

General Church Education



# Giving Thanks

Exodus 23:14-19

## Lesson 26

Jacob's Ladder Religion Lessons

Level 3: The Lord Is Our Lawgiver

For ages 8-9 years

## Giving Thanks

### Exodus 23:14-19

### For Parents and Teachers

One of the ways we can show our love to the Lord is to thank Him for the many blessings we have received from Him. The Lord tells us in the Word that we should do this, not for His sake, but for the sake of our own happiness. Offering thanks reminds us of the many good things that come from the Lord. This increases our awareness and appreciation of them, and thus the happiness they bring us.

The focus of this lesson is the three feasts of the year that the ancient Israelites were commanded to celebrate. These feasts illustrate the regular remembrance of the Lord's bountiful gifts, both natural and spiritual, that is so important in each person's life.

### Ideas for Children

- The Lord commanded the Israelites to have feasts of thanksgiving to remind them that He was their Creator who provided all things.
- Remember to thank the Lord on a regular basis for your blessings and your life.

### From the Writings

First-fruits were offerings and gifts which were thanksgivings for the fruits of the earth. They were the acknowledgement of blessings from Jehovah, that is, from the Lord, and therefore the acknowledgement that all things came from Him. In the internal sense they are the acknowledgement that He is the Source of every good and truth of faith. *Arcana Coelestia* 9223

# Giving Thanks

## Exodus 23:14-19

### Words to Understand

**annual**—something that happens once a year

**feast**—a celebration or festival usually including a rich, elaborate meal

**endure**—to hold out or last in spite of hardship

### Laws Given through Moses

Remember the dramatic way the Lord gave the Ten Commandments to Moses when he went to the top of Mount Sinai. The Lord was showing that these are not just ordinary rules or laws. Afterwards the Lord gave Moses many more laws for the children of Israel. You probably remember that at this time the ancient Hebrews had just come out of Egypt where they were slaves. After they were freed, they needed to learn how to live and work together. They needed guidance in all parts of their lives. The Lord gave them guidance with all the laws that are written in the five books Moses wrote which are Genesis, Exodus, Leviticus, Numbers and Deuteronomy.

Our reading for this lesson is about the feasts the Israelites were commanded to keep. **Read Exodus 23:14-19.** How many times a year were the Israelites supposed to have feasts of thanksgiving? (There were three feasts they were to keep.)

### The Feast of Unleavened Bread

The first of these feasts was the Feast of Unleavened Bread. Unleavened bread is flat bread made without yeast. The children of Israel made bread in a hurry to eat at the Passover just before they left Egypt after the tenth plague. So this feast is also called the Passover Feast. For seven whole days people ate only unleavened bread. The Lord said this feast should be observed in the month of Abib, which is from the ancient Hebrew calendar. Jews today still celebrate this feast. It is the same time of year as our month of April.

When this feast is celebrated, Jewish people remember how the Lord led them out of Egypt and into Canaan. They think of Moses, the giving of the Ten Commandments, and they also look back to the time when the Lord was present with them in the pillar of cloud and fire. The children of Israel of olden days and the Jewish people today give thanks to the Lord for all the things He did to deliver them and guide them to the Promised Land.

### The Feast of Harvest

The Feast of Harvest was the second feast commanded. It was celebrated seven weeks or about fifty days after the first one. Another name for it is the Feast of Pentecost. Pentecost comes from a Greek word meaning “fiftieth.” During this feast the Hebrews presented the first crops of the growing season to the Lord. They also gave other free-will offerings and rested. It was a time to be happy

for the harvest the Lord had given them.

We don't always think about it, but the change in seasons of each year provides the conditions needed to make our food grow. People plant the seeds and do the weeding, but we cannot make anything grow by ourselves, can we? The miracle of growth is another gift we receive from the Lord. He knows that we need good food and so He provides the seeds, water and sun to grow all the fruits and vegetables that we harvest.

### **The Feast of Ingathering**

The third feast was the Feast of Ingathering. This came at the time the crops were brought in from the fields to be stored for the winter ahead. Does your family have a feast or celebration at the end of the growing season when the crops are harvested? The Feast of Ingathering continued for eight days, about the fifteenth day following the new moon in October. It was also known as the Feast of Tabernacles because the Hebrews camped in tents for the feast. This reminded them of the way they lived in tents during the wilderness journey and how the Lord had led and helped them. Many animals were offered for sacrifice during this feast as a sign of thankfulness for all the food, clothing and shelter the Lord had provided for them.

All the Hebrew boys and men were commanded to come to the temple during these three feasts each year. Other family members often traveled to Jerusalem with the men. It was a time of rejoicing as they gave thanks to God.

### **The Reason for Giving Thanks**

We need to give thanks too because the Lord's Word instructs us to. The Lord knows that something wonderful happens when we give thanks. Whom do we think about when we are thankful? We think about the person who has given us something and we feel their love for us.

It is by giving thanks that the gifts we receive can truly touch our hearts. If we don't give thanks, we miss feeling the love that is within the gift.

How often do we receive gifts from other people? Sometimes our family, friends and teachers give us gifts such as a loving home, friendship and useful knowledge. When they do, it is important to say "thank you" for these gifts. By saying thanks, we enjoy not only the gift itself but also the love of the person who gave the gift.

Every day the Lord gives us wonderful gifts. Can you think of some? When you think about it, you notice so many things that we take for granted, starting with life itself. We wake up, we take a new breath, we enjoy the strength to work and play in each new day. We enjoy food, clothing and shelter as gifts from the Lord. Even more important we can learn about the Lord and spiritual life from His Word, which is truly a very precious gift.





### Ways to Show Our Thanks

Can you think of ways to show thanks to the Lord? First, we can show appreciation by using the gifts we receive wisely. This shows respect and honor for the gift and for the giver. Second, we can honor the Lord by remembering to give thanks at times such as before meals or bedtime and on Sunday as part of worship. Many countries around the world take a holiday to have a celebration at harvest time when everyone gives thanks together. Thanksgiving is a splendid occasion to see and taste all the wonderful foods that the Lord provides for us to enjoy.

### Discussion Ideas

- Talk about appropriate situations and ways to give acknowledgements of thanks.
- Help children cultivate the habit of saying “please” and “thank you.” Discuss why these and other good manners are important in daily life.

# Activity Overview | Giving Thanks

## Recitation

Learn the recitation by heart.

Enter into His gates with thanksgiving, and into His courts with praise. Be thankful to Him, and bless His name. For the Lord is good, His mercy is everlasting, and His truth endures to all generations. Psalm 110:4,5

## Song

*For Peace and for Plenty*

Listen or download at <https://www.newchurchvineyard.org/resource/song-for-peace-and-for-plenty/>

## Projects

Choose one or two activities.

- Activity 1 | Feast of Harvest Word Search
- Activity 2 | Quote to Color and Decorate: O Give Thanks to the Lord

## Additional Activity Ideas

- Memorize a new quote from the Word to say as a blessing before meals, such as:  
Bless the Lord, O my soul; And all that is within me, bless His holy name!  
Bless the Lord, O my soul. And forget not all His benefits.... Psalm 103:1,2  
I will bless the Lord at all times; His praise shall continually be in my mouth.... Oh, magnify the Lord with me, And let us exalt His name together. Psalm 34:1,3  
Blessed be the Lord, Who daily loads us with benefits. Psalm 68:19  
Oh, taste and see that the Lord is good; blessed is the one who trusts in Him! Psalm 34:8
- Write a prayer of thanks to the Lord.
- Think of someone you would like to thank and write a thank-you note.
- Take a nature walk. Make a centerpiece for your thanksgiving or harvest table using leaves, berries, seed pods, etc. you gather during your walk.

## Activity 1 | Feast of Harvest Word Search

Look for words about the Feast of Harvest in the word search. Words may be horizontal, diagonal, or vertical. Answers are on the next page.

### Words to Find

annual  
celebration  
endure  
feast  
fields  
gifts  
harvest  
laws  
Moses  
thankful

```

          B Q
          P Q
          H W
        V J P   N Z   B P G
      J P Y S J X K M I B K P
X M K I J F E A S T N F O E
H I A T B W I P C B U F A C
Z A H N R G L E E N D U R E
Y T H A N K F U L F O V K R
L K C V R U E Q E D X U I W
C Z C T R V A P B D S Q Y G
U J T C P J E L R W Y F T U
  E O G I F T S A O K I R
  S U S O X Y D T W O Y U
    J G I K A R I Q S G
    Q N N G W M O S E S
      T E F V I N B Y
        S N N K I T G P
          A P E W

```

## Activity 2 | Feast of Harvest Word Search Answers

B Q  
P Q  
H W  
V J P N Z B P G  
J P Y S J X K M I B K P  
X M K I J F E A S T N F O E  
H I A T B W I P C B U F A C  
Z A H N R G L E E N D U R E  
Y T H A N K F U L F O V K R  
L K C V R U E Q E D X U I W  
C Z C T R V A P B D S Q Y G  
U J T C P J E L R W Y F T U  
E O G I F T S A O K I R  
S U S O X Y D T W O Y U  
J G I K A R I Q S G  
Q N N G W M O S E S  
T E F V I N B Y  
S N N K I T G P  
A P E W



