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**THE
RITUAL
SABBATHS**

(WONDERS OF THE OLD COVENANT)

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The Ritual Sabbaths

PART ONE

Introduction. Setting the meaning. Leviticus 23:2,4. The seventh day of the week. Sabbath from its origin to the covenant at Sinai. Why ritual sabbaths?

The Hebrew Scriptures tells the history about Israel's development starting from few people entering Egypt to the moment they departed towards Canaan a number of six hundred thousand men.

From a large number of people without any organization they became a well organized nation, with their own system of laws, a society blessed by God, with a well fertilized land able to produce good quality fruits and grains and, most important, a nation blessed and protected by the Almighty God against enemies, wild beasts, deadly diseases. A nation strong enough to overcome powerful enemies in the battleground.

In fact, God wished Israel be a wealthy, prosperous, joyful and healthy nation. No nation in the world has ever possessed so many wonderful things than Israel.

The covenant at Sinai was written in a book and sealed with blood; it was the beginning of an uninterrupted communion between God and Israel. In signing that document the Lord was able to show how happy He was having Israel as His people.

The law that God gave to Israel have several feasts: The Feast of Passover, the Feast of Unleavened Bread, the Feast of the Weeks, the Feast of Trumpets, the Day of Atonement, the Feast of Tabernacles.

Setting the meaning

It is important to note that the Hebrew word "Shabbath" means rest from labor. Keeping this in mind will help understand that Shabbath is not a word to identify only the seventh day of the week but any day of rest from labor.

In Leviticus 23:2,4 is written:

2 *Speak unto the children of Israel, and say unto them, [Concerning] the feasts of the LORD, which ye shall proclaim [to be] holy convocations, [even] these [are] my feasts.*

3 *Six days shall work be done: but the seventh day [is] the sabbath of rest, an holy convocation; ye shall do no work [therein]: it [is] the sabbath of the LORD in all your dwellings.*

4 *These [are] the feasts of the LORD, [even] holy convocations, which ye shall proclaim in their seasons."*

The words from verse 2: "[Concerning] the feasts of the LORD", refer to the Sabbath, and those from verse 4 "These [are] the feasts of the LORD, [even] holy convocations" is a reference to the holidays.

The mention by God: "the feasts of the LORD", and "These [are] the feasts of the LORD, [even] holy convocations" is not mere coincidence or repetition; the double mention is purposely done in order to make a clear difference between the blessed seventh day rested by God when the Creation was finished, and the holidays ordered to Is-

rael. The seventh day is a weekly rest, while the holidays were held in specific dates of the year.

The Sabbath from its origins to the covenant at Sinai (Leviticus 23:3)

"Six days shall work be done: but the seventh day [is] the sabbath of rest, an holy convocation; ye shall do no work [therein]: it [is] the sabbath of the LORD in all your dwellings."

The first day to be kept holy by Israel is the seventh day of the week –The weekly Sabbath.

It is true that the Holy Scripture does not render whether the Sabbath was observed by the patriarchs in pre-israelite times, that lack of information could lead to think nobody observed it. However, our Lord Jesus Christ provides a valuable clue by saying: "The Sabbath was made for man" (Mark 2:27). These words clearly show for whom the Sabbath day was made for. The Lord does not say the Sabbath was made for Israel, but for men. Men exist from Adam, not from Israel. Therefore, a reasonable conclusion may establish the Sabbath as being observed by men (God's people) in times before Israel even when the Hebrew Holy Scripture makes not any mention.

The creation and sanctification of the seventh day was made by God. The book of Genesis 2:2-3 says:

"And on the seventh day God ended his work which he had made; and he rested on the seventh day from all his work which he had made.

And God blessed the seventh day, and sanctified it: because that in it he had rested from all his work which God created and made."

This is the main reason for mankind to keep the seventh day holy. Also, it is the reason for Israel to rest it. Pay attention to Exodus 20:8,11:

"Remember the Sabbath day, to keep it holy..."

For [in] six days the LORD made heaven and earth, the sea, and all that in them [is], and rested the seventh day: wherefore the LORD blessed the sabbath day, and hallowed it."

The word "remember" implies that Israel had knowledge of that day even before the covenant at Sinai.

It is not likely they observed the day while in captivity; however, when God ordered them: "Remember the Sabbath day to keep it holy", clearly shows they previously knew what God was referring to, after all, "Sabbath was made for men" long before the arriving at Sinai.

The Sabbath was observed by Israel in times when they knew nothing yet about other days of rest, Exodus 16:23 states:

"And he said unto them, This [is that] which the LORD hath said, To morrow [is] the rest of the holy sabbath unto the LORD: bake [that] which ye will bake [to day], and seethe that ye will seethe; and that which remaineth over lay up for you to be kept until the morning."

Listed as the Fourth Commandment of the Decalogue, the Sabbath was the only day of rest while traveling through the wilderness before the holidays were established in Israel.

This is the only day God rested when the Creation was finished. He did not rest in the solemnities given to Israel as part of their festive days. Therefore, although the seventh day of the week or Sabbath is listed in Leviticus 23 with

other solemnities, God makes a clear difference between them.

Sacrifices added to the Sabbath after the covenant (Leviticus 23:3)

Six days is work done, and in the seventh day is a sabbath of rest, a holy convocation; ye do no work; it is a sabbath to Jehovah in all your dwellings."

As the Holy Scripture renders in Genesis chapter 2:1-3, God finished all the creative process in six days, in the seventh day He rested of all the work He had done and declared that day holy and blessed. No sacrifices or holocausts were added to make the Sabbath holy. Even in times when no covenant was yet done, the observance of the day continued without sacrifices (please look at Exodus 16:23 and 20:8-11).

It was after the covenant when God commanded Israel to make in Sabbath two sacrifices in the morning and two in the evening (Numbers 28:9-10); however, neither God nor the prophets mention the double sacrifices as part of the holiness of the Sabbath. This leads to understand that the seventh day is holy because God made it holy, not because the addition of sacrifices.

Moreover, neither the six days of the week nor the Sabbath were created with sacrifices. Sacrifices were added when Israel became God's people.

Therefore, being a day of rest established by God from the Creation, the seventh day was included the first in the Israelites' calendar, and sacrifices were added.

Why ritual sabbaths?

There are no evidences that God or His prophets have ever mentioned "ritual sabbaths", however, the name is used in this study to make difference between the Sabbath and the other sabbath days.

This difference merges when the critical aspects involved in the solemnities given to Israel are taken in examination. Every solemnity included: Specific date of the year (not specific day but specific date), a purpose linked to Israel after their captivity, a number of sacrifices, holocausts and offerings performed in the Tabernacle, one or two days of rest. All together were included in every solemnity when they were established. Without any of these elements no solemnity could exist.

Thus, while the seventh day of the week was instituted holy without adding any sacrifice, the other holidays were instituted by putting several activities together, that's the reason why in this study they're called ritual sabbaths".

PART TWO *The Feasts*

The Passover (Leviticus 23:5)

"In the fourteenth [day] of the first month at even [is] the LORD'S passover."

This is not a feast with meaning of gaiety but a feast with meaning of reflection, alter all, the night of the fourteenth day of Abib was the day when the angel of the Lord struck down every firstborn in the land of Egypt and passed over the houses of the Israelites; hence the name passover.

That was a night of great sorrow for the Egyptians; and

for the Israelites a night to remember the mercy of God.

Although God ordered Israel to keep this solemnity holy its commemoration was not a day of rest. How this celebration was to be done is rendered in Exodus chapter 12: 1-14, and as declared in verses 26-27, in that day every man head of family must explain to his children the reason for the celebration.

Unleavened Bread (Leviticus 23:6-8)

"6 And on the fifteenth day of the same month [is] the feast of unleavened bread unto the LORD: seven days ye must eat unleavened bread.

7 In the first day ye shall have an holy convocation: ye shall do no servile work therein.

8 But ye shall offer an offering made by fire unto the LORD seven days: in the seventh day [is] an holy convocation: ye shall do no servile work [therein]."

The celebration of the feast of Unleavened Bread follows the day of Passover. Now, the purpose of this commemoration is linked to the day when God brought Israel out of the land of Egypt.

Exodus 12:15-17 provides more information.

"15 Seven days shall ye eat unleavened bread; even the first day ye shall put away leaven out of your houses: for whosoever eateth leavened bread from the first day until the seventh day, that soul shall be cut off from Israel.

16 And in the first day there shall be an holy convocation, and in the seventh day there shall be an holy convocation to you; no manner of work shall be done in them, save that which every man must eat, that only may be done of you.

17 And ye shall observe the feast of unleavened bread; for in this selfsame day have I brought your armies out of the land of Egypt: therefore shall ye observe this day in your generations by an ordinance for ever."

No leaven or yeast at all should be found in any Israelite house for seven days, otherwise transgressors should be put to death.

A careful reading of verse 16 clearly shows that the first and the last were sabbath days, and the order was: "no manner of work shall be done in them, save that which every man must eat". The first and the last were days of rest or sabbaths, labor in those two days was forbidden, only cooking for personal or family purpose was allowed.

The high importance of this day can be seen in John 19:31:

"The Jews therefore, because it was the preparation, that the bodies should not remain upon the cross on the sabbath day, (for that sabbath day was an high day,) besought Pilate that their legs might be broken, and [that] they might be taken away."

The Lord was crucified on the day of Passover (Abib 14), the same day the Jews went to Pilate to ask that His legs may be broken and His body might be taken away from the cross as soon as possible and buried.

Those three crucified must be buried before the end of that day because the first day of the Unleavened Bread was to start few hours later, and that day was the first sabbath of that festivity.

The book of Numbers 28:18-25 reports the sacrifices of-

ferred during that feast:

“18 In the first day [shall be] an holy convocation; ye shall do no manner of servile work [therein]:

19 But ye shall offer a sacrifice made by fire [for] a burnt offering unto the LORD; two young bullocks, and one ram, and seven lambs of the first year: they shall be unto you without blemish:

20 And their meat offering [shall be of] flour mingled with oil: three tenth deals shall ye offer for a bullock, and two tenth deals for a ram;

21 A several tenth deal shalt thou offer for every lamb, throughout the seven lambs:

22 And one goat [for] a sin offering, to make an atonement for you.

23 Ye shall offer these beside the burnt offering in the morning, which [is] for a continual burnt offering.

24 After this manner ye shall offer daily, throughout the seven days, the meat of the sacrifice made by fire, of a sweet savour unto the LORD: it shall be offered beside the continual burnt offering, and his drink offering.

25 And on the seventh day ye shall have an holy convocation; ye shall do no servile work.”.

First Fruits (Leviticus 23:10-21)

“10 Speak unto the children of Israel, and say unto them, When ye be come into the land which I give unto you, and shall reap the harvest thereof, then ye shall bring a sheaf of the firstfruits of your harvest unto the priest:

11 And he shall wave the sheaf before the LORD, to be accepted for you: on the morrow after the sabbath the priest shall wave it.

12 And ye shall offer that day when ye wave the sheaf an he lamb without blemish of the first year for a burnt offering unto the LORD.

13 And the meat offering thereof [shall be] two tenth deals of fine flour mingled with oil, an offering made by fire unto the LORD [for] a sweet savour: and the drink offering thereof [shall be] of wine, the fourth [part] of an hin.

14 And ye shall eat neither bread, nor parched corn, nor green ears, until the selfsame day that ye have brought an offering unto your God: [it shall be] a statute for ever throughout your generations in all your dwellings.

15 And ye shall count unto you from the morrow after the sabbath, from the day that ye brought the sheaf of the wave offering; seven sabbaths shall be complete:

16 Even unto the morrow after the seventh sabbath shall ye number fifty days; and ye shall offer a new meat offering unto the LORD.

17 Ye shall bring out of your habitations two wave loaves of two tenth deals: they shall be of fine flour; they shall be baked with leaven; [they are] the firstfruits unto the LORD.

18 And ye shall offer with the bread seven lambs without blemish of the first year, and one young bullock, and two rams: they shall be [for] a burnt offering unto the LORD, with their meat offering, and their drink offerings, [even] an offering made by fire, of

sweet savour unto the LORD.

19 Then ye shall sacrifice one kid of the goats for a sin offering, and two lambs of the first year for a sacrifice of peace offerings.

20 And the priest shall wave them with the bread of the firstfruits [for] a wave offering before the LORD, with the two lambs: they shall be holy to the LORD for the priest.

21 And ye shall proclaim on the selfsame day, [that] it may be an holy convocation unto you: ye shall do no servile work [therein: it shall be] a statute for ever in all your dwellings throughout your generations.

This feast started after the last day of the Unleavened Bread, that is the sixteenth of Abib, and is different than the first two as it projects a sense of happiness. After months of hard work now the people was ready to harvest and enjoy new grain.

Other Scriptural verses (i. e. Ruth 3) describes how the landlords celebrated the harvesting in animated communion, sharing with their slaves and workers.

Although verses 10-14 name this feast as the “First Fruits”, verses 15-16 count seven weekly Sabbaths or forty nine days plus an additional one. Thus, both names: First fruits and Feast of the weeks refer to the same event. This feast is well-known by Christians as Pentecost.

The reading reports the amount of sacrifices to be made.

In verse 21 the fiftieth day is declared a sabbath, a day of rest, a solemn day: *“And you shall proclaim on the same day that it is a holy convocation to you. You shall do no customary work on it”.*

The Feast of Trumpets (Leviticus 23:23-25)

“Lev 23:24 Speak unto the children of Israel, saying, In the seventh month, in the first [day] of the month, shall ye have a sabbath, a memorial of blowing of trumpets, an holy convocation.

Lev 23:25 Ye shall do no servile work [therein]: but ye shall offer an offering made by fire unto the LORD.”.

This was a festive day dedicated to celebrating the new year. This day is best known for its Hebrew name “Rosh HaShana translated as “head of year”.

The book of Numbers 29:1-6 explains how Israel had to celebrate this day:

“1And in the seventh month, on the first day of the month, you shall have a holy convocation. You shall do no customary work. For you it is a day of blowing the trumpets.

2 You shall offer a burnt offering as a sweet aroma to the LORD: one young bull, one ram, and seven lambs in their first year, without blemish.

3 Their grain offering shall be fine flour mixed with oil: three-tenths of an ephah for the bull, two-tenths for the ram,

4 and one-tenth for each of the seven lambs;

5 also one kid of the goats as a sin offering, to make atonement for you;

6 besides the burnt offering with its grain offering for the New Moon, the regular burnt offering with its grain offering, and their drink offerings, according to their ordinance, as a sweet aroma, an offering made

by fire to the LORD.”

According verse 1 the festivity lasts one day, a day of rest, a sabbath day.

Day of Atonement (Leviticus 23: 27-32)

27 Also on the tenth [day] of this seventh month [there shall be] a day of atonement: it shall be an holy convocation unto you; and ye shall afflict your souls, and offer an offering made by fire unto the LORD.

28 And ye shall do no work in that same day: for it [is] a day of atonement, to make an atonement for you before the LORD your God.

29 For whatsoever soul [it be] that shall not be afflicted in that same day, he shall be cut off from among his people.

30 And whatsoever soul [it be] that doeth any work in that same day, the same soul will I destroy from among his people.

31 Ye shall do no manner of work: [it shall be] a statute for ever throughout your generations in all your dwellings.

32 It [shall be] unto you a sabbath of rest, and ye shall afflict your souls: in the ninth [day] of the month at even, from even unto even, shall ye celebrate your sabbath.

Surely there is no solemnity with greater meaning than this. Not a festive day but one of remorse for all transgressions to the Law made during the year. A sabbath day in which all sins were removed from the people.

It is necessary understand that those forgiven sins had been classified as no deadly sins, or as Hebrew 9:7 says, “the errors of the people”. Those sins were redeemable. Sins like adultery or blasphemy were not redeemable and the convicted was put to death.

The prominence of the Day of Atonement is shown in Leviticus chapter 16:3-34.

“Lev 16:3 Thus shall Aaron come into the holy [place]: with a young bullock for a sin offering, and a ram for a burnt offering.

Lev 16:4 He shall put on the holy linen coat, and he shall have the linen breeches upon his flesh, and shall be girded with a linen girdle, and with the linen mitre shall he be attired: these [are] holy garments; therefore shall he wash his flesh in water, and [so] put them on.

Lev 16:5 And he shall take of the congregation of the children of Israel two kids of the goats for a sin offering, and one ram for a burnt offering.

Lev 16:6 And Aaron shall offer his bullock of the sin offering, which [is] for himself, and make an atonement for himself, and for his house.

Lev 16:7 And he shall take the two goats, and present them before the LORD [at] the door of the tabernacle of the congregation.

Lev 16:8 And Aaron shall cast lots upon the two goats; one lot for the LORD, and the other lot for the scapegoat.

Lev 16:9 And Aaron shall bring the goat upon which the LORD'S lot fell, and offer him [for] a sin offering.

Lev 16:10 But the goat, on which the lot fell to be the scapegoat, shall be presented alive before the

LORD, to make an atonement with him, [and] to let him go for a scapegoat into the wilderness.

Lev 16:11 And Aaron shall bring the bullock of the sin offering, which [is] for himself, and shall make an atonement for himself, and for his house, and shall kill the bullock of the sin offering which [is] for himself:

Lev 16:12 And he shall take a censer full of burning coals of fire from off the altar before the LORD, and his hands full of sweet incense beaten small, and bring [it] within the veil:

13 And he shall put the incense upon the fire before the LORD, that the cloud of the incense may cover the mercy seat that [is] upon the testimony, that he die not:

14 And he shall take of the blood of the bullock, and sprinkle [it] with his finger upon the mercy seat eastward; and before the mercy seat shall he sprinkle of the blood with his finger seven times.

15 Then shall he kill the goat of the sin offering, that [is] for the people, and bring his blood within the veil, and do with that blood as he did with the blood of the bullock, and sprinkle it upon the mercy seat, and before the mercy seat:

16 And he shall make an atonement for the holy [place], because of the uncleanness of the children of Israel, and because of their transgressions in all their sins: and so shall he do for the tabernacle of the congregation, that remaineth among them in the midst of their uncleanness.

17 And there shall be no man in the tabernacle of the congregation when he goeth in to make an atonement in the holy [place], until he come out, and have made an atonement for himself, and for his household, and for all the congregation of Israel.

18 And he shall go out unto the altar that [is] before the LORD, and make an atonement for it; and shall take of the blood of the bullock, and of the blood of the goat, and put [it] upon the horns of the altar round about.

19 And he shall sprinkle of the blood upon it with his finger seven times, and cleanse it, and hallow it from the uncleanness of the children of Israel.

20 And when he hath made an end of reconciling the holy [place], and the tabernacle of the congregation, and the altar, he shall bring the live goat:

21 And Aaron shall lay both his hands upon the head of the live goat, and confess over him all the iniquities of the children of Israel, and all their transgressions in all their sins, putting them upon the head of the goat, and shall send [him] away by the hand of a fit man into the wilderness:

22 And the goat shall bear upon him all their iniquities unto a land not inhabited: and he shall let go the goat in the wilderness.

23 And Aaron shall come into the tabernacle of the congregation, and shall put off the linen garments, which he put on when he went into the holy [place], and shall leave them there:

24 And he shall wash his flesh with water in the holy place, and put on his garments, and come forth, and offer his burnt offering, and the burnt offering of

the people, and make an atonement for himself, and for the people.

25 And the fat of the sin offering shall he burn upon the altar.

26 And he that let go the goat for the scapegoat shall wash his clothes, and bathe his flesh in water, and afterward come into the camp.

27 And the bullock [for] the sin offering, and the goat [for] the sin offering, whose blood was brought in to make atonement in the holy [place], shall [one] carry forth without the camp; and they shall burn in the fire their skins, and their flesh, and their dung.

28 And he that burneth them shall wash his clothes, and bathe his flesh in water, and afterward he shall come into the camp.

29 And [this] shall be a statute for ever unto you: [that] in the seventh month, on the tenth [day] of the month, ye shall afflict your souls, and do no work at all, [whether it be] one of your own country, or a stranger that sojourneth among you:

30 For on that day shall [the priest] make an atonement for you, to cleanse you, [that] ye may be clean from all your sins before the LORD.

31 It [shall be] a sabbath of rest unto you, and ye shall afflict your souls, by a statute for ever.

32 And the priest, whom he shall anoint, and whom he shall consecrate to minister in the priest's office in his father's stead, shall make the atonement, and shall put on the linen clothes, [even] the holy garments:

33 And he shall make an atonement for the holy sanctuary, and he shall make an atonement for the tabernacle of the congregation, and for the altar, and he shall make an atonement for the priests, and for all the people of the congregation.

34 And this shall be an everlasting statute unto you, to make an atonement for the children of Israel for all their sins once a year. And he did as the LORD commanded Moses."

The Feast of Tabernacles (Leviticus 23:34-43)

Lev 23:34 Speak unto the children of Israel, saying, The fifteenth day of this seventh month [shall be] the feast of tabernacles [for] seven days unto the LORD.

Lev 23:35 On the first day [shall be] an holy convocation: ye shall do no servile work [therein].

Lev 23:36 Seven days ye shall offer an offering made by fire unto the LORD: on the eighth day shall be an holy convocation unto you; and ye shall offer an offering made by fire unto the LORD: it [is] a solemn assembly; [and] ye shall do no servile work [therein].

Lev 23:37 These [are] the feasts of the LORD, which ye shall proclaim [to be] holy convocations, to offer an offering made by fire unto the LORD, a burnt offering, and a meat offering, a sacrifice, and drink offerings, every thing upon his day:

Lev 23:38 Beside the sabbaths of the LORD, and beside your gifts, and beside all your vows, and beside all your freewill offerings, which ye give unto the LORD.

Lev 23:39 Also in the fifteenth day of the seventh month, when ye have gathered in the fruit of the land, ye shall keep a feast unto the LORD seven days: on the first day [shall be] a sabbath, and on the eighth day [shall be] a sabbath.

40 And ye shall take you on the first day the boughs of goodly trees, branches of palm trees, and the boughs of thick trees, and willows of the brook; and ye shall rejoice before the LORD your God seven days.

41 And ye shall keep it a feast unto the LORD seven days in the year. [It shall be] a statute for ever in your generations: ye shall celebrate it in the seventh month.

42 Ye shall dwell in booths seven days; all that are Israelites born shall dwell in booths:

43 That your generations may know that I made the children of Israel to dwell in booths, when I brought them out of the land of Egypt: I [am] the LORD your God."

It is not clear why this feast is identified with two names: Feast of Tabernacles and Feast of Booths. The first name is not appropriate as the singular name "tabernacle" is a direct reference to the place where God manifested His glory among the people. In the other hand, "Feast of Booths" is a clear reference to the tents made by Israel in the wilderness for forty years.

Verses 35, 36 declare that in the first and the last days are sabbaths, no work had to be done.

The seven days of this solemnity were really busy for the priests as many sacrifices had to be done during the festivity. Numbers 29:12-38 lists: 71 young bulls, 15 rams, 105 male lambs, 8 male goats.

By putting all sabbaths together their number is seven:

| | |
|---|---|
| The feast of Unleavened Bread | 2 |
| The feast of the First Fruits (Pentecost) | 1 |
| The feast of Trumpets | 1 |
| The day of Atonement | 1 |
| The Feast of Booths | 2 |

PART THREE

Feasts came to end. Feasts in the Epistles.
Colossians 2:14-16.

Feasts came to the end (Hebrew 8:13)

"In that he saith, A new [covenant], he hath made the first old. Now that which decayeth and waxeth old [is] ready to vanish away..".

There were many difficulties for Israel to obey the Law as declared by the prophets, in response, the Almighty spoke to them by Isaiah 1:11-14 saying:

"11 To what purpose [is] the multitude of your sacrifices unto me? saith the LORD: I am full of the burnt offerings of rams, and the fat of fed beasts; and I delight not in the blood of bullocks, or of lambs, or of he goats.

12 When ye come to appear before me, who hath required this at your hand, to tread my courts?

13 Bring no more vain oblations; incense is an abomination unto me; the new moons and sabbaths, the calling of assemblies, I cannot away with; [it is] in-

iquity, even the solemn meeting.

14 Your new moons and your appointed feasts my soul hateth: they are a trouble unto me; I am weary to bear [them].”.

God never rejected Israel’s obedience of His Law, however, when that obedience was based upon their particular point of view He became upset because He never accepts contradictions to His will. His Law must be obeyed exactly as He gave it, without removing, adding or modifying elements whatsoever. God never allow men quotas to revise what He has established.

God’s voice through Isaiah clearly exposed the people transgressions on how the solemnities had to be obeyed, that’s why, instead of “my solemnities” He says “your solemnities”, “your Sabbaths”, “your appointed feasts”, and “*who has asked this of you*” delivering with those words a sense of reproach to their failings not following all the steps showed by the Law.

God’s reproach is a warning message: —Absolute obedience or nothing. Absolute obedience or punishment.

Through the prophet Amos 5:21 God says:

“I hate, I despise your feast days, and I will not smell in your solemn assemblies.”.

As a preamble of what would come, both Isaiah and Amos declared bad news for Israel. The day came when Jerusalem was invaded by the Chaldeans, the Temple destroyed and many people was carried away to Babylon.

Seventy years under captivity was the punishment for their wrong attitude.

After those seventy years in captivity the people went back to their homeland to rebuild the city and the Temple. When the rebuilding was concluded the people was called to have an assembly to listen the same Law they had broken seventy years ago —and they were cut to the heart and cry. It seemed they were ready to obey, however, the struggles they went through in their own land after the captivity shows that the relations between God and them would never be the same. The post-captivity years clearly show progressive deterioration of their obedience, the violations increased. God’s words through Jeremiah 31:31-34 pointed out to the end of the Sinai’s covenant. A new covenant should be made at the appointed time.

In the new covenant the children of Israel would no longer be justified by the Law but by Jesus Christ apart from the deeds of the law (Romans 3:28). This meant no more circumcision, no more justification by observing solemnities, no more day of atonement.

Feasts in the New Testament (Acts 20:16)

“For Paul had determined to sail by Ephesus, because he would not spend the time in Asia: for he hasted, if it were possible for him, to be at Jerusalem the day of Pentecost.”.

This verse clearly shows Paul’s determination to go back from Ephesus to Jerusalem because his purpose was to be present, at least, in the last day of Pentecost. The question is: Does Paul’s purpose was to arrive on time to participate in the celebration? The answer is no.

The rendering made by Luke (the writer of Acts) was not intended to suggest that Paul wanted to obey that feast, otherwise, he should be present in Israel from the beginning of the feast to the end. The Law requires complete obedi-

ence to every single aspect involved in every feast, from the first day to the last. He knew that.

This clearly shows that Paul was not interested in participating in that celebration, but rather to preach the gospel to the large amount of Jews gathered in Jerusalem.

Paul was not constrained to arrive on time in the last day of the Feast of Weeks; the verse says: “*for he was hurrying to be at Jerusalem, if possible, on the Day of Pentecost*”. The words “if possible” declares no submission to any feast.

In 1 Corinthians 16:8-9 he explains the real purpose of his visit to Jerusalem: *But I will tarry at Ephesus until Pentecost. For a great door and effectual is opened unto me, and [there are] many adversaries.”.*

Unleavened bread (Acts 20:6)

“And we sailed away from Philippi after the days of unleavened bread, and came unto them to Troas in five days; where we abode seven days.”.

Did Paul participate in the feast of Unleavened Bread at Phillipi? In order to arrive to the right conclusion the Law provides information how this festivity must be celebrated. Let’s take a look to Deuteronomy 16:16

“Three times in a year shall all thy males appear before the LORD thy God in the place which he shall choose; in the feast of unleavened bread, and in the feast of weeks, and in the feast of tabernacles: and they shall not appear before the LORD empty.”.

The celebration of the Unleavened Bread was not complete if men were absent from the Temple, any breaking of the Law was punished. As Acts 20:6 shows, Paul was not in Jerusalem with the offering ordered by the Law, he was at Phillipi; this clearly shows he did not celebrate the festivity. As Pharisee as he was, Paul knew very well every requirement of the Law and the consequences against the transgressors. Obviously, he did not celebrate the Unleavened Bread. He was not under ritual feasts.

Colossians 2: 14-16

“Blotting out the handwriting of ordinances that was against us, which was contrary to us, and took it out of the way, nailing it to his cross;

[And] having spoiled principalities and powers, he made a shew of them openly, triumphing over them in it.

Let no man therefore judge you in meat, or in drink, or in respect of an holyday, or of the new moon, or of the sabbath [days].”.

The Law was given by God to make Israel holy, spotless and in high level of sanctification. Thus, for every transgression the Law established the sacrifice the transgressor had to offer in the Temple; any failing was severely punished by God.

How often the transgressor had to go to the Temple in Jerusalem to present the sacrifices? That was not the matter. How far from the Temple the transgressor lived? That also was not the matter; the Law must be obeyed without hesitation or delays, at the appointed time the Israelite had to be present at the Temple carrying the offering.

Distance and frequency was a real problem because no consideration was included in the sense of not all Israelites lived near Jerusalem; even if they were willing to obey, these two aspects challenged their obedience. That’s why

Peter called that *“a yoke on the neck... which neither our fathers nor we were able to bear”*.

While Israel, living in their own land struggled to obey, reasonable is understand how much difficult for the gentiles that obedience could be, and it is easy to conclude that living hundred (or even thousands) of miles away from Israel that obedience could be easily classified as impossible.

Apostle Paul called those impossibilities *“the handwriting of requirements that was against us”*.

That was the reason for Jesus Christ to come to Earth bringing the new covenant. God no only love the Israelites but the whole world, to demonstrate that, He sent His Son to remove *“the handwriting of requirements”* in order to make easy the salvation to the gentiles, so they can worship God anywhere, without having Jerusalem as the center. No more sacrifices of animals for justification; no solemnities to observe, after all, those feasts were given to Israel purposely, a purpose in no manner regarded to the gentiles.

Paul said: *“Let no man therefore judge you in meat, or in drink, or in respect of an holyday, or of the new moon, or of the sabbath [days].”*. Those referred by Paul as *“judges”* were men who having been converted to Christ continued believing in the circumcision and in the observance of festive days.

Sabbath or sabbaths?

The sabbath (singular) in Colossians 2:16 might suggest a reference to the seventh day of the week. In that sense it could be read in the Strong's Concordance:

“Of Hebrew origin [H7676]; the Sabbath (that is, Shabbath), or day of weekly repose from secular avocations (also the observance or institution itself); by extension a se'nnight, that is, the interval between two Sabbaths; likewise the plural in all the above applications: - sabbath (day), week.”

Although the Sabbath is presented in singular it is no clear why this famous concordance says *“likewise the plural in all the above applications”*. What these words are intended to mean? Could Colossians 2:16 be taken not only in singular sense but also in plural?

There are many Bibles where the translation has been made in singular, in that sense it could be a reference to the Sabbath. However, the question is: Was the Sabbath,

seventh day of the week, originally written in that *“handwriting of requirements”*? The answer is no. The Sabbath, seventh day of the week was written by God as the Fourth Commandment. And it was made for mankind as the Lord says in Mark 2:27; but the sabbaths came to exist after the Sabbath, and they were given as solemnities for Israel.

Other Bibles translate that word in plural, some of them are:

The New Living Version, The Young's Literal Translation, The Darby Translation, The New International Reader's Version.

(The reasons why some versions render sabbath while other versions render sabbaths is not a subject in this study).

Remarkably, the Greek word σαββατων in Colossians 2:16 is not singular but plural; therefore, its meaning is plural (sabbaths); in accordance to this some Bible commentaries explain the plural word as a reference to the solemnities (i. e. James, Fausset and Brown, Adam Clarke, Robertson's Word Pictures).

Conclusion

Between the Sabbath and the sabbaths there is a meaning worth to pay attention, The feasts of the Lord were given to Israel.

Sabbath is the Fourth Commandment, it was established in behalf of men as our Lord says in Mark 2:27; to obey it is not required to perform those sacrifices ordered in the old covenant to the Israelites.

Although it is believed that the Sabbath was given to Israel exclusively, the Lord says it was made for men in a time when no Jewish or gentiles existed.

A notable truth that Sabbath was not abolished by Christ are His own words rendered in Matthew 24:20: *“But pray ye that your flight be not in the winter, neither on the sabbath day.”*

These words allude to those days when Jerusalem was destroyed by the Romans in 70 A.D., which are almost forty years since the Lord pronounced them to His disciples prior to his crucifixion. If as believed that the observance of the Sabbath was finished on the Cross, the question is: Why the Lord made that recommendation to His people? A clear reasoning shows Jesus Christ did not abolish the observance of the seventh day of the week.

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