

THE JEWISH FESTIVALS

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I, INTRODUCTORY

THE Jewish festivals are primarily important for the background of the Gospels.¹ Well known as they already were, Qumran documentary finds have recently confirmed their essential historicity.² Individual writers have built typologies upon them,³ or linked the Johannine discourses with a presumed synagogue lectionary.⁴ The biblical almanac followed the phases of the moon, but Jews, unlike modern Mohammedans, conformed their lunar year by intercalated months to the solar year of the circling seasons and expected crops, perhaps bearing Genesis 1: 14 in mind.⁵ The adjustment was accomplished approximately by doubling the twelfth month, Adar, every third year—the solar year exceeds the lunar by eleven days and a fraction. The months and festivals of the New Testament period thus "slide" somewhat, yet within fixed limits. Nisân always falls about March-April, Tishri about September-October, marking respectively the spring and autumn seasons. Tishri is first or New Year month according to Ezra, seventh according to Exodus 12: 2. Ezra may well have reverted to a pre-Mosaic autumnal New Year.⁶ Through the Mishnah offers four alternative dates for the fresh year,⁷ the Ezran convention may be taken as normative for the New Testament period.

¹ See further R. de Vaux, *Ancient Israel*, E. T. (London, 1961) (henceforth cited as de Vaux), pp. 468-517, 549-552; J. van Goudoever, *Biblical Calendars* (Leiden, 1959) (henceforth cited as Goudoever); *RGG*³ Vol. II (Tübingen 1958), pp. 910-918.

² *RGG* art. above cited, p. 914, col. 2, par. 7, gives numerous refs.

³ Cf. P. Fairbairn, *The Typology of Scripture*, Zondervan reprint, henceforth cited as Fairbairn.

⁴ Cf. A. Guilding, *The Fourth Gospel and Jewish Worship*—henceforth cited as Guilding (Oxford, 1960).

⁵ Cf. Goudoever p. 5.

⁶ See last section. Also N. H. Snaith, *The Jewish New Year Festival*, (London, 1947) (henceforth cited as Snaith), pp. 28-38, 141-149.

⁷ *Rosh ha-Shanah* i, 1; cf. JE IX, pp. 254-258.

II. FESTIVALS BASED ON THE NUMBER SEVEN

No Jewish institution is more familiar than the Sabbath, now Saturday.⁸ Because the Old Testament couples it so frequently with New Moon, some believe that Sabbath was actually marked by lunar phases. But there are approximately 29½ days in a mean lunar month, not 28—this objection is decisive.⁹ The Sabbath imparted sacredness to the number seven. The Old Testament advances reasons for its observance both cosmological (Genesis 2: 2f.; Exodus 20: 11) and humanitarian (Deuteronomy 5: 14). These were complementary and simultaneously valid—Jesus had no dispute with the Pharisees on that count.¹⁰ The Christians' transition from the seventh to the first day, incomplete in the New Testament, is fully established in the Apostolic Fathers, where Ignatius speaks of them as "no longer keeping sabbath (σαββαρίζοντες) but living according to the Lord's day" (κατὰ κυριακὴν ζῶντες). Burdensome as its restrictions appear to us, Jews found considerable joy in their Sabbath.¹²

On the Mosaic reckoning, Tishri was the seventh or Sabbatical month, and therefore imparted a Sabbatarian character to its special festivals. By gospel days, this association is obscured. The seventh year,¹³ and the fiftieth or Jubilee year, following seven Sabbaticals, entailed fallow lands and remission of debts. These are matters of Jewish rather than of Christian interest.

III. THE FEAST OF TRUMPETS

The first of Tishri, *Rôsh ha-Shanah*, "the head of the year", was marked by the Feast of Trumpets.¹⁴ The festival and its date are clearly biblical (Leviticus 23: 24f.; Numbers 29: 1-6; Nehemiah 8: 1-12), though some deny that there was any early and intrinsic con-

⁸ Cf. TB *Shabbath*; de Vaux, pp. 475-483; Fairbairn, Vol. II, pp. 107-131, 381-384, 447-459; RGG³ Vol. V, 1961, p. 1258f; E. L. Ehrlich, *Die Kultsymbolik im AT u. im nachbiblischen Judentum* (Stuttgart, 1959)—henceforth cited as Ehrlich—pp. 77-81.

⁹ For lunar view cf. *HDB* I, p. 859, col. 1; for other view, cf. *TWNT* VII, p. 4 and footnote.

¹⁰ Cf. *ZNW*, Beiheft 26 (Berlin, 1960), pp. 79-89; *SB* I, pp. 622-630; II, p. 5.

¹¹ *Mag.* IX,1. Cf. *Didache* XIV,1. For more fanciful Patristic developments, cf. *VC* II (1948), pp. 1-16.

¹² Cf. Montefiore & Loewe, *Rabbinic Anthology* (London, 1938), pp. 192-195.

¹³ RGG³ II (1958), art. *Erlaussjahr*, p. 56.

¹⁴ See *JQR* I, (1881), pp. 62-75; A. Edersheim, *The Temple*, Chap. xv; Snaith, pp. 150-194; Guilding, pp. 69-91.

nection with New Year.¹⁵ The Talmud greatly elaborates the Scripture account, imparting a new emphasis on the divine judgment of mankind. On that day all living creatures pass before God *kib'nê marôn*.¹⁶ The precise translation of the Mishnaic phrase is controversial, the implication clear. An adequate enough picture would be that of a flock of sheep passing through a wicket gate for enumeration and inspection.¹⁷ Judgment against sinners is pronounced on 1st Tishri, executed on the 10th, the Day of Atonement.¹⁸ Yet the intervening days offer opportunities for repentance to those who seek.¹⁹ The feast is traditionally associated with Sarah and Hannah as mothers of Isaac and Samuel. The straight antelope horn might be used as a trumpet on other occasions, but the curved ram's horn is stipulated for New Year's Day, to commemorate the ram substituted for Isaac on Mount Moriah.²⁰ The purpose of the blast is variously stated as intended to confuse Satan,²¹ or to remind the Heavenly Father of His children in Israel.²²

There has been much controversy concerning the identity of the unnamed feast in John 5: 1.²³ Dr. Aileen Guilding,²⁴ following Westcott, argues for the Feast of Trumpets—this, she maintains, provides the lectionary background for John 5 and 14, with its Jewish keynotes of judgment, witness and resurrection, and the added gospel notes of the Second Advent. The hypothesis is intensely interesting, though this is not the place for its fuller evaluation.

IV. THE DAY OF ATONEMENT

The Day of Atonement of 10th Tishri is perhaps the most dramatic of all Old Testament ceremonials, and certainly the most fruitful in New Testament typologies. The backcloth of the vital chapters Leviticus 16 and Hebrews 9-10 is the wilderness Tabernacle.

¹⁵ Cf. Buchanan Gray, *Sacrifice in the O.T.* (Oxford, 1925), pp. 302-305; de Vaux, pp. 502-504; Goudoever, pp. 36-44.

¹⁶ TB *Rosh ha-Shanah* i, 2; 18^a.

¹⁷ Jastrow renders "like children of rebellion", *Dict. of the Talmud*, p. 839; Levy, "like children of the Lord", or "like the Temple steps", *Neuhebr. u. chald. Wörterbuch*, III, p. 245; Danby's *Mishnah*, "like legions of soldiers".

¹⁸ TB *Rosh ha-Shanah* 16^a.

¹⁹ *Ib.* 16^b; 18^a.

²⁰ *Ib.* 16^b, with Gn. 22: 13; cf. also iii, 5 and 26^b—contrast iii, 3.

²¹ *Ib.* 16^b.

²² TB *Shabbath* 131^b.

²³ Cf. Hoskyns and Davey, *The Fourth Gospel* (London, 1940), p. 292.

²⁴ pp. 69-91.

To the Holy Place all priests were freely admitted at all times, save whilst the High-priest performed his annual act of contrition (Leviticus 16: 17). The first veil (Exodus 26: 36f.) excluded from the precincts all who were not priests. The second veil (Hebrews 9: 3; cf. Exodus 26: 31-35) debarred even the High-priest from the Nearer Presence, save only on the one yearly occasion, when God's pardon was ritually sought on a personal and national basis by the priestly intermediary (Leviticus 16: 29f.), and the Tabernacle or Temple cleansed from all ritual impurity.

In the Herodian Temple dimensions and furniture are changed, but the formal relationship of the veils and of the outer and inner sanctuaries continues. Hebrews 9: 3 refers specifically to the second veil of the Tabernacle, τὸ δεύτερον καταπέτασμα. The expositor of the Gospels has to decide whether this corresponds in position and function with the veil of the Herodian Temple, τὸ καταπέτασμα τοῦ ναοῦ (Mark 15: 38 and parallels), rent at the moment of Christ's death, for this has important bearing on the symbolism.²⁵

Especially interesting are the two goats described in Leviticus 16: 5 as components of a single sacrifice, one chosen by lot for immolation, the other designated "for Azazel."²⁶ "Azazel" might be a Hebrew substantive meaning entire removal²⁷—the goat symbolically carried away personal and national sins on its back, providing vicarious atonement. The word might equally be a cryptogram for Satan or some inferior demon. Some think the goat was hurled to death from a precipice named Azazel—this kind of forcible immolation is indeed enjoined in one Mishnaic passage.²⁸ This was a later development—originally the goat was released alive (Leviticus 16: 10). Holman Hunt's magnificent painting of the startled animal released in the wilderness correctly interprets the Old Testament and certain Rabbinic traditions, even to the meaningful crimson wool tied to its horns, which would miraculously turn white, some Rabbis believed or asserted, should God be pleased to grant pardon for sin.²⁹

²⁵ Cf. SB I, pp. 1043-1046; III, pp. 733-736.

²⁶ Cf. present writer's *Rabbinic Theology* (Edinburgh, 1961), pp. 135-139, with refs. Cf. further *NBD*, art. "Azazel"; *NBC*, p. 149; Ehrlich, pp. 58ff; etc.

²⁷ *BDB*, s.v.

²⁸ *Yoma* vi, 6. [Hence in N.E.B. the scapegoat is "the goat for the Precipice".]

²⁹ See *Rabbinic Theology*, p. 137.

V. THE PASSOVER

The first Passover of Exodus 12, dramatically remembered in Hebrews 11: 28, was a night of divine salvation for Israel, of stark, freezing terror for Egypt. Then the Lord passed over the blood-marked, blood-redeemed houses of His people, smiting every Egyptian firstborn. Each Israelite, feet shod, loins girded, staff in hand, ate hastily a meal of roast flesh, unleavened bread and bitter herbs, before beginning history's most momentous journey. These things were commemorated annually in the month of Abib (Nisan).³⁰ Such is the plain Scriptural account. There are numerous critical theories which make Moses the mere adaptor and stage manager of a more archaic pagan ceremonial, apotropaic, domestic or pastoral.³¹ It would not be surprising if the ritual embodies pre-Mosaic elements. Rabbinic literature frequently ascribes celebrations of Passover to the Patriarchs.³² Admittedly this is intended to enhance the antiquity of a Hebrew institution rather than to propound a critical theory, yet it may enshrine a substratum of truth, at least with regard to certain aspects. The significant Jewish Passover does, however, begin with Moses.

The observance of Passover reveals change and development even within the Old Testament period. Thus Numbers 9 introduces quasi-Rabbinically the case of a man ritually unclean at the statutory date, who must celebrate his Passover a month later; Deuteronomy 16 and Ezekiel 45 reflect lapse of time and institutional development. Temple sacrifice and priestly function became integrated into what was originally a domestic occasion, and the family unit might be maintained therein only by transporting itself bodily to Jerusalem. Nevertheless the institution possessed vitality enough to survive the final destruction of the Temple, thereby reverting to something more nearly resembling its original form. In gospel times Passover was a Jerusalem pilgrim festival, repeated once every solar year in spring—though the solar reference is chiefly chronometric. The Mishnah tractate *Pesahim* brings the entire ritual to a complexity widely removed from the historic night of the Exodus. The dating of the recurrent, commemorative festival is important for Gospel exegesis. The night of Passover proper

³⁰ See present writer's *NBD* art. "Passover", with lit. there cited; adding further de Vaux, pp. 484-493; Goudoever, pp. 7-14; Ehrlich, pp. 65-71; *ZTK* 55 (1958), pp. 1-35.

³¹ See *NBD* p. 936, col. 2, for exx. and refs. Cf. also Sir J. G. Frazer, *Th Golden Bough* (London, 1955 reprint), Pt. III, pp. 174-178; Pt. IX, p. 119, etc.

³² Cf. Midrash Gn. Rabbah, XLII, 8; ib. Dt. R. I. 25; Targumim, *passim*.

(14-15 Nisan) and the Feast of Unleavened Bread (15-21 Nisan) are distinguished in Leviticus 23: 5f. and Numbers 28: 16f., but telescoped in Luke 22: 1. Doubtless they had long become thus telescoped in popular thought and practice, as Josephus and the Mishnah bear out.³³ The first day of Unleavened Bread was strictly 15th Nisan, though the 14th was often loosely so called, as in Matthew 26: 17; Mark 14: 12.³⁴ The Preparation for the Passover began at 6 p.m. on 13th Nisan, ending at the same hour on the 14th. This is an analogical extension of the normal weekly Friday or *προσάββατον* (Mark 15: 42), when cooking and all laborious preparations for the Sabbath had to be performed. Festival days were holy, and, like Sabbaths, must not be defiled by work. The *παρασκευὴ τοῦ πάσχα* describing the day of the Passion in John 19: 14 is frequently taken to imply that Jesus died the day before the statutory Passover, which is against the Synoptic evidence. The phrase could of course mean "Friday of the Passover week",³⁵ or the Synoptists and John might be following divergent Pharisaic and Sadducean calendar traditions.³⁶ Neither the almanac conventions nor the colloquial usages of the first century should be endowed with a greater rigidity than they actually possessed—a wooden fixity of exegesis is apt to postulate "contradictions" needlessly.

It has been stated already that a festival such as Passover was circumvested with consuetudinary Sabbath-like restrictions. It was not normally legal for example to carry weapons on such an occasion, and critics of the theory that the Last Supper was a Passover have objected to the armed rabble approaching Gethsemane, the scuffle with the disciples, and the damage to the ear of Malchus. Needless to say, the fact that housebreaking is illegal scarcely suffices to prevent specific felonies. One Mishnaic authority, albeit representing a variant opinion, permits the carrying of weapons on the Sabbath, on the plea that they constitute personal adornments³⁷—which argues against any extreme stringency. Ordinary work was also under disapproval, together with extended journeys on foot. If Simon the Cyrenian (Mark 15: 21) had travelled *ἀπ' ἀγροῦ* on the Passover, whether this means from the country, or from agricultural work, or both, he was unquestionably a transgressor by Pharisaic standards—but there is nothing impossible about that. Jews gene-

rally disapproved of public executions at festival times, though they lost their prerogatives in any case when sentence and procedure passed into Roman hands. Nevertheless the angry people of Nazareth actually attempted to kill Jesus on the Sabbath (Luke 4: 29), and Jews tried to stone Him in the very Temple during the festival of Hanukkah (John 10: 22, 31). The Mishnah itself in one passage inculcates executions on major festival days,³⁸ though elsewhere it insists on their Sabbath-like restrictions.³⁹

The Passover in New Testament times consisted of two parts, preparation⁴⁰ and meal proper.⁴¹ The duties involved in the first stage were numerous and onerous. A room had to be secured and prepared in Jerusalem for the meal, and the number and identity of the participants settled. The lamb had to be taken to the Temple alive, correctly slaughtered there, skinned, eviscerated, brought to the place aforementioned, and roasted. The ceremonial of the meal proper is legislated for in Mishnah *Pesahim*, chapter X. Noteworthy amongst the elements are the daylight fast preceding the evening meal, the insistence on a table, even where the floor might be more customary, the minimal four cups of wine, even for the poorest, the points at which these cups are consumed, the exposition of the Exodus story by father to son, the chanting of the *Hallel*, or Psalms 113-118. (The *Hallel* is actually intended by the *καὶ ὑμνήσαντες* of Matthew 26: 30 and Mark 14: 26.⁴²) In describing a Passover celebration, a Jew would assume all these elements, without necessarily mentioning each specifically. The typological argument, based on the silence of Scripture, that no actual lamb was used in the Last Supper, because Christ our Passover was then sacrificed for us, is interesting, but inconclusive. Jeremias⁴³ believes that *ἀμνός* reflects an Aramic *talyâ'*, which may mean lamb, but also boy or servant as in the Isaianic Servant Songs.

VI. PENTECOST

Pentecost is variously known as the feast of harvest, or of first fruits, or of weeks (Exodus 23: 16; 34: 22). The Greek name, *ἡ πεντηκοστή ἡμέρα*, the fiftieth day, derives from the counting of seven weeks from a stated occasion (Leviticus 23: 15f.; Deuteronomy 16: 9). The statutory offerings and procedure are

³³ Cf. *TWNT* V, p. 897 and n. 17.

³⁴ Cf. *SB* II, pp. 812-815; *ib.* I, pp. 985, 987 f.

³⁵ Bernard, *ICC* on John, p., 623.

³⁶ *SB* II, pp. 812-853, esp. pp. 847ff.

³⁷ *Shabbath* vi, 4.

³⁸ *Sanhedrin* xi, 4.

³⁹ *Betzah*, *passim*. Cf. v, 2.

⁴⁰ *SB* IV, pp. 41-54.

⁴¹ *Ib.* pp. 54-76.

⁴² Cf. *AG*, p. 844, col. 1.

⁴³ *TWNT* I, p. 342.

carefully laid down in the Pentateuch (Leviticus 23: 15-22; Numbers 28: 26-31; Deuteronomy 16: 9-12). In popular thought and speech, Pentecost meant essentially the end of the grain harvest, just as Passover had marked its beginning. Hence there is a later Rabbinic term for Pentecost, *'useret*, which means the concluding festival, i.e. of the seven-week harvest period. Josephus transliterates the Aramaic form of this substantive as σαρθά—the term had wide currency. Indeed the Apocrypha,⁴⁴ the Book of Jubilees,⁴⁵ Philo, Josephus, the New Testament and the Rabbinic literature all testify to the continued observance within Judaism of Pentecost, the second of the three annual pilgrimage feasts at which all male Israelites were required to appear (Exodus 23: 17; 34: 23; Deuteronomy 16: 16).

What was the stated occasion from which the fifty days were counted? This depends on the meaning of "sabbath" in Leviticus 23: 11 and 15—and leads to the heart of a fierce controversy. The Sadducees maintained that this was the literal Sabbath of Passover week—hence, adding fifty days, they designated a Pentecost changeable in calendar date, but invariably a Sunday. The Pharisees insisted that "sabbath" in that context meant first day of Passover—their Pentecost possessed a fixed calendar date, with a variable weekday of occurrence.⁴⁷ The Pharisees and their Rabbinic successors wished to establish a historical connection between Pentecost and the Sinai promulgation of the Law, which required a fixed date. The Babylonian Talmud states that the Decalogue was given on 6th or 7th Siwan,⁴⁸ or at Pentecost.⁴⁹ The Sadducees believed contrariwise that the festival was purely agricultural, repudiating the Sinai connection. As the Pharisees upheld the absolute supremacy of Law, written and oral, this cleavage was radical. The Christian Whitsun, unfixed in date, follows, for better or worse, the Sadducean convention. The New Testament uses Pentecost twice for dating purposes (Acts 20: 16; 1 Corinthians 16: 8), but the only really significant passage is Acts 2: 1ff. Some have equated this with the Christophany of 1 Corinthians 15: 6.⁵⁰ There is of course

⁴⁴ 2 Macc. 12: 32; Tob. 2: 1.

⁴⁵ Cf. esp. i, 1: vi, 17f. 20f.

⁴⁶ Cf. *HJP*, II, II, p. 37; L. Finkelstein, *The Pharisees* (Philadelphia, 1946), pp. 57-62. See also *ERE*, under topics; writings of S. H. Hooke; etc.

⁴⁷ Cf. the hotly controversial *Hagigah* ii, 4.

⁴⁸ *Shabbath* 86b.

⁴⁹ *Pesahim* 68b.

⁵⁰ Cf. *TWNT* VI, p. 51, with n. 51.

in the Pharisaic Sinai association a certain appropriateness from a Christian symbolic viewpoint. Then the two Pentecosts represent two birthdays, Law and Spirit.

VII. TABERNACLES

Tabernacles, the third of the annual pilgrimage festivals obligatory on all Israelite males, was joyfully celebrated 15th-22nd Tishri, and provided something of a foil to the penitential mortification of the Day of Atonement. It is known both as the festival of booths, *sukkôt* (Leviticus 23: 34, 42; cf. Genesis 33: 17), from the temporary dwellings in which participants lodged for the eight days, and in agricultural reference, as the feast of ingathering, *'ásif* (Exodus 23: 16; 34: 22). The Greek equivalent is σκηνοπηγία literally "tent-fixing", used nine times in the Septuagint, once in the New Testament (John 7: 2), several times in Josephus,⁵¹ once surprisingly in Aristotle.⁵² This single classical usage shows that the term is not exclusively Jewish. No talk of tents should confuse the proper mental picture, which is not stretched skins, but a bivouac of live branches. The rendering "huts" has also been suggested,⁵³ but these, like tents, imply to modern ears things too carefully fabricated. "Leafy bowers" might be nearer the mark.

The festival of Tabernacles is primarily a memorial of God's providence in the days of the Sinai wanderings (Leviticus 23: 43), accompanied by statutory animal sacrifices (Numbers 29: 12-40), but it acquired later associations strongly agricultural. Hittite parallels may be freely admitted,⁵⁴ but any links with the Greek cults of Bacchus or of Adonis-Osiris are impossibly far-fetched, though some have postulated them.⁵⁵ The biblical significance is the relevant one. Goudoever may be right in feeling that there is a link deeper than mere English and Greek assonance with the wilderness Tabernacle, σκηνή.⁵⁶ According to the Pentateuch, the entire Law was to be read in the hearing of all Israel every seventh year, at the Feast of Tabernacles (Deuteronomy 31: 10-13). As the growth and expansion, both of Israel and of the Law, were rapid, the physical difficulties of literal obedience increased. The Mishnah gives a clue as to the probable procedure of gospel days. King

⁵¹ See refs. *SB* II, p. 774.

⁵² *de Anim. Hist.* IX, 7, p. 612, b 22; cf. *TWNT* VII, pp. 391-394.

⁵³ Cf. de Vaux, pp. 495-502.

⁵⁴ On Hittite festival of Puruli, see T. H. Gaster, *Thespis* (New York, 1950), pp. 317-336, cf. also C. H. Gordon, *Ugaritic Literature* (Rome, 1949), pp. 57-62. See also *ERE*, under topics; writings of S. H. Hooke; etc.

⁵⁵ Cf. de Vaux, p. 500, for a brief critique of these fantasies.

⁵⁶ pp. 33, 57.

Agrippa, acting officially, perhaps about A.D. 41 read a selection of passages from Deuteronomy—⁵⁷ this may well have reflected a more widespread convention. There was to be a note of expected thanksgiving to God every year, not only for Law, but also for corn, wine, oil, silver and gold.

Like all other ceremonies, Tabernacles acquired new complexities under the leaders of later Judaism. These may be conveniently studied in the Mishnah Tractate *Sukkah*, committed to writing about A.D. 200, but certainly reflecting first century traditions. *Sukkah* i-ii details the tedious regulations for the merely physical construction of booths under progressive Rabbinic legalism. The more colourful ceremonial of the water-libation goes back to the Old Testament in certain aspects, such as branch-bearing (Leviticus 23: 40) and rain emphasis (Zechariah 14: 16-19). The Rabbis added citrons to the palm or willow branches, and *Sukkah* iv, v describes and prescribes the manner of carrying water from the Pool of Siloam to the Temple in a golden flagon, with trumpet notes and flute playing, ritual dancing, statutory prayers, and a particularized altar ceremonial in the Temple. The citrons were immortalized by the famous Pharisaic pelting of Alexander Jannaeus, Sadducean priest-king, about B.C. 100.⁵⁸ As the Temple was destroyed in A.D. 70, this procedural detail takes us very close to the lifetime of Jesus.

This is not the place to discuss typology and symbolism, though that has been fruitfully done by many expositors.⁵⁹ The relationship of Tabernacles to the Fourth Gospel is discussed at some length by Dr. Guilding.⁶⁰ C. W. F. Smith,⁶¹ in an extensive comment on Dr. Guilding's work, goes further, and finds traces of Tabernacles in Mark 11: 12, and in the Transfiguration narrative. Puzzled as to why so popular a Jewish feast should seem to sink into the gospel background, he postulates "a progressive displacement of Tabernacles by Passover in Christian liturgical development".⁶² The interested reader may peruse the literature, and assess the theories, for himself.

Passover, Pentecost and Tabernacles are generally regarded as agricultural and solar festivals, because they are interspaced by solar years, and have at least an acquired agrarian reference. This in no way invalidates their historical connection with Exodus and

⁵⁷ *Sotah* vii, 8; see Soncino edn., p. 202 and n. 6; also p. 204.

⁵⁸ *Sukkah* iv, 9; 46b; *Jos. Ant.* XIII, 13, 5; cf. de Vaux, p. 498.

⁵⁹ Cf. Matthew Henry on Zech. 14: 16-19; Fairbairn, Vol. II, p. 401.

⁶⁰ pp. 92-120.

⁶¹ *NTS*, Jan. 1963, pp. 130-146.

⁶² *ib.*, p. 143.

Sinai—it is in that context that the student of Scripture finds them especially meaningful. The remaining festivals of the sacred calendar are of the purely historical or anniversary type, later in their origin, and of somewhat lesser significance.

VIII. HISTORICAL FESTIVALS

The institution of the historical festival of Purim is described in Esther 9: 17-32—the events leading up to it, Haman's plot to exterminate the Jews, Mordecai's counter measures, Esther's courage, are too familiar to require recapitulation. It is scarcely surprising that Queen Esther captured both the affection and the imagination of the Jewish people. The events above mentioned, variously dated in the 5th and 4th centuries B.C., culminated in Jewish triumph, and were thereafter celebrated annually at the feast of Purim, on the 14th and 15th of Adar. From B.C. 161 onwards, 13th Adar came to be known as Nicanor's Day—the barbarous usage of Nicanor's dead body and severed head in triumphal victory is recorded in 2 Maccabees 15: 28-36. Centuries later, Nicanor passed from the forefront of Jewish interest, whilst Purim and the day of his defeat, widely separated in their inception, became merged into one festival. The history underlying Purim is a mixture of God-given salvation in times of seemingly unescapable danger, of glorious heroism, and of bloody if understandable vengeance. These facts have coloured all subsequent Jewish observances, and have transmuted its intended solemnities into something of a Guy Fawkes night. In later centuries it became customary, even in the solemn, statutory synagogue lection of the book of Esther, for the people to hiss and boo at every mention of Haman, like demonstrative undergraduates; to chalk his name on the soles of their shoes, merely to gain the privilege of trampling on it; and to disturb the service with rattles and other unsuitable devices. Outside the Synagogue, there was masquerading, the burning of Haman in effigy, and a good deal of drunkenness.⁶³ This was very unlike the normal sobriety of Judaism—but the beginnings of the deviation may be traced from the Talmud. Raba⁶⁴ actually enjoined as a Purim duty that a man should drink wine to that stage of merriment at which he becomes unable to distinguish between "cursed be Haman" (*rwr hmn*) and "blessed be Mordecai" (*brwk mrdky*). (In typically Rabbinic fashion, the consonants of these phrases are adjusted to produce equal numerical totals of 502.) More significant

⁶³ *JE X*, pp. 274-283; Note also illustrations.

⁶⁴ *TB Megillah* 7b.

is the fact that the injunction, obeyed to sufficiency or excess, could lead to anything, even murder. We are informed immediately afterwards that in his Purim drunkenness one Rabbah once arose and cut R. Zera's throat. It would seem that Rabbi Zera survived the aftermath of his carousal with his friend, but some story of near-tragedy certainly lies behind the terse record of the Gemara.⁶⁵

Hanukkah, τὰ ἑγκαίνια, the festival of dedication or of lights, enjoys definite mention in John 10: 22. This is primarily, as Rankin states,⁶⁶ "the memorial of the Maccabean wars of freedom." On 25th Kisleu, B.C. 167, Antiochus Epiphanes defiled the Temple with the abomination of desolation. Exactly three years later, Judas Maccabaeus, against incredible odds, regained the Temple by war, cleansed it, and restored its worship.⁶⁷ Hanukkah became the festival commemorating this event. It resembled Tabernacles, but the lighting of lamps in the homes of the people constituted a new feature. If 2 Maccabees 1: 9 names the occasion ἡ σκηνοπηγία τοῦ χασελεῦ μηνός, the feast of tabernacles of the month Kisleu, Josephus uses the shorter terms φῶτα, Lights. The common Greek and Hebrew terms imply initiation, renewal, dedication, consecration—the action of Judas was primarily one of renewal. The lights of Hanukkah can scarcely be unconnected with the legend of the altar fire, hidden in a well over the period of the Captivity, wondrously restored in thick water in the time of Nehemiah.⁶⁸ The Talmud changes the altar fire to a single cruse of consecrated oil with the High-priest's seal intact, sole survivor of the violation of the Temple⁶⁹—the idea of continuity is the same. Rankin attempts to find a pre-Maccabean origin for Hanukkah, considering amongst other possibilities Iranian fire-worship. This is however somewhat speculative.⁷⁰ The biblical associations are light, renewal, and a fresh kingdom. The second of these themes has verbal links with Hebrews 9: 18; 10: 20, which are worthy of exegetical consideration.

It is necessary for completeness to mention the Feast of Wood-

⁶⁵ Cf. Levy, *Neuhebr. u. chald. Wörterbuch*, Vol. IV (Leipzig, 1889), p. 53, col. 1.

⁶⁶ O. S. Rankin, *The Origins of the Festival of Hanukkah* (Edinburgh, 1930), p. vi.

⁶⁷ The present writer has discussed this more fully in art. "Maccabees" for forthcoming revised *ISBE*.

⁶⁸ 2 Macc. 1: 18-36.

⁶⁹ *Shabbath* 21^b.

⁷⁰ In addition to Rankin's book, see Bible Dictionaries; *SB* II, pp. 539ff.; Guilding, pp. 127-142.

offering for the Temple, celebrated on 15th Abib;⁷¹ and the Maccabean Feast of the Captured Fortress.⁷² These and one or two other very minor events are lacking in exegetical importance.

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ABBREVIATIONS

AG	W. Bauer's <i>Greek-English Lexicon of the New Testament and Other Early Christian Literature</i> , translated by W. F. Anrdt and F. W. Gingrich (Chicago, 1957).
BDB	Brown-Driver-Briggs, <i>Hebrew Lexicon</i>
ERE	<i>Encyclopaedia of Religion and Ethics</i> , ed. J. Hastings
HDB	<i>Dictionary of the Bible</i> , ed. J. Hastings (Edinburgh, 1898-1904).
HJP	<i>History of the Jewish People in the Time of Jesus Christ</i> , by E. Schürer, Eng. trans. (Edinburgh, 1886-90).
ICC	<i>International Critical Commentary</i> (T. & T. Clark)
ISBE	<i>International Standard Bible Encyclopaedia</i>
JE	<i>Jewish Encyclopaedia</i>
JQR	<i>Jewish Quarterly Review</i>
NBC	<i>New Bible Commentary</i> (IVF).
NBD	<i>New Bible Dictionary</i> (IVF).
NTS	<i>New Testament Studies</i> (C.U.P.)
RGG	<i>Religion in Geschichte und Gegenwart</i>
SB	<i>Kommentar zum Neuen Testament aus Talmud und Midrasch</i> , von H. L. Strack und P. Billerbeck (München, 1922-25).
TB	<i>Babylonian Talmud</i>
TWNT	<i>Theologisches Wörterbuch zum Neuen Testament</i> , hrsg. von G. Kittel und G. Friedrich (Stuttgart, 1933 ff.).
VC	<i>Vigiliae Christianae</i>
ZNW	<i>Zeitschrift für die neutestamentliche Wissenschaft</i>
ZTK	<i>Zeitschrift für Theologie und Kirche</i>

⁷¹ Neh. 10: 34; 13: 31.

⁷² 1 Macc. 13: 50-52.