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Tabernacles/Ingathering (Exod. 23:16; Lev. 23:33-41; Num. 29:12-38). The other festivals were the New Moon festivals (Exod. 40:2, 17; Num. 10:10; 28:1-10; 1 Sam. 20:18; 1 Chron. 23:31) and Sabbaths (Exod. 16:22-30; 20:8-11; 23:12; 31:12-17; 34:21; 35:2-3; Lev. 23:3; 26:2; Num. 28:9-10; Deut. 5:12-15).

In Judaism, as in Christianity, renewal is often accomplished through rediscovery. In celebrating the various feasts and festivals, Israel returns to neglected roots and rediscovers a fresh understanding of God's power, purposes, and presence as creator and sustainer of the nation. Thus, Hebrew festive celebrations were purposeful educational events for the whole community.

Feasts and Festivals as Educational Events.

The Passover feast had specific educational goals. The rich imagery of the celebrations evoked the curiosity of inquisitive children to ask questions about the historical event (Exod. 12:26-27; 13:8, 14-16). Blood-sprinkled doorposts recalled the original signal to the angel of death to "pass over" their homes. Israel's firstborn males must thus be consecrated and redeemed, for God spared them from death that fateful night when all Egypt's firstborn were slain (Exod. 13:11-16). Fully dressed to go, the whole family ate the meal in haste. They even baked bread without yeast, illustrating the urgency of that moment. Bitter herbs reminded them of their harsh and brutal sufferings in Egypt. Through this yearly festival, the nation thus returns to its roots, and commemorates the exodus from Egypt as an act of God's mighty deliverance (Josh. 5:10; 2 Kings 23:21-23; 2 Chron. 30:1-5, 13-20; Exod. 6:19-21).

The Feast of Unleavened Bread was celebrated concurrently with the Passover. All yeast was removed from the home during this period and violators were excommunicated (Exod. 12:1-20; Lev. 23:4-8; Num. 28:16-25; Deut. 16:1-8). The seven day celebration was marked by holy con-

Hebrew Education through Feasts and Festivals. Feasts and festivals were regular assemblies of Israel at scheduled periods in the year for joyous feasting and thanksgiving to commemorate both civil and religious events. Israel's three major annual feasts, also known as the three pilgrim festivals (Exod. 23:14-19; 2 Chron. 8:12-13), include the Passover/Feast of Unleavened Bread (Exod. 12:1; 13:16; 34:18-20, 25; Lev. 23:4-8; Num. 28:16-25; Deut. 16:1-8), the Feast of Weeks/Harvest (Exod. 23:16; Lev. 23:15-21; Num. 28:26-31; Deut. 16:9-12), and the Feast of

vocations and no work was allowed. During this period, the whole community ate bread without yeast, reminding them of their affliction in Egypt. Unleavened bread is the bread of affliction, eaten in haste on that night of departure (Deut. 16:3).

The Feast of Weeks took place on the 50th day after the offering of the barley sheaf at the Feast of Unleavened Bread. It began with a sacred assembly and no work was to be done. The nation offered the first fruits of the wheat harvest to God as freewill offerings and in proportion to the harvest (Num. 28:26; Deut. 16:10). Burnt offerings and sin offerings were also made (Lev. 23:18-20; Num. 28:27-30). The nation was to rejoice in God's presence for the land God had given, and to share this joy not only with their children, menservants, and maidservants, but also with the aliens, fatherless, and widows in their midst (Deut. 16:11-12). This feast was also known as the Feast of Harvest or Pentecost. It was at this feast that God poured out his Holy Spirit upon the New Testament church in a miraculous way (Acts 2:1-4).

On the fifteenth day of the seventh month, the nation celebrated the Feast of Tabernacles or Ingathering where crops were gathered from the field (Lev. 23:33-36; Exod. 23:16; Deut. 16:14). This seven day festival was marked by holy convocations where no work was allowed. Animal sacrifices and grain and drink offerings were offered (Lev. 23:33-36; Num. 29:13-38). The people were to celebrate with joy and to include the menservants, maidservants, aliens, fatherless, and widows (Deut. 16:14). During this period, all native born Israelites were to live in booths to remember their days of sojourn in booths when God led them out of Egypt (Lev. 23:40, 42-43). This feast was celebrated throughout Israel's history (2 Chron. 8:12-13; Ezra 3:4; Neh. 8:13-18; John 7:2-3, 37-38).

As required under Mosaic law, Israel consecrated itself to God each new month during the New Moon festivals (Num. 28:11). Normal work ceased and the celebrations were marked by blowing of the trumpets (Num. 10:10) and offerings and sacrifices (Num. 28:11-15; 1 Chron. 23:30-31; 2 Chron. 2:4; 8:12-13; 31:3). Wrong attitudes during New Moon festivals incurred God's wrath (Isa. 1:13-14; Hos. 2:11; 5:7). Observation of the Sabbath was a distinctive of the people of God. Every seventh day was to be a holy day of rest to remember God's work in creation (Exod. 20:8-11; Lev. 23:3; Gen. 2:2-3). Servants, aliens within the community, and even animals were to cease from labor, and violation was punishable by death (Exod. 31:14; 35:2; Num. 15:32-36).

The most holy day of Israel's year was the Day of Atonement (Exod. 30:10; Lev. 16; 23:26-32; 25:9; Num. 29:7-11). On the tenth day of the seventh month, Israel sought forgiveness for her sins through complex sacrificial rites. After the high

priest sanctified himself through ceremonial washings and the sacrifice of a bullock, he would sacrifice a goat for the sins of the nation. Finally, a scapegoat bearing the sins of the people was sent into the wilderness, symbolizing God's pardon for the sin of the nation (Lev. 16:20-22; Gal. 3:12; 2 Cor. 5:21). This was a day of public fasting preceded by special Sabbaths.

Pedagogical Insights. Hebrew celebrations of feasts and festivals provide some interesting pedagogical insights. First, learning was fully experiential. Burnt offerings, animal sacrifices, harvest offerings, and lavish feasts evoked the full senses of sight, sound, touch, taste, and smell. The festivals often required cessation from normal life and labor and sometimes called for a radical change of lifestyle (Feast of Tabernacles). Second, learning occurred within communities. The Passover was celebrated within families who encouraged free participation of children. Other feasts frequently involved the nation as a whole. Third, learning focused on God as the source and sustainer of the nation. The great feasts were often occasions of covenant renewal, calling the nation back to its roots and beginnings in God. Not surprisingly, reading and teaching of the Law accompanied the other festivities (Deut. 31:9-13; Neh. 8). Last, but not least, learning encompassed the whole of life with its varied needs. Through a system of elaborate celebrations, the people remembered their humble beginnings (Passover/Feast of Unleavened Bread), celebrated God's sustaining grace (Feast of Weeks, Feast of Ingathering), received cleansing (Day of Atonement), and regularly consecrated themselves to holy service (Sabbath, New Moon).

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