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a *Grace Notes* course

## History II

### **The Temple**

*Its Ministry and Services as they were at the time of Christ*  
by Alfred Edersheim

**Lesson 10 – Chapter 10, Festive Cycles and Arrangement of the Calendar**

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### Instructions for Completing the Lesson

Begin each study session with prayer. It is the Holy Spirit who makes spiritual things discernable to Christians, so it is essential to be in fellowship with the Lord during Bible study.

#### Instructions

1. Read the lesson notes carefully.
  2. Look up and study each passage of the Bible that is mentioned.
  3. Complete the answers to the QUIZ and send your response to Grace Notes. The instructions for returning the Quiz are at the end of the lesson.
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## Chapter 10, Festive Cycles and Arrangement of the Calendar

### The Number Seven

The symbolical character which is to be traced in all the institutions of the Old Testament, appears also in the arrangement of its festive calendar. Whatever classification of the festivals may be proposed, one general characteristic pervades the whole. Unquestionably, the number seven marks in Scripture the sacred measurement of time. The Sabbath is the seventh of days; seven weeks after the commencement of the ecclesiastical year is the Feast of Pentecost; the seventh month is more sacred than the rest, its “firstborn” or “New Moon” being not only devoted to the Lord like those of the other months, but specially celebrated as the “Feast of Trumpets,” while three other festivals occur within its course--the Day of Atonement, the Feast of Tabernacles, and its Octave. Similarly, each seventh year is Sabbatical, and after seven times seven years comes that of Jubilee. Nor is this all. Seven days in the year may be designated as the most festive, since in them alone “no servile work” was to be done,<sup>1</sup> while on the so-called minor festivals (Moed Katon), that is, on the days following the first of the Passover week and of that of Tabernacles, the diminution of festive observances and of restrictions on labour marks their less sacred character.

### The Three Cycles

Besides this general division of time by the sacred number seven, certain general ideas probably underlay the festive cycles. Thus we may mark two, or else three, such cycles; the one commencing with the Paschal sacrifice and ending on the Day of Pentecost, to perpetuate the memory of Israel’s calling and wilderness life; the other, which occurs in the seventh month (of rest), marking Israel’s possession of the land and

<sup>1</sup> These are: the first and the seventh days of the ‘Feast of Unleavened Bread,’ Pentecost, New Year’s Day, the Day of Atonement, the first day of the Feast of Tabernacles, and its Octave.

grateful homage to Jehovah. From these two cycles the Day of Atonement may have to be distinguished, as intermediate between, applying to both, and yet possessing a character of its own, as Scripture calls it, “a Sabbath of Sabbatism,” in which not only “servile work,” but as on the weekly Sabbath, labour of any kind was prohibited.

In Hebrew two terms are employed--the one, Moed, or appointed meeting, applied to all festive seasons, including Sabbaths and New Moons; the other, Chag, from a root which means “to dance,” or “to be joyous,” applying exclusively to the three festivals of Easter, Pentecost, and Tabernacles, in which all males were to appear before the Lord in His sanctuary. If we might venture to render the general term Moadim by “trystings” of Jehovah with His people, the other would be intended to express the joyousness which was to be a leading characteristic of the “pilgrim-feasts.” Indeed, the Rabbis expressly mention these three as marking the great festivals: Reiyah, Chagigah, and Simchah; that is, presence, or appearance at Jerusalem; the appointed festive offerings of the worshippers, which are not to be confounded with the public sacrifices offered on these occasions in the name of the whole congregation; and joyousness, with which they connect the freewill offerings that each brought, as the Lord had blessed him, and which afterwards were shared with the poor, the desolate, and the Levite, in the joyous meal that followed the public services of the Temple.

To these general characteristics of the three great feasts we ought, perhaps, to add in regard to all festive seasons, that each was to be a “holy convocation,” or gathering for sacred purposes; the injunction of “rest” from “servile,” or else from all work; and, lastly, certain special sacrifices which were to be brought in the name of the whole congregation. Besides the Mosaic festivals, the Jews celebrated at the time of Christ two other feasts--that of Esther, or Purim, and that of the Dedication of the Temple, on its restoration by Judas the Maccabee. Certain minor observances, and the public fasts in memory of the great national calamities, will be noticed in the sequel. Private fasts would, of course, depend on

individuals, but the strict Pharisees were wont to fast every Monday and Thursday<sup>2</sup> during the weeks intervening between the Passover and Pentecost, and again, between the Feast of Tabernacles and that of the Dedication of the Temple. It is to this practice that the Pharisee in the parable refers (Luke 18:12) when boasting: “I fast twice in the week.”

### Three Annual Visits to Temple

The duty of appearing three times a year in the Temple applied to all male Israelites--bondsmen, the deaf, dumb, and lame, those whom sickness, infirmity, or age rendered incapable of going on foot up the mountain of the house, and, of course, all in a state of Levitical uncleanness, being excepted. In general, the duty of appearing before the Lord at the services of His house was deemed paramount. Here an important Rabbinical principle came in, which, although not expressed in Scripture, seems clearly founded upon it, that “a sacrifice could not be offered for any one unless he himself were present,” to present and to lay his hand upon it (Lev 1:3, 3:2,8).

It followed that, as the morning and evening sacrifices, and those on feast-days were purchased with money contributed by all, and offered on behalf of the whole congregation, all Israel should have attended these services. This was manifestly impossible, but to represent the people twenty-four courses of lay attendants were appointed, corresponding to those of the priests and the Levites. These were the “stationary men,” or “men of the station,” or “standing men,” from “their standing there in the Temple as Israel’s representatives.”

For clearness sake, we repeat that each of these “courses” had its “head,” and served for one week; those of the station on service, who did not appear in Jerusalem, meeting in a central synagogue of their district, and spending the time in fasting and prayer for their brethren. On the day before the

Sabbath, on the Sabbath itself, and on the day following, they did not fast, on account of the joy of the Sabbath. Each day they read a portion of Scripture, the first and second chapters of Genesis being for this purpose arranged into sections for the week. This practice, which tradition traced up to Samuel and David (Taan. iv. 2), was of ancient date. But the “men of the station” did not impose hands on either the morning or evening sacrifice, nor on any other public offering.

The only public offerings, with “imposition of hands,” were the scapegoat on the Day of Atonement, and the bullock when the congregation had sinned through ignorance.

Their duty was twofold: to represent all Israel in the services of the sanctuary, and to act as a sort of guide to those who had business in the Temple. Thus, at a certain part of the service, the head of the course brought up those who had come to make an atonement on being cleansed from any impurity, and ranged them along the “Gate of Nicanor,” in readiness for the ministry of the officiating priests. The “men of the station” were dispensed from attendance in the Temple on all occasions when the “Hallel” was chanted,\* possibly because the responses of the people when the hymn was sung showed that they needed no formal representatives.

### Difficulties of the Calendar

Hitherto we have not discussed the difficulties which those who intended to appear in Jerusalem at the feasts would experience from the want of any fixed calendar. As the year of the Hebrews was lunar, not solar, it consisted of only 354 days 8 hours 48” 38”. This, distributed among twelve months, would in the course of years have completely disordered the months, so that the first month, or Nisan (corresponding to the end of March or the beginning of April), in the middle of which the first ripe barley was to be presented to the Lord, might have fallen in the middle of winter.

Accordingly, the Sanhedrim appointed a Committee of three, of which the chief of the Sanhedrim was always president, and which, if not unanimous, might be increased to seven, when a majority of voices would suffice, to determine

<sup>2</sup> Because on a Thursday Moses had gone up to Mount Sinai, and came down on a Monday, when he received for the second time the Tables of the Law.

which year was to be made a leap-year by the insertion of a thirteenth month. Their resolution<sup>3</sup> was generally taken in the twelfth month (Adar), the additional, or thirteenth month (Ve-Adar), being inserted between the twelfth and the first.

A Sabbatical year could not be a leap-year, but that preceding it was always such. Sometimes two, but never three, leap-years succeeded each other. Commonly, every third year required the addition of a month. The mean duration of the Jewish month being 29 days 12 hours 44" 3 1/3", it required, during a period of nineteen years, the insertion of seven months to bring the lunar era in accordance with the Julian.

### The New Moon

And this brings up yet another difficulty. The Jews calculated the month according to the phases of the moon, each month consisting of either twenty-nine or thirty days, and beginning with the appearance of the new moon. But this opened a fresh field of uncertainty. It is quite true that every one might observe for himself the appearance of a new moon. But this would again partly depend on the state of the weather. Besides, it left an authoritative declaration of the commencement of a month unsupplied. And yet not only was the first of every month to be observed as "New Moon's Day," but the feasts took place on the 10th, 15th, or other day of the month, which could not be accurately determined without a certain knowledge of its beginning.

To supply this want the Sanhedrim sat in the "Hall of Polished Stones" to receive the testimony of credible witnesses that they had seen the new moon. To encourage as many as possible to come forward on so important a testimony, these witnesses were handsomely entertained at the public expense. If the new moon had appeared at the commencement of the 30th day--which would

<sup>3</sup> Tradition has it, that neither high-priest nor king ever took part in these deliberations, the former because he might object to a leap-year as throwing the Day of Atonement later into the cold season; the king, because he might wish for thirteen months, in order to get thirteen months' revenue in one year!

correspond to our evening of the 29th, as the Jews reckoned the day from evening to evening--the Sanhedrim declared the previous month to have been one of twenty-nine days, or "imperfect." Immediately thereon men were sent to a signal-station on the Mount of Olives, where beacon-fires were lit and torches waved, till a kindling flame on a hill in the distance indicated that the signal had been perceived. Thus the tidings, that this was the new moon, would be carried from hill to hill, far beyond the boundaries of Palestine, to those of the dispersion, "beyond the river."

Again, if credible witnesses had not appeared to testify to the appearance of the new moon on the evening of the 29th, the next evening, or that of the 30th, according to our reckoning, was taken as the commencement of the new month, in which case the previous month was declared to have been one of thirty days, or "full." It was ruled that a year should neither have less than four nor more than eight such full months of thirty days.

### The Seven Messengers of the New Moon

But these early fire-signals opened the way for serious inconvenience. The enemies of the Jews lit beacons to deceive those at a distance, and it became necessary to send special messengers to announce the new moon. These were, however, despatched only seven times in the year, just in time for the various feasts--in Nisan, for the Passover on the 15th, and in the month following, Iyar, for the "Second Passover," kept by those who had been debarred from the first (Num 9:9-11); in Ab (the fifth month), for the fast on the 9th, on account of the destruction of Jerusalem; in Elul (the sixth month), on account of the approaching solemnities of Tishri; in Tishri (the seventh month), for its festivals; in Kislev (the ninth month), for the Feast of the Dedication of the Temple; and in Adar, for Purim.

Thus, practically, all difficulties were removed, except in reference to the month Elul, since, as the new moon of the following month, or Tishri, was the "Feast of Trumpets," it would be exceedingly important to know in time whether Elul had twenty-nine or thirty days. But here the Rabbis ruled that Elul should be regarded as a month of twenty-nine days, unless a message to the contrary

were received--that, indeed, since the days of Ezra it had always been so, and that accordingly New Year's Day would be the day after the 29th of Elul. To make, however, assurance doubly sure, it soon became the practice to keep New Year's Day on two successive days, and this has since been extended into a duplication of all the great feast days (of course, with the exception of fasts), and that, although the calendar has long been fixed, and error is therefore no more possible.

### **Names of the Hebrew Months**

The present Hebrew names of the months are variously supposed to be derived from the Chaldee, or from the Persian language. They certainly do not appear before the return from Babylon. Before that, the months were named only after their numbers, or else from the natural phenomena characteristic of the seasons, as Abib, "sprouting," "green ears," for the first (Exo 13:4; 23:15; Deut 16:1); Ziv, "splendour," "flowering," for the second (1 Kings 6:1); Bul, "rain," for the eighth (1 Kings 6:38); and Ethanim, "flowing rivers," for the seventh (1 Kings 8:2). The division of the year into ecclesiastical, which commenced with the month Nisan (the end of March or beginning of April), or about the spring equinox, and civil, which commenced with the seventh month, or Tishri, corresponding to the autumn equinox, has by many likewise been supposed to have only originated after the return from Babylon.

But the analogy of the twofold arrangement of weights, measures, and money into civil and sacred, and other notices seem against this view, and it is more likely that from the first the Jews distinguished the civil year, which began in Tishri, from the ecclesiastical, which commenced in Nisan, from which month, as the first, all the others were counted. To this twofold division the Rabbis add, that for tithing the herds and flocks the year was reckoned from Elul to Elul, and for taxing fruits often from Shebat to Shebat.

### **The Eras Used by the Jews**

The earliest era adopted by the Jews was that which was reckoned to commence with the deliverance from Egypt. During the reigns of the

Jewish kings, time was computed from the year of their accession to the throne. After their return from exile, the Jews dated their years according to the Seleucidic era, which began 312 BC, or 3,450 from the creation of the world. For a short time after the war of independence, it became customary to reckon dates from the year of the liberation of Palestine. However, for a very long period after the destruction of Jerusalem (probably, till the twelfth century AD), the Seleucidic era remained in common use, when it finally gave place to the present mode of reckoning among the Jews, which dates from the creation of the world. To commute the Jewish year into that of our common era we have to add to the latter 3,761, always bearing in mind, however, that the common or civil Jewish year commences in the month of Tishri, i.e. in autumn.

### **The Week**

The week was divided into seven days, of which, however, only the seventh--the Sabbath--had a name assigned to it, the rest being merely noted by numerals. The day was computed from sunset to sunset, or rather to the appearance of the first three stars with which a new day commenced. Before the Babylonish captivity, it was divided into morning, mid-day, evening, and night; but during the residence in Babylon, the Hebrews adopted the division of the day into twelve hours, whose duration varied with the length of the day.

The longest day consisted of fourteen hours and twelve minutes; the shortest, of nine hours forty-eight minutes; the difference between the two being thus more than four hours. On an average, the first hour of the day corresponded nearly to our 6 a.m.; the third hour (when, according to Matthew 20:3, the market-place was full), to our 9 a.m.; the close of the sixth hour, to our mid-day; while at the eleventh, the day neared its close.

The Romans reckoned the hours from midnight, a fact which explains the apparent discrepancy between John 19:14, where, at the sixth hour (of Roman calculation), Pilate brings Jesus out to the Jews, while at the third hour of the Jewish, and hence the ninth of the Roman and of our calculation (Mark 15:25), He was led forth to be crucified. The night was divided by the Romans

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into four, by the Jews into three watches. The Jews subdivided the hour into 1,080 parts (chlakim), and again each part into seventy-six moments.

### Quiz - Instructions

The following questions relate to your study of this lesson.

Respond to the questions as required.

You have choices about sending the quiz back to Grace Notes.

- If you received an email file containing the questions, you can use the REPLY feature of your e-mail application to open the file. Enter your responses in the reply message. Then SEND the message to Grace Notes.
- You can enter your answers on these pages, then send the whole file back to Grace Notes as a file attachment. This is handy, but these lessons will average 100K to 200K in size. As an alternative,
- After you answer the questions here, copy and paste the whole list of questions into a new MS Word document; then, send the new file to Grace Notes as an attachment. The new file will, of course, be much smaller than this main file.
- Finally, you can print the Quiz pages on your printer and send your response back to Grace Notes in the regular mail. If you do this, send the mail to:

**Grace Notes**

**% Warren Doud**

**1705 Aggie Lane**

**Austin, Texas 78757 USA**

Whichever transmission method you use, when Grace Notes receives your response, we will send you the next lesson in the series.

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### Questions on The Temple, Lesson 10

1. The number \_\_\_\_\_ marks in Scripture the sacred measurement of time.

Answer:

2. The first festive cycle began with the \_\_\_\_\_ and ended on the day of \_\_\_\_\_.

Answer:

3. How often were male Israelites supposed to appear at the Temple?

Answer:

4. Who decided whether a year was to be a leap year?

Answer:

5. In what Jewish month was the Feast of Passover held?

Answer:

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6. Which day of the week was the seventh day?

Answer:

7. A person who was in a state of Levitical uncleanness could not enter the Temple,. [True/False]

Answer:

8. The priests who ministered in the Temple on the Sabbath would fast for three days. [True/False]

Answer:

9. What animal was offered when the congregation of Israel had sinned through ignorance?

Answer:

10. The first hour of the Jewish day corresponds to the hour of \_\_\_\_\_ in modern times.

Answer:

End of Quiz

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