The Holiness Editors’ Systematic Scheme of the Feasts:
Festal Innovation in Leviticus 23

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Abstract

The process of festal transmission did not depend on a single unbroken line during the course of inscribing the ritual stipulations. However, the general interpretations on the cultic calendars plot the various independent elements onto a chronological sequence of four successive documents (J, E, D and P). This paper will re-examine the methodologies, which are based on fixed theologies of the three annual feasts which do not consider the Holiness editors’ intention. Especially, Lev. 23, which is a complex of ritual traditions, adduces significant evidence of how and why H editors composed this festal calendar under conventional customs, priestly settings and D’s cultic innovations. This investigation will elucidate many various aspects which are reconstituted as “mô’ādē YHWH (Yahweh’s fixed times)” and “miqrā’ qōdeš (a sacred proclamation),” and the conclusion suggests that H editors evolved systematic schemes through means of the significance of Yôm Kippûrim and the new terminology of “šabbat šabbātôn.”

Keywords
H editors, mô’ādē YHWH, miqrā’ qōdeš, Yôm Kippûrim, šabbûtôn
1. A Preview of the Discussion about the Israelite Feasts

Conventionally, the biblical feasts have been discussed in light of the various sources (Ex. 23:14-19; 34:18-26=JE; Lev. 23=H; Nu. 28-29=P; Dt. 16:1-17=D), since Julius Wellhausen attempted to reconstruct the history of festal calendars that designated Israel’s cult. According to him, in the earliest period, represented by JE, the feast of maṣṣāt (Unleavened Bread) was agricultural in character, and later in the Deuteronomic reform, the feast was combined with pesaḥ (Passover) in a historicized form as the celebration of Israel’s deliverance from Egypt. He asserts, eventually, the post-exilic P removed the festival completely from its natural cycle with a rigid chronological framework. Many scholars have been heavily influenced by his theory, while it is not validated by a wider review of the scriptures, mainly because of his late dating of the P document and its lack of relation to the ANE texts. In fact, ardent claims of the contrary have been made to prove the antiquity of P (Yehezkel Kaufmann, Moshe Weinfeld, Jacob Milgrom).

However, in spite of scholars’ questions regarding the developmental festal cycles, his counting system, starting from “Easter,” is generally admitted as a plausible and desirable theory; the idea of “the feast of weeks” is accepted by many with the reckoning by the seven-day week towards “Pentecost." This method of reckoning towards the fiftieth day is not included in D’s feasts, but only found in Lev. 23:15-16. Hans-Joachim Kraus appropriately points out, “The OT has not bequeathed to us any traditions about the second great annual festival in the cultic calendar, the feast of Weeks.” Despite this, Gerhard von Rad concurs, asserting that “the creed we have in Dt. 26:5ff. is the cult legend of the Feast of Weeks” on the thesis that the tribute of Dt. 26 corresponds to his alleged “the Feast of Weeks” in Ex. 23:16; 34:22 and Lev. 23:17. Also, Martin Noth claims that “the continuous seven-day week determines the Sabbath,” but this view fails to consider all the various factors related to the Sabbath. Thus, the understanding of Sabbath in terms of week is obviously a late Jewish development, as J. B. Segal mentions, “There is no analogy throughout the Bible for the use of the week unit to fix the date of religious ritual. If, as is commonly assumed, the Jubilees calendar of the end of the second century B.C. does maintain such a system, it is precisely in this respect that it is at variance with ancient Hebrew practice. Indeed, the interpolation of šabbāt as a period of seven days in ending a day of rest—not necessarily the Sabbath—is the only interpretation which seems to yield satisfactory sense throughout the passage Lev. 23:9-21.”

The problem is that most critics tend to ignore the uniqueness of H and to assimilate it into P. Wellhausen acknowledges H’s significance but for him H is an outgrowth from the JE, and D sources, which in turn develop into the P source. On the other hand, Kaufmann’s
presupposition is problematic in that the D’s idea is reflected nowhere in the Holiness Code. He asserts that P’s festival laws (Lev. 23) betray pre-Deuteronomic viewpoint. Also, Weinfeld, whose aim is to prove P’s antedating D, in light of the many parallels between P and ritual texts from the Ancient Near East, concludes not only the dating of P, but also H is from pre-exilic times. He overlooks the evidence that H demonstrates the dependence on D. Instead, for him, they are to indicate D’s development, not H’s. He assumes that D built the seventh-year institution on the material which he ascribes to P, using an even more novel element, that of Yahweh’s redemptive action in Israelite history, with the aim of Yahweh centralization. In my view, this rise came as a direct result of the decline in the purity of P worship, not for lack of interest in the observance of cults. Nonetheless, Weinfeld sees these omissions, and others, as evidence of D’s deliberate suppression of sacral ritual. He ignores the valuable original elements relating to the H calendar in the Deuteronomic sections. However, I owe much to Weinfeld’s examinations of the P aspects of the D theology, even though obviously, his aim is to elucidate the biblical formation as the crystallization of D, not H.

This textual analysis limits its investigation to the divisions between PG and PS, and those of Dtr1 and Dtr2. Thus, regarding the procedure of editing the cultic calendars, we have much difficulty in investigating it within the framework of P/D’s theology. This research has been significantly advanced by Israel Knohl, who initially claims that P was the earliest layer in the Pentateuch against the prevalent opinion that H antedated P. The crux of his theory is that H expands the realm of holiness which encompasses all of Israelite life, society and land. It is a new interpolation of the earlier narratives through an innovative theory and develops the languages from earlier legal collections as well. However, Knohl doesn’t consider how D’s traits influence the form of the feasts. D demanded not only the restriction of cultic ceremonies to Yahweh’s sanctuary but also the innovation of the calendar, which is primarily holy and evolved through a strong claim to the representation of “the people’s obedience” to Yahweh’s holiness. Now, H demands the representation of “the people’s holiness” to Yahweh through daily activities in H’s annual calendar. From this perspective, it is productive to re-examine the methodologies, which are based on fixed theologies of the three annual feasts without correctly considering the H editors’ intention.

2. The Structure of Lev. 23

Knohl begins with a detailed analysis of Lev. 23, focusing in particular on how H incorporates P’s legislation and shows real concern for agricultural life. His main concern
is to compare Lev. 23 with Nu. 28-29 and detail the unique layered character of this chapter from the perspective of “the relationship between the P schools.” The structure of Lev. 23 must be first clarified before exploring the individual issues. This chapter can be divided fairly easily by the introductory formulae “wayyĕdabbĕr YHWH ʾel-Mōšeh lĕʾmōr (Yahweh spoke to Moses, saying)” (v. 1, 9, 23, 26, 33). Also, it is generally assumed that v. 2-3 is a secondary addition to this chapter which is itself a literary composite in light of the existence of two superscriptions (v. 2, 4). Noth points out that the first heading in v. 2, already composite in its inconsistent mixture of third and first persons for Yahweh, is followed by another in v. 4. Specifically, the double headings similarly characterize the miqrāʾ qōdeš (sacred proclamation) as Yahweh’s môʾădīm (fixed times). Also, Knohl reconstructs the original introduction (vv. 1, 2a, 4) to the list of festivals in Lev. 23, and asserts that the H editorial addition includes v. 2b and v. 3, as follows.

v. 2b móʾădē YHWH ʾāšer-tiqrēʾū ′ōtām miqrāʾē qōdeš ′ēlleh hēm móʾăday
(the fixed times of YHWH, which you shall proclaim as sacred proclamations, these are My fixed times.)

v. 3 šēšet yāmīm tēʾāšeḥ mēlāʾkā ʿābāyyōm haṣṣēbīʾī šabbat šabbātōn miqrāʾ-qōdeš kol-mēlāʾkā lōʾ taʾāsū šabbāt hiʾ laYHWH bĕkōl mōšēbōtēkem
(Six days shall work be done but on the seventh day is šabbat šabbātōn, a sacred proclamation; you shall do no work. It is Yahweh’s Sabbath in all your dwellings.)

It is comprehensible that primarily, the seventh-day Sabbath ordinance of v. 3 does not really belong to this annual festal-calendar, and it is deliberately inserted to the top of the original calendar, which reconstituted various elements of the feasts. However, as a recapitulation of his theory, Knohl assembles the stratification list of HS and PT and includes Lev. 23:2b-3, 9-22, 24-26, 28-32, 38-43 in H’s list and regards v. 4 as the P heading of the original calendar. Here, we must first clarify one issue with Knohl, initially raised by Milgrom, who claims that the Sabbath is not a móʾēd, even though it is called such in Lev. 23. Milgrom argues that the designation of “móʾădē YHWH ʾāšer-tiqrēʾū (Yahweh’s fixed times which you shall proclaim)” as distinctive H vocabulary and the omission of the required public sacrifices, pinpoint the exilic period as the time for the composition and insertion of the Sabbath pericope at the head of the festival calendar with his exilic theory. Therefore, according to him, the H redactor composed the framework not only of Lev. 23 but also Nu. 28-29 to indicate that the Sabbath is one of the móʾădē YHWH. He asserts, “The original P list subsumed all of the festivals under the heading “ʾēlleh móʾădē YHWH (v. 4).” I agree
that H demands the Sabbath as “mô’ādê YHWH,” but for a different reason.

Explicitly, this proclamation (with slight differences) recurring in v. 37\(^27\) indicates v. 4-37 should be regarded the body of the annual calendar. The proclamation of v. 4 designates the feasts as mô’ādê YHWH and migrā’ qôdeš by early H editors. That of v. 2b proclaims the seventh-day Sabbath as such with the designation of mô’āday by later H editors. Regarding the second Tabernacles passage (v. 39-43), which is close to the center section (v. 9-21) in manner and content,\(^28\) it is regarded as the H later addition.\(^29\) Lev. 23 itself features a blended product of historical process and traditional agricultural festivals, and the period of H’s activity can be divided into at least two stages. Knohl asserts that the formula “‘âni YHWH ʿĕlōhēkem I am Yahweh your God (vv. 22, 43),” which is characteristic of H, indicates that the sections (v. 9-22 and 38-43) stem from HS.\(^30\) In the former section, the H editors retain original traditions of the calendar but display various innovative elements as well. Now, the relationship between Lev. 23, Dt. 16 and other various sources must be examined.

3. H’s Harvest Festival Collection—v. 9-22

3-1. Šeba’ Šabbātôt—Seven Sabbaths

D promoted the custom of eating massōt material and the period of seven days, using an even more novel element, that of Yahweh’s redemptive action in Israelite history (Ex. 13:4; 23:15; 34:18).\(^31\) Over time, the seven-day hag massōt joined with the pesah was emphasized through D’s calendrical innovation (Dt. 16:1-7 [8]), but conventional P customs could not be ignored, so various materials were integrated into H’s inventive concept. The key example is v. 9-22, which represents a clear development of the older festal arrangements. This integral section describing the harvest does not name the feast, while D’s harvest festival is named “hag (feast) šābū’ōt (sevens/sevenness)”\(^32\) by the seven-multiplied expression of “šib’āh šābū’ōt (seven sevens) (Dt. 16:9-10).” This existent term has been traditionally rendered as “the feast of weeks,” interpreted in light of H’s counting system in Lev. 23:15-16.\(^33\) However, unlike in the earlier decree, H no longer employs D’s term of seven šābū’ōt, nor the name of the feast, as follows.

v. 15 ūsēpartem lākem mimmōhōrat haššabbāt miyyôm hābīʾākem ‘et-ʿōmer hattēnūpā šeba’ šabbātôt tēm ʿimōt tihyēnā

(You shall count for yourselves seven Sabbaths from the morrow after the Sabbath, from the day on which you bring the sheaf of the elevation offering; they shall be
Here, it is essential to explore how to characterize this harvest festival as shown in H’s own unique depiction of the Sabbath in the following points. First, H’s intentional phrasology, “šeba’ šabbātōt” which means “seven Sabbaths,” reveals H’s attachment to this term. Second is the question why H puts this nameless feast in the middle of the calendar. The reason is clarified on reading this section as one passage collected from the harvest traditions. The nature of this complex of traditions is substantiated by the key lexeme qṣr, 34 which means “reap, harvest” in the first and last verses (vv. 10, 22), 35 enclosing the stipulations of the harvest offerings. Primarily, in v. 10, H’s intention is to edify as to the notion of the land as Yahweh’s gift with D’s phraseology, “kı̂ -tābō’û ‘el-hā’āreṣ ‘āni nōtēn lākem (When you enter the land that I grant you),” 36 and express how to serve the ritual of harvest and present “‘ōmer rĕ’ šı̂ t qĕṣı̂ rĕlkem (the first sheaf of your harvest)” in light of priestly view. Furthermore, v. 11 defines the beginning of the ritual as “mimmōḥōrat haššabbāt (the morrow after the Sabbath),” and stipulates that “haššabbāt haššĕbı̂ ‘īt (the seventh Sabbath)” expresses the heart of this section, that is, the hope of the people looking forward to the harvest, with repetition of the H phrase “ḥuqqat ʿōlam lĕdōrōtêkem bĕkōl mōśēbōtēkem (an everlasting statute throughout your generations in all your dwellings)” 39 (vv. 14, 21). Also, Knohl includes “ūqērā’tem bĕ’ēsem hayyōm hazzeh (on that very day you shall proclaim)” in the H origin and differentiates it from the P phrase; “miqrā-qōdeš yihyeh lākem kol-mēle’ket ‘ābōdā lō’ ta’āsā (you shall hold a sacred proclamation; you must do no laborious work).” 40

Undoubtedly, H’s accurate phraseology “šeba’ šabbātōt (seven Sabbaths)” indicates H’s appropriation of D’s “ḥag šābū’ṭot (the feast of Sevenness)” in Dt. 16:9. Here, the term Sabbath is implicitly a double synonym for both “seven days,” and “the seventh day,” and the whole passage using “Sabbath” must have been re-constructed from the festal traditions. This must be validated through further examination. Linguistically, H’s idea of the longing for
the harvest during the period framed by these Seven Sabbaths can be regarded as crucial for a new understanding of the Sabbath. Of particular note is the fact that the counting of every seventh-day does not correspond to H’s annual calendar, in spite of H’s concern with the seventh Sabbath and the morrow, that is the fiftieth day, which corresponds to the fiftieth year. By the same token, this textual evidence betrays the erroneous rendering of “the feast of weeks.” It also indicates that the conventional interpretation of the second annual festival is based on the Deuteronomic sections.\(^4^1\) Andreas Schuele believes the Holiness Code is “a collection of legal and cultic materials from the First Temple period” considering “that one exception (Lev. 23:3) the Sabbath is not yet the seventh day of the week.” According to him, “the day of a particular festival is determined in relation to its preceding Sabbath, most likely understood as the day of the full moon in the middle of the month.”\(^4^2\) This suggestion raises a question about controversial terminology, “mimmōḥōrat haššabbāt (the morrow after the Sabbath vv. 11, 15, 16).”

3-2. Mimmōḥōrat Haššabbāt— the Morrow after the Sabbath

In the light of the literary context of this phrase, the possibility that the counting start-day can be associated with mimmōḥōrat haššabbāt connects v. 11-16 with the preceding v. 5-8; namely, the seven-day ḥag maṣṣōt following the paschal rite. Accordingly, most scholars interpret this terminology in the light of the prescriptions for ḥag maṣṣōt, which are succeeded by the ōmer rite. However, Karl William Weyde\(^4^3\) points out that v. 10ff. sets no specific date for the ōmer rite, the dating of which is conditionally dependent on regional differences of the climate. He contends that “it would be impossible to bring the sheaf of the first fruits to Yahweh at the same time.” According to him, the regionally dependent dating indicates Lev. 23 allows worship at local sanctuaries. Weyde quotes Milgrom who held the exilic H redactors as those who embraced the Sabbath as the only cultic ritual the community could celebrate together. Therefore, he asserts that “the day after the Sabbath” is “the day of the ōmer celebration” and can be several “weeks later than the ḥag maṣṣōt.” Even though I agree with him regarding the disconnection of the dating between ḥag maṣṣōt and the ōmer rite, his assertion based on the recurring Sabbath institution is problematic.

On the other hand, Gnana Robinson\(^4^4\) suggests that the morrow of “the full-moon night (his alleged Sabbath) in v. 5” is the first day of maṣṣōt, a work-off day, including a full Sabbath day (the 15th day). According to him, therefore, the counting start-day is the sixteenth day, and the seventh day of maṣṣōt (the 22nd day) in v. 8 is the second work-off and Sabbath day. This assumption can be accepted as a later interpretation, but the characteristics of v. 5-8 do not belong to H, but P (discussed later). Also, the fact that the
present calendar sets no specific date for the ‘ōmer rite and that the seventh day of massōt is not called the Sabbath makes his theory difficult.

As for this complex subject based on competing interpretations, Fishbane\(^45\) maintains that the striking onset of festivals in priestly sources points to some significance still accorded to lunar-especially full-moon phrases. He presents a conclusion that “the original meaning of šabbāt had long since fallen into obscurity, and that reference to it in Lev. 23:10-16 were interpreted inner-biblically and in terms of current usage.” Consequently, he emphasizes the importance of understanding Josh. 5:10-12 as a fulfillment of the prescription of Lev. 23:10-14. According to him, “Josh. 5:10-12 preserves eloquent witness to the fact that the old lunar sense of the term šabbāt was once current in priestly circles was the basis for ritual calculations towards Pentecost.” His rationale is that Joshua “preserves a covert exegetical clarification of the practical ritual sense of Lev. 23:10-16; and that it does so in the context of a descriptive historical narrative which purports to be a fulfillment of the prescriptive command of proper ritual procedure ‘when you come into the land.’” Thus, he suggests that the Sabbath in Lev. 23:10-16 was identified with the Passover that was the spring full moon. I agree with the traditional interpretation of the šabbāt and pesaḥ on the full moon.\(^46\) This evidence indicates H’s theology, not D’s, but his explanation needs further examination on the relevant terms in light of the literary context, such as “bē’ėṣem hayyōm hazzeḥ (on that very day Josh. 5:11; Lev. 23)\(^47\) and the significance of the verb šabāt (Josh. 5:12).

Furthermore, another problem lies regarding “massōt wēqālûy (unleavened bread and parched grain, Josh. 5:11) and qālûy (Lev. 23:14).” As Noth points out the peculiar expression “massōt wēqālûy” in Josh. 5:10-12 differs from P’s divine commandment of the Passover (Ex. 12:1 ff.).\(^48\) However, in my opinion, it is not D’s divine commandment in contrast to Noth’s assumption.

Explicitly, the difficulty lies in the identification of the word šabbāt, which is not identified with the seventh day, except in v. 3, and the calendar cannot apply to the recurring seventh day. My assumption, as mentioned already, is that Lev. 23 is a complex of variant sources and that H’s concept of šabbāt as a synonym for seven days, the seventh day and presumably the full-moon day is not fixed yet at this point. However, this section in question undoubtedly presents a phase of cultic innovation through means of H’s significant factors.

4. H’s Scheme for the Sacred Calendar
4-1. Šabbātōn as a Catalyst for the Sacred Feast
H’s original terminology, *šabbātôn*, must be first clarified before exploring the individual factors. Robinson points out the atoning character of the seventh month, during which the important and religious activities were held (Dt. 31:10 ff). However, his argument proceeds without differentiating between the crucial traits of P and H in Lev. 23. Thus, in my extensive review of academic literature, I have yet to find a correct definition of *šabbātôn* to develop a conclusive idea on the formulation of the seventh-day Sabbath. Thus, based on the eleven cases found in the Bible, I would like to explicate my definition of *šabbātôn*. The term *šabbātôn* is linked to the following periods of “time.”

(1) “the seventh” **day** (Ex. 16:23, 31:15, 35:2; Lev. 23:3)
(2) the first (Lev. 23:24), tenth (Lev. 16:31; 23:32), 15th and 22nd day (the first and eighth day of the festival) (Lev. 23:39 [twice]) of “the seventh” **month**
(3) “the seventh” **year** (Lev. 25:4, 5)

First and foremost, we must ascertain the definition of “*šabbātôn*” from the above examples, which are applied to “the seventh” day, month, and year, only appearing in the books of Exodus and Leviticus. Four cases of the seventh-day Sabbath are found, but as for Leviticus, the definition of the seventh-day Sabbath is limited to only Lev. 23:3. The idiom, *šabbat šabbātôn*, is employed to all the seventh-day Sabbaths (except in the fourth commandment), the tenth day of the seventh month (Lev. 16:31; 23:32) and the seventh-year Sabbath for the land (Lev. 25:4). The single term *šabbātôn* is attested in once to the seventh year, and in three cases to the seventh month: the first day as “*zikārōn tērūʿ ā* (a memorial with alarm blasts) (Lev. 23:24),” and the 15th and 22nd of the month as the first and last days of “*ḥag sūkkōt* (the Feast of the Booths)” (Lev. 23:39 [twice]).” Thus, it is noteworthy that the single *šabbātôn* occurs in only the seventh month of this calendar. (On the other hand, except vv. 3, 9-22, 32, *šabbāt* does not appear alone in this festal calendar.)

The term *šabbātôn* is generally supposed to be the noun for observing the Sabbath, derived from the verb *šābat*. However, I assume that the form of the abstract noun becomes *šabbātôn* in Hebrew, with three vowels using the particularizing suffix -on, giving the form a characteristic aspect different from the previous *šabbāt*. In short, it seems to describe the concept which really characterizes “Yahweh’s holiness,” not the paganized full moon *šabbāt*. The aim of projecting *šabbātôn* onto the festal calendar is not an appeal to abstain and rest from work but to emphasize the holiness of the seventh. In this light, H definitely designated the seventh month as *šabbātôn*.

On the other hand, *pesaḥ laYHWH* (the fourteenth day) and *ḥag hammassōt laYHWH*
(the fifteenth day) in “the first month”\textsuperscript{56} are not designated as šabbātôn, despite the fact that the prohibition of work is enjoined in Lev. 23:7-8 as follows.

\textsuperscript{v. 7} bayyôm hārīʾšôn miqrā-qōdeš yihyeh lākem kol-mēle ’ket ʿābōdā lōʾtaʾāsū  
(The first day shall be for you a sacred proclamation, you shall do no laborious work.)

\textsuperscript{v. 8} wēhiqrabtem ʾiššeh laYHWH šibʿat yāmīm ūbayyôm haššēbīʾi’i miqrā’-qōdeš kol-mēle ’ket ʿābūd lōʾtaʾāsū  
(Seven days you shall present a fire offering to Yahweh and on the seventh day, a sacred proclamation, you shall do no laborious work.)

Why are neither the first day (the full moon day) nor seventh day in the first month designated šabbāt or šabbātôn? Here, Knohl’s estimation that v. 5-8 is ascribed to P, not H, comes into consideration. Also, it is true to the ḥag sūkkōt in v. 34-36.\textsuperscript{57} That is to say that for P the sacred day is not šabbāt nor šabbātôn but miqrā’ qōdeš.

4-2. \textit{Miqrā Qōdeš—a Sacred Proclamation}

Obviously, miqrā’ qōdeš pertains to the strict prohibition of work in order to participate in the sacred (the secular work is abstained from). We can confirm that the full-moon festivals in the first and seventh months are proclaimed as miqrā qōdeš by P, while the New Moon and the Sabbath are not (Nu. 28:9-15). However, some claim that the recurring seventh-day Sabbath is not equivalent to the feasts.\textsuperscript{58} As for the terminology in the above, Milgrom repeats that the Sabbath is neither a mōʾēd nor a miqrā’ qōdeš, because the people were already familiar with it and its fixed customs.\textsuperscript{59} According to him, all responsibility belongs to his hypothetical author in the Exile who had to adapt the terminology of miqrā’ qōdeš in order to stress the complete Sabbath rest (Ex. 35:2), which is incumbent on Israel. Moreover, he maintains that the speciality of the Sabbath should demand the comprehensive prohibition of work (kol-mēlāʾkā). Also, according to Knohl, the function of šabbātôn is assigning great importance to the prohibition of work on the Sabbath. His contention is “HS assigns great importance to the prohibition of work on the Sabbath, whereas PT ignores this aspect completely.”\textsuperscript{60} Following him, Milgrom states that the work prohibition on the Sabbath is missing in P’s festal calendar, in contrast to the other festivals (Nu. 28:18, 25, 26; 29:1, 7, 12, 35).\textsuperscript{61}

However, the crucial difference is that unlike the other festivals, neither the Sabbath nor the New Moon are conceived by P as a miqrā’ qōdeš. That is to say, for P, the Sabbath has the same status as the New Moon. That is why H in Lev. 23 explicitly ignores the sacrifice of the
conventional full-moon Sabbath as well as the New Moon as found in Nu. 28. Whereas H introduces an even more novel interpretation when incorporating the cultic materials from the earlier traditions, not necessarily restricted to the exilic situation. Šabbā tôn does not necessarily indicate the prohibition of work without miqrā’ qôdeš (Lev. 23:39 [twice]). In regard to this inconsistency, Milgrom explains the lack of prohibition in v. 39: “the term šabbā tôn implies a minor Sabbath (except in the completed šabbat šabbā tôn) when minor, non-occupational work is permitted.” Conversely, however, examining this annual calendar, without the foundational presupposition of the seventh-day Sabbath, shows the opposite conclusion. I assert that the process of the Sabbath conceptualization should be reversed. H’s systematic scheme starts as follows. First, the Sabbath as well as other festivals was defined commensurately with “Yahweh’s mô’êd and miqrâ’ê qôdeš (Lev. 23:4).” Subsequently, H coined the new terminology šabbā tôn, which appears alone in reference to the first day of the seventh month as zikārôn têrû’â (v. 24), and the first and eighth day of the seventh month to the seven-day ḥag sûkkôt transformed (v. 39 [twice]), is not minor.

Therefore, Milgrom’s view is not supported by a wider review of the scriptures. The H editors seem to have evolved their first systematic scheme to bring together miqrâ’ qôdeš and šabbā tôn, the two notions which have become identical in content. The former which holds significance of holiness different from D’s reinforces the nature of the concept of the latter. Thus, for H, the role of miqrâ’ qôdeš is innovated. Also, the basic characteristic of the root šbt is the cessation of work, but both primarily demand holiness. Such a notion as the work prohibition comes as the result of strict holiness’ demands.

4-3. Yôm Kippûrı̂m and Šabbat Šabbā tôn—The Birth of New Concepts from the Tenth Day

Now, we have to consider the crux of this paper: How does H encourage the people’s holiness? H, for whom šabbā tôn has a special trait, considers the scheme more enlightening on all sacred occasions. The date designation is one feature of the priestly document, while the notion of a sacred number is arbitrary. In the original P stipulations seven days is not holy; impurity lasts seven days, which is regarded as the period of purgation, and on the eighth day a sin offering must be brought to the priest (Ex. Lev. 15:14-15, 28-30). Eventually, P’s festival calendar related this period to the full-moon day. Specifically, P designated as miqrâ’ qôdeš the first and last day based on the full-moon day of the first and seventh months (Ex. 12:16 [twice]; Lev. 23:7, 8, 35, 36; Nu. 28:18, 25; 29:12). Thus, the prohibition of work on the first, seventh and eighth day is enjoined by the designation of a miqrâ’ qôdeš. One corresponding specific formula “kol-mêle'ket ʿābôdh lō'ya'āśû (you shall
do no laborious work)” is employed in Lev. 23:7, 8, 35, 36; Nu 28:18, 25; 29:12.66

The experience of the exiles changed the transition of the sacred time. The crucial change influenced the liturgical calendar, in which ḥag sūkkōt (Lev. 23:34)67 of the biggest annual harvest is preceded by Yôm Kippūrîm on the tenth of the seventh month (v. 27).68 Significantly, this dating corresponds to the stipulation of the tenth day of the first month for the pesah preparation in Ex. 12:3. It is commanded to “ḵōl ṭādat yîšrâ’ēl (all the congregation of Israel).”69 Knohl appropriately suggests that as H’s characteristic phrase, “the repetitive resumption of lēdōrōtēkem ḥuqqat ʿōlam (Ex. 12:14, 17)”70 brackets the seven-day ḥag maṣṣōt (v. 15-16).71 Noticeable are the severe penalties: “wēnikrētā hannel枇̄ē šahih’ miyîšrâ’ēl (v. 15: that soul shall be cut off from Israel.),” and miqra-qōdeš (v. 16 [twice]), which does not appear apart from here in Exodus, with the expression “kol-mēlā’kā lō’ yēqāše (no work shall be done).”72 Undoubtedly, the traditional purgation theology73 is expanded by placing its dating and more emphasis on holiness through the addition of stricter injunctions. Furthermore, the main focus shifts to the tenth of the seventh month.74

As a point of departure, the tenth day is designated as miqra’ qōdeš enjoined with the total prohibition of work: “kol-mēlā’kā lō’ taʿāšû (you shall not do any work) (Lev. 23:28; 31; Nu. 29:7).” The enjoined concept is definitely related to not only the severe prohibition of secular activities, also to a self-affliction formula such as the strict phrases: “wēʾinnīṭem ṭet -napšōtēkem (you shall afflict your souls) (Lev. 23:27, 32; Nu. 29:7).”75 In this purifying stipulation, the tenth day of the seventh month is designated as Yôm Kippūrîm (the Day of Purgation)76 by the H editors (Lev. 23: 28b).77 Furthermore, H’s intention is integrated in this sacred tenth day, the holiness of which is emphasized as šabbat šabbātōn, as the tenth day of the seventh month (Lev. 23:27-32).78 It is the completed šabbat šabbātōn (v. 32), the repetitive sound ša of which emphasizes holiness.

It must be noted that this phrase does not indicate a specific date, whereas Yôm Kippūrîm indicates specified the tenth of the seventh month and is couched as the commencement of the Jubilee year (Lev. 25:9). Also, the significance of šabbat šabbātōn is interpolated at the end of Lev. 16 as the center of Leviticus (16:29-34).79 Lev. 16:29 addresses the people directly to observe “ḫuqqat ʿōlam (an everlasting statute)” on the tenth day of the šabbātōn month. Thus, šabbat šabbātōn acquires a critical place and significance in the ritual legislation combined with H’s intention as follows.

v. 29 wēḥāyētā läkem lēhuqqat ʿōlām baḥōdeš haḥshēbīʿī beʾāsōr laḥōdeš tēʾannū et-napšōtēkem wēkol-mēlāʾkā lōʾ taʿāšû hāʾezrāḥ wēḥaggēr haggār bētōkēkem
(It shall be an everlasting statute to you: in the seventh month, on the tenth of the month,
you shall afflict your souls and do no work at all, the native and the alien who resides among you.)

v. 30 ki bayyôm hazzeh yēkappēr ālēkem lētahēr 'etkem mikkōl ḥattō’tēkem lipnē YHWH tithārū
(For on that day purgation shall be effected on your behalf to purify you; you shall become pure from all your sins before Yahweh.)

v. 31 šabbat šabbātōn hī’ lākem wē’innītem ‘et-napšōtēkem ḥuqqat ‘ōlām
(It is šabbat šabbātōn to you, and you shall afflict your souls; it is an everlasting statute.)

The injunction corresponds to the phraseology of Lev. 23:27-32 and gives no reference of the seventh day. However, the equality of the sojourner and the purification of the people are enjoined. Intrinsically, the purgation ritual itself contains the most significant element: how we are to prepare for “kābôd yehwh (Yahweh’s presence).” It is the climax of the priestly theology and H’s aim. In Ex. 24:16, the preceding period of six days is completed on the seventh day, which encourages the people’s holy worship, intensifying the salvific faith. This six-seventh day scheme is already utilized in Ex. 23:12; 34:21, in which the verb šābat represents the work-off commandment. It also appears with a didactic modification in Josh. 6:3-4; 14-15. Here it must be affirmed that this trajectory of seven or six-seventh formulas may have led to H’s new concept of šabbat šabbātōn and the seventh-day Sabbath commandment holds the heading position in H’s festal calendar (Lev. 23:3).

5. Conclusion

The H editors elevate Yahweh’s sacred calendar through various innovations. Each H editor presents his own new interpretation respectively using such integral elements as mōʾēd, miqrāʾ qōdeš, and (šabbat) sabbātōn. The formation of Lev. 23 begins with gathering of the conventional feasts that were closely connected with “Yahweh’s mōʾēd and miqrāʾ ḍeš (v. 4).” Consequently, the resonance of šeba’ (seven) and šabbāt in the middle section is ticking Yahweh’s time with strong echoes mutually rebounding (v. 15-16). It impacts the reckoning of time, although we cannot deny that it is a rhetorical expression. However, the crux of H’s intention is not the feasts’ dating but the Israelites’ sacred worship to Yahweh, who demands the prohibition of foreign gods and moon worship. The purgation commandment is most rigidly enjoined to the people as well as priests (v. 27-32; 16:29-34). The present form of Lev. 23, which represents various aspects of the cultic traditions, is reconstituted by injecting the
seventh-day šabbat šabbātōn in the opening words (v. 3). It is declared as Yahweh’s Sabbath by the final H editors.

Wellhausen says: “The undesigned preponderance gained by the Sabbath may have ultimately given it independence, and led to the reckoning of time by regular intervals of seven days without regard to new moon, with which [the Sabbath] came into collision, instead of, as formerly, being supported by [the new moon]. In the end, even its name came to be interpreted as if derived from the verb ‘to rest.’… The highest development, amounting even to a change of quality, is seen in the Priestly Code.”

In the above, if we substitute Holiness for Priestly, no better comment than this is to be found. However, the above discussion indicates that the main thrust of H’s work was still in the transitional stage and H’s position was not stable during its period of activity. Much more still remains to be investigated. Above all, it is essential to explore the process of interpolating šabbat šabbātōn and the six-seventh day scheme with the aim of elucidating their roles in the course of the biblical formation.

Notes

*Abbreviations

Theological Dictionary of the Old Testament (=TDOT), Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1974-.

1 The following abbreviations are traditionally employed: P (referring to the Priestly material in the Pentateuch), D (Deuteronomist material), J (the Jahwist), E (the Elohist), H (the Holiness Code).

2 Julius Wellhausen, Prolegomena to the History of Ancient Israel: with a reprint of the article Israel from the Encyclopaedia Britannica preface by W. R. Smith (Meridian Books, 1957 [1878]), pp. 52-120. Wellhausen’s influential theory is based on the three-fold development through the historicization of agricultural festivals into P feasts. He suggests an earlier stage in which the sacrifice of the firstling belonged to the primitive pesah. In other words, the insight that common laws governed the development of religious practice from primitive to higher forms was applied to the Bible, particularly to the rite of pesah and first-born. Many scholars do not agree, presumably due to the terminology; primitive or higher.


4 Wellhausen, op. cit., p. 83 “InJE and D there is a rotation of three festivals. Easter and Pentecost mark the beginning and the end of the corn−harvest.” Also see p. 86 “seven weeks after Easter (Dt 16: 9),” p. 99 “during Easter week and also on the day of Pentecost,” and p. 101 “Easter falls upon the fifteenth, that is, at full moon, of the first, the feast of tabernacles upon the same day of the seventh month; Pentecost, which, strange to say, is left undetermined in Num. 28, falls, according to Lev. 23, seven weeks after Easter.” German original version: Ostern fällt auf den 15. Tag, d. h. auf den Vollmond, des ersten Monats, Laubhütten auf den selben, pp. 96-97. However, the terminology of Easter by his interpretation is not based on the Hebrew text, nor the Greek one.

In spite of this evidence, Haran claims that “since the substantive ‘week’, sabuot, in the plural, is associated with the name of this feast not only in P H, and D.” Menahem Haran, Temples and Temple Service in Ancient Israel (Oxford, 1978), p. 295.

Hans-Joachim Kraus, Worship in Israel: a cultic history of the Old Testament, tr. G. Buswell (John Knox, 1966), p. 55. Also see p. 57, “We cannot now discover the original meaning of this ‘seven-week period’.”

7 Gerhard von Rad, The Problem of the Hexateuch, and other essays, tr. E.W. Trueman Dicken (Oliver & Boyd, 1966 [1938]), pp. 42-43. von Rad asserts that “the tribute of agricultural produce envisaged by Dt. 26 corresponds to that of Ex. 23:16; 34:22 and Lev. 23:17, so that according to the ancient Israelite calendar the ceremony in question was observed at the Feast of Weeks.” He utilizes this counting system of summing up fifty days, which comes from Lev. 23:15-16, demonstrating his creed theory.


10 The complex in Lev. 17-26 customarily has been called the Holiness Code, due to God’s holiness addressed to the Israelites in general “qêdôšîm tîhyû kî qâdôš ‘ănî YHWH ‘êlônêkem (You shall be holy, for I Yahweh your God am holy).”

11 Wellhausen (op. cit., pp. 376-80) argues that Lev. 17-26 takes its starting-point from the JE legislation, and modifies it in the manner of D. According to him, H’s concerns with ethical behavior are uncharacteristic of P. Also, he (p. 384) states, “the fact that the last edition of the Law of H proceeds from the P Code” derives from “the use of Lev. 23:9–22 in this connection is completely justified by the consideration that only in this way do the rites it describes find meaning and vitality” (p. 86, n. 1). As Knohl mentions, “[Wellhausen] believed that H constitutes an intermediate stage between J, E, and D sources and the P source,” for Wellhausen H’s agricultural worship shows signs of the previous stage to “the creation of P.” (Israel Knohl The Sanctuary of Silence: the priestly Torah and the holiness school (Fortress Press, 1995 [1992]), p. 4.)

12 Kaufmann, op. cit., pp. 175-80 (esp., pp. 175-6).

13 Moshe Weinfeld, Deuteronomy and the Deuteronomic school (Oxford University Press, 1972), pp. 179-243. He claims, “Had P been dependent on D—as Wellhausen assumed—then we should be able to discern this dependence in verbal and conceptual parallels, but no such dependence has yet been convincingly demonstrated (p. 180).”

In my view, the festal calendar in D indicates the above transformation, and the features in D16:9-10 can be evaluated as evidence that the details had not yet been fixed in contrast with later H editors in Lev. 23.

Knohl critically examines the concept of God and cult in the P Torah (op. cit., esp. pp. 124-67) and explains about HS (Holiness School)’s essential features different from P (esp. pp. 168-98). He asserts that this holiness legislation refers to laws outside of Leviticus. For Knohl’s terminology of HS, such designations are usually associated with particular schools. In this paper, I have chosen to use a more general division of (earlier and later) H. According to him, PT’s period of activity was about two and a half centuries, from the time of David and Solomon down to the reign of Ahaz. HS’s period of activity fell between 743 and 701 BC.


Knohl represents H phraseologies characteristic of the elements of this chapter that are HS origin and details difference between the language of PT and the language of HS. Knohl, op. cit., esp. pp. 106-10.

Knohl, op. cit., p. 8.

Compare “מֹדָד (my fixed times)” in v. 2 with v. 4: ’הָלֶה מֹדָד יְהֹウェָה מִיכְרָא’-קּוֹדֶשׁ ‘אָשֶר-תִּקְרֶרְעָה ’וֹתָם בֵּמֹדָד (These are Yahweh’s fixed times, sacred proclamations, you shall proclaim at their fixed time).


The technical term, מִיכְרָאָה קּוֹדֶש occurs 19 times: Ex. 12:16, 16; Lev. 23:2 3, 4, 7, 8, 21, 24, 27, 35, 36, 37; Nu. 28:18, 25, 26; 29:1, 7, 12. מִיכְרָאָה קּוֹדֶש means literally “sacred proclamation” and the expression regularly bound up with the work-prohibition. It is generally rendered as a “holy convocation” (KJV, JPS, NRSVA etc.) Noth (op. cit., p. 168) mentions that the technical term מִיכְרָאָה קּוֹדֶש means literally “holy calling,” which does not mean “holy feast-assembly.” David Wright (ABD, v. 3, pp. 243-44) states that מִיכְרָאָה קּוֹדֶש means “declaration of, call for, summoning to holiness” rather than “holy convocation.” Knohl’s rendering is “proclaimed holiness.” Note Lev. 23:2, 4, 37 מִיכְרָאָה (m. pl. cstr.) קּוֹדֶש.


Ibid., pp. 104-6.

Milgrom, The Case for the Pre-Exilic and Exilic Provenance of the Book of Exodus, Leviticus and Numbers in Reading the Law (T & T Clark, 2007), pp. 48-49. Also see Leviticus 23-27, esp. pp. 1953-59. Milgrom attributes an editorial interpolation of the Sabbath passages to the exilic period. According to him, they are located in the interstices between the instructions and building of the sanctuary, telling signs that their author is the H redactor, who “lived among the exiles in Babylonia, where the temple and the sacrificially bound מֹדָד of Lev. 23:4-38 and Nu. 28-29 were inoperative.” Also, he (1953-54) asks appropriately, “Why, then, has H found it so urgent to go against accepted usage and label the Sabbath a מֹדָד?” To which he replies as the only logical answer: the H redactor “had no choice; he was citing Ex. 35:2 (H).” He explains about “two major differences between the two passages: the death penalty (Ex. 35:2; cf. 31:15) is dropped, and the phrase בֶּכֹל מֹשֶבֶהוֹדֶק ‘throughout your settlements’ is borrowed from the following verses (Ex. 35:3; it does not appear in Ex. 31:12-17).”

Milgrom, Leviticus 1-16, p. 19. Milgrom states, “Knohl shows convincingly that the Sabbath prescription in 23:2b-3 is an H interpolation into an original P list of festivals. That is, in this
passage, H innovates the notion that the Sabbath is a mîqrâ’ qôdeš and a day of rest (1987: 72-77). What Knohl fails to notice is that H’s innovation also consists in labeling the Sabbath a mô’êd. Whereas the original P list subsumed all of the festivals under the heading “‘êlleh mô’êdê YHWH (v. 4.).”

Verse 37a reads, “‘êlleh mô’êdê YHWH ’âsér-tiqrê’û ’ôtnâm mîqrâ’ê -qôdeš (These are Yahweh’s fixed times, which you shall proclaim as sacred occasions).” See Milgrom, Leviticus 23-27, 2033.

27 See Noth, op. cit., p. 175.

28 Knohl (op. cit., p. 56) attributes to the late H editors v. 38, which was added to the original conclusion (v. 37) to account for the lack of sacrifices in the Sabbath interpolation (v. 3).


30 Martin Noth, A History of Pentateuchal Traditions (Prentice-Hall, Inc. Englewood Cliffs, N. J., 1972[1948]), pp. 48-49. Noth discusses the Passover in the Deuteronomic law (Dt. 16:1, 3, 6) and in other Deuteronomistic passages (Ex. 12:26, 27a; 13:3, 8f., 14-16; 23:15=34:18) as the example of “bringing of Israel out of Egypt.”

31 The expression of ḥag šabbâ’ôt occurs in Ex. 34:22; Dt. 16:10, 16; 2Ch. 8:13. It is conventionally called “the feast of Weeks.” However, the habituation of week system makes us fail to notice that the seven-day unit is nowhere mentioned as a division of the year before the Book of Jubilees (as mentioned earlier). The term šabbâ’ôt is attested 20 times (the above verses and Gen. 29:27; 28; Lev 12:5; Nu. 28:26; Dt. 16:9, 9; Jer.5:24; Ezek. 45:21; Dan. 9:24, 25, 26, 27, 27; 10:2, 3, 8). This alluded second annual festival is generally identified as ḥag haqqāṣir (Ex. 23:16) at the time of the first fruits of the harvest (Lev. 23:10), because of offering the firstlings in Ex. 34:22; Nu. 28:26; Dt. 16:9-12. However, Milgrom, (Leviticus 23-27, p. 1990) points out that ḥag šabbâ’ôt, first appears in the deuteronomistic sources (Dt. 16:10, 16; Ex. 34:22). Also, Milgrom (1991-92) who remarks on “Nu. 28:26: šabbâ’ôt haqqāṣir minhâ hâdâsâ bēšabbâ’ôtēkem,” points out “the unique expression šabbâ’ôtēkem, a suffixed “your” betrays the existence of more than one date for the festival.” I maintain that basically šabbâ’ôt means a “seven day unit” and not a “week” in a calendrical sense. It must be noted that ḥag šabbâ’ôt in its present form is estimated as the seven-day observance, because the term, šabbâ’ôt, can be regarded as the emphatic plural form of the symbolic seven, šabbâ’at for the Deuteronomist offering date. See also Frank Crusemann, Torah: Theology and Social History of Old Testament Law tr. Allan W. Mahnke, (Fortress Press, 1996), p. 133. He states, “Because of its name, it is often called the ‘festival of sevenness’ šabbû’ot.”

32 E. Otto, TDOT, v.14, p. 366. Otto states that “the different dates for the Feast of Weeks proposed in late Israelite and early Jewish circles derive from the different interpretations of mimnhâhôrat haššabbât in Lev. 23:12), 15, interpretations leading to differing solutions to the mediation of the festival calendar with the week-based structure that was not really carried through in the biblical tradition itself.”

33 The verb and noun qêṣêt occurs in Lev. 23:10, 22, while the frequency of the verb in Pentateuch is 6 times (Lev.19:9; 23:10. 22; 25:5, 11; Dt. 24:9) and that of the noun is 11times (Gen. 8:22; 30:14; 45:6; Ex. 23:16; 34:21-22; Lev.19:9; 23:10. 22; 25:5, 11; Dt. 24:9).

34 v. 10... qêsâratem ‘et-qêsîríḥ wahâbê’tem ‘et-‘omer rē’sît qêsîrêkem ‘el-hâkkêhê (you reap its
harvest, you shall bring the first sheaf of your harvest to the priest.)

v. 22 ūḇqsrkem ʿet-ḡēṣṭr ʿarsḵem lōʾ tēḵalleh... bēqēṣyek... lōʾ tēlqagēt lēʾānty wēlāqēr taʿāzōb otam tānī YHWH ēlōhēkem (And when you reap the harvest of your land, you shall not complete... when you reap I Yahweh am your God.)

36 Weinfeld, op. cit., see the D phraseology list in p. 342. It is important to compare Lev. 23:10; 25:2 with Dt. 26.

37 The term wēḥēnîp, yēnîpennū>nūp is a special contribution. Milgrom, (Leviticus 1-16, pp. 461-73) concludes that is an actual or symbolic elevation rite of dedication.

38 Noth (Leviticus, p. 170) postulates that the expression “ʿel-hakkōhēn” is based on the ancient sentence.

39 The phraseology bēḵōl mōsēbōḵēkem occurs in vv. 3, 14, 17, 21, 31 in this chapter.


41 The expression “three times in a year” occurs in Ex. 23:14, 17; 34:23, 24; Dt. 16:16 and 1 K. 9:25; 2Ch. 8:13. This phraseology can be considered as D terminology and general interpretation regarding “three times of feasts” derived from the D documents. Lev. 23 does not refer to three feasts, and the precisely dated feasts are found in the first and seventh months. I assert that this is not a literal three times, but rather a rhetoric expression of the frequency of times.

42 Schuele, NIDB, v. 5, pp. 4-5. However, he admits the most notable exception is yōm hakippūrîm (the Day of Purgation), which is itself called a ʿabbāt sabbātōn (v. 32), although it does not fall on a full moon day.


44 Gnana Robinson, The Origin and Development of the Old Testament Sabbath (P. Lang, 1972), pp. 379-82. According to Robinson’s counting, the fourteenth evening (pesah) i.e. the full moon night of the fifteenth day, the Sabbath (v. 5) and the first day of massōṭ (the fifteenth day) is a work-off day and a full Sabbath day.

45 Michael Fishbane, Biblical Interpretation in Ancient Israel (Clarendon Press, 1988 [1985]), pp. 145-51. However, Fishbane (pp. 166-67), regarding the phrase in Lev. 23:15, suggests “that the noun ʿabbāt also meant ‘week’ in the biblical period. A comparison of Lev. 23:15 with Dt. 16:9 supports this observation…. The two prescriptions show both a traditional formulation (‘you shall count’) and a significant variation.”

46 The transformation of the Passover narrative: the morrow of the Passover in Josh. 5:10-12 might have caused the concept of the Sabbath to be changed. That is the morrow of the Sabbath, the day of the first-fruit offering.

47 Knohl, op. cit., p. 13. He suggests that the verse “bēʾēṣem hayyōm hazeh (on that very/same day)” is characteristic of the elements of HS origin (Lev. 23: 14, 21, 28, 29, 30). Cf. Gen. 7:13; 17:23, 26; Ex. 12:17, 41, 51; Dt. 32:48.


49 Robinson (op. cit., pp. 349-52) emphasizes Yahweh’s Sabbath as the impact of Yahweh’s kingship ideology, states that the word “ṣabbātōn” could be applied to any day which has an atoning or sanctifying character, independent of the full-moon day. According to Robinson, Dt. 31:10ff, the release seventh-year also commenced in the seventh month, with the festival sukōkāt. Both in Babylon and in Israel, the seventh month” was the holiest of all the months. However, he argues that
P, “for whom the number seven acquires a special atoning character,” seems to have considered all those solemn occasions in the seventh month as šabbātōn.

50 Niels-Erik A. Andreasen, The Old Testament Sabbath (Society of Biblical Literature for the Form Criticism Seminar, 1972), pp. 72-73, 111-113. He claims that “there is general agreement among Semitists that šabbātōn is a denominative of šabbāt,” and the term šabbātōn is not the superlative noun and “does not carry any idea of propitiation.” Also, according to him, “it seems to describe that which really characterize the Sabbath or any other day which has Sabbath qualities.” His conclusion is “that šabbātōn describes the content of the Sabbath, i.e., it is an abstraction of “keeping Sabbath,” used only in the late literature of P and H.” Moreover, he assumes “that the priestly circles found certain qualities in the Sabbath institution, probably abstention from work, which would justify the use of the name for these feast days.”

Morgenstern, IDB, v. 4, p. 140.


Milgrom, Leviticus 1-16, pp. 1057-58; Leviticus 17-22 (Yale University Press, 2000), pp. 1405-6; Leviticus 23-27, pp. 1959, 2013-14, 2018-19, 2036, 2040, 2056-58. Milgrom writes an exhaustive study dissecting, deliberating and defending his interpretation of the Sabbath. His work is the valuable guidance for my research, but his assertion, based on his reading of šabbāt as “rest,” is that the construct chain šab at šabbātōn (as a superlative form) means literally “the most restful rest.”

Knohl, op. cit., pp. 17, 35.


Budd, op. cit., pp. 237, 319.

Schuele, NIDB (2009), v. 5, p. 5.

Christophe Nihan, From Priestly Torah to Pentateuch (Mohr Siebeck, 2007), p. 567.


51 The phraseology of “šēn at (year) šabbātōn,” occurs only in Lev. 25:5, which designates the seventh year as Yahweh’s Sabbath.

52 Some scholars (ex. Noth, Leviticus, 172) interpret Lev. 23:24 as the New Year’s Day but the text explicitly defines not the first month, but the seventh month (ḥōdeš haššēbī’ti) as “šabbātōn zikārōn tērû’ā miqrā-gōdeš.” I assert that the blast of the horn means not necessarily the New Year’s Day, but the proclamation of the significant day. The same hold true also for Lev. 25:9.

53 Here, this name “ḥag sākkārī” comes from Lev. 23:34.

54 Knohl follows this idea and asserts that “The term šabbātōn, which indicates the prohibition of labor, is unquestionably derived from šābat.” (Knohl, op. cit., p. 35.)

56 Frank M. Cross, *Canaanite Myth and Hebrew Epic* (Harvard University Press, 1997 [1973]), pp. 105, 123. He argues that two New Year’s festivals in early Israel were celebrated at different sanctuaries, or periods and seasons; in the fall and the spring.

57 v. 35 bayyōm hārî ʾsōn mīqrāʾ-qōdeš kol-mēleʾ kēt ʿābōdā lōʾaʾāšū v. 36 šibʾat yāmīm taqribāʾ ʿiṣṣeh laYHWH bayyōm haʾššmînî mīqrāʾ-qōdeš yīyeh läkem wēhiqraḥtem ʿiṣṣeh laYHWH kol-mēleʾ kēt ʿābōdā lōʾaʾāšū ʿāseret hīʾ kol-mēleʾ kēt ʿābōdā lōʾaʾāšū (v. 35) The first day shall be a sacred proclamation; you shall do no laborious work. v. 36 Seven days you shall present a fire offering to Yahweh. On the eighth day, you shall observe a sacred proclamation and you shall present a fire offering to Yahweh. It is a solemn assembly, you shall do no laborious work.)

58 See Noth’s contention that the Sabbath-ordinance does not belong to the feast (*Leviticus*, p. 166).

59 Milgrom (*Leviticus* 23-27, pp. 1953-78) claims that “the Sabbath erroneously termed mōʾādim in the heading and subscript,” through the presupposition of the seventh-day Sabbath that is a “sacred occasion,” a day of rest for Yahweh, and a šabbat šabbāthōn “complete day of rest.” He saw no need to label the Sabbath as mōʾādim or mīqrāʾ qōdeš, as he viewed its origins going back to antiquity, and rejects editing which added this phrase as attempts to modify or interpret the Sabbath beyond his view of its original form. In short, he asserts the occurrence of the Sabbath is calculated by God, expending considerable time defending why it isn’t an appointed time. Whereas, the designated festivals, set in harmony with the lunar calendar, were to be calculated by man. However, it is clear from the outset that he is arguing from the stance of his presupposition of the weekly Sabbath. His discussion (esp. pp. 2034-35) goes on the rationale that the Sabbath is not mōʾēd, but, Lev. 23:2b-3 is the product of the latest (exilic) H stratum (H), which wanted to incorporate the Sabbath into “mōʾādē laYHWH.” He states, “The Sabbath is scrupulously distinguished from the mōʾēd in all the biblical sources, and it is independent of the lunar month, falling on every seventh day, it is not a mīqrāʾ, a proclamation day, its arrival need not be announced.”

60 Knohl, *op. cit.*, p. 122.


62 Milgrom, *ibid.*, p. 2040. “Perhaps because šabbat šabbāthōn ‘rest’ implies a prohibition against work, the injunction kol- mēleʾ kēt ʿābōdā lōʾaʾāšū ‘you shall do no laborious work’ (v. 36b) need not be repeated. That the term šabbat šabbāthōn implies a minor Sabbath (except in the completed šabbat šabbāthōn) when minor, non-occupational work is permitted.”

63 My assumption is that D demands the people should be holy to belong to God as an ‘am qādōs ‘a holy people’ (Dt. 7:6; 14:2, 21: 26:19; 28:9). Consequently, this concept of ethnic sanctity became H’s slogan (Lev. 11:44-45; 19:2; 20:7, 8, 26; 21:6-8, 15, 23; 22:9, 16, 32).

64 The verb šābat primarily means “cease, to come to an end” and is employed as the obligation to cease from work in the festal calendar (Ex. 34:21).

65 Mclauglin, *NIDB*, v. 4, pp. 138-139. “The monthly New Moon was a time of sacrifice and feasting (Nu. 28:11-15, 1 S 20:5, 18, 24, 27).” The new moon of the seventh month is especially holy, in Nu. 29:1f. As for the relationship between Lev. 23:23-25 and Nu. 29:1-6, Milgrom (*op. cit.*, p. 2013) states, “Lev. 23 (H) takes for granted the character and rites of Nu. 29 (P), and its innovations rest with two new (For H) concept: šabbatōn and zikkārōn.”

66 The expression “kol-mēleʾ kēt ʿābōdā lōʾaʾāšū” occurs in Lev 23:7, 8, 21, 25, 35, 36; Nu 28:18, 25, 26; 29:1, 12, 35. Two differing prohibitive formulas of assigned tasks pertain to mīqrāʾ qōdeš. One is “kol-mēleʾ kēt ʿābōdōh (laborious work)” and the other is “kol-mēlāʾkā (all work).” (discussed later)
76 ḥag sūkkōt occurs 9 times in Lev. 23:34; Dt. 16:13, 16; 31:10; Zec. 14:16, 18, 19; Ezr. 3:4; 2Ch. 8:13. It is noted that Lev. 23:34 employs the terminology of Dt. 16:13, 16 different from Numbers.

68 Propp (Exodus1-18, pp. 443-5) details more extensive similarities of ṣe'ër and Yôm Kippūrı̂m. Both rituals begin in the evening (Ex. 12:6; Lev. 23:32; Dt. 16:6), and “have undertones of purification and vicarious offering. In fact, the verb kipper (purge) is associated with Pesah in Ezek. 45:18-20.”

69 ‘ādat > ēdā is considered as P/H’s distinctive term for the entire Israelite nation. (Milgrom, Leviticus 17-22, p. 1603 etc). In Ex. 12, the proclamation about the dating decrees that the whole assembly of the congregation of Israel should be held on the night of the fourteenth day (v. 6) of the first month of the New Year (v. 2).

70 It is generally assumed Ex. 12:1-20, 40-50 are P units. However, Knohl ascribes v. 1-20 to HS (op. cit., pp. 19-23). He argues that the “cutting off” warning in vv. 15, 19, which too is HS provenance, militates against P attribution (op. cit., pp. 52, 93).

v. 14 wēḥāyāh hayōm hazeh lakem lezikkarōn wēḥaṣṣēm ŏtō hag laYhwh lēdōrêtekem huqqat ’ōlam tēḥaggū (This day shall be a memorial to you and you shall keep it Yahweh’s feast throughout your generations. You shall keep it a feast as an eternal law.)

v. 15 ūḇaṣṭa yāmīm massaṣṭō tō’kelū ‘ak bayyōm ḥārīʾsōn taḥšíṭū še’or miḇāṭekem (Seven days you shall eat unleavened bread; on the first day you shall remove leaven from your houses) ki kōl ’ākal hūmēt wēniḵrētā hannepeš ḥahīy’ miyiśrā’ēl miyīyōm ḥārīʾsōn ‘ad yōm ḥaššēbi’ī (whoever eats leavened bread from the first day until the seventh day shall be cut off from Israel.)

v. 16 ūḇayyōm ḥārīʾsōn miqrā-qōdeš ūḇayyōm haššēbi’ī miqrā-gōdeš yiḥyeh lākem kol-mēlā’ kā lō’ yēʾāše (On the first day it shall be a scared proclamation, and on the seventh day it shall be a scared proclamation to you; no work shall be done.)

72 This passage adds the exception: food preparation is permitted. Also, the verb “yēʾāše (Niphal, masculine)” does not correspond with the subject mēlā’ kā (feminine).

73 The full-moon evening (vv. 6, 16, 18) and the significance of the blood smearing (vv. 7, 13, 22, 23) are emphasized. Also, the procedure of Yahweh’s pesah (v. 11) is explained, developing the early narrative introducing pesah. The editors seem to have used earlier traditions to legitimate the paschal sacrifice. It is commonly held as an apotropaic rite to secure protection. I assume that the blood ritual is the emphatic accretion for redemption or purification (Lev. 17:12-15).

74 E. Otto (TDOT, v. 12, p. 18) states, “The redaction of the existing tradition in Ex. 12:1-14 stipulates the tenth day of the first month as the day of preparation (12:3) corresponding to the Day of Atonement of the seventh month; in so doing, it introduces an allusion to the atonement theme that, with the association of ntn (12:7) with the atoning smearing of the horns of the alter (29:12, 20, etc.), also lends a new semantic horizon to the blood ritual. Here the redaction stratum presupposes Dt. 16:1-7(8).”

75 This self-affliction formula appears in the section of the tenth day of the seventh month; Lev. 16: 29, 31; 23:27, 29, 32; Nu. 29:7. The rendering of Lev. 16:31; 23:32 is awkward like, “It is a sabbath of solemn rest unto you, and ye shall afflict your souls.” (JPS etc.).

76 The general rendering of Yôm Kippūrı̂m is the Day of Atonement, but I employ Milgrom’s rendering, the Day of Purgation, because the primary focus of the day is the ritual cleansing, i.e.,
purging, of the accumulated sin from the sanctuary (Lev. 16:11-19). See Milgrom, *Leviticus 1-16*, pp. 253-69, 1079-84. He explains that in the context of the purification offering, the verb kippēr (“purge” or “purify”) has to do with decontaminating the sanctuary and its sancta.


78 The tenth day of the seventh month is mentioned in Lev. 16:31; 23:32; 25:9 and Nu. 29:7. The sin offering details in Nu. 29:11. Segal (*Ibid.*, pp. 143-45) explores the theories about the original function of the tenth day.

79 Milgrom (*op. cit.*, pp. 2019-21) argues that Lev. 23:26-32 depends on Lev. 16. However, the opposite view can be conceivable from H’s intention to emphasize the new terminology, šabbat šabbātōn, and Lev. 16:29-34 is widely regarded as a later addition to Lev. 16. As Noth (*op. cit.*, p. 174) states that “the concluding formula in v. 31b shows v. 32 to be an appendage,” I assume that the idiom šabbat šabbātōn is added at the end of this section. Also, Noth (*op. cit.*, p. 126) states, “the final section (vv. 29-34) first fixes (vv. 29-31) the date of the tenth day of the seventh month for the annual performances of the great cleansing ritual. The position at the end shows the supplementary character of the date-fixing. The same is shown by the fact that element in the priestly and holy-place atonement has quite disappeared and the only atoning of Israel—addressed in the second person plural—is considered (v. 34a). In this last respect the passage vv. 32, 33 is seen as obviously older, though already secondary element of the holy-place atonement.”