FEASTS. Heb. *hag*, "feast'
Le 23:6; De 16:16,
mô"adê Yahweh, "feasts of the Lord'
Le 23:2, 4; Nu 15:3
The terms are expressive of a day or season of religious joy. While some of these feasts coincide with the seasons, it does not follow that they have their origin in the seasonal ritual of the religions of the ancient Near East. These are associated with the gods of the pantheon who banquet together or feast with men. (See C. H. Gordon, *Ugaritic Literature*, 1949, pp. 57-103; T. Gaster, *Thespis*, 1950, pp. 6-108.) Biblical feasts differ in origin, purpose and content.
To the Israelite the seasons were the work of the Creator for the benefit of man. They manifested the beneficence of God towards his creatures. By these feasts man not only acknowledged God as his Provider but recorded the Lord's unbounded and free favour to a chosen people whom he delivered, by personal intervention, in this world
Ex 10:2; 12:8-9, 11, 14; Le 23:5; De 16:6, 12
The joy expressed was heartfelt. Religious commitment was not incompatible with pleasure in temporal things conceived as gifts of God
Le 23:40; De 16:14
The response of the participant was religiously ethical. Acknowledgment of sin and devotion to the law of God was involved
Ex 13:9; Zec 8:9
The sacrifices offered bespoke forgiveness of sin and reconciliation with God
Le 17:11; Nu 28:22; 29:7-11; 2Ch 30:22; Eze 45:17, 20
To be withheld from the feast was considered a loss and a bar from privilege
Nu 9:7
Not only did the Israelite appear at the feast as a beneficiary of the divine favour, but he made return to the Lord as he had been blessed
De 16:10
Only in unauthorized feasts did unbelieving Israelites eat, drink and play
Ex 32:6; 1Ki 12:32-33
The feasts of the OT do not follow the ancient Near Eastern pattern of a period of joy preceded by rites of mortification and purgation (T. Gaster, *op. cit*., pp. 6, 12). The Bible festival itself contained the element of mourning, for this isinvolved in sacrifice for sin
Le 23:27; Nu 29:7
There is no sharp line of demarcation between sorrow for sin and the joy of the Lord.
Prophetical displeasure with the feasts as observed by the Jews # Isa 1:13-20 was not because they were in themselves on a lower plane of piety, but because many Israelites had departed from their spiritual purpose. They made the sum of religion consist in external observance, which was never the divine intent for the feasts from the time of their promulgation
Na 1:15
In the NT this was well understood by our Lord and devout believers who diligently and spiritually observed the prescribed feasts of the old economy
Lu 2:41; 22:8; Joh 4:45; 5:1; 7:2, 11; 12:20

The feasts to which reference is made in the OT are as follows:

1. The Feast of Unleavened Bread, Heb. *hag hammassôt* ( )
Ex 23:15,
or *Passover, Heb. *pesah*
Le 23:5,
was established to commemorate the historical deliverance from Egypt
Ex 10:2; 12:8, 14

It was one of the three annual festivals, and was observed on the fourteenth day of the first month. For 7 days unleavened bread was eaten and no servile work done. The first and the last day being "holy convocations', sacrifices were offered
Nu 28:16-25; De 16:1-8
2. The Feast of Weeks, Heb. *hag saäbû"ôt*. It is also called the "feast of harvest' and "the day of first fruits'
Ex 23:16; 34:22; Nu 28:26
Later it was known as ***Pentecost** because it was celebrated on the fiftieth day from the sabbath beginning the Passover. It was marked by a holy convocation and the offering of sacrifices.
3. The Feast of *Tabernacles, Heb. *hag hassukkôt*, or "the feast of booths', is also called the "feast of ingathering', Heb. *hag hä'äsîp*
Ex 23:16; 34:22; Le 23:34; De 16:13
It lasted 7 days, the first and last days being holy convocations. Fruit was gathered in and people dwelt in booths made of branches and boughs of trees
Le 23:39-43; Nu 29:12-38
4. The *Sabbath. This is regarded as a feast in
Le 23:2-3,
and called a "sabbath of rest'. It was marked by a solemn assembly
Isa 1:13,
and cessation from all labour. It was also a day of joy
Isa 58:13
5. The Day of Blowing of Trumpets
Nu 29:1
In
Le 23:24
it is called "a memorial of blowing of trumpets' and "a sabbath'. Sacrifices were offered and hard labour ceased.
6. The Day of *Atonement
Le 23:26-31
It was observed on the tenth day of the seventh month, and was a day of a "holy convocation' in which souls were afflicted and an atonement made for sin. It was observed but once in the year
Ex 30:10
7. The Feast of Purim, described in
Es 9:1 ...
Established by Mordecai in the time of Ahasuerus to commemorate the remarkable deliverance from the intrigues of Haman, this was a day of feasting and gladness.
The extra-biblical feast of *hanukkâ* is the celebration of the recovery and cleansing of the Jerusalem Temple by Judas Maccabaeus in 164 BC, after its desecration by Antiochus Epiphanes. It is also called the "festival of lights'. See
Joh 10:22,
where it is called by its Gk. name *enkainia* ("dedication').
BIBLIOGRAPHY.*EJ*, 6, cols. 1189-1196, 1237-1246. D.F.