

LESSON 23: Bible Geography



REFERENCE

Page 284 [BACKGROUND EXPLORATION]



WHAT YOU NEED

- (1) World map
- (2) LSM: 'Map of Israel'
- (2) Colour pencils
- (3) LSM: 'Where did it happen?'
- (3) Bibles
- (3) TSM: 'Where did it happen?'

AIM

- To give learners an overview of the geography of Biblical lands

OUTCOMES

- KUI Learners locate Israel on a world map, and various important biblical towns within it.
- KUI Learners identify a variety of Israel's geographical features.

TEACHER'S NOTE

The idea for this lesson comes from Thomas Zimmerman. 1977. 'Probe 4' in Bible Probes. Dubuque: William C Brown.

LESSON OUTLINE

1 Introduction

- i. Show the learners a world map and ask them to identify these places in relation to South Africa: (a) The Middle East, and (b) Israel.
- ii. Explain that the lesson will give some geographical background to these biblical places to enable them to build a better mental picture and understanding of the areas in which the events occurred.

2 Geographical Features

- i. Give each learner a copy of the Lesson Materials page 'Map of Israel'. On the reverse side is a map of the lands joining ancient Israel to Egypt. (If you are able to enlarge the maps to A3 size, learners will be able to write the names of the towns on them in the next exercise.)
- ii. Learners' attention is drawn to the three features listed below, and they are invited to annotate and colour their maps following your instructions.

(1) Natural Regions

- The cross-sectional view under the map indicates that going from west to east, Israel consists of a coastal plain, a strip of hill country, a deep river valley, and then highlands.
- *Galilee* is very green with a good rainfall and a Mediterranean climate. Colour green the land around Galilee.

(2) Rivers/Lakes/Seas

- Israel's main river is the *Jordan*. Colour this blue.

- The *Sea of Galilee* is a lake found in the north of Israel where the people fished. Fishing was a popular job and provided an income for many families. Colour this blue.
- The *Dead Sea* has an exceptionally high salt content. This means that very little animal life can survive these conditions. The lake is brown and people are unable to swim because of the high salt content. They merely float. Colour this lake brown
- The *Mediterranean Sea* borders the land in the west. It also forms the northern boundary of the triangle of land separating Egypt from Canaan. This triangle is bordered in the south by the *Red Sea*.

(3) Mountains

- The land just to the east of the Jordan was mountainous. Draw little peaks representing a mountain range on the east side of the Jordan from just north of Lake Galilee to just south of the Dead Sea.
- Three triangles on the map represent Mount Hermon, the Mount of Olives, and Mount Tabor. Which is which? Fill in the names next to the triangles.

3 Places of Historical Interest

- Divide the learners into small groups. Explain the following activity before handing out any material. The learners will be using clues to identify places on the map.
- Distribute the Lesson Materials page 'Where did it happen?' The learners use a Bible to complete the table from 1-26, dividing the workload to be able to complete the task in time. As they identify a name, they locate it on the map.
- When they have completed the exercise, review it with them in order to correct mistakes and answer queries. Consult the answer page 'Where did it happen?'

OTHER IDEAS

4 Group Competition

You could display an enlarged, numbered map, and hold a competition between the groups to see if they can identify the towns correctly.

MATERIALS

TEACHER

Thomas Zimmerman. 1977. *Bible Probe* 14. Wm C Brown, Dubuque (adapted)

LEARNER

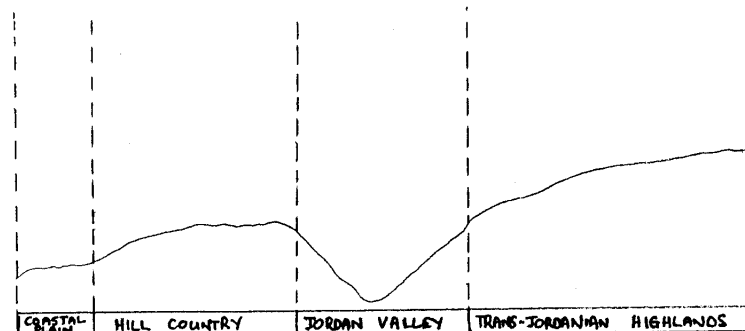
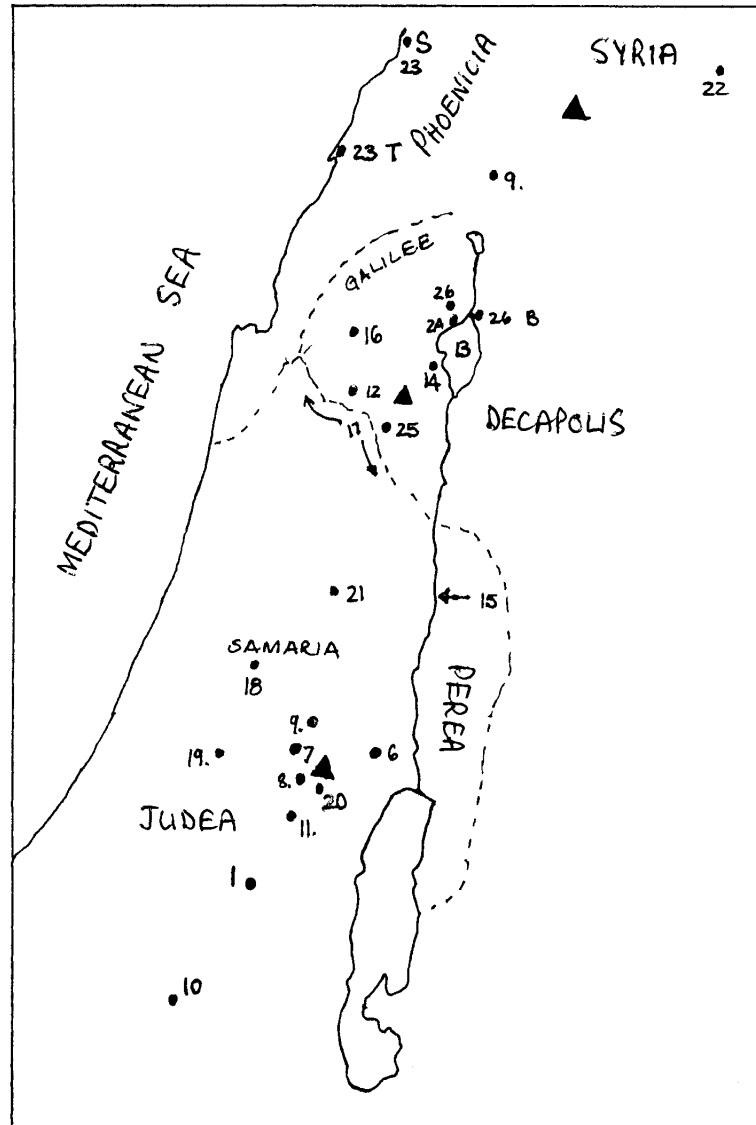
CIE. 2005. 'Map of Israel'

CIE. 2005. 'Where did it happen?'



Lesson Materials

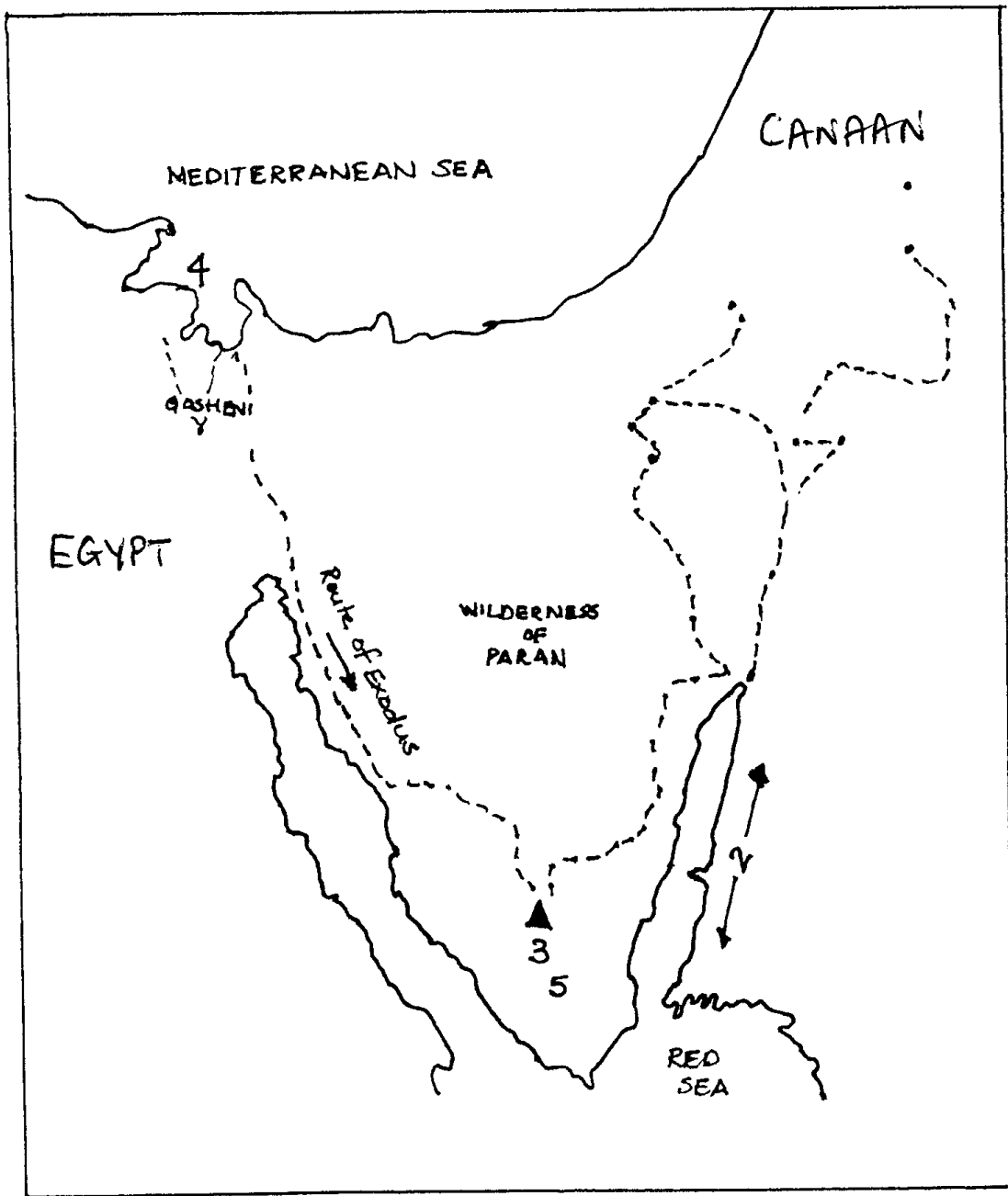
Map of Israel



Egypt-

Canaan/...

Lesson Materials
MAP OF ISRAEL (cont)



Lesson Materials



Where did it happen?

Old Testament

No.	Bible Verse	Clue	Town
1	Gen 23:2 Gen 23:12-20	Burial place of Abraham, Sarah, Isaac, Rebekah	
2	Ex 2:16-22	After fleeing from Egypt, Moses got married here and tended his father-in-law's herd	
3	Ex 3 1-5	The mountain where Moses first met God	
4	Ex 13:17-18	The Israelites crossed this body of water soon after they departed from Egypt	
5	Ex 19:1-2	God made the covenant with the Israelites here	
6	Jos 6:1-5	Here Joshua entered the Promised Land	
7	1Sam 10:17-21	Saul chosen here by lot as first king of the Israelites	
8	1Kings 7: 51-8:54	The first great temple was built here by Solomon	
9	1Kings 12:28-31	King Jeroboam erected 1 idol in each of the northern - and southernmost towns of the northern kingdom.	
10		Considered the southernmost town of Israel	

Lesson Materials



WHERE DID IT HAPPEN? (cont)

New Testament

No.	Bible Verse	Clue	Town
11	Lk 2:4	Birthplace of Jesus	
12	Lk 2:51	The town where Jesus grew up	
13	Mt 4:18	Place where Jesus met Simon, Andrew, James, John	
14	Jn 21:1	Place where Simon was called "rock" to describe his role as foundation on which the Church was to be built	
15	Jn 1:26-28	John baptised Jesus here (Name the river)	
16	Jn 2:1	Jesus began his public life at a wedding in this town	
17	Lk 17:11	Jesus cured the 10 lepers here	
18	Lk 23:50-54	Jesus was buried in the tomb of Joseph who came from this town	
19	Lk 24:13	After the resurrection, Jesus was recognised here when He broke the bread	
20	Lk 24:50-51	Near here Jesus was taken up into heaven	
21	Jn 4:1-7	Here Jesus spoke to the Samaritan woman at the well	
22	Act 9:1-3	Saul's conversion happened on his way to this town	
23	Lk 6:17	2 coastal towns mentioned	
24	Lk 7:1-10	Jesus heals a Roman officer's servant	
25	Lk 7:11-15	Jesus raises a widow's son here	
26	Lk 10:13	2 towns that rejected Jesus	

Lesson Materials



Where did it happen?

Answers

No.	Bible Verse	Clue	Town
1	Gen 23:2 Gen 23:12-20	Burial place of Abraham, Sarah, Isaac, Rebekah	Hebron
2	Ex 2:16-22	After fleeing from Egypt, Moses got married here and tended his father-in-law's herd	Midian
3	Ex 3 1-5	The mountain where Moses first met God	Horeb
4	Ex 13:17-18	The Israelites crossed this body of water soon after they departed from Egypt	Sea of Reeds
5	Ex 19:1-2	God made the covenant with the Israelites here	Sinai
6	Jos 6:1-5	Here Joshua entered the Promised Land	Jericho
7	1Sam 10:17-21	Saul chosen here as first king of the Israelites	Mizpah
8	1Kings 7: 51-8:54	The first great temple was built here by Solomon	Jerusalem
9	1Kings 12:28-31	King Jeroboam erected 1 idol in each of the northern-and southernmost towns of the northern kingdom.	Dan Bethel
10		Considered the southern-most town of Israel	Beersheba
New Testament			
11	Lk 2:4	Birthplace of Jesus	Bethlehem
12	Lk 2:51	The town where Jesus grew up	Nazareth
13	Mt 4:18	Place where Jesus met Simon, Andrew, James, John	Lake of Galilee
14	Jn 21:1	Place where Simon was called "rock" to describe his role as foundation on which the Church was to be built	Shore of Tiberius
15	Jn 1:26-28	John baptised Jesus here (River)	Bethany on far side of Jordan
16	Jn 2:1	Jesus began his public life at a wedding in this town	Cana in Galilee
17	Lk 17:11	Jesus cured the 10 lepers here	Borderland of Samaria and Galilee
18	Lk 23:50-54	Jesus was buried in the tomb of Joseph of ...	Arimathea
19	Lk 24:13	After the resurrection, Jesus was recognised here when He broke the bread	Emmaus
20	Lk 24:50-51	Near here Jesus was taken up into heaven	Bethany
21	Jn 4:1-7	Here Jesus spoke to the Samaritan woman at the well	Sychar
22	Act 9:1-3	Saul's conversion happened on his way to this town	Damascus
23	Lk 6:17	2 Phoenician coastal towns mentioned	Tyre Sidon
24	Lk 7:1-10	Jesus heals a Roman officer's servant	Capernaum
25	Lk 7:11-15	Jesus raises a widow's son here	Nain
26	Lk 10:13	2 towns that rejected Jesus	Chorazin Bethsaida

LESSON 24: Religious Background



REFERENCE

Page 285-286 [BACKGROUND EXPLORATION]



WHAT YOU NEED

- (2) LSM: 'Jewish Festivals in Israel'
- (2) LSM: 'The Calendar in Ancient Israel'

AIM

- To introduce learners to features of the Jewish faith so that they understand the Scriptures better

OUTCOMES

- KUI Learners name some of the Jewish festivals at the time of Jesus, and describe their significance.
- KUI Learners describe some of the daily practices in Jewish society at the time of Jesus.

TEACHER'S NOTE

This lesson is aimed at familiarising learners with the daily practices and the festivals of Jewish faith. The group discussion will allow learners to cover the most important things about the Jewish faith from three perspectives - the Synagogue, the Temple, and the home.

LESSON OUTLINE

I Introduction

Explain to the learners that they will be looking at the daily life of the Jewish people in the time of Jesus from a religious perspective. Begin, by asking the following questions:

- a. What do you know about the religion of the Jewish people?
- b. Name all Jewish festivals you know or have heard about.
- c. What happen during those festivals?
- d. Do you know any Jewish practice that is still significant today?

Clarify any misunderstandings before moving on. The main body of the lesson will deal with these questions.

2 Calendar of Jewish Festivals

- i. Give each learner a copy of the Lesson Materials page 'Jewish Festivals in Israel'. This is a contemporary description of the main festivals as they are observed today. It will give the learners an insight into the traditional, age-old practices that are still current. Note that the Gregorian calendar year is 2005-2006. The dates will need a little adjustment for the year in which you teach this lesson
- ii. Display an enlarged copy of the Lesson Materials page 'The Calendar in Ancient Israel' or distribute copies to the class.
- iii. Assign sections of 'Jewish Festivals' to small groups for study.
- iv. Starting with Rosh Hashanah, ask the groups to present their section, locating it on the displayed calendar. Move in a clockwise direction through the festivals.

3 Jewish Faith

What is at the heart of Jewish faith? Maimonides, a medieval Jewish philosopher, proposed the following thirteen articles as summarising Jewish belief. Invite the learners to discuss these beliefs from the perspective of their own faith. How close are these to Christian beliefs, for instance?

- (1) God exists.
- (2) God is one and unique.
- (3) God is incorporeal.
- (4) God is eternal.
- (5) Prayer is to God only.
- (6) The prophets spoke truth.
- (7) Moses was the greatest of the prophets.
- (8) The Written and Oral Torah were given to Moses.
- (9) There will be no other Torah.
- (10) God knows the thoughts and deeds of men.
- (11) God will reward the good and punish the wicked.
- (12) The Messiah will come.
- (13) The dead will be resurrected.

(www.religionfacts.com/judaism/beliefs/13_articles.htm)

OTHER IDEAS

4 Jesus the Christ

Learners discuss the 13 beliefs above from the point of view of Jesus, Can they recall New Testament passages where Jesus refers to any of them?

5 Jesus the Jew

Discuss: Was Jesus a Christian? Ask learners to substantiate their answers.

6 Projects

Ask learners to do a research project of the Jewish religion during the time of Jesus Christ with the main emphasis on the following points:

- The Home
- The Temple
- The Synagogue

To save time, collect the information on each of the topics and give it to the learners. If they have access to the Internet or a school library, allow them to do more research. If learners would like to cover any related topic that is not here, encourage them to do so.

MATERIALS

LEARNER

- Jewish Festivals in Israel (www.mfa.gov.il)
- Michel Barrette. 'The Calendar in Ancient Israel' in *That We May Share*, p 154



Lesson Materials



Jewish Festivals in Israel

Jewish festivals, originating in antiquity, are observed in Israel intensively and in many ways. They are manifested in traditional and non-traditional customs and practice, and they leave their imprint on diverse aspects of national life. The Jewish festivals are the "landmarks" by which Israelis mark the passing of the year. They are very much a part of daily life: on the street, in the school system and in synagogues and homes around the country.



Shabbat, the weekly day of rest, on Saturday, is marked in Israel with most people spending the day together with family and friends. Public transport is suspended, businesses are closed, essential services are at skeleton-staff strength, and leave is granted to as many soldiers as possible. The secular majority take advantage of their weekly day of rest for leisure time at the seashore, places of entertainment and excursions in outdoor settings. The observant devote many hours to festive family feasts and services in synagogue, desist from travel and refrain from working or using electrical appliances.



Rosh Hashanah marks the beginning of the Jewish New Year. Its origin is Biblical (Lev. 23:23-25): "a sacred occasion commemorated with loud blasts [of the shofar, the ram's horn]." The term *Rosh Hashanah*, "beginning of the year," is rabbinical, as are the formidable themes of the festival: repentance, preparation for the day of Divine judgment and prayer for a fruitful year. The two-day festival falls on 1-2 Tishrei in the Jewish calendar, usually September in the Gregorian calendar, and starts at sundown of the preceding evening, as do all Jewish observances. Major customs of Rosh Hashanah include the sounding of the shofar in the middle of a lengthy synagogue service that focuses on the festival themes, and elaborate meals at home to inaugurate the New Year. The prayer liturgy is augmented with prayers of repentance. In many senses, Israel begins its year on Rosh Hashanah. Government correspondence, newspapers and most broadcasts carry the "Jewish date" first. Felicitations for the New Year are generally tendered before Rosh Hashanah.



Yom Kippur, eight days after Rosh Hashanah, is the Day of Atonement, of Divine judgment, and of "affliction of souls" (Lev. 23:26-32) so that the individual may be cleansed of sins. The only fast day decreed in the Bible, it is a time to enumerate one's misdeeds and contemplate one's faults. The Jew is expected, on this day, to pray for forgiveness for sins between man and God and correct his wrongful actions against his fellow man. The major precepts of Yom Kippur - lengthy devotional services and a 25-hour fast - are observed even by much of the otherwise secular population.

The level of public solemnity/...

Lesson Materials

JEWISH FESTIVALS IN ISRAEL (cont)

The level of public solemnity on Yom Kippur surpasses that of any other festival, including Rosh Hashanah. The country comes to a complete halt for 25 hours on this day; places of entertainment are closed, there are no television and radio broadcasts (not even the news), public transport is suspended, and even the roads are completely closed.



Five days later falls **Sukkot**, described in the Bible (Lev. 23:34) as the "Feast of Tabernacles." Sukkot is one of the three festivals that were celebrated (until 70 CE) with mass pilgrimage to the Temple in Jerusalem and are therefore known as the "pilgrimage festivals." On Sukkot, Jews commemorate the Exodus from Egypt (c.13th century BCE) and give thanks for a bountiful harvest. At some kibbutzim, Sukkot is celebrated as *Chag Ha'asif* (the harvest festival), with the themes of the gathering of the second grain crop and the autumn fruit, the start of the agricultural year, and the first rains.

In the five days between Yom Kippur and Sukkot, tens of thousands of householders and businesses erect *sukkot* - booths for temporary dwelling, resembling the booths in which the Israelites lived in the desert, after their exodus from Egypt - and acquire the palm frond, citron, myrtle sprigs and willow branches with which the festive prayer rite is augmented. All around the country, *sukkot* line parking lots, balconies, rooftops, lawns, and public spaces. No army base lacks one. Some spend the festival and the next six days literally living in their *sukkot*.

In Israel, the "holy day" portion of Sukkot (and the other two pilgrimage festivals, Passover and Shavuot) is celebrated for one day. Diaspora communities celebrate it for two days, commemorating the time in antiquity when calendation was performed at the Temple and its results reported to the Diaspora using a tenuous network of signal fires and couriers.

The prayer liturgy is augmented with additional prayers, including the Hallel, a collection of blessings and psalms, recited on *Rosh Hodesh* (the beginning of each lunar month) and on the pilgrimage festivals.

After the festive day, Sukkot continues at a lesser level of sanctity, as mandated by the Torah (Lev. 23:36). During this intermediate week - half festival, half ordinary - schools are closed and many workplaces shut down or shorten their hours. Most Israelis spend the interim days of Sukkot and Passover at recreation sites throughout the country.



The intermediate week and the holiday season end on **Shemini Atseret**, the "sacred occasion of the eighth day" (Lev. 23:36) with which **Simhat Torah** is combined. Celebration of Shemini Atseret/Simhat Torah focuses on the Torah - the Five Books of Moses - and is noted for public dancing with a Torah scroll

in one's arms/...

Lesson Materials

JEWISH FESTIVALS IN ISRAEL (cont)

in one's arms and with recitation of the concluding and beginning chapters of the Torah, renewing the yearly cycle of Torah reading. After dark, many communities sponsor further festivities, often outdoors, that are not limited by the ritual restrictions that apply on the holy day itself.



Hanukkah, beginning on 25 Kislev (usually in December), commemorates the triumph of the Jews, under the Maccabees, over the Greek rulers (164 BCE) - both the physical victory of the small Jewish nation against mighty Greece and the spiritual victory of the Jewish faith against the Hellenism of the Greeks. Its sanctity derives from this spiritual aspect of the victory, and the miracle of the flask of oil, when a portion of sacramental olive oil meant to keep the Temple candelabrum lit for one day lasted for eight days, the time it took for the Temple to be rededicated.

Hanukkah is observed in Israel, as in the Diaspora, for eight days. The central feature of this holiday is the lighting of candles each evening - one on the first night, two on the second, and so on - in commemoration of the miracle at the Temple. The Hanukkah message in Israel focuses strongly on aspects of restored sovereignty; customs widely practiced in the Diaspora, such as gift-giving and the *dreidl* (spinning top), are also in evidence. The *dreidl's* sides are marked with Hebrew initials representing the message "A great miracle occurred here"; in the Diaspora, the initials stand for "A great miracle occurred there." Schools are closed during this week; workplaces are not.



Tu B'Shevat, the fifteenth of Shevat (January-February), cited in rabbinical sources as the new year of fruit trees for sabbatical, tithing, and other purposes, has almost no ritual impact. But it has acquired secular connotations as a day when trees are planted by individuals, especially by schoolchildren and it serves as the time when intensive afforestation is undertaken by the Jewish National Fund and local authorities. During this month, the fruit trees begin to flower, starting with the almond tree, although it is still cold.



Purim, another rabbinical festival in early spring, occurs on 14 Adar (15 Adar in walled cities), commemorating the deliverance of beleaguered Jewry in the Persian Empire under Artaxerxes, as recounted in the Scroll of Esther. This festival compensates for the solemnity of many other Jewish observances by mandating merriment. Schools are closed, public festivities abound, newspapers run hoax items reminiscent of April Fools' Day, children (and adults) don costumes, and a festive reading of the Scroll of Esther is marked by noisemakers sounded whenever Haman's name is recited.

The Orthodox/...

Lesson Materials

JEWISH FESTIVALS IN ISRAEL (cont)

The Orthodox indulge in inebriation, within limits, and carry out an exacting list of duties: giving of alms, evening and morning readings of the Scroll of Esther, exchange of delicacies and a full-fledged holiday feast.



In the spring, beginning on 15 Nisan, is **Passover (Pessah)**, the festival of the Exodus from Egypt (c. 13th century BCE) and liberation from bondage. Freedom is, indeed, the dominant note of Passover. The rites of Passover begin long before the festival, as families and businesses cleanse their premises of *hametz* - leaven and anything containing it - as prescribed in the Bible (Ex. 12:15-20). The day before the festival is devoted to preparatory rituals including ceremonial burning of the forbidden foodstuff. On the holiday evening, the *Seder* is recited: an elaborate retelling of the enslavement and redemption. At this festive meal, the extended family gathers to recite the *Seder* and enjoy traditional foods, particularly *matza* (unleavened bread). The following day's observances resemble those of the other pilgrimage festivals.

Passover is probably second only to Yom Kippur in traditional observance by the generally nonobservant. In addition, a secular Passover rite based on the festival's agricultural connotations is practiced in some kibbutzim. It serves as a spring festival, a festival of freedom, and the date of the harvesting of the first ripe grain. Passover also includes the second "intermediate" week - five half-sacred, half-ordinary days devoted to extended prayer and leisure - and it concludes with another festival day.



Shavuot, the last of the pilgrimage festivals, when enumerated from the beginning of the Jewish year, falls seven weeks after Passover (6 Sivan), at the end of the barley harvest and the beginning of the wheat harvest. The Bible (Deut. 16:10) describes this occasion as the festival of weeks (Heb. Shavuot), for so is it counted from Passover, and as the occasion on which new grain and new fruits are offered to the priests in the Temple. Its additional definition - the anniversary of the giving of the Torah at Mt. Sinai - is of rabbinical origin. Shavuot is observed among the Orthodox with marathon religious study and, in Jerusalem, with a mass convocation of festive worship at the Western Wall. In the kibbutzim, it marks the peak of the new grain harvest and the ripening of the first fruits, including the seven species mentioned in the Bible (wheat, barley, grapes, figs, pomegranates, olives and dates).



The lengthy summer until Rosh Hashanah is punctuated by the **Ninth of Av (Tisha B'Av)**, falling in July or early August), the anniversary of the destruction of the First and Second Temples. On the day itself, numerous rules of bereavement and the Yom Kippur measures of "self-denial," including a full-day fast, are in effect.

Calendar of Jewish Holidays/...

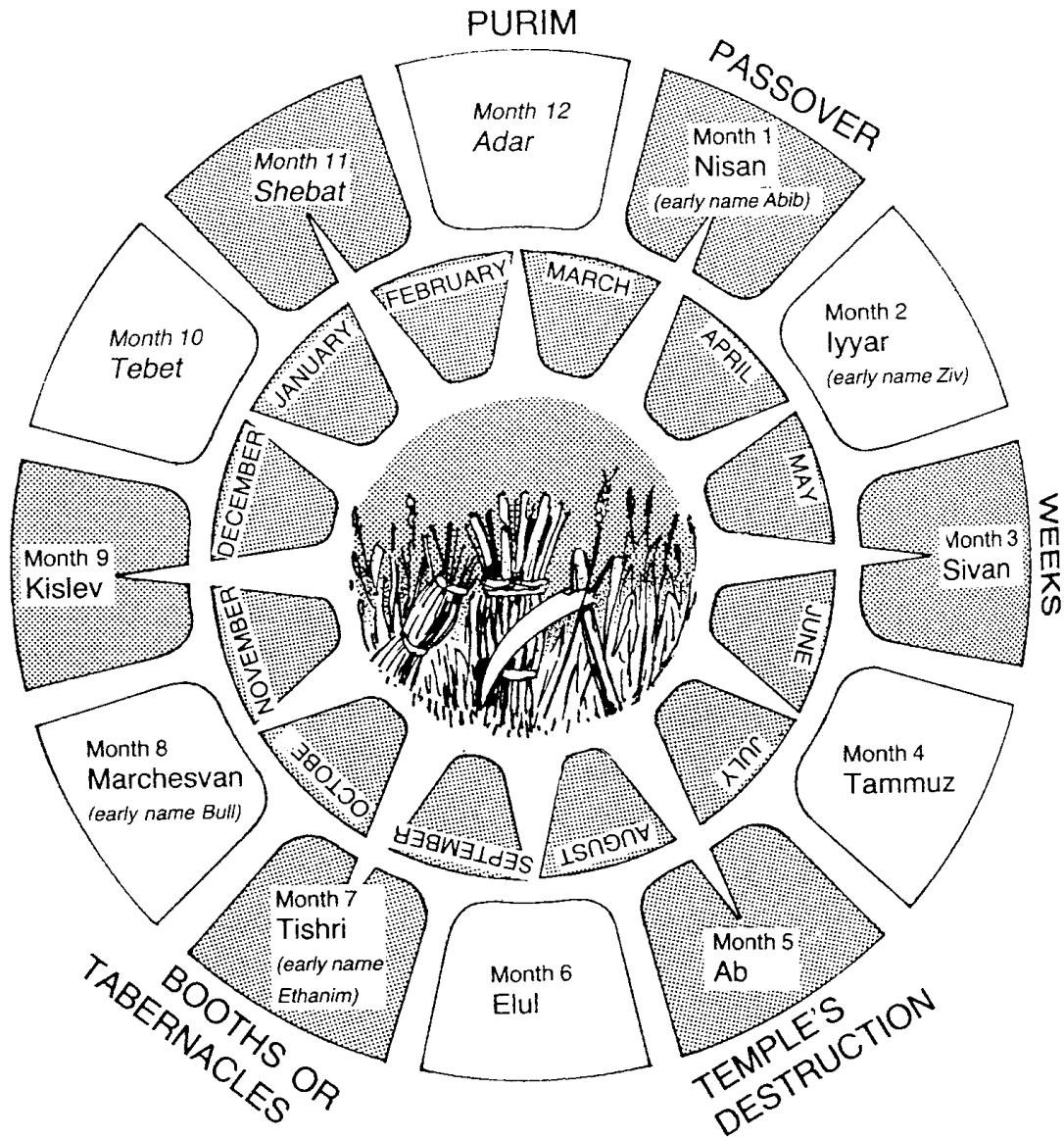
Lesson Materials  **JEWISH FESTIVALS IN ISRAEL (cont)**

Calendar of Jewish holidays

Name of Festival	Hebrew Date	Gregorian Date
	5766	2005
Rosh Hashanah	1-2 Tishre	4-5 Oct
Yom Kippur	10 Tishre	13 Oct
Sukkot	15-21 Tishre	18-24 Oct
Shemini Atzeret-Simchat Torah	22 Tishre	25 Oct
Hannukah	25 Kislev - 2 Tevet	26 Dec - 2 Jan 2006
		2006
Tu B'Shevat	15 Shevat	13 Feb
Purim	14 or 15 Adar	14 or 15 March
Passover	15-21 Nisan	13-19 April
Shavuot	6 Sivan	2 June
Ninth of Av	9 Av	3 August
	5767	
Rosh Hashanah	1-2 Tishre	23-24 Sept
Yom Kippur	10 Tishre	2 Oct
Sukkot	15-21 Tishre	7-13 Oct
Shemini Atzeret-Simchat Torah	22 Tishre	14 Oct
Hannukah	25 Kislev - 2 Tevet	16-23 Dec

Lesson Materials

The Calendar in Ancient Israel



© Michel Barrette, 'The Calendar in Ancient Israel' in *That We May Share*, p 154