

## Chapter 6:16-20

16 The commandment to honor the Sabbath and make it a delight applies equally to all the festivals. For Scripture says, “And call . . .the holy of the Lord clothed with honor” (Is. 58:13 ), and to each of the festivals it applies the term, “a holy convocation” (Lev. 23:2 *passim*; Num. 28:18 *passim*). We have explained the meaning of “honor” and “delight” in the Laws Concerning the Sabbath. It is likewise proper for one to refrain from having a full meal during the afternoon of the eve of a festival, just as one should refrain from it one the eve of the Sabbath, for this is one of the ways of showing honor. Furthermore, he who treats the festivals with contempt is like one who attaches himself to idol worship.

17 The seven days of Passover, the eight days of the Feast of Tabernacles, and the other festival days, are all days on which funeral eulogies and fasting are forbidden. It is one’s duty to rejoice and be of cheerful heart on these days, together with his children, his wife, his grandchildren, and all the other members of his household, for Scripture says, “And you shall rejoice in your feast, you and your son and your daughter,” etc. (Deut. 16:14). Although rejoicing in this context refers to the peace offering to be brought on festivals, as we shall explain in the Laws Concerning the Festal Offering, it includes also the duty incumbent upon each man, his children, and his household, to rejoice in the appropriate manner.

18 Thus children should be given parched ears, nuts, and other dainties; women should have clothes and pretty trinkets bought for them, according to one’s means; and men should eat meat and drink wine, for there can be no real rejoicing without meat to eat and wine to drink. And while one eats and drinks himself, it is his duty to feed the stranger, the orphan, the widow, and other poor and unfortunate people, for he who locks the doors to his courtyard and eats and drinks with his wife and family, without giving anything to eat and drink to the poor and the bitter in soul—his meal is not a rejoicing in a divine commandment, but a rejoicing in his own stomach. It is of such persons that Scripture says, “Their sacrifices shall be to them as the bread of mourners, all that eat thereof shall be polluted; for their bread is for their own appetite” (Hos. 9:4). Rejoicing of this kind is a disgrace to those who indulge in it, as Scripture says, “ And I will spread dung upon your faces, even the dung of your sacrifices” (Mal. 2:3).

19 Although eating and drinking on festivals are included in the positive commandment to rejoice on those days, one should not eat and drink all day long, the proper procedure being as follows: In the morning, people should go early to the synagogue or the schoolhouse, recite the prayers and read the lesson in the Law appropriate to the day, and then return home and eat. Then they should return to the schoolhouse and study Scripture or Mishnah until noon. After noon they should recite the afternoon prayer, and then return home and eat and drink for the rest of the day until nightfall.

20 When one eats and drinks and rejoices on a festival day, he should not overindulge in wine, merriment, and frivolity, in the belief that the more he does of this the more he is fulfilling the commandment to rejoice. For drunkenness, excessive merrymaking, and frivolity are not rejoicing but madness and folly, and we were commanded to indulge not in madness and folly but in the kind of rejoicing which partakes of the worship of the Creator of all things. For Scripture says, "Because you did not serve the Lord your God with joyfulness, and with gladness of heart, by reason of the abundance of all things" (Deut. 28:47), showing that one should serve God with joyfulness, whereas it is impossible to serve God in the mood created by merriment, frivolity, or drunkenness.