

ROSE GUIDE TO  
**THE FEASTS,**  
FESTIVALS AND FASTS  
**OF THE BIBLE**



**ROSE**  
PUBLISHING

Paul H. Wright, Editor

**HENDRICKSON**  
Publishing Group

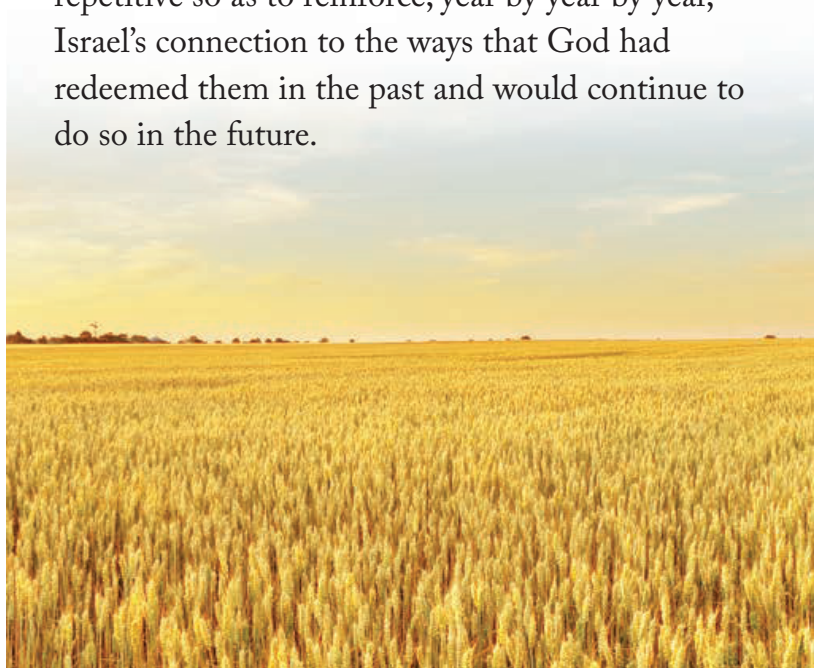
This free eChart is taken from the book *Rose Guide to the Feasts, Festivals and Fasts of the Bible* ISBN 9781649380210.  
God commanded Moses and the children of Israel to observe feasts and holy days as memorials to the great things that he had done in their lives. Understanding these times of celebration are important to help us better see God's complete picture and plan of redemption.

© 2023 Rose Publishing,LLC.



## PASSOVER, WEEKS, AND BOOTHS: THE GREAT FEASTS

The best-known biblical feasts are those that occur at regular intervals in the calendar. It is these which “run their round” (Isa. 29:1) that most forged Israel’s identity. Recurring moments reinforce memory everywhere, but especially within a worldview that sees the passage of time as cyclical rather than linear and that embraces the journey rather than the end, like ancient Israel. A cyclical calendar is relational: memory touches event touches memory touches event, so for an Israelite these feasts were associative rather than singular in character. That is, they were not once-and-done holidays celebrated differently each year (“Let’s do a destination Christmas this year, someplace where it’s warm and different”) but were intentionally repetitive so as to reinforce, year by year by year, Israel’s connection to the ways that God had redeemed them in the past and would continue to do so in the future.



The feasts were also accessible to everyone. The act of any given Israelite celebrating the same thing at the same time every year, either with his or her hearth-and-home group or at an appointed pilgrimage site far from home—along with countless others whom he or she didn't know and would otherwise never get to know—is strong glue binding individuals into a community, and a community into a people. Together, such feasts professed what Israel's relationship to God was—or at least what it could be. We have already met some of the strongest of these recurring feasts: the weekly Sabbath and, to a lesser extent, the new moon. But here, we will look at the feasts that “run their round” and have become the most familiar Jewish biblical feasts today. These three annual feasts can be called the “great feasts:”

- ✦ Passover (Pesach) with Unleavened Bread
- ✦ Feast of Weeks (Shavuot)
- ✦ Feast of Booths (Sukkot)

From all the evidence we have, it is clear that these feasts coincided in the calendar with the natural agricultural harvest celebrations of hearth and home observed in the land of ancient Israel. How this agricultural backdrop merged with portions of Israel's great founding story (the exodus, revelation at Mount Sinai, and wilderness wanderings) was a long drawn-out process that had only partially developed by the close of the Old Testament.

The books of Exodus, Leviticus, Numbers, and Deuteronomy provide many details about how the feasts were supposed to have been celebrated. We have already seen that what Israel did and what the prophets said the people should have done are two different things. In addition, when we carefully read the accounts of the feasts in the Torah, one of the first things we notice is how the feasts are described differently in each passage. In fact, some of these differences seem to be rather significant. (See the following charts for a detailed comparison.)

As we read these passages, we need to keep in mind that in spite of the details provided, we just don't have a clear picture of how the festivals were celebrated in the time of the Old Testament. As a result, what we as readers tend to do is to assume that they were celebrated then essentially the same way that they were celebrated in the time of the New Testament, a period from which we have a clearer view. This is understandable but not necessarily accurate; and it prompts us to read carefully, form conclusions humbly, and sometimes allow ourselves to admit, “I just don't know.” That being said, we can still make some helpful observations about Israel's three great pilgrimage feasts from the information that we do have.

## 1. Dealing with Differences

These three feasts are mentioned frequently in the Torah, in what we usually think of as the Bible's legal material (the word *Torah* actually means “instruction”). So it's not surprising that they became ancient Israel's most important annual feasts. But each time one of these feasts is mentioned in the Torah, the instructions about how to celebrate the feast are different. Bible scholars tend to take one of two approaches in dealing with these differences:

- ✦ One approach is to group all of the details into a single picture, producing a full or composite description of the ideal (or proper) way that Israel celebrated (or should have celebrated) each feast during the time of the Old Testament.<sup>49</sup>
- ✦ Another approach (and this is the majority view) is to assume that the differences indicate that the feasts developed slowly, over time, and among different sections of ancient Israel, coming to resemble the Jewish feasts that we know from the time of the New Testament only late in their history.<sup>50</sup>

We have already seen the gap between what Moses said *should* happen and what actually *did* happen in ancient Israel. Given the ethnic, cultural, and political diversity of the region in which Israel lived throughout the time of the Old Testament, we probably shouldn't expect the on-the-ground process by which these feasts became what we know them today to have been linear or even necessarily very intentional.

## 2. Grounded in Agriculture

A second observation is that each of these feasts coincides with a natural harvest season in the land of ancient Israel:

- ◆ Passover and Unleavened Bread at the beginning of the barley harvest (early spring)
- ◆ Feast of Weeks to mark the wheat harvest (late spring)
- ◆ Feast of Booths at the harvest of summer fruit (early autumn)

In their earliest mention in the Bible, Weeks was called the Feast of Harvest (Hag HaQatzir) and Booths, the Feast of Ingathering (Hag Ha'Asif; Ex. 23:16). We recall that *qatzir* and *asif* were the terms used in the Gezer calendar for the spring and autumn harvests, respectively. For this reason, some scholars have wondered if Passover and Unleavened Bread, two closely connected festivals, did not also have agricultural origins: Passover among shepherds (hence the emphasis on the lamb) and Unleavened Bread among farmers (emphasizing grain). Israel had deep roots in both livelihoods.<sup>51</sup> It is too much to say that Passover originated as an agricultural feast given the Bible's clear presentation of the Passover event in Egypt. At the same time, it is interesting that the first Passover took place at the same time as the beginning of the grain harvest in Israel. The exodus from Egypt and the start of the annual grain harvest season do have something in common: the start of a new, or renewed, life.



Shepherd tending her sheep in an olive grove between Jerusalem and Bethlehem. (Photo by Lindasj22/Shutterstock)

## Passover and Unleavened Bread

	Biblical Reference	What Was the Feast Called?	Why Was the Feast Held?	When Was the Feast Held?
#1	Ex. 12:1–27	The Lord’s Passover <i>Pesach l’Adonai</i> “a memorial day” <i>zikaron</i>  Feast of Unleavened Bread <i>Hag HaMatzot</i>  Days one and seven are a holy convocation ( <i>miqra qodesh</i> ).	To remember that the Lord “passed over” the houses of Israel when he caused the death of the first born in every house in Egypt, and to mark Israel’s exodus from Egypt	In the first month (“this month shall be for you the beginning of months”) Day 10: each family chose a lamb Day 14: the lamb was slaughtered at twilight Days 14–21: all Israel ate unleavened bread
#2	Ex. 23:14–17	Feast of Unleavened Bread <i>Hag HaMatzot</i>	To mark Israel’s exodus from Egypt	“For seven days at the appointed time [ <i>mo’ed</i> ] in the month of Abib”
#3	Ex. 34:18, 22–23, 25	Feast of Passover <i>Hag HaPesach</i> Feast of Unleavened Bread <i>Hag HaMatzot</i>	To mark Israel’s exodus from Egypt	For seven days “at the appointed time [ <i>mo’ed</i> ] in the month of Abib”
#4	Lev. 23:4–21; 33–44	The Lord’s Passover <i>Pesach l’Adonai</i>	Not mentioned	“In the first month, of the fourteenth day of the month, at twilight”
		Feast of Unleavened Bread <i>Hag HaMatzot</i>  All feasts in this passage are called appointed feasts of the Lord ( <i>mo’ed Adonai</i> ) and holy convocations ( <i>miqra’e qodesh</i> ).	“When you come into the land and reap its harvest”	“On the fifteenth day of the same month,” and for seven days  The first and last days are holy convocations.
#5	Num. 28:16–31; 29:12–38	The Lord’s Passover <i>Pesach l’Adonai</i>	Not mentioned	“On the fourteenth day of the first month”
		A feast ( <i>hag</i> ) with days one and seven as a holy convocation ( <i>miqra qodesh</i> )	Not mentioned	“On the fifteenth day of this month,” for seven days
#6	Deut. 16:1–17	Passover to the Lord <i>Pesach l’Adonai</i>	To mark Israel’s exodus from Egypt	“In the month of Abib”
		Feast of Unleavened Bread <i>Hag HaMatzot</i>	To mark that “you came out of the land of Egypt in haste”	For seven days The seventh day is a solemn assembly ( <i>atzara</i> ).

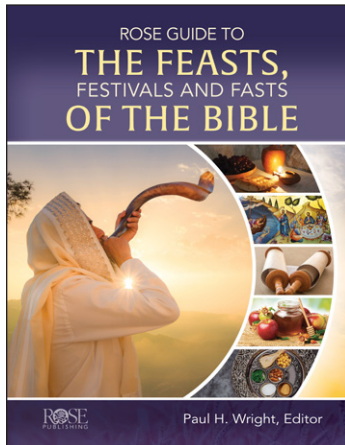
	Who Participated?	What Was Eaten or Included in the Feast?	What Was Sacrificed?	Where Was the Feast Held?
	"The whole assembly of the congregation of Israel"	Roasted lamb (sheep or goat) Unleavened bread Bitter herbs	Sacrifice of the Lord's Passover ( <i>zevach Pesach l'Adona</i> ) at twilight of day fourteen	Within family groups in Egypt
	"All your males"	Unleavened bread	Not mentioned	"Before the LORD your God"
	"All your males"	Unleavened bread	Sacrifice of the Feast of Passover ( <i>zevach Hag HaPesach</i> )	"Before the LORD your God"
	"The people of Israel"	Not mentioned	Food offering	"In all your dwelling places"
	"The people of Israel"	Unleavened bread	A sheaf ( <i>omer</i> ) of the firstfruits ( <i>reishit</i> ) of your harvest on the day after the Sabbath (Passover) Food offering Burnt offering Grain offering Drink offering	"In all your dwelling places"
	"The people of Israel"	Not mentioned	Food offering Burnt offering Grain offering Sin offering	Not mentioned
	"The people of Israel"	Unleavened bread	Food offering	Not mentioned
	"You"	The Passover lamb that was sacrificed, eaten for seven days	Passover sacrifice ( <i>zevach Pesach</i> )	"Not within any of your towns ... but at the place that the LORD will choose, to make his name dwell there"
	"You"	Unleavened bread, eaten for seven days	Not mentioned	

## Feast of Weeks

	Biblical Reference	What Was the Feast Called?	Why Was the Feast Was Held?	When Was the Feast Held?
#1	Ex. 12:1–27	The Feast of Weeks is not mentioned in this passage.		
#2	Ex. 23:14–17	Feast of Harvest <i>Hag HaQatzir</i>	To mark “the firstfruits [bikkurim] of your labor, of what you sow in the field”	Not mentioned
#3	Ex. 34:18, 22–23, 25	Feast of Weeks <i>Hag Shavuot</i>	To mark “the firstfruits [bikkurim] of the wheat harvest”	Not mentioned
#4	Lev. 23:4–21; 33–44	A specific name is not given, but all feasts in this passage are called appointed feasts of the Lord ( <i>mo’ede Adonai</i> ) and holy convocations ( <i>miqra’e qodesh</i> ).	To mark the wheat harvest, implied by “an offering of new grain”	“Seven full weeks from the day after the Sabbath” (that is, the day of Passover)
#5	Num. 28:16–31; 29:12–38	Feast of Weeks <i>Shavuot</i>  A holy convocation <i>miqra qodesh</i>	To mark the wheat harvest, implied by “an offering of new grain”	“On the day of firstfruits” ( <i>yom habikkurim</i> )
#6	Deut. 16:1–17	Feast of Weeks to the Lord <i>Hag Shavuot l’Adonai</i>	“Remember that you were a slave in Egypt”	“Seven weeks from the time the sickle is first put to the standing grain”

	Who Participated?	What Was Eaten or Included in the Feast?	What Was Sacrificed?	Where Was the Feast Held?
	"All your males"	Not mentioned	Not mentioned	"Before the LORD your God"
	"All your males"	Not mentioned	Not mentioned	"Before the LORD your God"
	"The people of Israel"	Not mentioned	Grain offering of loaves as firstfruits ( <i>bikkurim</i> ) Burnt offering Drink offering Peace offering	"In all your dwelling places"
	"The people of Israel"	Not mentioned	Grain offering Burnt offering Sin offering	Not mentioned
	"You, your son and your daughter, your male servant and your female servant, the Levite who is within your towns, the sojourner, the fatherless, and the widow who are among you"	Not mentioned, but told to rejoice	"The tribute of a freewill offering from your hand"	"At the place that the LORD your God will choose, to make his name dwell there"





 [Learn More](#)

## Rose Guide to the Feasts, Festivals and Fasts of the Bible

Packed with dozens of charts, maps, and timelines, over 150 illustrations and photographs, and easy-to-understand summaries, this full-color, reproducible book on the feasts and celebrations of the Bible will help you understand key information at a glance!

With all the ceremonies, festivals, and observances in the Bible, it's hard to keep track of them all and remember why they're important to our faith! But what if you could distill all this key information across dozens of chapters of the Bible into one solid, easy-to-read handbook with images, charts, and diagrams? It's never been easier to get an expert look at the traditions, fasts, and feasts of the Bible.

*Hardcover* .....978-1-64938-021-0 .....\$34.99

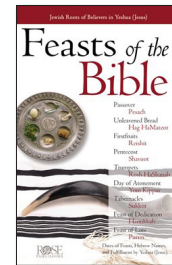


 [Learn More](#)

### Messiah in the Feasts of Israel

In this book, learn the details of each of the Feasts, their fulfillment in Messiah, and their implications for your life. Dive in for an in-depth and fascinating study that will deepen your understanding of God's Word as you see His plan in a whole new light.

*Softcover* ..... 978-0-97026-197-7 .....\$14.99

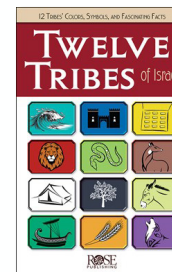


 [Learn More](#)

### Feasts of the Bible, Pamphlet

Throughout the Old Testament, God commanded the people of Israel to observe feasts and holy days (holidays) to remember the mighty things that He had done in the lives of Israel's ancestors. This full-color pamphlet celebrates and explains the meaning behind the biblical feasts and why they are important today.

*Pamphlet* ..... 978-1-89094-758-3 .....\$4.99



 [Learn More](#)

### Twelve Tribes, Pamphlet

Enjoy having a simple overview on the 12 Tribes of Israel at your fingertips. See each tribe's symbol, meaning, history, and other fascinating facts at a glance. Includes incredible visual aids, such as a full-color map, family tree, Tabernacle diagram, and more.

*Pamphlet* ..... 978-1-59636-916-0 .....\$4.99

**HENDRICKSON  
Publishing Group**

[www.hendricksonrose.com](http://www.hendricksonrose.com) | [csresponse@tyndale.com](mailto:csresponse@tyndale.com)  
or call 1-855-277-9400



**Money Back  
Guarantee!**

**ECPA**  
EVANGELICAL  
CHRISTIAN PUBLISHERS  
ASSOCIATION