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Project TABS

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The Origins of Sukkot

The connection between the Israelite festival of Sukkot in the temple and the Ugaritic new year festival and its dwellings of branches for the gods.

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Manuscript Illustration of a Sukkah (Italy, 1374). British Libriary MS Or 5024 fol 70v from Metzger, Jewish Life in the Middle Ages, fig. 369.

Festival of *Asif* – The Autumn New Year

The earliest biblical reference[2] to an autumn holiday celebrating the final gathering of produce from the fields appears in Exodus’ Covenant Collection (E):

שמות כג:טז …וְחַג הָאָסִף **בְּצֵאת הַשָּׁנָה** בְּאָסְפְּךָ אֶת מַעֲשֶׂיךָ מִן הַשָּׂדֶה.

Exod 23:16 …And the feast of Ingathering **upon the culmination of the year**, when you gather in the results of your work from the field.

The verse implies that *Asif* (Ingathering) was celebrated at the end of the harvest and also functioned as a New Year.[3] We are not told the calendrical date, how long it lasted, or even a season for this holiday, and it is thus possible that *Asif* may have had no set date and that the end of the harvest determined the end of the year.[4]

The Agricultural Festival of *Sukkot* (Deuteronomy)

Deuteronomy refers to the holiday not as *Asif* (Ingathering), but as *Sukkot* (Booths), and adds that it lasts seven days:

דברים טז:יג חַג הַסֻּכֹּת תַּעֲשֶׂה לְךָ שִׁבְעַת יָמִים בְּאָסְפְּךָ מִגָּרְנְךָ וּמִיִּקְבֶךָ.

Deut 16:13 After the gathering from your threshing floor and your vat, you shall hold the Feast of Booths for seven days.[5]

Like the verse in Exodus, the text here includes no exact date, nor does it say that the festival comes at the end of the year. Nevertheless, this is strongly implied in a later passage in Deuteronomy, which describes when the public reading of the Torah (i.e., Deuteronomy) should be held:

דברים לא:י …מִקֵּץ שֶׁבַע שָׁנִים בְּמֹעֵד שְׁנַת הַשְּׁמִטָּה בְּחַג הַסֻּכּוֹת.

Deut 31:10 …At the end of seven years, at the time of the year set for remission, at the Feast of Booths.

Here again, Sukkot occurs upon the culmination of a year.[6]

Canaanite Autumn Calendar

An autumn new year was ubiquitous in the Levant and seems to have been used by the Canaanites, as can be seen in what scholars call “the Gezer Calendar,” discovered in 1908 at Tel Gezer by R.A.S. Macalister, and dated to the 10th century (roughly the time of David according to biblical chronology):

ירחו אסף
ירחו זרע
ירחו לקש
ירח עצד פשת
ירח קצר שערם
ירח קצר וכל
ירחו זמר
ירח קץ
אבי[ה]

The (2) months of ingathering
The (2) months of planting
The (2) months of rain
The month of cutting flax
The month of harvesting barley
The month of harvesting and measuring (wheat/grain)
The (2) months of pruning
The month of summer (fruit)
Abiy[ah]

Scholars debate the meaning of this text, but one current interpretation is that the text is a seasonal calendar, listing not months but periods of time connected to the planting and harvest cycle. It begins with the ingathering of fruit, which has the exact same name as the ingathering holiday in Exodus 23. It ends with the month of summer fruit, often a reference to figs. The term *may*also be related to the Hebrew word קץ, which means “end” (both terms appear to derive from the root ק.צ.צ, meaning "cut off").[7]

Ugaritic New Year’s

Another culture that used the autumn calendar and even held a large new year celebration in the autumn was the coastal kingdom of Ugarit. Two tablets found in the excavation of this city (RS 1.003, RS 18.056) describe an autumnal New Year’s festival that spans more than a month:

On the month of Rashu-Yeni (ראשית היין; equivalent to *Elul,*the month preceding *Tishrei*, when Rosh Hashanah is celebrated), on the day of the New Moon (ym.ḥdt; יום חודש), cut a bunch of grapes for Ilu (=El) as a peace offering (*shelamim*)…[8]

The tablet goes on to describe the preparations made by the king on the 14th of the month. Then, on the 15th, a seven-day celebration begins, typified by many sacrifices:

A cow for the Ilahuma,
For Tukamuna-wa-Šu[nama an ewe]
An ewe for Rašap as a burnt-offering,
And as a peace offering: [two] e[wes] for Ilahu,
A bull and a ram for the Ilahuma
A cow for the Ilahuma
For Balu a bull…

The list goes on, with various forms of sacrifices to be brought for six days.[9] Then,

On the seventh day, when the sun rises, the day will be free (of cultic obligations); when the sun sets, the king will be free (of cultic obligations).

Dwellings for the Gods made of Branches on the First of the Autumn Month

The new year festival culminates in the next month:

On the day of the new moon of (the following month, equivalent to *Tishrei*)… the king will offer a sacrifice… on the roof **where there will be dwellings of branches (mtbt ͗zmr; מושבות זמר)**, four on one side four on the other, a ram as burnt offering, a bull and a ram as peace offering, to be repeated seven times. According to what is in his heart, the king will speak.

The connection to the practice on *Sukkot* of gathering branches and building booths, familiar from Leviticus 23, is unmistakable. In his introduction to this text, the Ugaritic scholar, Dennis Pardee, writes:

The reference to the “day of the new moon”… marks this as a text outlining a two-month festival, or at least, the festival of the last month of the year with a transitional festival to the new year. The new-year festival, similarly to that of the Hebrew Bible, appears to be a harvest festival, as may be surmised from the mention of “dwellings” for the gods made of “cut branches.”[10]

The connection between the practice in Ugarit and that described in the Torah was noted by another Ugaritic scholar, Johannes C. De Moor, in his discussion of the text in Deuteronomy:

It was now called *ḥag hassukkōt*, a name which for the first time points to the fact that like the people of Ugarit, the Israelites used booths of branches during the festival.[11]

It is significant that the bulk of the Ugaritic new year is celebrated at the end of the year and culminates in the new year, exactly as described in Exod 23 about *Asif*, which is celebrated “as the year ends.”

Brief Excursus: Connecting Ugarit and Israelites

The ancient city of Ugarit, located in modern day coastal Syria, was destroyed in the 12th century B.C.E. Nevertheless, Ugaritic culture shares many commonalities with Israel.[12] Considering the difference in time, such a connection is always difficult to explain, especially when the first text to make a clear connection between Judean and Ugaritic practice—in this case Leviticus—seems to be exilic or later.

Nevertheless, reminiscences of Ugaritic law and lore are sometimes only found in late texts.[13] Rituals tend to be conservative, and may very well have been preserved by the local population in Canaan, and the same may be true about the practice of making dwellings out of branches on the autumn new year.

Harvest Huts or Temple Huts

Deuteronomy sees the holiday of Sukkot as a Temple holiday:

דברים טז:טו שִׁבְעַת יָמִים תָּחֹג לַי-הוָה אֱלֹהֶיךָ **בַּמָּקוֹם אֲשֶׁר יִבְחַר יְ-הוָה** כִּי יְבָרֶכְךָ יְ-הוָה אֱלֹהֶיךָ בְּכֹל תְּבוּאָתְךָ וּבְכֹל מַעֲשֵׂה יָדֶיךָ וְהָיִיתָ אַךְ שָׂמֵחַ.

Deut 16:15 You shall hold a festival for YHWH your God seven days, **in the place that YHWH will choose**; for YHWH your God will bless all your crops and all your undertakings, and you shall have nothing but joy.

If booths (*sukkot* is plural) were built, it would have likely been for YHWH and his entourage (or for the priests?) at the Temple, likely on the roof in keeping with the Levantine practice found in Ugarit.[14]

But if Deuteronomy did imagine huts for YHWH and his entourage on the Temple roof as part of the holiday, how and when did the practice change to Israelites/Judeans building huts for themselves to dwell in outside the Temple precinct?

Leviticus: Taking Branches and Building Booths

The command to take branches and the command to dwell in booths are found in Leviticus 23 in two separate glosses, one after the other. The Holiness festival calendar originally ended in vv. 37-38.[15] In the first gloss (vv. 39-41), we find a commandment to take branches:

ויקרא כג:מ וּלְקַחְתֶּם לָכֶם בַּיּוֹם הָרִאשׁוֹן פְּרִי עֵץ הָדָר כַּפֹּת תְּמָרִים וַעֲנַף עֵץ עָבֹת וְעַרְבֵי נָחַל וּשְׂמַחְתֶּם לִפְנֵי יְ-הוָה אֱלֹהֵיכֶם שִׁבְעַת יָמִים….

Lev 23:40 On the first day you shall take the product of hadar trees, branches of palm trees, boughs of leafy trees, and willows of the brook, and you shall rejoice before YHWH your God seven days….

What the branches were to be taken for, whether to build booths for YHWH or some other ritual function, is unclear, but we do see that this ritual was meant to take place in the Temple. Thus, this fits with the ancient conception we saw in Deuteronomy of a Temple ritual.

After the conclusion of this gloss in v. 41, Leviticus continues with an additional gloss:

ויקרא כג:מב בַּסֻּכֹּת תֵּשְׁבוּ שִׁבְעַת יָמִים כָּל הָאֶזְרָח בְּיִשְׂרָאֵל יֵשְׁבוּ בַּסֻּכֹּת.

Lev 23:42 You shall live in booths seven days; all citizens in Israel shall live in booths.

According to this verse, booths should be built by individuals for their own purposes, and ostensibly, wherever they happen to be. Although we do not know when this redaction was added, a story in the book of Nehemiah, which describes the Judeans learning about this mitzvah for the first time, offers a *terminus ad quem*.

Nehemiah: The Judeans Don’t Know About Building Booths

In Nehemiah 8, after a public Torah reading ceremony conducted by Ezra on the first of the seventh month,[16] the leaders of the people gather together with Ezra the next day for a more intimate Torah study:

נחמיה ח:יג וּבַיּוֹם הַשֵּׁנִי נֶאֶסְפוּ רָאשֵׁי הָאָבוֹת לְכָל הָעָם הַכֹּהֲנִים וְהַלְוִיִּם אֶל עֶזְרָא הַסֹּפֵר וּלְהַשְׂכִּיל אֶל דִּבְרֵי הַתּוֹרָה. ח:יד וַיִּמְצְאוּ כָּתוּב בַּתּוֹרָה אֲשֶׁר צִוָּה יְהוָה בְּיַד מֹשֶׁה אֲשֶׁר יֵשְׁבוּ בְנֵי יִשְׂרָאֵל בַּסֻּכּוֹת בֶּחָג בַּחֹדֶשׁ הַשְּׁבִיעִי. ח:טו וַאֲשֶׁר יַשְׁמִיעוּ וְיַעֲבִירוּ קוֹל בְּכָל עָרֵיהֶם וּבִירוּשָׁלַ‍ִם לֵאמֹר צְאוּ הָהָר וְהָבִיאוּ עֲלֵי זַיִת וַעֲלֵי עֵץ שֶׁמֶן וַעֲלֵי הֲדַס וַעֲלֵי תְמָרִים וַעֲלֵי עֵץ עָבֹת לַעֲשֹׂת סֻכֹּת כַּכָּתוּב.

Neh 8:13 On the second day, the heads of the clans of all the people and the priests and Levites gathered to Ezra the scribe to study the words of the Teaching. 8:14 They found written in the Teaching that YHWH had commanded Moses that the Israelites must dwell in booths during the festival of the seventh month, 8:15 and that they must announce and proclaim throughout all their towns and Jerusalem as follows, “Go out to the mountains and bring leafy branches of olive trees, pine trees, myrtles, palms and *other*leafy trees to make booths, as it is written.”

ח:טזוַיֵּצְאוּ הָעָם וַיָּבִיאוּ וַיַּעֲשׂוּ לָהֶם סֻכּוֹת אִישׁ עַל גַּגּוֹ וּבְחַצְרֹתֵיהֶם וּבְחַצְרוֹת בֵּית הָאֱלֹהִים וּבִרְחוֹב שַׁעַר הַמַּיִם וּבִרְחוֹב שַׁעַר אֶפְרָיִם. ח:יזוַיַּעֲשׂוּ כָל הַקָּהָל הַשָּׁבִים מִן הַשְּׁבִי סֻכּוֹת וַיֵּשְׁבוּ בַסֻּכּוֹת כִּי לֹא עָשׂוּ מִימֵי יֵשׁוּעַ בִּן נוּן כֵּן בְּנֵי יִשְׂרָאֵל עַד הַיּוֹם הַהוּא וַתְּהִי שִׂמְחָה גְּדוֹלָה מְאֹד.

8:16 So the people went out and brought them, and made themselves booths on their roofs, in their courtyards, in the courtyards of the House of God, in the square of the Water Gate and in the square of the Ephraim Gate. 8:17The whole community that returned from the captivity made booths and dwelt in the booths — the Israelites had not done so from the days of Joshua son of Nun to that day — and there was very great rejoicing.

By the time of the account in Nehemiah, some version of what we have noted above as two glosses to Leviticus 23 had become established in the Torah.[17] ;Ezra understands these two verses as part of the same practice,[18] and thus people gather the special branches and build *sukkot* for the first time ever.

Not Just a Midrashic Innovation

The reaction of the people recorded in Nehemiah, combined with the fact that nowhere in the Torah except in this late gloss is there a command to build *sukkot*, might imply that the practice of dwelling in *sukkot* derives from a late (inner-biblical) “midrash,” interpreting the name: “Why is it called *Sukkot*? Because we are supposed to dwell in *sukkot*.” However, as noted above, Deuteronomy’s instruction to celebrate the holiday of Sukkot in Jerusalem, and the parallel practice in Ugarit of building dwellings out of branches on the temple roof, implies that the name really does derive from booths, but that these booths were built on the roof of the Temple and were meant for YHWH and his entourage.

An Exilic Development Transported Back to Judea

Bible scholar Jacob Milgrom suggests that the shift from Deuteronomy’s temple practice to Lev 23:42’s building of *sukkot* everywhere occurred during the exile. The Jews in Babylon, finding themselves without a temple, discontinued the practice of building *sukkot* for YHWH on the holiday. Instead, he argues, the practice of each family building their own *sukkah* began, and it was during this period that Lev 23:42 was added to the Holiness calendar. When Babylonian Jews like Ezra moved back to Judea, they took the revised text and the new practice with them.[19]

Nevertheless, we can see elements of continuity with the ancient practice. In fact, it is striking that in Nehemiah, the Judeans build their huts, among other places specifically on “roofs.” This may be a vestige of the old Canaanite custom reflected in the texts from Ugarit and likely practiced in the Jerusalem Temple. The verse about *sukkot* in Leviticus and the consequent practice in Nehemiah based on this verse are exilic revisions of this much earlier practice, unrecorded but assumed in Deuteronomy, of building a temporary dwelling at the Temple for YHWH and his entourage during the festival.

[View Footnotes](https://www.thetorah.com/article/the-origins-of-sukkot)

1. In collaboration with Rabbi David D. Steinberg
2. That this list predates the “Ritual Decalogue” list in Exod 34, and that the latter is a revision of this list, was demonstrated definitively by Shimon Gesundheit, in his essay “The Festival Calendars in Exod 23:14-19 and 34:18-26,” which appears as the first chapter of his book. See, Shimon Gesundheit, *Three Times a Year* (FAT 82; Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 2012), 12-43.
3. As noted by Gesundheit, the revision of this text in the Ritual Decalogue changes the language:

שמות לד:כב וְחַג הָאָסִיף **תְּקוּפַת**הַשָּׁנָה.

Exod 34:22…And the Feast of Gathering at **the turn** of the year.

This was likely meant to obscure the New Year aspect of the holiday, due to the dominance of the spring calendar in Judah.

1. Alternatively, it may be that *Asif* was celebrated at what was otherwise known as the end of the year.
2. The Priestly source in Numbers does offer an exact date for this holiday, as well as describing it as lasting seven days, but gives the holiday no name at all, in keeping with its treatment of all the holidays in the seventh month.

במדבר כט:יב וּבַחֲמִשָּׁה עָשָׂר יוֹם לַחֹדֶשׁ הַשְּׁבִיעִי מִקְרָא קֹדֶשׁ יִהְיֶה לָכֶם כָּל מְלֶאכֶת עֲבֹדָה לֹא תַעֲשׂוּ וְחַגֹּתֶם חַג לַיהוָה שִׁבְעַת יָמִים.

Num 29:12 On the fifteenth day of the seventh month, you shall observe a sacred occasion: you shall not work at your occupations. — Seven days you shall observe a festival of YHWH.

The latest festival calendar, the Holiness Legislation in Leviticus, which was familiar with the previous sources, combines all these elements:

ויקרא כג:לד …בַּחֲמִשָּׁה עָשָׂר יוֹם לַחֹדֶשׁ הַשְּׁבִיעִי הַזֶּה חַג הַסֻּכּוֹת שִׁבְעַת יָמִים לַיהֹוָה.

Lev 23:34 … On the fifteenth day of this seventh month there shall be the Feast of Booths to YHWH, seven days.

Both the Priestly and Holiness sources date the holiday to the 15th—i.e., the full moon—of the seventh month, following the Nissan calendar dominant in Judah before and certainly after the exilic period, thus neutralizing the holiday’s New Year connotations.

1. For more on this point, see Marc Z. Brettler, [“The Hakhel Ceremony,”](http://thetorah.com/hakhel-ceremony/) *TheTorah.com*(2014).
2. See, 2 Sam 16:1; Isa 19:9, 28:4; Jer 40:10, 12; Mic 7:1; Prov 10:5. “Summer fruit” is a better translation than merely “summer,” though both are accurate, since the calendar is about harvest activities not seasons per se. I thank Uzi Weingarten for calling my attention to this point.
3. Dennis Pardee, *Ritual and Cult at Ugarit* (Writings from the Ancient World 10; Atlanta: SBL, 2002), 63-65.
4. This huge list of daily sacrifices is reminiscent of the list of *Sukkot* sacrifices in Num 29:13-38.
5. Pardee further notes (*ad loc*.) the difference in the date:

It differs from the biblical version, however, in occurring on the first day of the month… rather than the fifteenth day…

Perhaps this first of the month celebration is related to the Jewish Rosh Hashanah, which, though never mentioned in the Bible as such, appears in suppressed form in P and H as “the Festival of the First of the Seventh Month.”

1. See, Johannes C. De Moor, *New Year with Canaanites and Israelites* (Kampen: J.H. Kok, 1972) 22. Following De Moor’s lead, Jan Wagenaar argues forcefully for this connection as well, and sums up the evidence nicely:

Like the New Year festival in Ugarit, Sukkot falls at the beginning of a new year. Sukkot may, therefore, have been to all intents and purposes the ancient Israelite new year festival. A comparison between Sukkot and the Ugaritic New Year festival may also contribute to the clarification of the designation חַג הַסֻּכּוֹת, ‘the festival of huts’ used in Deut 16:13, 16. The name has traditionally been taken to refer to the ‘huts’ that were erected in the vineyards and orchards in the course of the harvest of the grapes and the summer fruit. The huts in the far-off vineyards and orchards were erected in order to extend the working hours during daylight in the time of the harvest and facilitate guarding the crops. De Moor has, however, drawn attention to the custom of constructing two rows of huts on the roof of the temple as temporary dwellings for the images of the gods in the course of the Ugaritic New Year festival. The ‘festival of huts’ mentioned in Deuteronomy 16:13 may likewise have originally had in mind huts erected in the temple precinct of Jerusalem in the days of the new year festival. The name חַג הַסֻּכּוֹת may as such confirm the suggestion that the ‘festival of huts’ was originally a New Year festival.

Jan A. Waganaar, *Origin and Transformation of the Ancient Israelite Festival Calendar*(Wiesbaden: Otto Harrassowitz Verlag, 2005), 23. Another scholar of Ugaritic, Gregorio del Olme Lette, has offered a similar explanation for the origin of the Israelite *sukkah*, and traces its development from the Canaanite practice to the uniquely Israelite/Judahite practice into which it developed. See, Gregorio del Olme Lette,”Sûkkot: From Ugarit to the Talmud – The Survival of a Ritual ‘in the Terrace,'”*Miscelánea de Estudios Árabes y Hebraicos: Sección Hebreo*53 (2004): 249-269 [Spanish].

1. For some discussion of this, see Mark Smith, “Recent Study of Israelite Religion in Light of the Ugaritic Texts,” in *Ugarit at Seventy-Five* (ed., K. Lawson Younger; Winona Lake: Eisenbrauns, 2007), 1-26.
2. For example, Ezekiel makes reference to the great non-Israelite sage Danel (Ezek 14:14, 20, 28:3), known only from the Ugaritic epic of Akhat. How does Ezekiel, an exilic prophet living in Babylon know of a Ugaritic story buried in a city destroyed almost a millennium before his time? It seems necessary to posit that this story survived orally or in lost writings (or both) throughout the Levant during this long period. See discussion in, Walther Zimmerli,*Ezekiel 1* (Hermeneia; Minneapolis; Fortress Press, 1979), 314-315.
3. Such a practice likely predates Deuteronomy, and may even have been practiced in Canaanite or (other) Israelite temples. This suggested connection between the Israelite practice and the Ugaritic practice contrasts with the standard explanation for these huts as reflecting the practice of farmers during gathering season to build temporary dwellings near their crops. See esp. Isa 1:8. The Torah, of course, gives an entirely different reason for this practice, namely to remind the Israelites that God gave them *sukkot* to dwell in during the wilderness period:

ויקרא כג:מג לְמַעַן יֵדְעוּ דֹרֹתֵיכֶם כִּי בַסֻּכּוֹת הוֹשַׁבְתִּי אֶת בְּנֵי יִשְׂרָאֵל בְּהוֹצִיאִי אוֹתָם מֵאֶרֶץ מִצְרָיִם אֲנִי יְ-הוָה אֱלֹהֵיכֶם.

Lev 23:43 In order that future generations may know that I made the Israelite people live in booths when I brought them out of the land of Egypt, I YHWH your God.

This, however, is a late attempt to connect an agricultural holiday to an Israelite foundational myth. See discussion in David Frankel, [“Integrating the Exodus Story into the Festivals,”](http://thetorah.com/integrating-the-exodus-story-into-the-festivals/)*TheTorah.com* (2015).

1. See discussion in [“The First Sukkah,”](http://thetorah.com/the-first-sukkah/)*TheTorah.com* (2013). See also, Israel Knohl,*Sanctuary of Silence: The Priestly Torah and the Holiness School* (Winona Lake: Eisenbrauns, 2007) 39, n. 88. Another marker that the entire section of vv. 39-44 is a gloss, or a series of glosses, is its beginning with the word אך (“mark”), which is virtually always a sign of redaction. See discussion in, Michael Fishbane, *Biblical Interpretation in Ancient Israel*, Oxford 1988, 184-185, 197-199; David Frankel, *The Murmuring Stories of the Priestly School* (Leiden: Brill, 2002), 258-260; Emanuel Tov, “Glosses, Interpolations, and Other Types of Scribal Additions in the Text of the Hebrew Bible,” in *Language, Theology, and the Bible: Essays in Honour of James Barr* (ed. S.E. Balentine & J. Barton; Oxford: Clarendon, 1994), 40-66 [Revised version: *The Greek and Hebrew Bible* (1999), 53-74].
2. For more on this Torah reading, see Aaron Demsky, [“Historical Hakhel Ceremonies and the Origin of Public Torah Reading,”](http://thetorah.com/historical-hakhel-ceremonies-and-the-origin-of-public-torah-reading/) *TheTorah.com* (2017); Jacob L. Wright, [“The Origins of Torah Study,”](http://thetorah.com/the-origins-of-torah-study/) *TheTorah.com* (2015).
3. As Liz Fried notes, what Nehemiah quotes is not exactly what Leviticus says, implying that the text of this gloss was not yet fixed. See Lisbeth Fried, [“Sukkot in Ezra and Nehemiah and the Date of the Torah,”](http://thetorah.com/sukkot-in-ezra-nehemiah-and-the-date-of-the-torah/) *TheTorah.com* (2015). For an alternative view, see Jacob Milgrom, *Leviticus 23-27* (Anchor Bible; New Haven: Yale University Press, 2001), 2063-2067.
4. This is also the reading of the Karaites and the Samaritans. See Shawn Lichaa, [“Sukkot’s Unshaken Four Species,”](http://thetorah.com/sukkots-unshaken-four-species/) TheTorah.com (2016); Benyamim Tsedaka, [“A Fruity-Sukkah Made from the Four Species,”](http://thetorah.com/fruity-sukkah-made-from-the-four-species/) *TheTorah.com* (2014). Milgrom argues that this is a misunderstanding on Ezra’s part, and not the meaning of the text in Leviticus; Milgrom,*Leviticus 23-27*, 2050.
5. Milgrom, *Leviticus 23-27*, 2050. See also Liz Fried’s discussion in her above-referenced essay.