

OLD TESTAMENT FEASTS AND OTHER SACRED DAYS

God instructed Israel to set aside certain periods each year as feast days. The ceremonial worship of Israel centered in these feast or holy days. He did this for two reasons: 1) To keep God in the people's thoughts; and 2) To promote national unity. In fact, at three of these feasts all adult males were required to attend: Passover, Pentecost, and Tabernacles. The Sabbath is listed at the beginning of Leviticus 23 and as such is given a unique and independent place. The Sabbath was the basis of all the feasts. One who did not keep the Sabbath in the most religious manner was not capable of keeping any of the other feasts properly. This stands as the threshold of all religious observance. Because this was the day God rested from His labors (Genesis 2:3) it signifies a day of rest, rest of the body from labor and toil and rest to the soul from all worldly care and anxieties. The Sabbath is not only a memorial of God's rest but also of man's redemption (Exodus 31:13; Deuteronomy 5:15).

NAME	OLD TESTAMENT REFERENCES	OLD TESTAMENT TIME	MODERN EQUIVALENT	DESCRIPTION	PURPOSE	NEW TESTAMENT REFERENCES
Sabbath	Exodus 20:8-11; 31:12-17; Leviticus 23:3; Deuteronomy 5:12-15	7th day Duration 1 day	Same	Day of rest; no work; a day dedicated to God	Rest for people and animals	Matthew 12:1-14; 28:1; Luke 4:16; John 5:9; Acts 13:42; Colossians 2:16; Hebrews 4:1-11
Sabbath Year	Exodus 23:10,11; Leviticus 25:1-7	7th year	Same	Year of rest; fallow fields	Rest for land	
Year of Jubilee	Leviticus 25:8-55; 27:17-24; Numbers 36:4	50th year	Same	Canceled debts; liberation of slaves and indentured servants' land returned to original family owners	Help for poor; stabilize society	
Passover	Exodus 12:1-14; Leviticus 23:5; Numbers 9:1-14; 28:16; Deuteronomy 16:1-3a,4b-7	1st month (Abib) 14 Duration 7 days	March - April	Slaying and eating a lamb, together with bitter herbs and bread made without yeast, in every household.	Remember Israel's deliverance from Egypt	Matthew 26:17; Mark 14:12-26; John 2:13; 11:55; 1 Corinthians 5:7; Hebrews 11:28
Unleavened Bread	Exodus 12:15-20; 13:3-10; 23:15; 34:18; Leviticus 23:6-8; Numbers 28:17-25; Deuteronomy 16:3b,4a,8	1st month (Abib) 16	March - April	Eating bread made without yeast; holding several assemblies; making designated offerings	Remember how the Lord brought the Israelites out of Egypt in haste.	Mark 14:1; Acts 12:3; 1 Corinthians 5:6-8
First Fruits	Leviticus 23:9-14	1st month (Abib) 16	March - April	Presenting a sheaf of the first of the barley harvest as a wave offering; making a burnt offering and a grain offering	Recognize the Lord's bounty in the land	Romans 8:23; 1 Corinthians 15:20-23

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Weeks (Pentecost) (Harvest)	Exodus 23:16a; 34:22a; Leviticus 23:15-21; Numbers 28:26-31; Deuteronomy 16:9-12	3rd month (Sivan) 6 50 days after Passover Duration 1 day	May - June	A festival of joy; mandatory and voluntary offerings, including the first fruits of the wheat harvest	Show joy and thankfulness for the Lord's blessing of harvest	Acts 2:1-14; 20:16; 1 Corinthians 16:8
Trumpets (Later: Rosh Hashanah - New Year's Day)	Leviticus 23:23-25; Numbers 29:1-6	7th month (Tishri) 1 Duration 1 day	September - October October 1	An assembly on a day of rest commemorated with trumpet blasts and sacrifices	Present Israel before the Lord for His favor	
Day of Atonement (Yom Kippur)	Leviticus 16; 23:26-32; Numbers 29:7-11	7th month (Tishri) 10 5 days prior to Tabernacles Duration 1 day	September - October	A day of rest, fasting and sacrifices of atonement for priests and people and atonement for the tabernacle and altar	Cleanse priests and people from their sins and purify the holy place	Romans 3:24-26; Hebrews 9:7; 10:3,19-22
Booths (Tabernacles) (Ingathering)	Exodus 23:16b; 34:22b; Leviticus 23:33-36a, 39-43; Numbers 29:12-34; Deuteronomy 16:13-15; Zechariah 14:16-19	7th month (Tishri) 15-21 Duration 8 days	September - October October 15	A week of celebration for the harvest; living in booths and offering sacrifices	Memorialize the journey from Egypt to Canaan; give thanks for the productivity of Canaan	John 7:2,37
Holy Convocation	Leviticus 23:36b; Numbers 29:35-38	7th month (Tishri) 22	September - October	A day of convocation, rest and offering sacrifices	Commemorate the closing of the cycle of feasts	
Purim	Esther 9:18-32	12th month (Adar) 14,15	February - March March 22	A day of joy and feasting and giving presents	Remind the Israelites of their national deliverance in the time of Esther	

The Feast of Lights (Hanukkah), though not mentioned in the Old Testament, is celebrated on Kislev 25 (mid-December [December 23]). It is in commemoration of the purification of the temple and altar after it had been desecrated by Antiochus Epiphanes during the time of the Maccabees (165/4 B.C.). The feast is mentioned in John 10:22.

In addition, new moons were often special feast days (Numbers 10:10; 1 Chronicles 23:31; Ezra 3:5; Nehemiah 10:33; Psalm 81:3; Isaiah 1:13,14; 66:23; Hosea 5:7; Amos 8:5; Colossians 2:16).

The above chart was adapted in part from the NASB Study Bible (Zondervan Publishing House)