods], ascribe to the LORD glory and strength.
Ascribe to the LORD the glory due his name;
worship [hish^etaḥawah] the LORD in the splendor of holiness. (Psalm 29:1-2 ESV)

The term “sons of Gods” is from בְּנֵי אֱלֹהִים - b^eni ‘elim: both words are plural, b^eni is in the construct state, so genitive in English. The same phrase occurs in Psalm 89 verse six:

Let the heavens praise your wonders, O LORD,
your faithfulness in the assembly of the holy ones!
For who in the skies can be compared to the LORD?
Who among [sons of Gods] is like the LORD,
a God greatly to be feared in the council of the holy ones,
and awesome above all who are around him? (Psalm 89:5-7 ESV)

The phrase “the holy ones” is from קְדוֹשִׁים - q^edoshim, a term that is used for “saints”, converted persons, True Worshipers.³⁹ In the verses above, clearly by parallelism, the “b^eni ‘elim” are the same the “q^edoshim”.

The word אֱלֹהִים - ‘elohim is the most general Hebrew word for “deity”.⁴⁰ It can clearly be used to identify the “God Family”:

Then [‘elohim] said, “Let us make man in our image, after our likeness. And let them have dominion over the fish of the sea and over the birds of the heavens and over the livestock and over all the earth and over every creeping thing that creeps on the earth.”
So [‘elohim] created man in his own image,
in the image of [‘elohim] he created him;
male and female he created them. (Genesis 1:26:27 ESV)

The speaker is YHWH on behalf of God the Father and himself, the only members of the God Family at the creation. True Worshipers of God will be admitted to the God Family at the first resurrection.⁴¹

The phrase “b^eni ‘elim” refers to members of the God Family in the nescient state, i.e., as True Worshipers living according to The Way looking to the resurrection and the Family of God.

Isaiah prophesizes that in the Second Exodus those called to the New Israel will worship YHWH:

In that day from the river Euphrates to the Brook of Egypt the LORD will thresh out the grain, and you will be gleaned one by one, O people of Israel. And in that day a great trumpet will be blown, and those who were lost in the land of Assyria and those who were driven out to the land of Egypt will come and worship [hish^etaḥawah] the LORD on the holy mountain at Jerusalem. (Isaiah 27:12-13 ESV)

³⁸ See also Psalms 66:4, 72:11, 86:9, 96:7-9 // 1 Chronicles 16:28-30a

³⁹ See Psalms 16:3, 34:9

⁴⁰ See TWOT article 93 page 41

⁴¹ See 1 Thessalonians 4:13-17, 1 Corinthians 15:35-53, Revelation 19:6-9, 20:4-6

In his vision of the Jerusalem Temple in the World Tomorrow, Ezekiel gives us some information on the way worship will be conducted:

Thus says the Lord GOD: The gate of the inner court that faces east shall be shut on the six working days, but on the Sabbath day it shall be opened, and on the day of the new moon it shall be opened. The prince shall enter by the vestibule of the gate from outside, and shall take his stand by the post of the gate. The priests shall offer his burnt offering and his peace offerings, and he shall worship [hish^etaḥawah] at the threshold of the gate. Then he shall go out, but the gate shall not be shut until evening.

The people of the land shall bow down [hish^etaḥawah] at the entrance of that gate before the LORD on the Sabbaths and on the new moons.

When the people of the land come before the LORD at the appointed [times], he who enters by the north gate to worship [hish^etaḥawah] shall go out by the south gate, and he who enters by the south gate shall go out by the north gate: no one shall return by way of the gate by which he entered, but each shall go out straight ahead. (Ezekiel 46:1-3, 9 ESV)

From David we learn that True Worship puts the worshipper in the presence of God – before his Holy Temple in eternity. David's focus in worship was to give thanks to God for:

- Understanding of God's nature
- Understanding of God's Plan
- Direction in living according to the Way of God

David articulates the purpose of God's calling, which is to do the Work of God – to prepare for the day when all nations, all peoples, over the whole earth will worship the True God. This theme is taken up by later prophets. David elaborates that True Worshipers from all ages will be admitted to the Family of God at the first resurrection. Then a New Nation of Israel will be created who will truly worship the True God. Through the Family of God and the New Israel, the true worship of the True God will be carried to the whole earth.

4. The Worship of Hannah and Mary

These two women stand juxtaposed over a thousand years as the mothers of the bringers of salvation. God brought Samuel on the stage of history at a time when the covenant nation had fallen so deep into sin that its extinction seemed inevitable. Samuel shepherded Israel out of this dark time and anointed David as king to establish the Dynasty which will rule forever. Mary was selected by God as the mother of the Descendant of David, the Anointed One, who would fulfill the promises: the Good Sheppard⁴² who has made salvation possible for all human beings.

These two women have left us their words of worship which demonstrate their love for God from which all true worshippers can learn much. The Prayer of Hannah and the Magnificat of Mary stand as two of the most beautiful pieces of literature of all time.

4.1 The Prayer of Hannah

The author of First Samuel sets the stage by three uses of *hish^etaḥawah*:

There was a certain man of Ramathaim-zophim of the hill country of Ephraim whose name was Elkanah ... He had two wives. The name of the one was Hannah, and the name of the other, Peninnah. And Peninnah had children, but Hannah had no children. Now this man used to go up year by year from his city to worship [hish^etaḥawah] and to sacrifice to the LORD of hosts at Shiloh ... (1 Samuel 1:1-3a ESV)

... Hannah wept and would not eat. And Elkanah, her husband, said to her, "Hannah, why do you weep? And why do you not eat? And why is your heart sad? Am I not more to you than ten sons?" ... she was deeply distressed and prayed to the LORD and wept bitterly. And she vowed a vow and said, "O LORD of hosts, if you will indeed look on the affliction of your servant and remember me and not forget your servant, but will give to your servant a son then I will give him to the LORD all the days of his life ..." They rose early in the morning and worshiped [hish^etaḥawah] before the LORD; then they went back to their house at Ramah. ... in due time Hannah conceived and bore a son, and she called his name Samuel ... (1 Samuel 1:7b-8, 10-11, 19a, 20a ESV)

⁴² Ezekiel 34:11-16, 37:24, Jeremiah 23:3-4, Isaiah 40:11, Micah 7:14, John 10:1-18

“For this child I prayed, and the LORD has granted me my petition that I made to him. Therefore I have lent him to the LORD. As long as he lives, he is lent to the LORD.” And **they⁴³ worshiped** [hish‘tahawah] **the LORD there.** (1 Samuel 1:27-28 ESV)

These events establish Elkanah and Hannah as true worshippers of God. They were faithful to God’s covenant and his teaching. Worship of YHWH was part of their way of life. YHWH choose Hannah as the mother of Samuel. Samuel stood at a pinnacle in the plan of God. The period of the Judges had been a failure. Now God was ready to institute the Kingdom of Israel, a monarchy, as a type of the Kingdom of God. Samuel would be the man to perform this work. Little more is known of Hannah. She maintained contact with Samuel as he grew up and she was further blessed by YHWH:

And **his mother** used to make for him a little robe and take it to **him each year when she went up with her husband to offer the yearly sacrifice.** ... Indeed the LORD visited Hannah, and **she conceived and bore three sons and two daughters.** (1 Samuel 2:19, 21a ESV)

The words of Hannah in her prayer demonstrate a depth of understanding of who YHWH is, his nature, and his plan. This understanding can only come by revelation from God through conversion. The prayer demonstrates a love of God and a commitment to his Way that is a model of worship for all converted people:

1. **My heart exults in the LORD;** my **horn is exalted** in the LORD.
My mouth derides my enemies, because **I rejoice in your salvation.**
 2. There is none holy like the LORD: for there is none besides you; **there is no rock like our God.**
 3. Talk no more so very proudly, let not arrogance come from your mouth;
for **the LORD is a God of knowledge,** and by him **actions** are weighed.
 4. The **bows of the mighty are broken,** but the **feeble bind on strength.**
 5. Those who were full have hired themselves out for bread,
but **those who were hungry** have ceased to hunger.
The barren has borne seven, but she who has many children is forlorn.
 6. The LORD kills and **brings to life;** he brings down to [the grave] and **raises up.**
 7. The LORD makes poor and **makes rich;** he brings low and **he exalts.**
 8. He **raises up the poor** from the **dust;** he **lifts the needy** from the **ash heap**
to make them sit with princes and **inherit a seat of honor.**
For **the pillars of the earth are the LORD’s,** and on them he has set the world.
 9. **He will guard the feet of his faithful ones,**
but the **wicked** shall be **cut off** in darkness,
for not by might shall a man prevail.
 10. The adversaries of the LORD shall be broken to pieces; against them he will thunder in heaven.
The LORD will judge the ends of the earth;
he will **give strength to his king** and **exalt the horn of his anointed.**
(1 Samuel 2:1-10 ESV)
- Verse 1: “**exults**” is from עָלַץ - ‘alat, which would be better translated “**rejoices**”⁴⁴ because “**is exalted**” is from a different word, רָם - rum, which means “exalted”, “made high”.⁴⁵ The root is used twice in Isaiah 57:15 to describe the exalted spiritual state of God in eternity:
For thus says the **One who is high** [rum] and lifted up, who inhabits eternity, whose name is Holy:
“I dwell in **the high** [rum] and holy place, and also with him who is of a **contrite and lowly spirit,**
to revive the spirit of the lowly, and to revive the heart of the contrite. ...” (ESV)
“**Horn**” is a metaphor for “strength”. In the “b” part of the second line “**rejoice**” is from שָׂמַח - samah,⁴⁶ which is a more common synonym of ‘alat. **Hannah is rejoicing in the salvation of YHWH:** the exaltation of her “horn”, to “**be made high**”, and be with YHWH in eternity.
 - Verse 2: Hannah alludes to the Song of Moses in Deuteronomy chapter thirty-two where YHWH is called “**The Rock**” in verses 4, 15, 18, 30, and 31. **The Rock is identified as Jesus Christ** in 1 Corinthians 10:4.
 - Verse 3: The first line, “**talk no more ...**”, “**let not arrogance ...**”, may allude back to verse 1, “my mouth derides my enemies”: Hannah is telling her enemies to desist from deriding her. But it can also be taken as **a general call to repentance.** This is suggested by the second line of the verse.

⁴³ See ESV gloss at www.esv.org “Hebrew Word Detail”, the verbal suffix ך can be singular or plural.

⁴⁴ See Holladay page 275

⁴⁵ See TWOT article 2133 page 837

⁴⁶ See Holladay page 352, TWOT article 2268 page 879

Because **YHWH is a God of knowledge, arrogant patter** on the part of human beings is utterly irrelevant. In repentance, one goes to God requesting **forgiveness for past “actions” which God weighs** in conjunction with **future actions** to demonstrate a **changed attitude**.

- Verse 4: Here Hannah begins to develop two themes which run through the rest of the poem: **retributive justice**, “**bows of the mighty are broken**”; and, the **contrite of spirit**, true worshippers, “**the feeble**”. The word “feeble” is from a niphal participle of the root כָּשַׁל - kashal, which means literally “to stumble” or “to stagger”.⁴⁷ Spiritually this is generally the state people are in when God calls them.
- Verse 5: Here Hannah refers to **God’s ability to reverse the fortunes of people**. Those who feel they “have made it” and have all they need will be abased by God.⁴⁸ The theme of line 3 is picked up by Isaiah and alluded to by Paul:

Sing, **O barren one**, who did not bear;
break forth into singing and cry aloud, you who have not been in labor!
For the children of the desolate one will be more than the children of her who is married,”
says the LORD. (Isaiah 54:1 ESV)

Tell me, you who desire to be under the [nomos], do you not listen to the [nomos]? For it is written that Abraham had two sons, one by a slave woman and one by a free woman. But the son of the slave was born according to the flesh, while the son of the free woman was born through promise. Now **this may be interpreted allegorically**: these women are two covenants. One is from Mount Sinai, bearing children for slavery; she is Hagar. Now Hagar is Mount Sinai in Arabia; she corresponds to **the present Jerusalem**, for she **is in slavery with her children**. But the **Jerusalem above is free**, and **she is our mother**. For it is written,

“Rejoice, **O barren one** who does not bear; break forth and cry aloud, you who are not in labor!
For the children of the desolate one will be more than those of the one who has a husband.”

Now **you, brothers, like Isaac, are children of promise**. But just as at that time he who was born according to the flesh persecuted him who was born according to the Spirit, so also it is now. But what does the Scripture say? “Cast out the slave woman and her son, for the son of the slave woman shall not inherit with the son of the free woman.” So, brothers, **we are not children of the slave but of the free woman**. (Galatians 4:21-31 ESV)

The “**barren one**” represents the New Testament Church, true Christians, **True Worshippers of the True God**. Israel was “married” to YHWH. **Israel became enslaved to sin**. The nation produced no fruit. The New Testament Church has been producing “**children of God**” for two thousand years – the “desolate one”, i.e., “not married to YHWH”, has produced more than “her who is married”. At the resurrection **all True Worshippers from all ages will become the “Bride of Christ”**.⁴⁹

- Verse 6: Here **Hannah develops the themes** of the “retributive justice” and “contrite in spirit”. At the Day of YHWH, **all enemies of God will receive “retributive justice”**, they will be killed and go “down to the grave”.⁵⁰ God will “**bring to life**” all True Worshipers and “**raise them up**” in the **resurrection**.⁵¹
- Verse 7: This verse is discussing **repentance**. The Hebrew is a **masterpiece of alliteration**:
YHWH **morish uma`ashir mash`pil`aph m`eromem**
YHWH brings a person to a **low state of spiritual poverty** so the person will repent. The conclusion of repentance and **living by the Way of God** is to **be exalted** and made **spiritually rich in the resurrection**. Note the **synonymous parallelism** between verses six and seven.
- Verse 8: The theme of verse 7 is repeated. From the “**dust and ashes**” of being abased, one who becomes “**poor and needy**”, **contrite**, will “**inherit a seat of honour**” in the Kingdom of God.⁵² Line 3 alludes to **God’s omnipotence as the Creator of the universe** which clearly gives him the ability to fulfill his promises according to his word.

⁴⁷ See Holladay page 166, TWOT article 1050 page 457

⁴⁸ See Revelation 3:17-19

⁴⁹ See Revelation 19:6-9

⁵⁰ See Revelation 11:17-18

⁵¹ See 1 Corinthians 15:35-53, 1 Thessalonians 4:13-17, Revelation 19:6-9, 20:4-6

⁵² See, for example, Psalms 107:41-43, 109:21-26, 140:12-13; see also Matthew 5:3 (Psalm 40:17), 5:5 (Psalm 37:11), 25:34

- Verse 9: Hannah here discusses **the basis of faith**. God promises to take care of **those who are faithful to him** – resulting in salvation. No human device or power can allow a person to succeed. The wicked, **who trust in human devices, will be cut off** – retributive justice.
- Verse 10: Line 1 looks to the **Day of YHWH**; line 2 looks to YHWH's governance in the World Tomorrow, but it also implies **God's ability to fulfill his plan on an ongoing basis**. Line 3 is **Messianic** – it looks to the King of kings, the Anointed One; but also, it is **prophetic of the work that Samuel would carry out**.

4.2 The Magnificat of Mary

In the **Nativity Narratives**, both Matthew and Luke are very careful to connect the community into which Jesus was born with **the true remnant of Israel**. The people to whom God the Father committed the stewardship of his Only Son were clearly **True Worshippers of the True God**. The parents of John the Baptist, **the aunt and uncle of Jesus are identified as True Worshippers**:

In the days of Herod, king of Judea, there was a priest named **Zechariah**, of the division of Abijah. And he had a wife from the daughters of Aaron, and her name was **Elizabeth**. And they **were both righteous** before God, **walking blamelessly** in all the commandments and statutes of the Lord. (Luke 1:5-6a ESV)

Mary's husband, **Joseph**, is identified as a **"just man"** and he unquestioningly **obeyed the word of God** by the angel:

Now the birth of Jesus Christ took place in this way. When his mother **Mary had been betrothed to Joseph**, before they came together she was found to be with child from the Holy Spirit. And her husband Joseph, **being a just man** and unwilling to put her to shame, resolved to divorce her quietly. But as he considered these things, behold, **an angel of the Lord appeared to him** in a dream, saying, "Joseph, son of David, **do not fear to take Mary as your wife**, for that which is conceived in her is from the Holy Spirit. **She will bear a son**, and **you shall call his name Jesus**, for **he will save his people from their sins**." ... When Joseph woke from sleep, **he did as the angel of the Lord commanded him**: he took his wife, but knew her not until she had given birth to a son. And he called his name Jesus. (Matthew 1:18-21, 24-25 ESV)

Luke mentions **Simeon** and **Anna** as **True Worshippers** looking for the coming of the Messiah:

Now there was a man in Jerusalem, whose name was **Simeon**, and this man **was righteous and devout**, waiting for the consolation of Israel, and **the Holy Spirit was upon him**. And it had been revealed to him by the Holy Spirit that **he would not see death before he had seen the Lord's Christ**. (Luke 2:25-26 ESV)

And there was a prophetess, **Anna**, the daughter of Phanuel, **of the tribe of Asher**. She was advanced in years, having lived with her husband seven years from when she was a virgin, and then as a widow until she was eighty-four. She did not depart from the temple, **worshiping with fasting and prayer night and day**. And **coming up at that very hour** she began to give thanks to God and **to speak of him to all who were waiting for the redemption of Jerusalem**. (Luke 2:36-38 ESV)

And of course, Mary herself was clearly a True Worshipper of God:

... **the angel Gabriel was sent from God** to a city of Galilee named Nazareth, **to a virgin betrothed to a man whose name was Joseph**, of the house of David. And the virgin's name was **Mary**. And he came to her and said, "Greetings, **O favored one, the Lord is with you!**" But she was greatly troubled at the saying, and tried to discern what sort of greeting this might be. And the angel said to her, "**Do not be afraid**, Mary, for **you have found favor with God**. And behold, **you will conceive in your womb and bear a son**, and **you shall call his name Jesus**. He will be great and will be called **the Son of the Most High**. And the **Lord God will give to him the throne of his father David**, and he will reign over the house of Jacob forever, and **of his kingdom there will be no end**." ... And Mary said, "Behold, **I am the servant of the Lord**; **let it be to me according to your word**." And the angel departed from her. (Luke 1:26-33, 38 ESV)

Soon after the annunciation, Mary goes to stay with her cousin Elizabeth in the Hill Country of Judea, likely in the town of Ephraim.⁵³ This is the setting of **Mary's Magnificat**:

Verse 1: My **[being]** **magnifies**⁵⁴ the Lord, and my spirit rejoices in **God my Savior**, for he has looked⁵⁵ on **the humble estate of his servant**.

⁵³ See John 11:54

⁵⁴ See Psalms 34:2-3, 69:30

⁵⁵ See Psalms 69:33a, 72:4, 82:4, 138:6a, 140:12

Verse 2: For behold, from now on all generations will call me blessed; for he who is mighty⁵⁶ has done great things⁵⁷ for me, and holy is his name.⁵⁸ And his mercy is for those who fear him⁵⁹ from generation to generation.

Verse 3: He has shown strength with his arm;⁶⁰ he has scattered the proud in the thoughts of their hearts; he has brought down the mighty from their thrones⁶¹ and exalted those of humble estate;⁶² he has filled the hungry⁶³ with good things, and the rich he has sent away empty.

Verse 4: He has helped his servant Israel,⁶⁴ in remembrance of his mercy, as he spoke to our fathers,⁶⁵ to Abraham and to his offspring forever.⁶⁶ (Luke 1:46-55 ESV)

Mary was clearly familiar with the Prayer of Hannah, she reflects several themes from it, as well as many themes from the Psalms.

- Verse 1: Mary uses *psuche* to mean her whole being, whereas Hannah had used the more common Hebrew idiom of “heart”, *lev*. Hannah said she “exalted” (*‘alat* and *samah*) in YHWH; Mary “magnifies” (μεγαλύνω - megalynō) the Lord. Hannah prays “I rejoice in your salvation”; Mary “rejoices in God my Savior”. Mary immediately identifies her “humble estate” – the theme picked up in verse 4 by Hannah, “the feeble”.
- Verse 2: In this verse Mary states her awareness of the Plan of God: “all generations” “from generation to generation” will recognize the “great things” done by “he who is mighty”. Hannah similarly acknowledges YHWH, “there is no rock like our God” who created “the pillars of the earth”. Mary alludes to the nature of God: “holy is his name” and “his mercy”. Hannah recognized that there is “none holy like the LORD”, who is “a God of knowledge”, and who “brings to life” and “raises up”.
- Verse 3: As with Hannah, Mary explores the themes of “retributive justice” and the “contrite in spirit”: God has “scattered the proud”, “brought down the mighty”, and “the rich he has sent away empty”. On the other hand, he has “exalted those of humble estate” and “filled the hungry”.
- Verse 4: Mary finishes with the Plan of God dealing with “his servant Israel”, alluding to the New Israel in the World Tomorrow, and the Nature of God, “his mercy” in the promises to the patriarchs culminating in the second promise to Abraham of Universal Blessing of all Nations through the Messiah. Ending with the Messiah, “The Offspring”, as Hannah had done.

It is extremely unlikely that Mary consciously thought of all the allusions to the Old Testament that we are able to find.⁶⁷ The allusions are a reflection of her deep familiarity with scripture and more importantly the inspiration of God through the Holy Spirit.

5. Worship in the Gospels and Early Acts

The most common word for “worship” in the New Testament is προσκυνέω – proskyneō, a verb which means “worship”, “kneel”, or “bow down”.⁶⁸ There are sixty occurrences in the New Testament. We first encounter the word in Matthew’s account of the nativity:

Now after Jesus was born in Bethlehem of Judea in the days of Herod the king, behold, wise men from the east came to Jerusalem, saying, “Where is he who has been born king of the Jews? For we saw his star when it rose and have come to worship [proskyneō] him.” When Herod the king heard this, he was troubled, and all Jerusalem with him; and assembling all the chief priests and scribes of the people, he

⁵⁶ See Psalm 89:8, Zephaniah 3:17

⁵⁷ See Psalms 71:19b, 126:2bβ-3

⁵⁸ See Psalms 99:3, 111:9b, Isaiah 57:15

⁵⁹ See Exodus 33:19, 34:6, Deuteronomy 4:31, 7:9, Psalms 103:13, Malachi 3:16; see also *Excursus 5 – Reverence* אָרְוָה

⁶⁰ See Psalms 89:10b, 98:1b, 118:15b-16, Isaiah 51:9

⁶¹ See Psalm 107:40, 147:6b

⁶² See Job 5:11, Psalms 107:41, 113:7-8, 147:6a

⁶³ See Psalms 37:4, 107:9

⁶⁴ Isaiah 41:9, 44:21, 49:3

⁶⁵ See Genesis 12:1-7, 15:7, 18-20, 17:1-8, 19, 21, 26:2-5, 28:3-4, 35:10-12

⁶⁶ See Genesis 3:15, 12:3, 17:4-5, 26:4b, 28:3, 35:11

⁶⁷ See the multitude of references in the ESV cross references and notes; or, in any other reference Bible.

⁶⁸ See www.esv.org Greek Word Detail

inquired of them **where the Christ was to be born**. They told him, “In Bethlehem of Judea, for so it is written by the prophet:

“‘And you, O Bethlehem, in the land of Judah, are by no means least among the rulers of Judah; for from you shall come **a ruler who will shepherd my people Israel**.’” (Micah 5:2)

Then Herod summoned the wise men secretly and ascertained from them what time the star had appeared. And he sent them to Bethlehem, saying, “Go and search diligently for the child, and when you have found him, bring me word, that **I too may come and worship** [proskyneō] **him**.”

After listening to the king, they went on their way. And behold, the star that they had seen when it rose went before them until it came to rest over the place where the child was. **When they saw the star, they rejoiced exceedingly with great joy**. And **going into the house**, they saw the child with Mary his mother, and **they fell down and worshiped** [proskyneō] **him**. Then, opening their treasures, **they offered him gifts**, gold and frankincense and myrrh. (Matthew 2:1-11 ESV)

Matthew clearly expresses **the popular Messianic hope** of the time. The wise men looked for the “**king of the Jews**” by which Herod knew immediately this was the “**Messiah**”. The wise men’s purpose was to “**worship**” demonstrating that **they knew the Messiah was God**. Herod perfunctorily states he too desired to “**worship**”. The wise men are **filled with joy** by the star’s identifying the Messiah’s location so that they can “**worship**”. Their “**worship**” comprised **offering kingly gifts** and **falling down before the Messiah**.

The Gospel authors focus on Jesus as the true object of worship. This theme is set in the “temptation” narratives. After Satan has twice tempted Jesus,⁶⁹ he throws his ultimate temptation at Jesus:

Again, the devil took him to a very high mountain and **showed him all the kingdoms of the world and their glory**. And he said to him, “**All these I will give you**, if you will **fall down and worship** [proskyneō] **me**.” Then Jesus said to him, “**Be gone, Satan!** For it is written,

“**You shall worship** [proskyneō] **the Lord your God** and him only shall you serve.”⁷⁰
(Matthew 4:8-10 ESV)

Jesus is emphatic that **only God can be worshipped**. The Gospel writers go on to emphasis that **Jesus is to be worshipped since he is God**. There are many instances where **people approach Jesus with a request and worship him**, for example:⁷¹

When he came down from the mountain, great crowds followed him. And behold, **a leper came to him and knelt** [proskyneō] before him, saying, “Lord, **if you will, you can make me clean**.”
(Matthew 8:1-2 ESV)

While he was saying these things to them, behold, **a ruler came in and knelt** [proskyneō] before him, saying, “My daughter has just died, but **come and lay your hand on her**, and she will live.”
(Matthew 9:18 ESV)

And behold, **a Canaanite woman** from that region came out and was crying, “Have mercy on me, O Lord, Son of David; my daughter is severely oppressed by a demon.” ... But **she came and knelt** [proskyneō] before him, saying, “**Lord, help me**.” (Matthew 15:22, 25 ESV)

Then **the mother of the sons of Zebedee** came up to him with her sons, and **knéeing** [proskyneō] before him she **asked him for something**. (Matthew 20:20 ESV)

The disciples were given **specific demonstrations of Jesus divinity** so that they had no questions about worshipping him, for example:⁷²

Immediately **he made the disciples get into the boat and go before him to the other side**, while he dismissed the crowds. And after he had dismissed the crowds, he went up on the mountain by himself to pray. When evening came, he was there alone, but **the boat by this time was a long way from the land, beaten by the waves**, for the wind was against them. And in the fourth watch of the night **he came to them, walking on the sea** ... And Peter answered him, “Lord, if it is you, command me to come to you on the water.” He said, “Come.” So **Peter got out of the boat and walked on the water** and came to Jesus. But when he saw the wind, he was afraid, and beginning to sink he cried out, “**Lord, save me**.” Jesus immediately reached out his hand and took hold of him, saying to him, “**O you of little faith, why did you doubt?**” And when they got into the boat, **the wind ceased**. And **those in the boat worshiped** [proskyneō] **him**, saying, “**Truly you are the Son of God**.” (Matthew 14:22-25, 28-33 ESV)

⁶⁹ Note that Luke has this as the second temptation (Luke 4:5-8)

⁷⁰ Jesus alludes to such scriptures as Deuteronomy 6:13, 10:20, 13:4, and 30:20

⁷¹ See also Mark 5:1-10 and John 9:1-38, especially verses 30 and 38

⁷² See also “The Transfiguration” Mark 9:2-13 // Matthew 17:1-13 // and Luke 9:28-36; “The Transfiguration” is discussed in detail in the paper, “**The Transfiguration and the Tabernacle**” located at: <https://mikewhytebiblicalresearch.ca/>

After the resurrection, the disciples and the apostles unquestioningly **worship the risen Christ**:

Now after the Sabbath, toward the dawn of the first day of the week, **Mary Magdalene and the other Mary went to see the tomb**. ... And behold, **Jesus met them and said**, “Greetings!” And they came up and **took hold of his feet and worshiped** [proskyneō] **him**. Then Jesus said to them, “Do not be afraid; **go and tell my brothers to go to Galilee**, and there they will see me.” ... Now **the eleven disciples went to Galilee**, to the mountain to which Jesus had directed them. And when **they saw him they worshiped** [proskyneō] **him** ... (Matthew 28:1, 9-10, 16-17a ESV)

Luke ends his Gospel with **a summary of the ascension**:

Then he said to them, “These are my words that I spoke to you while I was still with you, that everything written about me in the [nomos] of Moses and the Prophets and the Psalms must be fulfilled.” Then **he opened their minds to understand the Scriptures**, and said to them, “Thus it is written, that the Christ should suffer and on the third day rise from the dead, and **that repentance for the forgiveness of sins should be proclaimed in his name to all nations, beginning from Jerusalem**. **You are witnesses of these things**. And behold, **I am sending the promise of my Father upon you**. But stay in the city until you are clothed with power from on high.”

And he led them out as far as Bethany, and lifting up his hands he blessed them. While he blessed them, **he parted from them and was carried up into heaven**. And **they worshiped** [proskyneō] **him** and returned to Jerusalem with great joy, and were **continually in the temple** blessing God. (Luke 24:44-53 ESV)

The Book of Acts records **the progress of Christianity** from a sect of Judaism to **the True Religion of the True God which will change the world**. Luke begins the Book of Acts with more details of **Jesus’ final teaching** and the ascension:

In the first book, O Theophilus, I have dealt with all that Jesus began to do and teach, until the day when he was taken up, after he had given commands through the Holy Spirit to the apostles whom he had chosen. **He presented himself alive to them after his suffering** by many proofs, appearing to them during forty days and **speaking about the kingdom of God**. And while staying with them he ordered them not to depart from Jerusalem, but to **wait for the promise of the Father**, which, he said, “you heard from me; for John baptized with water, but **you will be baptized with the Holy Spirit** not many days from now.”

So when they had come together, they asked him, “Lord, will you at this time restore the kingdom to Israel?” He said to them, “**It is not for you to know times or seasons** that the Father has fixed by his own authority. But **you will receive power when the Holy Spirit has come upon you**, and **you will be my witnesses in Jerusalem and in all Judea and Samaria, and to the end of the earth**.” And when he had said these things, **as they were looking on, he was lifted up**, and a cloud took him out of their sight. (Acts 1:1-9 ESV)

Christianity started out as a sect of Judaism with **worship centered in the Temple** in Jerusalem:⁷³

... many **wonders and signs were being done through the apostles**. And all who believed were together and had all things in common. And they were selling their possessions and belongings and distributing the proceeds to all, as any had need. And **day by day, attending the temple together** and breaking bread in their homes, they received their food with glad and generous hearts **praising God and having favor with all the people**. And the Lord added to their number day by day **those who were being saved**. (Acts 2:43b-47 ESV)

The Book of Acts describes the progress of Christianity from Jerusalem to the **“ends of the earth”**, the full extent of the Roman Empire. The Book of Acts picks up the theme of **“the true remnant”** showing that God had prepared many people of **“Judea and Samaria, and to the end of the earth”** to be called to the New Testament Church. John the Baptist performed much of this preparatory work.⁷⁴ On the First Christian Pentecost, after Peter’s sermon, some of **“those who were being saved”** responded:⁷⁵

Now **when they heard this they were cut to the heart**, and said to Peter and the rest of the apostles, “Brothers, **what shall we do?**” And Peter said to them, “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. For the promise is for you and for your children and for all who are far off, **everyone whom the Lord our God calls to himself**.” And with many other words he bore witness and continued to exhort them, saying, “Save yourselves from this crooked generation.” So those who received his word were baptized, and **there were added that day about three thousand [persons]**. (Acts 2:37-41 ESV)

⁷³ See also John 12:20-26, Acts 3:1, 11-12, 5:12-13, 8:26-38, 21:17-26, 24:10-21

⁷⁴ See the paper “John the Baptist - More Than a Prophet” on <https://mikewhytebiblicalresearch.ca/>

⁷⁵ See also Acts 2:47, 4:4, 5:14, 6:1,7, 21:20

From his birth, Jesus was recognized as the Messiah, the Son of God, and worthy of worship. The Gospel authors are very specific that Jesus was to be worshipped. Jesus' resurrection and the subsequent endowment of the disciples with the Holy Spirit gave them the ability to create the New Testament Church. **True Christianity is the True Religion of the True God**. Jesus' teaching was an explanation of the **Way of God** documented in the Old Testament. This teaching is the basis of True Christianity and the True Worship of the True God.

6. Worship Spreads in the Roman Empire

As the Gospel spread, the Apostles continued to encounter **True Worshippers who were now being called to Christianity**, for example, Cornelius and his family:

At Caesarea there was a man named Cornelius, a centurion of what was known as the Italian Cohort, a **devout** [eusebēs] **man who feared God with all his household** ... he saw clearly in a vision an angel of God come in and say to him, "Cornelius." And he stared at him in terror and said, "What is it, Lord?" And he said to him, "**Your prayers and your alms have ascended as a memorial before God**." And now **send men to Joppa and bring one Simon who is called Peter**.

And Peter went down to the men and said, "I am the one you are looking for. What is the reason for your coming?" And they said, "**Cornelius, a centurion, an upright and God-fearing man**, who is well spoken of by the whole Jewish nation, was directed by a holy angel to send for you to come to his house and to hear what you have to say." So he invited them in to be his guests.

The next day he rose and went away with them, and some of the brothers from Joppa accompanied him. And on the following day they entered Caesarea. **Cornelius was expecting them and had called together his relatives and close friends**. When Peter entered, **Cornelius met him and fell down at his feet and worshiped** [proskyneō] **him**. But Peter lifted him up, saying, "**Stand up; I too am a man**." (Acts 10:1-2a, 3b-5, 21-26 ESV)

Due to the supernatural nature of the events, **Cornelius believes Peter to be worthy of worship**. Peter emphatically makes the point that **only God is to be worshipped**.⁷⁶ Cornelius is described by the word εὐσεβής - eusebēs: it is an adjective which means "**devout**" or "**godly**". It is used only three times in the New Testament.⁷⁷ A more or less synonymous verb, σέβομαι - sebomai, which means "**to worship**" or "**be devout**", is used ten times.⁷⁸ In several instances it identifies **True Worshippers of God**, like Cornelius, who were **being called to Christianity**, for example:

Now **Paul and his companions** ... came to **Antioch in Pisidia**. And **on the Sabbath day** they went into the synagogue and sat down. After the reading from the [nomos] and the Prophets, the rulers of the synagogue sent a message to them, saying, "Brothers, **if you have any word of encouragement for the people, say it**." ... As they went out, **the people begged that these things might be told them the next Sabbath**. And after the meeting of the synagogue broke up, **many Jews and devout** [sebomai] **converts to Judaism followed Paul and Barnabas**, who, as they spoke with them, **urged them to continue in the grace of God**. (Acts 13:13a, 14-15, 42-43 ESV)

So, setting sail from Troas, we made a direct voyage to Samothrace, and the following day to Neapolis, and from there to **Philippi**, which is a leading city of the district of Macedonia and a Roman colony. We remained in this city some days. And **on the Sabbath day** we went outside the gate to the riverside, where we supposed there was a place of prayer, and we sat down and spoke to the women who had come together. **One who heard us was a woman named Lydia**, from the city of Thyatira, a seller of purple goods, **who was a worshiper** [sebomai] **of God**. **The Lord opened her heart** to pay attention to what was said by Paul. And after **she was baptized**, and **her household as well**, she urged us, saying, "**If you have judged me to be faithful to the Lord**, come to my house and stay." And she prevailed upon us. (Acts 16:11-15 ESV)

Now when they had passed through Amphipolis and Apollonia, they came to **Thessalonica**, where there was a synagogue of the Jews. And **Paul went in, has was his custom, and on three Sabbath days he reasoned** with them from the Scriptures, explaining and proving that **it was necessary for the Christ to suffer and to rise from the dead**, and saying, "This Jesus, whom I proclaim to you, is the Christ." And **some of them were persuaded** and joined Paul and Silas, **as did a great many of the devout** [sebomai] **Greeks and not a few of the leading women**. (Acts 17:1-4 ESV)

⁷⁶ See also Acts 14:15, Colossians 2:18, Revelation 19:10, 22:8-9; in contrast, the neuter noun σέβασμα - sebasma, meaning "object of worship" is used for invalid objects of worship in Acts 17:23 and 2 Thessalonians 2:4; the "wicked" worship [λατρεύω] idols (Romans 1:25)

⁷⁷ See Acts 10:2, 7, 2 Peter 2:9

⁷⁸ See Mark 7:7 // Matthew 15:9, Acts 13:43, 50, 16:14, 17:4, 17, 18:7, 13, 19:27

After this Paul left Athens and went to Corinth. ... And he reasoned in the synagogue every Sabbath, and tried to persuade Jews and Greeks. ... testifying to the Jews that the Christ was Jesus. And when they opposed and reviled him, he shook out his garments and said to them, “Your blood be on your own heads! I am innocent. From now on I will go to the Gentiles.” And he left there and went to the house of a man named Titius Justus, a worshiper [sebomai] of God. (Acts 18:1, 4, 5b-7a ESV)

When Paul is on trial before Felix the Roman governor, he makes a confession:

You can verify that it is not more than twelve days since I went up to worship [proskyneō] in Jerusalem, and they did not find me disputing with anyone or stirring up a crowd, either in the temple or in the synagogues or in the city. Neither can they prove to you what they now bring up against me. But this I confess to you, that according to the Way, which they call a sect, I worship [latreuō] the God of our fathers, believing everything laid down by the Law and written in the Prophets, having a hope in God, which these men themselves accept, that there will be a resurrection of both the just and the unjust. (Acts 24:11-15 ESV)

Luke uses a different word here for “worship”, λατρεύω - latreuō, it is a verb which means “worship”, “minister”, or “serve”. It occurs twenty-one times.⁷⁹ Paul asserts that he has lived “according to the Way”⁸⁰ prescribed to the “fathers” in the Old Testament. This is an allusion to in the Way (דֶּרֶךְ - derek) of life discussed so frequently in the Old Testament and discussed previously in Psalm 5:8, in section **3. Worship in Psalms and Prophets**. Paul asserts that Christianity is in no way inconsistent with the True Worship of God prescribed in the Old Testament.

Soon after the interrogation by Felix, Paul is being examined by King Herod Agrippa II. He again emphasizes the consistency of Christianity with the True Religion of the Old Testament:

My manner of life from my youth, spent from the beginning among my own nation and in Jerusalem, is known by all the Jews. They have known for a long time, if they are willing to testify, that according to the strictest party of our religion [thrēskeia] I have lived as a Pharisee. And now I stand here on trial because of my hope in the promise made by God to our fathers, to which our twelve tribes hope to attain, as they earnestly worship [latreuō] night and day. And for this hope I am accused by Jews, O king! Why is it thought incredible by any of you that God raises the dead? (Acts 26:4-8 ESV)

Here Luke introduces a new word in quoting Paul, θρησκεία - thrēskeia, a feminine noun meaning “religion” or “worship”. It occurs four times.⁸¹ Paul asserts that the “hope” to which all Israel has looked has been fulfilled by Jesus Christ. Paul has the same hope – the resurrection of the dead. That “hope” is the objective of True Worship. Later in a letter to Timothy, Paul again asserts consistency between Christian worship and the True Worship prescribed in the Old Testament:

I thank God whom I serve [latreuō], as did my ancestors, with a clear conscience, as I remember you constantly in my prayers night and day. (2 Timothy 1:3 ESV)

Paul on several occasions, states that his worship of God is demonstrated through service to God in doing the Work of God. In Philippi, there had been some problems with those of “the circumcision party”.⁸² Paul asserts that True Worship is through the Holy Spirit. True Worship comprises “circumcision of the heart”:⁸³

For this very night there stood before me an angel of the God to whom I belong and whom I worship [latreuō], and he said, ‘Do not be afraid, Paul ...’ (Acts 27:23 ESV)

For God is my witness, whom I serve [latreuō] with my spirit in the gospel of his Son, that without ceasing I mention you always in my prayers ... (Romans 1:9-10a ESV)

Look out for the dogs, look out for the evildoers, look out for those who mutilate the flesh. For we are the circumcision, who worship [latreuō] by the Spirit of God and glory in Christ Jesus and put no confidence in the flesh ... (Philippians 3:2-3 ESV)

In collecting food from Corinth for the Jerusalem Church during the famine,⁸⁴ Paul uses two other words for “service to God”, λειτουργία - leitourgia, (“service”, “ministry”), a feminine noun which occurs six

⁷⁹ See Matthew 4:10 // Luke 4:8, Luke 1:74, 2:37, Acts 7:42, 24:14, 26:7, 27:23, Romans 1:9,25, Philippians 3:3, 2 Timothy 1:3, Hebrews 8:5, 9:9,14, 10:2, 12:28, 13:10, Revelation 7:15, 22:3

⁸⁰ See also Acts 9:2, 16:17, 18:25-26, 19:9, 23, 22:4, 24:14, 22, Hebrews 10:20

⁸¹ See Acts 26:5, Colossians 2:18, James 1:26-27

⁸² See Acts 11:2, 15:1-5, Titus 1:10

⁸³ See Deuteronomy 10:16, 30:6, Jeremiah 4:4

⁸⁴ See Acts 11:27-30

times,⁸⁵ and διακονία - diakonia, (“service”, “ministry”), a feminine noun which occurs twenty-eight times in the context of “**service to God**”.⁸⁶ These words have significant overlap in range of meaning: He who supplies seed to the sower and bread for food will supply and multiply your seed for sowing and increase **the harvest of your righteousness**. You will be enriched in every way to be generous in every way, which through us will produce **thanksgiving to God**. For **the ministry** [diakonia] **of this service** [leitourgia] is not only supplying the needs of the saints but is also overflowing in many **thanksgivings to God**. By their **approval of this service** [διακονία], they will **glorify God** because of your submission that comes from your **confession of the gospel of Christ**, and the **generosity of your contribution** for them and for all others, while **they long for you and pray for you**, because of **the surpassing grace of God** upon you. Thanks be to God for his inexpressible gift! (2 Corinthians 9:10-15 ESV)

Paul is careful to demonstrate that the **physical service** of helping the brethren is an outgrowth of spiritual commitment to God. The **spiritual commitment is the True Worship**. The physical service is a natural result of spiritual commitment. No human effort can make one righteous – “**the harvest of righteousness**” comes at the resurrection as a gift from God.

When Paul is headed for Jerusalem towards the end of his third journey, he has been warned by God of danger to come. The danger is part of his **worship, through his service, in preaching the gospel**:

And now, behold, **I am going to Jerusalem**, constrained by the Spirit, not knowing what will happen to me there, except that the Holy Spirit testifies to me in every city that **imprisonment and afflictions await me**. But I do not account my life of any value nor as precious to myself, if only **I may finish my course and the ministry** [διακονία] that I received from the Lord Jesus, **to testify to the gospel** of the grace of God. (Acts 20:22-24 ESV)

Later, from Rome, in writing to the Church at Philippi, Paul compares his impending death to an **offering of worship** on behalf of the Church:

Therefore, **my beloved**, as you have always obeyed, so now, not only as in my presence but much more in my absence, **work out your own salvation with fear and trembling**, for it is God who works in you, both to will and to work for his good pleasure. ... holding fast to the **word of life**, so that in the day of Christ I may be proud that I did not run in vain or labor in vain. Even if **I am to be poured out as a drink offering upon the sacrificial offering** [leitourgia] **of your faith**, I am glad and rejoice with you all. Likewise you also should be glad and rejoice with me. (Philippians 2:12-13, 16-18 ESV)

The Greek language has a very rich vocabulary. The following words, surveyed in this section and the previous section, are used to describe “worship”:⁸⁷

- προσκυνέω – proskyneō, a verb which means “worship”, “kneel”, or “bow down”
- εὐσεβής – eusebēs, an adjective which means “devout” or “godly”
- σέβομαι – sebomai, a more or less synonymous verb which means “to worship” or “be devout”
- λατρεύω – latreuō, a verb which means “worship”, “minister”, or “serve”
- θρησκεία – thrēskeia, a feminine noun meaning “religion” or “worship”
- λειτουργία – leitourgia, a feminine noun which means “service”, “ministry”
- διακονία – diakonia, a more or less synonymous feminine noun which means “service”, “ministry”

Not only among the people of Judea, Galilee, Perea, and Samaria had God prepared True Worshipers to call to Christianity, but also **God was calling people from among the “Gentiles”, and the Jews of the Diaspora, scattered throughout the Roman Empire**. This was the work of the Apostle Paul – to find these people and initiate “Churches”, groups of True Worshipers. Paul was very clear that his work in serving these people was an outgrowth of his True Worship of the True God, this is required of all True Worshipers.

⁸⁵ See Luke 1:23, 2 Corinthians 9:12, Philippians 2:17, 30, Hebrews 8:6, 9:21

⁸⁶ See Acts 1:17,25, 6:4, 12:25, 20:24, 21:19, Romans 11:13, 12:7, 15:31, 1 Corinthians 12:5, 16:15, 2 Corinthians 3:7,8,9, 4:1, 5:18, 6:3, 9:1,12,13, 11:8, Ephesians 4:12, Colossians 4:17, 1 Timothy 1:12, 2 Timothy 4:5,11, Hebrew 1:14, Revelation 2:19; there is a closely related word, δῆκονος - diakonos, a masculine noun, which refers to a person performing διακονία, “one entrusted to serve the needs of others” (<https://www.esv.org/Matthew+20/> “Greek Word Detail”)

⁸⁷ For formal definitions of these words, see the appropriate entries in GEL.

7. Consolidation of New Testament Worship

The Book of Hebrews was written to Jewish Christians. There are many allusions to the Tabernacle and the worship service conducted in the Tabernacle which would have had little meaning to Gentile Christians. There were Jewish Christians all over the Roman world, but **the Jerusalem Church was very closely tied to the Temple and the worship service carried on there.** In 70AD after the destruction of the temple, this aspect of the life of Christians comprising the Jerusalem Church was shattered. Prior to the final destruction of Jerusalem and the Temple the Church had fled to Pella.⁸⁸ The Jerusalem Church in Pella is **the most likely audience of the Book of Hebrews.**

The Book of Hebrews contains a **formal discussion of the True Worship of the True God.** The recipients of the Book of Hebrews were in state of confusion regarding the Christian Faith. In chapter one, the author deals with **a problem regarding “angels”.** Jewish Christians familiar with the plethora of intertestamental writings, could easily have gotten this way. The author of Hebrews is very specific that **angels are inferior to Jesus Christ and NOT to be worshipped.** He summarizes:

... in these last days **he has spoken to us by his Son** ... he sat down at the right hand of the Majesty on high, having become as **much superior to angels** as the name he has inherited is more excellent than theirs. ... Are they not all **ministering** [leitourgikos]⁸⁹ **spirits** sent out **to serve** [diakonia] for the sake of those who are to inherit salvation? (Hebrews 1:2a, 3b-4, 14 ESV)

There seems to have been some confusion as to **the nature of Jesus:** that he was **fully divine** and **fully human.** The author of Hebrews clearly states Jesus’ position as **supreme ruler** over the universe; but also, his **human condition** in suffering death:

Now in putting **everything in subjection to him**, he left **nothing outside his control.** At present, we do not yet see everything in subjection to him. But we see him who for a little while was made lower than the angels, namely **Jesus, crowned with glory and honor** because of the **suffering of death**, so that by the grace of God **he might taste death for everyone.** For it was fitting that he [The Father], for whom and by whom all things exist, in bringing many sons to glory, should make **the founder of their salvation perfect through suffering.** ... Since therefore the children share in **flesh and blood**, he himself likewise **partook of the same things**, that **through death** he might destroy the one who has the power of death, that is, the devil ... Therefore he had to be made **like his brothers in every respect** ... (Hebrews 2:8b-10, 14, 17a ESV)

The people were suffering from **flagging faith:**

Take care, brothers, lest there be in any of you an evil, **unbelieving heart**, leading you to fall away from the living God. But **exhort one another** every day, as long as it is called “today,” that none of you may be hardened by **the deceitfulness of sin.** ... For good news came to us just as to them, but the message they heard did not benefit them, because **they were not united by faith** with those who listened. ... **you have become dull of hearing.** For though by this time you ought to be teachers, **you need someone to teach you again the basic principles of the oracles of God.** (Hebrews 3:12-13, 4:2, 5:11b-12a ESV)

The largest problem was the relationship between the Old Covenant and the New Covenant. With the destruction of the Temple, the sacrificial system was terminated. **The people believed that the sacrificial system was the heart of the Old Covenant,** and that its continuance was necessary for Christianity. The author of Hebrews identifies the ineffectiveness of the sacrificial system and the efficacy of Jesus’ sacrifice:

For **it is impossible for the blood of bulls and goats to take away sins.** Consequently, when Christ came into the world, he said,

“**Sacrifices and offerings you have not desired**, but a body have you prepared for me; in burnt offerings and sin offerings you have taken no pleasure.

Then I said, ‘Behold, **I have come to do your will**, O God,

as it is written of me in the scroll of the book.”⁹⁰

When he said above, “You have neither desired nor taken pleasure in sacrifices and offerings and burnt offerings and sin offerings” ... then he added, “Behold, **I have come to do your will.**” **He does away with the first in order to establish the second.** And by that will **we have been sanctified through the offering of the body of Jesus Christ once for all.**

⁸⁸ For a discussion of this, see *Excursus Three – The Destruction of Jerusalem in 70AD* in the paper “The Olivet Prophecy” on <https://mikewhytebiblicalresearch.ca/>

⁸⁹ λειτουργικός - leitourgikos is an adjective meaning “ministering”, “engaged in holy service” (GEL page 472); it is used only once in the New Testament; see <https://www.esv.org/Hebrews+1/>, “Greek Word Detail”

⁹⁰ This is loosely quoted from the Septuagint of Psalm 40:6-8

And every priest stands daily at his service [leitourgeō],⁹¹ **offering repeatedly the same sacrifices, which can never take away sins.** But when **Christ had offered for all time a single sacrifice for sins,** he sat down at the right hand of God, waiting from that time until his enemies should be made a footstool for his feet. For **by a single offering he has perfected for all time those who are being sanctified.** (Hebrews 10:4-14 ESV)

The **superiority of Jesus** over Moses and the Aaronic priesthood is established. Jesus' role as High Priest establishes him in **the ultimate position of service** – interceding for Christians:

... **consider Jesus,** the apostle and high priest of our confession, who was faithful to him who appointed him, just as **Moses also was faithful in all God's house.** For **Jesus has been counted worthy of more glory than Moses**—as much more glory as the builder of a house has more honor than the house itself. (For every house is built by someone, but the builder of all things is God.) Now **Moses was faithful in all God's house as a servant,** to testify to the things that were to be spoken later, but **Christ is faithful over God's house as a son.** (Hebrews 3:1b-6a ESV)

The former priests [Aaronic] were many in number, because they were prevented by death from continuing in office, but **he [Jesus] holds his priesthood permanently,** because he continues forever. Consequently, he is able to save to the uttermost those who draw near to God through him, since **he always lives to make intercession for them.** ... Now the point in what we are saying is this: **we have such a high priest, one who is seated at the right hand of the throne of the Majesty in heaven,** a minister [leitourgos]⁹² in the holy places, in the true tabernacle that the Lord set up, not man. For every high priest is appointed to offer gifts and sacrifices; thus it is necessary for this priest also to have something to offer. ... **Christ has obtained a ministry [leitourgia] that is as much more excellent than the old as the covenant he mediates is better,** since **it is enacted on better promises.** For if that first covenant had been faultless, there would have been no occasion to look for a second. (Hebrews 7:23-24, 8:1-3, 6-7 ESV)

The worship service in the Tabernacle is contrasted with **Christian worship of God in eternity.** The worship at the Tabernacle could not bring salvation – only **Christ's sacrifice and ongoing ministry** as High Priest allow **Christians to truly serve God** and **receive the gift of eternal life:**

Now even the first covenant had **regulations for worship** [latreia]⁹³ and an earthly place of holiness. For a tabernacle was prepared, the first section, ... is called the Holy Place. Behind the second curtain was a second section called the Most Holy Place ... These preparations having thus been made, **the priests go regularly into the first section, performing their ritual duties** [latreia], but **into the second only the high priest goes, and he but once a year,** and not without taking blood, which he offers for himself and for the unintentional sins of the people. By this the **Holy Spirit indicates that the way into the holy places [was] not yet opened** as long as the first section is still standing (which is symbolic for the age then present⁹⁴). According to this arrangement, gifts and **sacrifices are offered that cannot perfect the conscience of the worshiper** [latreuō] ... (Hebrews 9:1-3, 6-9 ESV)

But when **Christ appeared as a high priest** of the good things that have come, then through the greater and more perfect tabernacle (not made with hands, that is, not of this creation) **he entered once for all into the holy places,** not by means of the blood of goats and calves but **by means of his own blood,** thus **securing an eternal redemption.** For if the blood of goats and bulls, and the sprinkling of defiled persons with the ashes of a heifer, sanctify for the purification of the flesh, **how much more will the blood of Christ,** who through the eternal Spirit offered himself without blemish to God, **purify our conscience** from dead works **to serve** [latreuō] **the living God.** Therefore he is the mediator of a new covenant, so that **those who are called may receive the promised eternal inheritance** ... (Hebrews 9:11-15a ESV)

In the **Book of Revelation** in chapters four and five, the Apostle John is given **a glimpse into eternity** – to the throne of God the Father.⁹⁵ **The scene is one of worship:**

Around the throne were twenty-four thrones, and seated on the thrones were **twenty-four elders,** clothed in white garments, with golden crowns on their heads. ... And **around the throne,** on each side of the throne, are **four living creatures,** full of eyes in front and behind ... And whenever **the living creatures give glory and honor and thanks** to him who is seated on the throne, who lives forever and ever, the **twenty-four elders fall down before him who is seated on the throne and worship** [proskyneō] him who lives forever and ever. They cast their crowns before the throne, saying,

⁹¹ λειτουργέω - leitourgeō, verb, used also in Acts 13:2 and Romans 15:27; LXX uses leitourgeo for the service of the priests in the Tabernacle (GEL page 471)

⁹² λειτουργός - leitourgos, masculine noun, used also in Romans 13:6, 15:16, Philippians 2:25, Hebrews 1:7; "servants of God", "priests" (GEL page 472)

⁹³ This is a feminine noun related to the verb λατρεύω: λατρεία - latreia, ("worship", "ministry", "service to God").

It occurs five times: John 16:2, Romans 9:4, 12:1, Hebrews 9:1, 6

⁹⁴ See ESV footnote

⁹⁵ See also Daniel 7:9-10, 13-14, 26-27, Isaiah 6:1-5

“Worthy are you, our Lord and God, to receive glory and honor and power,
for you created all things, and by your will they existed and were created.”

Then I looked, and I heard around the throne and the living creatures and the elders **the voice of many angels,** numbering myriads of myriads and thousands of thousands, saying with a loud voice,

“Worthy is the Lamb who was slain,

to receive power and wealth and wisdom and might and honor and glory and blessing!”

And I heard every creature in heaven and on earth and under the earth and in the sea, and all that is in them, saying,

“To him who sits on the throne and to the Lamb

be blessing and honor and glory and might forever and ever!”

And the **four living creatures said, “Amen!”** and **the elders fell down and worshiped** [proskyneō].

(Revelation 4:4, 6b, 9-11, 5:11-14 ESV see also Revelation 7:11-12, 11:16, 19:4-5)

The attendants around the throne perform a vociferous worship of God the Father and Jesus Christ, the “Lamb”, who comprise the **“God Family”**. **Only they are worthy of worship:**

Then I saw **another angel** flying directly overhead, with [the] eternal gospel to proclaim to those who dwell on earth, to every nation and tribe and language and people. And he **said with a loud voice, “Fear God and give him glory,** because the hour of his judgment has come, and **worship** [proskyneō] **him** who made heaven and earth, the sea and the springs of water.”

And I saw what appeared to be **a sea of glass** mingled with fire—and also **those who had conquered** the beast and its image and the number of its name, **standing beside the sea of glass** with harps of God in their hands. And **they sing** the song of Moses, the servant of God, and the song of the Lamb, saying,

“Great and amazing are your deeds, O Lord God the Almighty!

Just and true are your ways, **O King of the nations!**

Who will not fear, O Lord, and glorify your name?

For **you alone are holy.**

All nations will come and worship [proskyneō] **you,** for your righteous acts have been revealed.”

(Revelation 14:6-7, 15:2-4 ESV see also Revelation 19:10, 22:8-9)

The Apostle John reported the incident with the Samaritan women at the well of Sychar. **This conversation is the seminal scripture on worship of God.** Jesus makes explicit point that **God the Father is to be worshipped:**

The woman said to him, “Sir, I perceive that you are a prophet. Our fathers worshiped [proskyneō] on this mountain, but you say that in Jerusalem is the place where **people ought to worship** [proskyneō].”

Jesus said to her, “Woman, believe me, the hour is coming when **neither on this mountain nor in Jerusalem will you worship** [proskyneō] **the Father. You worship** [proskyneō] **what you do not know; we worship** [proskyneō] **what we know,** for salvation is from the Jews. But the hour is coming, and is now here, when **the true worshipers** [proskynētēs]⁹⁶ will **worship** [proskyneō] **the Father in spirit and truth,** for **the Father is seeking such people to worship** [proskyneō] **him.** God is spirit, and those who worship [proskyneō] him must **worship** [proskyneō] **in spirit and truth.**” **The woman said to him, “I know that Messiah is coming** (he who is called Christ). When he comes, he will tell us all things.” **Jesus said to her, “I who speak to you am he.”** (John 4:19-26 ESV)

After their initial discussion, **the woman understood that Jesus was not just an ordinary man.** She goes right to the heart of the problem between Jews and Samaritans – the location of worship. Jesus points out that **the location of worship is irrelevant,** but that God’s plan was being fulfilled through the Jews, not the Samaritans. **With the commencement of the New Testament Church,** the distinction between Jews and Samaritans would become irrelevant because **True Worshipers would be given the Holy Spirit** and through the Holy Spirit would come to understand the Truth of God as revealed in the Bible. **This makes True Worship, in spirit and in truth, possible.** Jesus confirms his words by an explicit confirmation that he is the Messiah.

The following Greek words related to “worship” have been discussed in this section:⁹⁷

- λειτουργικός – leitourgikos, an adjective meaning “ministering”, “engaged in holy service”
- λειτουργέω – leitourgeō, verb meaning “to serve”, “to worship” (LXX uses leitourgeo for the service of the priests in the Tabernacle)
- λειτουργός – leitourgos, a masculine noun meaning “servants of God”, “priests”

⁹⁶ This is the only occurrence in the New Testament of προσκυνήτης - proskynētēs, a masculine noun related to the verb προσκυνέω, see TDNT VI pages 758-766.

⁹⁷ For formal definitions of these words, see the appropriate entries in GEL.

- λατρεία – latreia, a feminine noun, related to the verb λατρεύω, meaning “worship”, “ministry”, “service to God”

The **Book of Hebrews** and the **writings of the Apostle John** are last books of the New Testament to be written. **The Book of Hebrews is particularly important for understanding the concept of True Worship.** The author is very earnest to ensure the audience understands the nature of Jesus Christ and that only God can be worshipped. The audience is suffering flagging faith due to their lack of understanding of the purpose of the sacrificial system. The main point of the Book of Hebrews is the superiority of Jesus’ sacrifice over the sacrificial system. **Only through Jesus’ sacrifice and his ongoing role as High Priest, Intercessor, is salvation possible.**

The Apostle John was given unique insight into the worship of God the Father and “The Lamb” in the temple in eternity. In his gospel, **John records the seminal scripture on worship**, explaining that all past physical differences among human beings are irrelevant under the calling of God. **Those called of God can only truly worship him through the indwelling of the Holy Spirit.** Through living a Christian Life, the **Way of God**, True Worshipers come to a **living understanding** of the **Truth of God** revealed in the Bible and can then **“worship in truth”**.

8. When to Worship – the Sabbath

8.1 Jesus and the Sabbath

One Sabbath he was going through the grainfields, and as they made their way, his disciples began to pluck heads of grain. And the **Pharisees were saying** to him, “Look, **why are they doing what is not lawful on the Sabbath?**” And he said to them, “Have you never read what David did, when he was in need and was hungry, he and those who were with him: how he entered the house of God, in the time of Abiathar the high priest, and ate the bread of the Presence, which it is not lawful for any but the priests to eat, and also gave it to those who were with him?” And he said to them, **“The Sabbath was made for man, not man for the Sabbath. So the Son of Man is lord even of the Sabbath.”** (Mark 2:23-28 ESV // Matthew 12:1-8, Luke 6:1-5)

The Sabbath is very important to Jesus. The Pharisees had utterly corrupted the observance of the Sabbath with their ludicrous constraints. **Jesus repeatedly made a point of challenging the Pharisees in regard to the Sabbath.** Jesus’ point was to establish the proper worship on the Sabbath. On several occasions, Jesus deliberately healed on the Sabbath in order to point out to the Pharisees the corruption of their teaching. Jesus first healing as reported by Mark and Luke is on the Sabbath:

And they went into Capernaum, and immediately **on the Sabbath he entered the synagogue and was teaching.** And they were astonished at his teaching, for **he taught them as one who had authority, and not as the scribes.** And immediately there was in their synagogue **a man with an unclean spirit.** And he cried out, “What have you to do with us, Jesus of Nazareth? Have you come to destroy us? **I know who you are—the Holy One of God.**” But Jesus rebuked him, saying, “Be silent, and come out of him!” And the unclean spirit, convulsing him and crying out with a loud voice, came out of him. And they were all amazed, so that they questioned among themselves, saying, “What is this? A new teaching with authority! He commands even the unclean spirits, and they obey him.” **And at once his fame spread everywhere** throughout all the surrounding region of Galilee. (Mark 1:21-28 ESV // Luke 4:31-47)

Jesus is in the synagogue on the Sabbath teaching. The demon recognizes Jesus as **“Holy One of God”** and accosts him. Jesus exorcizes the demon as **an object lesson of his authority.** This results in widespread fame of Jesus, which would NOT go unnoticed by the “authorities”, the Pharisees. After this the **Pharisees began to watch Jesus:**

Again he entered the synagogue, and a man was there with a withered hand. And **they watched Jesus,** to see whether he would heal him on the Sabbath, so that they might accuse him. And he said to the man with the withered hand, “Come here.” And he said to them, **“Is it lawful on the Sabbath to do good or to do harm, to save life or to kill?”** But **they were silent.** And he looked around at them with anger, **grieved at their hardness of heart,** and said to the man, “Stretch out your hand.” He stretched it out, and his hand was restored. The **Pharisees went out and immediately held counsel** with the Herodians against him, **how to destroy him.** (Mark 3:1-6 ESV // Matthew 12:9-14, Luke 6:6-11)

Here Jesus deliberately throws a challenge to the Pharisees. They knew they could NOT debate with Jesus, so **“they were silent”**, but inwardly they churned with anger at the challenge. They could not bare to have their authority challenged. **Jesus was grieved because of their corruption of the Sabbath,**

and their stubbornness in refusing his teaching. Luke reports similar incidents in Luke 13:10-17 and 14:1-6. John reports two similar incidents in great detail in John 5:2-18 and 9:1-41. By these incidents Jesus demonstrated that he was indeed “**Lord of the Sabbath**” and that its **proper observance is very important to him**.

8.2 The Sabbath in the Old Testament

The **Sabbath was created on the seventh day** of the re-creation described in Genesis chapters one and two, when **God rested** on the seventh day which **made the day holy**:

Thus **the heavens and the earth were finished**, and all the host of them. And **on the seventh day** God **finished his work** that he had done, and **he rested on the seventh day** from all his work that he had done. So **God blessed the seventh day and made it holy**, because on it **God rested** from all his work that he had done in creation. (Genesis 2:1-3 ESV)

The word “rested” is from שָׁבַת - shavath, a verb meaning “cease”, “desist”, “rest”. On the meaning of the word, Victor P. Hamilton states:

... it should be observed that the meaning of *shavath* is “to rest” in the sense of repose only when the verb is used in a Sabbath context ... The basic thrust of the verb is, when transitive, “to sever, to put an end to”, and when intransitive, “to desist, to come to an end”.⁹⁸

The first occurrence of the noun שַׁבָּת - shabbath, “sabbath”, is in Exodus chapter sixteen. The Israelites are approaching the area of Horeb where Mount Sinai is located. They encamp for at least a week, possibly two or more weeks, because **YHWH is providing an object lesson to unequivocally show them which day is the Sabbath**. The people have complained over lack of food:

And the LORD said to Moses, “I have heard the grumbling of the people of Israel. Say to them, ‘At twilight you shall eat meat, and in the morning you shall be filled with bread. **Then you shall know that I am the LORD your God.**’” In the evening quail came up and covered the camp, and in the morning dew lay around the camp.

On the sixth day they gathered twice as much bread, two omers each. And when all the leaders of the congregation came and told Moses, he said to them, “This is what the LORD has commanded: **Tomorrow is a day of solemn rest** [shabbathon],⁹⁹ **a holy Sabbath to the LORD**; bake what you will bake and boil what you will boil, and all that is left over lay aside to be kept till the morning.” So they laid it aside till the morning, as Moses commanded them, and it did not stink, and there were no worms in it. Moses said, “Eat it today, for **today is a Sabbath to the LORD**; today you will not find it in the field. Six days you shall gather it, but **on the seventh day, which is a Sabbath, there will be none.**”

On the seventh day some of the people went out to gather, but they found none. And the LORD said to Moses, “How long will you refuse to keep my commandments and my [torah]? See! **The LORD has given you the Sabbath**; therefore on the sixth day he gives you bread for two days. Remain each of you in his place; **let no one go out of his place on the seventh day.**” **So the people rested on the seventh day.** (Exodus 16:11-13, 22-30)

Clearly the **Israelites had lost track of the Sabbath during the sojourn in Egypt**. There is no mention of the Sabbath between its inception and the object lesson. Prior to the flood, only three people are clearly identified as True Worshippers of God: Abel, Enoch, and Noah. Presumably there were others:

And Adam knew his wife again, and she bore a son and called his name Seth, for she said, “God has appointed for me another offspring instead of Abel, for Cain killed him.” To Seth also a son was born, and he called his name Enosh. **At that time people began to call upon the name of the LORD.** (Genesis 4:25-26 ESV)

Between the flood and the time of Moses, only the Patriarchs, Abraham,¹⁰⁰ Isaac, Jacob, Joseph, and some of their wives, are identified as True Worshippers. Certainly, all True Worshippers have kept the Sabbath, although prior to Moses there is no explicit discussion of it in our extant documents. Prior to the giving of the Ten Commandments, God is very careful to ensure there is no confusion as to which day is the Sabbath, because the **keeping of the Sabbath is fundamental to the Ten Commandments and to all understanding of the Plan of God**:

⁹⁸ TWOT article 2323 page 902

⁹⁹The word שַׁבְּתוֹן - shabbathon, is a masculine noun derived from שָׁבַת, “sabbath observance”, ESV translates “solemn rest”. “The ending -ōn is characteristic of abstract nouns in Hebrew ...” TWOT article 2323 page 903.

¹⁰⁰ Peter also identifies Lot as “righteous” (2 Peter 2:7).

Remember the Sabbath day, to keep it holy. Six days you shall labor, and do all your work, but the **seventh day is a Sabbath to the LORD your God.** On it you shall not do any work, you, or your son, or your daughter, your male servant, or your female servant, or your livestock, or the sojourner who is within your gates. For in six days **the LORD** made heaven and earth, the sea, and all that is in them, and **rested on the seventh day.** Therefore **the LORD blessed the Sabbath day and made it holy.** (Exodus 20:8-11 ESV see also Deuteronomy 5:12-15)

The Sabbath is Holy Time – made that way by God at the re-creation. Man cannot decree time to be holy. **Only God’s presence makes anything holy. God’s presence is only in the Sabbath.**

On Mount Sinai, YHWH gave Moses detailed instruction on the **construction of the Tabernacle** and its accoutrements. This was to be a major construction project which would take about six months effort by the whole population. The instructions are contained in Exodus chapters twenty-five through thirty. The actual construction is described in chapters thirty-five through thirty-nine. Twice **YHWH reminded the people to observe the Sabbath and perform no work on the Tabernacle on the Sabbath:**

And the LORD said to Moses, “You are to speak to the people of Israel and say, ‘**Above all you shall keep my Sabbaths,**¹⁰¹ for **this is a sign between me and you throughout your generations,** that you may know that I, the LORD, sanctify you. **You shall keep the Sabbath,** because **it is holy for you.** Everyone who profanes it shall be put to death. Whoever does any work on it, that [person] shall be cut off from among his people. **Six days shall work be done,** but **the seventh day is a Sabbath of solemn rest** [shabbathon], **holy to the LORD.** Whoever does any work on the Sabbath day shall be put to death. Therefore the **people of Israel shall keep the Sabbath, observing the Sabbath throughout their generations, as a covenant forever.** **It is a sign forever between me and the people of Israel** that in six days the LORD made heaven and earth, and **on the seventh day he rested** and was refreshed.” (Exodus 31:12-17 ESV)

Moses assembled all the congregation of the people of Israel and said to them, “These are the things that the LORD has commanded you to do. **Six days work shall be done,** but **on the seventh day you shall have a Sabbath of solemn rest** [shabbathon], **holy to the LORD.** Whoever does any work on it shall be put to death. You shall kindle no fire in all your dwelling places on the Sabbath day.” (Exodus 35:1-3 ESV)

These reminders, and the weekly observance of the Sabbath during the construction of the Tabernacle, served as **a further object lesson** for the Israelites as to **the importance of the Sabbath to God. God established the Sabbath as a sign between himself and his people as an eternal covenant.** This sign has continued for True Worshipers of God through all ages. The New Testament Church, comprised of True Christians, is **“spiritual Israel”**.¹⁰² **True Christians down through the ages have been identifiable by Sabbath observance.** The failure of ancient Israel to properly keep the Sabbath is well documented.¹⁰³

The prophet Isaiah provides insight into God’s intentions for the Sabbath. It is impossible to be certain of the Sitz-im-Leben for the material in **Isaiah chapters forty through sixty-six.**¹⁰⁴ Critical scholars, completely misunderstanding the Plan of God and NOT accepting God’s ability to specify the future in prophecy, attempt to assign these chapters to various anonymous authors of the exilic and post-exilic periods. However, **the material was clearly written by Isaiah ben Amoz,** the prophet of chapters one to thirty-nine.¹⁰⁵ Most likely the material comes from the time of Manasseh who had willingly become an Assyrian vassal and had taken the nation back into idolatry.¹⁰⁶ **Isaiah had been heavily involved in Hezekiah’s reform, and so roundly condemned the actions of Manasseh.**¹⁰⁷ For this he was hated by Manasseh and possibly executed by him. After a long section dealing with **“The Work of the Servant of God”** in chapters forty-nine through fifty-five, Isaiah summarizes with **a prophecy about the Sabbath:**

Thus says the LORD:

“Keep [mish^epat],¹⁰⁸ and do righteousness,
for **soon my salvation will come,** and **my righteousness be revealed.**

¹⁰¹ The Hebrew word is plural implying all Holy Days, NOT just the weekly Sabbath.

¹⁰² See Galatians 3:7,29, 4:26, 6:16, Ephesians 2:12-13, Romans 2:29, 4:16, 9:8, Hebrews 12:22-23, James 1:1, 2:21, 1 Peter 1:1

¹⁰³ See Jeremiah 17:19-27, Ezekiel 20:9-26, 22:6-12, 26, Nehemiah 13:15-22

¹⁰⁴ For a summary of these chapters, see **“Isaiah Chapters 40-66 - an Outline”** on <https://mikewhytebiblicalresearch.ca/> under **Bible Study Materials**

¹⁰⁵ See Young (OT) pages 202-211, Harrison pages 764-795, Oswalt (IS1) pages 17-28, Oswalt (IS2) pages 3-6

¹⁰⁶ See 2 Kings 21:1-9,16, 24:3, 2 Chronicles 33:1-9, Jeremiah 15:4

¹⁰⁷ See 2 Kings 21:10-15, Isaiah 56:9-12, 57:1-13, 59:1-8

¹⁰⁸ The word *mish^epat* has a broad range of meaning. As a character attribute, it means “justness” – inherent to God and required of all True Worshipers. In a broader context, it means the “understanding”, “wisdom”, “discretion”, which can only come from living life according to the Sabbath, September 3, 2022

Blessed is the man who does this, and the son of man who holds it fast,
who keeps the Sabbath, not profaning it, and keeps his hand from doing any evil.”
Let not the foreigner who has joined himself to the LORD say,
“The LORD will surely separate me from his people”;
and **let not the eunuch** say, “Behold, I am a dry tree.”

For thus says the LORD:

“To the eunuchs who keep my Sabbaths,
who choose the things that please me and hold fast my covenant,
I will give in my house and within my walls a monument
and **a name** better than sons and daughters;
I will give them **an everlasting name** that shall not be cut off.
And **the foreigners who join themselves to the LORD,**
to minister to him, to love the name of the LORD, and to be his servants,
everyone who keeps the Sabbath and does not profane it, and holds fast my covenant—
these **I will bring to my holy mountain**, and make them joyful in my house of prayer;
their burnt offerings and their sacrifices will be accepted on my altar;
for my house shall be called a house of prayer **for all peoples.”**

The Lord GOD, who **gathers the outcasts of Israel**, declares,

“I will gather yet others to him besides those already gathered.” (Isaiah 56:1-8 ESV)

God’s purpose for human beings is to attain **salvation**, to be given the gift of eternal life at the resurrection.¹⁰⁹ **God is inherently “righteous”, holy:** at the resurrection, God’s **righteousness will be revealed** in those who are resurrected – they will attain holiness. This is the Plan of God. To understand God’s plan, to participate in it, a person must be **“one who keeps the Sabbath”**.

“Foreigners” and **“eunuchs”** represent classes of people who were specifically excluded from the “congregation of Israel”.¹¹⁰ YHWH explicitly says to them, as representative of **“all peoples”**, that they can be included **“in my house”**, in God’s Family, with **“an everlasting name”**, eternal life. This was NOT possible in ancient Israel – it became possible with the sacrifice of Jesus Christ and the establishment of the New Testament Church. **Salvation is by grace** – not race, position, or status. Those to whom God has given to understand this, **those called “to my holy mountain”**, are **“everyone who keeps the Sabbath”** – **True Worshipers**. In the World Tomorrow, God will create a New Israel, through the Second Exodus, when he **“gathers the outcasts of Israel”**. Then, God’s calling will be available **“for all peoples”** everywhere in the world, and God **“will gather yet others”**.

8.3 The Sabbath in the Early Church

It is clear that Jesus, the Apostles, and the New Testament Church kept the Sabbath. Near the beginning of the Great Galilean Ministry, Luke reports:

And [Jesus] came to Nazareth, where he had been brought up. And **as was his custom, he went to the synagogue on the Sabbath day**, and he stood up to read. (Luke 4:16 ESV)

About two years later, Mark reports:

[Jesus] went away from there and came to his hometown, and his disciples followed him. And **on the Sabbath he began to teach in the synagogue** ... (Mark 6:1-2a ESV)

Towards the end of Jesus’ public ministry, Luke reports:

Now [Jesus] was **teaching in one of the synagogues on the Sabbath**. (Luke 13:10 ESV)

The Gospel writers make it clear that over Jesus’ whole public ministry his custom was to observe the Sabbath by participating in public worship and teaching. Similarly, Luke makes it clear that **Paul’s practice was to keep the Sabbath** by participating in Synagogue worship:

Now Paul and his companions ... came to **Antioch in Pisidia**. And **on the Sabbath day they went into the synagogue** and sat down. (Acts 13:13a, 14 ESV)

... they came to **Thessalonica**, where there was **a synagogue** of the Jews. And **Paul went in, as was his custom**, and **on three Sabbath days he reasoned with them** from the Scriptures ... (Acts 17:1b-2 ESV)

Way of God. For a discussion of *mish*pat* see *Excursus 1 – mish*pat* in the paper “Covenants of Grace” and *Excursus 4 – David’s Use of mish*pat* in the paper “David – a Man After My Own Heart” located at <https://mikewhytebiblicalresearch.ca/>

¹⁰⁹ See John 3:16, 5:24, 6:39-40,44,47,54, 10:28, 17:1-26

¹¹⁰ See Exodus 12:43-49, Leviticus 21:20, Deuteronomy 23:1,3

After this Paul left Athens and went to Corinth. ... And he reasoned in the synagogue every Sabbath, and tried to persuade Jews and Greeks. (Acts 18:1, 4 ESV)

At the time of the crucifixion, the True Worshippers were very careful to observe the Sabbaths. Jesus was crucified on Wednesday Nissan 14 and died late in the afternoon:¹¹¹

Now there was a man named Joseph, from the Jewish town of Arimathea. He was a member of the council, a good and righteous man, who had not consented to their decision and action; and he was looking for the kingdom of God. This man went to Pilate and asked for the body of Jesus. Then he took it down and wrapped it in a linen shroud and laid him in a tomb cut in stone, where no one had ever yet been laid. It was the day of Preparation, and the Sabbath was beginning. The women who had come with him from Galilee followed and saw the tomb and how his body was laid. ... On the Sabbath they rested according to the commandment. (Luke 23:50-55, 56b ESV)

Since it was the day of Preparation, and so that the bodies would not remain on the cross on the Sabbath (for that Sabbath was a high day) ... (John 19:31a ESV)

Wednesday Nissan 14 is the “day of preparation”. The next day, Thursday Nisan 15, commenced the Feast of Unleavened Bread, the first day of which is a Sabbath, a “high day”. The True Worshippers kept that Sabbath, then on Friday Nissan 16 obtained spices and prepared materials to anoint the body: When the Sabbath was past, Mary Magdalene, Mary the mother of James, and Salome bought spices, so that they might go and anoint him. (Mark 16:1 ESV)

The women then kept the weekly Sabbath on Nissan 17, during which Jesus was resurrected late in the afternoon, three days and three nights after his death.¹¹² Then early in the morning of Sunday Nisan 18 they went to the tomb to prepare the body, but found Jesus already resurrected:

But on the first day of the week, at early dawn, they went to the tomb, taking the spices they had prepared. And they found the stone rolled away from the tomb, but when they went in they did not find the body of the Lord Jesus. While they were perplexed about this, behold, two men stood by them in dazzling apparel. And as they were frightened and bowed their faces to the ground, the men said to them, “Why do you seek the living among the dead? He is not here, but has risen.” (Luke 24:1-6a ESV)

The early Christians continued to participate in Sabbath worship in the Synagogues until the Jews forced them to stop.¹¹³ After this, Sabbath observance by True Worshippers was continued apart from the Jews.¹¹⁴

9. When to Worship – Feasts and Appointed Times

God’s plan of salvation is symbolized each year by the cycle of Feasts and appointed times. There are three designated Feasts and four other appointed times for assemblies of worship. The overall theme of the feast seasons is “harvest”. This coincided with the agricultural year in ancient Israel. Symbolically, the harvests look to God’s “harvesting” human being to become part of the God Family through the resurrection from the dead.

9.1 Passover and the Feast of Unleavened Bread

The verb הָגַג - ḥagag means “to hold a feast”, “celebrate a feast”. The derivative masculine noun הַג - ḥag means “feast”, “feast day”.¹¹⁵ The concept of a “feast” is first introduced when Moses goes to Pharaoh and demands release of the Israelites:

Afterward Moses and Aaron went and said to Pharaoh, “Thus says the LORD, the God of Israel, ‘Let my people go, that they may hold a feast [ḥagag] to me in the wilderness.’” (Exodus 5:1 ESV)

Moses said, “We will go with our young and our old. We will go with our sons and daughters and with our flocks and herds, for we must hold a feast [ḥag] to the LORD.” (Exodus 10:9 ESV)

¹¹¹ See the chart “Jesus’ Last Ten Days” located at <https://mikewhytebiblicalresearch.ca/chronological-charts>

¹¹² See Matthew 12:40

¹¹³ See the discussion of this in Bruce (NT) pages 385-386 and Barrett pages 166-167.

¹¹⁴ For an analysis of how the visible church came to keep Sunday rather than the Sabbath, see Bacchiocchi.

¹¹⁵ See TWOT article 602 page 261

The Israelites were first introduced to God's cycle of feasts by the final plague on the Egyptians. YHWH planned to kill all the firstborn in Egypt. The Israelites would be spared by the blood of a lamb:

... **every man shall take a lamb** according to their fathers' houses, a lamb for a household. ... Your lamb shall be without blemish, a male a year old. ... and you shall keep it until the fourteenth day of this month, when the whole assembly of the congregation of Israel shall kill their lambs at twilight. Then they shall **take some of the blood and put it on the two doorposts and the lintel** of the houses in which they eat it. They shall eat the flesh that night, roasted on the fire; **with unleavened bread** [matztzah] and bitter herbs they shall eat it. ... **It is the LORD's Passover** [pesah]. For I will pass through the land of Egypt that night, and I will strike all the firstborn in the land of Egypt, both man and beast; and on all the gods of Egypt I will execute judgments: I am the LORD. **The blood shall be a sign for you**, on the houses where you are. And when I see the blood, I will pass over you, and no plague will befall you to destroy you, when I strike the land of Egypt." (Exodus 12:3b, 5a, 6-8, 11b-13 ESV)

The Passover is introduced. The Hebrew word is פֶּסַח - pesah, a masculine noun derived from the verb פָּסַח - pasah, "pass or spring over".¹¹⁶ Note that Passover is NOT designated as "*hag*", a feast.¹¹⁷ The eating of unleavened bread with Passover is enjoined. The Hebrew word for "unleavened bread" is מַצֵּה - matztzah, a feminine noun derived from the verb מָצַח - matzatz, "drain out".¹¹⁸ The text of Exodus then goes on to explain the first *hag* – the **Feast of Unleavened Bread**:

"This day shall be for you a memorial day, and you shall **keep it as a feast** [hagag] **to the LORD**; throughout your generations, as a statute forever, **you shall keep it as a feast** [hagag]. **Seven days you shall eat unleavened bread** [matztzah]. On the first day you shall remove leaven out of your houses, for if anyone eats what is leavened, from the first day until the seventh day, that person shall be cut off from Israel. On the **first day you shall hold a holy assembly**, and on **the seventh day a holy assembly**. No work shall be done on those days. But what everyone needs to eat, that alone may be prepared by you. And **you shall observe the Feast of Unleavened Bread** [matztzah], for **on this very day I brought your hosts out of the land of Egypt**. Therefore **you shall observe this day**, throughout your generations, as a statute forever. In the first month, from the fourteenth day of the month at evening, **you shall eat unleavened bread** [matztzah] until the twenty-first day of the month at evening. For seven days no leaven is to be found in your houses. If anyone eats what is leavened, that person will be cut off from the congregation of Israel, whether he is a sojourner or a native of the land. You shall eat nothing leavened; in all your dwelling places **you shall eat unleavened bread** [matztzah]." (Exodus 12:14-20 ESV)

In explaining the Passover to the "elders of Israel" Moses provides more information:

Then **Moses called all the elders of Israel** and said to them, "Go and select lambs for yourselves according to your clans, and kill the Passover lamb [pesah]. Take a bunch of hyssop and dip it in the blood that is in the basin, and touch the lintel and the two doorposts with the blood that is in the basin. **None of you shall go out of the door of his house until the morning**. For the LORD will pass through to strike the Egyptians, and when he sees the blood on the lintel and on the two doorposts, the LORD will pass over the door and will **not allow the destroyer to enter your houses to strike you**. You shall **observe this rite as a statute for you and for your sons forever**. And **when you come to the land** that the LORD will give you, as he has promised, **you shall keep this service**. And **when your children say** to you, 'What do you mean by this service?' you shall say, '**It is the sacrifice of the LORD's Passover** [pesah], for he passed over [pasah] the houses of the people of Israel in Egypt, when he struck the Egyptians but spared our houses.'" (Exodus 12:21-27a ESV)

Sometime later, YHWH provide more information to Moses:

And the **LORD said to Moses and Aaron**, "This is **the statute of the Passover** [pesah] **no foreigner shall eat of it**, but every slave that is bought for money may eat of it after you have circumcised him. No foreigner or hired worker may eat of it. **It shall be eaten in one house; you shall not take any of the flesh outside the house**, and **you shall not break any of its bones**. **All the congregation of Israel shall keep it**. **If a stranger shall sojourn with you and would keep the Passover** [pesah] to the LORD, **let all his males be circumcised**. Then he may come near and keep it; he shall be as a native of the land. But no uncircumcised person shall eat of it. There shall be one [torah] for the native and for the stranger who sojourns among you." (Exodus 12:43-49 ESV)

¹¹⁶ See TWOT article 1786 page 728

¹¹⁷ Exodus 34:25 reads "You shall not offer the blood of my sacrifice with anything leavened, or let the sacrifice of the **Feast** of the Passover remain until the morning." (ESV) Some commentators suggest this is a scribal error in adding "*hag*" to the text. The topic is the Passover meal, **a sacrifice resulting in a group meal**. Most likely the sense is that "feast" is used in a general way as in Exodus 10:19. It could read: "... or let the sacrifice for the feast [meal] of the Passover remain until morning."

¹¹⁸ See TWOT article 1234 page 522, the verb is used only once in Isaiah 66:11

Moses provides further instruction to the people about the Feast of Unleavened Bread:

Then **Moses said to the people, “Remember this day** in which you came out from Egypt, out of the house of slavery, for by a strong hand the LORD brought you out from this place. No leavened bread shall be eaten. [The day], in the month of Abib, you [went] out.¹¹⁹ And when the LORD brings you into the land of the Canaanites, the Hittites, the Amorites, the Hivites, and the Jebusites, which he swore to your fathers to give you, a land flowing with milk and honey, **you shall keep this service in this month. Seven days you shall eat unleavened bread** [matztzah], and **on the seventh day there shall be a feast [ḥag] to the LORD.** Unleavened bread [matztzah] shall be eaten for seven days; **no leavened bread shall be seen with you, and no leaven shall be seen with you in all your territory.**

You shall tell your son on that day, ‘It is because of what the LORD did for me when I came out of Egypt.’ And **it shall be to you as a sign on your hand** and as **a memorial between your eyes**, that **the [torah] of the LORD may be in your mouth.** For with a strong hand the LORD has brought you out of Egypt. You shall therefore keep this statute at its **appointed time** [mo`ed] from year to year. (Exodus 13:3-10 ESV)

Related to the Feast of Unleavened Bread, the important concept of מוֹעֵד - mo`ed is introduced – it means **“appointed time”**.¹²⁰ It is important to God that all feasts are kept at the correct time.

The characteristics of the Passover are:

- It is a “statute” forever
- It is a “sacrifice” of YHWH
- The blood of the Passover is a “sign” for protection from death
- The sacrificed lamb is to be fully consumed in a formal meal in one house
- None of the bones of the lamb is to be broken
- None of the flesh of the lamb is to leave the house
- None of the participants in the meal is to leave the house before morning
- All Israelites were required to participate in the Passover service
- No non-Israelite could participate in the Passover service
- A “sojourner” who lived among the Israelites could participate once circumcised
- The performance of the Passover service was to be an object lesson to teach children about God’s deliverance

The characteristics of the Feast of Unleavened Bread are:

- Remove all leaven and leavened food from dwellings and territory
- No leavened products are to be found
- Eat only unleavened bread for seven days – the whole period is a “feast”
- There is a “holy assembly” on the first day
- There is a “holy assembly” on the seventh day, which is specifically a “feast”
- The first day is a “memorial” of the day the Israelites left Egypt
- The observance of the Feast of Unleavened Bread is to be an object lesson to teach children about God’s deliverance
- The observance of the Feast of Unleavened Bread is to be a “sign” in all actions, “on your hand”, in all thinking, “memorial between your eyes”, and in all speaking, “teaching of the LORD may be in your mouth” – this describes conversion

9.2 Pentecost and the Fall Feast Season

The first mention of the other two Feasts is in the Book of the Covenant:¹²¹

Three times in the year you shall keep a feast [ḥagag] to me. You shall keep the Feast [ḥag] of Unleavened Bread [matztzah]. As I commanded you, you shall eat unleavened bread for seven days at the **appointed time** [mo`ed] in the month of Abib, for in it you came out of Egypt. **None shall appear before me empty-handed.** You shall keep the **Feast [ḥag] of Harvest** [qatzir], of **the firstfruits of your labor**, of what you sow in the field. You shall keep the **Feast [ḥag] of Ingathering** [ʿasiph] at the end of the year,

¹¹⁹ ESV has: “Today, in the month of Abib, you are going out.” This sounds like the instructions were given before they actually went out, on the very day they were leaving. The Hebrew is “*hayom ‘atem yotz’im ...*”, literally “the day you going out ...”. Verse 3 says “remember the day” so clearly this instruction was given after the day they actually had left Egypt - *yotz’im* is a participle, so past tense is better in English.

¹²⁰ See TWOT article 878b page 388; see also [Excursus 2 – mo`ed](#)

¹²¹ See Exodus 20:22 through 23:33 and 24:4,7

when you gather in from the field the fruit of your labor. Three times in the year shall **all your males appear before the Lord GOD.** (Exodus 23:14-17 ESV)

The word for “harvest” is קָצִיר - qatzir.¹²² The word for “ingathering” is אֲסִיף - `asiph.¹²³ The Book of the Covenant was given to Moses for the Israelites immediately after they were given the Ten Commandments. The Book of the Covenant was the **first teaching [torah] from YHWH** for Israel of specific requirements **“to obey my voice.”**¹²⁴ The mention of the **Feast of Harvest**¹²⁵ and the **Feast of Ingathering** is so brief that it begs further elaboration, which was given later. It is possible that the terms were already familiar to the Israelites. At that time, the plan was for the Israelites to be in the Promised Land within a couple of years. The focus of the Book of the Covenant is the **civil organization of the nation once in the land** – the concept of “harvesting” had no meaning in the desert. The only part of these instructions that was meaningful in the desert was **“three times in the year shall all your males appear before the Lord GOD”**, which would be useful for military purposes.

9.3 The Covenant of Performance

After the **“golden calf” incident**,¹²⁶ YHWH refuses to be among the Israelites because they were “unclean” due to the sin of having broken the Covenant:

The LORD said to Moses, “Depart; go up from here, you and the people whom you have brought up out of the land of Egypt ... I will send an angel before you ... but **I will not go up among you, lest I consume you on the way,** for you are a stiff-necked people.” When the people heard this disastrous word, they mourned ... For the LORD had said to Moses, “Say to the people of Israel, ‘You are a stiff-necked people; **if for a single moment I should go up among you, I would consume you.**’” (Exodus 33:1a, 2a, 3b-4a, 5a ESV)

Moses implores YHWH for mercy and to be with his people:

Moses said to the LORD, “See, you say to me, ‘Bring up this people,’ but you have not let me know whom you will send with me. Yet you have said, **‘I know you by name, and you have also found favor in my sight.’** Now therefore, if I have found favor in your sight, **please show me now your ways,** that I may know you in order to find favor in your sight. **Consider too that this nation is your people.**”

And he said, **“My presence will go with you, and I will give you rest.”** And he said to him, “If your presence will not go with me, do not bring us up from here. For how shall it be known that I have found favor in your sight, I and your people? **Is it not in your going with us, so that we are distinct,** I and your people, from every other people on the face of the earth?” (Exodus 33:12-16 ESV)

Moses appeals to his having been called by YHWH, **“you have said, I know you by name”**, and begs for deeper insight into the nature of God, **“please show me now your ways”**. Moses then reminds God that the Israelites were his nation, **“this nation is your people”**. YHWH acquiesces and consents, **“My presence will go with you, and I will give you rest”**. In order for YHWH to be among the people, it was necessary to provide **a formal mechanism to restore the nation to a state of “cleanness”** so that God could account them “holy”. While the Tabernacle was being built, Moses was given the formal instructions [torah] for the sacrificial system¹²⁷ which would do this.

Back to the immediate situation, Moses reminds YHWH that the only thing that distinguished Israel from all other nations was **God’s presence**, **“is it not in your going with us, so that we are distinct”**. To which, YHWH agrees to Moses’ request to reveal to him deeper insight into his nature:

And **the LORD said to Moses,** **“This very thing that you have spoken I will do,** for you have found favor in my sight, and **I know you by name.**” Moses said, “Please show me your glory.” And he said, “I will make all my goodness pass before you and will **proclaim before you my name ‘The LORD.’** And **I will be gracious to whom I will be gracious,** and will **show mercy on whom I will show mercy.**” (Exodus 33:17-19 ESV)

¹²² See TWOT article 2062 page 809

¹²³ See TWOT article 140 page 60

¹²⁴ See Exodus 19:5

¹²⁵ The Feast of Harvest came to be known by the Greek word Pentecost due to the fifty days used to calculate it.

¹²⁶ See Exodus 32:1-35

¹²⁷ See Leviticus chapters 1, 2, 3, 4, 5, 6, and 7; see also *Excursus 6 – Terminology of Sacrifices*

Moses is given a personal theophany from YHWH,¹²⁸ then YHWH enter into a unique covenant – a

Covenant of Performance: YHWH promises to accomplish his plan for human beings:

And he said, “**Behold, I am making [karath]¹²⁹ a covenant. Before all your people I will do marvels, such as have not been created in all the earth or in any nation.** And **all the people** among whom you are **shall see the work of the LORD**, for **it is an awesome thing that I will do with you.** (Exodus 34:10 ESV)

This covenant is independent of and distinct from the Sinai Covenant. **God covenants that he will accomplish his purpose** for Israel. Israel was to be “**a kingdom of priests, and a holy nation**”,¹³⁰ by which God would spread True Worship to all peoples. Israel failed, and **the performance of his plan passed to the New Testament Church**¹³¹ – God will fulfill his covenant promise.¹³²

At the point in time when God gave the Covenant of Performance, **Israel was in a state of uncleanness.** The point YHWH is making is that he will accomplish his purpose. Through the sacrificial system, Israel could be restored to a state of “cleanness” and therefore, be accounted “holy” by God so he could be among them. This would make it possible for Israel to accomplish what God intended for them. The Covenant of Performance contained no conditions because it was a promise from God. **God would provide a means to fulfill his promise independent of the success or failure of ancient Israel.** After making the covenant promise, YHWH returns to give **instruction for Moses to pass on to the Israelites and to all True Worshipers:**

Observe what I command you this day. ... Take care, **lest you make a covenant with the inhabitants of the land** to which you go, lest it become a snare in your midst. ... (for **you shall worship no other god**, for the LORD, whose name is Jealous, is a jealous God), lest you make a covenant with the inhabitants of the land, and when they whore after their gods and sacrifice to their gods **and you are invited**, you eat of his sacrifice, and you **take of their daughters for your sons**, and their daughters whore after their gods and make your sons whore after their gods. **You shall not make for yourself any gods** ... (Exodus 34:11a, 12, 14-17 ESV)

The Israelites were again warned to avoid all idolatrous situations. **This injunction is equally valid for True Worshipers today** – all involvement with the ways of the world can lead a person astray. Then YHWH proceeds to discuss **the Sabbath and the three annual Feasts.** This **is the means whereby God will accomplish his purpose;** the means whereby True Worshipers can remain faithful to God and avoid the ways of the world:

You shall keep the **Feast [hag] of Unleavened Bread** [matztzah]. Seven days you shall eat unleavened bread, as I commanded you, at the **time appointed** [mo`ed] in the month Abib, for in the month Abib you came out from Egypt. ... Six days you shall work, but **on the seventh day you shall rest.** In plowing time and in harvest you shall rest. You shall observe **the Feast [hag] of Weeks** [shavua`], the firstfruits of wheat harvest, and the **Feast [hag] of Ingathering** [‘asiph] at the year’s end. (Exodus 34:18, 21-22 ESV)

The term שָׁבֻעַ - shavua`, “period of seven”,¹³³ is used for the Feast of Harvest of first fruits, because “seven” “sevens of days” are used to calculate it. The fact that each “seven” comprises a “week” is implied by the context – “sevens of days”. A better translation would be “**Feast of Sevens**”. The use of the term here presupposes some instruction in the calculation of the day, which is first documented in Leviticus chapter twenty-three.

9.4 Leviticus Chapter Twenty-three

The most complete instruction [torah] on feasts and appointed times is in Leviticus chapter twenty-three. The Book of Leviticus was written sometime during the thirty-eight years of wandering in the wilderness. **Leviticus is the most carefully structured of the books of the Pentateuch.** The book contains some narrative descriptions of events about which Moses had first had personal information.¹³⁴ The rest of the material is direct revelation from YHWH either to Moses alone or to Moses and Aaron

¹²⁸ See Exodus 34:1-9

¹²⁹ “karath” means “to cut”, it is a technical term for the initiation of a new covenant.

For a discussion of this, see the paper “**Covenants of Grace**” on <https://mikewhytebiblicalresearch.ca/>

¹³⁰ See Exodus 19:6

¹³¹ See 1 Peter 2:9

¹³² See Isaiah 55:11, 45:23, 24:3, Jeremiah 1:12, Ezekiel 17:24, Psalm 147:15, 33:4

¹³³ See TWOT article 2318d page 899; for a discussion of shavua` see the paper “**Exegesis of Daniel 9:24-27 - The Seventy Periods Prophecy**” on <https://mikewhytebiblicalresearch.ca/>

¹³⁴ See Leviticus chapters 8, 9, 10, and 24:10-16,23

together. All material in the Book of Leviticus relates to “holiness”.¹³⁵ Leviticus chapter twenty-three starts out:

The LORD spoke to Moses, saying, “Speak to the people of Israel and say to them, These are the appointed [times] [mo’ed] **of the LORD** that **you shall proclaim** as holy convocations [miq’ra’ qodesh]; they are my appointed [times] [mo’ed]. Six days shall work be done, but on the seventh day is a **Sabbath of solemn rest**, a holy convocation [miq’ra’ qodesh]. You shall do no work. It is a **Sabbath** to the LORD in all your dwelling places. These are the appointed [times] [mo’ed] **of the LORD**, the holy convocations [miq’ra’ qodesh], which **you shall proclaim at the time appointed** [mo’ed] for them. (Leviticus 23:1-4 ESV)

The phrase “**holy convocations**” is קִדְּשׁ מִקְרָא - miq’ra’ qodesh, literally “**assemblies of holiness**”. All of the feasts and appointed times require a “holy convocation”, **a group assembly of public worship**. The Sabbath is listed first because it is the pre-eminent *miq’ra’ qodesh*. The invocation is not only to observe the appointed times, but also to “**proclaim them**” – this is an integral part of “**preaching the gospel**”.

The **Passover**, the first appointed time of the year, and the **Feast of Unleavened Bread** comprise the first holy day season. They were fully described in the Book of Exodus, so the description is brief:

In the first month, on the fourteenth day of the month at twilight, is **the LORD’s Passover** [pesah]. And on the fifteenth day of the same month is the **Feast [hag] of Unleavened Bread** [matztzah] to the LORD; for seven days you shall eat unleavened bread [matztzah]. On the **first day** you shall have a holy convocation [miq’ra’ qodesh]; you shall not do any ordinary work. But you shall present **an [offering by fire]**¹³⁶ **to the LORD** for seven days. On the **seventh day** is a holy convocation [miq’ra’ qodesh]; you shall not do any ordinary work.” (Leviticus 23:5-8 ESV)

The offering of the “**wave sheaf**” was not previously specified; so, it is fully described:

And **the LORD spoke to Moses**, saying, “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, 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. 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. And **the grain offering** with it shall be two tenths of an ephah of fine flour mixed with oil, an [offering by fire] to the LORD with a pleasing aroma, and **the drink offering** with it shall be of wine, a fourth of a hin. 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.” (Leviticus 23:9-14 ESV)

The “wave sheaf” is the first ripe barley – the barley harvest commenced around the time of the Feast of Unleavened Bread. The purpose of the wave offering is “**so that you may be accepted**” – before it is offered “**you shall eat neither bread nor grain parched or fresh**”. The offering was made on the first day of the week following the Sabbath during the Feast of Unleavened Bread. This started the count of seven sevens of days until **the Feast of Harvest of firstfruits (Feast of Weeks)** ending on the first day of the week:

“**You shall count seven full [sevens] [shavua’]** from the day after the Sabbath, from the day that you brought the sheaf of the wave offering. 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**. 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**. 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**, an [offering by fire] with a pleasing aroma to the LORD. And you shall offer one male goat for a **sin offering**, and two male lambs a year old as a sacrifice of **peace offerings**. 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**. And you shall **make a proclamation** on the same day. You shall hold a holy convocation [miq’ra’ qodesh]. You shall not do any ordinary work. It is a statute forever in all your dwelling places throughout your generations.” (Leviticus 23:15-21 ESV)

¹³⁵ The paper “**To Be a Priest**” on <https://mikewhytebiblicalresearch.ca/> contains an outline of the Book of Leviticus and discussion of much of the contents.

¹³⁶ The ESV has “food offering”; the Hebrew is אִשְׁשֶׁה ‘ishsheh, “offering by fire”, a burnt offering: the whole animal is burned: see ESV footnote on Leviticus 1:9; see also the discussion of ‘ishsheh in section **The Burnt Offering**.

The main grain harvest occurred over the fifty days preceding the Feast of Harvest of firstfruits. The two loaves were most likely made with wheat flour.¹³⁷ The two loaves represent “**firstfruits to the LORD**”, as did the “wave sheaf”. To the Israelites, this would have represented gratitude to YHWH for the provision of an abundant harvest. Grain was the staple food in ancient Israel – without an abundant grain harvest there would be starvation. Note the **addendum to The Feast of Harvest**:

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.” (Leviticus 23:22 ESV)

Given an abundant harvest, the Israelites were enjoined to remember the less fortunate – to ensure all people had food.

The fall feast season comprises one Feast and three appointed times. The fall feast season commences with the **Day of Trumpets**:

And **the LORD spoke to Moses**, saying, “Speak to the people of Israel, saying, **In the seventh month, on the first day of the month**, you shall observe a **day of solemn rest**, a **memorial proclaimed with blast of trumpets**, a **holy convocation** [miq^era’ qodesh]. You shall not do any ordinary work, and you shall present an [offering by fire] to the LORD.” (Leviticus 23:23-25 ESV)

The Day of Trumpets is a Sabbath, “**a day of solemn rest**”, and “**a holy convocation**”, a public assembly of worship. It is also a “**memorial proclaimed with blast of trumpets**”. The word “memorial” is from זִכָּרוֹן - zikkaron. It is a masculine noun derived from the verb זָכַר - zakar, “think about”, “remember”, “commemorate”, and several other nuances.¹³⁸ The First Day of Unleavened Bread is also “zikkaron” commemorating the day that Israel left Egypt.¹³⁹ No other day is designated a “zikkaron”. The only other information given is that the memorial is “**proclaimed with blast of trumpets**”. Before the Israelites set off from Horeb on the march toward the Promised Land, they were instructed to manufacture two trumpets:

The LORD spoke to Moses, saying, “**Make two silver trumpets**. Of hammered work you shall make them, and you shall use them for **summoning the congregation** and for **breaking camp**. And when both are blown, all the congregation shall gather themselves to you at the entrance of the tent of meeting. But if they blow only one, then the chiefs, the heads of the tribes of Israel, shall gather themselves to you.

When you blow an alarm, the camps that are on the east side shall set out. And when you blow an alarm the second time, the camps that are on the south side shall set out. An alarm is to be blown whenever they are to set out. But **when the assembly is to be gathered together**, you shall blow a long blast, but you shall not sound an alarm. And the sons of Aaron, **the priests, shall blow the trumpets**. The trumpets shall be to you for **a perpetual statute** throughout your generations.

And **when you go to war** in your land against the adversary who oppresses you, then you shall sound an alarm with the trumpets, **that you may be remembered** [zakar] **before the LORD your God**, and you shall be saved from your enemies. **On the day of your gladness** also, and **at your appointed [times]** [mo’ed] and **at the beginnings of your months, you shall blow the trumpets over your burnt offerings** and **over the sacrifices of your peace offerings**. **They shall be a reminder** [zikkaron] **of you before your God:** I am the LORD your God.” (Number 10:1-10 ESV)

The trumpets were to **communicate to the Israelites in the camp** as they moved and to inform them of various situations. Also, they were to be used “**on the day of your gladness**” – this would include **the Day of Trumpets**. To the Israelites, the Day of Trumpets would have been associated with the Conquest of Canaan – **a memorial of the day they left Horeb** as a fully functioning army prepared for **the war that would yield the Promised Land**.

The next appointed time is the **Day of Atonement**. At Horeb, the Tabernacle was erected on the first day of the first month in the second year after leaving Egypt.¹⁴⁰ Prior to the celebration of the Passover fourteen days later, Aaron’s sons, Nadab and Abihu, were killed for approaching the Holy Place in state

¹³⁷ See Exodus 34:22

¹³⁸ See TWOT article 551 page 241

¹³⁹ See Exodus 12:14, 13:9

¹⁴⁰ See Exodus 40:1-38, Numbers 9:15-23

of uncleanness.¹⁴¹ Immediately after this the instructions for **the ritual of the Day of Atonement** were given to Moses.¹⁴² The **summary of the Day of Atonement** is given:

And it shall be a statute to you forever that in the seventh month, on the tenth day of the month, **you shall afflict yourselves** and shall **do no work**, either the native or the stranger who sojourns among you. For on **this day shall atonement be made for you to cleanse you. You shall be clean before the LORD from all your sins.** It is a **Sabbath of solemn rest** to you, and **you shall afflict yourselves**; it is a statute forever. And **the priest who is anointed and consecrated** as priest in his father's place **shall make atonement**, wearing the holy linen garments. He shall make atonement **for the holy sanctuary**, and he shall make atonement **for the tent of meeting** and **for the altar**, and he shall make atonement **for the priests** and **for all the people of the assembly**. And this shall be a statute forever for you, that atonement may be made for the people of Israel **once in the year because of all their sins.**" And Aaron did as the LORD commanded Moses. (Leviticus 16:29-34 ESV)

The Day of Atonement is a **"Sabbath of solemn rest"**. The purpose of the day is to **"make atonement"**, from כָּפַר - kaphar, a denominative verb, meaning **"make reconciliation"**.¹⁴³ **"this day shall atonement be made for you to cleanse you"**. The sacrifices of the Day of Atonement took the various objects to a state of "cleanness" so that God could account them "holy" and be present among them. It is only the "High Priest", **"the priest who is anointed and consecrated"**, that could make the atoning sacrifices. Because the **"sanctuary"**, the fence and all it enclosed, was among the **"people of the assembly"**, who are inherently unclean, atonement was necessary for the **"sanctuary"**, for the **"priests"**, and for **"all the people of the assembly"**. The atonement occurred once a year, superseding all the sacrifices done during the year, indicating that although they were necessary, they were NOT sufficient. **This looks to the sacrifice of Jesus Christ which supersedes and obviates all other sacrifices.** The Day of Atonement is further specified:

And **the LORD spoke to Moses**, saying, "Now on the tenth day of this seventh month is the **Day of Atonement**. It shall be for you a time of **holy convocation** [miq'ra' qodesh], and **you shall afflict yourselves** and present an [offering by fire] to the LORD. And **you shall not do any work** on that very day, for it is a **Day of Atonement, to make atonement for you before the LORD your God**. For whoever is not **afflicted** on that very day shall be cut off from his people. And whoever does any work on that very day, that person I will destroy from among his people. You shall not do any work. It is a statute forever throughout your generations in all your dwelling places. It shall be to you a **Sabbath of solemn rest**, and **you shall afflict yourselves. On the ninth day of the month beginning at evening, from evening to evening shall you keep your Sabbath.**" (Leviticus 23:26-32 ESV)

As with all appointed times, **the Day of Atonement is a miq'ra' qodesh**, a public assembly of worship. All participants are told **"you shall afflict yourselves"**, this is a Hebrew idiom which means **"fasting"** – doing without food and liquid for a period of time.¹⁴⁴ The fact that **the day begins and ends at sunset** is reiterated because it is **critical to the period of fasting**.

Finally, Leviticus chapter twenty-three discusses the **Feast of Tabernacles** and the **Eighth Day**:

And **the LORD spoke to Moses**, saying, "Speak to the people of Israel, saying, On the fifteenth day of this seventh month and for seven days is **the Feast** [hag] **of Booths** [sukkah] to the LORD. On the **first day shall be a holy convocation** [miq'ra' qodesh]; **you shall not do any ordinary work**. For seven days you shall present [offerings by fire] to the LORD. **On the eighth day** you shall hold **a holy convocation** [miq'ra' qodesh] and present an [offering by fire] to the LORD. It is **a solemn assembly** [ʾatzarah]; **you shall not do any ordinary work.** (Leviticus 23:33-36 ESV)

The word "booths" is from סֻכָּה - sukkah. It means "a booth" or "a hut".¹⁴⁵ The word "tabernacle" is from מִשְׁכָּן - mishkan. The first day of the Feast is a Sabbath, a **"holy convocation"**, and the Feast continues for seven days. On the **Eighth Day**, which is distinct from The Feast of Tabernacles, is another Sabbath, a **"holy convocation"**. A new term is introduced, אֶצְרָה - ʾatzarah, **"solemn assembly"**.¹⁴⁶

¹⁴¹ See Leviticus 10:1-20

¹⁴² See Leviticus 16:1-28; see also the discussion of the ritual in section **6.2 The Book of Leviticus** of the paper **"To Be a Priest"** on <https://mikewhytebiblicalresearch.ca/>

¹⁴³ See TWOT article 1023 page 452

¹⁴⁴ See **Excursus 3 – Fasting צוּם and צוּמָה**

¹⁴⁵ For a detailed discussion of the words related to the Feast of Tabernacles, see **Excursus 1 – Hebrew and Greek Words** in the paper **"The Transfiguration and the Tabernacle"** on <https://mikewhytebiblicalresearch.ca/>

¹⁴⁶ See TWOT article 1675 (1875c) page 691; ʾatzarah is used specifically for the Eighth Day in Numbers 29:35, 2 Chronicles 7:9, and Nehemiah 8:18; In Deuteronomy 16:8 it is used for the Last Day of Unleavened Bread; in Joel 1:14 and 2:15 it is associated with a fast, perhaps the Day of Saturday, September 3, 2022

Further instruction [*torah*] on the Feast of Tabernacle and Eighth Day continues:

On the fifteenth day of the seventh month, **when you have gathered in the produce of the land**, you shall **celebrate** [hagag] **The Feast** [hag] **of the LORD** seven days. On **the first day shall be a solemn rest**, and on the **eighth day shall be a solemn rest**. And **you shall take on the first day the fruit of splendid trees, branches of palm trees and boughs of leafy trees and willows of the brook**, and **you shall rejoice before the LORD your God** seven days. **You shall celebrate** [hagag] it as **a feast** [hag] **to the LORD for seven days** in the year. It is a statute forever throughout your generations; you shall celebrate it in the seventh month. You shall **dwelling in booths** [sukkah] **for seven days**. All native Israelites shall dwell in booths [sukkah], **that your generations may know that I made the people of Israel dwell in booths** [sukkah] **when I brought them out of the land of Egypt**: I am the LORD your God.” (Leviticus 23:39-43 ESV)

There is an allusion to the completion of the harvest, “**when you have gathered in the produce of the land**”, then “**The hag of the LORD**” is celebrated. The mention of “**branches**” and “**boughs**” would seem to be related to the construction of *sukkah*, but the “**fruit of splendid trees**” implies the abundance of the final harvest. The “**dwelling in sukkah**”, is **an object lesson** for succeeding generations of the **beneficence of YHWH in the provision of life support** when the Israelite had left Egypt.

Leviticus chapter twenty-three ends with **a general summary** of the “appointed times”:

These are the appointed [times] [mo`ed] **of the LORD**, which **you shall proclaim** as times of **holy convocation** [miq`ra` qodesh], for presenting to the LORD [offerings by fire], **burnt offerings and grain offerings, sacrifices and drink offerings, each on its proper day**, besides the **LORD’s Sabbaths** and besides **your gifts** and besides all **your vow offerings** and besides all **your freewill offerings**, which you give to the LORD. ... Thus Moses declared to the people of Israel the **appointed [times]** [mo`ed] of the LORD. (Leviticus 23:37-38, 44 ESV)

Israel’s responsibility was to “**proclaim**” the appointed times as “**holy convocations**” this is implicit in God’s requirement of Israel to be “**a kingdom of priests and a holy nation**”¹⁴⁷ to carry the True Worship of YHWH to the whole world. The **individual requirements of worshipping God** are listed. The word “**Sabbaths**” is **plural** because in addition to the “weekly Sabbath”, the “**appointed times of holy convocation**” are also Sabbaths. Only the Passover is NOT also a Sabbath.

9.5 Further Instruction [*torah*] on Appointed Times

The Israelites set out from Horeb on the twentieth day of the second month of the second year after leaving Egypt.¹⁴⁸ They traveled directly to Kadesh-barnea just south of the Promised Land.¹⁴⁹ From there, the spies went through the Promised Land and returned with a negative report.¹⁵⁰ The people rebelled, and the entire generation of men of military age were condemned to die in the wilderness.¹⁵¹ This commenced the **thirty-eight years of wandering in the wilderness**.

Before leaving Horeb, the Israelites kept the Passover:

And **the LORD spoke to Moses** in the wilderness of Sinai, in the first month of the second year after they had come out of the land of Egypt, saying, “**Let the people of Israel keep the Passover** [pesah] **at its appointed time** [mo`ed]. On the fourteenth day of this month, at twilight, you shall keep it at its appointed time [mo`ed]; according to all its statutes and all its [mish`patim]¹⁵² you shall keep it.” So Moses told the people of Israel that they should keep the Passover [pesah]. And **they kept the Passover** [pesah] **in the first month, on the fourteenth day of the month, at twilight, in the wilderness of Sinai**; according to all that the LORD commanded Moses, so the people of Israel did. (Numbers 9:1-5 ESV)

However, there was a problem – some of the people were in a state of “uncleanness” and could NOT therefore keep the Passover:

And there were **certain men who were unclean through touching a dead body**, so that they could not keep the Passover [pesah] on that day, and they came before Moses and Aaron on that day. And those

Atonement; in Isaiah 1:13 and Amos 5:21 it is used pejoratively; in 2 Kings 10:20 it is used with an assembly of Ba`al; Jeremiah 9:2 uses it for a “company of treacherous men”.

¹⁴⁷ See Exodus 19:6

¹⁴⁸ See Numbers 10:11-12

¹⁴⁹ See Numbers 12:16, Deuteronomy 1:2,19; the distance is about 220 miles, “eleven days’ journey” – there is no indication how long it took to cover this distance.

¹⁵⁰ See Numbers 13:1-33, Deuteronomy 1:20-33

¹⁵¹ See Numbers 14:1-38, Deuteronomy 1:34-39

¹⁵² The Hebrew word *mish`patim* has a very broad range of meaning. There is no corresponding English word. The general sense when plural is the understanding which derives from living according to God’s Way as defined by his teaching, the *torah*. A possible translation here would be “... and according to lessons to be learned from it you shall keep it”.

men said to him, “We are unclean through touching a dead body. **Why are we kept from bringing the LORD’s offering** at its appointed time [mo`ed] among the people of Israel?” And Moses said to them, **“Wait, that I may hear what the LORD will command concerning you.”** (Numbers 9:6-8 ESV)

This resulted in the institution of the **Second Passover**:

The LORD spoke to Moses, saying, “Speak to the people of Israel, saying, **If any one of you or of your descendants is unclean through touching a dead body, or is on a long journey, he shall still keep the Passover [pesah] to the LORD. In the second month on the fourteenth day at twilight they shall keep it.** They shall eat it with unleavened bread and bitter herbs. They shall leave none of it until the morning, nor break any of its bones; according to all the statute for the Passover [pesah] they shall keep it. But **if anyone who is clean and is not on a journey fails to keep the Passover [pesah], that person shall be cut off from his people** because he did not bring the LORD’s offering at its appointed time [mo`ed]; that man shall bear his sin. And if a stranger sojourns among you and would **keep the Passover [pesah] to the LORD**, according to the statute of the Passover [pesah] and according to its [mish`pat], so shall he do. **You shall have one statute, both for the sojourner and for the native.**” (Numbers 9:9-14 ESV)

Clearly the observance of the Passover is important to God – he has allowed a second opportunity to observe it. All True Worshipers of God must **observe the Passover on a yearly basis**. This is made abundantly clear in the institution of the **New Testament Passover**:

For I received from the Lord what I also delivered to you, that **the Lord Jesus on the night when he was betrayed took bread**, and when he had given thanks, he broke it, and said, **“This is my body, which is for you. Do this in remembrance of me.”** In the same way also **he took the cup**, after supper, saying, **“This cup is the new covenant in my blood. Do this, as often as you drink it,¹⁵³ in remembrance of me.”** For as often as you eat this bread and drink the cup, **you proclaim the Lord’s death until he comes.** (1 Corinthians 11:23-26 ESV)

Later in the wilderness period, likely just before they made their final approach to the Promised Land, YHWH provided the Israelites with a detailed list of all communal animal sacrifices, “burnt offerings” to be performed. This is summarized in the table **“Calendar of Public Sacrifices”**.

The instruction [*torah*] starts out:

The LORD spoke to Moses, saying, “Command the people of Israel and say to them, **‘My offering, my food for my [offerings by fire], my pleasing aroma, you shall be careful to offer to me at its appointed time [mo`ed].’** And you shall say to them, This is the [offering by fire] that you shall offer to the LORD ... (Numbers 28:1-3a ESV)

The Feast Days are reiterated:

On the fourteenth day of the first month is the LORD’s Passover [pesah], and **on the fifteenth day of this month is a feast [ḥag]. Seven days shall unleavened bread be eaten.** On the first day there shall be a holy convocation [miq`ra` qodesh]. You shall not do any ordinary work ... And on the seventh day you shall have a holy convocation [miq`ra` qodesh]. You shall not do any ordinary work. On the day of the firstfruits, when you offer a grain offering of new grain to the LORD at your **Feast of Weeks**,¹⁵⁴ you shall have a holy convocation [miq`ra` qodesh]. You shall not do any ordinary work ... On the **fifteenth day of the seventh month** you shall have a holy convocation [miq`ra` qodesh]. You shall not do any ordinary work, and **you shall keep [ḥagag] a feast [ḥag] to the LORD seven days.** ... **These you shall offer to the LORD at your appointed [times] [mo`ed]** (Numbers 28:16-18, 25-26, 29:12, 39 ESV)

Calendar of Public Sacrifices

Occasion	Bulls	Rams	Lambs	Goats
Every day (28:3–8)			2	
Sabbath (28:9–10)			2	
1st day of month (28:11–15)	2	1	7	1
Unleavened Bread: each day (28:17–25)	2	1	7	1
Pentecost (Feast of Weeks) (28:26–31)	2	1	7	1
1st day of 7th month (29:1–6)	1	1	7	1
Day of Atonement (29:7–11)	1	1	7	1
Feast of Booths (29:12–38):				
1st day	13	2	14	1
2nd day	12	2	14	1
3rd day	11	2	14	1
4th day	10	2	14	1
5th day	9	2	14	1
6th day	8	2	14	1
7th day	7	2	14	1
8th day	1	1	7	1

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These sacrifices would NOT have been practical in the years in the dessert. Once in the Land with an abundant supply of animals, the sacrifices could be preformed. The required sacrifices at the Tabernacle were very important to keep the people focused on God’s purpose for Israel: the people were

¹⁵³ The implication here is that when the Passover is taken, it is a memorial; NOT that it can be taken whenever desired.

¹⁵⁴ The Hebrew here is unusual: בְּשִׁבְעַתֶּיךָ - b`shavu`othekem, literally “at periods of seven of you”: an idiomatic expression for the “Feast of Harvest”.

committed to “**obey my voice and keep my covenant**” so that they could become “**a kingdom of priests and a holy nation**” and to be to God a “**treasured possession among all peoples**”.¹⁵⁵ The Plan of God was for Israel to spread the True Worship of the True God to all peoples on the earth. Note the large **increase in offerings during the Feast of Tabernacles** – this is indicative of the importance of the Feast of Tabernacles.

During the last month before his death, Moses addressed the Nation of Israel in the Plains of Moab on the east side of the Jordan River. Moses’ objective was to make sure that the Israelites understood all the teaching [torah] that YHWH had revealed since leaving Egypt. We have the record of Moses’ addresses in the Book of Deuteronomy:

These are the words that Moses spoke to all Israel beyond the Jordan in the wilderness ... In the fortieth year, on the first day of the eleventh month, Moses spoke to the people of Israel **according to all that the LORD had given him in commandment to them** ... Beyond the Jordan, **in the land of Moab, Moses undertook to explain this [torah]** ... (Deuteronomy 1:1a, 3, 5 ESV)

Moses summarizes the instructions for the three feasts:

Three times a year all your males shall appear before the LORD your God at the place that he will choose: at the **Feast [hag] of Unleavened Bread [matztzah]**, at the **Feast [hag] of Weeks [shavua’]**, and at the **Feast [hag] of Booths [sukkah]**. They shall not appear before the LORD empty-handed. **Every man shall give as he is able**, according to the blessing of the LORD your God that he has given you. (Deuteronomy 16:16-17 ESV)

Moses is looking to the establishment of a fixed location for the Tabernacle. In the desert, the Tabernacle was always right there – in the center of the camp. In the Promised Land, it would be located at a particular place to which the Israelites would have to come to present themselves at the three annual Feasts. At each appearance, an offering was to be brought – an animal to be sacrificed.

Further instructions are given for the Passover and Feast of Unleavened Bread:

Observe the month of Abib and keep the Passover [pesah] to the LORD your God, for in the month of Abib the LORD your God brought you out of Egypt by night. And you shall offer the Passover sacrifice [pesah] to the LORD your God, from the flock or the herd, **at the place that the LORD will choose**, to make his name dwell there. You shall eat no leavened bread with it. Seven days you shall eat it¹⁵⁶ with unleavened bread [matztzah], the bread of affliction—for you came out of the land of Egypt in haste—**that all the days of your life you may remember the day when you came out of the land of Egypt**. No leaven shall be seen with you in all your territory for seven days, nor shall any of the flesh that you sacrifice on the evening of the first day remain all night until morning. **You may not offer the Passover sacrifice [pesah] within any of your towns** that the LORD your God is giving you, **but at the place that the LORD your God will choose**, to make his name dwell in it, **there you shall offer the Passover sacrifice [pesah], in the evening at sunset, at the time [mo’ed] you came out of Egypt**. And **you shall cook it and eat it at the place that the LORD your God will choose**. And in the morning you shall turn and go to your tents. **For six days you shall eat unleavened bread [matztzah], and on the seventh day there shall be a solemn assembly** to the LORD your God. You shall do no work on it. (Deuteronomy 16:1-8 ESV)

Moses stresses the need to “**remember the day when you came out of the land of Egypt**” – this salvific event created the Nation of Israel. Moses recognized that forgetfulness of their origin would lead to lack of gratitude to YHWH. The eating of unleavened bread was to keep the Israelites in memory of their humble origin – “**the bread of affliction**”. There is also a **change in the observance of Passover**. Originally it was kept privately among each family group in a home – **a covenant meal**. In the Promised Land, the Passover was to be a public event only celebrated collectively at the location where the Tabernacle was situated.

There is no change to the **Feast of Harvest of firstfruits** (Feast of Weeks) – it was always a public event, only now the Israelites would have to travel to the location of the Tabernacle:

You shall count seven weeks [shavua’]. Begin to count the seven weeks [shavua’] from the time the sickle is first put to the standing grain. Then **you shall keep the Feast [hag] of Weeks [shavua’]** to the LORD your God with **the tribute of a freewill offering from your hand**, which you shall give as the LORD your God blesses you. And you shall **rejoice before the LORD your God**, you and your son and your daughter,

¹⁵⁵ See Exodus 19:5-6

¹⁵⁶ The English sounds like the Passover, “it”, is to be eaten for seven days. The Hebrew implies that the eating is “in addition to” the Passover. The clause is literally translated: “**seven days you shall eat in addition to it unleavened bread**”.

your male servant and your female servant, the Levite who is within your towns, the sojourner, the fatherless, and the widow who are among you, at the place that the LORD your God will choose, to make his name dwell there. You shall remember that you were a slave in Egypt; and you shall be careful to observe these statutes. (Deuteronomy 16:9-12 ESV)

Again, Moses indicates that sacrificial offering is to be brought – “the tribute of a freewill offering from your hand” Moses stresses the need to care for the less fortunate, and again enjoins remembrance of origin – “You shall remember that you were a slave in Egypt”.

The Feast of Tabernacles is briefly reviewed:

You shall keep the Feast [ḥag] of Booths [sukkah] seven days, when you have gathered in the produce from your threshing floor and your winepress. You shall rejoice in your feast [ḥag], you and your son and your daughter, your male servant and your female servant, the Levite, the sojourner, the fatherless, and the widow who are within your towns. For seven days you shall keep the feast [ḥagag] to the LORD your God at the place that the LORD will choose, because the LORD your God will bless you in all your produce and in all the work of your hands, so that you will be altogether joyful. (Deuteronomy 16:13-15 ESV)

Again, the only change is the need to travel to the location of the Tabernacle. One of Moses' final actions was to institute the reading of “This Book of the torah” at the Feast of Tabernacles:

Then Moses wrote this [torah] and gave it to the priests, the sons of Levi, who carried the ark of the covenant of the LORD, and to all the elders of Israel. And Moses commanded them, “At the end of every seven years, at the set time [mo'ed] in the year of release, at the Feast [ḥag] of Booths [sukkah], when all Israel comes to appear before the LORD your God at the place that he will choose, you shall read this [torah] before all Israel in their hearing. Assemble the people, men, women, and little ones, and the sojourner within your towns, that they may hear and learn to fear the LORD your God, and be careful to do all the words of this [torah], and that their children, who have not known it, may hear and learn to fear the LORD your God, as long as you live in the land that you are going over the Jordan to possess.” (Deuteronomy 31:9-13 ESV)

Moses comes right back to his original motivation from the beginning of the Book of Deuteronomy: “to explain this torah”.

9.6 History of Feast Keeping

Over the course of time as Israel lived in the Promised Land, little is explicitly said about “Feast Keeping”. Presumably it was such an ordinary part of life that little needed to be said. It is clear, however, that over the years Israel was not fully faithful in keeping the Feasts. The Northern Kingdom fell into abject violation with Jeroboam's innovations:

[Jeroboam] also made temples on high places and appointed priests from among all the people, who were not of the Levites. And Jeroboam appointed a feast [ḥag] on the fifteenth day of the eighth month like the feast [ḥag] that was in Judah, and he offered sacrifices on the altar. ... He went up to the altar that he had made in Bethel on the fifteenth day in the eighth month, in the month that he had devised from his own heart. And he instituted a feast [ḥag] for the people of Israel and went up to the altar to make offerings. (1 Kings 12:31-32a, 33 ESV)

In both Hezekiah's reform and Josiah's reform, it is noted that in the past the Passover had not been properly observed:

Hezekiah sent to all Israel and Judah, and wrote letters also to Ephraim and Manasseh, that they should come to the house of the LORD at Jerusalem to keep the Passover [pesah] to the LORD, the God of Israel. ... and the plan seemed right to the king and all the assembly. So they decreed to make a proclamation throughout all Israel, from Beersheba to Dan, that the people should come and keep the Passover [pesah] to the LORD, the God of Israel, at Jerusalem, for they had not kept it as often as prescribed. (2 Chronicles 30:1, 4-5 ESV)

And the king [Josiah] commanded all the people, “Keep the Passover [pesah] to the LORD your God, as it is written in this Book of the Covenant.” For no such Passover [pesah] had been kept since the days of the judges who judged Israel, or during all the days of the kings of Israel or of the kings of Judah. But in the eighteenth year of King Josiah this Passover [pesah] was kept to the LORD in Jerusalem. (2 Kings 23:21-23 ESV)

So all the service of the LORD was prepared that day, to keep the Passover [pesah] and to offer burnt offerings on the altar of the LORD, according to the command of King Josiah. And the people of Israel who were present kept the Passover [pesah] at that time, and the Feast of Unleavened Bread [matztzah] seven days. No Passover [pesah] like it had been kept in Israel since the days of Samuel the

prophet. None of the kings of Israel had kept such a Passover [pesah] as was kept by Josiah, and the priests and the Levites, and all Judah and Israel who were present, and the inhabitants of Jerusalem. In the eighteenth year of the reign of Josiah this **Passover [pesah] was kept.** (2 Chronicles 35:16-19 ESV)

After the exile, it is noted that the Feast of Tabernacles had not always been properly observed:

And **all the assembly of those who had returned from the captivity made booths [sukkah] and lived in the booths [sukkah],** for **from the days of Jeshua the son of Nun to that day the people of Israel had not done so.** (Nehemiah 8:17 ESV)

However, there are many passing notices of Feast observance in the Old Testament indicating that **Feast observance was always an assumed part of the culture:**

While the people of Israel were encamped at Gilgal, they kept the Passover [pesah] on the fourteenth day of the month in the evening on the plains of Jericho. (Joshua 5:10 ESV)

So they said, "Behold, **there is the yearly feast [hag] of the LORD at Shiloh ...** (Judges 21:19a ESV)

Now Solomon purposed to build a temple for the name of the LORD ... Behold, I am about to build a house for the name of the LORD my God and dedicate it to him for the burning of incense of sweet spices before him, and for the regular arrangement of the showbread, and for burnt offerings morning and evening, on the Sabbaths and the new moons and **the appointed [times] [mo'ed]** of the LORD our God, as ordained forever for Israel. (2 Chronicles 2:1a, 4 ESV)

And **all the men of Israel assembled to King Solomon at the feast [hag] in the month Ethanim, which is the seventh month.** ... So **Solomon held the feast [hag] at that time,** and all Israel with him, a great assembly, from Lebo-hamath to the Brook of Egypt, before the LORD our God, **seven days. On the eighth day** he sent the people away, and they blessed the king and went to their homes joyful and glad of heart for all the goodness that the LORD had shown to David his servant and to Israel his people. (1 Kings 8:2, 65-66 ESV)

And **all the men of Israel assembled before the king at the feast [hag] that is in the seventh month.** ... At that time **Solomon held the feast [hag] for seven days,** and all Israel with him, a very great assembly, from Lebo-hamath to the Brook of Egypt. And **on the eighth day they held a solemn assembly,** for they had kept the dedication of the altar seven days and **the feast [hag] seven days.** (2 Chronicles 5:3, 7:8-9 ESV)

Then Solomon offered up burnt offerings to the LORD on the altar of the LORD that he had built before the vestibule, as **the duty of each day required,**¹⁵⁷ offering according to the commandment of Moses for the **Sabbaths,** the new moons, and the **appointed times [mo'ed],**¹⁵⁸ **three annual feasts [hag]**—the **Feast [hag] of Unleavened Bread [matztzah],** the **Feast [hag] of Weeks [shavua'],** and the **Feast [hag] of Booths [sukkah].** (2 Chronicles 8:12-13 ESV)

And many people came together in Jerusalem to **keep the Feast [hag] of Unleavened Bread [matztzah]** in the second month, a very great assembly. ... And the people of Israel who were present at Jerusalem **kept the Feast [hag] of Unleavened Bread [matztzah] seven days with great gladness,** and the Levites and the priests praised the LORD day by day, singing with all their might to the LORD. And Hezekiah spoke encouragingly to all the Levites who showed good skill in the service of the LORD. So **they ate the food of the appointed time [mo'ed] for seven days,** sacrificing peace offerings and giving thanks to the LORD, the God of their fathers. (2 Chronicles 30:13, 21-22 ESV)

And **Hezekiah appointed** the divisions of the priests and of the Levites, division by division, each according to his service, the priests and the Levites, for burnt offerings and peace offerings, to minister in the gates of the camp of the LORD and to give thanks and praise. **The contribution of the king** from his own possessions was for the burnt offerings: the burnt offerings of morning and evening, and the burnt offerings for the Sabbaths, the new moons, and the **appointed [times] [mo'ed],** as it is written in the [torah] of the LORD. (2 Chronicles 31:2-3 ESV)

9.7 Feasts in Psalms and Pre-exilic Prophets

In these documents we find on the one hand, understanding and recognition of the correct keeping of Feasts and appointed times; but on the other hand, severe criticism of violations and incorrect observance. Starting with three non-Davidic Psalms:

My [mind] thirsts for God, **for the living God.**

When shall I come and appear before God?

My **tears** have been my food day and night,
while they say to me all the day long, "**Where is your God?**"

These things I remember, **as I pour out my [heart]:**

¹⁵⁷ See Numbers chapter 28 and 29

¹⁵⁸ The word, *mo'ed*, is incorrectly left untranslated in the ESV.

how I would go with the throng and lead them in **procession to the house of God** with glad shouts and songs of praise, **a multitude keeping festival** [ḥagag]. (Psalm 42:2-4 ESV)

The Psalmist expresses his longing **“for the living God”**, asking when is it acceptable **“appear before God”**. He laments the **“tears”** of daily life and scorn of those who deride **“Where is your God?”** He finds condolence only in coming before God **“as I pour out my heart”**, as part of a **“multitude keeping festival”**. Next a Psalmist expresses the **unbridled joy of the Fall Feast Season**:

Sing aloud to God our strength; **shout for joy** to the God of Jacob!
Raise a song; sound the tambourine, the sweet lyre with the harp.
Blow the trumpet at the new moon, [Day of Trumpets, Ethanim/Tishri 1]
at the full moon, on our feast [ḥag] **day**. [Feast of Tabernacles, Ethanim/Tishri 15]
(Psalm 81:1-3 ESV)

Continuing in a Messianic Psalm, **a Psalmist prays for salvation and for the success of the Work of God**:

Save us, we pray, O LORD! O LORD, **we pray, give us success!**
Blessed is he who comes in the name of the LORD!
We bless you from **the house of the LORD**.
The LORD is God, and **he has made his light to shine upon us**.
Bind the festal sacrifice with cords, up to the horns of the altar! (Psalm 118:25-27 ESV)

This Psalm is clearly Messianic, a previous verse reads:

The stone that the builders rejected has become the cornerstone. (Psalm 118:22 ESV)

Jesus applied this verse to himself:

But he looked directly at them and said, “What then is this that is written:
“The stone that the builders rejected has become the cornerstone”?
(Luke 20:17 ESV // Mark 12:10-11, Matthew 21:42)¹⁵⁹

On Jesus’ final approach to Jerusalem, he is riding on a donkey, and the crowd shouts out:

“Hosanna! **Blessed is he who comes in the name of the Lord!**
Blessed is the coming kingdom of our father David! Hosanna in the highest!”
(Mark 11:9b-10 ESV // Matthew 21:9, Luke 19:38)

Jesus applies this quote to his second coming:

For I tell you, **you will not see me again**, until you say, **‘Blessed is he who comes in the name of the Lord.’**
(Matthew 23:39 ESV // Luke 13:35)

“The house of the LORD” in the Psalmist’s time was the physical Temple which was a type of the New Testament Church¹⁶⁰ – the Family of God: **“we”** represents **“True Worshipers”**, nascent members of the God Family, **praying for success of the Work of God**. The calling of God to be a “True Worshiper” begins to happen when God **“has made his light to shine upon us”**. The Hebrew of the final line is very difficult to translate:

אָסְרוּ־חַג	בְּעֵצִים	עַד־	קַרְנוֹת	הַמִּזְבֵּחַ
ḥag	ba`avothim	`ad	qar`noth	hammiz`beah
feast	with branches	to	horns of	the altar

A literal translation is: **“bind feast with branches to horns of the altar”**.

This is clearly a symbolic or idiomatic statement. The word *avothim*, **“branches”** is used in Leviticus 23:40 and Nehemiah 8:15 for the materials used to build huts for the **Feast of Tabernacles**, so this is a clear allusion to the Feast of Tabernacles. The **“horns of the altar”** are a physical feature of the bronze altar of the Tabernacle. To **“bind”** two things together is to make them very close, or to make them **“one”**, a unity. **The Feast of Tabernacles and the “horns of the altar” are to be bound together.** The **“horns of the altar”** were used in the **consecration ceremony** of the **“priests”**:

You shall **make the altar of acacia wood**, five cubits long and five cubits broad. The altar shall be square, and its height shall be three cubits. And you shall **make horns for it on its four corners**; its horns shall be of one piece with it, and you shall **overlay it with bronze**. (Exodus 27:1-2 ESV)

Now this is what you shall do to them **to consecrate them, that they may serve me as priests**. ...Then you shall bring the bull before the tent of meeting. **Aaron and his sons shall lay their hands on the head of**

¹⁵⁹ Allusion is also made to this verse in Acts 4:11, Ephesians 2:20, and 1 Peter 2:4-7

¹⁶⁰ See 1 Corinthians 3:16-17, 6:19, Ephesians 2:19-22, Revelation 3:12

the bull. Then you shall **kill the bull** before the LORD at the entrance of the tent of meeting, and shall **take part of the blood of the bull and put it on the horns of the altar with your finger**, and the rest of the blood you shall pour out at the base of the altar. (Exodus 29:1, 10-12 ESV)

The symbolism is all very clear:

- Psalm 118 is a **Messianic Psalm**
- The Psalmist prays for **salvation** and for the **success of the Work of God**
- In the **First Advent**, Jesus came "**in the name of YHWH**" as the Messiah
- Jesus' words "**you will not see me again**" began at the **Ascension** and continue until the **Second Advent**, when all humanity will say "**Blessed is he who comes in the name of the Lord**"
- **True Worshippers are called** to become sons and daughters in the **Family of God** at the First Resurrection, when fully "**he has made his light to shine upon us**"
- The "**success of the Work of God**" is epitomized by the Feast of Tabernacles which is **integrally bound** to the full commitment of True Worshippers who are called:
 - ... **to be a holy priesthood**, to offer **spiritual sacrifices acceptable to God through Jesus Christ**.For it stands in Scripture:
 - "Behold, I am laying in Zion a stone, a **cornerstone** chosen and precious, and **whoever believes in him** will not be put to shame." (Isaiah 28:16 LXX)
 - So the honor is for **you who believe**, but for those who do not believe,
 - "The stone that the builders rejected has become the **cornerstone**" (Psalm 118:22)(1 Peter 2:5b-6 ESV)
- The "**blood**" applied to the "**horns of the altar**" by Arron and his sons **represented their full and complete commitment** to serve YHWH
- The "**blood**" of Jesus Christ, **accepted by True Worshippers** at Baptism, **represents full and complete commitment** to serve Jesus Christ and live by the **Way of God**
- The **Way of God**, the **Plan of Salvation**, is represented by the **Feasts and appointed times** of God upon which he requires True Worshippers to worship him¹⁶¹

The pre-exilic prophets make clear **God's feelings towards those who ignore or perfunctorily keep** his Feasts and appointed times:

I hate, **I despise your feasts** [hag], and I take no delight in your solemn assemblies.
Even though you offer me your burnt offerings and grain offerings, I will not accept them;
and the peace offerings of your fattened animals, I will not look upon them. (Amos 5:21-22 ESV)

I will turn your feasts [hag] **into mourning** and all your songs into lamentation;
I will bring sackcloth on every waist and baldness on every head;
I will make it like the mourning for an only son and the end of it like a bitter day. (Amos 8:10 ESV)

And **I will put an end to all her mirth**, **her feasts** [hag], her new moons, her Sabbaths,
and **all her appointed [times]** [mo'ed]. (Hosea 2:11 ESV)

They shall not pour drink offerings of wine to the LORD, and **their sacrifices shall not please him**.
It shall be like mourners' bread to them; all who eat of it shall be defiled;
for their bread shall be for their hunger only; **it shall not come to the house of the LORD**.
What will you do on the day of the appointed [time] [mo'ed],
and **on the day of the feast** [hag] **of the LORD?** (Hosea 9:4-5 ESV)

Bring no more vain offerings; incense is an abomination to me.
New moon and Sabbath and the calling of convocations—
I cannot endure iniquity and solemn assembly.
Your new moons and **your appointed [times]** [mo'ed], **my [being] hates**;
they have become a burden to me; I am weary of bearing them. (Isaiah 1:13-14 ESV)

Again, the pre-exilic prophets look to a time when **all will properly keep the Feasts and appointed times**:

So you, by the help of your God, return,
hold fast to [hesed] and [mish'pat], and **wait continually for your God**.
I am the LORD your God from the land of Egypt;
I will again make you dwell in tents, **as in the days of the appointed [time]** [mo'ed]. (Hosea 12:6, 9 ESV)

You shall have a song as in the night when a holy feast [hag] is kept, and gladness of heart, as when one sets out to the sound of the flute to **go to the mountain of the LORD,** to the Rock of Israel. (Isaiah 30:29 ESV)

Behold, upon the mountains, **the feet of him who brings good news,** who publishes peace!¹⁶²

Keep your feasts [hag], O Judah; **fulfill your vows,** for never again shall the worthless pass through you; he is utterly cut off. (Nahum 1:15 ESV)

Behold Zion, the city of our appointed [times] [mo`ed]!

Your eyes will see Jerusalem, **an untroubled habitation,** an immovable tent,¹⁶³ whose stakes will never be plucked up, nor will any of its cords be broken. (Isaiah 33:20 ESV)

9.8 Exilic and Post-exilic Feast Keeping

The final dissolution of the Nation of Israel occurred under the distressed eye of **the Prophet Jeremiah.** Meanwhile his contemporary, **the Prophet Ezekiel,** worked with a group of exiles in Babylonia to reach those being called by God to become True Worshipers and prepare for the First Advent. When the time was right, God established a remnant community around Jerusalem. The Prophets **Haggai** and **Zechariah,** the governor, **Nehemiah,** and the Priest, **Ezra,** normalized the community in its purpose – to prepare for the First Advent.

The last prophetic word in the Bible is contained in the **Book of Malachi,** for which there is some evidence it was written by Ezra, so about 425BC. After this there is no firsthand information from the remnant community until the time of the **Maccabees,** about 175BC. The books First Maccabees and Second Maccabees contain many references to the Feasts. **It was approximately this time that the Pharisees emerged as a significant political power.** Under their direction, Feast Keeping was never more strongly institutionalized, albeit perfunctorily, as we observe in the New Testament. Nevertheless, it is clear from the New Testament that True Worshipers continued the proper observance of the Feasts and appointed times.

Looking out over the destroyed city and temple, Jeremiah remembers the celebration of Feasts and appointed times, and he laments:

The roads to Zion mourn, for **none come to the [appointed time]** [mo`ed];
all her gates are desolate; **her priests groan;**
her virgins have been afflicted, and she herself suffers bitterly. ...
The Lord has scorned his altar, disowned his sanctuary;
he has delivered into the hand of the enemy the walls of her palaces;
they raised a clamor in the house of the LORD **as on the day of [appointed time]** [mo`ed]; ...
You summoned as if to a day of [appointed time] [mo`ed] my terrors on every side,
and **on the day of the anger of the LORD no one escaped or survived;**
those whom I held and raised my enemy destroyed. (Lamentations 1:4, 2:7, 22 ESV)

Meanwhile in Babylonia, in teaching the exiles, Ezekiel makes abundantly clear the importance of the Feasts and appointed times. Ezekiel ends his **prophecy of the New Covenant,**¹⁶⁴ upon which the **New Israel** will be based, with an allusion to the beauty of the former observance to the appointed times in Jerusalem:

“Thus says the Lord GOD: This also I will let the house of Israel ask me to do for them: to **increase their people like a flock.** Like the flock for sacrifices, **like the flock at Jerusalem during her appointed [times]** [mo`ed], so shall **the waste cities be filled with flocks of people.** Then they will know that I am the LORD.” (Ezekiel 36:37-38 ESV)

Ezekiel then goes on to make it abundantly clear that the **Feasts and appointed times will be observed** in the World Tomorrow:

They [priests] shall teach my people the **difference between the holy and the common,** and show them how to **distinguish between the unclean and the clean.** In a dispute, they shall act as judges, and they shall judge it according to my [mish`patim].¹⁶⁵ They shall **keep my [torah] and my statutes in all my appointed [times]** [mo`ed], and they shall keep my Sabbaths holy. (Ezekiel 44:23-24 ESV)

¹⁶² Paul alludes to this in Romans 10:14-15 in the context of “preaching the gospel”.

¹⁶³ The allusion is to the Tabernacle, which was moveable, “Jerusalem” in the World Tomorrow will be “immovable”. The “stakes” and “cords” allude to the guy ropes which supported the Tabernacle’s fence.

¹⁶⁴ See Ezekiel 11:14-21, 34:11-19, 25-31, 36:8-15, 22-36

¹⁶⁵ Here, *mish`patim*, alludes to **impartial discernment** due understanding God’s character attribute of “justness” and the understanding of *torah* which comes from living by the Way of God.

It shall be **the prince's duty** to furnish the burnt offerings, grain offerings, and drink offerings, **at the feasts** [hag], the new moons, and the Sabbaths, **all the appointed times** [mo'ed] of the house of Israel: he shall provide the sin offerings, grain offerings, burnt offerings, and peace offerings, to make atonement on behalf of the house of Israel. (Ezekiel 45:17 ESV)

In the first month, on the fourteenth day of the month, you shall **celebrate the Feast** [hag] **of the Passover** [pesah],¹⁶⁶ and **for seven days unleavened bread** [matztzah] **shall be eaten**. On that day **the prince shall provide** for himself and all the people of the land a young bull for a sin offering. And on **the seven days of the festival** [hag] he shall provide as a burnt offering to the LORD seven young bulls and seven rams without blemish, on each of the seven days; and a male goat daily for a sin offering. And he shall provide as a grain offering an ephah for each bull, an ephah for each ram, and a hin of oil to each ephah. **In the seventh month, on the fifteenth day of the month and for the seven days of the feast** [hag], he shall make the same provision for sin offerings, burnt offerings, and grain offerings, and for the oil. (Ezekiel 45:21-25 ESV)

When **the people of the land come before the LORD at the appointed times** [mo'ed], he who enters by the north gate **to worship** shall go out by the south gate, and he who enters by the south gate shall go out by the north gate: no one shall return by way of the gate by which he entered, but each shall go out straight ahead. When they enter, **the prince** shall enter with them, and when they go out, he shall go out. **At the feasts** [hag] and **the appointed times** [mo'ed], the grain offering with a young bull shall be an ephah, and with a ram an ephah, and with the lambs as much as one is able to give, together with a hin of oil to an ephah. (Ezekiel 46:9-11 ESV)

When the seventy years of hegemony allotted to Babylon were complete¹⁶⁷ and Cyrus the Persian assumed control of the former Babylonian empire, God used Cyrus to effect a **revival of an Israelite remnant community**.¹⁶⁸ The first objectives of the revival were to rebuild the city of Jerusalem, rebuild the Temple, and restore the worship of YHWH in the temple. The initial return in 538 was led by **Sheshbazzar** who made an initial attempt to start the Temple construction.¹⁶⁹ He was quickly followed up by **Zerubbabel** with a larger group of returnees including **Jeshua ben Jozadak**, a High Priest. **Their first actions were to assemble for the Fall Feast season, erect an altar, and commence worship services:**

When **the seventh month came**, and the children of Israel were in the towns, **the people gathered as one man to Jerusalem**. Then arose **Jeshua** the son of Jozadak, with his fellow priests, and **Zerubbabel** the son of Shealtiel with his kinsmen, and **they built the altar of the God of Israel, to offer burnt offerings** on it, as it is written in the [torah] of Moses the man of God. They set the altar in its place, for fear was on them because of the peoples of the lands, and **they offered burnt offerings** on it to the LORD, **burnt offerings morning and evening**. And **they kept the Feast** [hag] **of Booths** [sukkah], as it is written, and **offered the daily burnt offerings by number according to [mish'pat]**,¹⁷⁰ as each day required,¹⁷¹ and after that the regular burnt offerings, the offerings at the new moon and at all the **appointed times** [mo'ed], of the LORD, and the offerings of everyone who made a freewill offering to the LORD. **From the first day of the seventh month they began to offer burnt offerings to the LORD**. (Ezra 3:1-6a ESV)

Next, they made an earnest attempt to reconstruct the Temple and **restart the worship services:**

Now in the second year after their coming to the house of God at Jerusalem, in the second month, **Zerubbabel** the son of Shealtiel and **Jeshua** the son of Jozadak **made a beginning**, together with the rest of their kinsmen, the priests and the Levites and all who had come to Jerusalem from the captivity. They appointed the Levites, from twenty years old and upward, to supervise **the work of the house of the LORD**. And Jeshua with his sons and his brothers, and Kadmiel and his sons, the sons of Judah, together supervised the workmen in the house of God, along with the sons of Henadad and the Levites, their sons and brothers. And when **the builders laid the foundation of the temple of the LORD, the priests** in their vestments came forward with trumpets, **and the Levites**, the sons of Asaph, with cymbals, to **praise the LORD**, according to the directions of David king of Israel. And they sang responsively, praising and giving thanks to the LORD,

"For he is good, for his [hesed] endures forever toward Israel."¹⁷²

And **all the people shouted with a great shout when they praised the LORD**, because **the foundation of the house of the LORD was laid**. (Ezra 3:8-11 ESV)

¹⁶⁶ The word *hag* is used here for the whole "Passover" season, i.e., Passover and the Feast of Unleavened Bread.

¹⁶⁷ See Jeremiah 25:11-12, 29:10, Daniel 9:1-2

¹⁶⁸ See 2 Chronicles 36:22-23, Ezra 1:1-4, Isaiah 44:26-28, 45:1,13

¹⁶⁹ See Ezra 1:8-11, 5:14-16

¹⁷⁰ In this context, *mish'pat* implies performing God's will, presenting the offerings, with understanding.

¹⁷¹ See Numbers chapters 28 and 29

¹⁷² This is a common refrain from many Psalms, see for example Psalm 136

The **construction of the Temple was halted** until 520BC by local opposition.¹⁷³ In 520BC the Prophets **Haggai** and **Zechariah** arrived from Babylonia. They found that while the people had busied themselves with their own affairs, **constructing their own houses in the city**, there was **no progress on the Temple**:

Thus says the LORD of hosts: **“These people say the time has not yet come to rebuild the house of the LORD.”** Then the word of the LORD came by the hand of Haggai the prophet, **“Is it a time for you yourselves to dwell in your paneled houses, while this house lies in ruins? ... my house that lies in ruins, while each of you busies himself with his own house.** (Haggai 1:2-4, 9b ESV)

With the direction of the Prophets, **the Temple was completed**, and **worship services commenced**:

And the **elders of the Jews built and prospered through the prophesying** of **Haggai** the prophet and **Zechariah** the son of Iddo. **They finished their building** by decree of the God of Israel and by **decree of Cyrus** and Darius and Artaxerxes king of Persia; and **this house was finished** on the third day of the month of Adar, in the sixth year of the reign of Darius the king. ... **On the fourteenth day of the first month, the returned exiles kept the Passover** [pesah]. For the priests and the Levites had purified themselves together; all of them were clean. So they slaughtered the **Passover lamb** [pesah] for all the returned exiles, for their fellow priests, and for themselves. It was eaten by the people of Israel who had returned from exile, and also by every one who had joined them and separated himself from the uncleanness of the peoples of the land **to worship the LORD**, the God of Israel. And they kept the **Feast** [hag] **of Unleavened Bread** [matztzah] seven days **with joy**, for **the LORD had made them joyful** ... (Ezra 6:14-15, 19-22a ESV)

The Prophets Haggai and Zechariah got the remnant community going in the right direction. On the last day of the **Feast of Tabernacles**, Tishri 21, Haggai delivered this prophecy:

In the seventh month, on the twenty-first day of the month, the word of the LORD came by the hand of Haggai the prophet: ... **Be strong, all you people of the land**, declares the LORD. **Work, for I am with you**, declares the LORD of hosts, **according to the covenant that I made with you when you came out of Egypt. My Spirit remains in your midst. Fear not.**

For thus says the LORD of hosts: Yet once more, in a little while, **I will shake the heavens and the earth and the sea and the dry land**. And I will shake all nations, so that the treasures of all nations shall come in, and **I will fill this house with glory**, says the LORD of hosts. The silver is mine, and the gold is mine, declares the LORD of hosts. **The latter glory of this house shall be greater than the former**, says the LORD of hosts. And **in this place I will give peace**, declares the LORD of hosts.” (Haggai 2:1, 4b-9 ESV)

YHWH enjoins the remnant community, **“people of the land”**, to **“be strong”**, **“fear not”**, and accomplish the **“work”** of **preparation for the First Advent**. He reassures them that this is the Plan of God: **“I am with you”**, **“my spirit remains in your midst”**. YHWH alludes to the **“the covenant that I made with you when you came out of Egypt”** – this is of course the Sinai Covenant by which Israel was to become **“a kingdom of priests and a holy nation”**¹⁷⁴ to bring the True Worship of the True God to all the world; but also, it alludes to **9.3 The Covenant of Performance**, by which YHWH promised to accomplish his work in spite of the failure of ancient Israel. YHWH then looks to the **Second Advent** when **“I will shake the heavens and the earth ...”**; but first, God incarnate, Jesus Christ, **“will fill this house with glory”** by his presence at the **First Advent**. Finally, as depicted by all God’s Feasts and appointed times, **“in this place I will give peace”** in the World Tomorrow.

The **Book of Zechariah** was to the remnant community what the Book of Revelation is to the New Testament Church. It is filled with **prophecies of the First and Second Advents to encourage the remnant community to accomplish their work**. It is beyond the scope of this paper to cover the Book of Zechariah in detail. Only Zechariah’s final prophecy of the World Tomorrow is quoted:

Jerusalem shall dwell in security. ... Then **everyone** who survives of all the nations that have come against Jerusalem **shall go up year after year to worship the King, the LORD of hosts**, and **to keep the Feast** [hag] **of Booths** [sukkah]. (Zechariah 14:11b, 16 ESV)

In spite of this beginning, the remnant community fell into problems – the Book of Malachi discusses some of the problems.¹⁷⁵ **Nehemiah** first came to Jerusalem in 445BC – the twentieth year of the reign

¹⁷³ See Ezra 4:1-5

¹⁷⁴ See Exodus 19:6

¹⁷⁵ See Malachi 1:6-14, 2:1-9, 10-12, 13-16, 17, 3:6-12

of Artaxerxes I¹⁷⁶ - about seventy-five years after Haggai and Zechariah.¹⁷⁷ **Nehemiah came to build a wall around the city.**¹⁷⁸ After this was done, in 433BC, he returned to Artaxerxes I to request an extension of his governorship and for **assistance in restoring the worship** of the community.¹⁷⁹ As a result of this **Ezra was given a commission to go to Jerusalem to restore the Temple worship.**¹⁸⁰ The priests in Babylon had worked over the exile to assemble the writings of Moses and transcribe them into the Aramaic square script which is still in use. Ezra brought copies of these documents back with him. Soon after his arrival, he read from these documents to the assembled people in Jerusalem **on the Day of Trumpets:**

And **all the people gathered as one man into the square before the Water Gate.** And they told Ezra the scribe to bring the Book of the [torah] of Moses that the LORD had commanded Israel. So Ezra the priest brought the [torah] before the assembly, both men and women and all who could understand what they heard, on **the first day of the seventh month.** And he read from it facing the square before the Water Gate from early morning until midday, in the presence of the men and the women and those who could understand. And the ears of all the people were attentive to the Book of the [torah]. ... And **Nehemiah, who was the governor, and Ezra the priest and scribe, and the Levites who taught the people** said to all the people, **“This day is holy to the LORD your God; do not mourn or weep.”** For all the people wept as they heard the words of the [torah]. Then he said to them, **“Go your way. Eat the fat and drink sweet wine and send portions to anyone who has nothing ready, for this day is holy to our Lord. And do not be grieved, for the joy of the LORD is your strength.”** So the Levites calmed all the people, saying, **“Be quiet, for this day is holy; do not be grieved. ...”** (Nehemiah 8:1-3, 9-11 ESV)

Soon after this, they kept **The Feast of Tabernacles:**

On the second day the heads of fathers' houses of all the people, with the priests and the Levites, came together to Ezra the scribe in order to study the words of the [torah]. And they found it written in the [torah] that the LORD had commanded by Moses that **the people of Israel should dwell in booths during the feast [ḥag] of the seventh month,** and that **they should proclaim it and publish it in all their towns and in Jerusalem.** **“Go out to the hills and bring branches of olive, wild olive, myrtle, palm, and other leafy trees to make booths [sukkah], as it is written.”**

So the people went out and brought them and **made booths [sukkah]** for themselves, each on his roof, and in their courts and in the courts of the house of God, and in the square at the Water Gate and in the square at the Gate of Ephraim. And all the assembly of those who had returned from the captivity **made booths [sukkah]** and **lived in the booths [sukkah], for from the days of Jeshua the son of Nun to that day the people of Israel had not done so.** And **there was very great rejoicing.** And day by day, from the first day to the last day, they read from the Book of the [torah] of God. **They kept the feast [ḥag] seven days, and on the eighth day there was a solemn assembly,** according to the [mish'pat].¹⁸¹ (Nehemiah 8:13-18 ESV)

9.9 Feast Keeping in the New Testament

The Greek language has a far richer vocabulary than the Hebrew language. There are many words in Greek which relate to “feasts” in general and the Feasts and appointed times of God in particular.¹⁸²

- ἑορτή - heortē, feminine noun, “feast”, “festival”; this is the most general word used. It is frequently used with one of the words for a specific Feast, e.g., “πάσχα ἐν τῇ ἑορτῇ”, Passover Feast, (John 2:23); it has the same range of meaning as ḥag.
- δοχή - dochē, feminine noun, “banquet”, more or less synonymous with ἑορτή, but only used twice by Luke for banquets unrelated to God's Feasts (Luke 5:29, 14:13).
- γάμος - gamos, masculine noun, “wedding”, “marriage”, “wedding feast”; used by Matthew in the Parable of the Wedding Feast (Matthew 22:1-4) and the Parable of the Ten Virgins (Matthew 25:1-13); and by Luke in his two Wedding Feast Parables (Luke 12:35-40, 14:7-11); John uses it for the wedding at Cana (John 2:1-5); the author of Hebrews uses it for the “state of marriage” (Hebrews 13:4); finally it is used for the marriage and marriage supper of the Lamb (Revelation 19:6-9).

¹⁷⁶ See Nehemiah 1:1, 2:1

¹⁷⁷ The chronology of this period is difficult. For a discussion of the problems, see *Excurses 8 – The Work of Ezra* in the paper “Exegesis of Daniel 9:24-27 The Seventy Periods Prophecy” on <https://mikewhytebiblicalresearch.ca/>

¹⁷⁸ See Nehemiah 1:3b, 2:8,17, 3:1-32

¹⁷⁹ See Nehemiah 13:6

¹⁸⁰ See Ezra 7:7-26; note in verse 7, the number should most likely read “thirty-seventh” year, 428BC

¹⁸¹ In this context, *mish'pat* implies performing God's will, keeping the Feast, with understanding.

¹⁸² For formal definitions of these words, see the appropriate entries in GEL.

- ἀρχιτρίκλεινος - architrikleinos, masculine noun, “master of the feast”, used only in John 2:8-9.
- συνευωχέομαι - syneuōcheomai, verb, “feast together”, used only in 2 Peter 2:13 and Jude 12.
- πάσχα - pascha, neuter noun, “Passover festival”, “Passover meal”, “Passover lamb”; 29 occurrences; these are discussed in **9.10 The New Testament Passover**; it has the same range of meaning as *pesah*.
- ἄζυμος - azymos, adjective, “unleavened”, “Feast of Unleavened Bread”; 9 occurrences; it has the same range of meaning as *matztzah*.¹⁸³
- σκηνοπηγία - skēnopēgia, feminine noun, “act of setting up a temporary shelter”; used only in John 7:2 – “ἢν δὲ ἐγγύς ἡ **ἐορτὴ** τῶν Ἰουδαίων ἡ **σκηνοπηγία**”:
Now the Jews’ Feast of Booths was at hand. (ESV)
- πεντηκοστή - pentēkostē, feminine noun, “Pentecost”, used Acts 2:1, 20:16, 1 Corinthians 16:8.
- ἐγκαίνια - enkainia, neuter noun, “Feast of Dedication”, used in only in John 10:22; see the discussion in **Excursus 4 – New Moon, Dedication, and Purim**.

The only specific instructions for Feast Keeping in the New Testament are related to **9.10 The New Testament Passover**, because **there was a significant change in the observance**. However, the casual references to the observance of Feasts and appointed times in the New Testament clearly demonstrate that Feast Keeping was an integral and assumed part of the life of Jesus, the Apostles, and the early Church:

Now his parents went to Jerusalem every year at the Feast [heortē] of the Passover [pascha]. And when he was twelve years old, **they went up according to custom.** And **when the feast [heortē] was ended**, as they were returning, the boy **Jesus stayed behind in Jerusalem.** His parents did not know it ... (Luke 2:41-43 ESV)

The Passover [pascha] of the Jews was at hand, and **Jesus went up to Jerusalem.** In the temple he found those who were selling oxen and sheep and pigeons, and the money-changers sitting there. And making a whip of cords, he drove them all out of the temple ... Now **when he was in Jerusalem at the Passover [pascha] Feast [heortē], many believed in his name** when they saw the signs that he was doing. But Jesus on his part did not entrust himself to them ... (John 2:13-15a, 23-24a ESV)

When the day of Pentecost [pentēkostē] arrived, they were all together in one place. And suddenly there came from heaven a sound like a mighty rushing wind, and it filled the entire house where they were sitting. (Acts 2:1-2 ESV)

... Paul sent for the disciples, and after encouraging them, he said farewell and departed for Macedonia. When he had gone through those regions and had given them much encouragement, he came to Greece. There he spent three months ... we sailed away from Philippi **after the days of Unleavened Bread [azymos]**, and in five days we came to them at Troas, where we stayed for seven days. ... Paul had decided to sail past Ephesus, so that he might not have to spend time in Asia, for **he was hastening to be at Jerusalem**, if possible, **on the day of Pentecost [pentēkostē].** (Acts 20:1b-3a, 6, 16 ESV)

For I do not want to see you now just in passing. I hope to spend some time with you, if the Lord permits. But **I will stay in Ephesus until Pentecost [pentēkostē]**, for a wide door for effective work has opened to me, and there are many adversaries. (1 Corinthians 16:7-9 ESV)

Therefore **let no one pass judgment on you** in questions of food and drink, or **with regard to a festival [heortē] or a new moon or a Sabbath.** (Colossians 2:16 ESV)

The Day of Atonement is not mentioned by name in the New Testament – Luke simply refers to it as **“The Fast”**:

Since much time had passed, and **the voyage was now dangerous** because even **the Fast was already over**, Paul advised them, saying, “Sirs, I perceive that the voyage will be with injury and much loss, not only of the cargo and the ship, but also of our lives.” (Acts 27:9-10 ESV)

Similarly, **“the eighth day”** is not explicitly mentioned, but its observance is integrally tied to the Feast of Tabernacles – see the discussion in the section **9.11 Feasts in the Gospel of John**.

The remnant of True Worshipers who formed the community into which Jesus came as a human being **faithfully observed God’s Holy Days.** **Jesus observed the Holy Days** throughout his earthly life. The **early church observed the Holy Days.** When True Christians had to “go underground” as the false church gained control through the second and third centuries, there is little information as to the

¹⁸³ See Matthew 26:17, Mark 14:1,12, Luke 22:1,7, Acts 12:3, 20:6, 1 Corinthians 5:7,8
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observance of Holy Days. We saw in section [9.6 History of Feast Keeping](#) that the Nation of Israel was at times lax in keeping the Holy Days. It is possible that, under the extreme pressure of the false church, the observance of Holy Days was not consistent. However, the revelation God has preserved for us in the Bible is sufficient to attain **a full understanding of God's Holy Days. We are in the end-times.** As we see prophecy unfold and prepare for the Second Advent, **it is critical for True Christians to understand and faithfully observe God's Holy Days.**

[9.10 The New Testament Passover](#)

On the night before his crucifixion, Jesus ate a traditional Passover meal with his disciples. Then he instituted the New Testament Passover. The traditional Passover looked back to the Exodus of the Israelites from Egypt. **Jesus changed the meaning of Passover to be a memorial of his sacrifice** for True Worshipers. Jesus' sacrifice makes it possible to worship "in spirit and in truth". **True Worshipers are required to observe the New Testament Passover annually to look to the Second Advent** when God will grant the gift of eternal life through the resurrection. Eating the traditional Passover demonstrated the continuity of the Plan of God from the "old covenant" to the "new covenant":

And **on the first day of Unleavened Bread** [azymos], **when they sacrificed the Passover lamb** [pascha], his disciples said to him, "**Where will you have us go and prepare for you to eat the Passover** [pascha]?"

And he sent two of his disciples and said to them, "Go into the city, and a man carrying a jar of water will meet you. Follow him, and wherever he enters, say to the master of the house, '**The Teacher says, Where is my guest room, where I may eat the Passover** [pascha] **with my disciples?**' And he will show you a large upper room furnished and ready; there prepare for us." And the disciples set out and went to the city and found it just as he had told them, and **they prepared the Passover** [pascha].

And **when it was evening, he came with the twelve.** And as **they were reclining at table and eating,** Jesus said, "Truly, I say to you, **one of you will betray me,** one who is eating with me." They began to be sorrowful and to say to him one after another, "Is it I?" He said to them, "It is one of the twelve, one who is dipping bread into the dish with me. For **the Son of Man goes as it is written of him,** but woe to that man by whom the Son of Man is betrayed! It would have been better for that man if he had not been born." (Mark 14:12-21 ESV // Matthew 26:17-24)

Mark records the institution of the New Testament Passover most simply, and Matthew follows almost verbatim:¹⁸⁴

And **as they were eating, he took bread,**¹⁸⁵ and **after blessing it broke it and gave it to them,** and said, "**Take; this is my body.**" And **he took a cup,** and **when he had given thanks he gave it to them,** and they all drank of it. And he said to them, "**This is my blood of the covenant,**¹⁸⁶ **which is poured out for many.** Truly, I say to you, I will not drink again of the fruit of the vine until that day when I drink it new in the kingdom of God." (Mark 14:22-25 ESV)

Now **as they were eating, Jesus took bread,** and **after blessing it broke it and gave it to the disciples,** and said, "**Take, eat; this is my body.**" And **he took a cup,** and **when he had given thanks he gave it to them,** saying, "**Drink of it, all of you, for this is my blood of the covenant, which is poured out for many for the forgiveness of sins.** I tell you I will not drink again of this fruit of the vine until that day when I drink it new with you in my Father's kingdom." (Matthew 26:26-29 ESV)

The tradition of eating a meal in conjunction with the Passover seems to have continued, although problems developed in Corinth:

When you come together, it is not the Lord's supper that you eat. **For in eating,** each one goes ahead with his own meal. One goes hungry, another gets drunk. What! Do you not have houses to eat and drink in? Or do you despise the church of God and humiliate those who have nothing? What shall I say to you? Shall I commend you in this? No, I will not.

For I received from the Lord what I also delivered to you, that the Lord Jesus on the night when he was betrayed took bread, and when he had given thanks, he broke it, and said, "This is my body, which is for you. Do this in remembrance of me." In the same way also **he took the cup, after supper, saying, "This cup is the new covenant in my blood. Do this, as often as you drink it, in remembrance of me."** For as often as you eat this bread and drink the cup, **you proclaim the Lord's death until he comes.** Whoever, therefore, eats the bread or drinks the cup of the Lord **in an unworthy manner** will be guilty concerning the body and blood of the Lord. (1 Corinthians 11:20-27 ESV)

¹⁸⁴ Mark records only as Peter recounted the events; Matthew, having been there, adds details from memory – all under the inspiration of the Holy Spirit.

¹⁸⁵ This is "unleavened bread", see Exodus 12:8

¹⁸⁶ Luke 22:20 includes the adjective "new" with "covenant". Some Greek manuscripts have copied "new" into Mark and Matthew.

Paul is explicit that he received his instructions directly from Jesus Christ. He does NOT say that a meal should NOT be partaken, but it must be done with dignity. Paul states that Jesus **“took the cup after supper”** – both Mark and Matthew record that the New Testament Passover symbols were given **“as they were eating”** – a slight difference in perspective. Paul is specific that the Passover is a memorial of the death of Christ, **“do this in remembrance of me – proclaim the Lord’s death until he comes”**, whereas Mark emphasized that Jesus’ blood **“is poured out for many”** and Matthew adds **“for the forgiveness of sins”**.

Only Paul alludes to the incorrect observance of the New Testament Passover: **“in an unworthy manner”**. By this he certainly implied the problems which occurred during the meal in Corinth. But, far more importantly, he refers to the **attitude in which it is observed** and **when it is observed**. A Christian must take the Passover in full understanding and acceptance of the sacrifice of Jesus Christ. It is to be done only at the time prescribed by Jesus Christ.¹⁸⁷

Luke writing later under the influence of Paul, using Mark’s gospel as a guide, records that the cup of wine was used twice with different objectives:

And **when the hour came, he reclined at table, and the apostles with him**. And he said to them, **“I have earnestly desired to eat this Passover [pascha] with you before I suffer**. For I tell you I will not eat it until it is fulfilled in the kingdom of God.” And **he took a cup, and when he had given thanks he said**, “Take this, and divide it among yourselves. For **I tell you that from now on I will not drink of the fruit of the vine until the kingdom of God comes**.”

And **he took bread, and when he had given thanks, he broke it and gave it to them**, saying, **“This is my body, which is given for you. Do this in remembrance of me.”** And likewise **the cup after they had eaten**, saying, **“This cup that is poured out for you is the new covenant in my blood.”**

But behold, the hand of him who betrays me is with me on the table. For **the Son of Man goes as it has been determined**, but woe to that man by whom he is betrayed!” And they began to question one another, which of them it could be who was going to do this. (Luke 22:14-23 ESV)

The Apostle John adds a very important detail to the observance of the New Testament Passover:

... Jesus, knowing that the Father had given all things into his hands, and that he had come from God and was going back to God, **rose from supper**. He laid aside his outer garments, and taking a towel, tied it around his waist. Then **he poured water into a basin and began to wash the disciples’ feet** and to wipe them with the towel that was wrapped around him.

He came to Simon Peter, who said to him, “Lord, do you wash my feet?” Jesus answered him, **“What I am doing you do not understand now, but afterward you will understand.”** Peter said to him, “You shall never wash my feet.” Jesus answered him, **“If I do not wash you, you have no share with me.”** Simon Peter said to him, “Lord, not my feet only but also my hands and my head!” Jesus said to him, “The one who has bathed does not need to wash, except for his feet, but is completely clean. And **you are clean** ...

When he had washed their feet and put on his outer garments and resumed his place, he said to them, **“Do you understand what I have done to you? You call me Teacher and Lord, and you are right, for so I am. If I then, your Lord and Teacher, have washed your feet, you also ought to wash one another’s feet. For I have given you an example, that you also should do just as I have done to you.”** Truly, truly, I say to you, a servant is not greater than his master, nor is a messenger greater than the one who sent him. **If you know these things, blessed are you if you do them.** (John 13:3-10a, 12-17 ESV)

The **“foot washing”** took place in conjunction with the **“traditional meal”**¹⁸⁸ before the new Passover symbols were given. The **“foot washing”** has several symbolic meanings:

- The Cristian life is one of growth, increasing understanding – **“What I am doing you do not understand now, but afterward you will understand”**
- Washing the feet echoes washing away sins by Jesus’ blood in baptism – **“If I do not wash you, you have no share with me”**
- Having repented and been baptised, a Christian is a new person to God – **“you are clean”**
- The Christian life is one of service, not position or privilege – **“I then, your Lord and Teacher, have washed your feet”**

¹⁸⁷ The traditions of mainstream “Christianity” are in direct violation of the clear teaching of the Bible.

¹⁸⁸ Note there are textual variants in verse two which raise questions as to exactly “when”, in conjunction with the traditional meal, the foot washing took place: see Aland page 381, Metzger “Commentary” page 239

- Christians are required to demonstrate an attitude of service – “**you also should do just as I have done to you**”
- Understanding comes through doing – “**If you know these things**”
- Knowledge requires action – “**blessed are you if you do them**”

The corruption of the New Testament Passover is one of the great lies of traditional “Christianity”. **The meaning and observance of the New Testament Passover is abundantly clear from the New Testament documents.** The doctrines developed by **the commandments of men** which are observed by traditional “Christianity” under the names of “communion”, “the Lord’s supper”, “the cup”, etc., are a heinous perversion of the plain teaching of the Bible. They are corruptions instigated by Satan the Devil to confuse people and point them away from true service to God.

9.11 Feasts in the Gospel of John

The Gospel of John was most likely written in Ephesus around 80-90AD (before the book of Revelation was written). The primary audience was the Churches of Asia Minor – largely converted Gentiles, but also some converted Jews of the Diaspora. The book contains no direct mention of the Sadducees because their influence had ceased with the destruction of the temple. The Sea of Galilee is called the Sea of Tiberias (John 6:1), not the Lake of Gennesaret (Luke 5:1) – “Gennesaret” was the traditional name; the name “Tiberias” came into use toward the end of the first century.

John’s objective was to supplement the synoptic gospels by providing important material which was not covered in them, and to provide a chronological framework of Christ’s ministry.¹⁸⁹ John states:

Now Jesus did many other signs in the presence of the disciples, which are not written in this book; but **these are written so that you may believe** that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God, and that by believing **you may have life in his name.** (John 20:30-31 ESV)

Now there are also many other things that Jesus did. Were every one of them to be written, I suppose that **the world itself could not contain the books that would be written.** (John 21:25 ESV)

To accomplish this purpose, **John structures his Gospel around seven miracles**¹⁹⁰ **and six feasts.** Two of the miracles are paralleled in the synoptic gospels; five are not. There are many additional miracles and much other material in the synoptic gospels. **The chronological framework of the feasts is unique to John – without it there would be no chronological data around the ministry of Christ.** The synoptic material not paralleled by John can be more or less conformed to John’s chronological structure.¹⁹¹

It is clear from John’s references to the various Feasts and appointed times, that his audience was familiar with them because they were observing them. It is also clear that **his audience was NOT familiar with the Jewish observances that had gone on before the destruction of the Temple** – John frequently points out differences between the Christian observance and the historic Jewish observance.

John first discusses a Passover in Jerusalem:

The Passover [pascha] **of the Jews** was at hand, and **Jesus went up to Jerusalem.** ... Now when he was in Jerusalem at the **Passover** [pascha] **Feast** [heortē], many believed in his name when they saw the signs that he was doing. ... So when he came to Galilee, the Galileans welcomed him, having seen all that he had done in Jerusalem at **the feast** [heortē]. For they too had gone to **the feast** [heortē]. (John 2:13, 23, 4:45 ESV)

John points out that **the Jewish custom was to go up to Jerusalem for the Passover.** John uses the term “**Passover Feast**” as an **inclusive for “The Passover” and “The Feast of Unleavened Bread”**, then he calls the whole period “**the feast**”. Next John mentions a “feast”, but does not say which one – the so called “**unnamed feast**”:

After this there was **a feast** [heortē] **of the Jews,** and **Jesus went up to Jerusalem.** (John 5:1 ESV)

¹⁸⁹ For a summary of the structure of the Gospel of John, see “**Framework of the Gospel of John**” on <https://mikewhytebiblicalresearch.ca/chronological-charts>

¹⁹⁰ For a discussion of the miracles recorded in the Gospel of John, see under “Bible Study Materials”, “**The Miracles of the Gospel of John**” on <https://mikewhytebiblicalresearch.ca/>; see also the power point presentation, “**The Miracles of the Gospel of John**” on <https://mikewhytebiblicalresearch.ca/presentations>

¹⁹¹ See Robertson pages 255-257, 267-270, 276-279

Another Passover is discussed next:

After this **Jesus went away to the other side of the Sea of Galilee, which is the Sea of Tiberias**. And a large crowd was following him, because they saw the signs that he was doing on the sick. Jesus went up on the mountain, and there he sat down with his disciples. Now **the Passover** [pascha], **the feast** [heortē] **of the Jews**, was at hand. (John 6:1-4 ESV)

John points out the approach of the Passover because of **the miracles Jesus performs at this time**: feeding five thousand¹⁹² and walking on water¹⁹³ – a public and a private demonstration of his identity which would be fully demonstrated by offering himself as **“The Passover Sacrifice”**.¹⁹⁴ Then John goes on to the most important teaching Jesus does at a Feast – **The Feast of Tabernacles**:

Now **the Jews’ Feast of Booths** [skēnopēgia] was at hand. So his brothers said to him, “Leave here and go to Judea, that your disciples also may see the works you are doing. For no one works in secret if he seeks to be known openly. If you do these things, show yourself to the world.” For not even his brothers believed in him. Jesus said to them, **“My time has not yet come**, but your time is always here. The world cannot hate you, but it hates me because I testify about it that its works are evil. **You go up to the feast** [heortē]. **I am not going up to this feast** [heortē], **for my time has not yet fully come**.” After saying this, he remained in Galilee.

But **after his brothers had gone up to the feast** [heortē], **then he also went up, not publicly but in private**. The Jews were looking for him at the feast [heortē], and saying, “Where is he?” And there was much muttering about him among the people. While some said, “He is a good man,” others said, “No, he is leading the people astray.” Yet for fear of the Jews no one spoke openly of him. (John 7:2-13 ESV)

About the middle of the feast [heortē] **Jesus went up into the temple and began teaching**. ... So Jesus answered them, **“My teaching is not mine, but his who sent me**. If anyone’s will is to do God’s will, he will know whether the teaching is from God or whether I am speaking on my own authority. The one who speaks on his own authority seeks his own glory; but **the one who seeks the glory of him who sent him is true, and in him there is no falsehood**. (John 7:14, 16-18 ESV)

On the last day of the feast [heortē], **the great day**,¹⁹⁵ Jesus stood up and cried out, “If anyone thirsts, let him come to me and drink. **Whoever believes in me**, as the Scripture has said, **‘Out of his heart will flow rivers of living water’**.” Now this he said about the Spirit, [which] those who believed in him were to receive, for as yet the Spirit had not been given, because Jesus was not yet glorified. (John 7:37-39 ESV)

John then moves on to **the final Passover**:

Now the **Passover** [pascha] **of the Jews was at hand**, and many went up from the country to Jerusalem before the Passover [pascha] to purify themselves. **They were looking for Jesus** and saying to one another as they stood **in the temple**, “What do you think? That he will not come to the feast [heortē] at all?” ... Six days before the Passover [pascha], **Jesus therefore came to Bethany**¹⁹⁶ ... The next day **the large crowd that had come to the feast** [heortē] **heard that Jesus was coming to Jerusalem**. So they took branches of palm trees and went out to meet him, crying out, “Hosanna! Blessed is he who comes in the name of the Lord, even **the King of Israel**!” (John 11:55-56, 12:1, 12-13 ESV)

The writings of the Apostle John are critical to the understanding of the life and teaching of Jesus Christ. John brilliantly uses the mnemonic device of the seven miracles and six feasts to organize his material. In the ancient world, **the vast majority of the people did NOT have access to written materials**. When an author wrote, the assumed audience was a **“listening”** audience. The author assumed his **material would be read aloud to the audience**.¹⁹⁷ Paul exhorted Timothy to do this: Until I come, devote yourself to **public reading of Scripture** ... (1 Timothy 4:13 ESV)

By keying his teaching to the events of the life of Christ, John gave his hearers **a means to more accurately remember his message**. Without John’s having done this, we would have no chronological data on the life of Christ. John’s use of the **Feasts and appointed times** make it clear that **the Church at the end of the first century was familiar with them and observing them**, albeit differently from the way the Jews had observed them prior to the destruction of the Temple.

¹⁹² See John 6:5-14 // Mark 6:35-44, Matthew 14:15-21, Luke 9:12-17

¹⁹³ See John 6:16-21 // Mark 6:45-50, Matthew 14:22-27

¹⁹⁴ See Jesus’ discussion of “the bread of life” in John 6:22-59

¹⁹⁵ There is disagreement as to whether this is the “seventh day of the Feast of Tabernacles” or the “eighth day”.

¹⁹⁶ Bethany is very close to Jerusalem, just east of the Mount of Olives. Mary, Martha, and Lazarus lived there – likely where Jesus stayed. Jesus used this as a base of operations for the six days prior to the crucifixion.

¹⁹⁷ See for example Jeremiah 36:4-6, 10

10. The Role of Sacrifices

The purpose of “sacrifices” is to render human beings to a state where God can account them “holy”; and, therefore, **allow human beings to have contact with God.** The Old Testament sacrificial system is specified in Leviticus chapters one through seven.¹⁹⁸ Theoretically, the sacrificial system could have been simpler:

For in the day that I brought them out of the land of Egypt, **I did not speak to your fathers or command them concerning burnt offerings and sacrifices.** But this command I gave them: **‘Obey my voice,** and I will be your God, and you shall be my people. And **walk in all the way that I command you,** that it may be well with you. (Jeremiah 7:22-23 ESV)

The violation of the covenant agreement by the Golden Calf incident is discussed above in section **9.3 The Covenant of Performance.** This incident precipitated the detailed sacrificial system. However, from the beginning God had intended human beings to offer sacrifices:

In the course of time Cain brought to the LORD **an offering of the fruit of the ground,** and Abel also brought **of the firstborn of his flock** and of their fat portions. And the LORD had regard for Abel and his **offering,** but for Cain and his **offering** he had no regard. (Genesis 4:3-5a ESV)

We are nowhere informed as to how Cain and Abel knew to provide offerings. Obviously, there was instruction from God to human beings that has not been preserved. But even before this, **the Plan of God** was set in motion leading up to the **“ultimate sacrifice”**:

The LORD God said **to the serpent,** “Because you have done this ... I will put enmity between you and **the woman,** and between **your offspring** and **her offspring;** he shall bruise your head, and you shall bruise his heel.” (Genesis 3:14a, 15 ESV)

The “serpent” was a proxy for Satan the Devil.¹⁹⁹ The “woman”, Eve, is a type of **the people of God,** Israel and the Church, True Worshipers. The “offspring” of Satan is “this world”, the corrupted civilizations that human beings have created under Satan’s influence. The **“offspring of the woman”** is Jesus Christ. The verse is known as the **“protoevangelium”**.²⁰⁰ It is the beginning of a long series of Old Testament prophecies which predict the coming of Jesus the Messiah, his life, and sacrifice. The fulfilment of these prophecies is recounted in the New Testament.

10.1 Efficacy of Sacrifices in the Old Testament

The first formal sacrificial event recorded is after the flood when Noah and his family descend from the Ark:

So Noah went out, and his sons and his wife and his sons’ wives with him. ... Then **Noah built an altar** to the LORD and took some of every clean animal and some of every clean bird **and offered burnt offerings** on the altar. And when **the LORD smelled the pleasing aroma** ... (Genesis 8:18, 20-21a ESV)

Again, we have no record of how Noah was familiar with the concepts of “building an altar” and “burnt offerings”, but what is new is that God accepted the offering as a **“pleasing aroma”**. What is a “pleasing aroma”? The Hebrew words are רִיחַ נִיחֹהַ - reah nihoah, literally, “aroma, satisfaction”. The word *reah* is the ordinary word for “odor”, “scent”, “fragrance”.²⁰¹ The word *nihoah* is used almost exclusively with *reah* as **a technical term for the reaction of YHWH to an offered sacrifice** – “a pleasing aroma”.²⁰²

Why is God pleased with the aroma of a sacrifice? In the first room of the Tabernacle there was a small golden altar upon which fragrant incense was to be burned daily:

You shall **make an altar on which to burn incense** ... A cubit shall be its length, and a cubit its breadth. It shall be square, and two cubits shall be its height. Its horns shall be of one piece with it. You shall **overlay it with pure gold** ... And you shall **put it in front of the veil** that is above the ark of the testimony, in front of the mercy seat that is above the testimony, **where I will meet with you.** And Aaron shall burn fragrant incense on it. Every morning ... and ... at twilight, he shall burn it, **a regular incense offering** before the

¹⁹⁸ See *Excursus 6 – Terminology of Sacrifices*; see also the discussion in sections **2. The Aaronic Priesthood** and **6. Holiness** of the paper **“To Be a Priest”** located at <https://mikewhytebiblicalresearch.ca/>

¹⁹⁹ See Revelation 12:9

²⁰⁰ See the Wikipedia article, https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Seed_of_the_woman, for a general discussion and references.

²⁰¹ See Holladay page 339

²⁰² See Holladay page 237

LORD throughout your generations. **You shall not offer** unauthorized incense on it, or a burnt offering, or a grain offering, and you shall not pour a drink offering on it. **Aaron shall make atonement** on its horns once a year. With **the blood of the sin offering of atonement** he shall make atonement for it once in the year throughout your generations. **It is most holy to the LORD.** (Exodus 30:1a, 2-3a, 6-7a, 8b-10 ESV)

Facts about the alter of incense:

- It was located in front of the Most Holy Place from which the presence of God emanated
- Morning and evening special incense was to be burned
- No other offerings were to be placed on the incense alter
- Once a year, in the Day of Atonement ritual,²⁰³ the horns of the alter were touched with blood
- The incense alter is **“most holy to YHWH”**

The curtain between the Holy Place and the Most Holy Place, before which the alter of incense sat, represented **the separation of the Holy God from inherently sinful human beings**. This curtain in the Temple was supernaturally torn in half at the death of Jesus Christ:

And Jesus uttered a loud cry and breathed his last. And **the curtain of the temple was torn in two**, from top to bottom. (Mark 15:37-38 ESV // Matthew 27:50-51, Luke 23:45-46)

“Incense” represents to God the “prayers of the saints”, the communication of True Worshippers of God with their heavenly Father:

O LORD, I call upon you; hasten to me! Give ear to my voice when I call to you!

Let my prayer be counted as incense before you,
and the lifting up of my hands as the evening sacrifice! (Psalms 141:1-2 ESV)

And when he had taken the scroll, the four living creatures and the twenty-four elders **fell down before the Lamb**, each holding a harp, and **golden bowls full of incense**, which are **the prayers of the saints**.

And another angel came and stood at the altar with a golden censer, and he was given **much incense** to **offer with the prayers of all the saints** on **the golden altar before the throne**, and the smoke of the **incense**, with **the prayers of the saints**, rose before God from the hand of the angel.
(Revelation 5:8, 8:3-4 ESV)

From the beginning, God has desired a close relationship with those human beings whom he calls, who repent, and who **accept the terms of the relationship as specified by God**. The **“pleasing aroma”** of sacrifice represents the **communication** between God and his children **upon which the relationship is based**.

When the time came for God to **commence the execution of his Plan of Salvation** by creating the physical nation of Israel, the people of Israel were slaves in Egypt. To establish his position as Suzerain over the slaves, YHWH had to defeat the Egyptians and deliver Israel from slavery. The final act of deliverance was the **death of the “firstborn” in all of Egypt**.²⁰⁴ This act of deliverance was intimately tied to a unique sacrifice – the **personal sacrifice of a lamb by each household**. The blood of the lamb was used as a sign on each household to protect the “firstborn” within it. The lamb was consumed by the household in a “covenant” meal which committed that household to serve YHWH.

God “knew” when time to act had come:

... **the people of Israel groaned because of their slavery** and cried out for help. Their cry for rescue from slavery came up to God. And **God heard** their groaning, and **God remembered** his covenant with Abraham, with Isaac, and with Jacob. **God saw** the people of Israel—and **God knew**.
(Exodus 2:23b-25 ESV)

God instructed Moses to challenge Pharaoh – God won the challenge:

And the LORD said to Moses, “When you go back to Egypt, see that you do before Pharaoh all the miracles that I have put in your power. But I will harden his heart, so that he will not let the people go. Then you shall say to Pharaoh, ‘**Thus says the LORD, Israel is my firstborn son**, and I say to you, “Let my son go that he may serve me.” **If you refuse to let him go, behold, I will kill your firstborn son.**”

At midnight the LORD struck down all the firstborn in the land of Egypt, from the firstborn of Pharaoh who sat on his throne to the firstborn of the captive who was in the dungeon, and all the firstborn of the livestock. And Pharaoh rose up in the night, he and all his servants and all the Egyptians. And **there was a**

²⁰³ See the discussion of the Day of Atonement ritual in section **6.2 The Book of Leviticus** of the paper “**To Be a Priest**”, located at <https://mikewhytebiblicalresearch.ca/>

²⁰⁴ See **Excursus 7 – The Firstborn Son**

great cry in Egypt, for there was not a house where someone was not dead. Then he summoned Moses and Aaron by night and said, “Up, **go out from among my people**, both you and the people of Israel; and go, **serve the LORD**, as you have said. (Exodus 4:21-23, 12:29-31 ESV)

Deliverance for the people of Israel began with the sacrifice of a lamb:

Tell all the congregation of Israel that on the tenth day of this month **every man shall take a lamb** according to their fathers’ houses, **a lamb for a household**. ... **Your lamb shall be without blemish**, a male a year old. You may take it from the sheep or from the goats, and you shall keep it until the fourteenth day of this month, when **the whole assembly of the congregation of Israel shall kill their lambs at twilight**. Then they shall **take some of the blood** and put it **on the two doorposts and the lintel** of the houses in which they eat it. They shall **eat the flesh that night**, roasted on the fire; with unleavened bread and bitter herbs they shall eat it. ... **The blood shall be a sign for you**, on the houses where you are. And when I see the blood, **I will pass over you**, and no plague will befall you to destroy you, when I strike the land of Egypt. (Exodus 12:3, 5-8, 13 ESV)

The “blood” of the lamb was very real to the Israelites – in the morning they saw the destruction wrought upon the Egyptians from which **they were protected by the “blood”**. Following this salvific action, God effected the deliverance of Israel across the desert and through Yam Suph, where the final attack of the Egyptians was thwarted. Then the nation of Israel was created at Mount Sinai with the Sinai Covenant,²⁰⁵ with the requirement that **they were to become a “holy nation”**.²⁰⁶

God is inherently holy. Human beings are inherently sinful, yet **God commands us to be holy**:

... for **all have sinned** and fall short of the glory of God ... (Romans 3:23 ESV)

For I am the LORD your God. **Consecrate yourselves therefore, and be holy, for I am holy**. You shall not defile yourselves ... For I am the LORD who brought you up out of the land of Egypt to be your God. **You shall therefore be holy, for I am holy**. ... **You shall be holy to me**, for **I the LORD am holy** and have separated you from the peoples, that you should be mine.

(Leviticus 11:44-45, 20:26 ESV, see also Leviticus 19:2, 20:7, 21:8, 1 Peter 1:15-16)

How can sinful human beings be accounted as holy by God?²⁰⁷ If anything that is “unclean” or “common” comes into contact with something that is “holy”, it must be destroyed. Any offering given to God becomes “holy” by its being put into the presence of God. Any offering that was put onto the bronze altar had to be completely burned up:

Then you shall take one of the rams ... and **burn the whole ram** on the altar. It is a burnt offering to the LORD. ... **Whatever touches the altar shall become holy**. (Exodus 29:15a, 18a, 37b ESV)

Any living thing that could not be used as an offering, that came into contact with something holy, was **“devoted to destruction”**:

But no devoted thing that a man devotes to the LORD, of anything that he has, whether man or beast, or of his inherited field, shall be sold or redeemed; **every devoted thing is most holy to the LORD**. No one devoted, who is to be **devoted for destruction** from mankind, shall be ransomed; **he shall surely be put to death**. (Leviticus 27:28-29 ESV)

The Hebrew word is **הֵרֵם** – *herem*, a masculine noun, meaning “devoted thing”. The root verb is **הָרַם** - *haram*, “devote”, “destroy utterly”.²⁰⁸ When the Israelites entered the Promised Land, all the inhabitants were “devoted to destruction” as “unclean” to prevent them from coming into contact with the Israelites, whom God accounted as “holy”:

When the LORD your God brings you into the land that you are entering to take possession of it, and clears away many nations before you ... you must **devote them to complete destruction**. You shall make no covenant with them and **show no mercy to them**. You shall not intermarry with them, giving your daughters to their sons or taking their daughters for your sons, for **they would turn away your sons from following me, to serve other gods**. (Deuteronomy 7:1a, 2b-4a ESV)

... Joshua said to the people, “Shout, for **the LORD has given you the city**. And the city and **all that is within it shall be devoted to the LORD for destruction**. ... Then **they devoted all in the city to destruction**, both men and women, young and old, oxen, sheep, and donkeys, with the edge of the sword. (Joshua 6:16b-17a, 21)

²⁰⁵ See the discussion of the Sinai Covenant in section 4. *The Covenant of Knowledge* in the paper “Covenants of Grace” located at <https://mikewhytebiblicalresearch.ca/>

²⁰⁶ See Exodus 19:6

²⁰⁷ See section 6. *Holiness* of the paper “To Be a Priest”, located at <https://mikewhytebiblicalresearch.ca/>

²⁰⁸ See TWOT article 744 page 324

Any sin rendered an Israelite “unclean”. Disease, contact with a dead body, and various other conditions also rendered a person “unclean”. When an Israelite became “unclean”, it was necessary to make an animal sacrifice. An example of the instruction is the case of “childbirth”:

If a woman conceives and bears a male child, then she shall be unclean seven days. ... Then she shall continue for thirty-three days in the blood of her purifying. She shall not touch anything holy, nor come into the sanctuary, until the days of her purifying are completed. ... And when the days of her purifying are completed ... she shall bring to the priest at the entrance of the tent of meeting a lamb a year old for a burnt offering, and a pigeon or a turtledove for a sin offering, and he shall offer it before the LORD and make atonement for her. ... And the priest shall make atonement for her, and she shall be clean. (Leviticus 12:2a, 4, 6-7a, 8b ESV)

Jesus’ parents were careful to carry out this instruction:

And **when the time came for their purification** according to the [nomos] of Moses, **they brought him up to Jerusalem to present him to the Lord** (as it is written in the [nomos]²⁰⁹ of the Lord, “Every male who first opens the womb shall be called holy to the Lord”) **and to offer a sacrifice** according to what is said in the [nomos] of the Lord, “a pair of turtledoves, or two young pigeons.” (Luke 2:22-24 ESV)

The blood of the sacrifice allowed God to consider the offeror “clean” and therefore account the offeror “holy” so that contact with God was possible:

... without the shedding of blood there is no forgiveness of sins. (Hebrews 9:22b ESV)

Anything that was to be used in the service of God had to be “consecrated” to “holy use” by the presence of God:

Now this is what you shall offer on the altar ... It shall be **a regular burnt offering** throughout your generations **at the entrance of the tent of meeting** before the LORD, where I will meet with you, to speak to you there. There I will meet with the people of Israel, and **it shall be sanctified by my glory.** I will **consecrate the tent of meeting and the altar. Aaron also and his sons I will consecrate to serve me** as priests. **I will dwell among the people of Israel and will be their God.** And they shall know that I am the LORD their God, who brought them out of the land of Egypt that I might dwell among them. I am the LORD their God. (Exodus 29:38a, 42-46 ESV)

When the Tabernacle was completed, there was **a formal consecration ceremony**, and the presence of YHWH rendered the Tabernacle “holy”:

The LORD spoke to Moses, saying, “On the first day of the first month **you shall erect the tabernacle** of the tent of meeting. ... Then you shall **take the anointing oil and anoint the tabernacle** and all that is in it, and **consecrate it** and all its furniture, **so that it may become holy.** You shall also **anoint the altar** of burnt offering and all its utensils, and **consecrate the altar, so that the altar may become most holy.** You shall also anoint the basin and its stand, and consecrate it. ...”

Then the cloud covered the tent of meeting, and **the glory of the LORD filled the tabernacle.** And Moses was not able to enter the tent of meeting because the cloud settled on it, and the glory of the LORD filled the tabernacle. (Exodus 40:1-2, 9-11, 34-35 ESV)

Aaron and his sons required a more elaborate ceremony before they could commence their duties. In Exodus chapter twenty-nine, Moses is given the instructions for the ceremony, and its actual enactment is described in Leviticus chapter eight.²¹⁰ The ceremony started with the sacrifice of a “bull” as a “sin” offering. This “atoned” for the sinful nature of Aaron, rendering him “clean” so that YHWH could account him “holy”:

Then he brought **the bull of the sin offering**, and Aaron and his sons laid their hands on the head of the bull of the sin offering. And he killed it, and Moses took the blood, and with his finger put it on the horns of the altar around it and purified the altar and poured out the blood at the base of the altar and **consecrated it to make atonement for it.** (Leviticus 8:14-15 ESV)

Then a “ram” was presented as a “burnt offering”. The total consumption of a “burnt offering” depicts complete commitment to God, to live by his Way, **full submission to his service.** Note that the “sin offering” is always required prior to the “burnt offering”. **A person must be rendered “holy” before it is possible to make a commitment to serve God:**

Then he presented **the ram of the burnt offering**, and Aaron and his sons laid their hands on the head of the ram. And he killed it, and Moses threw the blood against the sides of the altar. He cut the ram into

²⁰⁹ See *Excursus 8 – torah and nomos*

²¹⁰ Note that Exodus 40:1-33 and Leviticus 8:1-36 are descriptions of the same ceremony. Exodus focuses on the Tabernacle and its accoutrements; Leviticus focuses on Aaron and his sons.

pieces, and Moses burned the head and the pieces and the fat. He washed the entrails and the legs with water, and **Moses burned the whole ram on the altar**. It was a burnt offering with a pleasing aroma, an offering by fire for the LORD, as the LORD commanded Moses. (Leviticus 8:18-21 ESV)

Next a special offering was made, a **“ram of ordination”**. Only the inedible parts of this animal were burned – most of it was eaten by Moses, Aaron, and his sons. Along with the “ram” some “unleavened bread” was involved in the offering. Some of the “unleavened bread” was put into the hands of Aaron and his sons and “waved” before YHWH – **this put the waved object in God’s presence making it “holy”**. Symbolically, Aaron and his sons were **“presented for holy service” – ordained to be priests**. The waved bread was then burned with the burnt offering. Part of the animal was also “waved”:

Then he presented the other ram, **the ram of ordination**, and Aaron and his sons laid their hands on the head of the ram. ... Then **he presented Aaron’s sons**, and Moses put some of the blood on the lobes of their right ears and on the thumbs of their right hands and on the big toes of their right feet. ... **out of the basket of unleavened bread** that was before the LORD he took one unleavened loaf and one loaf of bread with oil and one wafer and placed them on the pieces of fat and on the right thigh. And **he put all these in the hands of Aaron and in the hands of his sons and waved them as a wave offering before the LORD**. **Then Moses took them from their hands and burned them** on the altar with the burnt offering. This was **an ordination offering with a pleasing aroma**, an offering by fire to the LORD. And **Moses took the breast and waved it for a wave offering before the LORD**. It was Moses’ portion of the ram of ordination, as the LORD commanded Moses. (Leviticus 8:22, 24a, 26-29 ESV)

Later, **the whole tribe of Levi was consecrated** to the service of the Tabernacle **through a “wave offering”**:

And the LORD spoke to Moses, saying, **“Take the Levites** from among the people of Israel and cleanse them. ... And you shall bring the Levites before the tent of meeting and assemble the whole congregation of the people of Israel. When you bring the Levites before the LORD, **the people of Israel shall lay their hands on the Levites**, and **Aaron shall offer the Levites before the LORD as a wave offering** from the people of Israel, **that they may do the service of the LORD**. Then the Levites shall lay their hands on the heads of the bulls, and you shall offer the one for a sin offering and the other for a burnt offering to the LORD to make atonement for the Levites. And you shall **set the Levites before Aaron and his sons**, and shall **offer them as a wave offering to the LORD**. “Thus you shall separate the Levites from among the people of Israel, and **the Levites shall be mine**. And **after that the Levites shall go in to serve** at the tent of meeting, **when you have cleansed them and offered them as a wave offering**. (Numbers 8:5-6, 9-15 ESV)

From the beginning, the Plan of God has included the need for sacrifices. Jesus, as YHWH, knew his role was as **“... the Lamb who was slain before the foundation of the world ...”** (Revelation 13:8). The entire sacrificial system of the Old Testament was a surrogate for the nation of Israel so that God could have contact with them. **All the sacrifices pointed to Jesus Christ**. His sacrifice obviated the need for all animal sacrifices – yet **the rich lessons to be learned from the teaching related to the sacrifices is vital for True Worshippers**:

- The shedding of “blood” is required for the forgiveness of sin
- To come in contact with God, God must account a person “holy” – this can only happen when sins are forgiven
- The “sin” offering precedes the “burnt” offering: forgiveness is required before service
- To serve God, a person must be brought into God’s presence as a “wave” offering
- Any relationship is based on communication: God desires a relationship with each and every True Worshipper – prayers are a “pleasing aroma” to God as represented by the “smoke of a sacrifice”

10.2 Corruption of Sacrifices

From the beginning, God was very concerned about how sacrifices were presented – **the attitude and the intent of the offeror**, the offeror’s “heart”, being the most important aspect:

... and Abel also brought of the firstborn of his flock and of their fat portions. And **the LORD had regard for Abel and his offering**, but **for Cain and his offering he had no regard**. So **Cain was very angry**, and his face fell. The LORD said to Cain, “Why are you angry, and why has your face fallen? (Genesis 4:4-6 ESV)

The offered items in themselves certainly provided no basis for YHWH's disapproval – produce and animals were both acceptable offerings. Clearly, Cain presented his offering with a wrong attitude, **“Cain was very angry”**. His subsequent actions demonstrate the intentions of his heart.

The **deaths of Nadab and Abihu** provide for all True Worshipers of God an object lesson in the seriousness of **coming before God**. God's calling to be a True Worshiper, **to become holy**, is the most significant event in a person's life. Nadab and Abihu had just gone through a formal ceremony to be **consecrated and ordained to the service of YHWH**. They had just participated in the first public worship service involving the people of Israel at the Tabernacle.²¹¹ Then for whatever reason, they thought they could derive an innovation and **approach the Tent of Meeting in an unclean state**:

Now Nadab and Abihu, the sons of Aaron, each took his censer and put fire in it and laid incense on it and **offered unauthorized fire** before the LORD, **which he had not commanded them**. And fire came out from before the LORD and consumed them, and **they died before the LORD**. Then Moses said to Aaron, “This is what the LORD has said: **‘Among those who are near me I will be sanctified**, and before all the people I will be glorified.’” And Aaron held his peace. (Leviticus 10:1-3 ESV)

The only prescribed service at the Tabernacle using “fire on a censer” was the Day of Atonement ritual.²¹² Did Nadab and Abihu actually intend to go into the Most Holy Place? We are not told their intentions; but clearly, they were in an “unclean” state, **“among those who are near me I will be sanctified”**. In talking to Aaron and his surviving sons, Eleazer and Ithamar, Moses records the words of YHWH:

And the LORD spoke to Aaron, saying, **“Drink no wine or strong drink, you or your sons with you, when you go into the tent of meeting, lest you die. It shall be a statute forever throughout your generations. You are to distinguish between the holy and the common, and between the unclean and the clean, and you are to teach the people of Israel all the statutes that the LORD has spoken to them by Moses.”** (Leviticus 10:8-11 ESV)

Possibly Nadab and Abihu were drunk. In any case, the purpose of the object lesson is clear, **“you are to distinguish between the holy and the common, and between the clean and the unclean”**. Nadab and Abihu did NOT do this. Aaron is enjoined to **“teach the people of Israel”**. This is a lesson for all True Worshipers of the True God.

The only significant event recorded during the thirty-eight years of wandering **is the rebellion of Korah, Dathan, and Abiram**.²¹³ The Book of Numbers records that **Moses had just reassured the people of Israel that they would enter the Promised Land**. Some details were presented on the use of the produce of the land in offering and sacrifice:

The LORD spoke to Moses, saying, “Speak to the people of Israel and say to them, **When you come into the land you are to inhabit**, which I am giving you, and you offer to the LORD from the herd or from the flock an offering by fire, ~~or~~²¹⁴ a burnt offering or a sacrifice, to fulfill a vow or as a freewill offering or at your appointed [times], to make a pleasing aroma to the LORD ... As many as you offer, so shall you do with each one, as many as there are. **Every native Israelite shall do these things in this way**, in offering an offering by fire, with a pleasing aroma to the LORD. And if **a stranger** is sojourning with you, or **anyone is living permanently among you**, and he wishes to offer an offering by fire, with a pleasing aroma to the LORD, he **shall do as you do**. ... So **you shall remember and do all my commandments**, and **be holy to your God**. I am the LORD your God, who brought you out of the land of Egypt to be your God: I am the LORD your God.” (Numbers 15:1-3, 12-14, 40-41 ESV)

Then the events of the rebellion are recorded. **The rebellion was widespread**: Korah was from the clan of Izhar, a sub-clan of the Kohathites; Aaron and Moses were from the clan of Amram, also a sub-clan of the Kohathites.²¹⁵ **The Kohathites were tasked with guarding and transporting the Tabernacle tent and its contents under the supervision of Aaron's sons**.²¹⁶ There may have been resentment over the role of Aaron's sons. **Dathan and Abiram were of the tribe of Reuben, Jacob's firstborn son**. Normally, the

²¹¹ See Leviticus chapter nine and the discussion of it in section 3. *The Intercessory Role of the Aaronic Priesthood* of the paper “To Be a Priest”, located at <https://mikewhytebiblicalresearch.ca/>

²¹² See Leviticus 16:12-14

²¹³ See Numbers 16:1-40; “On” is also mentioned in verse one, but not again.

²¹⁴ The translator has supplied “or”: in Hebrew the “burnt offering or sacrifice” are in apposition to the “offering by fire”.

²¹⁵ See Exodus 6:16,18,20 Numbers 3:27

²¹⁶ See Numbers 3:30-32, 4:4-15

firstborn son in a family was entitled to the preeminence,²¹⁷ but Jacob predicted that it would pass from Reuben²¹⁸ – clearly **Levi was being given the preeminence over Reuben**; again, possibly incurring resentment. In addition, some 250 “chiefs of the congregation” openly supported the rebellion:

Now **Korah** the son of Izhar, **son of Kohath**, son of Levi, and **Dathan** and **Abiram** the sons of Eliab, and **On** the son of Peleth, **sons of Reuben**, took men. And they rose up before Moses, with a number of the people of Israel, **250 chiefs of the congregation**, chosen from the assembly, well-known men. They **assembled themselves together against Moses and against Aaron** and said to them, “You have gone too far! For **all in the congregation are holy**, every one of them, and the LORD is among them. Why then do you exalt yourselves above the assembly of the LORD?” (Numbers 16:1-3 ESV)

God had reminded the people to **“be holy to your God”**. Those challenging Moses and Aaron insisted that **“all in the congregation are holy”**. This represented a severe lack of understanding of the teaching from God through Moses – **attaining “holiness” is a life-long process** dependent upon the calling and election of God. **They were not willing to accept the terms of God’s calling**, but thought they were entitled to more – **they thought that they could worship God on their own terms**:

When Moses heard it, he fell on his face, and he said to Korah and all his company, “In the morning the LORD will show who is his, and who is holy, and will bring him near to him. **The one whom he chooses he will bring near to him**. Do this: take censers, Korah and all his company; put fire in them and put incense on them before the LORD tomorrow, and the man whom the LORD chooses shall be the holy one. You have gone too far, sons of Levi!”

And Moses said to Korah, “Hear now, you sons of Levi: is it too small a thing for you that **the God of Israel has separated you from the congregation of Israel, to bring you near to himself, to do service in the tabernacle** of the LORD and to stand before the congregation to minister to them, and that he has brought you near him, and all your brothers the sons of Levi with you? And **would you seek the priesthood also**? Therefore it is against the LORD that you and all your company have gathered together. What is Aaron that you grumble against him?” (Numbers 16:4-11 ESV)

King Saul provides a classic example of **a perfunctory attitude to offering sacrifices to God**. Saul was about to engage in major battle with the Philistines. Samuel, as God’s prophet, would instruct Samuel on God’s intentions in the battle. Samuel had instructed Saul to wait for him at Gilgal before engaging in the battle. **Samuel’s presence involved sacrifices which Saul apparently regarded as a mere formality**:

He waited seven days, the time appointed by Samuel. But Samuel did not come to Gilgal, and the people were scattering from him. **So Saul said, “Bring the burnt offering”²¹⁹ here to me, and the peace offerings.** And he offered the burnt offering. As soon as he had finished offering the burnt offering, behold, Samuel came. And Saul went out to meet him and greet him. Samuel said, “What have you done?” And Saul said, “When I saw that the people were scattering from me, and that you did not come within the days appointed, and that the Philistines had mustered at Michmash, I said, ‘Now the Philistines will come down against me at Gilgal, and **I have not sought the favor of the LORD.**’ **So I forced myself**, and offered the burnt offering.” And Samuel said to Saul, “You have done foolishly. **You have not kept the command of the LORD your God**, with which he commanded you. (1 Samuel 13:8-13a ESV see also 1 Samuel 15:25, 30-31)²²⁰

This was the beginning of the end for Saul – **his attitude continued to deteriorate** until he was utterly rejected by God. The **reason for his rejection** is summarized:

“Has the LORD as great delight in burnt offerings and sacrifices, as in obeying the voice of the LORD? Behold, **to obey is better than sacrifice**, and to listen than the fat of rams. For rebellion is as the sin of divination, and **presumption is as iniquity and idolatry**. Because you have rejected the word of the LORD, he has also rejected you from being king.” (1 Samuel 15:22-23 ESV)

This sentiment is repeated many times by the later prophets:

What shall I do with you, O Ephraim? What shall I do with you, O Judah?

Your [hesed] is like a morning cloud, like the dew that goes early away.

Therefore I have hewn them by the prophets;

I have slain them by the **words** of my mouth, and my **[mish*patim]**²²¹ goes forth as the light.

²¹⁷ See [Excursus 7 – The Firstborn Son](#)

²¹⁸ See Genesis 49:3-4

²¹⁹ Note also that a “sin” offering should have preceded the “burnt” offering.

²²⁰ The *hish*tahawah* shown by Bil’am (Balaam) to “the angel of YHWH” seems also to be of a perfunctory nature (Numbers 22:22-35).

²²¹ In this context, *mish*patim*, plural, is parallel to “words”, so it implies the understanding of the teaching of God.

For I desire [hesed] and not sacrifice, the knowledge of God rather than burnt offerings.
(Hosea 6:4-6 ESV)

"I hate, I despise your feasts, and I take no delight in your solemn assemblies.
Even though you offer me your burnt offerings and grain offerings, I will not accept them;
and the peace offerings of your fattened animals, I will not look upon them.
Take away from me the noise of your songs; to the melody of your harps I will not listen.
But let [mish^epat]²²² roll down like waters, and righteousness like an ever-flowing stream.
(Amos 5:21-24 ESV)

What to me is the multitude of your sacrifices? says the LORD;
I have had enough of burnt offerings of rams and the fat of well-fed beasts;
I do not delight in the blood of bulls, or of lambs, or of goats.
When you come to appear before me, who has required of you this trampling of my courts?
Bring no more vain offerings; incense is an abomination to me.
New moon and Sabbath and the calling of convocations—I cannot endure iniquity and solemn assembly.
Your new moons and your appointed [times] my [being] hates;
they have become a burden to me; I am weary of bearing them.
When you spread out your hands, I will hide my eyes from you;
even though you make many prayers, I will not listen; your hands are full of blood.
Wash yourselves; make yourselves clean;
remove the evil of your deeds from before my eyes; cease to do evil, learn to do good
seek [mish^epat],²²³ correct oppression; bring justice to the fatherless, plead the widow's cause.
(Isaiah 1:11-17 ESV)

But this is the one to whom I will look: he who is humble and contrite in spirit and trembles at my word.
He who slaughters an ox is like one who kills a man;
he who sacrifices a lamb, like one who breaks a dog's neck;
he who presents a grain offering, like one who offers pig's blood;
he who makes a memorial offering of frankincense, like one who blesses an idol.
These have chosen their own ways, and their [heart] delights in their abominations;
I also will choose harsh treatment for them and bring their fears upon them,
because when I called, no one answered, when I spoke, they did not listen;
but they did what was evil in my eyes and chose that in which I did not delight.
(Isaiah 66:2b-4 ESV)

Hear, O earth; behold, I am bringing disaster upon this people, the fruit of their devices,
because they have not paid attention to my words; and as for my [torah], they have rejected it.
What use to me is frankincense that comes from Sheba, or sweet cane from a distant land?
Your burnt offerings are not acceptable, nor your sacrifices pleasing to me. (Jeremiah 6:19-20 ESV)
The LORD said to me: "Do not pray for the welfare of this people. Though they fast, I will not hear their cry, and though they offer burnt offering and grain offering, I will not accept them. But I will consume them by the sword, by famine, and by pestilence." (Jeremiah 14:11-12 ESV)

The prophet Micah captures the essence of the correct attitude to offering sacrifices:

"With what shall I come before the LORD, and bow myself before God on high?
Shall I come before him with burnt offerings, with calves a year old?
Will the LORD be pleased with thousands of rams, with ten thousands of rivers of oil?
Shall I give my firstborn for my transgression, the fruit of my body for the sin of my [life]?"
He has told you, O man, what is good; and what does the LORD require of you
but to do [mish^epat],²²⁴ and to love [hesed], and to walk humbly with your God? (Micah 6:6-8 ESV)

The most important word describing the Nature of God is *hesed* – God's unequivocal love for those he calls to be his children. The word *mish^epat* as a character attribute of God describes his "justness" – complete "fairness", "impartiality", "righteousness" in all his dealings. God requires those he calls to learn these character attributes and through the Holy Spirit make them part of their own character. To "walk humbly" with God is the essence of the Sinai Covenant – "obey my voice".²²⁵

²²² In this context, *mish^epat*, singular, is parallel to "righteousness", it is a character attribute of God, "justness", which he requires True Worshipers to learn.

²²³ In this context, *mish^epat*, singular, is parallel to a series of desired social outcomes, so it is the result of the application of the teaching of God.

²²⁴ In this context, *mish^epat*, singular, is parallel to a series of required character attributes so, it implies "justness"; but it is the object of the verb *'asah*, "to do", meaning here "to live by", so the full meaning is to acquire the character attribute of justness by living by the Way of God.

²²⁵ See Exodus 19:5

King David, in contrast to King Saul, understood the Nature of God, and his requirements of those he calls, the correct attitude to coming before God with an offering:

For **you will not delight in sacrifice**, or I would give it; you will not be pleased with a burnt offering. The **sacrifices of God** are a **broken spirit**; a broken and **contrite heart**, O God, you will not despise. **Do good to Zion** in your good pleasure; build up the walls of **Jerusalem**; **then will you delight in right sacrifices**, in burnt offerings and whole burnt offerings; then bulls will be offered on your altar. (Psalm 51:16-19 ESV)

The True Worshipper of the True God comes before him with a “**broken spirit and contrite heart**” – an attitude of true humility, reciprocating the *hesed* of God and demonstrating *mish'pat* in the worshipper's way of life. Given this attitude, a True Worshipper can confidently request God to do his “good pleasure” and build up the **spiritual “Zion”, “Jerusalem”, the mother of us all.**²²⁶ Then God will be delighted in the “**living sacrifices**” offered to please God.

10.3 Christian Sacrifices

Since the sacrifice of Jesus Christ, **to be a True Worshipper of the True God means to be a “Christian”** as defined by the New Testament. To be a “Christian”, a person must be “**called**” by God, the person must “**repent**” accepting the “**sacrifice**” of Jesus Christ as propitiation for sin, the person must be “**baptized**” for remission of sins, and the person must **receive the gift of the Holy Spirit**. Through the Holy Spirit a Christian can **live by the Way of God**, learning to be “**holy**”, and then in his mercy God may grant “**the gift of eternal life**” at the First Resurrection:

To this end we always pray for you, that our **God may make you worthy of his calling** and may fulfill every resolve for good and every work of faith by his power, so that the name of our Lord Jesus may be glorified in you, and you in him, **according to the grace of our God and the Lord Jesus Christ.** (2 Thessalonians 1:11-12 ESV)

... **Jesus came** into Galilee, **proclaiming the gospel** of God, and saying, “The time is fulfilled, and the **kingdom of God** is at hand; **repent and believe in the gospel.**” (Mark 1:14b-15 ESV)

And Peter said to them, “**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.** ...” (Acts 2:38 ESV)

Therefore be imitators of God, as beloved children. And walk in love, as **Christ** loved us and **gave himself** up for us, **a fragrant offering and sacrifice to God.** (Ephesians 5:1-2 ESV)

... **God's love** has been poured into our hearts **through the Holy Spirit** [which] has been given to us. (Romans 5:5b ESV)

... **the free gift of God is eternal life** in Christ Jesus our Lord. (Romans 6:23b ESV)

Paul and Peter capture **the essence of Christian Sacrifices**:

I appeal to you therefore, brothers, by the mercies of God, to **present your bodies as a living sacrifice**, holy and acceptable to God, **which is your spiritual worship.** Do not be conformed to this world, but be transformed by the renewal of your mind, that by testing you may **discern what is the will of God**, what is good and acceptable and perfect. (Romans 12:1-2 ESV)

As you **come to him**, a living stone rejected by men but in the sight of God chosen and precious, **you yourselves like living stones** are being built up as a spiritual house, to be a holy priesthood, to **offer spiritual sacrifices acceptable to God through Jesus Christ.** (1 Peter 2:4-5 ESV)

Christians, living by the Way of God, are to be “living sacrifices”. Like the “burnt offering”, **God requires complete and total commitment to serve him.** The **Way of God** is best described as the “**way of love**”. Jesus summarized it best:

And one of the scribes came up and heard them disputing with one another, and seeing that he answered them well, asked him, “**Which commandment is the most important of all?**” Jesus answered, “The most important is, ‘Hear, O Israel: The Lord our God, the Lord is one. And **you shall love the Lord your God** with all your heart and with all your [being] and with all your mind and with all your strength.’ The second is this: ‘**You shall love your neighbor as yourself.**’ There is no other commandment greater than these.” (Mark 12:28-31 ESV // Matthew 22:34-40)

The first four of the Ten Commandments define **love towards God**. This “love” is the reciprocal of the *hesed*²²⁷ that defines the Nature of God in his relationship with those he calls to be True Worshipers. **Love towards God** requires understanding of his Nature and the vast gulf that exists between we

²²⁶ See Galatians 4:26, Hebrews 12:22-23

²²⁷ For a discussion of *hesed*, see *Excursus 2 – hesed* in the paper “Covenants of Grace”, located at <https://mikewhytebiblicalresearch.ca/>

inherently sinful human beings and the Holy Creator and Sustainer of the Universe. Love toward God requires an attitude of “reverence” – see [Excursus 5 – Reverence](#).

The last six of the Ten Commandments define **love within a human community**. These commandments are **the basis of a stable human society**. The importance of the “family relationship” within human society is emphasized by the final prophecy of Malachi:²²⁸

Remember the [torah] of my servant Moses, the statutes and [mish*patim]²²⁹ that I commanded him at Horeb for all Israel. “Behold, I will send you Elijah the prophet before the great and awesome day of the LORD comes. And he will **turn the hearts of fathers to their children** and the **hearts of children to their fathers**, lest I come and strike the [earth] with a decree of utter destruction.” (Malachi 4:4-6 ESV)

Were it not for the existence of True Worshipers of the True God to fulfill this prophecy, God would have no choice but to **“devote to destruction” all humanity and the entire earth**. The state of corruption in this world has gone that far!

Much of the New Testament is devoted to elaborating the meaning of “love” – living by the Way of God. A few of the most important passages are now briefly discussed. The “sermon on the mount” begins with the so-called, “beatitudes”.²³⁰ In these, Jesus quotes and alludes to many passages in the Psalms. He starts off with **the fundamental requirement of True Worshiper of the True God**:

Blessed are **the poor in spirit**, for theirs is the kingdom of heaven. (Matthew 5:3 ESV)

True humility before God is the basis of a correct relationship with God. We must know God as he is and see ourselves as we truly are. King David came to a full realization of this fact – which is largely why God called him “a man after my own heart”.²³¹

But may all who seek you rejoice and be glad in you;
may **those who love your salvation** say continually, “Great is the LORD!”
As for me, **I am poor and needy**, but the Lord takes thought for me.
You are my help and my deliverer; do not delay, O my God! (Psalm 40:16-17 ESV)

The Apostle Paul has recorded much material on living the Way of God, for example:

Let love be genuine. Abhor what is evil; hold fast to what is good. **Love one another with brotherly affection**. Outdo one another in showing honor. Do not be slothful in zeal, **be fervent in spirit**, serve the Lord. Rejoice in hope, be patient in tribulation, be constant in prayer. **Contribute to the needs** of the saints and seek to **show hospitality**. (Romans 12:9-13 ESV)

If I give away all I have, and if I deliver up my body to be burned, but **have not love, I gain nothing**. **Love is** patient and kind; **love does** not envy or boast; it is not arrogant or rude. It does not insist on its own way; it is not irritable or resentful; it does not rejoice at wrongdoing, but rejoices with the truth. **Love bears** all things, believes all things, hopes all things, endures all things. (1 Corinthians 13:3-7 ESV)

The author of Hebrews recognizes how hard life can be, but defines **the basis of hope**:

Consider him who endured from sinners such hostility against himself, so that **you may not grow weary or fainthearted**. In your struggle against sin you have not yet resisted to the point of shedding your blood. And have you forgotten the exhortation that addresses you as sons?

“My son, **do not regard lightly the discipline of the Lord**, nor be weary when reproved by him. For **the Lord disciplines the one he loves**, and chastises every son whom he receives.”
(Proverbs 3:11-12)

It is for discipline that you have to endure. God is treating you as sons. For what son is there whom his father does not discipline? If you are left without discipline, in which all have participated, then you are illegitimate children and not sons. ... **he disciplines us for our good, that we may share his holiness**. For the moment all discipline seems painful rather than pleasant, but later **it yields the peaceful fruit of righteousness** to those who have been trained by it. (Hebrews 12:3-8, 10b-11 ESV)

Christian sacrifices are defined by living the Way of God – truly seeing God as he is and seeing our pitiful human condition. The word **mish*pat** embodies much of what is required. God’s character attribute of perfect “**justness**” is fundamental to his dealings with human beings. Similarly, we must develop that character attribute in dealings with other human beings – the foundation of Christian

²²⁸ For a detailed discussion of this prophecy, see the paper, “The Work of Elijah”, located at <https://mikewhytebiblicalresearch.ca/>

²²⁹ In this context, *mish*patim* means the understanding of the “statutes” that comes from living by the *torah*.

²³⁰ See Matthew 5:3-12 // Luke 6:20-26

²³¹ See the discussion of the Davidic Psalms in the paper “David – a Man After My Own Heart”, located at <https://mikewhytebiblicalresearch.ca/>

service. The result of a life of Christian service, living by the Way of God, is **mish*patim**, a deep understanding of all God's teaching and the ability to apply it and teach it.

11. Faith AND Works

Since the Protestant Reformation of the sixteenth century, there has been an on-going debate on the role of Christian faith contrasted with "works". Some contend that a "trivial" faith comprising only an acknowledgement of a "belief in Jesus Christ" is sufficient for salvation. Others contend that one can "earn salvation" through various types of "works". Of course, neither of these extremes is even close to reality. **There is nothing a human being can do which will put God in a position that he must grant salvation to that person.** The gift of eternal life is only available through the grace of God. Nevertheless, God requires True Worshipers to live by his Way. **Living by the Way of God includes doing Christian "works".**

11.1 False Teachers in Galatia

The Apostle Paul visited **the region of Galatia**, in the central part of the modern nation of Turkey, on his first missionary journey in 46-47BC.²³² Paul found ready converts in the area and initiated several Churches. He returned a year or two later on his second missionary journey.²³³ At some point, when Paul was NOT there, **the Churches were visited by "false teachers":**

I am astonished that you are so quickly deserting him who called you in the grace of Christ and are **turning to a different gospel**—not that there is another one, but **there are some who trouble you and want to distort the gospel of Christ.** But even if we or an angel from heaven should preach to you a gospel contrary to the one we preached to you, let him be accursed. As we have said before, so now I say again: **If anyone is preaching to you a gospel contrary to the one you received, let him be accursed.**

O foolish Galatians! **Who has bewitched you?** ... Have I then become your enemy by telling you the truth? **They make much of you, but for no good purpose.** **They** want to shut you out, that you may make much of them.

It is always good to be made much of for a good purpose, and not only when I am present with you, my little children, for whom I am again in the anguish of childbirth until Christ is formed in you! I wish I could be present with you now and change my tone, for **I am perplexed about you.** ... **the one who is troubling you** will bear the penalty, **whoever he is.** (Galatians 1:6-9, 3:1a, 4:16-20, 5:10b ESV)

A principal tenet of these "teachers" was that a person could attain **salvation through "works".** **This was a principal teaching of Pharisaic Judaism.** **Paul is adamant that salvation is by grace** – by faith of Jesus Christ:

... yet we know that **a person is not justified by works** of the [nomos] **but through faith [of] Jesus Christ,** so we also have believed in Christ Jesus, in order to **be justified by faith [of] Christ and not by works** of the [nomos], because **by works of the [nomos] no one will be justified.** ... Let me ask you only this: Did you receive the Spirit by works of the [nomos] or by hearing with faith? Are you so foolish? **Having begun by the Spirit, are you now being perfected by the flesh?** ... Now it is evident that no one is justified before God by the [nomos], for **"The righteous shall live by faith."** But the [nomos] is not of faith, rather "The one who does them shall live by them." **Christ redeemed us from the curse of the [nomos]** by becoming a curse for us ... (Galatians 2:16, 3:2-3, 11-13a ESV)

Paul's contrast between "the law" [nomos] and "faith" has caused much confusion over the centuries by apologists who try to argue that in some way Paul is saying the *torah*, in particular the Ten Commandments, is done away. **Paul is using the word νόμος - nomos for the English "law";** it is the normal Greek word for law. See **Excursus 8 – torah and nomos** for a discussion of how this word came to be applied to *torah*. **To a "Jew" at that time, the word "nomos" included, without distinction, the torah, the specifications of the animal sacrifices, and all the Pharisaic interpretations.** Paul uses the word in this sense, and this is the sense intended by the "false teachers". **The essence of Paul's argument is absolutely valid.** Even stripping away the Pharisaic interpretations, no amount of works, no matter how perfect, can in any way justify a human being. **Salvation is purely a matter of God's grace – there is nothing a human being can do to put God in a position where he "must" provide salvation to any human being.** **The "curse of the law" is death** – the natural result of living apart from the Way of

²³² See Acts 13:13-52, 14:1-23

²³³ See Acts 16:1-6

God; **eternal death** for those who refuse to repent. Christ's sacrifice makes forgiveness of sins possible which allows God to consider a repentant person as a candidate for the gift of eternal life.

Paul actually has a good idea who the "false teachers" are:

But when Cephas came to Antioch, I opposed him to his face, because he stood condemned. For before certain men came from James, he was eating with the Gentiles; but when **they came** he drew back and separated himself, **fearing the circumcision party**. And the rest of the Jews acted hypocritically along with him, so that even Barnabas was led astray by their hypocrisy. But when I saw that their conduct was not in step with the truth of the gospel, I said to Cephas before them all, "If you, though a Jew, live like a Gentile and not like a Jew, **how can you force the Gentiles to live like Jews?**" (Galatians 2:11-13 ESV)

Now the apostles and the brothers who were throughout Judea heard that **the Gentiles also had received the word of God**. So when Peter went up to Jerusalem, **the circumcision party criticized him**, saying, "You went to uncircumcised men and ate with them." (Acts 11:1-3 ESV)

In the early Church in Jerusalem, there was a faction called the **"circumcision party"**. **These were clearly "Pharisees" who had been "converted"**. We know nothing else about the incident between Paul and Peter.²³⁴ The incident alluded to in Acts chapter eleven is the conversion of Cornelius and his family recorded in Acts chapter ten. **It was the "circumcision party" which precipitated the Jerusalem Conference:**

But **some men came down from Judea and were teaching** the brothers, **"Unless you are circumcised according to the custom of Moses, you cannot be saved."** And after Paul and Barnabas had no small dissension and debate with them, Paul and Barnabas and some of the others were appointed to go up to Jerusalem to the apostles and the elders about this question. ... When they came to Jerusalem, they were welcomed by the church and the apostles and the elders, and they declared all that God had done with them. But **some believers who belonged to the party of the Pharisees rose up and said, "It is necessary to circumcise them and to order them to keep the [nomos] of Moses."** (Acts 15:1-2, 4-5 ESV)

The teaching that these former "Pharisees" were trying to impose on the Church was that to **be a "Christian", a person first had to become a "Jew"**. The implication of this is that **all "Pharisaic" interpretations were binding on Christians**. Jesus had repeatedly demonstrated the fallaciousness of the Pharisees' interpretations, for example:

But **woe to you, scribes and Pharisees, hypocrites!** For you shut the kingdom of heaven in people's faces. For you neither enter yourselves nor allow those who would enter to go in. **Woe to you, scribes and Pharisees, hypocrites!** For you travel across sea and land to make a single proselyte, and when he becomes a proselyte, you make him twice as much a child of hell as yourselves. **"Woe to you, blind guides,** who say, 'If anyone swears by the temple, it is nothing, but if anyone swears by the gold of the temple, he is bound by his oath.' **You blind fools!** ... **Woe to you, scribes and Pharisees, hypocrites!** For you tithe the mint and dill and cumin, and have neglected the weightier matters of the [nomos]: justice and mercy and faithfulness. These you ought to have done, without neglecting the others. **You blind guides,** straining out a gnat and swallowing a camel! **"Woe to you, scribes and Pharisees, hypocrites!** For you clean the outside of the cup and the plate, but **inside they are full of greed and self-indulgence.** (Matthew 23:13-17a, 23-25 ESV)

This deception was clearly an attack by Satan on the early Church to corrupt the True Worship of God. The Pharisaic interpretations were a heinous collection of gobbledy-gook which in no way facilitated edification. **To require "Christians" to become "Jews" would have destroyed the New Testament Church.** Paul recognized this:

For freedom Christ has set us free; stand firm therefore, and do not submit again to a yoke of slavery. Look: I, Paul, say to you that **if you accept circumcision, Christ will be of no advantage to you**. I testify again to every man who accepts circumcision that he is obligated to keep the whole [nomos]. **You are severed from Christ, you who would be justified by the [nomos]; you have fallen away from grace.** For through the Spirit, by faith, we ourselves eagerly wait for the hope of righteousness. For **in Christ Jesus neither circumcision nor uncircumcision counts for anything, but only faith working through love.** (Galatians 5:1-6 ESV)

Paul is also concerned that the **new converts in Galatia** were being drawn back into **former pagan ways**: **Formerly, when you did not know God, you were enslaved to those that by nature are not gods.** But now that you have come to know God, or rather to be known by God, **how can you turn back again** to the weak and **worthless elementary principles of the world**, whose slaves you want to be once more? You observe days and months and seasons and years! I am afraid I may have labored over you in vain.

²³⁴ James may allude to it in Acts 15:24, and it may be the incident alluded to in Acts 15:1.
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Now **the works of the flesh** are evident: **sexual immorality**, impurity, sensuality, **idolatry**, sorcery, enmity, strife, jealousy, fits of anger, rivalries, dissensions, divisions, envy, drunkenness, orgies, and things like these. I warn you, as I warned you before, that **those who do such things will not inherit the kingdom of God**. (Galatians 4:8-11, 5:19-21 ESV)

11.2 Heresy in Rome

Close to ten years later, in writing from Corinth to the Church in Rome, Paul deals with similar issues. The Church in Rome apparently had significant numbers of both Jewish and Gentile converts – the contrast between “Jews and Greeks” is a major theme of the Book of Romans.²³⁵ **There was apparently some feeling among the Jewish Christians that justification could be accomplished through works:**

But **if you call yourself a Jew and rely on the [nomos] and boast in God and know his will** and approve what is excellent, because you are instructed from the [nomos]; and **if you are sure that you yourself are a guide to the blind**, a light to those who are in darkness, **an instructor of the foolish**, a teacher of children, having in the [nomos] the embodiment of knowledge and truth—**you then who teach others, do you not teach yourself?** While you preach against stealing, do you steal? You who say that one must not commit adultery, do you commit adultery? You who abhor idols, do you rob temples? You who boast in the [nomos] dishonor God by breaking the [nomos]. For, as it is written, **“The name of God is blasphemed among the Gentiles because of you.”** (Romans 2:17-24 ESV)

Again, **Paul is adamant that justification is through faith:**

But now **the righteousness of God has been manifested apart from the [nomos]**, although the [nomos] and the Prophets bear witness to it—**the righteousness of God through faith in Jesus Christ for all who believe**. For there is no distinction: for all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God, and are **justified by his grace as a gift, through the redemption that is in Christ Jesus, whom God put forward as a propitiation by his blood, to be received by faith**. This was to show God’s righteousness, because in his divine forbearance he had passed over former sins. It was to show his righteousness at the present time, so that he might be just and **the justifier of the one who has faith [of] Jesus**.

Therefore, since **we have been justified by faith**, we have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ. Through him **we have also obtained access by faith into this grace** in which we stand, and we rejoice in hope of the glory of God. (Romans 3:21-26, 5:1-2 ESV)

In both Galatians and Romans, Paul alludes to **Abraham** as **“the father of the faithful”** because he believed what God promised:

And Abram said, “Behold, **you have given me no offspring**, and a member of my household will be my heir.” And behold, the word of the LORD came to him: “This man shall not be your heir; **your very own son shall be your heir**.” And he brought him outside and said, “Look toward heaven, and number the stars, if you are able to number them.” Then he said to him, “So shall your offspring be.” And **he believed the LORD, and he counted it to him as righteousness**. (Genesis 15:3-6 ESV)

... **just as Abraham “believed God, and it was counted to him as righteousness”**? Know then that it is **those of faith who are the sons of Abraham**. And the Scripture, foreseeing that God would justify the Gentiles by faith, preached the gospel beforehand to Abraham, saying, “In you shall all the nations be blessed.” So then, **those who are of faith are blessed along with Abraham**, the man of faith. (Galatians 3:6-9 ESV)

That is why it depends on faith, in order that **the promise may rest on grace** and be guaranteed to all his offspring—not only to the adherent of the [nomos] but also to the one who shares the faith of **Abraham, who is the father of us all**, as it is written, “I have made you the father of many nations”—in the presence of the God in whom he believed, who gives life to the dead and calls into existence the things that do not exist. **In hope he believed against hope, that he should become the father of many nations**, as he had been told, “So shall your offspring be.” He did not weaken in faith when he considered his own body, which was as good as dead (since he was about a hundred years old), or when he considered the barrenness of Sarah’s womb. **No unbelief made him waver** concerning the promise of God, but he grew strong in his faith as he gave glory to God, **fully convinced that God was able to do what he had promised**. **That is why his faith was “counted to him as righteousness.”** But the words “it was counted to him” were not written for his sake alone, but for ours also. **It will be counted to us who believe** in him who raised from the dead Jesus our Lord, who was delivered up for our trespasses and raised for our justification. (Romans 4:16-25 ESV)

The allusion to Abraham’s faith is taken up by **James** who **points out the Abraham’s faith was made perfect by works**.

²³⁵ See Romans 1:16, 2:9-10, 3:1,9,29, 4:9, 15:8-13, and all of chapters 9, 10, and 11
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11.3 Christian Works

James, the brother of Jesus Christ, became **the leading apostle in the Jerusalem Church** as the original twelve traveled throughout the Roman and Parthian Empires. In **a general letter to Christians**, identified metaphorically as “the twelve tribes in Dispersion”, he also addresses the issue of “faith and works”:

But **be doers of the word**, and not hearers only, deceiving yourselves. For if anyone is a hearer of the word and not a doer, he is like a man who looks intently at his natural face in a mirror. For **he looks at himself and goes away and at once forgets what he was like**. But the one who looks into the perfect [nomos], the *law*²³⁶ of liberty, and perseveres, **being no hearer who forgets but a doer who acts**, he will be blessed in his doing.

What good is it, my brothers, if someone says he has faith but does not have works? Can that faith save him? If a brother or sister is poorly clothed and lacking in daily food, and one of you says to them, “Go in peace, be warmed and filled,” **without giving them the things needed for the body, what good is that?** So also **faith by itself, if it does not have works, is dead**.

But someone will say, “**You have faith and I have works.**” Show me your faith apart from your works, and **I will show you my faith by my works**. You believe that God is one; you do well. Even the demons believe—and shudder! Do you want to be shown, you foolish person, that faith apart from works is useless? **Was not Abraham our father justified by works** when he offered up his son Isaac on the altar? You see that **faith was active along with his works, and faith was completed by his works**; and the Scripture was fulfilled that says, “**Abraham believed God, and it was counted to him as righteousness**”—and he was called a friend of God. You see that **a person is justified by works and not by faith alone**. (James 1:22-25, 2:14-24 ESV)

Faith cannot be separated from Christian works – serving the brethren; but also, doing the Work of God to carry the True Gospel of the Kingdom of God to all human beings. Paul’s point, which James does NOT challenge, is that no amount of “works”, Christian service, in any way earns a person a commitment from God that that person is owed, or deserves, eternal life. **Salvation cannot be earned**. Salvation is only available as a free gift from God made possible by his grace. Paul also recognized and documented this truth:

Brothers, if anyone is caught in any transgression, **you who are spiritual should restore him in a spirit of gentleness**. Keep watch on yourself, lest you too be tempted. **Bear one another’s burdens**, and so fulfill the [nomos] of Christ. For if anyone thinks he is something, when he is nothing, he deceives himself. **But let each one test his own work**, and then his reason to boast will be in himself alone and not in his neighbor. For each will have to bear his own load.

Let the one who is taught the word **share all good things** with the one who teaches. Do not be deceived: God is not mocked, for **whatever one sows, that will he also reap**. For the one who sows to his own flesh will from the flesh reap corruption, but the one who sows to the Spirit will from the Spirit reap eternal life. And **let us not grow weary of doing good**, for in due season we will reap, if we do not give up. So then, **as we have opportunity, let us do good to everyone, and especially to those who are of the household of faith**. (Galatians 6:1-10 ESV)

Let love be genuine. Abhor what is evil; hold fast to what is good. Love one another with brotherly affection. **Outdo one another in showing honor. Do not be slothful in zeal, be fervent in spirit, serve the Lord**. Rejoice in hope, be patient in tribulation, be constant in prayer. **Contribute to the needs of the saints and seek to show hospitality**.

We who are strong have an obligation to **bear with the failings of the weak**, and not to please ourselves. **Let each of us please his neighbor for his good**, to build him up. For Christ did not please himself, but as it is written, “The reproaches of those who reproached you fell on me.” For whatever was written in former days was written for our instruction, that through endurance and through the encouragement of the Scriptures we might have hope. May the God of endurance and encouragement grant you to **live in such harmony with one another**, in accord with Christ Jesus, that together you may with one voice glorify the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ. Therefore **welcome one another** as Christ has welcomed you, for the glory of God. (Romans 12:9-13, 15:1-7 ESV)

This is what Jesus meant by “**loving one another**”:

A new commandment I give to you, that you **love one another**: just as I have loved you, you also are to **love one another**. By this all people will know that you are my disciples, **if you have love for one another**.

By this my Father is glorified, that you **bear much fruit** and so prove to be my disciples. **As the Father has loved me, so have I loved you**. Abide in my love. If you keep my commandments, you will abide in my love, just as I have kept my Father’s commandments and abide in his love. These things I have spoken to

²³⁶ This word is supplied by the “translator” – it is NOT in the Greek.

you, that my joy may be in you, and that your joy may be full. This is my commandment, that you **love one another as I have loved you**. (John 13:34-35, 15:8-12 ESV)

Jesus is clear the “Christian Works” are required as a prerequisite for a person to be considered worthy of the gift of eternal life:

When the Son of Man comes in his glory, and all the angels with him, then he will sit on his glorious throne. Before him will be gathered all the nations, and he will separate people one from another as a shepherd separates the sheep from the goats. And he will place the sheep on his right, but the goats on the left. Then the King will say to those on his right, **‘Come, you who are blessed by my Father, inherit the kingdom prepared for you from the foundation of the world.** For I was hungry and **you gave me food**, I was thirsty and **you gave me drink**, I was a stranger and **you welcomed me**, I was naked and **you clothed me**, I was sick and **you visited me**, I was in prison and **you came to me**.’ Then the righteous will answer him, saying, ‘Lord, when did we see you hungry and feed you, or thirsty and give you drink? And when did we see you a stranger and welcome you, or naked and clothe you? And when did we see you sick or in prison and visit you?’ And the King will answer them, ‘Truly, I say to you, **as you did it to one of the least of these my brothers, you did it to me.**’ (Matthew 25:31-40 ESV)

For a detailed discussion of “faith”, see the paper “**The Inner Workings of Faith**” located at <https://mikewhytebiblicalresearch.ca/>

For a discussion of how Abraham became the “father of the faithful”, see section **3. The Covenant of Promise** in the paper “**Covenants of Grace**” located at <https://mikewhytebiblicalresearch.ca/>

11.4 Christian Rewards

There are many places in the New Testament which make it clear that **“good works” will result in being rewarded**. The promised reward is NOT the gift of eternal life. The reward is increased opportunity to serve. **Consider the parables of the “minas” and the “talents”:**

He said therefore, “A nobleman went into a far country to receive for himself a kingdom and then return. Calling ten of his servants, he gave them ten minas,²³⁷ and said to them, **‘Engage in business until I come.’** ... When he returned, having received the kingdom, he ordered these servants to whom he had given the money to be called to him, that he might know what they had gained by doing business. The first came before him, saying, **‘Lord, your mina has made ten minas more.’** And he said to him, ‘Well done, good servant! **Because you have been faithful in a very little, you shall have authority over ten cities.**’ (Luke 19:12-13, 15-17 ESV)

For it will be like a man going on a journey, who called his servants and entrusted to them his property. To one he gave five talents,²³⁸ to another two, to another one, **to each according to his ability**. Then he went away. **He who had received the five talents** went at once and traded with them, and he **made five talents more**. ... Now after a long time the master of those servants came and settled accounts with them. And he who had received the five talents came forward, bringing five talents more, saying, ‘Master, you delivered to me five talents; here, I have made five talents more.’ His master said to him, **‘Well done, good and faithful servant. You have been faithful over a little; I will set you over much. Enter into the joy of your master.’** (Matthew 25:14-16, 19-21 ESV)

Both parables make the same point: **a Christian is to do the best he can with the available resources and opportunities**. Then, when Jesus returns and the resurrection has occurred and God has granted the gift of eternal life, Jesus will know he can trust that person to continue to serve him.

Jesus is clear that even **“good works”** done in his name by people believing themselves to be “good Christians” **can be worthless without the correct relationship:**

Not everyone who says to me, **‘Lord, Lord,’** will enter the kingdom of heaven, but the one who does the will of my Father who is in heaven. On that day **many will say to me, ‘Lord, Lord, did we not prophesy in your name, and cast out demons in your name, and do many mighty works in your name?’** And then will I declare to them, **‘I never knew you; depart from me, you workers of lawlessness.’**

Then **the kingdom of heaven will be like ten virgins** who took their lamps and went to meet the bridegroom. **Five of them were foolish**, and five were wise. For when the foolish took their lamps, **they took no oil with them**, but the wise took flasks of oil with their lamps. As the bridegroom was delayed, they all became drowsy and slept. But at midnight there was a cry, ‘Here is the bridegroom! Come out to meet him.’ Then all those virgins rose and trimmed their lamps. And **the foolish said to the wise, ‘Give us some of your oil,** for our lamps are going out.’ But the wise answered, saying, ‘Since there will not be enough for us and for you, go rather to the dealers and buy for yourselves.’ And while they were going to

²³⁷ A mina was about three months’ wages for a labourer (see ESV footnote).

²³⁸ A talent was about twenty years’ wages for a labourer (see ESV footnote).

buy, the bridegroom came, and those who were ready went in with him to the marriage feast, and the door was shut. Afterward the other virgins came also, saying, 'Lord, lord, open to us.' But he answered, 'Truly, I say to you, I do not know you.' (Matthew 7:21-23, 25:1-12 ESV)

The relationship Jesus requires of True Worshipers is to be totally committed to serve him and live by the Way of God:

Then Jesus told his disciples, "If anyone would come after me, let him deny himself and take up his cross and follow me. For whoever would save his life will lose it, but whoever loses his life for my sake will find it. For what will it profit a man if he gains the whole world and forfeits his [life]? Or what shall a man give in return for his [life]? For the Son of Man is going to come with his angels in the glory of his Father, and then he will repay each person according to what he has done. (Matthew 16:24-27 ESV)

The "repayment" is the reward, but it is only available once the gift of eternal life has been granted.

Jesus makes the point again in talking with **"the rich young man"**:

And behold, a man came up to him, saying, "Teacher, what good deed must I do to have eternal life?" And he said to him, "Why do you ask me about what is good? There is only one who is good. If you would enter life, keep the commandments." ... The young man said to him, "All these I have kept. What do I still lack?" Jesus said to him, "If you would be perfect, go, sell what you possess and give to the poor, and you will have treasure in heaven; and come, follow me." When the young man heard this he went away sorrowful, for he had great possessions.

When the disciples heard this, they were greatly astonished, saying, "Who then can be saved?" But Jesus looked at them and said, "With man this is impossible, but with God all things are possible." Then Peter said in reply, "See, we have left everything and followed you. What then will we have?" Jesus said to them, "Truly, I say to you, in the new world, when the Son of Man will sit on his glorious throne, you who have followed me will also sit on twelve thrones, judging the twelve tribes of Israel. And everyone who has left houses or brothers or sisters or father or mother or children or lands, for my name's sake, will receive a hundredfold and will inherit eternal life."

(Matthew 19:16-17, 20-22, 25-29 ESV // Mark 10:17-30, Luke 18:18-30)

Living by the Ten Commandments is fundamental to the Way of God. To live by them, one requires total commitment, the "correct relationship". The "young man" was more committed to his wealth. The disciples recognize the difficulty, **"who then can be saved"**, to which Jesus pointed out that salvation is God's gift, **"with God all things are possible"**, in spite of human failings. Peter vocalizes the correct attitude upon which the relationship with Jesus is based, and Jesus replies all who have the correct relationship **"will receive a hundredfold"**, the reward, but to **"inherit eternal life"** remains God's gift.

Luke summarizes Christian works and rewards:

Everyone to whom much was given, of him much will be required, and from him to whom they entrusted much, they will demand the more.

So you also, when you have done all that you were commanded, say, 'We are unworthy servants; we have only done what was our duty.' (Luke 12:48b, 17:10 ESV)

12. The Gift of Eternal Life

God's purpose for human beings is to become members of the God Family and share in Eternity with God the Father and the Firstborn Son,²³⁹ Jesus Christ:

... so must the Son of Man be lifted up, that whoever believes in him may have eternal life. For God so loved the world, that he gave his only Son, that whoever believes in him should not perish but have eternal life. ... Whoever believes in the Son has eternal life; whoever does not obey the Son shall not see life, but the wrath of God remains on him. (John 3:14b-16, 36 ESV)

And this is the will of him who sent me, that I should lose nothing of all that he has given me, but raise it up on the last day. For this is the will of my Father, that everyone who looks on the Son and believes in him should have eternal life, and I will raise him up on the last day." ... Everyone who has heard and learned from the Father comes to me—not that anyone has seen the Father except he who is from God; he has seen the Father. Truly, truly, I say to you, whoever believes has eternal life. I am the bread of life. ... Whoever feeds on my flesh and drinks my blood has eternal life, and I will raise him up on the last day. For my flesh is true food, and my blood is true drink.²⁴⁰ (John 6:39-40, 45b-48, 54-55 ESV)

²³⁹ See [Excursus 7 – The Firstborn Son](#)

²⁴⁰ Jesus alludes to the New Testament Passover symbols.

But now that **you have been set free from sin** and have become slaves of God, **the fruit you get leads to sanctification** and its end, **eternal life**. For the wages of sin is death, but **the free gift of God is eternal life in Christ Jesus our Lord**. (Romans 6:22-23 ESV)

Let what you heard from the beginning abide in you. If what you heard from the beginning abides in you, then you too will **abide in the Son and in the Father**. And **this is the promise that he made to us—eternal life**. (1 John 2:24-25 ESV)

12.1 The Commandments of Men

This is the world of Satan the Devil:

The seventy-two returned with joy, saying, “Lord, **even the demons are subject to us in your name!**” And he said to them, “**I saw Satan fall like lightning from heaven.**” (Luke 10:17-18 ESV)

... **the god of this world** has blinded the minds of the unbelievers, to keep them from seeing the light of the gospel of the glory of Christ ... (2 Corinthians 4:4a ESV)

I will no longer talk much with you, for **the ruler of this world** is coming. ... **the ruler of this world** is judged ... Now is the judgment of this world; now will **the ruler of this world** be cast out. (John 14:30a, 16:11b, 12:31 ESV)

And the great dragon was thrown down, that ancient serpent, who is called **the devil and Satan**, the **deceiver of the whole world**—he was thrown down to the earth, and his angels were thrown down with him. (Revelation 12:9 ESV)

The deceptions of Satan in this world are enormous in all areas of human life, but nowhere more than in religion. To discuss the various religions of the world is beyond the scope of this paper, but the greatest deception of Satan the Devil is the “**visible Christianity**” of this world. **Almost every major doctrine of traditional “Christianity” is at variance with the plain teaching of the Bible**. For example, this paper has discussed in detail the importance of the Sabbath, Feasts, and appointed times in the True Worship of God. Traditional Christianity has substituted for these the day of pagan worship, Sunday, and the holy days of pagan worship, Christmas, Easter, etc., but it extends far beyond these examples. This is what Jesus means by “**teaching for doctrines the commandments of men**”. To Truly Worship the True God, we need to understand **what the Bible actually says** and ensure our worship is in accord with God’s word, **with the commandments of the Creator God**.

12.2 To Worship in Spirit and Truth

To “**worship in truth**” means to understand what the Bible says about worshipping God, and to actually worship in the manner prescribed by God. To “**worship in spirit**” requires calling by God, repentance, baptism, and receipt of the Holy Spirit; then a person can begin to **live by the Way of God**. Living by the Way of God allows a person to come to know God, which allows “spiritual” worship:

... the hour is coming, and is now here, when **the true worshipers will worship the Father in spirit and truth**, for the Father is seeking such people to worship him. God is spirit, and **those who worship him must worship in spirit and truth.**” (John 4:23-24 ESV)

To be a True Worshipper of God, a person must be called by God. The response to God’s calling requires learning about God’s Plan of Salvation and learning to live by the Way of God. From the beginning, God has had the Plan of Salvation formulated:

Where were you when **I laid the foundation of the earth?**

Tell me, if you have understanding. (Job 38:4 ESV)

My hand laid the foundation of the earth,

and my right hand spread out the heavens; when I call to them, they stand forth together. ...

As I have planned, so shall it be, and as I have purposed, so shall it stand ...

This is the purpose that is purposed **concerning the whole earth,** and this is the hand that is stretched out over all the nations.

For **the LORD of hosts has purposed,** and who will annul it?

His hand is stretched out, and who will turn it back? ...

... **for I am God, and there is no other;** I am God, and there is none like me,

declaring the end from the beginning and from ancient times things not yet done,

saying, ‘My counsel shall stand, and **I will accomplish all my purpose**’ ...

... **so shall my word be** that goes out from my mouth; it shall not return to me empty,

but **it shall accomplish that which I purpose,** and shall succeed in the thing for which I sent it.

(Isaiah 48:13, 14:24, 26-27, 46:9b-10, 55:11 ESV)

In **9.3 The Covenant of Performance** God made an unequivocal commitment to accomplish his purpose – his Plan of Salvation. The Apostle Paul reiterates **God’s purpose in calling True Worshipers**:

Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who has blessed us in Christ with every spiritual blessing in the heavenly places, even as **he chose us in him before the foundation of the world**, that **we should be holy and blameless before him**. In love he predestined²⁴¹ us for **adoption to himself as sons through Jesus Christ**, according to **the purpose of his will**, to the praise of his glorious grace, with which he has blessed us in the Beloved. In him we have **redemption through his blood**, the forgiveness of our trespasses, according to the riches of **his grace**, which he lavished upon us, in all wisdom and insight **making known to us the mystery of his will, according to his purpose**, which he **set forth in Christ** as a **plan for the fullness of time**, to unite all things in him, things in heaven and things on earth. (Ephesians 1:3-10 ESV)

The question is: **how are we to understand the Plan of God for salvation?** That is the purpose of the Sabbath, the Feasts, and the other appointed times. **The Sabbath is the basis for all understanding of The Plan of God**. By worshipping on the Sabbath and using the Holy Time to study the Word of God, God speaks to True Worshipers through the teaching (*torah*), that is, the Bible. Only by the lead of the Holy Spirit, which is the power of God, the “helper”,²⁴² can a human being come to a correct understanding of the Bible. **This is only available to True Worshipers**. Furthermore, **the Sabbath is a type of the goal of the Christian life**: to participate in Eternity in the Family of God. The author of Hebrews contrasts the failure of the Exodus Generation to enter the Promised Land with the potential for Christians to enter the Kingdom of God:

Therefore, while **the promise of entering his rest** still stands, let us fear lest any of you should seem to have failed to reach it. For good news came to us just as to them, but **the message they heard did not benefit them**, because they were not united by faith with those who listened. For **we who have believed enter that rest**, as he has said,

“As I swore in my wrath, ‘They shall not enter my rest,’” (Psalm 95:11)

although **his works were finished from the foundation of the world**. For he has somewhere spoken of the seventh day in this way: “And **God rested on the seventh day from all his works**.” ... Since therefore **it remains for some to enter it**, and those who formerly received the good news failed to enter because of disobedience, again he appoints a certain day, “Today,”²⁴³ saying through David²⁴⁴ so long afterward, in the words already quoted,

“Today, if you hear his voice, do not harden your hearts.” (Psalm 95:7b-8a)

For if Joshua had given them rest, God would not have spoken of another day later on. So then, **there remains a Sabbath rest for the people of God**, for whoever has entered God’s rest has also rested from his works as God did from his. **Let us therefore strive to enter that rest** ... (Hebrews 4:1-4, 6-11a ESV)

True Worshipers of the True God must worship God “in spirit and in truth”. God has promised to accomplish his **Plan of Salvation**. True Worshipers are called to participate in the **Plan of God**. The Sabbath is the key to understanding the Plan of God. It is also a type of the objective of the Plan of God: **the true rest in the Kingdom of God**.

12:3 The Plan of Salvation

The Plan of Salvation is depicted yearly by **the cycle of Feasts and other appointed times**. In addition, **the entire sacrificial system of the Old Testament was designed to foreshadow the ultimate sacrifice of Jesus Christ** which has replaced all of them and made them obsolete. The most obvious example is the **sacrifice of the Passover Lamb** at the time of the Exodus:

- The lamb was carefully selected to be a perfect animal; Jesus as YHWH was the creator of the human race – his life is of more value than all human lives combined

²⁴¹ The Greek word for “predestined” is προορίζω - proorizō; it means “decide upon before hand” (GEL page 716) or “predetermine” (www.esv.org Greek Word Detail). It essentially means the same as “calling” – by calling a person, God predetermines that the person is being given the opportunity to receive the gift of eternal life. It does NOT in any way suggest that some people are automatically assigned to eternal life while others are assigned to condemnation.

²⁴² See John 14:16,26, 15:26, 16:7 the Greek for “helper” is παράκλητος - paraklētos, it could also be translated “advocate” or “counselor” (see ESV footnote). English Bibles translate references to the Holy Spirit as “masculine”, “he”, based on the false belief that the Holy Spirit is a “personage”, a sentient being. The Holy Spirit is the power of God, NOT in independent entity: it should be referenced in the “neuter”, “it”.

²⁴³ Apologists try to use this to assert a change from Sabbath to Sunday, which is totally incorrect. Both in the Psalm and in the context of Hebrews the use of “today” is to emphasize that “now”, when the opportunity is available, one needs to respond to the teaching of God.

²⁴⁴ Note that in the Masoretic Text, Psalm 95 is NOT identified as “Davidic”.

- Each individual household personally selected a lamb, slaughtered it, spread the blood, and participated in the covenant meal; each True Worshipper must individually accept the blood of Christ and fully commit to living by the Way of God
- The death of the firstborn of Egypt consecrated to God all the firstborn of Israel, who were protected by the blood of the lamb; Jesus is the firstborn²⁴⁵ from the dead – his resurrection makes possible the consecration of all others who will be raised from the dead, protected from eternal death by his blood
- The Exodus event was the beginning of the Nation of Israel; the sacrifice of Christ is the beginning of the Plan of Salvation for Christians

John the Baptist specifically identifies Jesus as the “Lamb of God”:

The next day he saw Jesus coming toward him, and said, **“Behold, the Lamb of God,** who takes away the sin of the world! ... And **John bore witness:** “I saw the Spirit descend from heaven like a dove, and it remained on him. I myself did not know him, but he who sent me to baptize with water said to me, ‘He on whom you see the Spirit descend and remain, this is he who baptizes with the Holy Spirit.’ And **I have seen and have borne witness that this is the Son of God.**” The next day again John was standing with two of his disciples, and he looked at Jesus as he walked by and said, **“Behold, the Lamb of God!”** (John 1:29, 32-36 ESV)

Once a person has been called by God and has responded to the calling by repentance, acceptance of Jesus sacrifice, baptism, and receipt of the Holy Spirit, the Christian Life begins. **This is depicted by the Feast of Unleavened Bread.** The whole period is a “feast” with a specific “feast day” at the beginning and another “feast day” at the end. **This “feast” represents the Christian life. Leaven is type of sin:**

Your boasting is not good. Do you not know that a little leaven leavens the whole lump? **Cleanse out the old leaven** that you may be a new lump, as **you really are unleavened.** For Christ, our Passover lamb, has been sacrificed. Let us therefore **celebrate the festival,** not with **the old leaven, the leaven of malice and evil,** but with the unleavened bread of sincerity and truth. (1 Corinthians 5:6-8 ESV)

... he began to say to his disciples first, **“Beware of the leaven of the Pharisees,** which is **hypocrisy.** ...” (Luke 12:1b ESV // Mark 8:15, Matthew 16:6)

The **objective of the Christian life is to learn to be holy,** to have all sin purged out of our beings:

As obedient children, do not be conformed to the passions of your former ignorance, but **as he who called you is holy, you also be holy in all your conduct,** since it is written, “You shall be holy, for I am holy.” And **if you call on him as Father** who judges impartially according to each one’s deeds, **conduct yourselves with fear** throughout the time of your exile, knowing that **you were ransomed from the futile ways inherited from your forefathers,** not with perishable things such as silver or gold, but **with the precious blood of Christ,** like that of a lamb without blemish or spot. **He was foreknown before the foundation of the world** but was made manifest in the last times for the sake of **you who through him are believers in God,** who raised him from the dead and gave him glory, so that your faith and hope are in God. (1 Peter 1:14-21 ESV)

The **first Christian Feast of Pentecost** was the day upon which the New Testament Church was born:

When the day of Pentecost arrived, they were all together in one place. And suddenly there came from heaven a sound like **a mighty rushing wind,** and it filled the entire house where they were sitting. And **divided tongues as of fire appeared to them and rested on each one of them.** And **they were all filled with the Holy Spirit** ... But **Peter,** standing with the eleven, **lifted up his voice and addressed them:** “Men of Judea and all who dwell in Jerusalem, let this be known to you, and give ear to my words. ... this is what was uttered through the prophet Joel:

And **in the last days** it shall be, God declares, that **I will pour out my Spirit** on all flesh ...” (Joel 2:28)

“Men of Israel, hear these words: Jesus of Nazareth, a man attested to you by God with mighty works and wonders and signs that God did through him in your midst, as you yourselves know—**this Jesus, delivered up according to the definite plan and foreknowledge** of God, **you crucified** and killed by the hands of lawless men. **God raised him up,** loosing the pangs of death ... Let all the house of Israel therefore know for certain that God has made him both Lord and Christ, this Jesus whom you crucified.” Now when they heard this **they were cut to the heart,** and said to Peter and the rest of the apostles, “Brothers, **what shall we do?**” And Peter said to them, **“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.** For

²⁴⁵ See *Excursus 7 – The Firstborn Son*

the promise is for you and for your children and for all who are far off, **everyone whom the Lord our God calls to himself.** (Acts 2:1-4a, 14, 16-17a, 22-24a, 36, 37-39 ESV)

The general availability of the indwelling of Holy Spirit to persons called by God was a new thing.

Under the Old Covenant, the indwelling of Holy Spirit was only available on a case-by-case basis as God required to accomplish his work. With the initiation of the New Testament Church, God began to call many people to have the opportunity for salvation. **The indwelling of the Holy Spirit is necessary to live by the Way of God:**

You, however, are not in the flesh but in the Spirit, if in fact **the Spirit of God dwells in you.** Anyone who does not have the Spirit of Christ does not belong to him. But if Christ is in you, although the body is dead because of sin, the Spirit is life because of righteousness. **If the Spirit of him who raised Jesus from the dead dwells in you, he who raised Christ Jesus from the dead will also give life to your mortal bodies through his Spirit [which] dwells in you.** (Romans 8:9-11 ESV)

The Feast of Pentecost was originally called the **Feast of Harvest of Firstfruits.** The symbolism of “firstfruits” is very important. **Jesus Christ is the first of the firstfruits.**²⁴⁶

But in fact **Christ has been raised from the dead,** the **firstfruits** of those who have fallen asleep. For as by a man came death, by a man has come also **the resurrection of the dead.** For as in Adam all die, so also in Christ shall all be made alive. But each in his own order: **Christ the firstfruits,** then at his coming those who belong to Christ. (1 Corinthians 15:20-23 ESV)

And we know that for those who love God all things work together for good, for **those who are called according to his purpose.** For those whom he foreknew he also predestined²⁴⁷ to be conformed to the image of his Son, **in order that he might be the firstborn among many brothers.** (Romans 8:28-29 ESV)

The First Resurrection is the culmination of the Plan of God as depicted by the spring Holy Days. At the First Resurrection all True Worshipers of God (from all ages beginning with Abel) to whom God sees fit to grant the gift of eternal life will become spiritual members of the God Family, the **firstfruits of the Plan of God:**

But we do not want you to be uninformed, brothers, **about those who are asleep,** that you may not grieve as others do who have no hope. For since we believe that **Jesus died and rose again,** even so, **through Jesus, God will bring with him those who have fallen asleep.** For this we declare to you by a word from the Lord, that **we who are alive,** who are left until the coming of the Lord, **will not precede those who have fallen asleep.** For **the Lord himself will descend from heaven** with a cry of command, with the voice of an archangel, and **with the sound of the trumpet of God.** And **the dead in Christ will rise first.** **Then we who are alive,** who are left, will be caught up together with them in the clouds to meet the Lord in the air, and so we will always be with the Lord. (1 Thessalonians 4:13-17 ESV)

I tell you this, brothers: **flesh and blood cannot inherit the kingdom of God,** nor does the perishable inherit the imperishable. Behold! I tell you a mystery. **We shall not all sleep, but we shall all be changed,** in a moment, in the twinkling of an eye, **at the last trumpet.** For the trumpet will sound, and **the dead will be raised imperishable, and we shall be changed.** For this perishable body must put on the imperishable, and **this mortal body must put on immortality.** (1 Corinthians 15:50-53 ESV)

The Fall Holy Days begin with **The Day of Trumpets** – the day which depicts the return of Jesus Christ as King of kings, and the day upon which the First Resurrection occurs:

Then will appear in heaven **the sign of the Son of Man,** and then all the tribes of the earth will mourn, and they will see **the Son of Man coming on the clouds of heaven with power and great glory.** And he will send out his angels **with a loud trumpet call,** and **they will gather his elect from the four winds, from one end of heaven to the other.** (Matthew 24:30-31 ESV // Mark 13:26-27, Luke 21:27)

And the angel whom I saw standing on the sea and on the land raised his right hand to heaven and swore by him who lives forever and ever, who created heaven and what is in it, the earth and what is in it, and the sea and what is in it, that **there would be no more delay,** but that **in the days of the trumpet call to be sounded by the seventh angel, the mystery of God would be fulfilled,** just as he announced to his servants the prophets.

Then the seventh angel blew his trumpet, and there were loud voices in heaven, saying, **“The kingdom of the world has become the kingdom of our Lord and of his Christ, and he shall reign forever and ever.”** And the twenty-four elders who sit on their thrones before God fell on their faces and worshiped God, saying,

²⁴⁶ See [Excursus 7 – The Firstborn Son](#)

²⁴⁷ See footnote 241

We give thanks to you, Lord God Almighty, who is and who was,
for **you have taken your great power and begun to reign**. (Revelation 10:5-7, 11:15-17 ESV)

The First Resurrection provides God with a Family of beings like himself and Jesus Christ who can then proceed to accomplish the execution of the remainder of the Plan of God to bring salvation to all human beings who have ever lived. The concept of membership in the Family of God is beyond description – our minds cannot fathom the significance of this change. **God the Father will provide a suitable new name for each of his children:**

He who has an ear, let him hear what the Spirit says to the churches. **To the one who conquers** I will give some of the hidden manna, and I will give him a white stone, with **a new name** written on the stone **that no one knows except the one who receives it**. (Revelation 2:17 ESV)

... **but his servants he will call by another name** ... (Isaiah 65:15b ESV)

Jesus Christ was known as YHWH in the Old Testament. He has also been known by many other epithets, but he **also will receive a new name**:

Then I saw heaven opened, and behold, a white horse! **The one sitting on it** is called Faithful and True, and in righteousness he judges and makes war. His eyes are like a flame of fire, and on his head are many diadems, and he has **a name written that no one knows but himself**. He is clothed in a robe dipped in blood, and the name by which he is called is The Word of God. (Revelation 19:11-13 ESV)

Before the God Family can proceed with the execution of the Plan of Salvation, some unfinished business remains. The god of this world, Satan the Devil, the one who has made this world the way it is, must be put aside. This is **the message of the Day of Atonement**. The goat for the “sin offering” is symbolic of the sacrifice of Jesus Christ as propitiation for the sins of humanity. **The goat for “Azazel” represents Satan the Devil:**

Then **he shall take the two goats** and set them before the LORD at the entrance of the tent of meeting. And **Aaron shall cast lots over the two goats, one lot for the LORD and the other lot for Azazel**. And Aaron shall present **the goat on which the lot fell for the LORD** and use it as a sin offering, but **the goat on which the lot fell for Azazel shall be presented alive before the LORD to make atonement over it**, that it may be **sent away into the wilderness** to Azazel. ...he shall present the live goat. And **Aaron shall lay both his hands on the head of the live goat**, and **confess over it all the iniquities** of the people of Israel, and **all their transgressions, all their sins**. And he shall **put them on the head of the goat** and **send it away into the wilderness** by the hand of a man who is in readiness. **The goat shall bear all their iniquities** on itself to a remote area, and he shall let the goat go free in the wilderness. (Leviticus 16:7-10, 20b-22 ESV)

This is the fate of Satan the Devil:

Then I saw an angel coming down from heaven, holding in his hand the key to the bottomless pit and a great chain. And **he seized the dragon**, that ancient serpent, who is **the devil and Satan**, and **bound him** for a thousand years, and **threw him into the pit**, and shut it and sealed it over him, **so that he might not deceive the nations any longer** ... (Revelation 20:1-3a ESV)

The Day of Atonement is a very solemn day, so **True Worshipers fast to draw closer to God**, as prescribed in Leviticus chapters sixteen and twenty-three – see the discussion of fasting in section **9.4 Leviticus Chapter Twenty-three** and in **Excursus 3 – Fasting** **עֲנָה and צוֹם** .

With Satan the Devil out of the way, the King of kings can lead the Family of God to create the **worldwide utopia known as the Wonderful World Tomorrow**. All of the prophecies of “peace”, “order”, “good government”, “abundance”, “happiness” and most importantly, “freedom” will be fulfilled. **This is the meaning of the Feast of Tabernacles**²⁴⁸ – seven days away from the world as it is today, seven days depicting all the blessings to come from God as specified in the prophecies:

... and **the government shall be upon his shoulder**,
and his name shall be called Wonderful Counselor, Mighty God, Everlasting Father, Prince of Peace.
Of the **increase of his government** and **of peace there will be no end**,
on the throne of David and over his kingdom,
to establish it and to uphold it with [mish*pat] and with righteousness
from this time forth and forevermore.
The zeal of the LORD of hosts will do this.

²⁴⁸ See also the discussion in section **6. The Feast of Tabernacles** in the paper “**The Transfiguration and the Tabernacle**” located at <https://mikewhytebiblicalresearch.ca/>

The **wolf shall dwell with the lamb**,
and the leopard shall lie down with the young goat,
and the calf and the lion and the fattened calf together;
and **a little child shall lead them**.

They shall not hurt or destroy in all my holy mountain;
for **the earth shall be full of the knowledge of the LORD** as the waters cover the sea.

On this mountain **the LORD of hosts will make for all peoples a feast** of rich food,
a feast of well-aged wine, of rich food full of marrow, of aged wine well refined.
And he will swallow up on this mountain **the covering that is cast over all peoples,**
the veil that is spread over all nations.²⁴⁹

He will swallow up death forever;
and **the Lord GOD will wipe away tears from all faces**,
and the reproach of his people he will take away from all the earth, for the LORD has spoken.
(Isaiah 9:6b-7, 11:6, 9, 25:6-8 ESV)

It shall come to pass in the latter days that **the mountain of the house of the LORD**
shall be established as the highest of the mountains, and it shall be lifted up above the hills;
and **peoples shall flow to it**, and many nations shall come, and say:

“Come, let us go up to the mountain of the LORD, to the house of the God of Jacob,
that he may teach us his ways and that we may walk in his paths.”

For out of Zion shall go forth the [torah], and the word of the LORD from Jerusalem.

He shall judge between many peoples, and shall decide disputes for strong nations far away;
and they shall **beat their swords into plowshares**, and their spears into pruning hooks;
nation shall not lift up sword against nation, neither shall they learn war anymore;
but they shall sit every man under his vine and under his fig tree, and **no one shall make them afraid**,
for the mouth of the LORD of hosts has spoken. (Micah 4:1-4 ESV)

Jesus earnestly looked forward to this time:

Jesus answered, **“My kingdom is not of this world.”** (John 18:36a ESV)

And he said to them, “I have earnestly desired to eat this Passover with you before I suffer.
For I tell you **I will not eat it until it is fulfilled in the kingdom of God.**”²⁵⁰ (Luke 22:15-16 ESV)

When the Son of Man comes in his glory, and all the angels with him, then he will sit on his glorious
throne. **Before him will be gathered all the nations** ... (Matthew 25:31-32a ESV)

This utopia will last for a “thousand” years:

Then I saw **thrones**, and seated on them were **those to whom the authority to judge** was committed.
Also I saw the [persons] who had been beheaded for the testimony of Jesus and for the word of God, and
those who had not worshiped the beast or its image and had not received its mark on their foreheads or
their hands. **They came to life and reigned with Christ for a thousand years.** ... This is the first
resurrection. Blessed and holy is the **one who shares in the first resurrection!** Over such the second
death has no power, but they will be **priests of God and of Christ**, and **they will reign with him for a
thousand years.** (Revelation 20:4, 5b-6 ESV)

Then comes **the period of time represented by the “eighth day”**:

The rest of the dead did not come to life until the thousand years were ended. ... Then I saw a great
white throne and him who was seated on it. From his presence earth and sky fled away, and no place was
found for them. And I saw **the dead, great and small, standing before the throne**, and **books were
opened**. Then **another book was opened**, which is the **book of life**. And **the dead were judged by what
was written in the books**, according to what they had done. And **the sea gave up the dead** who were in
it, Death and Hades gave up the dead who were in them, and they were judged, each one of them,
according to what they had done. (Revelation 20:5a, 11-13 ESV)

All human beings who have ever lived will be resurrected to a physical life. The **“books to be opened”**
are the **books of the Bible** – they will be opened to the understanding of all people. All people who
have ever lived will be taught the Way of God – **they will be given the opportunity for salvation**. The
“opening of the book of life” indicates that **all will be “called”**. The name of each and every human
being will go into “the book of life”. All will have access to God the Father and Jesus Christ, the
Intercessor. Each and every person will have the opportunity for the indwelling of the Holy Spirit. **Each**

²⁴⁹ This “veil” was symbolized by the curtain separating the two rooms of the Tabernacle and similarly the two rooms of the Temple – it was symbolically torn in half at Jesus’ death (see Mark 15:37-38, Matthew 27:50-51, Luke 23:45-46). The “veil” indicates that only those called by God can approach him. In the World Tomorrow, “calling” will extend to every last human being.

²⁵⁰ The “Kingdom of God” comprises the Family of God – resurrected beings transformed into spirit. The Kingdom of God, headed by Jesus Christ, will govern all the earth in the World Tomorrow.

person will have to make the choice to Worship the True God as he prescribes and live in eternity as a member of the Family of God, or choose not to continue with life:

Then Death and Hades²⁵¹ were **thrown into the lake of fire**. This is **the second death**, the lake of fire. And **if anyone's name was not found written in the book of life, he was thrown into the lake of fire**. (Revelation 20:14-15 ESV)

The Great Creator suggests choosing life:

I call heaven and earth to witness against you today, that **I have set before you life and death**, blessing and curse. **Therefore choose life**, that you and your offspring may live, **loving the LORD your God, obeying his voice** and **holding fast to him**, for **he is your life and length of days** ... (Deuteronomy 30:19-20a)

Excursus 1 – *hish^etaḥawah*

The Hebrew word **הִשָּׁתַּחֲוָה** - *hish^etaḥawah* has an interesting history. Until recently it was considered a Hithpael stem of the root **הָשָׁח** - *shaḥah*, “bow down”.²⁵² However, a cognate verb has been found in Ugaritic, *ḥwy*, “to bow down”. Now it is recognized that *hish^etaḥawah* is an Eshtaphal²⁵³ stem of **הָוָה** - *hawah*. As surveyed in Sections 1, 2, and 3 of this paper, when used in relationship with God, *hish^etaḥawah* is a technical term for “worship”. It is also used for worship of idols. It can also be used in relationship of two persons for “bowing down” in respect.

God commanded the Israelites not to “bow down” to or “serve” any idol:

You shall not make for yourself a **carved image**, or **any likeness of anything** that is in heaven above, or that is in the earth beneath, or that is in the water under the earth. **You shall not bow down** [*hish^etaḥawah*] to them **or serve** [*ʿavad*] them ...

When my angel goes before you and brings you to the Amorites and the Hittites and the Perizzites and the Canaanites, the Hivites and the Jebusites, and I blot them out, **you shall not bow down** [*hish^etaḥawah*] to their gods **nor serve** [*ʿavad*] them, nor do as they do, but you shall utterly overthrow them and break their pillars in pieces. **You shall serve** [*ʿavad*] **the LORD your God** ... (Exodus 20:4-5a, 23:23-25a ESV)²⁵⁴

The Hebrew word **עָבַד** - *ʿavad* is the normal word for “doing work”. Its range of meaning includes “serving a master”, “serving as a slave”.²⁵⁵ To serve an idol implies doing the idol’s work. God requires True Worshipers to serve him.

From the beginning, Israel fell into Idol worship:

And the LORD said to Moses, “Go down, for **your people**, whom you brought up out of the land of Egypt, **have corrupted themselves**. They have turned aside quickly out of the way that I commanded them. **They have made for themselves a golden calf** and have **worshiped** [*hish^etaḥawah*] it and **sacrificed** [*zabah*] to it and said, ‘These are your gods, O Israel, who brought you up out of the land of Egypt!’” (Exodus 32:7-8 ESV)²⁵⁶

They **made a calf in Horeb** and **worshiped** [*hish^etaḥawah*] **a metal image**.

They exchanged the glory of God for the image of an ox that eats grass.

They forgot God, their Savior, who had done great things in Egypt, wondrous works in the land of Ham, and awesome deeds by [Yam Suph].

Therefore he said he would destroy them—had not Moses, his chosen one, stood in the breach before him, to turn away his wrath from destroying them. (Psalm 106:19-23 ESV)

The Hebrew word **זָבַח** - *zavah* is the normal word for a sacrifice involving killing an animal. Its range of meaning includes any killing of an animal, “slaughter”, especially for “sacrifice”.²⁵⁷

²⁵¹ The phrase “Death and Hades” seems to represent the incorrigible, those who refuse to repent. In verse thirteen, it then indicates that even the “incorrigible” in their physical life will come up in the second resurrection.

²⁵² See TWOT article 619 page 267, article 2360 page 914, Holladay page 365, BDB page 1005

²⁵³ www.esv.org Hebrew Word Detail has “hishtaphel”; TDOT IV page 249 has “ishtaphal”

²⁵⁴ See also Exodus 34:14, Leviticus 26:1, Deuteronomy 4:19, 5:9, 8:19, 11:16, 17:3, 30:17, Joshua 23:7, 16, 1 Kings 9:6, 2 Kings 17:35-36, 2 Chronicles 7:19, Jeremiah 25:6

²⁵⁵ See Holladay page 261, TWOT article 1553 page 639

²⁵⁶ See also Numbers 25:2, Deuteronomy 29:24-26, Judges 2:11-14, 19, 2 Kings 17:14-17, Isaiah 44:9-17, 46:6, Jeremiah 1:16, 8:1-2, 13:10, 16:11-12, 22:8-9, Ezekiel 8:16-17

²⁵⁷ See Holladay page 86; see also discussion in *Excursus 6 – Terminology of Sacrifices*.

The prophet Samuel and King David made great strides to set the nation of Israel on the right path, but subsequent kings, beginning with Solomon, fell into serious idolatry:

Now **King Solomon loved many foreign women** ... from the nations concerning which the LORD had said to the people of Israel, “You shall not enter into marriage with them, neither shall they with you, for surely **they will turn away your heart after their gods.**” ... For when Solomon was old his wives turned away his heart after other gods, and his heart was not wholly true to the LORD his God, as was the heart of David his father. ... So **Solomon did what was evil in the sight of the LORD** and did not wholly follow the LORD, as David his father had done. Then **Solomon built a high place** ... on the mountain east of Jerusalem.

‘Behold, I am about to tear the kingdom from the hand of Solomon ... because **they have forsaken me and worshiped** [hish^etaḥawah] Ashtoreth **the goddess** of the Sidonians, Chemosh **the god** of Moab, and Milcom **the god** of the Ammonites, and **they have not walked in my ways**, doing what is right in my sight and keeping my statutes and my [mish^epatim],²⁵⁸ as David his father did.
(1 Kings 11:1a, 2, 4, 6-7, 31b, 33 ESV)²⁵⁹

Between human beings, to “bow down” was an act of respect. For example, consider the public negotiations between Abraham and Ephron to purchase the cave at Machpelah as a burial site:

And Abraham rose up from before his dead and said to the Hittites, “I am a sojourner and foreigner among you; **give me property among you for a burying place**, that I may bury my dead out of my sight.” The Hittites answered Abraham, “Hear us, my lord; you are a prince of God among us. Bury your dead in the choicest of our tombs. None of us will withhold from you his tomb to hinder you from burying your dead.” **Abraham rose and bowed** [hish^etaḥawah] **to the Hittites**, the people of the land. And he said to them, “If you are willing that I should bury my dead out of my sight, hear me and entreat for me **Ephron** the son of Zohar, that he **may give me the cave of Machpelah**, which he owns; it is at the end of his field. **For the full price** let him give it to me in your presence as property for a burying place.”

Now Ephron was sitting among the Hittites, and **Ephron the Hittite answered Abraham** in the hearing of the Hittites, of all who went in at the gate of his city, “No, my lord, hear me: **I give you the field**, and **I give you the cave** that is in it. In the sight of the sons of my people I give it to you. Bury your dead.” Then **Abraham bowed down** [hish^etaḥawah] **before the people of the land**. (Genesis 23:3-12 ESV)²⁶⁰

Frequently the “respect” shown by bowing down was “perfunctory” – the person bowing down did NOT have respect for the other person but had some ulterior motive. For example, consider Joab’s scheme to get Absalom reinstated in David’s court:

Now Joab the son of Zeruiah knew that the king’s heart went out to Absalom. And **Joab sent to Tekoa and brought from there a wise woman and said to her**, “Pretend to be a mourner and put on mourning garments. Do not anoint yourself with oil, but behave like a woman who has been mourning many days for the dead. **Go to the king and speak thus to him.**” So Joab put the words in her mouth. When the woman of Tekoa came to the king, **she fell on her face to the ground and paid homage** [hish^etaḥawah] and said, “Save me, O king.” ... Then **the king answered the woman**, “Do not hide from me anything I ask you.” And the woman said, “Let my lord the king speak.” The king said, **“Is the hand of Joab with you in all this?”**

Then **the king said to Joab**, “Behold now, I grant this; go, **bring back the young man Absalom.**” And **Joab fell on his face to the ground and paid homage** [hish^etaḥawah] ... Then Joab went to the king and told him, and he summoned **Absalom**. So he **came to the king and bowed** [hish^etaḥawah] himself on his face to the ground before the king, and the king kissed Absalom. (2 Samuel 14:1-4, 18-19a, 21-22a, 33 ESV)²⁶¹

The act of *hish^etaḥawah* can be part of **a vision or a prophecy**. For example, consider Joseph’s dreams:

Now **Joseph had a dream**, and when he told it to his brothers they hated him even more. He said to them, “Hear this dream that I have dreamed: Behold, we were binding sheaves in the field, and behold, my sheaf arose and stood upright. And behold, **your sheaves gathered around it and bowed down** [hish^etaḥawah] **to my sheaf.**” His brothers said to him, “Are you indeed to reign over us? Or are you deed to rule over us?” So they hated him even more for his dreams and for his words.

Then **he dreamed another dream** and told it to his brothers and said, “Behold, I have dreamed another dream. Behold, **the sun, the moon, and eleven stars were bowing down** [hish^etaḥawah] **to me.**” But when he told it to his father and to his brothers, his father rebuked him and said to him, “What is this

²⁵⁸ In this context, *mish^epatim* means a “correct understanding and application” of God’s teaching as specified in “statutes”.

²⁵⁹ See also 1 Kings 16:30-34, 22:51-53, 2 Kings 21:1-3, 19-21, 2 Chronicles 25:14, 33:1-3

²⁶⁰ See also Genesis 33:1-11, 42:6, 43:26, 28, 48:12, Exodus 18:7, Ruth 2:10, 1 Samuel 20:41, 24:28, 25:23, 41, 2 Samuel 9:6-8, 16:4, 18:21, 28, 24:20, 1 Kings 1:16, 23, 31, 2:19, 2 Kings 2:15, 4:37, 1 Chronicles 21:21

²⁶¹ See also 1 Samuel 28:14, 2 Samuel 1:1-2, 15:1-6, 1 Kings 1:53, 2 Chronicles 24:17-19

dream that you have dreamed? **Shall I and your mother and your brothers indeed come to bow ourselves** [hish^etaḥawah] **to the ground before you?**" (Genesis 37:5-10 ESV)²⁶²

There are many **prophecies of the abolition of idol worship** in the World Tomorrow:

Their land is filled with idols;

they bow down [hish^etaḥawah] **to the work of their hands**, to what their own fingers have made. ...

In that day **mankind will cast away their idols** of silver and their idols of gold, which **they made for themselves to worship** [hish^etaḥawah], to the moles and to the bats ... (Isaiah 2:8, 20 ESV)²⁶³

And in that day, declares the LORD,

I will cut off your horses from among you and will destroy your chariots;

and I will cut off the cities of your land and throw down all your strongholds;

and I will cut off sorceries from your hand, and you shall have no more tellers of fortunes;

and **I will cut off your carved images** and your pillars from among you,

and **you shall bow down** [hish^etaḥawah] **no more to the work of your hands;**

and **I will root out your Asherah images** from among you and destroy your cities.

And in anger and wrath I will execute vengeance on the nations that did not obey. (Micah 5:10-15 ESV)²⁶⁴

This shall be their lot in return **for their pride,**

because **they taunted and boasted** against the people of the LORD of hosts.

The LORD will be awesome against them;

for **he will famish all the gods of the earth,**

and **to him shall bow down** [hish^etaḥawah], each in its place, **all the lands of the nations.**

(Zephaniah 2:10-11 ESV)²⁶⁵

There are a few **"unique" usages of hish^etaḥawah** which remain to be discussed. They are all slightly different but do fall into the semantic range already outlined. Starting with the death of Jacob – in an act of humility before God – **because death is inevitable, Jacob bows** in worship to accept God's will:

And Jacob lived in the land of Egypt seventeen years. So the days of Jacob, the years of his life, were 147 years. And **when the time drew near that Israel must die,** he called his son Joseph and said to him, "... Do not bury me in Egypt, but let me lie with my fathers. Carry me out of Egypt and bury me in their burying place." He answered, "I will do as you have said." And he said, "Swear to me"; and he swore to him. Then **Israel bowed** [hish^etaḥawah] **himself upon the head of his bed.**²⁶⁶ (Genesis 47:28-29a, 29bβ-31 ESV)

When David is fleeing from Absalom, the author of Second Samuel comments that the summit of the Mount of Olives had become **place of worship**:

But David went up the ascent of the Mount of Olives, weeping as he went, barefoot and with his head covered. ... While David was coming to **the summit, where God was worshiped** [hish^etaḥawah] ... (2 Samuel 15:30a, 32a ESV)

Similarly, *hish^etaḥawah* is used to identify a **place of worship** by the Rabshakeh in his challenge of Hezekiah:

And **the Rabshakeh said** to them, "Say **to Hezekiah,** 'Thus says the great king, the king of Assyria: On what do you rest this trust of yours? Do you think that mere words are strategy and power for war? In whom do you now trust, that you have rebelled against me? Behold, you are trusting now in Egypt, that broken reed of a staff, which will pierce the hand of any man who leans on it. Such is Pharaoh king of Egypt to all who trust in him. But if you say to me, "**We trust in the LORD our God,**" is it not he whose high places and altars Hezekiah has removed, saying to Judah and to Jerusalem, "**You shall worship** [hish^etaḥawah] **before this altar in Jerusalem**"?' (2 Kings 18:19-22 ESV // Isaiah 36:4-7, 2 Chronicles 32:9-12)

Soon after this, Sennacherib dies worshipping in an idol's temple:

Then Sennacherib king of Assyria departed and went home and lived at Nineveh. And as **he was worshiping** [hish^etaḥawah] **in the house of Nisroch his god,** Adrammelech and Sharezer, his sons, struck him down with the sword ... (2 Kings 19:36-37a ESV // Isaiah 37:37-38a)

When **Elisha instructs Naaman how to become healed of leprosy,** Naaman expresses his gratitude by expressing a desire to worship the God of Israel. However, he recognizes that he will NOT be able to avoid compromising situations. Elisha knowing that he is not truly converted acquiesces:

²⁶² The dream was literally fulfilled in Genesis 42:6, 43:26,28; see also Genesis 27:29, 49:8, Exodus 11:8, 1 Samuel 2:36 (ESV has "implore" for *hish^etaḥawah*), 1 Kings 9:8-9, 2 Chronicles 7:19-22

²⁶³ See also Isaiah 45:14, 49:7,23, 60:14

²⁶⁴ See also Psalms 45:10-12, 96:9, 97:6-7

²⁶⁵ See also Zephaniah 1:3-6

²⁶⁶ David expresses the same attitude just before his death: 1 Kings 1:47, 2:1,10

And Elisha sent a messenger to him, saying, “Go and wash in the Jordan seven times, and your flesh shall be restored, and you shall be clean.” ... So he went down and dipped himself seven times in the Jordan, according to the word of the man of God, and his flesh was restored like the flesh of a little child, and he was clean. Then he returned to the man of God, he and all his company, and he came and stood before him. And he said, “Behold, I know that there is no God in all the earth but in Israel ...” Then Naaman said, “... from now on your servant will not offer burnt offering or sacrifice to any god but the LORD. “In this matter may the LORD pardon your servant: when my master goes into the house of Rimmon to worship [hish^etaḥawah] there, leaning on my arm, and I bow myself [hish^etaḥawah] in the house of Rimmon, when I bow myself [hish^etaḥawah] in the house of Rimmon, the LORD pardon your servant in this matter.” He said to him, “Go in peace.” (2 Kings 5:10, 14-15a, 17aα, 17b-19 ESV)

When Haman is promoted by King Ahasuerus (Xerxes) he expects to be shown due respect by the “bowing down” of subordinates. Mordecai, the uncle and guardian of Esther, refuses:

And all the king’s servants who were at the king’s gate bowed down and paid homage [hish^etaḥawah] to Haman, for the king had so commanded concerning him. But Mordecai did not bow down or pay homage [hish^etaḥawah]. ... And when Haman saw that Mordecai did not bow down or pay homage [hish^etaḥawah] to him, Haman was filled with fury. (Esther 3:2, 5 ESV)

There are several other Hebrew words which share the same semantic space as *hish^etaḥawah*:

- קָדַד - qadad, “bow down”,²⁶⁷ is used in all instance with *hish^etaḥawah* to indicate the physical act of bending over
- שָׁחָה - shaḥah, “bow down”, “be brought low”,²⁶⁸ is NOT used with *hish^etaḥawah*, but it is more or less synonymous with *qadad* in the physical act of bowing. Figuratively, it is used for “being brought low”, “made humble” usually by God:
So man is humbled [shaḥah], and each one is brought low—do not forgive them! ...
The haughty looks of man shall be brought low,
and the lofty pride of men shall be humbled [shaḥah],
and the LORD alone will be exalted in that day. ...
And the haughtiness of man shall be humbled [shaḥah],
and the lofty pride of men shall be brought low,
and the LORD alone will be exalted in that day.
(Isaiah 2:9, 11, 17 ESV)²⁶⁹
- קָרָע - kara, has a wider range of meaning than *qadad* and *shaḥah* but can be synonymous with them.²⁷⁰ It can be used of a person or an animal “sinking down” or “crouching down”:²⁷¹
Judah is a lion’s cub; from the prey, my son, you have gone up.
He stooped down; he crouched [kara] as a lion and as a lioness; who dares rouse him?
(Genesis 49:9 ESV)
She sent her hand to the tent peg and her right hand to the workmen’s mallet;
she struck Sisera; she crushed his head; she shattered and pierced his temple.
Between her feet he sank [kara], he fell, he lay still;
between her feet he sank [kara], he fell;
where he sank [kara] there he fell—dead. (Judges 5:26-27 ESV)
Now his daughter-in-law, the wife of Phinehas, was pregnant, about to give birth. And when she heard the news that the ark of God was captured, and that her father-in-law and her husband were dead, she bowed [kara] and gave birth, for her pains came upon her.
(1 Samuel 4:19 ESV)
- שָׁחָה - shaḥah, “bow down”, occurs twice: Proverbs 12:25 and Isaiah 51:23.²⁷² It is likely that *shaḥah* is just a morphological variant of *shaḥah*.

²⁶⁷ See TWOT article 1985 page 784; Genesis 24:26,48, 43:28, Exodus 4:31, 12:27, 34:8, Numbers 22:31, 1 Samuel 24:8, 28:14, 1 Kings 1:16,31, 1 Chronicles 29:20, 2 Chronicles 20:18, 29:30, Nehemiah 8:6

²⁶⁸ See TWOT article 2361 page 915; “bow down”: Job 9:13, 38:40, Psalm 10:10, 35:14, 38:6, Proverbs 14:19, Ecclesiastes 12:4, Habakkuk 3:6

²⁶⁹ See also Psalm 107:39, Isaiah 5:15, 25:12, 26:5, 29:4, 60:14, Lamentations 3:20

²⁷⁰ See TWOT article 1044 page 456; synonymous: Judges 11:35, 1 Kings 8:54, 19:18, 2 Kings 1:13, 2 Chronicles 7:3, 29:29, Ezra 9:5, Esther 3:2,5, Psalm 22:29, 72:9, 95:6, Isaiah 45:23, 46:1,2

²⁷¹ See also Numbers 24:9, Judges 7:5,6, 2 Samuel 22:40, 2 Kings 9:24, Job 4:4, 31:10, 39:3, Psalm 17:13, 18:40, 20:8, 78:31, Isaiah 10:4, 65:12

²⁷² See TWOT article 2360 page 914

Excursus 2 – *mo`ed*

The masculine noun מועֵד - *mo`ed* is derived from the root verb יָעַד - *ya`ad*, which means “appoint”, “assemble”, “meet”, “set”.²⁷³ The range of meaning of *mo`ed* includes “appointed sign”, “appointed time”, “appointed season”, “place of assembly”. This paper has dealt with *mo`ed* extensively in section **9. When to Worship – Feasts and Appointed Times** where we saw that it is used as **a technical term for a period of time designated by God for a holy convocation**:

The LORD spoke to Moses, saying, “Speak to the people of Israel and say to them, These are the **appointed [times]** [*mo`ed*] **of the LORD** that **you shall proclaim** as **holy convocations** [*miq`ra` qodesh*]; they are my **appointed [times]** [*mo`ed*]. (Leviticus 23:1-2 ESV)

Apart from these occurrences, the first instance of *mo`ed* is:

And God said, “**Let there be lights in the expanse of the heavens** to separate the day from the night. And **let them be for signs** [*oth*] **and for seasons** [*mo`ed*], and for days and years, and let them be lights in the expanse of the heavens to give light upon the earth.” And it was so. And God made the two great lights—the greater light to rule the day and the lesser light to rule the night—and the stars. And God set them in the expanse of the heavens to give light on the earth, to rule over the day and over the night, and to separate the light from the darkness. And God saw that it was good. And there was evening and there was morning, **the fourth day**. (Genesis 1:14-19 ESV)

On the fourth day of re-creation the atmosphere was cleared revealing the sun, moon, and stars. These were to be for “**signs and seasons**”. The word “signs” is from אֹת - *oth*, which carries the same range of meaning as the English word “sign”.²⁷⁴ Clearly God’s intention was that the calendar should be based on astronomical phenomena. The weekly Sabbath is specifically identified as an *oth*.²⁷⁵ The implication of “seasons”, *mo`ed*, “appointed times”, is primarily the yearly “holy day” seasons.²⁷⁶

English translations of *mo`ed* are generally poor. Most try to make it a synonym of *hag*, “feast”, which it is NOT. There are three feasts: Feast of Unleavened Bread, Feast of Harvest of Firstfruits (Pentecost), and the Feast of Tabernacles. The “feasts” are *mo`ed*, but *mo`ed* also includes the weekly Sabbath, Passover, Day of Trumpets, Day of Atonement, and “Eighth Day”.

An important usage of *mo`ed* is for “place of assembly”. This can be the official gathering of Israel, the “congregation”:

Now Korah the son of Izhar, son of Kohath, son of Levi, and Dathan and Abiram the sons of Eliab, and On the son of Peleth, sons of Reuben, took men. And they rose up before Moses, with a number of the people of Israel, 250 **chiefs of the congregation** [*`edah*], chosen from **the assembly** [*mo`ed*], well-known men. They **assembled themselves together** [*qahal*] against Moses and against Aaron and said to them, “You have gone too far! For **all in the congregation** [*`edah*] **are holy**, every one of them, and the LORD is among them. Why then do you exalt yourselves above of **the assembly** [*qahal*] **LORD?**” (Numbers 16:1-3 ESV)

The normal word for the “assembly of Israel”, the “congregation”, is עֵדָה - *`edah*, a feminine noun, derived, like *mo`ed*, from *ya`ad*. The act of assembling is the verb קָהַל - *qahal*.²⁷⁷ The masculine noun, *qahal*, is more or less synonymous with *`edah*. Normally, *mo`ed* points to the “place of assembly”.²⁷⁸

Your foes have roared in the midst of your meeting place [*mo`ed*];

they set up their own signs for signs.

They were like those who swing axes in a forest of trees.

And all its carved wood they broke down with hatchets and hammers.

They set your sanctuary on fire;

they profaned the dwelling place of your name, bringing it down to the ground.

They said to themselves, “We will utterly subdue them”;

they burned all the meeting places [*mo`ed*] of God in the land. (Psalm 74:4-8 ESV)

²⁷³ See TWOT article 878 page 387

²⁷⁴ See TWOT article 41a page 18

²⁷⁵ See Exodus 31:12-17, Ezekiel 20:12,20

²⁷⁶ See also Psalm 104:19, Hosea 2:9

²⁷⁷ See TWOT article 1991 page 789

²⁷⁸ See also Joshua 8:14, 1 Samuel 20:35, Job 30:23, Isaiah 14:13, Lamentations 1:15

The Psalmist laments the destruction of the Temple, the *mo'ed* of YHWH. Jeremiah expresses the same sentiment:

The Lord has become like an enemy; he has swallowed up Israel;
he has swallowed up all its palaces; he has laid in ruins its strongholds,
and he has multiplied in the daughter of Judah mourning and lamentation.
He has laid waste his booth like a garden, **laid in ruins his meeting place** [mo'ed];
the LORD has made Zion forget [appointed time] [mo'ed] and Sabbath,
and in his fierce indignation has spurned king and priest.
The Lord has scorned his altar, **disowned his sanctuary**;
he has delivered into the hand of the enemy the walls of her palaces;
they raised a clamor in **the house of the LORD** as on the day of [appointed time] [mo'ed].
(Lamentations 2:5-7 ESV)

By far the most common use of the word *mo'ed* is in the phrase מוֹעֵד אֹהֶל - 'ohel mo'ed, "tent of meeting".²⁷⁹ During the construction of the Tabernacle Moses set up a temporary "tent of meeting":
Now Moses used to take the tent ['ohel] **and pitch it outside the camp**, far off from the camp, and **he called it the tent of meeting** ['ohel mo'ed]. And everyone who sought the LORD would go out to **the tent of meeting** ['ohel mo'ed], which was outside the camp. Whenever Moses went out to the tent ['ohel], all the people would rise up, and each would stand at his tent door, and watch Moses until he had gone into the tent ['ohel]. When Moses entered the tent ['ohel], the pillar of cloud would descend and stand at the entrance of the tent ['ohel], and **the LORD would speak with Moses**. And when all the people saw the pillar of cloud standing at the entrance of the tent ['ohel], all the people would rise up and worship, each at his tent door. Thus **the LORD used to speak to Moses face to face**, as a man speaks to his friend. When Moses turned again into the camp, his assistant Joshua the son of Nun, a young man, would not depart from the tent ['ohel]. (Exodus 33:7-11 ESV)

When the construction of the Tabernacle was complete, **the term "tent of meeting" was used generally for the whole sanctuary**, but specifically, the "tent of meeting" was **the first room of the Tabernacle** where Moses would communicate with YHWH:

Then **the cloud covered the tent of meeting** ['ohel mo'ed], and the glory of the LORD filled the tabernacle. And **Moses was not able to enter the tent of meeting** ['ohel mo'ed] because the cloud settled on it, and the glory of the LORD filled the tabernacle. (Exodus 40:34-35 ESV)

The LORD called Moses and spoke to him from the tent of meeting ['ohel mo'ed], saying, "Speak to the people of Israel and say to them ... The LORD spoke to Moses, saying, "Command the people of Israel to bring you pure oil from beaten olives for the lamp, that **a light may be kept burning regularly**. Outside the veil of the testimony, **in the tent of meeting** ['ohel mo'ed], Aaron shall arrange it from evening to morning before the LORD regularly. (Leviticus 1:1-2a, 24:1-3a ESV)

The LORD spoke to Moses, saying, "Speak to the people of Israel, and get from them staffs, one for each fathers' house, from all their chiefs according to their fathers' houses, twelve staffs. Write each man's name on his staff, and write Aaron's name on the staff of Levi. For there shall be one staff for the head of each fathers' house. Then you shall **deposit them in the tent of meeting** ['ohel mo'ed] before the testimony, **where I meet with you**. (Numbers 17:1-4 ESV)

Another use of *mo'ed* is to specify **a particular time when something is to occur**, for example, consider the birth of Isaac:²⁸⁰

But I will establish my covenant with **Isaac**, whom **Sarah shall bear** to you **at this time** [mo'ed] next year. ... Is anything too hard for the LORD? **At the appointed time** [mo'ed] I will return to you, about this time next year, and **Sarah shall have a son**. ... And **Sarah** conceived and **bore Abraham a son** in his old age **at the time** [mo'ed] of which God had spoken to him. (Genesis 17:21, 18:14, 21:2 ESV)

The "specific time" being set can have prophetic implications:²⁸¹

At the set time [mo'ed] that I appoint **I will judge** with equity.

When the earth totters, and all its inhabitants, it is I who keep steady its pillars. Selah
I say to the boastful, 'Do not boast,' and to the wicked, 'Do not lift up your horn;

²⁷⁹ See **Exodus** 27:21, 28:43, 29:4,10,11,30,32,42,44, 30:16,18,20,26,36, 31:7, 33:7, 35:21, 38:8,30, 39:32,40, 40:2,6,7,12,22,24,26,29,30,32,34,35, **Leviticus** 1:1,3,5, 3:2,8,13, 4:4,5,7,14,16,18, 6:16,26,30, 8:3,4,31,33,35, 9:5,23, 10:7,9, 12:6, 14:11,23, 15:14,29, 16:7,16,17,20,23,33, 17:4,5,6,9, 19:21, 24:3, **Numbers** 1:1, 2:2,17, 3:7,8,25,38, 4:3,4,15,23,25,28,30,31,33,35,37,39,41,43,47, 6:10,13,18, 7:5,8,9, 8:9,15,19,22,24,26, 10:3, 11:16, 12:4, 14:10, 16:18,19,42,43,50, 17:4, 18:4,6,21,22,23,31, 19:4, 20:6, 25:6, 27:2, 31:54, **Deuteronomy** 31:14, **Joshua** 18:1, 19:51, **1 Samuel** 2:22, **1 Kings** 8:4, **1 Chronicles** 6:32, 9:21, 23:32, **2 Chronicles** 1:3,6,13, 5:5

²⁸⁰ See also Exodus 9:5, 1 Samuel 9:24, 13:8,11, 2 Samuel 20:5, 24:15, 2 Kings 4:16,17, Nehemiah 10:34

²⁸¹ See also Jeremiah 8:7, Daniel 8:19, 11:27,29,35, Habakkuk 2:3, Zechariah 8:19

do not lift up your horn on high, or speak with haughty neck.
For not from the east or from the west and not from the wilderness comes lifting up,
but it is God who executes judgment, putting down one and lifting up another.
For **in the hand of the LORD there is a cup with foaming wine**, well mixed,
and he pours out from it, and **all the wicked of the earth shall drain it down to the dregs.**
(Psalm 75:2-8 ESV)

The ESV has a particularly bad translation in the Book of Zephaniah:

Sing aloud, O **daughter of Zion**; shout, **O Israel!**
Rejoice and exult with all your heart, O **daughter of Jerusalem!**
The LORD has taken away the judgments against you; he has cleared away your enemies.
The King of Israel, the LORD, **is in your midst**; you shall never again fear evil.
On that day it shall be said to Jerusalem: "Fear not, O Zion; let not your hands grow weak.
The LORD your God is in your midst, a mighty one who will save;
he will rejoice over you with gladness; he will quiet you by his love;
he will exult over you with loud singing.
I will gather those of you who mourn for the [appointed time]²⁸² [mo`ed],
so that you will no longer suffer reproach.
Behold, **at that time** I will deal with all your oppressors.
And **I will save the lame and gather the outcast**,
and I will change their shame into praise and renown in all the earth.
At that time I will bring you in, **at the time** when I gather you together;
for I will make you renowned and praised among all the peoples of the earth,
when **I restore your fortunes** before your eyes," says the LORD. (Zephaniah 3:14-20 ESV)

The prophecy is looking to the time after the Second Advent, when "**The King**", YHWH, Jesus Christ, "**is in your midst**". It is the time of the Second Exodus, "**I will save the lame and gather the outcast**", and the creation of the New Israel, "**O Israel ... I restore your fortunes**". This will happen according to the Plan of God, at the time he appoints, "**the appointed time**", "**at that time**". There is no discussion of Feasts or Holy Convocations, so the ESV translation of "festival" has no basis. Those "**who mourn for the appointed time**" are True Worshipers. They are the ones to whom God says "**I will gather those of you**" in the First Resurrection.

There is another difficult use of *mo`ed* in Isaiah chapter fourteen:

Wail, O gate; cry out, O city; melt in fear, O Philistia, all of you!
For smoke comes out of the north, and there is **no straggler**²⁸³ in his **ranks** [mo`edim]. (Isaiah 14:31 ESV)

All modern translations are consistent with the ESV in using "ranks", but this **is a one-off translation based on context**. The *sitz-im-leben* of this pericope is explicit:

In the year that King Ahaz died came this oracle: (Isaiah 14:28 ESV)

Ahaz died in 715BC. At that time, there was a rebellion brewing among the Philistine cities. Sargon had suffered a defeat from Babylon in 721 and was occupied with fighting in the north and in the east.²⁸⁴

Isaiah prophesized Assyria would come and crush the rebellion:

Rejoice not, O Philistia, all of you, that the rod that struck you is broken,
for from the **serpent's root will come forth an adder**, and its fruit will be a flying fiery serpent. ...
Wail, O gate; cry out, O city; **melt in fear, O Philistia, all of you!** (Isaiah 14:29, 31a ESV)

Using this context translators and commentators interpret verse 31b in **a military sense**:

In this approaching enemy there is no one separated or isolated. **All in its armies are together**, for it is well organized and trained, ready to fight and destroy. Before it, Philistia cannot stand.
(Young (IS1) page 452)²⁸⁵

The traditional translation of verse 31b follows the old King James translation:

For smoke will come from the north, And no one *will be* alone in his **appointed times** [mo`edim]. (NKJV)

²⁸² ESV has "festival"

²⁸³ This is from בִּלְדָּד - boded, a masculine participle of the verb בָּדַד - badad, it means "one being alone"; see TWOT article 201 page 90.

²⁸⁴ See Bright pages 280-282

²⁸⁵ See also KD volume 7, page 207

The NKJV note identifies the possibility of “ranks”. Oswalt also uses “ranks” in his translation, but a footnote quotes the Targum as:

... none that delays at his appointed times [mo`edim]. (Oswalt (IS1) page 329)

The problem with the military interpretation is that it ignores verses 30 and 32:

And the firstborn of the poor will graze, and the needy lie down in safety;
but I will kill your root with famine, and your remnant it will slay. ...

What will one answer the messengers of the nation?

“The LORD has founded Zion, and in her the afflicted of his people find refuge.” (Isaiah 14:30, 32 ESV)

The subject of Isaiah chapter fourteen is the destruction of “world city” by the King of kings on the Day of YHWH at the Second Advent:

After this I saw another angel coming down from heaven, having great authority, and the earth was made bright with his glory. And he called out with a mighty voice,

“Fallen, fallen is Babylon the great!

She has become a dwelling place for demons, a haunt for every unclean spirit,
a haunt for every unclean bird, a haunt for every unclean and detestable beast.

For all nations have drunk the wine of the passion of her sexual immorality,
and the kings of the earth have committed immorality with her,
and the merchants of the earth have grown rich from the power of her luxurious living.”
(Revelation 18:1-3 ESV)

“Babylon”, “Assyria”, “Philistia”, are proxies for “world city” – the aggregated nations of this world and the evil systems that have been created under the influence of Satan the Devil. The timeframe for the prophecy in Isaiah chapter fourteen is set in verse one:

For the LORD will have compassion on Jacob and will again choose Israel, and will set them in their own land, and sojourners will join them and will attach themselves to the house of Jacob. (Isaiah 14:1 ESV)

This is looking to the Second Exodus and the establishment of the New Israel. There is a lot of “duality” in the chapter. Verses 3-11 particularize the destruction of “Babylon” as a type of “world city”. Verses 12-15 give some background on the perpetrator, Satan the Devil, and his fate. Verses 16-21 discuss the fate of the end-time leader of “world city”, “the beast”, “antichrist”. Verses 22-23 summarize the destruction of “Babylon”. Verses 24-27 concern Assyria, the immediate foe of Isaiah’s time, but also a type of “world city”. Verses 28-32 deal with Philistia also as a type of “world city”.

Given the context of the whole chapter and the clear statements in verse 30 and 32 which look to the resurrection and the establishment of the Kingdom of God, it is clear that *mo`edim* in verse 31 should retain its normal meaning of “appointed times”:

For smoke comes out of the north, and **there is no one alone at his appointed times** [mo`edim].

The allusion is to the Battle of Armageddon when the assembled armies of “world city” will oppose the returning King of kings and be destroyed by him. The Assyrian army at the time of Isaiah was a “type” of the end-time armies. The **“appointed time”** is as in other prophetic usages of *mo`ed* – **when God sets the “time” to act, he will accomplish all his purpose**. The plural, *mo`edim*, indicates that God has acted in the past and will do it again.

One final difficult passage remains:

And I heard **the man clothed in linen**, who was above the waters of the stream; he raised his right hand and his left hand toward heaven and swore by him who lives forever that it would be for **a time** [mo`ed], **times** [mo`edim], and **half a time** [hatzi], and that **when the shattering of the power of the holy people comes to an end all these things would be finished**. (Daniel 12:7 ESV)

Verse seven is a response to **the question in verse six**: “How long shall it be until the end of these wonders?” “How long” is translated from עַד מָתַי קֵץ - `ad mathay qetz, **“until when end”**. **The question is NOT looking for a duration, but for an end point.** When **mo`ed is used in the context of time it is always a “point in time”**, the time of an event, the time of an occurrence. Daniel uses *mo`ed* clearly in this way in Daniel 8:19, 11:27, 29, and 35. Verse seven is in fact explicit that it is dealing with point in time, the time at which **“the shattering of the power of the holy people”** ends. This occurs at the first resurrection. **So, the understanding of mo`ed in this verse has to relate to the point in time of events which lead up to the Second Advent.** This is precisely the topic of the Seventy Periods Prophecy

in Daniel chapter nine verses twenty-four through twenty-seven.²⁸⁶ Daniel 12:7 would be better translated as follows:

And I heard **the man clothed in linen**, who was above the waters of the stream; he raised his right hand and his left hand toward heaven and swore by him who lives forever that it would be for **appointed time** [mo`ed], **appointed times** [mo`edim], and **half** [hatzi], and that **when the shattering of the power of the holy people comes to an end all these things would be finished**.

The **traditional understanding** of “time times and half” has been to relate it to the explicit time periods mentioned in Daniel 8:14, “2300 evenings and mornings”;²⁸⁷ Daniel 12:11, “1290 days”; Daniel 12:12, “1335 days”; Revelation 11:2 and 13:5, “forty-two months”; Revelation 11:3 and 12:6, “1260 days”.

These are all clearly “durations” – mo`ed relates to “a point in time”, so the two should NOT be mixed.

In Daniel 7:25 there is the Aramaic phrase “up to time times and half of time” and in Revelation 12:14 there is the Greek phrase “for time and for times and for half of time”. These are clearly related to the Hebrew phrase. The point of all this is the **marvellous ambiguity of the whole topic**. Should the given “durations” be taken literally or figuratively? To which specific events do the “points in time” relate?²⁸⁸

God is specific that he has not given us the information to figure out when “the appointed time”, the end-time, is to occur:

It is not for you to know the times or the season that the Father has fixed by his own authority.
(Acts 1:7 ESV)

The Bible contains a plethora of end-time prophecies. These tell us in no uncertain terms **what is going to happen** as the end approaches. **It is this that God has given us to understand:**

I heard, but **I did not understand**. Then I said, “O my lord, what shall be the outcome of these things?” He said, “Go your way, Daniel, for **the words are shut up and sealed until the time of the end**. Many shall purify themselves and make themselves white and be refined, but **the wicked shall act wickedly**. And **none of the wicked shall understand**, but **those who are wise shall understand**. (Daniel 12:8-10 ESV)

Excursus 3 – Fasting עֲנָה and צוֹם

The Hebrew idiom “**you shall afflict yourselves**” means “**to fast**” – do without food and drink for a specific period of time. The idiom is stated identically in three places – Leviticus 16:31, 23:32, and Numbers 29:7:

נַפְשֵׁיכֶם	אֶת	וְעֲנִיתֶם
naph ^e shothekem	’eth	w ^e ’innithem
selves of you	(sign of)	and you shall
	(direct object)	afflict

Leviticus 16:29 has a slightly different form of the verb and Numbers 30:13 has a shorter form of the idiom. The verb “afflict” is עָנָה - ‘anah, its range of meaning includes “humble oneself”, “be humbled”, “humiliate”, “submit”, “punish”, “inflict pain upon”.²⁸⁹ The verb צוֹם - tzum means specifically “to fast” and the derivative noun צוֹם - tzom means “fast”, “fasting”.²⁹⁰ The two words are used together in several places which make the meaning of the idiom crystal clear, for example:

נַפְשִׁי	בְּצוֹם	עָנִיתִי
naph ^e shi	vatz ^z om	’innethi
self of me	with the fast	I afflicted
“I afflicted myself with fasting” (ESV)		
Psalm 35:13bα		

²⁸⁶ See the discussion of these verses in “An Exegesis of Daniel 9:24-27 The Seventy Periods Prophecy” located on www.mikewhytebiblicalresearch.ca

²⁸⁷ There is disagreement as to whether this “2300 days” each day being an evening and a morning (Genesis 1:5,8,13,19,23,31); or is it “1150 evenings” and “1150 mornings”, therefore, 1150 days?

²⁸⁸ A possible mapping of the “points in time” to events is: the *mo`ed* is the First Advent ending the first group of “seven” periods; *mo`edim* are two closely related events: “the shattering of the power of the Holy People”, the hegemony of the “beast power”, ending the time of the New Testament Church, the end of the second group of “sixty-two” periods; and, the Second Advent with the first resurrection and the inauguration of the Kingdom of God, ending the “seventieth” period. The *hatzi*, “half” is the tribulation, the first part of the “seventieth” period where Satan, through the beast power, tries to destroy all True Christians.

²⁸⁹ See TWOT article 1652 page 682; Holladay pages 277-278

²⁹⁰ See TWOT article 1890 page 758; Holladay pages 304

Then I **proclaimed a fast** [tzom] there, at the river Ahava, that we might **humble ourselves** [ʿanah] before our God, to seek from him a safe journey for ourselves, our children, and all our goods. (Ezra 8:21 ESV)

The word “fast” is translated from *tzom*; “humble ourselves” is translated from a hithpael infinitive of *ʿanah*.

In those days I, Daniel, was mourning for three weeks. **I ate no delicacies, no meat or wine entered my mouth**, nor did I anoint myself at all, for the full three weeks. ... Then he said to me, “Fear not, Daniel, for from the first day that you set your heart to understand and **humbled yourself** [ʿanah] before your God, your words have been heard, and I have come because of your words. (Daniel 10:2-3, 12 ESV)

Verses two and three specifically state that Daniel was “fasting”. In verse twelve, “humbled yourself” is also translated from a hithpael infinitive of *ʿanah*.

The classic passage on fasting is in Isaiah:

1. “Cry aloud; do not hold back; lift up your voice like a trumpet; **declare to my people their transgression**, to the house of Jacob their sins.
2. Yet they **seek me daily** and **delight to know my ways**, **as if they were** a nation that did righteousness and did not forsake the [mishʿpat]²⁹¹ of their God; they ask of me righteous [mishʿpatim]; they delight to draw near to God.
3. ‘Why have we **fasted** [tzum], and you see it not? Why have we **humbled ourselves** [ʿanah], and you take no knowledge of it?’ Behold, **in the day of your fast** [tzom] you **seek your own pleasure**, and **oppress all your workers**.
4. Behold, you fast [tzum] only to **quarrel and to fight** and to hit with a wicked fist. Fasting [tzum] like yours this day will not make your voice to be heard on high.
5. Is such the fast [tzom] that I choose, a day for a person to humble [ʿanah] himself? Is it to bow down his head like a reed, and to spread sackcloth and ashes under him? Will you call this a fast [tzom], and a day acceptable to the LORD?
6. **Is not this the fast** [tzom] **that I choose**: to loose the bonds of wickedness, to undo the straps of the yoke, to **let the oppressed go free**, and to **break every yoke**?
7. Is it not to **share your bread with the hungry** and **bring the homeless poor into your house**; **when you see the naked, to cover him**, and not to hide yourself from your own flesh?
8. Then shall your light break forth like the dawn, and your healing shall spring up speedily; your righteousness shall go before you; the glory of the LORD shall be your rear guard.
9. **Then you shall call, and the LORD will answer**; you shall cry, and he will say, ‘Here I am.’ If you **take away the yoke** from your midst, the pointing of the finger, and **speaking wickedness**,
10. if you **pour yourself out for the hungry** and **satisfy the desire of the afflicted** [ʿanah], then shall your light rise in the darkness and your gloom be as the noonday.
11. And **the LORD will guide you continually** and satisfy your desire in scorched places and make your bones strong; and **you shall be like a watered garden**, like a spring of water, whose waters do not fail.
12. And your ancient ruins shall be rebuilt; **you shall raise up the foundations of many generations**; you shall be called the repairer of the breach, the restorer of streets to dwell in. (Isaiah 58:1-12 ESV)

The passage is explicitly about fasting – *tzum* and *tzom* are used several times, and the idiom is explicitly shown to be equivalent in **verse three**. The important thing about the passage is that it clearly shows the purpose of fasting. YHWH is the speaker. In **verse one**, he commands Isaiah to “**declare to my people their transgression**”, then he goes on to deal with a serious sin – coming before God with an insincere attitude: **fasting in a perfunctory manner**. In **verse two**, the people insincerely seek God. In **verse three-a**, the people put forth their fasting as an example of devotion. In **verse three-b through verse five**, YHWH points out **the hypocrisy of their fasting**. **Verse five** indicates **making a show of fasting**. **Verses six and seven** specify the correct “**faith and works**” fasting should demonstrate. In **verses eight and nine-a**, YHWH promise to respond to correct fasting. **Verses nine-b and ten** further elaborate correct “**faith and works**”. **Verses eleven and twelve** may be **Isaiah’s comment** on what correct fasting can accomplish: **verse eleven** depicts the life of a True Worshipper, and **verse twelve**

²⁹¹ The structure here is complicated: “righteousness” is parallel with “seek me daily”; “*mishʿpat*” is parallel with “my ways”. “Righteousness” and “*mishʿpat*” are attributes of the Nature of God. The sin is in rejecting God by rejecting his nature. In the last line of verse two, *mishʿpatim* is understanding of the *torah*, which the people pretend to seek, or at best seek perfunctorily.

specifies the successful outcome of being a True Worshipper – to be part of the Kingdom of God and restore the earth.

Excursus 4 – New Moon, Dedication, and Purim

The New Moon

The Hebrew word for the moon as an astral body is יָרֵחַ - yareah;²⁹² for example:

Then he dreamed another dream and told it to his brothers and said, “Behold, I have dreamed another dream. Behold, the sun, **the moon** [yareah], and eleven stars were bowing down to me.”
(Genesis 37:9 ESV)

And beware lest you raise your eyes to heaven, and when you see the sun and **the moon** [yareah] and the stars, all the host of heaven, you be drawn away and bow down to them and serve them, things that the LORD your God has allotted to all the peoples under the whole heaven. (Deuteronomy 4:19 ESV)

It was discussed in **Excursus 2 – mo`ed** that the moon was to be used to mark time, i.e., the beginning of each month was at the new moon. The Hebrew word הֹדֶשׁ - hodesh, means literally “new moon”.²⁹³ It is frequently translated “month” in English. For calendrical purposes, God specified that Abib²⁹⁴ was to be counted as the first month:

This month [hodesh] [Abib]²⁹⁵ shall be for you the beginning of months [hodesh]. It shall be the first month [hodesh] of the year for you. (Exodus 12:2 ESV)

There is also another word in Hebrew for “month”, יָרַח - yerah.²⁹⁶ It has a narrower semantic range than *hodesh*, but the two words can be use more or less as synonyms:

In the fourth year the foundation of the house of the LORD was laid, **in the month** [yarah] **of Ziv**. And in the eleventh year, **in the month** [yarah] **of Bul**, which is **the eighth month** [hodesh], the house was finished in all its parts, and according to all its specifications. He was seven years in building it. ... And all the men of Israel assembled to King Solomon at **the feast in the month** [yarah] **Ethanim**, which is the **seventh month** [hodesh]. (1 Kings 6:37-38, 8:2 ESV)

When the first crescent of the new moon became visible, the new month was declared. It was announced by the blowing of trumpets:

The LORD spoke to Moses, saying, “**Make two silver trumpets**. Of hammered work you shall make them, and you shall use them for summoning the congregation and for breaking camp. ... And **the sons of Aaron, the priests, shall blow the trumpets**. The trumpets shall be to you for a perpetual statute throughout your generations. ... On the day of your gladness also, and at your [appointed times] and **at the beginnings of your months** [hodesh], **you shall blow the trumpets** over your burnt offerings and over the sacrifices of your peace offerings. They shall be a reminder of you before your God: I am the LORD your God.” (Numbers 10:1-2, 8, 10 ESV)

This was all that was necessary in the dessert. All the people had to be aware that a new month was beginning. Just before going into the Promised Land, Moses gave the Priests and Levites **enhanced instructions for the Tabernacle service**. This included specific sacrifices to be performed on various occasions – one such occasion was the “new moon”:

At the beginnings of your months [hodesh], **you shall offer a burnt offering** to the LORD: two bulls from the herd, one ram, seven male lambs a year old without blemish; also three tenths of an ephah of fine flour for a grain offering, mixed with oil, for each bull, and two tenths of fine flour for a grain offering, mixed with oil, for the one ram; and a tenth of fine flour mixed with oil as a grain offering for every lamb; for a burnt offering with a pleasing aroma, an offering by fire to the LORD. Their drink offerings shall be half a hin of wine for a bull, a third of a hin for a ram, and a quarter of a hin for a lamb. **This is the burnt offering of each month** [hodesh] **throughout the months** [hodesh] **of the year**. Also one male goat for a sin offering to the LORD; it shall be offered besides the regular burnt offering and its drink offering.
(Numbers 28:11-15 ESV)

The “new moon” sacrifices were strictly part of the service required of the Priests and Levites. The new moon is NOT called a *mo`ed*. There is no mention of a “holy assembly”, a *miq`ra` qodesh*. In Leviticus

²⁹² See TWOT article 913a page 406

²⁹³ See TWOT article 613b page 266

²⁹⁴ After the exile, the Babylonian name “Nisan” was used.

²⁹⁵ See Exodus 13:4, Deuteronomy 16:1

²⁹⁶ See TWOT article 913b page 407

chapter twenty-three, the formal specification of Feasts and appointed times, there is no mention of the new moon. **The new moon was strictly a “civil” ordinance for Israel so that everyone was aware of the currently correct date. It is NOT a religious requirement.** There is no need for True Worshipers today to keep track of the “new moon”.²⁹⁷

Since most nations in the Ancient Near East used a lunar calendar, most observed the “new moon” as a religious occasion. This custom no doubt had influence on Israel. **King Saul kept a new moon “banquet”** which perhaps had a “religious” connotation:

Then Jonathan said to him, **“Tomorrow is the new moon** [hodesh], and you will be missed, because **your seat will be empty.** ... So **David** hid himself in the field. And **when the new moon** [hodesh] **came, the king sat down to eat food.** The king sat on his seat, as at other times, on the seat by the wall. Jonathan sat opposite, and Abner sat by Saul’s side, but **David’s place was empty.** Yet Saul did not say anything that day, for he thought, “Something has happened to him. **He is not clean;** surely he is not clean.” But on the second day, **the day after the new moon** [hodesh], David’s place was empty. And Saul said to Jonathan his son, **“Why has not the son of Jesse come to the meal, either yesterday or today?”** (1 Samuel 20:18, 24-27 ESV)

In the time of Elisha, there seems to be a connotation of “new moon” observance:

Then she called to her husband and said, “Send me one of the servants and one of the donkeys, that **I may quickly go to the man of God** and come back again.” And he said, **“Why will you go to him today? It is neither new moon** [hodesh] **nor Sabbath.**” She said, “All is well.” (2 Kings 4:22-23 ESV)

The **eighth century prophets deride the practiced observance of the “new moon”:**

Bring no more **vain offerings;** incense is an abomination to me.
New moon [hodesh] and Sabbath and the calling of convocations—
I cannot endure **iniquity and solemn assembly.**
Your new moons [hodesh] and your appointed [appointed times] my [being] hates;
they **have become a burden to me;** I am weary of bearing them. (Isaiah 1:13-14 ESV)
And **I will put an end to all her mirth,** her feasts [hag], **her new moons** [hodesh],
her Sabbaths, and all her appointed [times]. (Hosea 2:11 ESV)²⁹⁸
Hear this, **you who trample on the needy** and bring the poor of the land to an end,
saying, **“When will the new moon** [hodesh] **be over,** that we may sell grain?
And the Sabbath, that we may offer wheat for sale,
that we may make the ephah small and the shekel great
and **deal deceitfully with false balances,**
that we may **buy the poor** for silver and the needy for a pair of sandals
and **sell the chaff** of the wheat?” (Amos 8:4-6 ESV)

The Chronicler is careful to record the proper observance of the new moon in the Temple Service at various points in Israel’s history. The Chronicler clearly distinguishes the new moon from Sabbaths, appointed times, and Feasts, for example:

Behold, I am about to build **a house for the name of the LORD my God** and dedicate it to him for the burning of incense of sweet spices before him, and for the regular arrangement of the showbread, and for burnt offerings morning and evening, on the Sabbaths and **the new moons** [hodesh] and the appointed [times] of the LORD our God, **as ordained forever for Israel.** (2 Chronicles 2:4 ESV)²⁹⁹

The Prophet Ezekiel, suggests that there will be a return to some form of “new moon” observance:

It shall be **the prince’s duty** to furnish the **burnt offerings,** grain offerings, and drink offerings, at the feasts [hag], **the new moons** [hodesh], and the Sabbaths, all the appointed [times] of the house of Israel: he shall provide the sin offerings, grain offerings, burnt offerings, and peace offerings, to **make atonement on behalf of the house of Israel.** “Thus says the Lord GOD: **In the first month,**³⁰⁰ **on the first day of the month** [hodesh], you shall take a bull from the herd without blemish, and purify the sanctuary. The priest shall take some of the blood of the sin offering and put it on the doorposts of the temple, the four corners of the ledge of the altar, and the posts of the gate of the inner court. You shall do the same

²⁹⁷ There is one reference to the “new moon” in the New Testament, Colossians 2:16. Paul appears to be just quoting a familiar list from the Old Testament. Paul’s point is that, although physical forms of worship are necessary, they are NOT sufficient. Salvation is only through God’s grace made possible by Christ’s blood.

²⁹⁸ Hosea 5:7 is ambiguous: is it a “new moon” observance or a duration “a month”?

²⁹⁹ See also 1 Chronicles 23:31, 2 Chronicles 8:13, 31:3, and Nehemiah 10:33

³⁰⁰ The translator has supplied “month” – it is NOT in the Hebrew.

on the **seventh day of the month** [hodesh] for anyone who has sinned through error or ignorance; so **you shall make atonement for the temple**. (Ezekiel 45:17-20 ESV)³⁰¹

The Feast of Dedication

The Feast of Dedication is mentioned once in the New Testament:

At that time the Feast of Dedication took place at Jerusalem. It was winter, and Jesus was walking in the temple, in the colonnade of Solomon. (John 10:22-23 ESV)

This feast is nowhere discussed as a required observance of True Worshipers. It was a civil observance of the Jews instituted at the rededication of the Temple in December 164BC. The Temple had been desecrated by Antiochus Epiphanes IV in 167BC.³⁰² Today the Feast of Dedication is known as Hanukkah.³⁰³

The beginning of the festival is recorded in the First Book of Maccabees:

They celebrated the consecration of the altar for eight days, joyfully offering holocausts and celebrating sacrifices of thanksgiving and praise. The front of the temple was adorned with crowns of gold and shields; and the gates and the rooms had been restored and fitted with doors. **There was no end to the celebration among the people**; and so the profanation of the temple by the pagans was forgotten. Finally, **Judas, his brothers and the whole assembly of Israel agreed to celebrate the anniversary of the consecration of the altar annually** for eight days, from the twenty-fifth of the month of Chislev, in high festivity. (1 Maccabees 4:56-59)

Purim

Like the Feast of Dedication, Purim is purely a Jewish civil holiday. It is based on the events recorded in the Book of Esther. The observance of the feast is recorded as follows:

Therefore they called these days Purim, after the term Pur. Therefore, because of all that was written in this letter, and of what they had faced in this matter, and of what had happened to them, **the Jews firmly obligated themselves and their offspring and all who joined them**, that without fail they would **keep these two days** according to what was written and at the time appointed every year, that **these days should be remembered and kept throughout every generation**, in every clan, province, and city, and that these days of Purim should never fall into disuse among the Jews, nor should the commemoration of these days cease among their descendants. (Esther 9:26-28 ESV)

The **Jewish Encyclopedia** makes the following comments:

Jewish feast celebrated annually on the 14th, and in Shushan, Persia, also on the 15th, of Adar, **in commemoration of the deliverance of the Persian Jews from the plot of Haman** to exterminate them, as recorded in the Book of Esther. ... Aside from the much-mooted question whether Purim is of Jewish or of heathen origin, it is certain that, as it appears in the Book of Esther, **the festival is altogether devoid of religious spirit**—an anomaly in Jewish religious history. This is due to the worldly spirit of the Book of Esther. ... Nevertheless **Purim has been held in high esteem at all times and in all countries** ... The Book of Esther does not prescribe any religious service for Purim; it enjoins only the annual celebration of the feast among the Jews on the 14th and 15th of Adar, commanding that they should "make them days of feasting and joy, and of sending portions one to another, and gifts to the poor." It seems, therefore, that **the observance of Purim was at first merely of a convivial and social nature**. Gradually it assumed religious features. ... **The first religious ceremony ordained for the celebration of Purim is the reading of the Book of Esther in the synagogue**, a regulation ascribed in the Talmud ...³⁰⁴

Excursus 5 – Reverence יָרָא

The verb יָרָא - yare' carries a similar semantic range as the English verb "to fear": "**fear**", "**be afraid**", "**to be fearful**", "**revere**".³⁰⁵ There is also a derivative adjective, יָרֵא - yare', and a derivative feminine noun, יִרְאָה - yir'ah. There are about 450 occurrences of these words. This **scope of this excursus** is to examine the instances of these words which **shed light on the meaning of "reverence towards God"**.

³⁰¹ See also Ezekiel 46:1-8

³⁰² See <https://www.esv.org/John+10/> ESV Study Bible;

³⁰³ See <https://jewishencyclopedia.com/articles/4236-chanukkah>

³⁰⁴ See <https://jewishencyclopedia.com/articles/5874-esther-feast-of>

³⁰⁵ See TWOT article 907 page 399, TDOT VI pages 290-315

The Basis of Reverence

When the Israelites were trapped at Yam Suph, YHWH parted the waters, the Israelites crossed, and the waters closed in on the Egyptian army. **This deliverance**, this mighty act of God, became **the basis of the people's reverence toward God**:

Thus **the LORD saved Israel** that day from the hand of the Egyptians, and **Israel saw** the Egyptians dead on the seashore. **Israel saw** the great power that the LORD used against the Egyptians, **so the people feared** [yare'] **the LORD**, and they believed in the LORD and in his servant Moses. (Exodus 14:30-31 ESV)

When **YHWH proclaimed the Ten Commandments** to **"all the people"**, his purpose was to demonstrate his power and might so that the people would develop a correct **"attitude of reverence"**. The objective of "reverence" being **"that you may not sin"**:

Now when **all the people** saw **the thunder and the flashes of lightning and the sound of the trumpet and the mountain smoking**, the people were afraid and trembled, and they stood far off and said to Moses, "You speak to us, and we will listen; but do not let God speak to us, lest we die." Moses said to the people, "Do not fear, for **God has come to test you, that the fear** [yare'] **of him may be before you, that you may not sin.**" (Exodus 20:18-20 ESV)

Later Joshua alluded to the crossing of Yam Suph. He reminded the Israelites that God's purpose was to use Israel to teach **"all the peoples of the earth"** and that YHWH's deliverance and ongoing dealings with Israel required them to **remain in a state of reverence toward YHWH**:

The people came up out of the Jordan on the tenth day of the first month, and they encamped at Gilgal on the east border of Jericho. And those twelve stones, which they took out of the Jordan, Joshua set up at Gilgal. And he said to the people of Israel, "When your children ask their fathers in times to come, **'What do these stones mean?'** then you shall let your children know, 'Israel passed over this Jordan on dry ground.' For the LORD your God dried up the waters of the Jordan for you until you passed over, **as the LORD your God did to [Yam Suph]**, which he dried up for us until we passed over, **so that all the peoples of the earth may know that the hand of the LORD is mighty**, that **you may fear** [yare'] **the LORD your God forever.**" (Joshua 4:19-24 ESV see also Joshua 24:14-15)

Just before crossing into the Promised Land, after Moses had spent a month addressing the nation to **"explain the torah"**.³⁰⁶ Finally, Moses commissioned the Levitical Priests to ensure that **the torah was regularly presented to the people**. The objective being that **future generations would learn** the *torah* and the nation would continue to **"do all the words of this [torah]"** so that they would remain in a correct **"attitude of reverence"**:

Then Moses wrote this [torah] and gave it to the priests, the sons of Levi, who carried the ark of the covenant of the LORD, and to all the elders of Israel. And Moses commanded them, "At the end of every seven years, at the set time in the year of release, at the Feast of Booths, when all Israel comes to appear before the LORD your God at the place that he will choose, **you shall read this [torah] before all Israel in their hearing**. Assemble the people, men, women, and little ones, and the sojourner within your towns, that **they may hear and learn to fear** [yare'] **the LORD your God**, and be careful to **do all the words of this [torah]**, and that **their children**, who have not known it, **may hear and learn to fear** [yare'] **the LORD your God**, as long as you live in the land that you are going over the Jordan to possess." (Deuteronomy 31:9-13 ESV)

In his explanation of the *torah*, Moses repeatedly came back to the theme of **living by the Way of God**. This is the basis of understanding God's Plan and his purpose for human beings. Only by living by the Way of God can a person remain in a correct **"attitude of reverence"**:

Now this is the commandment—the statutes and the [mish'patim]³⁰⁷—that the LORD your God commanded me to teach you, **that you may do them** in the land to which you are going over, to possess it, **that you may fear** [yare'] **the LORD your God**, you and your son and your son's son, **by keeping all his statutes and his commandments**, which I command you, **all the days of your life**, and **that your days may be long**. Hear therefore, O Israel, and **be careful to do them, that it may go well with you**, and that you may multiply greatly, as the LORD, the God of your fathers, has promised you, in a land flowing with milk and honey. ... **take care lest you forget the LORD**, who brought you out of the land of Egypt, out of the house of slavery. **It is the LORD your God you shall fear** [yare']. **Him you shall serve** and by his name you

³⁰⁶ See Deuteronomy 1:5

³⁰⁷ In this context, *mish'patim* is the understanding of the torah (commandments and statutes) which comes from living by the Way of God.

shall swear. You shall not go after other gods, the gods of the peoples who are around you ...
(Deuteronomy 6:1-3, 12-14 ESV see also Deuteronomy 10:12-22, 13:1-11)

An attitude of reverence towards God is demonstrated by proper **respect and treatment of other people:**

You shall not **curse the deaf** or put a **stumbling block before the blind**, but you shall **fear [yare'] your God**: I am the LORD. ... You shall **stand up before the gray head** and honor the face of an old man, and you shall **fear [yare'] your God**: I am the LORD. ... You shall **not wrong one another**, but you shall **fear [yare'] your God**, for I am the LORD your God. ... If your brother becomes poor and cannot maintain himself with you, **you shall support him** as though he were a stranger and a sojourner, and he shall live with you. **Take no interest from him or profit**, but **fear [yare'] your God**, that your brother may live beside you. ... If your brother becomes poor beside you and sells himself to you, you shall **not make him serve as a slave**; ... You shall **not rule over him ruthlessly** but shall **fear [yare'] your God**.
(Leviticus 19:14, 32, 25:17, 35-36, 39, 43 ESV see also Nehemiah 5:1-9)

Especially in **judicial matters** and attitude of reverence toward God is critical:

Moreover, look for able men from all the people, **men who fear [yare'] God**, who are trustworthy and hate a bribe, and place such men over the people as chiefs of thousands, of hundreds, of fifties, and of tens. And **let them judge the people** at all times. ... (Exodus 18:21-22a ESV)

Moreover, in Jerusalem Jehoshaphat **appointed certain Levites and priests** and heads of families of Israel, to give judgment for the LORD and **to decide disputed cases**. They had their seat at Jerusalem. And he charged them: "Thus **you shall do in the fear [yir'ah] of the LORD**, in faithfulness, and with your whole heart ... (2 Chronicles 19:8-9 ESV)

For a Christian, **deliverance** starts with **God's calling**. Learning reverence towards God begins with the **response to God's calling**. The **Christian life** comprises learning progressively more and more about the **Way of God**. As one learns, living by the Way of God, **the Plan of God** becomes more real, and the Christian comes to a deeper understanding of the **depth of God's love**. This whole process is designed to bring the Christian into a fuller **attitude of reverence towards God**. This is demonstrated by proper **faith and works** – treatment of other persons especially brethren. Finally, the mature Christian is able to **make correct discernments** in the application of the Way of God. This is required of each person to whom God grants **the gift of eternal life** and entry into the **Kingdom of God**.

Attributes of Reverence

Repentance is required before God can forgive. This is **the beginning of a correct attitude of reverence** towards God:

Out of the depths I cry to you, O LORD! O Lord, hear my voice!
Let your ears be attentive to the voice of my **pleas for mercy**!
If you, O LORD, should mark iniquities, O Lord, who could stand?
But **with you there is forgiveness, that you may be feared** [yare']. (Psalm 130:1-4 ESV)

Learning the Way of God requires a person to be **teachable**. This leads to an attitude of reverence towards God which reciprocally make the person more teachable:

For you are great and do wondrous things; you alone are God.
Teach me your way, O LORD, that I may walk in your truth;
unite my heart to fear [yare'] your name.

Who is **the man who fears [yare'] the LORD**?
Him will he instruct in the way that he should choose.
(Psalm 86:10-11, 25:12 ESV)

Having learned an attitude of reverence, a person should **become prepared to teach others**:

Come, O children, listen to me; **I will teach you the fear [yir'ah] of the LORD**.
Let **those who fear [yare'] you** turn to me, that they may know your testimonies.
(Psalm 34:11, 119:79 ESV)

Living the Christian life, the Way of God, is necessary to truly learn an attitude of reverence:

Blessed is everyone who fears [yare'] the LORD, who walks in his ways!

The angel of the LORD encamps around **those who fear [yare'] him**, and delivers them.
Oh, taste and see that the LORD is good! Blessed is the man who takes refuge in him!

Oh, **fear** [yare'] **the LORD**, **you his saints**, for **those who fear** [yare'] **him** have no lack!
(Psalm 128:1, 34:7-9 ESV)

Trust in the LORD with all your heart, and do not lean on your own understanding.
In all your ways acknowledge him, and **he will make straight your paths**.
Be not wise in your own eyes; **fear** [yare'] **the LORD**, and turn away from evil.

Whoever **walks in uprightness fears** [yare'] **the LORD** ...
(Proverbs 3:5-7, 14:2a ESV)

I perceived that **whatever God does endures forever**; nothing can be added to it, nor anything taken from it. **God has done it, so that people fear** [yare'] **before him**. ... The end of the matter; all has been heard.
Fear [yare'] **God** and **keep his commandments**, for this is the whole duty of man.
(Ecclesiastes 3:14, 12:13 ESV)

A correct attitude of reverence towards God is demonstrated by Christian **Faith and Works**:

He who **withholds kindness** from a friend **forsakes the fear** [yir'ah] **of the Almighty**. (Job 6:14 ESV)

I am a companion of all who fear [yare'] **you**, of those who keep your precepts. (Psalm 119:63 ESV)

You who fear [yare'] **the LORD, trust in the LORD!** He is their help and their shield. (Psalm 115:11 ESV)

An attitude of reverence towards God gives a person **hope** and **understanding of God's nature**:

Behold, the eye of the LORD is on **those who fear** [yare'] **him**, on **those who hope** in his [hesed]³⁰⁸ ...
... the LORD takes pleasure in **those who fear** [yare'] **him**, in **those who hope** in his [hesed].
(Psalm 33:18, 147:11 ESV)

The end result of living the Christian life with correct attitude of reverence towards God is the **attainment of godly wisdom**:

From where, then, does wisdom come? And where is the place of understanding? ...

God understands the way to it, and he knows its place.

... he saw it and declared it; he established it, and searched it out.

And he said to man, 'Behold, **the fear** [yir'ah] **of the Lord, that is wisdom**,
and to turn away from evil is understanding.' (Job 28:20, 23, 27-28 ESV)

The fear [yir'ah] **of the LORD is the beginning of wisdom**;

all those who practice it have a good understanding.

His praise endures forever! (Psalm 111:10 ESV)

The **fear** [yir'ah] **of the LORD** is the **beginning of knowledge**; **fools** despise wisdom and instruction.

... they will call upon me, but I will not answer; they will seek me diligently but will not find me.

Because **they hated knowledge** and did not choose the **fear** [yir'ah] **of the LORD**,
would have none of my counsel and despised all my reproof ...

Give instruction to a wise man, and he will be still wiser;

teach a righteous man, and he will increase in learning.

The **fear** [yir'ah] **of the LORD** is the **beginning of wisdom**, and the knowledge of the Holy One is insight.

Whoever ignores instruction despises himself, but he who listens to reproof gains intelligence.

The **fear** [yir'ah] **of the LORD** is **instruction in wisdom**, and humility comes before honor.

(Proverbs 1:7, 28-30, 9:9-10, 15:32-33 ESV see also Proverbs 2:1-15)

Once a person has attained wisdom, it is possible to **make correct discernment** between good and evil,
right and wrong, the Way of God versus the way of the world:

The **[torah]** of the LORD is perfect, reviving the [mind];

the **testimony** of the LORD is sure, making wise the simple;

the **precepts** of the LORD are right, rejoicing the heart;

the **commandment** of the LORD is pure, enlightening the eyes;

the fear [yir'ah] **of the LORD is clean, enduring forever**;

the **[mish'patim]** of the LORD are true, and righteous altogether. (Psalm 19:7-9 ESV)

The **torah**, the teaching, of God comprises "testimony", "precepts", and "commandment". These are **the words of life** – the definition of **the Way of God**. Living by the Way of God brings one to a state of **correct reverence towards God**. The word "clean" is translated from טָהוֹר - tahor. It implies "purity",

³⁰⁸ The foundation of God's grace is *hesed*, covenant love, God's unfailing commitment to accomplish his purpose. For an exposition of God's grace see the paper "**Covenants of Grace**" located on www.mikewhytebiblicalresearch.ca
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“brightness”.³⁰⁹ The implication in this Psalm is **the resurrection** – the gift of God given to True Worshipers: **“enduring forever”**.

Note that *yir’ah* is parallel with *mish’patim*, this emphasizes **the relationship between “reverence” and “discernment”**. The correct understanding of the *torah* is implied by *mish’patim*. The application of this understanding is godly wisdom. This is only available to True Worshipers who have faithfully lived by the Way of God.

Psalm Nineteen is a Davidic Psalm. The **deep understanding** it expresses of the Way of God is highlighted by later Psalmists:

Blessed is **the man who fears** [yare’] **the LORD**, who **greatly delights** in his commandments! ...
Confirm to your servant your promise, **that you may be feared** [yir’ah]. ...
My flesh trembles for fear of you, and I am afraid [yare’] of your [mish’patim].
(Psalm 112:1b, 119:38, 120 ESV)

To **“greatly delight”** in the teaching of God requires a long life of living by the Way of God developing a correct attitude of reverence towards God. The word **“confirm”** is from **הָקִים** - haqem. This is a hiphil imperative verb from the root **קָם** - qum, with a basic meaning of “stand up”, “get up”. The hiphil has a basic meaning of “carry out”, “perform”.³¹⁰ The sense in this Psalm is that **God “confirms” his promise** of the **“blessing”** of a deep understanding leading to the gift of eternal life.

The last line above from Psalm 119:120 is poorly translated. The Hebrew is:

יִרְאֵתִי	וּמִמִּשְׁפָּטֶיךָ	בְּשָׂרִי	מִפְחָדְךָ	סָמַר
yare’thi	umimmish’petka	v’sari	mipah’d’ka	samar
I fear	and from	flesh	from fear	he
	discernments of you	of me	of you	trembles

Literally: “he trembles from fear of you my flesh; and from discernments of you I fear.” Or in **better English:** “My flesh trembles in reverence of you; I am in reverence of your discernments.”

The end result is summarized in Proverbs:

I, **wisdom**, dwell with **prudence**, and I find **knowledge** and **discretion**.
The fear [yir’ah] **of the LORD is hatred of evil**.
Pride and arrogance and the way of evil and perverted speech I hate.
I have counsel and **sound wisdom**; I have insight; I have strength.
By [hesed] and faithfulness **iniquity is atoned for**,
and by **the fear** [yir’ah] **of the LORD** one turns away from evil.
(Proverbs 8:12-14, 16:6 ESV)

Reverence in Prophecy

An important element in a very important Messianic prophecy is **“reverence toward God”**:

There shall come forth **a shoot** from the stump of Jesse, and **a branch** from his roots shall bear fruit.
And the **Spirit of the LORD shall rest upon him**, the Spirit of wisdom and understanding,
the Spirit of counsel and might, the **Spirit of knowledge and the fear** [yir’ah] **of the LORD**.
And **his delight shall be in the fear** [yir’ah] **of the LORD**.
He shall not judge by what his eyes see, or decide disputes by what his ears hear,
but with righteousness **he shall judge the poor**, and decide with equity for **the meek** of the earth;
and he shall **strike the earth** with the rod of his mouth,
and with the breath of his lips she shall kill the wicked.
Righteousness shall be the belt of his waist, and **faithfulness** the belt of his loins. (Isaiah 11:1-5 ESV)

The **“shoot”**, the **“branch”**, is of course the **Messiah**.³¹¹ This prophecy deals with both the First Advent and the Second Advent. The prophecy features the “Holy Spirit”, which was a sign of Jesus’ Messiahship.³¹² One of the attributes of the Holy Spirit is that it is **“the Spirit of knowledge and reverence of YHWH”**. One who is imbued with the Holy Spirit has a correct attitude of reverence

³⁰⁹ See Holladay page 122

³¹⁰ See Holladay pages 315-316

³¹¹ See **Excursus 3 – The Branch** in the paper “**The Transfiguration and the Tabernacle**”, located at www.mikewhytebiblicalresearch.ca

³¹² See the discussion of this in section **6. The Message of the Messenger** in the paper “**John the Baptist – More Than a Prophet**”, located at www.mikewhytebiblicalresearch.ca

towards God. Certainly, **Jesus Christ exemplified this**. But notice, **an attribute of the “Branch”**, the Messiah, is that **“his delight shall be in the reverence of YHWH”**. This pertains to the establishment of the New Testament Church. **The New Testament Church is the beginning of salvation for all humanity**. As discussed in this paper, a correct attitude of reverence towards God is required of any person that God considers as a candidate for the gift of eternal life. That is why Jesus’ **“delight”** is in the **“reverence of YHWH”**. Jesus’ judging **“the poor and the meek”** pertains to his current role of **“High Priest”** “intercessor” at the throne of God the Father.³¹³ At the Second Advent, Jesus will **“strike the earth”**. This is the Day of YWH.³¹⁴ Then as **King of kings** he will rule in **“righteousness”** and **“faithfulness”**, and **salvation will be made available to all of humanity**.

This prophetic theme of “reverence” in True Worshipers, True Christians, is exemplified throughout the New Testament. This paper has previously discussed in section **4.2 The Magnificat of Mary**, where she stated, **“And his mercy is for those who fear him from generation to generation”**. This is an allusion to the prophecy of Malachi:

Then **those who feared** [yare’] **the LORD** spoke with one another. The LORD paid attention and heard them, and a book of remembrance was written before him of **those who feared** [yare’] **the LORD** and esteemed his name. **“They shall be mine**, says the LORD of hosts, in the day when I make up **my treasured possession**, and I will spare them as a man spares his son who serves him. ...” (Malachi 3:16-17 ESV)

In the New Testament the phrase **“those who fear God”** is used as more or less a synonym for “Christian”. There are **two Greek words** used for this concept: the masculine noun φόβος - phobos, and the verb φοβέομαι - phobeomai. These words carry essentially **the same semantic range** as *yir’e’ah* and *yare’*, for example:

So the church throughout all Judea and Galilee and Samaria had peace and was being built up. And **walking in the fear** [phobos] **of the Lord** and in the comfort of the Holy Spirit, it multiplied.

At Caesarea there was a man named Cornelius, a centurion of what was known as the Italian Cohort, a **devout man who feared** [phobeomai] **God** with all his household, gave alms generously to the people, and prayed continually to God.

And they said, “Cornelius, a centurion, **an upright and God-fearing** [phobeomai] **man**, who is well spoken of by the whole Jewish nation, was directed by a holy angel to send for you to come to his house and to hear what you have to say.” (Acts 9:31, 10:1-2, 22 ESV)

There was at that time among the Jews an expression **“God Fearers”** used mainly for gentile men who were attracted to Judaism but did not fully become Jews.³¹⁵ In **Pisidian Antioch**, in the synagogue on the Sabbath, Paul appealed to this group and apparently drew significant converts from them:

So Paul stood up, and motioning with his hand said: “Men of Israel **and you who fear** [phobeomai] **God**, listen. ... Brothers, sons of the family of Abraham, **and those among you who fear** [phobeomai] **God**, to us has been sent the message of this salvation. ...” (Acts 13:16, 26 ESV)

In his letters, the **Apostle Paul** makes several references to the importance of Christians having a correct attitude of reverence towards God:

Since we have these promises, beloved, let us cleanse ourselves from every defilement of body and spirit, bringing holiness to completion **in the fear** [phobos] **of God**. (2 Corinthians 7:1 ESV)

Look carefully then how you walk, not as unwise but as wise ... giving thanks always and for everything to God the Father in the name of our Lord Jesus Christ, **submitting to one another out of reverence** [phobos] **for Christ**. (Ephesians 5:15, 20-21 ESV)

Therefore, my beloved, as you have always obeyed, so now, not only as in my presence but much more in my absence, **work out your own salvation with fear** [phobos] **and trembling** ... (Philippians 2:12 ESV)³¹⁶

Bondservants, obey in everything those who are your earthly masters, not by way of eye-service, as people-pleasers, but **with sincerity of heart, fearing** [phobeomai] **the Lord**. (Colossians 3:22 ESV)

³¹³ See the discussion in section **8. The Role of a Priest** in the paper “**To Be a Priest**”, located at www.mikewhytebiblicalresearch.ca

³¹⁴ See the paper “**The Day of YHWH**”, located at www.mikewhytebiblicalresearch.ca

³¹⁵ For a discussion of this phenomenon, see Bruce (NT) pages 145-147 and 265-278.

³¹⁶ This verse is an allusion to Psalm 119:120 discussed above.

Similarly, the **Apostle Peter** makes reference to the importance of Christian having a correct attitude of reverence towards God:

And if you call on him as Father who judges impartially according to each one's deeds, **conduct yourselves with fear** [phobos] throughout the time of your exile ...

Live as people who are free, not using your freedom as a cover-up for evil, but living as servants of God. Honor everyone. Love the brotherhood. **Fear** [phobeomai] **God**. Honor the emperor.
(1 Peter 1:17, 2:16-17 ESV)

In the **Book of Revelation**, True Worshipers, those with a correct attitude of reverence towards God, have a prominent role to play:

Then **the seventh angel blew his trumpet**, and there were loud voices in heaven, saying, "The kingdom of the world has become the kingdom of our Lord and of his Christ, and he shall reign forever and ever." ...
The nations raged, but your wrath came, and the time for the dead to be judged,
and for **rewarding your servants**, the prophets and saints,
and **those who fear** [phobeomai] **your name**, both small and great,
and for destroying the destroyers of the earth."

Then I saw another angel flying directly overhead, with [the] eternal gospel to proclaim to those who dwell on earth, to every nation and tribe and language and people. And he said with a loud voice, "**Fear** [phobeomai] **God** and **give him glory**, because the hour of his judgment has come, and **worship him** who made heaven and earth, the sea and the springs of water."

Who will not fear [phobeomai], **O Lord, and glorify your name?**

For you alone are holy.

All nations will come and **worship you**, for your righteous acts have been revealed."

And the twenty-four elders and the four living creatures fell down and **worshipped God** who was seated on the throne, saying, "Amen. Hallelujah!" And from the throne came a voice saying, "**Praise our God**, all **you his servants, you who fear** [phobeomai] **him**, small and great."
(Revelation 11:15, 18, 14:6-7, 15:4, 19:4-5 ESV)

Excursus 6 – Terminology of Sacrifices

The **specifications for the five main types of sacrifice** are given in Leviticus chapters one through seven. Chapters one through verse seven of chapter six are instructions for the offeror. Chapter six verse eight through chapter seven are instructions for the priests.

The most general word for an offering is קָרַבַּן - qar^eban, a masculine noun derived from the root verb קָרַב - qarav,³¹⁷ which has the basic meaning of "come near", "approach", "enter into". The implication is that **the "offering" is brought close by the offeror to God**:

The LORD called Moses and spoke to him from the tent of meeting, saying, "Speak to the people of Israel and say to them, **When any one of you brings** [qarav] **an offering** [qar^eban] **to the LORD, you shall bring** [qarav] **your offering** [qar^eban] of livestock from the herd or from the flock. (Leviticus 1:1-2 ESV)

A more or less synonymous word is זָבַח - zevah, a masculine noun derived from the root verb

זָבַח - zavah,³¹⁸ which has the basic meaning of "sacrifice", "slaughter". The emphasis is on the killing of the animal:

So Israel took his journey with all that he had and came to Beersheba, and **offered** [zavah] **sacrifices** [zevah] **to the God of his father Isaac**. (Genesis 46:1 ESV)

All animals were killed in the northeast corner of the court of the Tabernacle. The bronze altar, the altar of sacrifice, sat in middle of the court where it was visible from outside of the Tabernacle fence so that the common people could observe the goings-on. Only the priests and Levites were normally in the Tabernacle. A common person could go into the court only to present an offering. Anyone coming near the Tabernacle had to be "clean".³¹⁹

³¹⁷ See TWOT article 2065 page 811

³¹⁸ See TWOT article 525 page 233

³¹⁹ For a good general article on Sacrifices and Offerings, see NBD pages 1113-1124. For commentary on Leviticus chapters one through seven, see Wenham pages 47-128, KD1 pages 499-532; for a shorter commentary see NBC pages 143-148.

The technical details of the five types of offerings are summarized in the following table:

	Burnt Offering	Peace Offering	Sin Offering	Guilt Offering
animals	male cow male sheep male goat turtledove pigeon	male or female cow male or female sheep or goat	high priest: male cow congregation: male cow leader: male goat commoner: female sheep or goat, two turtle dove or pigeons	ram
disposition	entire animal burned on the alter skin to priest	entrails and fat burned on the alter flesh eaten by offeror breast and right thigh eaten by priests	entrails and fat burned on the alter rest of animal burned outside the camp	entrails and fat burned on the alter flesh eaten by priests
blood	thrown against sides of alter	thrown against sides of alter	high priest or congregation: into tent of meet, sprinkled before veil, on horns of incense alter others: on horns of bronze alter remainder poured before bronze alter	same as sin offering
objective	to make atonement for the offeror	thanks giving vow fulfillment	to make atonement for the offeror	to make atonement for the offeror
beneficence	offering by fire pleasing aroma	offering by fire pleasing aroma	offering by fire, pleasing aroma: only mentioned for commoner	compensation
Grain Offering	raw flour with oil and frankincense; baked in oven, baked on griddle, cooked in a pan, with oil no leaven or honey can ever be used; salt must be used for all memorial portion: burned on alter as pleasing aroma; remainder eaten by priests a grain offering can be used for a sin offering; grain offering at high priest ordination is fully burned			

The Burnt Offering

The specifications for the Burnt Offering are in verses three through seventeen of chapter one, verses eight through eleven of chapter six, and verse eight of chapter seven. The word for “burnt offering” is עֹלָה - `olah, a feminine noun derived from the root verb עָלָה - `alah.³²⁰ The general meaning of `alah is “to go up”, “to climb”, “to ascend”. The connotation being that **the entire animal “goes up in smoke” to YHWH**. The total consumption of the offering represents the total commitment of the worshipper:

If his offering [qar^eban] is a **burnt offering** [‘olah] from the herd, he shall offer [qarav] **a male without blemish**. He shall bring it to **the entrance of the tent of meeting, that he may be accepted before the LORD**. He shall **lay his hand on the head of the burnt offering** [‘olah], and **it shall be accepted for him to make atonement** for him. Then **he shall kill the bull before the LORD**, and Aaron’s sons the priests **shall bring** [qarav] **the blood** and **throw the blood against the sides of the altar** that is at the entrance of the tent of meeting. ... And **the priest shall burn all of it on the altar**, as **a burnt offering** [‘olah], **an offering by fire** [‘ishsheh] with a pleasing aroma to the LORD. (Leviticus 1:3-5, 9b ESV)

- All animals selected for offering had to be “**without blemish**”, as Jesus was spiritually perfect when he was sacrificed.
- The “**entrance of the tent of meeting**” was as close as a person could get to God before the sacrifice of Jesus Christ, which allows Christians to “**with confidence draw near to the throne of grace**”.³²¹
- Along with the action, “**lay his hand on the head**”, presumable there was some dialogue between the offeror and the priest, likely a prayer was said.
- The acceptance of the offering is “**to make atonement**” for the offeror – this allows God to account the offeror as “holy”, as Jesus’ sacrifice allows God to account Christians as “holy”.
- It is the “**blood**” that is poured out for forgiveness of sins.³²²

³²⁰ See TWOT article 1624 page 666

³²¹ See Hebrews 4:16

³²² See Matthew 26:28

The items burned on the altar are all called “**an offering by fire with a pleasing aroma to the LORD**”. The “**pleasing aroma**” was discussed in section [10.1 Efficacy of Sacrifices in the Old Testament](#). The text of the ESV actually has “food offering” with “offering by fire” in a footnote. The Hebrew word is **עֹשֶׂה** - ‘ishsheh. It is a technical term for an “offering made by fire. It is derived from the common word for “fire”: **אֵשׁ** - ‘esh,³²³ so “**offering by fire**” is **preferable**.

[The Grain Offering](#)

The specifications for the Grain Offering are in chapter two, verses fourteen through twenty-three of chapter six, and verses nine and ten of chapter seven. The word for “grain offering” **מִנְחָה** - min^ehah, a feminine noun with no certain verbal root.³²⁴ The technical meaning of the word is “grain offering”, but it is also used as a general term for any kind of offering more or less synonymous with *zevah*. Another important word is used only with the Grain Offering: **אֶזְכָּרָהּ** - ‘az^ekarah, a feminine noun meaning “memorial portion”. It is derived from the verb **זָכַר** - zakar, which was discussed in in section [9.4 Leviticus Chapter Twenty-three](#), with respect to the Day of Trumpets. The Grain Offering is specified thus:

When anyone brings [qarav] a grain offering [min^ehah] as an offering [qar^eban] to the LORD, his offering [qar^eban] shall be of fine flour. He shall pour oil on it and put frankincense on it and bring it to Aaron’s sons the priests. And **he shall take from it a handful of the fine flour and oil, with all of its frankincense, and **the priest shall burn this as its memorial portion** [‘az^ekarah] on the altar, an offering by fire [‘ishsheh] with a pleasing aroma to the LORD. But **the rest of the grain offering** [min^ehah] shall be for Aaron and his sons; **it is a most holy part of the LORD’s offerings by fire** [‘ishsheh]. (Leviticus 2:1-3 ESV)**

There are also specified several options for cooking the grain and presenting the cooked product as a “grain offering”. **The word ‘az^ekarah is only used of the Grain Offering,**³²⁵ but **it is nowhere indicated why it is a “memorial portion”**. As previously discussed, **the word zikkaron means “memorial”**. It is also derived from *zakar*. The first day of the **Feast of Unleavened Bread** is a *zikkaron* of the day the Israelites left Egypt. The **Day of Trumpets** is a *zikkaron* of the Israelites’ leaving Horeb to enter the Promised Land.

To a Christian, the first day of the Feast of Unleavened Bread symbolized **the beginning of the Christian life**, living by the Way of God, having had the sacrifice of Jesus Christ applied to atone for sin, as symbolized by the Passover. The Day of Trumpets looks to **the Second Advent** – the Day of YHWH and **the first resurrection**, when God will grant the gift of eternal life to True Worshipers. In the institution of the **New Testament Passover**, Jesus explicitly said it was to be kept by Christians “in remembrance of his death” – **a memorial of Jesus’ death**. Clearly this is the meaning of the “**memorial portion**” – it looks to **the Plan of God and salvation**: “**it is a most holy part of the LORD’s offerings by fire**”.

[The Peace Offering](#)

The specifications for the Peace Offering are in chapter three and verses eleven to thirty-six of chapter seven. The Peace Offering has the most complicated instructions of all the offerings. **The Peace Offering was used as a covenant meal for the offeror and his party**. Some of the meat was given to the priests. Only the entrails and the fat were burned. Several important words are introduced with the Peace Offering. The primary word for “peace offering” is **שְׁלָמִים** - sh^elamim: the plural of the masculine noun **שָׁלֵם** - shelem. The singular is almost never used.³²⁶ The root verb is **שָׁלַם** - shalem which means “to be complete” or “to be sound”. Lloyd Carr states:

The general meaning behind the root *sh-l-m* is of completion and fulfillment – of entering into a state of wholeness and unity, **a restored relationship**.³²⁷

³²³ See TWOT article 172 page 76

³²⁴ See TWOT article 1214a page 514

³²⁵ See Leviticus 2:2,9,16, 5:12, 6:15, and Numbers 5:26; in Leviticus 24:7, the frankincense on the Bread of the Presence is called a “memorial portion”: it was presumably “burned” on top of the pile of bread.

³²⁶ It appears only in Amos 5:22.

³²⁷ See TWOT article 2401 page 930

The basic instructions for the Peace Offering are:

If his offering [qar^eban] is a sacrifice [zevah] of peace offering [sh^elamim], if he offers [qarav] an animal from the herd, male or female, he shall offer [qarav] it without blemish before the LORD. And he shall lay his hand on the head of his offering [qar^eban] and kill it at the entrance of the tent of meeting, and Aaron's sons the priests shall throw the blood against the sides of the altar. And from the sacrifice [zevah] of the peace offering [sh^elamim], as an offering by fire [‘ishsheh] to the LORD, he shall offer [qarav] the fat covering the entrails and all the fat that is on the entrails, and the two kidneys with the fat that is on them at the loins, and the long lobe of the liver that he shall remove with the kidneys. Then Aaron's sons shall burn it on the altar on top of the burnt offering [‘olah], which is on the wood on the fire; it is an offering by fire [‘ishsheh] with a pleasing aroma to the LORD. ... All fat is the LORD's. It shall be a statute forever throughout your generations, in all your dwelling places, that you eat neither fat nor blood.” (Leviticus 3:1-5, 16b-17 ESV)

The killing of the animal is identical to the killing of the Burnt Offering. **Since the Peace Offering is intended to be eaten, proscriptions are reiterated against the consumption of fat or blood**. Further instructions introduce further significant terms. The feminine noun תֹּדָה - todah generally means “confession” or “thanksgiving”, but in relation to an offering, it means “**thank offering**”. It is derived from the root verb יָדָה - yadah, which means “confess”, “praise”, “give thanks”.³²⁸ The feminine noun תְּרוּמָה - t^erumah generally means a contribution or offering to be used by the priests. It is derived from the root verb רוּם - rum, which means “be high”, “rise up”.³²⁹ The instructions for **the Peace Offering as a Thank Offering** are:

And this is the [instruction] of **the sacrifice [zevah] of peace offerings [sh^elamim]** that one may offer [qarav] to the LORD. **If he offers [qarav] it for a thanksgiving [todah]**, then **he shall offer [qarav] with the thanksgiving [todah] sacrifice [zevah] unleavened loaves** mixed with oil, **unleavened wafers** smeared with oil, and **loaves of fine flour** well mixed with oil. With the sacrifice [zevah] of his peace offerings [sh^elamim] for thanksgiving [todah] he shall bring [qarav] his offering [qar^eban] with **loaves of leavened bread**. And from it he shall offer one loaf from each offering [qar^eban], **as a gift [t^erumah] to the LORD**. **It shall belong to the priest** who throws the blood of the peace offerings. And **the flesh** of the sacrifice of his peace offerings for thanksgiving **shall be eaten on the day of his offering**. He shall not leave any of it until the morning. (Leviticus 7:11-15 ESV)

This instruction clearly demonstrates that a purpose of the Peace Offering was to **solidify the covenant relationship between the offeror and YHWH**. The offeror is giving thanks for the beneficence of YHWH by joyously providing a covenant meal with friends and family. The **unleavened loaves and wafers** were a normal Grain Offering. The **leavened loaves** were simply part of the meal – they could NOT be presented at the altar due to the leaven. One loaf was given to the priest for his meal.

Further instruction elucidates other meanings of the Peace Offering. The masculine noun נֶדֶר - neder means “a vow” or “votive offering”. It is derived from the root verb נָדַר - nadar, “to make a vow”.³³⁰ A vow nearly always involved offering a sacrifice.³³¹ The feminine noun נִדְבָה - n^edavah, means “freewill offering”. It is derived from the root verb נָדַב - nadav, which means “to make willingly” or “to incite”.³³² The instruction continues:

But if the sacrifice [zevah] of his offering [qar^eban] is **a vow offering [neder] or a freewill offering [n^edavah]**, **it shall be eaten on the day that he offers [qarav] his sacrifice [zevah]**, and **on the next day what remains of it shall be eaten**. But what remains of the flesh of the sacrifice [zevah] on the third day shall be burned up with fire. If any of the flesh of the sacrifice [zevah] of his **peace offering [sh^elamim]** is eaten on the third day, he who offers [qarav] it shall **not be accepted, neither shall it be credited to him**. It is tainted, and he who eats of it shall **bear his iniquity**. (Leviticus 7:16-18 ESV)

The concept of the “vow offering” is clear. The “**freewill offering**” at first appears little different from the “**thank offering**”. **The distinction seems to be in spontaneity and scope**. For a thank offering, the offeror is assumed to be able to plan sufficiently that he has the required number of participants to

³²⁸ See TWOT article 847 page 364

³²⁹ See TWOT article 2133 page 837

³³⁰ See TWOT article 1308 page 557

³³¹ It is beyond the scope of this paper to examine the concept of “vows”; see Leviticus 27:1-33, Numbers 6:1-21, 30:1-15, and Deuteronomy 23:21-23

³³² See TWOT article 1299 page 554

consume the animal in one meal. Clearly for a “vow offering” there would likely be fewer participants so that consumption on the second day would be appropriate. If a “freewill offering” is decided upon spontaneously, the offeror could similarly have fewer participants again requiring second day consumption. Consumption of a Peace Offering beyond the prescribed time limit resulted in the sacrifice’s become of no avail with YHWH.

The Sin Offering

The specifications for the Sin Offering are in chapter four, in verses one through thirteen of chapter five, and in verses twenty-four through thirty of chapter six. The Sin Offering is prescribed differently for various classes of people, but for all classes the purpose is the same – to **make atonement** for unintentional sin:

And the LORD spoke to Moses, saying, “Speak to the people of Israel, saying, **If anyone sins [hata’] unintentionally [sh’e-gagah] in any of the LORD’s commandments** about things not to be done, and does any one of them ... So **the priest shall make atonement** for him for his sin, and **he shall be forgiven**. (Leviticus 4:1-2, 26b ESV)

The sacrifices could NOT bring atonement for **intentional sin**:

But **the person who does anything with a high hand**, whether he is native or a sojourner, **reviles the LORD**, and **that person shall be cut off** from among his people. Because he has **despised the word of the LORD** and has broken his commandment, that person shall be utterly cut off; **his iniquity shall be on him**.” (Numbers 15:30-31 ESV)

The word for “sin offering” is חַטָּאת - hatta’t’h a feminine noun derived from the root verb חָטָא - hata’, which means literally “miss a mark”, and by extension “to sin”.³³³ The feminine noun

שְׁגָגָה - sh’e-gagah means “an act perpetrated in ignorance, not willfully”. It is derived from the root verb שָׁגָה - shagah “to sin inadvertently”.³³⁴ The sin of the **High Priest** and a common sin of the **whole congregation** are treated similarly:

if it is the anointed priest who sins [hata’], thus bringing guilt on the people, then **he shall offer [qarav] for the sin [hatta’t’h]** that he has committed **a bull** from the herd without blemish to the LORD **for a sin offering [hatta’t’h]**. ... And the anointed priest shall **take some of the blood** of the bull and bring it **into the tent of meeting**, and the priest shall dip his finger in the blood and **sprinkle part of the blood seven times before the LORD in front of the veil of the sanctuary**. And the priest shall **put some of the blood on the horns of the altar of fragrant incense** before the LORD that is in the tent of meeting, and all **the rest of the blood** of the bull he shall **pour out at the base of the altar of burnt offering [’olah]** that is at the entrance of the tent of meeting. ... all the **rest of the bull**—he shall **carry outside the camp** to a clean place, to the ash heap, and shall **burn it up on a fire of wood**. On the ash heap it shall be burned up. (Leviticus 4:3, 5-7, 12 ESV)

If the whole congregation of Israel sins unintentionally [shagah] ... **the assembly shall offer [qarav] a bull** from the herd for a **sin offering [hatta’t’h]** and bring it in front of the tent of meeting. And the elders of the congregation shall lay their hands on the head of the bull before the LORD, and the bull shall be killed before the LORD. Then **the anointed priest shall bring some of the blood of the bull into the tent of meeting**, and the priest shall dip his finger in the blood and **sprinkle it seven times before the LORD in front of the veil**. And he shall **put some of the blood on the horns of the altar** that is in the tent of meeting before the LORD, and **the rest of the blood he shall pour out at the base of the altar of burnt offering [’olah]** that is at the entrance of the tent of meeting. ... And he shall **carry the bull outside the camp** and **burn it up** as he burned the first bull; **it is the sin offering [hatta’t’h] for the assembly**. (Leviticus 4:13a, 14b-18, 21 ESV)

Other than the Day of Atonement, these are the only circumstances under which the incense altar is used for anything but incense. For **“leaders”**,³³⁵ a male goat is prescribed. For **commoners**, a female goat or lamb is prescribed. In neither case is the animal burned outside the camp. The edible parts of the animals were to be eaten by the priests.³³⁶ **If a person could NOT afford a goat or a lamb**, turtledoves, or pigeons, or even a grain offering could be used – it was essential that **all Israelites could**

³³³ See TWOT article 638 page 277

³³⁴ See TWOT article 2325 page 904

³³⁵ The word נָסִי - nasi’ applies to anyone in a position of authority; See TWOT article 1421b page 601

³³⁶ See Leviticus 6:26,29-30

have a means of atonement so that God could account them “holy”, and they could remain in a relationship with God.

The symbolism of the Sin Offering is most obvious – it points directly to the sacrifice of Jesus Christ to atone for the sins of humanity:

Therefore, brothers, since we have confidence to enter the holy places by the blood of Jesus, by the new and living way that he opened for us through the curtain, that is, through his flesh, and since we have a great priest over the house of God, let us draw near with a true heart in full assurance of faith, with our hearts sprinkled clean from an evil conscience and our bodies washed with pure water. Let us hold fast the confession of our hope without wavering, for he who promised is faithful. ... For if we go on sinning deliberately after receiving the knowledge of the truth, there no longer remains a sacrifice for sins, but a fearful expectation of judgment, and a fury of fire that will consume the adversaries. Anyone who has set aside the [nomos] of Moses dies without mercy on the evidence of two or three witnesses. How much worse punishment, do you think, will be deserved by the one who has trampled underfoot the Son of God, and has profaned the blood of the covenant by which he was sanctified, and has outraged the Spirit of grace? (Hebrews 10:19-23, 26-29 ESV)

The Guilt Offering

The specifications for the Guilt Offering are in verses fourteen through nineteen of chapter five, verses six through seven of chapter six,³³⁷ and in verses one through seven of chapter seven. The utility of the Guilt Offering appears to overlap to some extent the Sin Offering. The intent of the Guilt Offering seems to be the handling of sins for which there can be some physical compensation. In most of its occurrences, the masculine noun אֲשָׁם - ‘asham, means “guilt offering”. It is derived from the root verb אָשָׁם - ‘asham, which means “to be desolate”, “to be guilty”, “to offend”, “to acknowledge offense”.³³⁸ There is also a feminine noun אֲשָׁמָה - ‘ashamah, which carries a connotation of “guilt” as awareness of sin. The instructions start out:

The LORD spoke to Moses, saying, “If anyone commits a breach of faith and sins [hata’] unintentionally [shagah] in any of the holy things of the LORD, he shall bring to the LORD as his compensation [‘asham], a ram without blemish out of the flock, valued in silver shekels, according to the shekel of the sanctuary, for a guilt offering [‘asham]. He shall also make restitution [shalem] for what he has done amiss in the holy thing and shall add a fifth to it and give it to the priest. And the priest shall make atonement for him with the ram of the guilt offering [‘asham], and he shall be forgiven. (Leviticus 5:14-16 ESV)

The “ram” used as the Guilt Offering must have a certain value in silver and an additional fifth of that value is provided to the priest. In addition, “restitution” must be made – the root verb of the Peace Offering is used for “restitution”. The form of the restitution is subsequently clarified. The instructions continue:

If anyone sins [hata’], doing any of the things that by the LORD’s commandments ought not to be done, though he did not know it, then realizes his guilt [‘asham], he shall bear his iniquity. He shall bring to the priest a ram without blemish out of the flock, or its equivalent, for a guilt offering [‘asham], and the priest shall make atonement for him for the mistake [shagah] that he made unintentionally [shagah], and he shall be forgiven. It is a guilt offering [‘asham]; he has indeed [‘asham] incurred guilt [‘asham] before the LORD. (Leviticus 5:17-19 ESV)

The emphasis here is on the realization that a sin has been committed and the associated “guilty” feeling – “bearing iniquity”. Note that the Guilt Offering can be the ram or “its equivalent” – presumable the value of the ram in silver or another precious item. Next some examples are given of the kinds of situations that requires a Guilt Offering and the types of “restitution”:

The LORD spoke to Moses, saying, “If anyone sins [hata’] and commits a breach of faith against the LORD by deceiving his neighbor in a matter of deposit or security, or through robbery, or if he has oppressed his neighbor or has found something lost and lied about it, swearing falsely—in any of all the things that people do and sin thereby—if he has sinned [hata’] and has realized his guilt [‘asham] and will restore what he took by robbery or what he got by oppression or the deposit that was committed to him or the lost thing that he found or anything about which he has sworn falsely, he shall restore [shalem] it in full and shall add a fifth to it, and give it to him to whom it belongs on the day he realizes his guilt

³³⁷ Note that in the Masoretic Text, chapter five continue through verse seven of English chapter six.

³³⁸ See TWOT article 180 page 78

[‘ashmah]. And he shall bring to the priest as his **compensation** [‘asham] **to the LORD** a ram without blemish out of the flock, **or its equivalent**, for a **guilt offering** [‘asham]. And the priest shall make atonement for him before the LORD, and he shall be forgiven for any of the **things that one may do and thereby become guilty** [‘ashmah].” (Leviticus 6:1-7 ESV)

The examples given all relate to the wrongs done by one person to another. These are sins to God, but they also require correction on a personal basis. These kinds of wrongs are the antithesis of **11.3 Christian Works**. That is **the message of the Guilt Offering**. When a True Worshipper of God becomes aware of a wrong committed to another person, **repentance to God is required**, but the True Worshipper must also **make things right with the other person**.

Excursus 7 – The Firstborn Son

In ancient near eastern culture, the firstborn male of animals and humans was considered sacred.³³⁹ In pagan cultures, **human sacrifice frequently took place**:

When the **king of Moab** saw that the battle was going against him ... he took **his oldest son** who was to reign in his place and **offered him for a burnt offering** on the wall. (2 Kings 3:26a, 27a ESV)

In times of depravity, Israel also fell into human sacrifice:

Ahaz was twenty years old when he began to reign ... he did not do what was right in the eyes of the LORD his God ... **He even burned his son as an offering**, according to the despicable practices of the nations whom the LORD drove out before the people of Israel. (2 Kings 16:2-3 ESV)

Manasseh was twelve years old when he began to reign ... he did what was evil in the sight of the LORD, according to the abominations of the nations whom the LORD drove out before the people of Israel. ... he **burned his sons as an offering** ... (2 Chronicles 33:1a, 2, 6a ESV)

The “firstborn” had certain rights. Esau was the “firstborn son” of Isaac, therefore the “birthright” and “blessing” of Isaac belonged to him:

Once when Jacob was cooking stew, **Esau came in from the field, and he was exhausted**. And Esau said to Jacob, “Let me eat some of that red stew, for I am exhausted!” ... **Jacob said, “Sell me your birthright now.”** Esau said, “I am about to die; of what use is a birthright to me?” Jacob said, “Swear to me now.” So **he swore to him and sold his birthright to Jacob**.

When **Isaac was old and his eyes were dim** so that he could not see, **he called Esau his older son** and said to him, “My son”; and he answered, “Here I am.” He said, “Behold, I am old; I do not know the day of my death. Now then, take your weapons, your quiver and your bow, and go out to the field and hunt game for me, and prepare for me delicious food, such as I love, and bring it to me so that I may eat, **that my [being] may bless you before I die.**” (Genesis 25:29-33, 27:1-4 ESV)

Jacob legitimately purchased the “birthright” but he swindled the “blessing”:

So **[Jacob] went in to his father and said**, “My father.” And he said, “Here I am. Who are you, my son?” Jacob said to his father, **“I am Esau your firstborn.** I have done as you told me; now sit up and eat of my game, that your [being] may **bless me.**” (Genesis 27:18-19 ESV)

Prior to entry into the Promised Land, Moses formalized some rights of the “firstborn”:

If a man has two wives, the one loved and the other unloved, and both the loved and the unloved have borne him children, and **if the firstborn son belongs to the unloved**, then on the day when he assigns his possessions as an inheritance to his sons, **he may not treat the son of the loved as the firstborn** in preference to the son of the unloved, who is the firstborn, but **he shall acknowledge the firstborn**, the son of the unloved, by giving him a double portion of all that he has, for **he is the firstfruits of his strength**. The right of the firstborn is his.

If brothers dwell together, and one of them dies and has no son, the wife of the dead man shall not be married outside the family to a stranger. Her husband’s brother shall go in to her and take her as his wife and perform the duty of a husband’s brother to her. And **the first son whom she bears shall succeed to the name of his dead brother**, that his name may not be blotted out of Israel. (Deuteronomy 21:15-17, 25:5-6 ESV)

YHWH legitimized his removal of the Israelites from Egypt on the basis of the “firstborn son”:

Then you shall say to Pharaoh, Thus says the LORD, **Israel is my firstborn son**, and I say to you, Let my son go that he may serve me. If you refuse to let him go, behold, **I will kill your firstborn son.** (Exodus 4:22-23 ESV)

³³⁹ See IDB volume 2 page 270, NBD page 423, and Bibliographies of these articles

YHWH was true to his threat:

At midnight the LORD struck down all the firstborn in the land of Egypt, from the firstborn of Pharaoh who sat on his throne to the firstborn of the captive who was in the dungeon, and all the firstborn of the livestock. And Pharaoh rose up in the night, he and all his servants and all the Egyptians. And there was a great cry in Egypt, for there was not a house where someone was not dead. Then he summoned Moses and Aaron by night and said, “Up, go out from among my people, both you and the people of Israel; and go, serve the LORD, as you have said. ...” (Exodus 12:29-31 ESV)

By slaying the “firstborn” of Egypt to free Israel, **YHWH claimed the right to all the “firstborn” of Israel.** In Israel, the firstborn animals were to be sacrificed and firstborn humans were to be “redeemed”:

When the LORD brings you into the land of the Canaanites, as he swore to you and your fathers, and shall give it to you, **you shall set apart to the LORD all that first opens the womb.** All the **firstborn of your animals that are males shall be the LORD’s.** Every firstborn of a donkey you shall redeem with a lamb, or if you will not redeem it you shall break its neck. **Every firstborn of man among your sons you shall redeem.**

And when in time to come your son asks you, ‘**What does this mean?**’ you shall say to him, ‘By a strong hand the LORD brought us out of Egypt, from the house of slavery. For when Pharaoh stubbornly refused to let us go, **the LORD killed all the firstborn in the land of Egypt,** both the firstborn of man and the firstborn of animals. **Therefore I sacrifice to the LORD all the males that first open the womb, but all the firstborn of my sons I redeem.**’ (Exodus 13:11-15 ESV)

On the basis that the “firstborn son” is considered “firstfruits”, YHWH extended the consecration to the “firstfruits” of produce:

... acknowledge **the firstborn** ... by giving him a double portion of all that he has, for **he is the firstfruits of his strength.** (Deuteronomy 21:17a ESV)

Reuben, **you are my firstborn,** my might, and the **firstfruits of my strength,** preeminent in dignity and preeminent in power. (Genesis 49:3 ESV)

You shall keep the **Feast of Harvest,** of **the firstfruits of your labor,** of what you sow in the field. ... The **best of the firstfruits** of your ground you shall bring into the house of the LORD your God. (Exodus 23:16a, 19a ESV)

The root verb, בָּכַר - bakar, means “to be born first”; it is seldom used.³⁴⁰ The masculine noun, בִּכּוֹר - bikkor, means “firstborn”. The plural masculine noun, בִּכּוּרִים - bikkurim, means “firstfruits”. The concepts of “firstborn” and “firstfruits” are closely related.

YHWH made it clear that his **claim on the “firstborn” was symbolic.** All the **“firstborn” were redeemed by the tribe of Levi:**

And the LORD spoke to Moses, saying, **“Bring the tribe of Levi near,** and set them before Aaron the priest, that they may minister to him. They shall keep guard over him and over the whole congregation before the tent of meeting, as they **minister at the tabernacle.**

Behold, **I have taken the Levites from among the people of Israel instead of every firstborn** who opens the womb among the people of Israel. **The Levites shall be mine, for all the firstborn are mine.** On the day that I struck down all the firstborn in the land of Egypt, I consecrated for my own all the firstborn in Israel, both of man and of beast. They shall be mine: I am the LORD.”

“List the sons of Levi, by fathers’ houses and by clans; every male from a month old and upward you shall list.” ... And the LORD said to Moses, **“List all the firstborn** males of the people of Israel, from a month old and upward, taking the number of their names. And **you shall take the Levites for me—I am the LORD—instead of all the firstborn** among the people of Israel ...” (Number 3:5-7, 12-13, 15, 40-41a ESV)

During the Feast of Unleavened Bread, a **“wave sheaf”** was presented to YHWH. At the Feast of Firstfruits of the Harvest **two “loaves” were waved** before YHWH. This was discussed in section **9.4 Leviticus Chapter Twenty-three.** The action of “waving” symbolically puts the waved object in YHWH’s presence rendering it “holy”. This was discussed in section **10.1 Efficacy of Sacrifices in the Old Testament.** The redemption of the “firstborn” by the tribe of Levi, was a symbolic action looking to the **redemption from sin made possible by Jesus’ sacrifice.** **The wave sheaf represents Christ.** After the resurrection Jesus had to be **presented for holy service** before the Father:

³⁴⁰ See TWOT article 244 page 108
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Jesus said to [Mary Magdalene], “Do not cling to me, for **I have not yet ascended to the Father**; but go to my brothers and say to them, ‘I am ascending to my Father and your Father, to my God and your God.’” (John 20:17 ESV)

The two loaves represent participants in the First Resurrection. Participants in the First Resurrection must be **presented for holy service** before God the Father in **a covenant meal**.³⁴¹

Let us rejoice and exult and give him the glory,
for **the marriage of the Lamb has come**, and his Bride has made herself ready;
it was granted her to clothe herself with fine linen, bright and pure” — ...
Blessed are those who are invited to the marriage supper of the Lamb. (Revelation 19:7-9a ESV)

Jesus Christ is the Firstborn Son, represented by the “wave sheaf”:

He is the image of the invisible God, **the firstborn of all creation**. For by him all things were created, in heaven and on earth, visible and invisible, whether thrones or dominions or rulers or authorities—all things were created through him and for him. And he is before all things, and in him all things hold together. And he is the head of the body, the church. He is the beginning, **the firstborn from the dead, that in everything he might be preeminent**. For in him all the fullness of God was pleased to dwell, and through him to reconcile to himself all things, whether on earth or in heaven, **making peace by the blood of his cross**. (Colossians 1:15-20 ESV)

John to the seven churches that are in Asia: Grace to you and peace from him who is and who was and who is to come, and from the seven spirits who are before his throne, and from **Jesus Christ** the faithful witness, **the firstborn of the dead**, and the ruler of kings on earth. To him **who loves us and has freed us from our sins by his blood** and made us a kingdom, priests to his God and Father, to him be glory and dominion forever and ever. Amen. (Revelation 1:4-6 ESV)

True Worshipers of God to whom God grants the gift of eternal life at the First Resurrection **are the firstfruits**, represented by the “two loaves”:

Do not be deceived, my beloved brothers. **Every good gift and every perfect gift** is from above, coming down from the Father of lights, with whom there is no variation or shadow due to change. Of his own will he brought us forth by the word of truth, that **we should be a kind of firstfruits of his creatures**. (James 1:16-18 ESV)

But in fact **Christ has been raised from the dead, the firstfruits of those who have fallen asleep**. For as by a man came death, by a man has come also the resurrection of the dead. For as in Adam all die, so also in Christ shall all be made alive. But each in his own order: **Christ the firstfruits, then at his coming those who belong to Christ**. (1 Corinthians 15:20-23 ESV)

For the creation waits with eager longing for the **revealing of the sons of God**. ... For we know that the whole creation has been groaning together in the pains of childbirth until now. And not only the creation, but **we ourselves, who have the firstfruits of the Spirit**, groan inwardly as **we wait eagerly for adoption as sons, the redemption of our bodies**. ... And we know that for those who love God all things work together for good, for **those who are called according to his purpose**. For those whom he foreknew he also predestined³⁴² to be conformed to the image of his Son, in order that **he might be the firstborn among many brothers**. (Romans 8:19, 22-23, 28-29 ESV)

But we ought always to give thanks to God for you, brothers beloved by the Lord, because **God chose you as the firstfruits to be saved**, through sanctification by the Spirit and belief in the truth. To this he called you through our gospel, so that you may obtain the glory of our Lord Jesus Christ. (2 Thessalonians 2:13-14 ESV)

Excursus 8 – *torah* and *nomos*

The translation of the Old Testament into Greek, which we call the Septuagint, seems to have been commenced in early third century BC with the five Books of Moses. Other books were added in subsequent decades.³⁴³ In this translation, the Jewish translators chose to use the Greek word νόμος – *nomos* as a translation of *torah*. The English word “law” carries pretty much the same range of meaning as *nomos*; whereas *torah* means “teaching”, “instruction”, “direction”.³⁴⁴ **Why did the Jewish translators choose *nomos* to translate *torah*?**

³⁴¹ See the discussion of the “covenant meal” of Exodus 24:8-11 discussed in section 2. *Communal Worship in the Old Testament*.

³⁴² See footnote 241

³⁴³ See Schürer II,3, pages 159-164

³⁴⁴ See *Excursus 3 – torah* in the paper “Covenants of Grace” located at www.mikewhytebiblicalresearch.ca

H. Kleinknecht states:

νόμος ... has the sense of “what is proper”, “what is assigned to someone”. In ancient times it has a comprehensive range of meaning which embraces any kind of existing or accepted norm, order, usage, or tradition. Νόμος is what is valid and in use ... The concept is religious in origin ... to honour the gods ... by participating in ... worship ... (TDNT IV pages 1023-1024)

So, **the origin of the word *nomos* is in the realm of pagan religious worship**. Kleinknecht goes on to explain the development of the usage of the word. It came “into **specialized use in the judicial sphere**”, extending to “the **law of nature**” and “**moral law**”. By the fifth century BC, *nomos* began to be written down and a sense of “**written law**” began to develop. This provided “a fixed expression of legal order and **the national constitution in a democratic polis**”. But the religious connotations of the word always remained:

This philosophical theory became a historical reality under Hellenism. Here νόμος no longer rules as king in the *polis*. The will and person of the [king] has itself become νόμος. ... **The divine king is the new divine source of νόμος** ... (TDNT IV page 1032)

This is the environment in which in Jewish translators of the Septuagint worked. In the Persian and Greek periods, **the Jewish community centered in Jerusalem had been under relentless pressure to conform to the pagan world around them**. This drove the community in two directions: some were readily willing to assimilate to pagan ways; **others strove bitterly to defend the traditional ways**. Among those defending the traditional ways there was a desire to convince the pagan world that **Israel's traditions were older and superior**. In fact, they asserted, Israel's scriptures contained the essence of all Greek philosophy and learning. This tendency reached its epitome in **Philo of Alexandria** at the time of Christ. Given this, **the translators wanted the Greek world to think of Israel's *torah* as the same as the pagan *nomos***. They were trying to conform the Truth of God to the lies of the world.

To understand this process, we need to **briefly sketch the course of events from the exile to the inception of the New Testament Church**. We have a very well-defined starting point: **the work of Ezekiel**. Ezekiel's purpose in captivity was to bring to repentance those individuals among the captive community that God was calling to return to Promised Land as a remnant of True Worshipers to prepare for the First Advent. In the New Testament we find **the last of this remnant community** alive and well and prepared for the First Advent – thousands were readily converted and quickly formed the nucleus of the New Testament Church. During the **five hundred years** between these events, we have **very little information and many dark periods**.

God's purpose in re-establishing the community in the Promised Land was to **prepare for the First Advent**. There had to be a community in which the Messiah could live as a human being and there had to be within this community a group of True Worshipers to nurture the Messiah as a child. Jeremiah records **YHWH's words to the exile community** explaining God's intentions for them:

For thus says the LORD: When **seventy years are completed for Babylon**, I will visit you, and I will fulfill to you my promise and **bring you back to this place**. For I know **the plans I have for you**, declares the LORD, plans for welfare and not for evil, to give you **a future and a hope**. Then you will call upon me and come and pray to me, and I will hear you. (Jeremiah 29:10-12 ESV)

God worked with the entire returning community to get it re-established. This was discussed in section **9.8 Exilic and Post-exilic Feast Keeping**. See especially the discussion of the prophecy in the second chapter of Haggai. After the temple was completed, the community fell into degeneracy. This is the situation depicted in the Book of Malachi. To remedy this, God sent Nehemiah and Ezra. They were successful. Some points to consider for this period:

- **Nehemiah** was a **civil governor**, there is sketchy information on a few governors after him
- **Ezra** was a **priest and a scribe**: scribism was a new concept – it involved full time, systematic, study and maintenance of the sacred writings³⁴⁵
- **Ezra** successfully re-established the **formal worship of YHWH in the temple** with a complete temple service, including educating the people in *torah*

³⁴⁵ See Schürer II,1,pages 306-328
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- In the years after the work of Nehemiah and Ezra, **the civil governorship ceased**, and the **priests gained political control** while **independent scribes who were NOT priests** became more and more important as teachers³⁴⁶

We have period of about one hundred years between the reforms of Nehemiah and Ezra and the conquest of Alexander – **the dark years of the Persian period**. There is little or no first-hand information on the affairs of the community during this period.³⁴⁷ For the next hundred and fifty years, from the **conquest of Alexander** until the **Maccabean revolt**, there is much richer information the influence of Hellenism on the community; but again, there is **little direct information on the community**.³⁴⁸

By the time of Christ, the “**Pharisees**” were the **undisputed thought leaders** of the Jewish community. The origins of the Pharisees are obscure.³⁴⁹ The most likely origin is a group called the “**Hasidim**” who fought along with the Maccabees in the early stages of the rebellion, but completely withdrew their support when the objectives of the Maccabees became political.³⁵⁰

The word חַסִּידִים - ḥasidim is the plural of חַסִּיד - ḥasid, “godly”, “saints”³⁵¹ **a word that David had established as an epithet of True Worshipers**, for example:

But know that the LORD has set apart **the godly [ḥasid]** for himself ... (Psalm 4:3a ESV)

With **the merciful [ḥasid]** you show yourself merciful;

with **the blameless** man you show yourself blameless;

with **the purified** you show yourself pure ... (Psalm 18:25-26a ESV)

Turn away from evil and do good; **so shall you dwell forever**.

For the LORD loves [mishpat]; he will not forsake **his saints [ḥasid]**.

They are **preserved forever** ... (Psalm 37:27-28bα ESV)

All your works shall give thanks to you, O LORD, and all **your saints [ḥasid]** shall bless you!

They shall speak of the **glory of your kingdom** and tell of your power,

to **make known to the children of man** your mighty deeds, and the glorious splendor of your kingdom. ...

The LORD is **righteous** in all his ways and kind in all his works.

The LORD is near to all **who call on him**, to all who call on him **in truth**.

He fulfills the desire of **those who fear him**; he also hears their cry and **saves them**.

(Psalm 145:10-12, 17-19 ESV)

Later Palmists continued to use the word ḥasid to identify True Worshipers:

O God, the nations have come into your inheritance;

they have defiled your holy temple; they have **laid Jerusalem in ruins**.

They have given the bodies of **your servants** to the birds of the heavens for food,

the flesh of **your faithful [ḥasid]** to the beasts of the earth. (Psalm 79:1-2 ESV)

Show us your [ḥesed], O LORD, and **grant us your salvation**.

Let me hear what God the LORD will speak,

for he will speak **peace to his people, to his saints [ḥasid]**; but let them not turn back to folly.

Surely his salvation is near to **those who fear him**, that glory may dwell in our land. (Psalm 85:7-9 ESV)

O **you who love the LORD**, hate evil!

He preserves the lives of his saints [ḥasid]; he delivers them from the hand of the wicked.

Light is sown for **the righteous**, and joy for **the upright in heart**. (Psalm 97:10-11 ESV)

Precious in the sight of the LORD is the death of his saints [ḥasid]. (Psalm 116:15 ESV)

Let them praise the name of the LORD, for his name alone is exalted;

his majesty is above earth and heaven.

He has raised up a horn for **his people**, praise for **all his saints [ḥasid]**,

for the people of Israel **who are near to him**. Praise the LORD! (Psalm 148:13-14 ESV)

Praise the LORD!

Sing to the LORD a new song, his praise in **the assembly of the godly [ḥasid]**! ...

For the LORD takes pleasure in **his people**; he adorns **the humble** with salvation.

³⁴⁶ See Schürer II,2,pages 29-43

³⁴⁷ See Bruce (Nations) pages 107-115, Bright pages 405-412

³⁴⁸ See Bruce (Nations) pages 116-139, Bright pages 412-422

³⁴⁹ See Schürer II,2,pages 10-28, and Bruce (NT) pages 69-81

³⁵⁰ See Schürer II,2,pages 26, and Bruce (NT) pages 69-70

³⁵¹ See TWOT article 698b page 307

Let **the godly [hasid]** exult in glory; let them sing for joy on their beds. ...
This is honor for all his godly ones [hasid]. Praise the LORD! (Psalm 149:1, 4-5, 9b ESV)

The existence of a group of True Worshipers at the end of the Nehemiah-Ezra period is affirmed in the Book of Malachi:

Then **those who feared the LORD** spoke with one another. The LORD paid attention and heard them, and a **book of remembrance** was written before him of **those who feared the LORD** and **esteemed his name**. **"They shall be mine**, says the LORD of hosts, **in the day** when I make up **my treasured possession**, and I will spare them as a man spares his son who serves him. Then once more **you shall see the distinction between the righteous** and the wicked, between **one who serves God** and one who does not serve him. ..." (Malachi 3:16-17 ESV)

So clearly the "Hasidim" were originally the True Worshipers of God. By the time of the Maccabean revolt, the "Hasidim" **still believed themselves to be "True Worshipers"**. However, the facts suggest that at some point True Worshipers had separated from the group known as "Hasidim". By the time of John Hyrcanus, a generation after the Maccabean revolt, the "Hasidim", now identified as Pharisees, appear in full-blown colour, i.e., espousing their interpretations of the *torah*.³⁵²

The **Pharisees** were less influenced by the Septuagint than Jews of the Diaspora because they continued to use the Hebrew text. However, **the notion of the equivalence of *nomos* with *torah* was apparently pervasive** as they completely lost all true perspective on the meaning of the *torah*. The **Pharisaic interpretations frequently ignore obvious teaching and delve into obscure abstractions**. Jesus constantly condemned the Pharisees' interpretations: see for example the discussion of Matthew chapter twenty-three in section **11.1 False Teachers in Galatia**. The Pharisees were so opposed to Jesus because they believed themselves to be the True Remnant, the only True Worshipers of God, and they believed their interpretations were the only path to true righteousness and salvation.

The other extreme is represented by **Philo of Alexandria**. He was a Jew of the Diaspora who was **fully educated in Greek philosophy and learning**. He used the Septuagint as his Bible not the Hebrew text – unquestioningly accepting the equivalence of *nomos* and *torah*. He wrote extensively to demonstrate that the Old Testament was in fact the source of all philosophy and true learning.³⁵³ **Philo used the technique of "allegory"**, which was common at that time. The problem with "allegory" is that it ignores the literal meaning of a text and applies **subjective symbolic meaning**. This renders most of Philo's works more or less useless today. His problem was his acceptance of Greek philosophy, much of which is diametrically opposed to the truth of the Bible.

In the New Testament, *nomos* is used as dictated by the Septuagint. This was the common practice and God did NOT inspire the New Testament authors to deviate from it. God has left it to True Worshipers to come to a true understanding of his teaching, his *torah*.

In summary, we in the modern world are stuck with English Bible translations that use "law" for "*torah*" even though it is **a completely incorrect translation**. The Jews who translated the Septuagint wanted to conform to the pagan ways of the world around them. Under this influence, the Pharisees ignored the teaching of God and developed their labyrinth of interpretations. Others, like Philo, allegorized away the teaching of God in an attempt to reconcile the Bible with pagan philosophy. **The notion that "*torah*" is law is pervasive in the modern world. True Worshipers need to go behind this notion and truly understand the teaching of God.**

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³⁵² See Schürer II,2,page 26, Bruce (Nations) pages 169-170

³⁵³ See Schürer II,3,pages 321-381, Barrett pages 173-189, and Yonge

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www.mikewhytebiblicalresearch.ca

The location of “True Worship of the True God” and other referenced papers.

www.ucg.org

The website of United Church of God an International Association contains hundreds of articles, broadcasts, sermons, bible study aids, and booklets. In particular, the following booklets are especially relevant:

- The Gospel of the Kingdom
- Sunset to Sunset: God's Sabbath Rest
- God's Holy Day Plan: The Promise of Hope for All Mankind
- Holidays or Holy Days: Does It Matter Which Days We Observe?
- What Does the Bible Teach About Grace?
- The Ten Commandments