

KARL WILLIAM WEYDE

# The Appointed Festivals of YHWH

*Forschungen  
zum Alten Testament 2. Reihe*

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**Mohr Siebeck**

# Forschungen zum Alten Testament

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Herausgegeben von

Bernd Janowski (Tübingen) · Mark S. Smith (New York)  
Hermann Spieckermann (Göttingen)

4





Karl William Weyde

# The Appointed Festivals of YHWH

The Festival Calendar  
in Leviticus 23 and the *sukkôt* Festival  
in Other Biblical Texts

Mohr Siebeck

KARL WILLIAM WEYDE: Born 1947; Graduate of the Norwegian Lutheran School of Theology (Die Theologische Gemeindefakultät), Oslo. 1999 Dr. Theol. Since 2003 Professor of Old Testament at the Norwegian Lutheran School of Theology, Oslo.

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## Preface

This book contains two parts. The first part is a study of the festival calendar in Leviticus 23, the second deals with texts related to the *sukkôt* festival (the festival of booths) in the Hebrew Bible. Thus, focusing on the last festival of the year mentioned in Leviticus 23, the second part of the book is closely connected to the first.

Although related thematically to each other, the two parts of this study were written in different contexts. The chapters on the *sukkôt* festival originated as a lecture given in connection with my doctoral thesis at the Norwegian Lutheran School of Theology (Die Theologische Gemeindefakultät), Oslo, in 1999. Realizing then that the topic raises a wide range of problems that should be discussed more thoroughly, I soon found myself busy with the task. Needless to say, my work quickly involved me in questions related to the festival calendars in the Hebrew Bible as well. So, I became preoccupied with topics pertinent to the festivals which I devoted my time and interest to for the following years. A first draft of the investigations was submitted to my Faculty as part of the work required for my *Habilitation* and I want to thank Prof. John Barton, Prof. Kåre Berge and Prof. Magnar Kartveit for their valuable comments on it. The following study is a revised version of that draft.

Above all, however, my work on the festival calendars and the *sukkôt* festival was inspired by the ongoing and intense research in this area by scholars from different parts of the world. The present book has benefited much from these studies and should also be seen as a contribution to the discussion of questions that are truly controversial and will continue to be debated in years to come. In this connection I wish to express my thanks to Dr. Corinna Körting, Göttingen, for stimulating discussions of the festival calendar in Leviticus 23 at a seminar in Göttingen, April 2002, hosted by Prof. Hermann Spieckermann and his colleagues at Theologische Fakultät, Georg-August-Universität, Göttingen, to which Old Testament scholars from the Norwegian Lutheran School of Theology were kindly invited.

I am also grateful to Prof. Erhard Blum for having invited me to the *Tagung* (conference) of “Wissenschaftliche Gesellschaft für Theologie” in

Eisenach, May 2003, at which *Die Feste Israels* was the topic. This conference was most valuable for me at a time when I was completing my work and was also at a stage where I had to make decisions on many of the difficult problems that anyone studying the festival calendars is faced with.

Finally, I would like to express my gratitude to the editors of the series *Forschungen zum Alten Testament*, Prof. Bernd Janowski and Prof. Hermann Spieckermann, for accepting this work for publication.

Oslo, 17 October 2003

Karl William Weyde

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## Introduction

# The Appointed Festivals of YHWH

During the 1990s biblical scholarship enjoyed the appearance of several studies dealing with the so-called cultic or festival calendars in the Pentateuch.<sup>1</sup> Needless to say, the interest of researchers in this field is by no means new,<sup>2</sup> but the last decade of the previous century seemed to bring about more research in the field than was the case in earlier years. As one might expect, this trend also revealed a variety of methods applied to the texts: different approaches were taken, which were dependent, among others, on the scholar's view of the source problems in the Pentateuch.

In the rather complex picture of the situation in research thus emerging, there seems to be some recurring questions in the discussion, such as the relationship between the calendars including the problem of (literary) dependence and of chronological order. Other central issues are related to the historical background of the calendars: is it possible to date the material? Discussions of this problem are, in general, concerned not only with the final shape of the calendars as now recorded in the Hebrew Bible, but also with the assumed different layers (strata) in them including theories of how to identify such levels and their historical background. That is to say, as will be shown below, that some of the above-mentioned studies of the cultic calendars in the Hebrew Bible can provide important contributions to the ongoing debate on how the pentateuchal traditions originated and gained their present shape, including the question of their provenance. To identify expansions of the assumed-basic material until it reached its final form and to explain why they were made is one of the most important challenges of those studies. A wide range of historical problems are attached to the ongoing discussion of the assumed growth of the material in those calendars.

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<sup>1</sup> E.g., BAR-ON, *Calendars*, 161ff; GERSTENBERGER, *Leviticus*, 306ff; GERTZ, *Passa-Massot-Ordnung*, 56ff; GRÜN WALDT, *Heiligkeitgesetz*, 76ff.282ff; KNOHL, *Sanctuary*, 8ff, cf. *idem*, *Torah*, 65ff; KÖRTING, *Schall*, 8ff.95ff.213ff; LEVINSON, *Deuteronomy*, 53ff; MILGROM, *Leviticus 23-27*, 1947ff; MCCONVILLE, *Unification*, 47ff; SCOTT, *Booths*, 6ff.101ff; ULFGARD, *Story*, 37ff.76ff; VEIJOLA, *History*, 53ff; WEIMAR, *Pascha*, 61ff.

<sup>2</sup> See the brief survey of previous research in HARTLEY, *Leviticus*, 376ff, to which should be added CHOLEWIŃSKI, *Heiligkeitgesetz*, 82ff.179ff.

Some of the studies just referred to pay special attention to the festivals in the seventh month, the so-called autumnal festivals.<sup>3</sup> This focus, and even more the fact that the book of Leviticus has attracted increasing interest among scholars in the last years,<sup>4</sup> may explain why the cultic calendar in Leviticus 23 is at the core of the debate on those festivals. As is apparent, for instance, in the monographs by W.R. Scott, I. Knohl, K. Grünwaldt, H. Ulf-gard, and C. Körting, as well as in the commentaries on Leviticus by J.E. Hartley, E.S. Gerstenberger, and above all in the third volume of the Leviticus commentary by J. Milgrom, the following problems are central—and are also solved quite differently—by researchers:

1. Is the festival calendar in Leviticus 23, in its present shape, the result of a long process of growth, the stages of which can be identified and, perhaps also, dated with a relatively high degree of accuracy? Or is this calendar from its very beginning a fixed, literary composition, which allowed only few insertions or additions to be made later, which means that there are but few traces of editorial reworking on the material?

Two examples from the text, which are central in the debate on these questions, shall be mentioned. First, the two verses in Lev 23:37f seem to form the closing part of a calendar beginning in v. 4. This is suggested by the command “These are the appointed festivals of the LORD, the holy convocations, which you shall celebrate at the time appointed for them” (v. 4), which recurs with minor modifications in v. 37. In the last-mentioned verse it is followed by what may be called summarizing statements on the offerings required at the festivals. That vv. 37-38 close the calendar, is apparent also from the fact that v. 38 contains additional prescriptions, which are linked explicitly to the preceding ones (cf. four times מִלֵּכָד, v. 38). The legislation in vv. 34-36 applies to the *sukkôt* festival. In vv. 39ff, however, following the summarizing statements in vv. 37f, there are more commands for that festival, which, because of their position after vv. 37f, seem to be later additions to the legislation recorded in vv. 34-36.<sup>5</sup>

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<sup>3</sup> See the references to KÖRTING, SCOTT and ULFGARD, n. 1 above.

<sup>4</sup> See, e.g., GRABBE, Leviticus, 91ff; JOOSTEN, People; SMITH, Structure, 17ff; SUN, Investigation; cf. also RENDTORFF, Leviticus, 27ff. See also the reference to GERSTENBERGER, GRÜN WALDT and MILGROM, n. 1 above.

<sup>5</sup> For instance, the phrase “a/the festival of/to the LORD” (vv. 39.41) presupposes the full name of that festival in v. 34; and there are also other phrases that indicate the secondary character of vv. 39ff, see the discussion of these verses below.

Second, also the sabbath legislation in v. 3 is preceded by the command quoted above, with minor modifications: “These are the appointed festivals of the LORD that you shall proclaim as holy convocations, my appointed festivals” (v. 2). Why does this command occur both there and in v. 4? Does it indicate that the sabbath legislation was added later or is there another explanation?

It is taken for granted by most scholars that vv. 3.39ff, or at least parts of the material in vv. 39ff, are additions to the calendar in vv. 5ff, the framework of which occurs in vv. 4 and 37f. Opinions differ, however, as regards other parts of the calendar. For instance, J. Milgrom contends that there are four strata in Leviticus 23:

1. Pre-H<sub>1</sub>, which “stands for the pre-Hezekian stratum” (parts of the passage in vv. 10-22, which presuppose worship at a local sanctuary, and vv. 39a\*.40); it reflects a flexible agricultural calendar, ...

2. Pre-H<sub>2</sub> is a “Sunday Pentacostalist”, i.e., its purpose is to establish a *ḥag* at each local sanctuary and bring the barley and the wheat offering to the sanctuary on the day after the sabbath, on “Sunday”; this stratum introduces the notion of sabbath as the sabbath-week.

3. H, which is “the true H, the founder of the school reflecting the worship of God at the Jerusalem Temple. ... H is also responsible for the main text on the calendar year (vv. 4-38).”

4. “H<sub>R</sub> represents the final stratum of this chapter ... the end product of the H Source composed in the Babylonian Exile ... It assumes that all observances mentioned in H that are practiced independently of the cult would be followed, ... It focuses expressly on the sabbath and the Festival of Booths, ... In sum, Lev 23 is totally the product of the H Source.”<sup>6</sup>

What is of particular interest is that Milgrom finds that “Lev 23 is wholly dependent on ... Num 28-29 (P). Thus, Num 28-29 (P) must be earlier than and the basis of Lev 23 (H) ... in general, H is the heir and redactor of P.”<sup>7</sup>

As regards this assumed chronological relationship, I. Knohl concurs with Milgrom, but he presupposes that the work of two schools can be traced in the Pentateuch, *and also in Leviticus 23*: these are the Priestly school, or better: the Priestly Torah (PT), and the Holiness School (HS), and “the work of the HS clearly postdates the work of the PT.”<sup>8</sup>

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<sup>6</sup> MILGROM, Leviticus 23-27, 2054-56; cf. also idem, Leviticus 17-22, 1345.

<sup>7</sup> MILGROM, Leviticus 23-27, 2054.

<sup>8</sup> KNOHL, Sanctuary, 6; cf. 10ff (italics above are mine).



W.R. Scott holds the same view on the chronological order between the calendars in question; but he disagrees with Knohl as regards his contention that Leviticus 23 contains P material: "The first HS scribe to work on Leviticus 23 did not sit down to revise an existing short calendar of P, as Knohl has concluded. Rather he created a new text, drawing freely from existing texts with which he was familiar, particularly, but not exclusively, the priestly calendar of Num 28-30:1."<sup>9</sup>

However, other scholars, who also identify different layers in Leviticus 23, advocate the chronological priority of this calendar vis-à-vis the one in Numbers 28f. For instance, C. Körting contends that in Leviticus there are two strata, one "Grundschrift" and one "Überarbeitungsschrift", both of which can be found in all passages in Leviticus 23, except those in vv. 5-8, 34-36, which belong to the "Grundschrift". As for the chronology, she states that the calendar in Numbers 28f is "eine Ergänzungsschrift zu Lev 23".<sup>10</sup>

K. Grünwaldt, who argues for the same chronological order,<sup>11</sup> differs slightly from Körting and the other above-mentioned scholars with regard to the question of different layers. He remarks that "Lev 23 ist weitgehend formal geschlossen", and that each passage, with the exception of that in vv. 9-22, contains the same 5-6 elements; it is a calendar "der wenig Freiräume, aber auch wenig Unklarheiten enthält."<sup>12</sup> He does not try to identify different layers in the text.

2. The very fact that the calendar in Leviticus 23 is not the only calendar in the Hebrew Bible takes us to another important issue in the debate, which was touched on above: the relationship between the biblical calendars. The one in Leviticus 23 shares some features with other biblical calendars; but it also departs from them in several respects and exhibits characteristics of its own which must be of significance. The very existence of more than one calendar in the Pentateuch has long since invited scholars to interpret them in the light of each other.<sup>13</sup> With regard to the calendar in Leviticus 23, the question arises whether it is dependent on other festival calendars in the Hebrew Bible, such as those in Ex 23:14ff; 34:18ff; Deut 16:1ff,<sup>14</sup> and perhaps also on other

<sup>9</sup> SCOTT, Booths, 95.

<sup>10</sup> KÖRTING, Schall, 95ff.214f (quotations, 99.102).

<sup>11</sup> GRÜN WALDT, Heiligkeitgesetz, 80.287.297.

<sup>12</sup> GRÜN WALDT, Heiligkeitgesetz, 285.298.

<sup>13</sup> One recent example is BAR-ON, Calendars, 161ff; see also the discussion of Deut 16:1ff below.

<sup>14</sup> For the sake of convenience, we apply the phrase "festival calendar" to the passages in Ex 23:14ff; 34:18ff and Deut 16:1ff, although we are aware of the distinction made by

biblical passages containing information on the feasts and festivals that are presented in Leviticus 23.<sup>15</sup> Or, conversely, was the calendar in Leviticus 23 a “source text” for some of the festival calendars just mentioned, and thus older than they are?<sup>16</sup> And, if a solution to these problems can be found, perhaps it may also be possible to determine the chronological order of the biblical calendars and place the calendar in Leviticus 23 in it.<sup>17</sup>

The last-mentioned issue implies a problem that is in need of clarification, as the brief survey of recent research demonstrated: the relationship between the legislation in the calendar in Leviticus 23 and the offering prescriptions related in Numbers 28f. There are so many points of similarity between the laws in these two calendars that scholars, as noted, take for granted that there is some kind of relationship between them, in terms of literary dependence. But in which direction did the influence go? Which of the two calendars has the chronological priority? We observed that scholars give different answers: Milgrom, Knohl and Scott argue for the chronological priority of the calendar in Numbers 28f, whereas Körting and Grünwaldt hold the opposite view.

The brief survey of research on the interpretation of Leviticus 23 as presented above shows that scholarship is far from having reached an agreement on the main issues of the discussion. This lack of consensus provides part of the background of the present study, for it seems to be a challenge to examine the arguments on which different views are based: are they tenable? Whatever the answer, one should also ask whether the criteria applied may lead to other suggestions of how the calendar in Leviticus gained its present shape than those hitherto put forward.

For instance, if a passage in Leviticus 23 exhibits features that do not occur elsewhere in the calendar, are they to be explained (only) as resulting from a growth of the material in the passage, alternatively as products of editorial

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MORGAN, who applies the phrase “festal prescriptions” to these passages, and the term “calendar” only to the passages in Leviticus 23 and Numbers 28-29, see MORGAN, *Calendars*, 90f.124f.158f.187f.215f.

<sup>15</sup> This is widespread opinion, and we therefore refer here only to the study by CHOLEWIŃSKI, *Heiligkeitgesetz*, 218ff.

<sup>16</sup> This is only scarcely debated; however, if much of the material in Leviticus 23 is old, as contended by MILGROM, the question is relevant. In this connection one should note that MILGROM, *Leviticus 23-27*, 1971f, speaks of Lev 23:5-8 as an “early source”, and of Deut 16:1-7 as later. As regards the question of chronology of these passages, see the discussion below.

<sup>17</sup> Discussed in particular by SCOTT, *Booths*, 101ff; cf. MILGROM, *Leviticus 23-27*, 2054ff et passim.

additions? Is another explanation just as or even more likely, namely that such features may be due to influence from the traditions applied by the author? Moreover, could it be that the author makes use of particular phrases or forms in one passage, but not elsewhere in the calendar, in order to emphasize the profile of the festival described in that passage? In both cases it *may* be irrelevant to postulate theories of later reworkings of an assumed-basic passage, or to speak about different layers in the present text. One should consider the possibility that peculiarities of one passage in the calendar compared with what occurs in other passages in it, may reflect the author's way of using earlier traditions or conveying his message; the source material at his disposal may have coloured the legislation he worked out.

These considerations may serve as critical remarks on the theories launched for instance by Milgrom to which we referred above: does he give tenable arguments for identifying different strata in Leviticus 23?

Moreover, if there are indications of some kind of relationship between two calendars in terms of literary dependence—as for instance between those in Leviticus 23 and Numbers 28-29—the following question becomes crucial: is it possible to establish tenable arguments for determining the direction of influence? Our suggestion is that, in search of an answer, it is necessary first to compare parallel passages in the two calendars, try to identify as far as possible characteristics of each passage, with special regard to forms and terms, as well as to omissions and additions, and then ask: which passage is most likely the source for the other, and which is the “receiving part”?

It follows from the reflections above that, in order to attempt to contribute to a solution to some of the problems discussed in recent research on Leviticus 23, one has to compare passages in this calendar with corresponding passages in other calendars. Such approach will perhaps make it necessary to analyse in detail the last-mentioned material as well, in order to try to shed light on both the differences and the relationship between the calendars. This will be demonstrated particularly in the analysis of Lev 23:5-8 below.

But it may also be useful to compare one passage with other passages in the same calendar, as for instance in Leviticus 23, to try to detect the profile of the legislation in that passage and thus to find the intention of the author. Using the term “the author” we suggest that one should not exclude the possibility that the festival calendar in Lev 23:5-36,<sup>18</sup> as a whole or—at least—most of it, is the product of one author (or “school”) who produced it by drawing on legislation related in other calendars in the Hebrew Bible.

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<sup>18</sup> The festival calendar as such is related in vv. 5-36, whereas vv. 4.37f should be regarded as (part of) the framework.

It should also be emphasized that the present study is not a verse by verse commentary in the traditional sense of the word; we shall not comment on every topic in the calendar. Our aim is to focus on features of the calendar in Leviticus 23 which, according to our view, may shed light on some of the above-mentioned problems in research on this material, and on the basis of our observations to suggest some solutions. This will be the challenge of the present study in Part One.

In Part Two we shall pay attention to some other texts in the Hebrew Bible, in which the *sukkôt* festival is mentioned or possibly referred to. There is thus a connection between the two parts of the study, since the *sukkôt* festival is the last of “the appointed festivals” mentioned in the calendar in Leviticus 23. The reason why we turn to these texts is that there are indications that the *sukkôt* festival was of special importance in post-exilic times, as appears, for instance, in the announcement of the universal pilgrimage to Jerusalem, year after year, to worship YHWH at that festival, which is recorded in Zech 14:16ff. But also the reference to the festival in the seventh month, when the dedication of the First Temple took place according to 1 Kings 8, may be an indication of the significance of the *sukkôt* festival. Finally, the profile of this festival has been a matter of discussion ever since S. Mowinckel, in his *Psalmenstudien II* (1922), presented his theory of the enthronement of YHWH at the autumnal festival, which he based, among others, on psalms describing the Kingship of YHWH. Recent discussion of the so-called “enthronement psalms”, and also of other psalms that *may* be related to the *sukkôt* festival, may provide a rationale for devoting a chapter to this issue.



## Part One

### The Festival Calendar in Leviticus 23



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