

Can We Cook Food on the Annual Holy Days?

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All Scriptures are from the New King James translation unless otherwise noted.

God commanded His faithful people not to cook food during the weekly Sabbath. For this reason, He created the sixth day to be a preparation day in which gathering and cooking for both the sixth and seventh day is to be done. As Moses wrote:

Then the LORD said to Moses, "Behold, I will rain bread from heaven for you. And the people shall go out and gather a certain quota every day, that I may test them, whether they will walk in My law or not. And it shall be on the sixth day that they shall prepare what they bring in, and it shall be twice as much as they gather daily..." So they gathered it every morning, every man according to his need. And when the sun became hot, it melted. And so it was, on the sixth day, *that* they gathered twice as much bread, two omers for each one. And all the rulers of the congregation came and told Moses. Then he said to them, "This *is what* the LORD has said: **'Tomorrow is a Sabbath rest, a holy Sabbath to the LORD. Bake what you will bake *today*, and boil what you will boil; and lay up for yourselves all that remains, to be kept until morning.'**" So they laid it up till morning, as Moses commanded; and it did not stink, nor were there any worms in it. Then Moses said, "Eat that today, for today *is* a Sabbath to the LORD; today you will not find it in the field. Six days you shall gather it, but on the seventh day, the Sabbath, there will be none." Now it happened *that some* of the people went out on the seventh day to gather, but they found none. And the LORD said to Moses, "How long do you refuse to keep My commandments and My laws? See! For the LORD has given you the Sabbath; therefore He gives you on the sixth day bread for two days. Let every man remain in his place; let no man go out of his place on the seventh day." So the people rested on the seventh day (Exodus 16:5-30).

Food eaten on the Sabbath was prepared the day prior. When it comes to the annual Sabbaths, it appears that the Eternal made a distinction. There is no such command for a preparation day to furnish food for these times. The fact that no preparation day was commanded indicates that food was permitted to be prepared on the annual holy days. In addition, some of the first documented instructions for observing the Feast of Unleavened Bread indicate that cooking food was permitted:

Seven days you shall eat unleavened bread. On the first day you shall remove leaven from your houses. For whoever eats leavened bread from the first day until the seventh day, that person shall be cut off from Israel. On the first day *there shall be* a holy convocation, and on the seventh day there shall be a holy convocation for you. No manner of work shall be done on them; **but *that* which everyone must eat—that only may be prepared by you** (Exodus 12:15-16).

This shows us that, on both high days of the Feast of Unleavened Bread, preparing food can be done. In Leviticus 23 all the holy days are listed with instructions for each one, but God does not make legislation for the work necessary to prepare food with the exception of the weekly Sabbath and the Day of Atonement where work of any kind is prohibited:

Six days shall work be done, but the seventh day *is* a Sabbath of solemn rest, a holy convocation. **You shall do no work on it;** *it is* the Sabbath of the LORD in all your dwellings (Leviticus 23:3).

And **you shall do no work** on that same day, for it *is* the Day of Atonement, to make atonement for you before the LORD your God (Leviticus 23:28).

Collecting and preparing food is considered work. The Sabbath and Atonement are singled out as times when these activities are not permitted. These scriptures alone imply that something may be done on the other days which may not be done on these two occasions. That something is preparing food. Therefore, Christians are permitted to do the work necessary to prepare food on Pentecost and the Memorial of Trumpets.

Leviticus 23 says nothing about the work necessary to prepare food for the first and last day of unleavened bread. However, the fact that this was already previously said indicates that it applies to all annual holy days in which food can be eaten a component of the celebration of these feasts.

With this example, and the fact that the offerings and animals sacrificed on these days were cooked and eaten, the option to cook food applies to all the annual holy days with the exception of the Day of Atonement (Deu. 18:1-5, 1Cor. 9:13). On the day where everyone will fast for 24-hours, no offerings are given, and nothing is eaten.

Another question some have asked is, “Can we cook food during the weekly Sabbath that falls within the two high days of the Feast of Unleavened Bread, or the weekly Sabbath that occurs within the high days of the Feast of Tabernacles?” The answer is no. God’s instructions for the weekly Sabbath applies to any weekly Sabbath—even if it falls in between the two high days of those particular feasts. However, if the weekly Sabbath happens to fall on the same day as a high day, it is our belief that the high day supersedes the weekly Sabbath and food preparation would be allowed.

In conclusion, on the annual holy days, the work necessary to earn a living, or to maintain our homes or property, is not to be done. We are also not to have people work for us when there is not an immediate need to protect life or property (Luke 14:5). We also cannot avoid taking care of matters ahead of time in anticipation of using the “ox in a pit” excuse. That would be an attempt to take advantage of the allowance, and God is not gullible (Mat. 26:26).

We are permitted to prepare meals on the high days of the Feast of Unleavened Bread, Pentecost, the Feast of Trumpets, and the Feast of Tabernacles. However, that does not mean that we can hire people to prepare food for us, or go to a restaurant on a holy day. Such behavior is a clear violation of the Sabbath commandment no matter which Sabbath of the year it is. For more on that topic, see our book titled *The Sabbath Test*.