

**A PROPOSED SOLUTION TO “THE MOST LONG-LASTING
SCHISM IN THE HISTORY OF THE JEWISH PEOPLE”:
A FRESH LOOK AT שַׁבָּת IN LEVITICUS 23:11**

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Abstract

The term “S/sabbath” in Lev 23:11 provides the temporal orientation in verses 9–22 for both the sheaf elevation ritual of verses 10–14, on the following day, and the new grain offering ritual (Festival of Weeks), seven weeks thereafter. However, identity of the S/sabbath itself is contextually indeterminable in chapter 23, and has been disputed throughout the centuries. The various theories, all based upon cessation of human labor, contend for either a weekly Sabbath linked to the festival, or one of the two festival days that prohibit all occupational work, or a “Sabbath week.” Yet, none can demonstrably establish its claim as *the* specified S/sabbath over against the other theories. The only antecedent with requisite specificity for the term S/sabbath in verse 11 is derived from Exod 12:15, where the *hiphil* of the verb שָׁבַת mandates the “cessation of leaven,” specifically on the first day of the festival (*Abib* 15). This proposal, versus either the weekly Sabbath theory or the Sabbath-week theory, is corroborated by the essentiality of the adjective תְּמִימָה, “complete,” modifying שִׁבְעַת שַׁבָּתוֹת, “seven Sabbaths,” in Lev 23:15, which is rendered superfluous in the weekly Sabbath-based theories.

Keywords: Sabbath, *shabbat*, ceremonial Sabbath, Sabbath week, wave sheaf, elevated sheaf, Festival of Unleavened Bread, *Shavuot*, Festival of Weeks, Pentecost, *omer*, *tamim*, Leviticus 23:11, Leviticus 23:15, Exodus 12:15.

Introduction

Ostensibly, the instruction of Lev 23:9–22 concerning the temporal orientation for the sheaf elevation rite and for the new grain offering seven weeks thereafter (the day of new grain offering constituting one of seven non-weekly מִקְרָא־קֹדֶשׁ, “holy convocations”)¹ is imprecise. Strange indeed is

¹Jacob Milgrom notes that “the *ōmer* rite is not ‘a sacred occasion’ when ‘laborious work’ is prohibited. It thus does not qualify as a *mō’ēd* ‘festival’ and, hence, does not technically belong under the heading of v. 4” (*Leviticus 23–27*, AB 3B [New York: Doubleday, 2001], 1986).

This article does not address the issue as to whether the term מִקְרָא־קֹדֶשׁ refers to “holy convocation,” as generally translated, or to either “sacred occasion” or “proclamation of holiness,” as held by Milgrom and Roy Gane. See *ibid.*, 1957–1959; Roy Gane, *Leviticus, Numbers*, NIV Application Commentary (Grand Rapids:

this apparent imprecision, in light of the specificity of all other מְקָרְא־קִדְשׁ in chapter 23,² wherein work is similarly prohibited,³ and in view of the fact that the primary purpose of the chapter is to identify the מוֹעֵד, “appointed times,” of YHWH (vv. 2, 4, 37, 44). Yet, a close reading of the passage, comparing the MT and LXX, sheds light that unveils the precision of the temporal orientation of verses 9–22, specifically identifying “the Sabbath” within the phrase מִמָּחֳרַת הַשַּׁבָּת, “on the day after the Sabbath,” in verse 11b, which anchors the seven-week time period of verses 9–22.

Current Views of the Term הַשַּׁבָּת in Leviticus 23:11

As Jacob Milgrom notes, the competing interpretations of the expression מִמָּחֳרַת הַשַּׁבָּת, “on the day after the Sabbath,” “gave rise to arguably the most long-lasting schism in the history of the Jewish people.”⁴ There are four historic interpretations of the term הַשַּׁבָּת in this phrase, two of which hold that it refers to the weekly Sabbath, either the one that occurs *during* the Feast of Unleavened Bread (Samaritans and Karaites) or the one occurring *after* the festival (Boethusians and Qumran), and two of which hold that it refers to the festal day of rest from laborious work, either the first day of the festival (Pharisees, Philo [*Spec. Leg.* 2.162], and Josephus [*Ant.* 3.10.5–6]) or the seventh day of the festival (Peshitta and modern Falashas).⁵ Current scholarship

Zondervan, 2004), 387–388. However, for the sake of consistency, I employ the common translation “holy convocation.”

²The other appointed times of holy convocation, overtly specified, are the weekly Sabbath (v. 3), the first and seventh days of the Feast of Unleavened Bread (on the fifteenth and twenty-first days of the first month; vv. 7–8), the first day of the seventh month (v. 24), the tenth day of the seventh month (v. 27), and the first and eighth days of the Feast of Booths (the fifteenth and twenty-second days of the seventh month; vv. 34–36, 39).

³On the weekly Sabbath and *yôm hakkippurim*, מִלְאָכָה, “all work,” is prohibited without qualification (vv. 3, 31), whereas, for the other six non-weekly holy convocations, מְלָאכָת עֲבֹדָה, “all laborious work,” is prohibited (vv. 7–8, 21, 25, 35–36).

⁴Milgrom, *Leviticus*, 2057. “The famous dispute between Pharisaic and sectarian law over the correct date for observing the Festival of Weeks . . . has become, perhaps more than any other issue, a symbol of the halakhic schisms of the Second Temple period” (David Henshke, “The Day after the Sabbath’ [Lev 23:15]: Traces and Origins of an Inter-Sectarian Polemic,” *DSD* 15.2 [2008]: 225).

⁵Milgrom, *Leviticus*, 2057. Alternatively, Boethusians/Sadducees are categorized with Samaritans and Karaites in observing הַשַּׁבָּת as the weekly Sabbath that falls within the Festival of Unleavened Bread. See James C. VanderKam, “Weeks, Festival of,” *ABD* 6:895–897; John E. Hartley, *Leviticus*, WBC 4 (Dallas: Word, 1992), 385–386 (following J. van Goudoever, *Biblical Calendars* [Leiden: Brill, 1961], 18–29); and E. Otto, “שַׁבְּעוֹת; שַׁבְּעוֹת,” *TDOT* 14:336–367, esp. 366. Further, VanderKam, Hartley, and Otto point out that the book of Jubilees, in line with Qumran, implicitly holds that הַשַּׁבָּת is the weekly Sabbath that follows the end of the Festival of Unleavened Bread. In the festival calendar of the book of Jubilees, which was a solar calendar, the first month would begin on a Wednesday; consequently, הַשַּׁבָּת would fall on Saturday,

is split along three of these four lines.⁶ To these interpretations, Milgrom adds his own: “*In vv. 11–16, it [שַׁבָּת] bears only one meaning, the sabbath-week, not the sabbath day.*”⁷

Milgrom reaches this conclusion via his conjectured tri-layered history of the text, reflecting his perceived evolution of the rites involved.⁸ In his view,

Abib 25, and the Feast of Weeks on Sunday, *Sivan* 15.

⁶Proponents of הַשַּׁבָּת as the weekly Sabbath falling within the seven-day festival include R. Laird Harris, “Leviticus,” in *Genesis, Exodus, Leviticus, Numbers*, EBC 2 (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1990), 625–626; Baruch A. Levine, *Leviticus* (Philadelphia: Jewish Publication Society of America, 1989), 158–159; Mark F. Rooker, *Leviticus*, NAC 3A (Nashville: Broadman & Holman, 2000), 286; Gordon J. Wenham, *The Book of Leviticus*, NICOT 3 (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1979), 304. To this camp may be added Hartley, who states, “The sheaf is offered *during* the Feast of Unleavened Bread, but the exact day is disputed” (*Leviticus*, 391; emphasis added). Earlier, he states that the weekly Sabbath plays a role in determining the time for celebrating the Feast of Weeks (ibid., 372). Proponents of הַשַּׁבָּת as *Abib* 15, the first day of the festival, include K&D 2:439–442; Clyde M. Woods and Justin M. Rogers, *Leviticus-Numbers*, The College Press NIV Commentary, Old Testament Series (Joplin, MO: College Press, 2006), 138. Proponents of הַשַּׁבָּת as *Abib* 21, the last day of the festival, include Samuel E. Balentine, *Leviticus*, IBC (Louisville: Westminster John Knox, 1999), 176; Erhard S. Gerstenberger, *Leviticus*, OTL (Louisville: Westminster John Knox, 1996), 344; Otto, “שַׁבָּעוֹת; שַׁבָּע,” 14:365.

⁷Milgrom, *Leviticus*, 2060; emphasis original.

⁸Ibid., 1993–1996, 2054–2056. According to Milgrom, the earliest layer of verses 10aβ–21 (Pre-H₁) prescribed that each landowner brings his firstfruits of barley and wheat, fifty days apart, to his local sanctuary as an elevation offering; such offering involved neither a pilgrimage, a fixed date, nor a day of rest. Milgrom attributes the vast majority of verses 10aβ–21 to Pre-H₁.

The second layer of verses 10aβ–21, which Milgrom attributes to an interpolator (Pre-H₂), fixed the date for the barley offering to the first Sunday that follows the week during which the harvest began. Milgrom asserts that Pre-H₂'s motive was to coordinate the individual offerings at a local sanctuary for a joint rite on the same day, since the crops in that localized area would mature at approximately the same time. Thus, Pre-H₂ tried to establish a mini-הַג for both grain offerings. Pre-H₂'s interpolation of verses 10–21 consists merely of the four phrases involving the term שַׁבָּת: מִמָּחֳרַת הַשַּׁבָּת: שַׁבָּת, “on the day after the Sabbath,” in verses 11 and 15a, שַׁבָּע שַׁבָּתוֹת, “there shall be seven complete Sabbaths,” in verse 15b, and הַשַּׁבְיַעַת הַחֲסָרִיזוּ, “until the day after the seventh Sabbath, you shall count,” in verse 16a. It is these four phrases that constitute the crux of analysis in this paper.

The third layer of verses 10aβ–21 Milgrom attributes to H. This layer, consisting of the phrase חֻקֵּי עוֹלָם לְדֹרֹתֵיכֶם בְּכָל מִשְׁבְּתֵיכֶם, “it is a perpetual statute throughout your generations in all your dwellings,” in verse 14 and the majority of verses 18–21, supposedly “converts the hitherto individual grain offerings into public sacrifices operated by the regional sanctuary” (ibid., 1996). To do so, H borrows from P in Num 28–29, requiring that the wheat offering (Festival of Weeks) be observed as a sacred day (rest from laborious work); but H adds “that the Israelites remain at home (‘in all your settlements,’ [Lev 23:]21b), thereby implying that this day is not a *hag*” (ibid., 1995). Milgrom makes much of the term מוֹשְׁבֵיכֶם; however, it need imply nothing more than a temporary dwelling location during a pilgrimage.

after the text attained its final form, the Sabbath of verse 11 was linked to the Feast of Unleavened Bread through tradition.⁹ Without endorsing Milgrom's theory of the textual history, Gane accepts Milgrom's position that tradition provided the link between verses 9–22 and the Feast of Unleavened Bread,¹⁰ but, unlike Milgrom, holds that the term שַׁבָּת in verse 11 refers to the weekly Sabbath, while the plural שַׁבָּתוֹת in verse 15 refers to “weeks.”¹¹

Critique of the Current Views of השַׁבָּת in Leviticus 23:11

Unencumbered by Milgrom's protracted speculation as to the evolution of the text and of the rites prescribed, a simpler solution to the issue emerges. While the specified day for elevating the sheaf (מִן־הַיּוֹם הַשֶּׁבִּיעִי הַשָּׂבִיעִי) cannot be identified solely from the speech unit in which this phrase is found (i.e., vv. 9–22), the text does provide sufficient characteristics concerning the Sabbath-in-

See Exod 10:23; Lev 13:46. Further, Milgrom unpersuasively asserts that H “drops P’s term for the pentacostal בְּשַׁבְעַת־יָמֶיךָ ‘in your Festival of *Weeks*’ since it has no choice but to accept the (interpolated) text’s term for weeks, שַׁבָּתוֹת” (ibid., 1995), without explaining why H is stuck with this term. Lastly, Milgrom holds that H abolished the individual farmer’s offerings “on purely pragmatic grounds” (ibid.), since the farmer and his family were in the throes of the harvest season and could not be expected to make a pilgrimage—a refrain Milgrom often repeats. See ibid., 1991, 1992, and 1996. Yet, he inconsistently acknowledges the possibility of such a pilgrimage, being informed by his student, D. Stewart, “an erstwhile farmer,” that there is an availing timeslot for a pilgrimage between the final two stages of ripeness: “fully ripe” (ripening of the first fruits) and “dead ripe” (ripening of the entire crop) (ibid., 1996).

⁹“It should also be apparent that this firstfruits offering had nothing to do with the approximately concurrent Festival of Unleavened Bread. *Later interpreters*, however, made this connection because they understood the word *šabbāt* to mean the sabbath day or the first day of the festival” (ibid., 1994; emphasis added). “It is Pre-H₂ that introduces the notion of *šabbāt* as the sabbath-week, which later Jewish groups mistook for the sabbath day, giving rise to schismatic differences on the relation between this sabbath and the proximate Feast of Unleavened Bread” (ibid., 2055).

¹⁰“By the Second Temple period, *tradition* had connected the elevation of the sheaf to the first part of the Festival of Unleavened Bread, and a fierce interpretive controversy raged over whether ‘the day after the Sabbath’ meant the first weekly Sabbath after Passover (Nisan 14) or the ceremonial Sabbath on the first day of Unleavened Bread, which always came on the [*sic*] Nisan 15 (vv. 6–7)” (Gane, *Leviticus*, 389; emphasis added). Like Milgrom, Gane holds that, according to the text, the sheaf elevation rite is temporally unaffiliated with the Feast of Unleavened Bread because the sheaf elevation is in a separate divine speech and because it is dependent upon “agricultural realities”—“the timing of elevating the sheaf is tied to the actual beginning of the harvest, the date of which can fluctuate” (ibid.). Thus, Gane concludes, “Whatever day the Israelites harvest the first sheaf (not including Sabbath, of course), the priest is to elevate it on the following first day of the week, which we call Sunday” (ibid.).

¹¹Ibid., 389–390. Nevertheless, in the final analysis, Gane’s position equates to that of Milgrom, in that the elevation of the first sheaf is independent of the Feast of Unleavened Bread and that both the sheaf elevation rite and the new grain offering occur on their respective Sundays.

quest, such that outside the speech unit, identification of the antecedent Sabbath clearly ensues, and it is this Sabbath, as opposed to tradition, that connects the sheaf elevation rite with the Feast of Unleavened Bread, *contra* Milgrom and Gane, as shown below.

Gane suggests that the Feast of Unleavened Bread is inapposite for purposes of timing the sheaf elevation rite, because the instructions regarding the Feast of Unleavened Bread are in a separate divine speech unit,¹² and because the timing of sheaf elevation depends upon “agricultural realities.”¹³ However, restricting the search for timing the sheaf elevation to verses 9–22 renders the timing absolutely indeterminable; therefore this restriction must be rejected.

Concerning his claim that the timing of sheaf elevation depends on agricultural factors rather than the Feast of Unleavened Bread, Gane asserts, “In verse 10 the timing of elevating the sheaf is tied to the actual beginning of harvest, the date of which can fluctuate.”¹⁴ Indeed, the elevation of the first sheaf is tied to the beginning of harvest. In fact, it is the very first act of harvest, as indicated by the phrase אֶת-עֹמֶר רֵאשִׁית קְצִירְכֶם, “the *first* sheaf of your harvesting,” in verse 10b, and confirmed in Deut 16:9, discussed below. This rite specifically releases the barley produce for consumption as stated in Lev 23:14, and implicitly releases it for harvest. But simply knowing that the sheaf elevation rite commences harvest does not determine the date of the rite.

Gane suggests that the date for elevating the sheaf “must float according to agricultural realities,”¹⁵ by which he means “the actual beginning of the harvest, the date of which can fluctuate.”¹⁶ Thus, the commencement of harvest is viewed as the primary determinant of the heretofore indeterminable date of elevating the sheaf, which verse 11 simply places after a weekly Sabbath. Consequently, the phrase מִמָּחֳרַת הַשְּׁבֵת in verse 11 functions merely as a *secondary* determinant, according to this approach, that is applicable only once the primary determinant—commencement of harvest—is known.

However, the “agricultural realities” that are propounded as the necessary factor for determining the timing of the sheaf elevation, independently from Passover/Feast of Unleavened Bread, are actually already accounted for through the determination of the first month, *Abib*, as instructed in Deut 16:1

¹²Ibid., 389. Gane correctly avoids the hermeneutical blunder of assuming a connection between הַשְּׁבֵת and the Feast of Unleavened Bread, *in the first instance*, an assumption made by the traditional contending views. Instead, the characteristics of the antecedent of הַשְּׁבֵת (as control in the exegetical quest beyond the speech unit) must be garnered exclusively from the speech unit in which the term הַשְּׁבֵת occurs, verses 9–22. The assumption that הַשְּׁבֵת is correlated to the Feast of Unleavened Bread, simply because the feast occurs in the immediately prior speech unit, is a non sequitur, even though in the final analysis this correlation will be established.

¹³Ibid., 390.

¹⁴Ibid., 389.

¹⁵Ibid., 390.

¹⁶Ibid., 389.

(“Observe the month *’abib* and do the Passover”).¹⁷ Since this determination was made in view of Passover, the agricultural realities having already been evaluated at the new moon for Pascal purposes need not be independently reevaluated for purposes of sheaf elevation, on a weekly basis thereafter,¹⁸—especially if the rite of sheaf elevation is correlated to Passover/Feast of Unleavened Bread. Accordingly, it does not follow that the date for elevating the sheaf “must float according to agricultural realities.”

Finally, the position of Milgrom and Gane, which claims that barley harvest began during the week prior to the sheaf elevation, is problematic because of verse 9, which conjoins the commencement of harvest and the commencement of the seven-week counting. As Milgrom acknowledges,

¹⁷As Milgrom notes, the determination of all calendrical times was entirely in human hands. See *Leviticus*, 1959, 1963. Hence, the determination of *Abib* involved human discretion. In contrast, the weekly Sabbath “is independent of the calendar; its occurrence has been predetermined by God” (*ibid.*, 1964). The etymology of *Abib* indicates that determination of the first month was based upon agricultural realities, namely, when the barley was in the ear, as when YHWH’s seventh plague destroyed Egypt’s barley crop, which was אָבִיב “in the ear” (Exod 9:31). Milgrom notes that the name *Abib* derives from the expression הַזֶּמֶן הַקָּבִיעִי, “at the fixed time of the month of the ripening grain,” or “the month when the grain is easily hulled,” in Exod 23:15 and 34:18. See *ibid.*, 1965–1966.

The Rabbis found the mandate for intercalating a month in the lunar year in the command of Deut 16:1, “Observe the month *’abib* and do the Passover.” “Here we are enjoined to intercalate a month in the lunar year if without such an intercalation the *’abib* season will not have arrived by the Passover (Mikhilta, Bo 2)” (“אָבִיב,” *Encyclopedia Talmudica* 1:69). The three rabbinic criteria for intercalating a month are the spring equinox, occurring on the sixteenth of *Nisan* or later; the barley not maturing; and the fruit of the trees not maturing (*ibid.*, 70–71). I conjecture that the spring equinox, as a factor for determining whether to intercalate a month (and thus for determining the month of *Abib*), rose to prominence during the exile due to the influence of Babylon’s fixation with astronomical calculations (hence, the rabbinic usage of the Babylonian name *Nisan* for the pre-exilic name *Abib*). Prior thereto, Israel’s agrarian society relied predominantly upon the barley crop for such determination.

The term אָבִיב occurs only eight times in the Hebrew Bible: Exod 9:31; 13:4; 23:15; 34:18 (twice); Lev 2:14; Deut 16:1 (twice). In every instance save for Exod 9:31 and Lev 2:14, it is directly associated with Passover or the Feast of Unleavened Bread. The command to observe the month of אָבִיב in Deut 16:1, the observation of which is based upon the evidence of spring as revealed by the barley crop, is specifically connected as a precondition to the performance of Passover: “Observe the month *Abib* so that you do (וַעֲשִׂיתָ) the Passover.” I contend that the *vav*-consecutive here has a purposive nuance. Thus, the agricultural realities (i.e., the stage of barley ripening) are already factored in when the month of *Abib*, which commences the cultic calendar, is determined in view of performing Passover. Therefore, Israel’s agricultural realities did not float independently of Passover/Feast of Unleavened Bread, as Gane suggests. On the contrary, they were the grounding temporal factor for it.

¹⁸Theoretically, according to Gane’s approach, harvest and the sheaf elevation rite (floating independently based on harvest readiness) could predate Passover, even though Passover/Feast of Unleavened Bread is always mentioned as the lead-off cultic event, annually. See Exod 23:15; 34:18; Lev 23; Deut 16.

“Deuteronomy states explicitly that the seven-week counting begins *mēhāḥēl ḥermēs baqqāmā* ‘when the sickle is first put to the standing grain’ (Deut 16:9).”¹⁹ Since the sheaf elevation rite *also* occurs on the first day of the seven-week counting (Lev 23:15), harvesting would not commence during the prior week (*contra* Milgrom²⁰ and Gane²¹), and thus the commencement of harvest could not be the primary determinant for the date of the sheaf elevation rite.

In contrast to Milgrom and Gane, I submit that the term הַשְּׁבֵת in the phrase מִן־הַקָּרֵת הַשְּׁבֵת in verse 11 operates as the *primary* (indeed exclusive) determinant of the date for elevating the first sheaf. This is especially the case since הַשְּׁבֵת is articulated, thus anaphorically particularizing the Sabbath—“on the day after *the* Sabbath,” rather than “on the day after a (weekly) Sabbath.” Consequently, הַשְּׁבֵת of verse 11 determines when the harvest begins and the first sheaf is elevated, and not the other way around, where the beginning of harvest determines הַשְּׁבֵת.

In summary, because the speech unit containing the instructions for elevating the first sheaf does not identify, without external reference, the timing of the sheaf elevation rite; because the control characteristics of the antecedent of הַשְּׁבֵת garnered from the speech unit ultimately will show a connection with Passover/Festival of Unleavened Bread; because the primary determinant of the timing of the sheaf elevation rite is the phrase מִן־הַקָּרֵת הַשְּׁבֵת in verse 11 and not the commencement of harvest; because the status of the barley crop was already factored in, in the annual determination of the month of *Abib* with Passover in view; and because barley harvest would not commence during the week prior to the sheaf elevation rite in light of Deut 16:9; *therefore*, the “conjectured original practice” that Milgrom proposes, wherein the sheaf elevation rite has nothing to do with the Festival of Unleavened Bread,²² must be rejected. To the contrary, in the final analysis, the sheaf elevation rite is correlated to the Festival of Unleavened Bread, via the term הַשְּׁבֵת in Lev 23:11.²³

¹⁹Milgrom, *Leviticus*, 2059. While Lev 23:10 does not identify the timing of elevating the sheaf, it does specify the sheaf to be elevated: “when you reap its [the land’s] harvest, then you shall bring *the first sheaf of your harvest* [אַת־נִמְרָאֵי־רֵאשִׁית קְצִירְכֶם] unto the priest.” Milgrom notes that, here in verse 10, the term רֵאשִׁית “takes on the connotation ‘first’ in a temporal sense—the very first ‘ōmer to be harvested” such that “the ‘ōmer is not to be selected from the many sheaves that make up the first harvest, but must be the very first sheaf. As Deuteronomy puts it, *mēhāḥēl ḥermēs baqqāmā* ‘when the sickle is first put to the standing grain’ (Deut 16:9)” (ibid., 1984).

²⁰“An interpolator, Pre-H, sets the barley offering for the first Sunday after the week (ending with the sabbath) during which the harvest has begun” (ibid., 1994).

²¹“Whatever day the Israelites harvest the first sheaf (not including Sabbath, of course), the priest is to elevate it on the following first day of the week, which we call Sunday” (Gane, *Leviticus*, 389).

²²Milgrom, *Leviticus*, 1989.

²³Accordingly, Gane acknowledges (in a personal communication with me on 21 April 2016) that the commencement of harvest must *follow* the sheaf elevation rite and therefore cannot determine the timing of הַשְּׁבֵת.

In contrast to Milgrom, and without his restriction to the speech unit (vv. 9–22), all four historic interpretations of הַשַּׁבָּת assume a correlation with the Festival of Unleavened Bread. But the issue remains as to which holy convocation (מִקְרָאֵי קֹדֶשׁ)²⁴ associated with the Festival of Unleavened Bread in verses 1–8 is the antecedent of the term הַשַּׁבָּת in verse 11. Hitherto, none of the four historic interpretations, including the date proposed by the rabbinic interpretation (with which I agree), could be definitively established, due to the inadequacy of their respective rationales. Both the weekly Sabbath options (the Sabbath during and immediately following the festival) and the festal options (the first and seventh days of the festival) lack the requisite singularity in verses 1–8 to be the definite antecedent of the term הַשַּׁבָּת in verse 11. Further, the festal options, though pronounced שַׁבְּתוֹת קֹדֶשׁ, are not thereby deemed שַׁבְּתוֹת, while the weekly Sabbath options, though indeed שַׁבְּתוֹת, are not *explicitly* associated with the Festival of Unleavened Bread anywhere in the Hebrew Bible.²⁵

²⁴One may assume that the antecedent of הַשַּׁבָּת is a מִקְרָאֵי קֹדֶשׁ in the previous speech unit, since the topic of verse 23 concerns the various appointed times that Israel is to proclaim, as indicated in the chapter's double introduction (vv. 2, 4) and its conclusion (vv. 37–38). Accordingly, the four options are either the weekly Sabbath (v. 3) during or immediately following the Festival of Unleavened Bread, or the first or seventh day of the festival (vv. 7–8).

²⁵“[T]he origin of the great ‘the day after the Sabbath’ rift [between Pharisaic and sectarian law] is to be located, as in other cases, in the particular hermeneutical principles used for deriving the law from mutually exclusive or contradictory biblical verses: the Pharisees point of departure is Deuteronomy, and so they interpret the various verses in the preceding books accordingly; whereas the sect’s point of departure is Leviticus” (Henshke, “Day after the Sabbath,” 238). Henshke assumes (as did the Pharisees and Qumran sect) that the biblical texts, Lev 23:15–16 (counting seven complete Sabbaths commencing on “the day after the Sabbath”) and Deut 16:9–10 (counting seven weeks commencing when the cycle is put to the standing grain), are in conflict (ibid., 247), an assumption with which I fundamentally disagree. This perceived conflict results when the Sabbath in “the day after the Sabbath” is understood as a weekly Sabbath, and the day after as a Sunday (ibid., 239–241).

Beyond the assumption that הַשַּׁבָּת of Lev 23:11 is a weekly Sabbath, the sectarian position assumes, without biblical support, that הַשַּׁבָּת refers to the weekly Sabbath immediately following the festival. Instead, the sect was guided by *the Book of Jubilees*, which predetermined the date for the Feast of Weeks on the fifteenth day of the third month of the sect’s own 364-day solar calendar, the date of which was always a Sunday (*Jub* 15:1; 44:4–5). Accordingly, the sheaf elevation rite, which occurred seven weeks prior, was bound to fall on the twenty-sixth day of the first month of the sect’s calendar. This, of course, was also always a Sunday, namely the Sunday following the weekly Sabbath that immediately followed the Festival of Unleavened Bread (Milgrom, *Leviticus*, 2060–2061). Yet, such Sabbath was neither identified nor corroborated by biblical reference. As Milgrom correctly states, “If [הַשַּׁבָּת] refers to the weekly sabbath, an ambiguity arises: we do not know which one it is (*Sipra* Emor 12:4; *b. Menah.* 66a)” (ibid., 2057). Herein lies the pitfall of the weekly Sabbath view regarding הַשַּׁבָּת.

Identification of the Antecedent of הַשְּׁבֹתָהּ in Leviticus 23:11

One must search outside of verses 9–22 in order to determine the antecedent of the term הַשְּׁבֹתָהּ in verse 11, yet control for the search must be established from within the text. The critical characteristic for identifying the antecedent of הַשְּׁבֹתָהּ, garnered exclusively from the speech unit in which הַשְּׁבֹתָהּ occurs, consists of an explicitly specified שְׁבֹתָהּ,²⁶ occurring on an annual basis at the commencement of harvest.²⁷ In the universe of biblical שְׁבֹתָהּ instances, only two occur on an annual basis—the Day of Atonement and the cessation of leaven on the first day of the Festival of Unleavened Bread (Exod 12:15). The former cannot be the antecedent of הַשְּׁבֹתָהּ in Lev 23:11, because such does not occur at the commencement of harvest, leaving the cessation of leaven as the only eligible antecedent. It is also the only association of an explicit שְׁבֹתָהּ, either as a verbal form or as the substantive cognate,²⁸ with the festival,²⁹

²⁶I submit that the articulated term הַשְּׁבֹתָהּ requires, as its antecedent, an explicitly identified cyclical occurrence of שְׁבֹתָהּ on an annual basis (in a rather deictic manner), as opposed to an implicit or implied annual שְׁבֹתָהּ (i.e., one derived by inference, such as the weekly Sabbath that occurs during or immediately following the Festival of Unleavened Bread), which, though it occurs of logical necessity, is never referenced as such in Scripture.

²⁷From the arrangements of speech units in verse 23, we may also logically deduce that הַשְּׁבֹתָהּ occurs sometime in the first six months of the year, because the subsequent speech unit, verses 23–25, concerns the Festival of Trumpets on the first day of the seventh month. Further, because the sheaf elevation rite concerns a sheaf of barley, we may also safely conclude that it is associated with the month of *Abib*. See n17.

²⁸Whether or not the direction of derivation can be linguistically established, theologically the substantive term שְׁבֹתָהּ derives from its previously employed verbal cognate, both for the weekly Sabbath (derived from God's cessation of work after six days) and the cessation of leaven here in Exod 12:15. In fact, both verbal meanings (ceasing from labor and ceasing from leaven) appear prior to the initial occurrence of the substantive term שְׁבֹתָהּ in 16:23. Thus, the semantic range of the verb was established in the biblical narrative before any theological substantivizing of the verb occurred.

²⁹The verb שְׁבֹתָהּ is *implicitly* associated with Passover/Festival of Unleavened Bread in Josh 5:12. That text chronicles the cessation (*qal* of שְׁבֹתָהּ) of manna מִמֶּחָרָה, “on the morrow,” which term, in the absolute case, refers to the full phrase מִמֶּחָרָה הַפֶּסַח, “on the morrow after Passover,” in the previous verse. On this same day, the Israelites ate from the produce of the land (v. 11). In verse 12, the phrase מִמֶּחָרָה הַפֶּסַח, “when they ate from the produce of the land,” stands in apposition to the absolute term מִמֶּחָרָה. This instance of the verb שְׁבֹתָהּ cannot be the referent of the term הַשְּׁבֹתָהּ in Lev 23:11 for obvious reasons: it occurred a generation after the institution of Passover/Festival of Unleavened Bread and the stipulations of chapter 23, and it was a non-recurring event, whereas verse 11 implies an annual cessation. There are no other associations of the verb שְׁבֹתָהּ with Passover/Festival of Unleavened Bread in the Hebrew Bible.

Kleinig contends that Josh 5:10–12 is incorrectly adduced to support the rabbinic view that the term הַשְּׁבֹתָהּ in Lev 23:11 refers to the first day of the festival because, in his view, the eating of the produce occurred on the fifteenth, rather than the sixteenth, of *Abib*. See John W. Kleinig, *Leviticus*, ConcC (St. Louis: Concordia, 2003), 489. Although it can be established that the Israelites observed Passover on

and it is this sole instance (*biphil* of שבת in Exod 12:15) that provides the requisite singularity/specificity as the antecedent of the term הַשְּׁבֵת in Lev 23:11: “Seven days you shall eat unleavened bread; only on the first day [אַךְ בַּיּוֹם הָרִאשׁוֹן] *you shall cause to cease* [תִּשְׁבִּיתוּ] leaven from your houses; for whoever eats anything leavened from the first day until the seventh day, that soul will be cut off from Israel.”³⁰ Hence, the first day of the Festival of Unleavened Bread, *Abib* 15, is הַשְּׁבֵת in Lev 23:11, because (and, I submit, only because³¹) it is the day of *cessation* of leaven, a requisitely unique שבת, occurring on an annual basis, according to Exod 12:15.³²

Abib 15 (cf. Exod 12:18, where the fourteenth day of the month כְּעֶרֶב demarcates the commencement of *Abib* 15), Kleinig’s position is bolstered by Num 33:3b, the only other instance of the phrase מִמָּחֳרַת הַפֶּסַח, where it clearly refers to the morning of *Abib* 15. Yet, because מִמָּחֳרַת has the ambivalent meaning of either “the following morning (of the same day)” or “the following day,” it is possible that the phrase מִמָּחֳרַת הַפֶּסַח means “on the day after Passover” (i.e., *Abib* 16), rather than “on the morning after Passover” (i.e., the morning of *Abib* 15), as in Num 33:3b. In light of Lev 23:14, which prohibits consumption of the new harvest until the sheaf elevation rite is performed, it is *probable* that the Israelites ate the produce of the land on *Abib* 16, and therefore, that the phrase מִמָּחֳרַת הַפֶּסַח means “on the day after Passover” (i.e., *Abib* 16), in contrast to its usage in Num 33:3. This conclusion, of course, presumes that Josh 5:11–12 comports with Lev 23:10–14 and that the fundamental proposition advanced in this article is correct: the cessation of leaven in Exod 12:15 on the first day of the Feast of Unleavened Bread is the antecedent of the term הַשְּׁבֵת in Lev 23:11, and therefore the sheaf elevation rite was performed on *Abib* 16, מִמָּחֳרַת הַשְּׁבֵת, “on the day following the Sabbath.” In Lev 23:11, the *nomen regens* מִמָּחֳרַת definitely means the following day (*Abib* 16), rather than the morning of *Abib* 15, because the *nomen rectum* הַשְּׁבֵת is identified with the first day of the feast (*Abib* 15) via Exod 12:15, without restriction to the evening thereof.

³⁰This is also the seminal text concerning the Feast of Unleavened Bread. The divine address in which it occurs (Exod 12:1–20) was spoken on the very commencement of Israel’s calendrical implementation: “the beginning of months” (v. 2).

³¹Even though all work of *servitude* is prohibited, and a holy convocation is proclaimed on the first (and seventh) day of the Festival of Unleavened Bread (Lev 23:7–8), thus endowing it with Sabbath character (i.e., שְׁבֻתוֹן, cf. vv. 24, 39), this appointed time does not thereby constitute שְׁבֵת. By contrast, the weekly Sabbath and the Day of Atonement prohibit all work without qualification and are designated שְׁבֻת שְׁבֻתוֹן. Furthermore, even though the designation הַשְּׁבֵת in verses 11, 15—uniquely deriving its שְׁבֵת-status from the cessation of leaven in Exod 12:15—applies to the first day of the festival, this does not elevate the first day of the festival to the high status of שְׁבֻת שְׁבֻתוֹן.

³²Technically, the term הַשְּׁבֵת in Lev 23:11 refers to the event—the cessation of leaven—but also encompasses the day of the event. It does not extend beyond *Abib* 15, even though leaven was prohibited throughout the entire seven-day festival (Exod 12:18–19) because the cessation (*biphil* of שבת) in verse 15 was specifically enjoined on the first day only: “Seven days you shall eat unleavened bread; *only* on the first day you shall cause leaven to cease from your houses” (שְׁבֵעַת יָמִים) (מצות תאכלו אך ביום הראשון תשבייתו שאר מקמחכם). Here, the asseverative particle אך denotes the singularity of the day, as it does in Exod 31:13; Lev 23:27, 29. See Francis Brown, “אך,” *BDB* 36. It is the *event* of cessation assigned to the first day, not the

A comparison with the LXX supports this conclusion. In Lev 23:11, it translates the phrase תַּשְׁבֵּהּ תַּרְחֻמָּה, “on³³ the day after the Sabbath,” as τῆ ἐπαύριον τῆς πρώτης, “on the morrow of the first,” rendering πρώτης for תַּשְׁבֵּהּ. Here, the antecedent for the adjective πρώτης is the phrase ἡ ἡμέρα ἡ πρώτη, “the first day,” in verse 7, which phrase also appears in Exod 12:15 and refers in both instances to the first day of the Festival of Unleavened Bread.³⁴

Leviticus 23:15 repeats the phrase תַּשְׁבֵּהּ תַּרְחֻמָּה, but in this second instance, the LXX renders the less interpretive translation ἀπὸ τῆς ἐπαύριον τῶν σαββάτων, “from the morrow (day after) the Sabbath,” rather than repeat τῆ ἐπαύριον τῆς πρώτης. This inconsistency produced no confusion, since the prepositional phrase ἀπὸ τῆς ἐπαύριον τῶν σαββάτων is appositionally defined by the following prepositional phrase ἀπὸ τῆς ἡμέρας ἧς ἂν προσενέγκητε τὸ δράγμα τοῦ ἐπιθέματος,³⁵ “from the day when you bring the sheaf of the heave-offering,” such that τῶν σαββάτων of verse 15a is clearly identified with τῆς πρώτης of verse 11.

Response to Anticipated Objections

Having argued the cessation of leaven in Exod 12:15 as the only rationale with requisite specificity for the term תַּשְׁבֵּהּ in Lev 23:11, four objections may be anticipated: (1) no attested usage of תַּשְׁבֵּהּ as “cessation of leaven;” (2) the usage of תַּשְׁבֵּהּ is restricted to “cessation of labor;” (3) in the same pericope, תַּשְׁבֵּהּ has two different senses (“*Abib* 15” in vv. 11, 15a and “week” in vv. 15b–16); and (4) תַּשְׁבֵּהּ in verse 15b means “Sabbath-week” and therefore תַּשְׁבֵּהּ in verse 11 must refer to a weekly Sabbath.

As to the first objection, admittedly this is a unique usage of the term תַּשְׁבֵּהּ, but such may be expected on account of the demand for such temporal particularity—i.e., this “Sabbath” is a particularly unique Sabbath.³⁶

resultant *state* throughout the festival, that constitutes תַּשְׁבֵּהּ in verse 11. Consequently, the day after תַּשְׁבֵּהּ cannot be the twenty-second of *Abib*; rather, it must be the second day of the festival (*Abib* 16).

³³Milgrom notes, “The prefixed preposition *min* can mean ‘on’ and is interchangeable with *beth* (Sarna 1959)” (*Leviticus*, 2056–2057).

³⁴Nevertheless, while the LXX translators were intentionally precise about the meaning of תַּשְׁבֵּהּ, the rationale for their translation cannot be proven—that is, *why* they understood תַּשְׁבֵּהּ as referring to the first day of the festival.

³⁵The LXX employs a word-for-word translation of the Hebrew מִיּוֹם הַבְּרִיאָה אֶת־עֶמְרַת הַתְּנִינִיָּה.

³⁶In a similarly “unattested” manner, the noun מִקְרָא, which occurs twenty-three times in the Hebrew Bible and is translated “convocation” (Milgrom and Gane contend for “proclamation”; see n1 above) in twenty-one instances and “summoning” in one other (Num 10:2), has the unique and unquestioned semantic of “reading” in Neh 8:8. As per Num 10:2, Joüon classifies the term מִקְרָא as an “Aramaising” infinitive (i.e., an infinitive with a preformative מ) “to convene the assembly,” rather than a substantive; he similarly treats the term מִשְׁפָּע in the same verse. See Paul Joüon and Takamitsu Muraoka, *A Grammar of Biblical Hebrew*, 3rd ed., *SubBi* 27 (Rome: Gregorian & Biblical Press, 2011), 135.

Furthermore, 25:6 also demonstrates a singular employment of the term שָׁבַת, where it refers to the uncultivated produce of the earth as food during the sabbatical year.³⁷ Hence, this objection cannot stand.

As to the second objection, the semantic range of שָׁבַת is irrefutably expanded beyond its typical definition of “cessation of labor” or “weekly Sabbath” by its usage within the very same speech unit. Leviticus 23:15b designates the period of time to be counted which commences with the sheaf elevation rite: שִׁבְעַת שָׁבָתוֹת תְּמִימֹת תִּהְיֶינָה, “there shall be seven complete *sabbātōt*.” The plural שָׁבָתוֹת must refer to seven-day periods, rather than to weekly Sabbaths, else the adjective תְּמִימֹת which modifies it would be superfluous—the denotation of a weekly Sabbath as either complete or incomplete would be nonsensical. Additionally, it is clear from 25:8 (the only other verse in the Hebrew Bible where the phrase שִׁבְעַת שָׁבָתוֹת appears) that the phrase refers to seven weeks, rather than to seven Sabbaths.³⁸ In verse 8, the phrase appears twice in the context of years: שִׁבְעַת שָׁבָתוֹת שָׁנִים, “seven *sabbātōt* of years.” In the first instance in verse 8a, the phrase is appositionally defined as שִׁבְעַת שָׁנִים שִׁבְעַת שָׁנִים, “seven years seven times.” The chiasmic relationship between these two phrases, therefore, defines one שָׁבַת שָׁנִים as a period of seven years (שִׁבְעַת שָׁנִים) rather than merely the seventh year:

A	“seven”	שָׁבַע	A
B	“weeks of years”	שָׁבָתוֹת שָׁנִים	B
B'	“seven years”	שִׁבְעַת שָׁנִים	B'
A'	“seven times”	שִׁבְעַת שָׁנִים	A'

In the second instance in verse 8b, the phrase appears in the construct chain שִׁבְעַת שָׁבָתוֹת הַשָּׁנִים, “the time [literally, days] of seven *sabbātōt* of years,” which is appositionally defined as forty-nine years. Thus, again, one שָׁבַת שָׁנִים fits best as a *week* of years rather than merely the Sabbatical year. Therefore, the term שָׁבָתוֹת, in the same phrase שִׁבְעַת שָׁבָתוֹת in verse 15 refers to “weeks” rather than “Sabbath days.” Accordingly, the semantic range of שָׁבַת is not restricted to “cessation of labor.”

As to the third objection,³⁹ the Sabbatical theme, predicated upon the weekly Sabbath which commences the chapter (v. 3), runs throughout chapter 23 as a unifying motif of the מִקְרָאֵי קֹדֶשׁ appointed by YHWH, such that שָׁבַת exhibits a semantic range encompassing multiple meanings: weekly Sabbath (v. 2), week (v. 15), and Day of Atonement (v. 32). It is of no

³⁷Milgrom, *Leviticus*, 2034. I am indebted to Gane for sharing this insight.

³⁸Leviticus 23:15–16 and 25:8 (twice) are the only instances where שָׁבַת is translated ἑβδομάς in the LXX and where the term clearly means weeks.

³⁹Milgrom asserts, “[I]t is difficult to conceive that the author or interpolator would use *sabbāt* in the same pericope in two different senses: the sabbath day (vv. 11, 15a) and the sabbath week (vv. 15b, 16)” (*Leviticus*, 2060). He constrains the meaning of שָׁבַת to “Sabbath-week” in the second speech unit, verses 9–22, on the basis of his theorized evolution of the text, particularly as modified by the conjectured interpolator, Pre-H₂. See nn8–9, 20.

significance that the term bears two senses in one speech unit, when it demonstrably exhibits three meanings in the unified topic of the chapter. As noted above, in specifying a time period to be counted, verses 15–16 exhibit dual meanings of שָׁבַע, which are highlighted by the LXX’s translation.⁴⁰ Whereas in verse 15a, which designates the starting *point*, the term שָׁבַע means “the (day of) cessation of leaven,” in verse 15b, which designates the *duration*, שָׁבַע means “weeks”: שָׁבַע שָׁבָתוֹת תְּמִימֹת תִּהְיֶינָה, “there shall be seven complete weeks.” Please add the following sentence at the end of this paragraph: It is the adjective תְּמִימֹת that signals this semantic transition of שָׁבַע in verse 15.

As to the fourth objection, indeed, if שָׁבָתוֹת in verse 15b means “Sabbath-weeks,” הַשָּׁבָת in verse 11 fits best referring to a weekly Sabbath. However, the term שָׁבָתוֹת in verse 15b is not restricted to the standard “Sabbath-week,” as Milgrom contends,⁴¹ but rather functions as a terminological surrogate for שָׁבָעוֹת, “weeks,” which simply indicates a seven-day period, not necessarily terminating on the Sabbath.⁴² This terminological surrogacy for שָׁבָעוֹת is due to the modifying adjective תְּמִימֹת, “complete,” which requires that the שָׁבָתוֹת, “weeks,” be complete. This requirement (and thus the term תְּמִימֹת) would be superfluous if שָׁבָתוֹת strictly meant standard “sabbath-weeks,” because they, perforce, would be complete.⁴³

⁴⁰The LXX phonetically approximates the term שָׁבָת as τῶν σαββάτων, “the Sabbath,” in verse 15a, but interpretively renders the plural שָׁבָתוֹת שָׁבַע as ἐπτά ἑβδομάδας, “seven weeks,” in verse 15b and the singular הַשָּׁבָת הַשְּׁבִיעִת as τῆς ἐσχάτης ἑβδομάδος, “the last week,” in verse 16a.

⁴¹Ibid., 2060. Gane holds that the term שָׁבָתוֹת in verse 15b refers to “weeks,” which he sees as buttressing the argument that הַשָּׁבָת “earlier in the same verse refers to the weekly Sabbath rather than a yearly ceremonial rest day” (Gane, *Leviticus*, 390). Effectively, Gane agrees with Milgrom in regard to שָׁבָתוֹת meaning “sabbath-weeks” (i.e., seven-day cycles ending with the Sabbath day) in verses 15b–16.

⁴²In the LXX, the Greek ἑβδομάς, like the Hebrew שָׁבָע and the English “week,” indicates a period of seven days, not necessarily aligned with the Sabbath-week (i.e., not necessarily ending on the seventh-day Sabbath).

Leviticus 12:5 and Ezek 45:21 unambiguously demonstrate the usage of שָׁבָעוֹת for a period of seven days that is not aligned with the Sabbath-week. Contrastingly, no instance of שָׁבָעוֹת unambiguously demonstrates its usage for a Sabbath-week! In Lev 12:5, the two-week (שָׁבָעַיִם) period of a woman’s ritual impurity, communicable by touch, commences with the birth of her daughter—an event that obviously need not occur on a Sunday. In Ezek 45:21, the Passover is appositionally defined as a festival of a week of days (הַפֶּסַח הָיָה שָׁבָעוֹת יָמִים). This week of days, being calendrically tied to the fifteenth of *Abib*, is not confined to the Sabbath-week.

Unlike the two unambiguous instances of שָׁבָעוֹת (Lev 12:5; Ezek 45:21), there are no instances in the LXX of ἑβδομάς unambiguously referring to either a Sabbath-week or a period of seven days not aligned with the Sabbath-week. This is because the LXX translates the two unambiguous instances of שָׁבָעוֹת as ἐπτά ἡμέρας, “seven days,” rather than ἑβδομάς.

⁴³If שָׁבָתוֹת meant “Sabbath-ending-weeks” in verse 15b, the preceding day, the orienting הַשָּׁבָת of verse 15a, would have to be a weekly Sabbath, since there would be no other way in which the seven Sabbath-weeks could fit the fifty-day timeframe, as

Only when the seven-day period does not align with the standard “Sabbath-week” (i.e., when the seven-day period does not begin on the first day of the standard Sabbath-week) can there be an “incomplete week,” meaning, of course, an incomplete standard week. The presence of תְּמִימָה in verse 15, which precludes an incomplete standard week from being reckoned as one of the שַׁבָּתוֹת, indicates the anticipation of incomplete standard weeks, which, in turn, indicates that the שַׁבָּתוֹת do not begin, as a matter of course, on the first day of the standard week.⁴⁴ Thus, the שַׁבָּתוֹת are not restricted to standard Sabbath-weeks. Effectively, to avoid superfluity, תְּמִימָה requires that each week terminate seven days after its commencement, irrespective of the Sabbath (the terminus of the standard week).

The parallel phrase שַׁבָּתוֹת שְׁבַע in 25:8 lacks the adjective תְּמִימָה, which, if present, would be superfluous, since the “weekly” cycle of years always terminates with the sabbatical year (i.e., the weekly cycle of years in ch. 25 is, per se, a standard week of years) and thus, is always “complete.” Again, by contrast, the necessary presence of תְּמִימָה in 23:15 implies that the weeks are not, as a matter of course, standard Sabbath-weeks, and therefore do not automatically commence on the first day of the standard week.

Leviticus 25:30 and Josh 10:13 may be adduced as further evidence to show that the adjective תְּמִי, when modifying time, refers to a non-standard period. In fact, these are the only other instances in the Hebrew Bible where תְּמִי is a temporal modifier. In Lev 25:30, the phrase שְׁנֵה תְּמִימָה, “complete year,” refers to the time period allotted for the right of redemption of a dwelling house within a walled town. The corresponding phrase in verse 29 (תָּם תְּמִי) שְׁנַת מְקַבְּרוֹ, “the completion of a full year of/from its sale,”⁴⁵ indicates

required by verses 15b–16a. Thus, the seven שַׁבָּתוֹת would automatically be complete, rendering the term תְּמִימָה superfluous. Further, the term תְּמִימָה must do more than merely alter the meaning of שַׁבָּתוֹת from “Sabbath days” to “Sabbath-weeks,” because such an alteration would effectuate no change in terms of calculating the day of new grain offering, which is the ultimate objective of verses 15–16. That is, it makes no difference whether one is to count seven Sabbath days or seven Sabbath-weeks, because the day following either count is the same. Thus, again, the interpretation of שַׁבָּתוֹת as “Sabbath-weeks” renders the term תְּמִימָה superfluous and must therefore be rejected.

⁴⁴As a corollary, the term הַשַּׁבָּת of verse 15a cannot mean “weekly Sabbath” or “Sabbath-week,” because the weeks referred to by the term שַׁבָּתוֹת in verse 15b, which commence the day after הַשַּׁבָּת, do not, as a matter of course, begin on the first day of the standard week. That is, if הַשַּׁבָּת of verse 15a meant “weekly Sabbath” or “Sabbath-week,” the שַׁבָּתוֹת of verse 15b would align with the standard week and thus be “complete,” rendering the term תְּמִימָה superfluous. This corollary is the reverse of the fourth objection.

⁴⁵The key term in this corresponding phrase is the plural יָמִים, literally “days,” which means “full” when in apposition to a time period (e.g., שְׁנֵתַי יָמִים, “two full years,” [Gen 41:1; 2 Sam 13:23; 14:28; Jer 28:3, 11]; חֹדֶשׁ יָמִים, “a full month,” [Gen 29:14]; יָרַח יָמִים, “a full month” [Deut 21:13; 2 Kgs 15:13]; שְׁלֹשָׁה שָׁבָעִים יָמִים, “three full weeks,” [Dan 10:2–3]). If the term יָמִים is an appositional element of the prepositional phrase עַד־תָּם שְׁנַת מְקַבְּרוֹ יָמִים, “until the completion of a full year of/from its sale,” then the two terms prior to and succeeding the prepositional phrase,

that *שָׁנָה תְּמִימָה* does not refer to the standard (i.e., calendrical) year, but to an equivalent period that commences upon the house's sale, which may occur at any point within the calendrical year.

In Josh 10:13, in response to Joshua's petition for the extension of daylight, the sun stopped in the middle of the sky and did not proceed to set *יָוֵם תְּמִיִם*, "for about a whole day." Again, the time period modified by the adjective *תְּמִיִם* does not refer to the commencement and termination of the standard *יוֹם* (that is, sunset to sunset), but to an equivalent period commencing with Joshua's prayer and terminating with the procession of sunset, which period, by its very nature, was not aligned with the commencement and termination of the standard period (i.e., that day was doubly long).

Therefore, by comparison with Lev 25:30 and Josh 10:13, wherein the time period as modified by the adjective *תְּמִיִם* indicates a duration equivalent to the complete standard period, but not confined to the commencement and termination of that standard period, the phrase *שִׁבְעַת תְּמִימֹת* in Lev 23:15 indicates a duration of seven complete weeks, which are not confined to the standard Sabbath-week.

Conclusion

In conclusion, the antecedent of *הַשָּׁבֻעַ* in verses 11 and 15a cannot be determined on the basis of chapter 23 alone. Instead, the term *הַשָּׁבֻעַ* of verse 11 requires, as its antecedent to be found elsewhere, an explicit annual incident of *שַׁבָּת*, occurring at the commencement of harvest. In the totality of biblical *שַׁבָּת* incidents, only two are explicitly annual: the Day of Atonement and the cessation of leaven. Since the former does not occur at the

וְהָיָה זְכוּתוֹ, "then his redemption right will be," and *תְּהִיָּה זְכוּתוֹ*, "his redemption right shall be," respectively, constitute an *inclusio*, utilizing the perfect and imperfect verbal forms that share the prepositional phrase. The LXX translates the text in this manner: *καὶ ἔσται ἡ λύτρωσις αὐτοῦ ἕως πληρωθῆναι ἐνιαυτὸς ἡμερῶν ἔσται ἡ λύτρωσις αὐτοῦ*, "and its redemption will be until a year of days be fulfilled will be its redemption." The LXX lacks a term corresponding to *מִמְכָרוֹ*, "its sale."

Alternatively, the plural *שָׁנִים* can mean "one year" (e.g., Gen 40:4; Judg 17:10; 19:2; 1 Sam 27:7; 29:3; 1 Kgs 17:15). For *שָׁנִים* meaning "yearly," see 1 Sam 1:21; 2:19; 20:6. For *מִשָּׁנָה מִשָּׁנָה* meaning "from year to year," see also Exod 13:10; Judg 11:40; 21:19; 1 Sam 1:3; 2:19. The MT places the *'atnah* under the term *מִמְכָרוֹ* so that *שָׁנִים* is treated as part of a separate clause: *וְהָיָה זְכוּתוֹ שָׁנִים*, "his right of redemption shall be one year." Milgrom translates it so (*Leviticus*, 2147).

Either way, as Milgrom correctly states in his comment on *שָׁנִים* in Lev 25:29, "A full year is meant, as specified in the previous phrase 'the end of a year of its sale' and in the following verse *šānā thmīmā* 'one full year' (v. 30) . . . that is, a full year and not to the end of the calendar year" (ibid., 2198). If Milgrom applied the same logic to *שִׁבְעַת תְּמִימֹת* as he does to *šānā thmīmā*, he would not confine the "seven full weeks" of 23:15b to the standard Sabbath-week, since, in his view, "one full year" in 25:29 is not confined to the standard calendar year. However, he inconsistently and erroneously holds that "the week's completeness is stressed [in 23:15b by *תְּמִימֹת*] to make sure that the week ends with the Sabbath" (ibid., 2001). Ironically, as shown above, *תְּמִימֹת* stresses the very opposite point.

commencement of harvest, the term *שִׁבְתֵּי* of verse 11 must point to the initial instructions concerning the Festival of Unleavened Bread in Exod 12:15 as the only possible referent with requisite specificity: the mandated cessation (*hiphil* of *שב*) of leaven on the first day of the festival. Consequently, the term *שִׁבְתוֹת* of Lev 23:15b must refer to weeks that are not restricted to standard Sabbath-ending weeks. Independently, this definition of *שִׁבְתֵּי* is established by the presumed essentiality of its modifying adjective *תְּמִימָה*, along with other instances in which *תְּמִימָה* modifies temporal terms. Comparison of the same phrase in 25:8 as in 23:15, *שִׁבְתוֹת שִׁבְעָה*, collaterally establishes the meaning of *שִׁבְתוֹת* as “weeks” rather than “weekly Sabbaths.” It was noted that the term *שִׁבְתֵּי* of verse 15a cannot mean “weekly Sabbath” or “Sabbath-week,” if, as argued, the weeks referred to by the term *שִׁבְתוֹת* in verse 15b do not begin, as a matter of course, on the first day of the standard week. The LXX confirms these exegetical conclusions by translating the terms *שִׁבְתֵּי* in verse 11 and *שִׁבְתוֹת* in verse 15b (along with *שִׁבְתֵּי* in v. 16a), with the more interpretative terms *τῆς πρώτης*, “the first [of the Festival of Unleavened Bread]” in verse 11 and *ἑβδομάδας* “weeks” in verse 15b (along with *ἑβδομάδος* “week” in v. 16a). While verses 11 and 15a could have employed *יום הָרִאשׁוֹן*, “the first day,” or “the fifteenth of *Abib*,” instead of *שִׁבְתֵּי*, and while verses 15b–16 and 25:8 could have employed *שָׁבָעוֹת*, “weeks,” instead of *שִׁבְתוֹת*, at the cost of explicit clarity comes the benefit of thematic unity, rooted in the Sabbath.