

7th Day Rest E6 Final

The Seven Festivals

Podcast Date: November 18, 2019

(67.23)

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The Seven Festivals

Jon: Hey, this is Jon at The Bible Project. Today on the podcast, we continue a series on the theme of seventh-day rest. God created the cosmos in six days, and on the seventh day, He stopped and He settled into His creation to rest and rule with his human partners in a day that has no end. The seventh-day rest is what we all long for and it's what God promises to recreate.

To start this recreation project, He chooses one family, the family of Abraham, and He wants to give them the rest that was lost and let them bring that rest to the whole world. Today, on this episode, we're going to look at Israel's sacred days, their feasts and festivals. And surprise, there are seven of them.

Tim: What we're going to see is that Israel's ritual calendar on a yearly basis and then on a seven-year cycle, and then on a seven times seven year cycle, these are all ways that Israel is to reenact and symbolize this same basic storyline.

Jon: That is the story of God's desire to partner with humans to bring creation to a state of rest. Thanks for joining us. Here we go.

We're talking about the Sabbath or are we talking about the Sabbath?

Tim: The Sabbath is one of the things we're talking about. It's one of the ways...

Jon: It's the way we got into the conversation.

Tim: ...that the ideal of the seventh-day is talked about in the Bible. But there are many other stories and things and whatever time periods of seven that point to the same idea.

Jon: Seventh-day, the day of completeness.

Tim: The day of completeness when creation is filled with God's presence and power, when creation response by generating abundance, and humanity can rest and rule in God's presence and trust that everything's going to be okay.

Jon: That's Genesis 1 and 2 ideal that was never fully realized. It's the taste of it.

Tim: It's the last opportunity. Yeah, that's right.

Jon: This blessing of the seventh-day was then offered to Abraham who then...

Tim: In a seven-line poem...

The Seven Festivals

Jon: And Abraham's family ends up as slaves in Egypt - not seventh-day rest.

Tim: No, no.

Jon: Slavery and oppression, and death, and disorder - back to darkness and disorder.

Tim: In this case, it's the powers, the Gods of Egypt and Pharaoh together, bringing death and darkness onto the family of Abraham. Just like in Genesis 1, God brought life and order out of the dead darkness in 10 words, 10 acts of speaking, in the Exodus God speaks 10 acts of judgment on to Egypt and Pharaoh and it's gods.

Jon: And He brings them out of darkness.

Tim: Yes. And the 10th, all begins at night. It's as if the 10 words uncreate or decrease Egypt back to the dark night of death and then God provides light. He starts redoing Genesis 1 but just for the family of Israel.

Jon: Then Israel now is in the wilderness and they...

Tim: He gives them light and takes them through the waters to the dry land.

Jon: We're supposed to be seeing all this Genesis 1 replay.

Tim: Correct. You're like, "Oh, this family's on the way to a new Sabbath rest and a new Eden."

Jon: A new seventh-day.

Tim: Correct.

Jon: And God says, "I've got a land for you and it's going to be abundant." And so we're like, "Yes, the seventh-day rest. We're going to get back." Abraham's family's going to be there. He's going to show the world what it's like to rest and reign with God. To get there they have to go through the wilderness. On the way they're provided with manna.

Tim: A bread from heaven.

Jon: A bread from heaven.

Tim: Bread from the sky.

Jon: Sky bread. Desert flakes. Remind me how that take the Sabbath.

The Seven Festivals

Tim: Well, they are grumbling because like, "We don't have any meat or bread and you brought us out here to kill us in the wilderness - the realm of death."

Jon: And God instructs them to take this abundant sky bread and pick it up every day (day one, day two, day three, day four, day five, day six).

Tim: In the morning. In the morning it appears.

Jon: And on day six to take twice as much so that on day seven, they don't have to work. They can just rely on the overabundance.

Tim: Yes, the seventh day becomes the day where they imitate God's rest. But that imitation is itself a test of loyalty and trust, where they trust that God has packed creation with enough abundance for them that they can just rest and enjoy it even while they're in the wilderness as a band of escaped immigrant slaves. Just like, "Chill out in your tents for a day instead of getting another 10 miles."

Jon: Oh, they are not even supposed to match? They're not even supposed to be journeying?

Tim: Oh, that's a good point. The point is not gather. It doesn't say, "don't travel." But yeah, don't gather food.

Jon: But they're not gathering food.

Tim: They're not gathering food.

Jon: And this is before there's any sort of Sabbath law.

Tim: Correct.

Jon: So this pattern is already present.

Tim: That's right.

Jon: Resting on the seventh day as a way to imitate what God did. But they call it a test. Moses call it a test or God calls it a test?

Tim: God calls it a test. Because they've actually already had two collusions before this story where they're grumbling. In Exodus 15, three days after the exodus event, the parting of the seas, three days afterwards, they didn't find any water. Then they did find some and it was bitter. And so they grumbled against Moses, "What are we supposed to drink?" So they're already there little three days.

Jon: I get thirsty in three days.

The Seven Festivals

- Tim: Well, you do. Yeah, that's right. That's right. But the point is, is as readers we're supposed to view this as kind of like, "Oh, this doesn't bode well." These people just saw the 10 plagues and the waters parted and now they think God's going brought them out here to kill them? That's crazy.
- Jon: Dehydrate them to death. So can you trust that will be enough and that you can rest and trust God's provision?
- Tim: The seventh-day is the day to trust in God's abundant provision even when my circumstances tell the opposite story.
- Jon: And then it gets really fascinating because Moses is called up Mount Sinai. He goes up there. And he's up there for?
- Tim: Well, he's told to go up and he wait six days. And then on the seventh day...
- Jon: God comes and rests.
- Tim: Yes, the glory cloud rests.
- Jon: And Moses see something.
- Tim: He sees up into the heavenly throne.
- Jon: He sees what it's like for God's presence and reigns to be in it. God gives him instructions...
- Tim: A pattern.
- Jon: He calls it a pattern?
- Tim: He's shown a pattern based on what he has seen up in the heaven.
- Jon: And what that is, is blueprints for the tabernacle. So Moses comes down with...And the Ten Commandments, that's the same time, right?
- Tim: No, he's already come down with those in chapter 24.
- Jon: Oh, this is a separate journey.
- Tim: Correct. And then they had this covenant ceremony and they said, "Yes, we're going to do all this." Then god says...after they get married - this is the marriage ceremony covenant - after God and Israel get married, then again, God says, "Come up here. I want to move in. You just got married, I'm going to move in with my people."

The Seven Festivals

- Jon: There's two trips up the mountain?
- Tim: There's actually seven.
- Jon: They're seven trips up the mountain
- Tim: Between Exodus 19 and Exodus 24, Moses goes up and down the mountain seven times.
- Jon: Of course, he does. That's awesome. But on the second, he's gets the blueprints?
- Tim: On the seventh, he gets the blueprints.
- Jon: Oh, so we're skipping a lot of territories.
- Tim: Oh, yeah. I'm not pointing out all the sevens as we go. It would be too much. It's like the matrix.
- Jon: He's been up and down seven times at this point?
- Tim: If you count it.
- Jon: Really?
- Tim: Yeah. It's actually fairly complicated. It's the thing going on. He gets a lot of exercises. Moses was fit.
- Jon: He's got some quads. He gets the pattern, comes down, and the pattern is delivered. And he says, "Here's how you're going to build the tabernacle." And it's in a series of seven words.
- Tim: Seven speeches. Seven speeches of God.
- Jon: Seven speeches is the instructions. And the last one isn't about how to build a tabernacle. It's about resting on the Sabbath.
- Tim: That's right.
- Jon: Then what happens right after that?
- Tim: Then the golden calf story. Even think how it's following the arc of Genesis 1-3, where you get the blueprints of heaven on earth in a series of seven speeches. The seventh one is about resting on the seventh day to imitate God. That's the seventh thing Moses hears. Then the camera pans down to the camp where the people are.
- Jon: And they're worshiping another god.

The Seven Festivals

Tim: Yeah. And they say, "Where's this Moses? Make god for us?" Aaron sees and then he takes the gold and he makes the golden calf.

Jon: All the Genesis 3 vocabulary it's there taking the tree of knowledge of good and evil moment.

Tim: Correct. That's right.

Jon: Then they build the tabernacle according to the blueprint?

Tim: Then the covenant is almost broken, but then Moses intercedes, God forgives the people and says he'll forgive them and go with them. Then Moses starts the building project.

Jon: Again, seven times it repeats.

Tim: You get this long narrative that repeats verbatim the blueprints, but just with verbs now of "and they built the ark this way. And they built..." Then we get to Exodus 39 and 40, there's this paragraph where Moses assembles everything. The paragraph is broken into seven beats, and every beat ends with "and Moses did just as the Lord commanded him." So he obey seven times over the word of the Lord.

After the seventh act of obedience, the glory cloud shows up. Moses finished the work after the seventh act of obedience. This is what it says. Exodus 40:33 "and Moses finished the work." Just like Genesis 2 "and God completed His work." Then right in the slot parallel to Genesis 2 where God rested, here in Exodus, the cloud covers over the tent and the glory of the Lord appears over it in the pillar of fire and cloud.

Jon: So here it is. It's God's seventh-day rest. It's come.

Tim: But dwelling in a symbolic micro Eden in the middle of His people.

Jon: Which is the tent.

Tim: Which is the tabernacle, yeah.

Jon: But there's a wrinkle.

Tim: Wrinkle, yes. That's right. Next to the last line of Exodus "and the cloud covered the Tent of Meeting and the glory of Yahweh filled the tabernacle. But Moses was not able to go into the tent of meeting." It's a tent for meeting with God. Just right there is stating it as a paradox.

Jon: Well, and this is representing the Eden ideal.

Tim: Correct.

The Seven Festivals

- Jon: Yes, of course, you would go in. God placed the humans there.
- Tim: Right now it's going to be only Moses and then later after he gets ordained, Aaron, to go in. So that already is kind of a bummer. Like only now a representative can go in. It's a diminishment of the Eden ideal. It's awesome.
- Jon: Eden ideal was all humanity would live there. You'd be born there.
- Tim: Humanity and life - Adam and Eve. Now it's just Moishe and Aharon, two brothers. It says, "Moses is not able to go into the tent because the cloud and the glory of Yahweh were dwelling over it." And you're like, "But that's exactly the point."
- Jon: "I want to go in there because he's dwelling in there." God's presence has created a problem.
- Tim: God's presence has created a problem for rebellious people who think that God is out to kill them and who make idolatrous golden calves.
- Jon: It's the same kind of motif then of like the cherubim guarding Eden. Like they can't get back in. Which in a sense if I'm outside, I can't get in.
- Tim: That's right. For the Eden ideal to be realized, God's People have to be transformed, which is what the book of Leviticus is all about. That's the transition into the Book of Leviticus. What we're going to do for this conversation is focusing on a couple more calendar seven themes in Leviticus that are hovering around the same ideas. But what we're going to see is that Israel's ritual calendar, on a yearly basis, and then on a seven-year cycle, and then on a seven time seven year cycle, these are all ways that Israel is to reenact and symbolize this same basic storyline. They've built it into every part of their lives.
- The drama of Leviticus is amazing. I highly recommend a book by Hebrew Bible scholar, Michael Morales - we'll put it in the show notes - called Who Shall Ascend the Mountain of the Lord, A biblical theology of the book of Leviticus. Dude, it's so awesome.
- Jon: It sounds riveting.
- Tim: It actually is if you like the Bible. So that works through a lot of stuff in Leviticus that we won't talk about. But what I want to talk about is the seventh year release of slaves and have debts in ancient Israel.
- Jon: Let's talk about that.
- Tim: Doesn't that sound riveting?

The Seven Festivals

Jon: We already know about the seven-day weekly cycle, correct, and it's one of the Ten Commandments.

Tim: Correct.

Jon: There are two different times the Ten Commandments are talked about, and what it says because God created the earth this way, rest on the seventh day. But also in the other time, it's talked about, it says, "Because you were slaves, and you were liberated. And because of that, rest and trust God, and let your slaves rest."

Tim: You got it. So yeah, watch how this all folds together in seventh-year command.

[00:16:33]

Tim: The first time this seven-year release gets expressed is actually back at Mount Sinai during the covenant-making ceremony. Remember there were the Ten Commandments and then 42 more after that, and those are the terms of the marriage covenant between God and...

Jon: Forty two six times seven.

Tim: That's right. One of the commands...

Jon: One of the 42?

Tim: One of the 42 is this law right here in Exodus 23:9. "You shall not oppress the immigrant since you yourselves know the life of the immigrant. The Hebrew word is nephesh. You know the being, what it means to be an immigrant for you were immigrants in the land of Egypt. Six years you shall sow seed in your land, and gather in its yield." So six, agricultural cycles. "But in the seventh year, release the land. Leave it alone."

Jon: Release the land.

Tim: Yes, release it.

Jon: Like the land is under bondage - under slavery.

Tim: It is "you are working." Remember the word for "work" and "labor" is the same Hebrew words for "slave." So when you're working the ground, you're making it serve you. That's true.

Jon: Ground's like, "I just want to chill out and make garden flowers, meadow flowers."

The Seven Festivals

Tim: And humans are like, "No, you're going to make cucumber." That's subduing the land.

Jon: "Nope you're a pumpkin batch."

Tim: You make it serve your will. "Once every seven years, at the seventh year, set the land free." And think, this follows just after the command of "don't oppress the immigrant. Because you were immigrants in Egypt you know what it's like to be slaves." That's the whole point. Then the next law is...

Jon: Don't oppress the land.

Tim: Yeah. "You know what it's like to be a slave, you know what's like to be a freed slave, so every seventh year, free the land from being a slave to you."

Jon: Interesting.

Tim: Here's the reason. So that the needy of your people may eat. And whatever they leave the beast of the field can eat. You're to do the same...

Jon: Because it's still going to grow stuff even if you haven't thrown seeds in.

Tim: That's right. That's right. Notice for man and beast to eat, you've got these farm fields and the poor can come earn a living off of it, can come provide for themselves but also the animals.

Jon: Would it have been everyone's on the same cycle or it's seventh year of any given plow land?

Tim: Welcome to the rabbit hole. One is, if this is everybody doing on the same time, then that could pose some problems.

Jon: It would pose some problems.

Tim: It could be that it's understood that when you acquire...You know, this is kind of like fallow, letting the land lie fallow. And so different fields will be on different time cycles and so on.

Jon: That's a farming thing to let your lands chill.

Tim: Correct. That's right. And so all the way back to the period of Jesus, Jewish rabbis have been debating these things. Whether this is like a more of a utopian vision. Everyone at the same seventh year or different farmers. And it doesn't clarify. But the point is, you can see the Eden ideal coming out here. Every seventh year...

The Seven Festivals

Jon: Let the land produce on its own.

Tim: ...you let the land produce and just trust that it will produce for you by God's generosity and wisdom. In fact, it'll be enough for the poor and for the wild animals. It's the garden. It's the garden.

Jon: Now, if you really cared about the poor and the wild animals, why don't you just plant some seed in there? Because then you'll have more.

Tim: That's a great point. Here we're looking at the paragraph.

Jon: I think I said about the Eden ideal, which is you don't work for it, and it'll still be abundant.

Tim: Let's finish the paragraph. We're only halfway through it.

Jon: All right.

Tim: First statement was "don't oppress immigrants because you used to be enslaved as an immigrant." "Six years, so seed, seventh year released the land, so that the needy can eat and the wild animals. Six days you're to do your work, but on the seventh day you shall Shabbat so that your ox and your donkey may nuakh." Those are two words there. Shabbat and nuakh. And so that as you cease and rest on the seventh day, the son of your female slave, as well as the immigrants among you, may refresh themselves. And the word "refresh" is the verb "naphash" that comes from the noun "nepshesh" - to be alive, to have life.

This is actually a beautiful little cemetery, this paragraph here, but you can see how the six years of sowing is parallel to the six days of working. The seventh-year freeing the land is parallel to seventh-day you ceasing and resting but also so that the poor the immigrant and the slave may also rest along with you. The whole package deal, Sabbath rest is a...it's like a little Eden reset. Every seven days and every seven years.

Jon: Eden reset.

Tim: It's like resetting the land to the life of Eden for a day every seven days and then...

[crosstalk 00:22:01]

Jon: Because in the life of Eden, you're not working, you're letting the land just provide for you.

Tim: Well, that's a great point. You're not supposed to sow and gather. Oh, and this is also picking up the manna pattern as well.

The Seven Festivals

- Jon: Right. "Don't pick up the manna."
- Tim: Six days you go out and gather, and seventh you don't.
- Jon: This goes back to what we talked about. Because when humans replace the garden, there's hope to work and serve.
- Tim: To work and to keep the garden. Interesting.
- Jon: But here it's very clearly like "don't." It doesn't say, "Don't work." It just say, "don't sow and gather."
- Tim: Yeah, that's it. You release the land by not sewing and not gathering. That's the majority of the work.
- Jon: That is the majority of the work. There's something about Eden in which you don't have to really work for it. It just kind of happens.
- Tim: The land responds happily. The land isn't your slave in Eden.
- Jon: Interesting.
- Tim: To me, that's what's fascinating is the land is freed from serving you.
- Jon: But in its freedom, it does have an abundance for you. It's a different relationship with the land.
- Tim: This is a great example of how later cycles of a design pattern give you new insight to go back to the beginning and to think about in the first instance of the pattern. This happens a lot. It's like a backwards kind of commentary or reflection. This is interesting. It's not bad that God's given us the land to serve our needs, but the land is also not ours. It doesn't belong to me. It's not my property. It's on loan, and so I free it. I set it free every sense.
- Jon: That is this ideal where the land is free, but it still provides for you. And not just for you, but for the poor and for the animals. Everyone's being provided for.
- Tim: That's right. In fact, that's analogous to the Sabbath rest where every seven days you let your animals and if you own slaves as a nation Israelite, then, you let them rest too. It's as if they're not your property for a day either.
- Jon: There's something similar there too, which is like in your rest, there still will be enough and abundant.

The Seven Festivals

Tim: Yeah, that's right. You'll all be provided for. I mean, people have noticed both in Exodus we'll look at another one, this seventh-year principle is a really radical equalizer in the life of ancient Israel. Which was a fairly patriarchal, traditional, hierarchical society, but the seventh day had a way of putting everybody on the same footing, including the animals and including the land.

Jon: Everyone gets to rest.

Tim: Yeah, that's right. Totally.

[00:25:38]

Tim: This, every seven years, gets repeated and carried forward in Deuteronomy. We're going to come back to Leviticus. Trust me. Deuteronomy chapter 15:1 "At the end of every seven years you shall grant a release." It's just a principle. Every seven years is a year of release. What does that involve? It involves two things.

One is, this is the manner of the release. Every lender shall release what he's loaned to his neighbor. He shall not take it back from his neighbor or his brother because it's Yahweh's release being proclaimed.

Jon: So if you owe someone money, forget it.

Tim: It's not yours anymore. Release from debt obligations.

Jon: Sign 30-year loans, don't offer them.

Tim: Let's go down to vs 12. That's a release from debt.

Jon: That's really radical.

Tim: But dude, there were some analogies to this in the ancient Near East. When a king who would come to be inaugurated, like in Babylon, both Babylon and I believe in Hittite culture, whatever, I mean, I've read this in background dictionaries and kind of thing, it was the king's prerogative in his opening year to claim what a release to free slaves or to cancel debts. What's radical is not that such a thing should happen; what's happening in ancient Israel is, is being freed from human control.

Jon: Like it's not up to just one king when it happens or if it happens.

Tim: It's not a political tool. I mean, it's pretty clear...

Jon: ...why you would do it.

Tim: You want to make everyone like you before you...

The Seven Festivals

Jon: You want a long reign.

Tim: Yeah, you want a long reign. You haven't had to break anybody's kneecaps yet. But you get 20 years into a reign and you've had to kill some competitors and make some hard decisions and made some enemies. But you can always say, "Remember what I did for you all when I became king? I canceled the debts." Here it's completely detached and it's brought into this seventh-day recall to Eden cycle. So it's detached from human manipulation. It's every seven years the debt's released.

Then you go down to vs 12, "Now if your kinsmen, a Hebrew man or woman, is sold to you, then the maximum you can serve as six years. And in the seventh year, you shall send him out." That verb "send out" is the key repeated motif in the exodus story. "Let my people go" means "let them be sent out. Let them go." And you get this. "When you set free your slave in the seventh year, don't send him or her away empty-handed. Furnish him liberally from your flock and threshing floor, from your wine vat. Give to him as Yahweh your God has blessed you. You shall remember you were a slave in the land of Egypt and Yahweh your God redeemed you, therefore I command you to do this day."

Every seventh year, both the land gets released. Now you have these cycles of every seventh year debts are released. Debts were a common way that people became slaves. I can't pay the debt, so then I become the property of the person who I owe something until I work it off. There's more laws and clarifications, like if you see the seventh year coming...Oh, sorry, we'll get to that later. Just the point here is every seven years people's property isn't really a property in terms of debts, and people's bodies are your property.

Jon: I mean, the assumption then is that owning slaves and owning debt obligations, these things are not the Eden ideal.

Tim: Yeah, that's right. Why else do you have to undo them? That's right.

Jon: So every seven years, it's just resetting to remember and to kind of get back closer to that Eden ideal so we don't get too far away from it. It's not like we're creating Eden on that seventh year, but we're trying to settle into it a little bit.

Tim: Ancient Israel was a hill country, mostly rural towns farming communities arranged in extended households of two to three generations. So you can see how in the course of a generation or two, few people go bankrupt, few people become debt slaves. In not very long, one or two families could own a whole town. The land and wealth could become centralized.

The Seven Festivals

People have noticed this, and it's a way of getting Israel...really this is resetting the ideal of when Israel first entered the land - every tribe given their own land - and it's a way of recreating, resetting the clock back to that. So it is. It's a completely different socio-economic situation than most modern economies today. I don't think you can just drop these immediately into a modern context. I think you have to really understand the principles at work. But it's recovering an ideal.

Jon: In the same way, there's something about the way that we work during the six days of work and the way that we treat land that isn't ideal either that we need a break from.

Tim: And the land needs a break from us.

Jon: We need a break from ourselves too.

Tim: Yeah, that's right. The daily grind inevitably produces non-ideal situations where a bad year of rain or something, a bad crop can't pay off my obligations for this year and all of a sudden, you know, through nobody's fault, I might have to sell some of my children, sell myself. Or somebody wrongs another person, you know, somebody moves your neighbor's boundary marker...They care a lot about the boundary markers in the Old Testament. Because that's like...

Jon: How you know.

Tim: Yeah. Then your land is how you provide for your family. So you steal like a 10 by 10 square from my farming field...

Jon: Kind of keeps shifting it over.

Tim: Yeah stuff like that. People steal and all that. And so every seven years you just reset to the Eden ideal. Life inevitably produces these inequities that need to be reset in seventh year.

Jon: So in the Eden ideal, not only are you not owning slaves, that make sense, not owning debt, that makes sense, but you're not working and you're not planting anything. That's just kind of seems like what are we going to do is sit around and play Monopoly Deal and read the Torah.

Tim: Yeah, that's right. Well, it's a good example of the Torah is giving us...

Jon: It's funny that I chose Monopoly. It's all about acquiring assets and enslaving people. So weird

Tim: This is a great example of how the Torah isn't the same thing as Israel's ancient constitution. An ancient constitution would require way more

The Seven Festivals

detail right about how to implement all of this. The author of the Torah, beginning with Moses, and then the prophetic scribes that follow him, they've arranged certain laws in the larger narrative thematic development of the storyline. I think for here, in this context, all these seven-year things are pointing us back to the narrative of the Garden of Eden. And we just have to speculate on the actual economic ramifications of what this meant for your average ancient Israelite. We're just not given that information.

Jon: Well, what it meant for the ancient Israelite, but I'm also thinking, what is it pointing to? What kind of Eden reality is it pointing to? And maybe we're just not supposed to try to obsess about that, but it's a new creation. It's still physical creation. I imagine it's going to be a lot like what we know. And so I'm just like, "Okay, there's going to be work to do. There's going to be projects." Or are we just going to be like...

Tim: Playing Monopoly.

Jon: Do you play Monopoly Deal though. That's pretty fun. It's a card game. That's what I meant to say.

Tim: Yes. Yes, I did. I like that even worse, even less. Here, I appreciate that you're asking that question. It'll come up again as we go further.

[00:35:18]

Tim: Back to Leviticus. Once God takes up residence in the tabernacle, Israel is now supposed to orient the whole of their lives around the reality of God's presence there. The sacrifice laws all come in Leviticus 1-7. It's how you say "thank you." It's how you say "I'm sorry." It's how you celebrate with your neighbors that God lives among you. Then you get the purity and impurity guidelines and the kosher food laws. These are ways of symbolically reinforcing the fact that the creator of life has come to your midst and death and corruption can't be in this midst. And God wants to change us into people who are free of death and corruption. That's the purity laws.

The last section of Leviticus in the 20s, the ritual calendar gets explored. This is specifically Leviticus 23, 24, 25 and 26. We're going to just do an overview here.

These aren't thrilling for most people to read, but once you ponder what's going on here, this is electric stuff, man. It is cool. Leviticus 23. You ready?

Jon: Ready.

The Seven Festivals

Tim: "Yahweh spoke again to Moses saying, 'speak to the sons of Israel and say to them, Yahweh's appointed times that you shall proclaim as holy meeting times.'" Con vocations is funny word. We don't really use. Holy convocations.

Jon: Sacred assemblies in NIV.

Tim: That's a little better. Sacred assemblies. "These are my appointed times." That word "appointed times" appears on page one of Genesis.

Jon: The day four?

Tim: Day four, yes. God says, "I will give the sun, moon, and the stars for signs and for appointed times."

Jon: These are the appointed times?

Tim: Here's the list of the seven appointed times in Leviticus 23. The first appointed time is the Sabbath. For six days, work may be done. On the seventh day, there's a complete Shabbat. It actually repeats the word Sabbath twice.

Jon: Sabbath Sabbath?

Tim: Yeah. It's Shabbat Shabbaton.

Jon: That's lost in translation.

Tim: What do you got here in NIV?

Jon: Sabbath rest.

Tim: Oh, a day of Sabbath rest. Well, there you go. Shabbat Shabbaton.

Jon: Shabbat Shabbaton. Stopping Sabbath.

Tim: Stopping, stopping. "Don't do any work" it is a Sabbath to Yahweh is the same in the NIV. So a Sabbath to Yahweh. It's an interesting phrase.

Jon: Stopping to Yahweh.

Tim: The "to" is indicating possession or belonging. It's a Sabbath that belongs to Yahweh. This is not your day. This day doesn't belong to you. So just like the debts and the slaves and the land, this day isn't yours to do what you want with. This is my day. It's going to be a key principle here. But you can see the analogy?

Jon: Yeah.

The Seven Festivals

Tim: Vs 4 then says, "These are the appointed times." You're like, "Wait, I thought, we just had the appointed times." This chapter opened by saying, "these are the appointed times." Then you get the Sabbath. And then vs 4 says, "These are the appointed times."

Jon: So something is literarily happening here.

Tim: Correct. The Sabbath, it's a little frame around the Sabbath. Think of the Sabbath as like the most basic Lego block. Like maybe the two by four.

Jon: That is the most basic.

Tim: Isn't it? Is it the two by two? The two by two Lego block?

Jon: The two by four. That's the workhorse Lego block. That's like if you want to build a castle, you're collecting as many of those two by fours as you can.

Tim: That's right. This whole chapter is going to be about the annual (the once a year) appointed time. But it begins with that every seven days because it's like the most basic building block. The rest of the list, which is going to be six more annual appointed times, are all going to be riffing off of the meaning of the Sabbath and the number seven. So it's going to take the Sabbath building block and then building all kinds of new Lego buildings out of them in different ways. It might help just to look at the list.

There are six appointed time wasted. times in the rest of the chapter divided into two groups of three. That sounds familiar. That sounds like days one through six of Genesis. And they're precisely the ones that come in the first six months - you get three - and then the one you get in the second six months of the year. So you're going to start with the first month, and then the second half of the year begins with the seventh month. That's convenient for you.

Jon: There's that number again.

Tim: There it is. The first one is Passover and Unleavened Bread.

Jon: And we talked a little bit about that.

Tim: That's right. Passover begins on the 14th (two times seven) but on the night of the 14th.

Jon: The night of the 14th. That's when the day starts.

Tim: That's right. And you're really playing Genesis 1:2. You begin at the night.

The Seven Festivals

- Jon: And there was evening and there was morning.
- Tim: Correct. That's right. Then after Passover, from the 15th to the 21st, you observe the Feast of Unleavened Bread for seven days.
- Jon: Passover is the meal on the evening of 14th, and then for seven days after that...so it's really an eight-day feast in a way.
- Tim: Total when you put the two together. Correct.
- Jon: But they're two separate...No, no, they are treated as one appointed time.
- Tim: They're always mentioned together. Passover is the night of the two times seven, 14th day of the first month and then you get a seven-day observance to follow.
- Next thing in the list here is simply called the first fruits. And in Leviticus 23 it's actually ambiguous. This begins in...
- Jon: Before we get to first fruit, unleavened bread, the feast, you're just eating unleavened bread for seven days? That's what you're doing?
- Tim: You can eat other things but no yeast in your bread. Actually, I have a whole thing of this in the notes and we didn't talk about it.
- Jon: I'm sure there's a lot of other traditions packed in those seven days.
- Tim: Yes, and especially as the holiday developed throughout Israelite Jewish history. But the main thing is you eat low quality bread.
- Jon: On the first day you hold a sacred assembly, do no regular work. And for seven days present a food offering to the Lord. So you do some offerings. On the seventh day, hold a sacred assembly and do no work.
- Tim: That's right.
- Jon: That was framed by Sabbath.
- Tim: The first day in the seventh day are extra special days.
- Jon: More stopping.
- Tim: Yeah, more stopping. You have to get calendars out to do this. It's always confusing to me. Because remember, all these sevens are tied to the moon cycle. This is all about the first of the month. Every month is about the moon cycle. These days float independently of a perpetual seven day Sabbath cycle, which is not based on sun or the moon.

The Seven Festivals

Jon: I was wondering about that. So the Passover meal itself might land on any random day.

Tim: Might, yeah. But every once in a while it will land on Sabbath like it does on passion week for Jesus, which is why...

Jon: That's probably extra special Passover.

Tim: Correct. Yeah, that's right. A year when the Passover overlaps with the seven day Sabbath is an extra special Passover. That's what the gospel authors highlight.

Jon: Oh, I didn't realize that. That's cool. So then the day after that, day of sacred assembly, you don't do any work. On that next would have been the Sunday.

Tim: Correct. We'll talk about that when we get to the Gospels.

[00:44:25]

Tim: The next one begins in Leviticus 23:9.

Jon: First fruits.

Tim: It says, "When you enter the land which I'm going to give you, and you reap the harvest, bring in the sheaf of the first fruits and show it to the priest. He's going to do the symbolic things with this. And do this the day after the Sabbath." Really unclear.

Jon: Which day.

Tim: Exactly. It doesn't say.

Jon: Which Sabbath. Well, I guess it's whenever the harvest starts.

Tim: Whenever the harvest starts. You go into your land and whenever the harvest comes?

Jon: Yeah.

Tim: That's right.

Jon: Basically if the harvest starts in like a Wednesday, then that next Sabbath, the after you're doing this.

Tim: Correct. That's right. That's a floating. But the point is is on the Sabbath of whatever the harvest is, you bring in the first fruits. Next one is

The Seven Festivals

Pentecost, which is after Passover and Unleavened Bread, you count seven Sabbaths.

Jon: After Passover and Unleavened Bread, you count seven Sabbaths. Okay.

Tim: Seven Sabbath. Seven times seven days, seven Sabbath.

Jon: We call those weeks.

Tim: We call them weeks.

Jon: Seven weeks. Seven Sabbaths.

Tim: Think, you're already going to have a Sabbaths. Seven times seven, the 49th day is going to be Sabbath. But then on the fifth day, you have an extra holy day where you do the same thing you did on the Sabbath, but you just carry it over for an extra day.

Jon: You get a double heaping of Sabbath.

Tim: Totally. That's right.

Jon: It sounds like a weekend. And you bring in now a whole bunch more of your harvest and you offer it to God as a thank you. Thank you. That's the first half of the year. And it's pretty stacked.

Jon: That's called the Festival of weeks.

Tim: Weeks. Because the word "weeks" in Hebrew is "seven."

Jon: It's really just a one-day thing.

Tim: Well, but it's named after...

Jon: The fact that you're counting weeks.

Tim: ...that you're counting seven sevens. The Greek name is Pentecoste, which is the Greek word for fifty. So it's named after the final day. The Hebrew name weeks is for the whole duration. All right.

Jon: First three, Passover. And then after that, it's a week of eating crackers. Unleavened bread. We eat unleavened bread.

Tim: Yeah, yeah.

Jon: It's the harvest one. Whenever the harvest happens, that next Sabbath, the day after that. And that one's called the first fruits. And then you count 50 days after the Passover...

The Seven Festivals

Tim: Seven times seven.

Jon: Seven times seven weeks. And then you have the day of weeks.

Tim: Or Pentecost.

Jon: Those happen all the first half of the year?

Tim: Correct. Correct. Now we're up to four in terms of our list of Leviticus 23.

[00:47:52]

Tim: The last three now happen in the second half of the year and they all happen in the seventh month.

Jon: They're all packed into the seven month.

Tim: In Jewish tradition today, they're called the days of awe and wonder because they're all packed into about two to three weeks. There's a lot of days off. Kind of the way that in the western religious calendar that Christmas and New Year's...

Jon: You get a lot of time off...

Tim: ...create this big block, this is that big block in the Jewish calendar. It's usually in October.

Jon: Man, I'd rather have a bunch of time off in the fall.

Tim: It's usually like mid-late October, early November.

Jon: Sounds great. And one of these you're like hanging out in a tent, right? That's the next one.

Tim: Yeah, totally. The first thing you do is on the first day of the seventh month, you blow trumpets to mark the beginning of the seventh month. It makes sense.

Jon: It's an important month.

Tim: This is what's now called Rosh Hashanah, which is the phrase that means "the head of the year." This is fascinating. The way the language for the year works, it seems like ancient Israelites conceived of their year as essentially...you know how we have like a financial year?

Jon: Fiscal year?

The Seven Festivals

Tim: Yeah. And then think, daylight savings is some other weird way of accounting for a year. It is based on old agricultural calendar when we set our clocks and do that kind of thing. Then we have our calendar year.

Jon: Solar year.

Tim: We have many overlapping different calendars in our minds.

Jon: Sure. School year.

Tim: Yeah, that's good. In a way, there's different overlapping calendars in the Hebrew Bible. Months are called different names based on different calendars. It's very confusing. This is an additional wrinkle that the language of the seventh month is talked about as if it's the first day of the new year. It says every six months you're conceiving of the next six months as the next year. If you think of your year in six-month blocks, then the seventh month is like a new beginning within the year. Anyway. Rosh Hashanah, the head of the year can...

Jon: It's a new year of sorts. But it's also the seventh month, so they understand that it's also not a new year.

Tim: Actually, think about this. In pre calendar cultures where, like, when you lived in blocks of weeks in your mind, like think the Sabbath is many people's way of accounting for time.

Jon: "How many Sabbaths ago did this happen?"

Tim: "How many sundowns ago was the Sabbath?" "Three." These days were the anchor. And then the rhythms of the harvest would be another way to anchor time. And so the first month and the seventh month are two big anchors. And then when you're in those, you're just in those other cycles, mostly in thinking about Sabbath cycles. It's the same year. Anyway, so Rosh Hashanah is on the seven month. That later became associated with the story of the giving of the Torah on analogy with the sound that the people heard when God's glory showed up on Mount Sinai. It says that they saw the sounds and heard them know when the cloud showed up. Today, it's associated with celebrating the giving of the Torah.

Jon: Rosh Hashanah. And that's the first day of the seventh month.

Tim: That's right. The 10th day of the seventh month is the Day of Atonement. That's the day with the purification offerings, the two goats. If you think of the Sabbath as a weekly reset to the Eden ideal, the Day of Atonement happening on the 10th day...Remember, 10 is key number in...

[crosstalk 00:51:53]

The Seven Festivals

Jon: Yeah, the 10 words.

Tim: The 10th words. The 10th day of the seventh month it's the day when Israel sins are all focused in on one goat that's exiled from the camp. It's as if we go back to being in a pristine, sinless state before God, at least for a few minutes.

Jon: It's clear in your browser history.

Tim: Yeah. Yeah, that's it. There it is. It's the Day of Atonement. Then on the 15th day of the seventh month begins a seven day Feast of Tabernacles. Here you relive the wilderness wanderings for seven days. Do you remember how unleavened bread lasted seven days too?

Jon: Yeah.

Tim: On unleavened bread, the first day and the seventh day were the special meetings.

Jon: They were like an extra Sabbath almost.

Tim: Correct. Tabernacles, every one of those seven days.

Jon: Yeah, don't do any work.

Tim: This is the culmination of the year. It's the seventh in the list of Tabernacles.

Jon: This one sounds the most fun to me out of all of them.

Tim: Tell me why.

Jon: Oh, you're not working for seven days. That's awesome. And then you're camping out in front of your house.

Tim: It's awesome.

Jon: Sounds great.

Tim: It's totally awesome. Yeah, I agree. I agree. So every day is like a Sabbath. Every day extra special offerings are being made. In the book of Numbers 28 and 29 just focusing on the special offerings for these seven days. You know, you're offering 77 bowls in the tabernacle, etc.

Going back to live in a tent, you have the sacred tent in the middle that's a little micro Eden. In the desert, they were given the bread of Eden to eat an extra bit for every seventh day. So the journey in the wilderness is

The Seven Festivals

the exact opposite of the garden. But the manna and then the tent in the wilderness...

Jon: The tabernacle or?

Tim: The tabernacle ...are these symbols that even in the wilderness God created Eden for them in the wilderness.

Jon: Eden can be found.

Tim: Eden can be found. Like the Psalm 107 will say, "He makes pools of water for the thirsty in the wilderness for answers." That's he created eaten in the wilderness. That's how they made it for 40 years. So for seven days a year, we party like we're in Eden in our own little sacred tent in our backyard. That's what the whole thing's about.

Jon: Cool.

Tim: It's totally cool. Have you camped in your backyard with kiddos?

Jon: Oh, no. We've we camped in our friend's backyard. We do it every year on Labor Day. And it's super fun. I've wanted to do it in my backyard, but when your beds right there, you just decide to sleep inside.

Tim: Totally. Sorry, I forgot this. The description of the tent in Leviticus 23 is - get this- "and you will take the fruit of a beautiful tree. The branches of a palm, the branches of a leafy tree,...

Jon: NIV says luxuriant tree.

Tim: ...the poplars of a tree by a river."

Jon: Get a river tree.

Tim: Yes. Make sure you get leaves from a beautiful tree by a river.

Jon: That's very specific.

Tim: And then party before Yahweh for seven days. That's like begging to be connected to the tree of life by the river of Eden. What else is that line doing there?

Jon: This festival makes me want to be Torah observant.

Tim: Here we go. I think this is coolest thing. We've been asked to make videos about feasts, I think we should really consider putting on the list. It would be fun to do.

The Seven Festivals

- Jon: It would be fun to do. It's easy. Well, now that we've gone through them, I just spent the time to go through them, I feel a lot more like, "Okay, cool. I got them downloaded." Before it was just this jumbled mess. I'll forget in another couple of week but...
- Tim: What's great is Leviticus 23 has organized it with you, organized it for you in a Genesis 1 type of pattern.
- Jon: Yeah, two sets of three.
- Tim: Two sets of three.
- Jon: With the seventh-day rest.
- Tim: Headed by the seventh-day rest. It's the first half of the year. The second half we're all in the seventh month. every one of them is connected to seven in some way - first day of the seventh month.
- Jon: All of these festivals, you've said this, they're all trying and helping us reconnect with this ideal of resting and resting reigning with God in a complete and full and abundant way.
- Tim: Yeah. On all of these, the reason why you set them apart is because they are special days where you bring special offerings. You go to the temple and offer your offerings there. For three of them, Passover, weeks, and tabernacles, once Israel came into the land and had a centralized temple, for those three, all the males were supposed to make a pilgrimage every year. These were moments where you go meet with God at the symbolic Eden at the center of the land, or at the center of the camp. That's what it's all about.
- Jon: Did you experience all of these festivals when you were in Jerusalem for that year?
- Tim: Yeah. We were there for calendar year. It was awesome.
- Jon: That's cool.
- Tim: And often inconvenient.
- Jon: Yeah, that's the point. Like during unleavened bread, there was whole sections of observant grocery stores. Anything that had a certain basically gluten or yeast, they would take butcher paper and just rap whole aisles.
- Jon: Like when you're painting or something?

The Seven Festivals

Tim: Yeah. Like when maybe like removing lead paint from a house and they'll wrap it in plastic? They would do that the whole aisles.

Jon: They didn't want any yeast to sneak out.

Tim: Yeah.

Jon: It's awesome. And as you're doing that, you should be remembering we're hoping for an ideal...

Tim: That's right. The whole point is you inconvenience yourself to symbolically remind you of your real hope - of your hope that our work a day, grinding it out isn't all there is, but God has a purpose for all of history to culminate in the hope of the seventh-day rest. We are actually meant to get a little foretaste of it in all of these rituals, symbolic days of rest. Which isn't just every seven days. Now, you look at this calendar and you're like, "Dude." You're working out this ideal most of the year.

Jon: You have to plan your whole year round it.

Tim: Totally. We can land the plane with this. There's a rabbinic work of a rabbi called Rabbi Eliezer. It's from like the third century AD, though he lived a little bit earlier. But he has the same saying about the Sabbath. He says, "The Holy One, blessed be He, created seven ages. And of all of them, He chose the seventh age only. The six ages are for going in and coming out, therefore, war, and therefore peace, but the seventh age is entirely Shabbat and rest in eternal life."

Here's a rabbi whose, think, his life was shaped by this, and for him, this is all about celebrating the life of the age to come right here in the middle of the age of war and peace and going in and coming out.

Jon: He thinks of kind of reality before the seventh day just like...he calls it six ages.

Tim: Yeah, that's right.

Jon: That's interesting.

Tim: This is a well-worn motif and Jewish literature of this period of thinking all of creation is taking place in a 7,000-year structure.

Jon: All of creation is happening in a 7,000-year structure.

Tim: And a lot of it's been out of Psalm 90: "To you, a day is like a thousand years and thousand years is like a day."

Jon: So when he says ages, he's meaning millennia?

The Seven Festivals

- Tim: Well, you're right. He doesn't say millennia here. It's a related idea.
- Jon: Okay.
- Tim: But he thinks of six ages, six large units of time and the seventh that God has planned is. I like that. Entirely Shabbat and rest in eternal life. That's what the Sabbath reminds him of every seven days.
- Jon: That's nice to think about if your days are grueling. I mean, if this is like, "Man, I hate my job. It's backbreaking," it's just like, "Oh, everlasting rest." It sounds great. But after you've been on vacation for like a couple of weeks, you're kind of like, "I want to do some work. I'm ready to get something done."
- Tim: Yeah, I know that feeling.
- Jon: For some reason, entirely Sabbath rest in that life everlasting sounds a little boring to me.
- Tim: Well, sure. Isn't it interesting how our social location shapes how we think about things?
- Jon: Because if I was a farmer...
- Tim: If you're a farmer, you don't take vacations. Tabernacle is a vacation.
- Jon: That's true, you don't.
- Tim: You rest every seventh day, and you get tabernacles and the unleavened bread the first and the seventh day. I mean, this is your holiday calendar. You just read it. It's not that many days off except every seventh.
- Jon: And you're being forced to take those days off. You'd want to make sure that fields still taken care of.
- Tim: Oh, man, when I lived in Wisconsin, I went to school at UW, I met a lot of farmers or people who grew up on farms. It's like most of the state. And just to hear them talk about how from your earliest memories daily chores in the dark of morning with animals and out in cold, muddy fields every day. Every day. It never ends. I mean, I met people who were like, "My parents never took a vacation. What's a vacation?" It's a different life.
- Jon: Than everlasting rest.
- Tim: That's right. That's how we got started on this. In a way, if you have the privilege of taking a vacation, it is like a foretaste of the ultimate

The Seven Festivals

Sabbath. But a kind of Sabbath where you don't get bored because there's a whole new universe to cultivate and create within.

Jon: I mean, it's back to this image of land. That instead of being a farmer, and just this like grueling day in and day out up before the sun, making sure that it produces for you, it's land that is just producing. It's just happening. You're going to go out there and you're going to pick from it and you're going to cook some food and you're going to be doing quote-unquote, "work" and you probably got projects and stuff, but it won't feel like that grind of like, "How do I make this land produced for me. I'm breaking my back doing it."

Tim: That's right. This isn't biblical language but it's taking the image of in the seventh year you free, you release the land from serving you. It's imagining a way of existing where you work with the land instead of working the land.

Jon: Yeah. It's like this cooperation. It's almost like this friendship.

Tim: It doesn't have to serve you and you don't have to serve it. Remember you return to the dust by the sweat of your brow in Genesis 3?

Jon: Right. You're not a slave either.

Tim: You're not a slave. Which is an analogy to humans working with each other, right? Which is why you release debts and slaves every seven years. That's the same thing. Your fellow Israelite shouldn't in the ideal be your slave and you shouldn't be his. You work together and live together. So put that on analogy to the land itself. You work with the land.

Jon: "Okay land, what are you up to today? What should we do? I got some avocados? Awesome. Make some avocado toast." Oh, man, my dream is to have an avocado tree in my backyard. We don't have the habitat for it but...

Tim: We don't have the climate for it.

Jon: Oh, my goodness.

Tim: I mean, we pay for it but I eat avocados like I have an avocado tree. We consume a lot of avocados. They're really healthy and satisfying. Avocados are the fruit of Eden. Maybe that was the fruit. Who knows?

Jon: That's the Tree of Life is probably an avocado tree.

The Seven Festivals

Thanks for listening to this episode of The Bible Project podcast. We're continuing to collect questions for an ongoing question response that will accompany this series. If you have any questions, send them our way. Record yourself asking the question, keep it to around 20 seconds or so and let us know your name and where you're from. You can send those questions to info@jointhebibleproject.com.

Our theme music is by the band Tents. Today's show is produced by Dan Gummel. We're a nonprofit in Portland, Oregon. We make free resources to experience the Bible as a unified story that leads to Jesus. Thanks for being a part of this with us. All right, cool. Let's see here.

William: Hi, my name is William Murphy. I'm from Orlando, Florida. Let's see, I first heard about The Bible Project in 2017. I love every video that I've watched so far. I use the Bible project to help illuminate things that I don't quite understand and just get a reference for the Bible. My favorite thing about The Bible Project is the thing videos. My favorite video so far has been the one on justice. We believe that the Bible is a unified story that leads to Jesus. We're a crowdfunded project by people like me. Free videos, study notes, podcasts and more, you can find them at thebibleproject.com.