

Celebrate the Festivals

An Introduction to the Feasts of the LORD [*YHVH*]

by
Dean & Susan Wheelock

Speak to the children of Israel,
And say to them:
The feasts of the LORD,
Which you shall proclaim *to be* holy convocations,
These *are* My feasts.
Leviticus 23:2

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The Scriptures used in this booklet are:

- The Complete Jewish Bible (CJB)*
Jewish New Testament Publications
Clarksville, Maryland, 1998
- The Holy Bible - King James Version (KJV)*
Oxford University Press
London
- The Open Bible*
New King James Version (NKJV),
Thomas Nelson, Inc., Nashville, 1985.
- The Tanakh (TNK)*,
Jewish Publication Society,
Philidelphia/New York, 1988

~ Introduction ~

Speak to the children of Israel,
And say to them:
The feasts of the LORD
Which you shall proclaim *to be* holy convocations,
These *are* My feasts.
Leviticus 23:2

The purpose of this booklet is to articulate the importance, from God's point of view, of keeping the Festivals, what God expects of us as Messianic Believers, and why the Festivals are important for our own understanding of the great plan which God is working out here on earth.

One thing we have noticed, since becoming part of the Messianic movement almost two decades ago, is that some Messianic Believers seem to take a rather cavalier attitude toward the annual Festivals. While careful about keeping the Weekly Sabbath (and that is good), they do not seem to have the same compulsion to set-apart (observe as holy) the Festival Holydays, despite the Scriptural injunction to do so.

We believe that one major reason for this anomaly is because some Messianics teach the Orthodox Jewish position that the *Torah* commands are only for the Jews, and that Gentiles do not need to observe them. This position holds that even the Weekly Sabbath need not be kept by "Gentiles," because it was given only to the Jews. However, God expressed a much different view through Isaiah the Prophet:

"Blessed is the man who does this,
And the son of man *who* lays hold on it;
Who keeps from defiling the Sabbath,
And keeps his hand from doing any evil.'
³ **Do not let the son of the foreigner**
Who has joined himself to the LORD
Speak, saying,
"The LORD has utterly separated me
from His people;"

...

"6 'Also the sons of the foreigner
Who join themselves to the LORD, to serve Him,
And to love the name of the LORD, to be
His servants --
Everyone who keeps from defiling the Sabbath,
And holds fast My covenant --
7 Even them I will bring to My holy mountain,
And make them joyful in My house of prayer.
Their burnt offerings and their sacrifices
Will be accepted on My altar;
For My house shall be called a house of prayer for all
nations." (Isa. 56:2-3, 6-7)

It was to counteract this very teaching (that Gentiles are not required to observe *Written Torah*) that *Hebrew Roots* began a series of articles called *Gentiles and the Law*. These articles were published over a number of years and are currently available in several back issues of *Hebrew Roots*.

The *Written Torah* is for all Believers in *Y'shua HaMashiach* (Yeh-shoo'-ah Hah Mah-shee'-achk = Jesus the Messiah), for all have been Grafted-in to the *Olive Tree of Israel* (Rom. 11):

"Therefore let us keep the feast, not with old leaven, nor with the leaven of malice and wickedness, but with the unleavened bread of sincerity and truth." (I Cor. 5:8)

Shalom!

Dean & Susan Wheelock

Beit Shalom, 2009

~ ~ ~ ~ ~

~ Festival Celebration ~

All the ends of the world
Shall remember and turn unto the LORD:
And all the kindreds of the nations
Shall worship before thee.
Psalm 22:27



It is abundantly clear, from Scripture, that when one accepts *Y'shua* (Yeh-shoe'-ah = Jesus) as their personal Savior and the promised Messiah, they are no longer considered to be aliens, but have become part of the very Commonwealth of Israel. Gentiles do not have to convert to Judaism in order to become "naturalized" members of that Commonwealth or to receive personal Salvation:

"Therefore remember that you, once Gentiles in the flesh -- who are called Uncircumcision by what is called the Circumcision made in the flesh by hands -- ¹² that at that time you were without Christ [*Messiah*], being aliens from the commonwealth of Israel and strangers from the covenants of promise, having no hope and without God in the world. ¹³ But now in Christ Jesus [*Messiah Y'shua*] you who once were far off have been brought near by the blood of Christ [*Messiah*]." (Eph. 2:11-13)

Gentiles have been (and are still being) accepted into the Commonwealth of Israel through Messiah *Y'shua*. Therefore, it is incumbent upon those same Gentiles to follow the laws of that Commonwealth, i.e., the *Written Torah*.

Not only are Gentiles now part of the Commonwealth of Israel, they have actually been grafted into the very Olive Tree of Israel and are now partakers of the richness which comes from the root of that Olive Tree. That richness includes the *Written Torah*, the *Prophets*, and the *Writings*; in other words, the Hebrew Scriptures:

"For if the firstfruit is holy, the lump is also holy; and if the root is holy, so are the branches. ¹⁷ And if some of the branches were broken off, and you, being a wild olive tree, were grafted in among them, and with them became a partaker of the root and fatness of the olive tree, ¹⁸ do not boast against the branches. But if you do boast, remember that you do not support the root, but the root supports you. ... ²⁴ For if you were cut out of the olive tree which is wild by nature, and were grafted contrary to nature into a cultivated olive tree, how much more will these, who are natural branches, be grafted into their own olive tree?" (Rom. 11:16-18, 24)

The richness of the root of the *Olive Tree of Israel* also includes the Covenants of Promise. The final Covenant of Promise is commonly known as the *New Covenant*:

"Behold, the days are coming, says the LORD, when I will make a new covenant with the house of Israel and with the house of Judah -- ³² not according to the covenant that I made with their fathers in the day that I took them by the

hand to lead them out of the land of Egypt, My covenant which they broke, though I was a husband to them, says the LORD. ³³ But this is the covenant that I will make with the house of Israel after those days, says the LORD: I will put My law in their minds, and write it on their hearts; and I will be their God, and they shall be My people. ³⁴ No more shall every man teach his neighbor, and every man his brother, saying, "Know the LORD," for they all shall know Me, from the least of them to the greatest of them, says the LORD. For I will forgive their iniquity, and their sin I will remember no more.'" (Jer. 31:31-34)

~ The Festival Chapter ~

Leviticus chapter 23 is the Festival Chapter of the Bible. Here is found, laid out in chronological order, all of the Festivals which God commanded the children of Israel to observe:

"And the LORD spoke to Moses, saying, ² 'Speak to the children of Israel, and say to them: "The feasts [*moed*] of the LORD, which you shall proclaim [*kara*] to be holy [*kodesh*] convocations [*mikra*], these are My feasts [*moed*].'" (Lev. 23:1-2)

The very first thing that must be noticed about this passage is that these Feasts are not the "Feasts of Israel," or the "Feasts of the Jews;" they are the Feasts of the Creator God who made the heavens and the earth:

"Ah, Lord GOD! Behold, You have made the heavens and the earth by Your great power and outstretched arm. There is nothing too hard for You." (Jer. 32:17)

In order to be abundantly clear, God repeated Himself in verse four when He again stated these Festivals belong to Him:

"These are the feasts [*moed*] of the LORD, holy [*kodesh*] convocations [*mikra*] which you shall proclaim [*kara*] at their appointed times [*moed*]." (Lev. 23:4)

~ Definitions ~

Before moving on, it is important to understand the key words found in these two verses. The first word is *moed* (mow'-ehd, Strong's #4150), and it means:

"1) appointed place, appointed time, meeting 1a) appointed time 1a1) appointed time (general) 1a2) sacred season, set feast, appointed season 1b) appointed meeting 1c) appointed place 1d) appointed sign or signal 1e) tent of meeting."

The second word in our study is *kara* (kah-rah,' Strong's #7121) which means:

"1) to call, call out, recite, read, cry out, proclaim 1a) (Qal) 1a1) to call, cry, utter a loud sound 1a2) to call unto, cry (for help), call (with name of God) 1a3) to proclaim 1a4) to read aloud, read (to oneself), read 1a5) to summon, invite, call for, call and commission, appoint, call and endow 1a6) to call, name, give name to, call by 1b) (Niphal) 1b1) to call oneself 1b2) to be called, be proclaimed, be read aloud, be summoned, be named 1c) (Pual) to be called, be named, be called out, be chosen."

Finally we have a two word phrase: *kodesh* (koh-dehsh,' Strong's #6944) *mikra* (meek-rah,' Strong's #4744). *Kodesh* means:

"1) apartness, holiness, sacredness, separateness 1a) apartness, sacredness, holiness 1a1) of God 1a2) of places 1a3) of things 1b) set-apartness, separateness."

Mikra means:

"1) convocation, convoking, reading, a calling together 1a) convocation, sacred assembly 1b) convoking 1c) reading."

Thus we have the sense that these days are holy (set-apart) days, which have been appointed by God, on which the children of Israel are to assemble. Not only are they to assemble, they are to proclaim them loudly and publicly.

~ The Festival Seasons ~

The Festivals consist of seven Holydays, five of which occur within three pilgrimage Seasons. In addition there are intermediate days within the two seven day Festival Seasons which are not termed "Holydays." The three seasons are explicitly mentioned in Exodus:

"Three times you shall keep a feast to Me in the year: ¹⁵ You shall keep the Feast of Unleavened Bread (you shall eat unleavened bread seven days, as I commanded you, at the time appointed in the month of Abib, for in it you came out of Egypt; none shall appear before Me empty); ¹⁶ and the Feast of Harvest, the firstfruits of your labors which you have sown in the field; and the Feast of Ingathering at the end of the year, when you have gathered in the fruit of your labors from the field. ¹⁷ Three times in the year all your males shall appear before the Lord GOD."

(Ex. 23:14-17)

The seven Holydays are set-apart from normal work days, just as the Weekly Sabbath is set-apart from the other six days of the week.

Two Holydays closely precede the third Season (Feast of Trumpets and Day of Atonement), so they could be said to be a part of that third Season. These seven Holydays are days on which customary work is prohibited.

* Spring Festivals *

- ◆ *Passover and the Days of Unleavened Bread* (*Pesach* {Peh-sock'} and *Hag HaMatzah* {Hahg Hah Mah'-tzah}). Within this Festival season are two Holydays; the First and Last Day of Unleavened Bread:

"On the first day you shall have a holy [*kodesh*] convocation [*mikra*]; you shall do no customary work on it. ⁸ But you shall offer an offering made by fire to the LORD for seven days. The seventh day shall be a holy [*kodesh*] convocation [*mikra*]; you shall do no customary work on it."

(Lev. 23:7-8)

Included within the *Passover* Festival Season are the day of the *Passover Sacrifice* (14 Aviv) and the day of the *Omer*

Wave Offering (the first day of the week during the Days of Unleavened Bread). These two days are not "Holydays" in that no *kodesh mikra* (Holy Convocation) is commanded. Therefore, work may be done on these two days even though they do have very special significance.

- ◆ *Shavu'ot* (Shaw-voo' oat') is the second Festival Season. It takes place in late spring, fifty days after the *Omer Wave Offering*. Most Christians know this as the Day of Pentecost:

"And you shall count for yourselves from the day after the Sabbath [*weekly Sabbath*], from the day that you brought the sheaf of the wave offering: seven Sabbaths [*weekly Sabbaths*] shall be completed. ¹⁶ Count fifty days to the day after the seventh Sabbath [*weekly Sabbath*]; then you shall offer a new grain offering to the LORD.'

...

"²¹ 'And you shall proclaim on the same day that it is a holy [*kodesh*] convocation [*mikra*] to you. You shall do no customary work on it. It shall be a statute forever in all your dwellings throughout your generations.'"

(Lev. 23:15-16, 21)

In Jewish teaching, *Shavu'ot* is the culmination or completion of *Pesach* and *Hag HaMatzah* (the Passover Season).

* Fall Festivals *

After the long summer harvest season comes the seventh month called *Tishri* (Teesh'-ree). During this month, there are four Holydays (*kodesh mikra*) plus the seven day Festival of *Sukkot* (Sue-coat' = Feast of Tabernacles). The specific Holydays are:

- ◆ *Yom Teruah* (Yohm Teh-rue-ah' = Feast of Trumpets) falls on the first day of the seventh month (*Tishri*). In Jewish teaching it is usually called *Rosh HaShannah*:

"Then the LORD spoke to Moses, saying, ²⁴ 'Speak to the children of Israel, saying: "In the seventh month, on the first day of the month, you shall have a sabbath -rest, a memorial of blowing of trumpets, a holy [*kodesh*] convocation [*mikra*]. ²⁵ You shall do no customary work on it; and you shall offer an offering made by fire to the LORD.'"

(Lev. 23:23-25)

- ◆ *Yom Kippur* (Yohm Kee-pure' = Day of Atonement) comes ten days later. It is considered by the Jewish people to be the most holy day of the year:

"Also the tenth day of this seventh month shall be the Day of Atonement. It shall be a holy [*kodesh*] convocation [*mikra*] for you; you shall afflict your souls, and offer an offering made by fire to the LORD."

(Lev. 23:27)

- ◆ *Sukkot* (Sue-coat' = Feast of Tabernacles) follows five days later. It is a seven day Festival. The first day of *Sukkot* is a Holyday:

"Speak to the children of Israel, saying: "The fifteenth day of this seventh month shall be the Feast of Tabernacles for seven days to the LORD. ³⁵ On the first day there shall be a holy [kodesh] convocation [mikra]. You shall do no customary work on it."" (Lev. 23:34-35)

- ◆ *Shemini Atzeret* (She-mee-nee' Ah-tzehr-eh't' = the Eighth Day Assembly) is the final (seventh) Holyday of the year. It occurs on the day following the close of the seven day Festival of *Sukkot*:

"For seven days you shall offer an offering made by fire to the LORD. On the eighth [shemini] day you shall have a holy [kodesh] convocation [mikra], and you shall offer an offering made by fire to the LORD. It is a sacred assembly [atzeret], and you shall do no customary work on it. (Lev. 23:36)

The seven *Kodesh Mikra* (Holy Convocations) commanded by God for the children of Israel are:

- ◆ First day of *Hag HaMatzah* (Unleavened Bread)
- ◆ Last day of *Hag HaMatzah*
- ◆ *Shavu'ot* (Pentecost)
- ◆ *Yom Teruah* (Feast of Trumpets)
- ◆ *Yom Kippur* (Day of Atonement)
- ◆ First day of *Sukkot* (Feast of Tabernacles)
- ◆ *Shemini Atzeret* (The Eighth Day)

By referring back to verses 2 and 4 of Leviticus 23, we can see that not only are these seven Holydays *Kodesh Mikra* (Holy Convocations), but they are also Appointed Times (*Moedim*). Included within the *Moedim* are the five Intermediate days of *Hag HaMatzah* and the last six Days of *Sukkot*.

God has set these Festivals on His calendar and He plans to show up to meet with us. If we choose not to meet with Him, the loss is ours.

~ Additional Festivals ~

There are two more festivals which are celebrated by the Jewish people; *Hanukkah* and *Purim*. The *Torah* does not command the observance of these two festivals, although they are certainly wonderful to observe.

It is clear that our Savior, *Y'shua HaMashiach* (Yeh-shoe'ah Hah Mah-shee'ach = Jesus the Messiah), observed *Hanukkah* at the Temple:

"Now it was the Feast of Dedication [Hanukkah] in Jerusalem, and it was winter. ²³ And Jesus [Y'shua] walked in the temple, in Solomon's porch." (John 10:22-23)

In Hebrew, the word *Hanukkah* means Dedication. This eight day festival commemorates the rededication of the Temple after it had been desecrated by Antiochus Epiphanes. (See *Hebrew Roots* Issue 98-4 and the booklet *Hanukkah Readings for the Believer* for more information about *Hanukkah* and how to observe it.)

Likewise, the festival of *Purim* is good for non-Jews to observe, just as it states in the book of *Esther*:

"Therefore, because of all the words of this letter, what they had seen concerning this matter, and what had happened to them, ²⁷ the Jews established and imposed it upon themselves and their descendants and all who would join them, that without fail they should celebrate these two days every year, according to the written instructions and according to the prescribed time, ²⁸ that these days should be remembered and kept throughout every generation, every family, every province, and every city, that these days of Purim should not fail to be observed among the Jews, and that the memory of them should not perish among their descendants." (Esther 9:26-28)

As this passage clearly states, one does not have to be Jewish to celebrate the festival of *Purim* (see *Hebrew Roots* Issue 98-5 for more information about *Purim*).

~ The Four Fast Days ~

In Jewish tradition there are four annual fast days which are observed (in addition to *Yom Kippur*). These are not commanded observances in Scripture, rather they commemorate four critical events leading up to the destruction of the First Temple. While Orthodox Judaism still keeps these fast days today, Scripture states a time will come when they will be observed as festive days instead:

"Thus says the LORD of hosts:

"The fast of the fourth month,

The fast of the fifth,

The fast of the seventh,

And the fast of the tenth,

Shall be joy and gladness and cheerful feasts

For the house of Judah.

Therefore love truth and peace."

(Zech. 8:19)

The four fixed fast days are:

- ◆ The fast of the tenth month (*10 Tevet*) marks the beginning of the siege of Jerusalem.
- ◆ The fast of the fourth month (*17 Tammuz*) is the day on which the walls of Jerusalem were breached.
- ◆ The fast of the fifth month (*9 Av*) is the day on which the Temple was destroyed.
- ◆ The fast of the seventh month (*3 Tishri*) is when Gedeliah, the Babylonian appointed governor of Judah was assassinated. (Thus, Orthodox Jews fast on both the 3rd and 10th day of *Tishri* -- the 10th day being a commanded fast from Leviticus 23, the *Day of Atonement* or *Yom Kippur*.)

~ One Other Festival ~

There is one other *Moed* or Festival found in Leviticus 23 which has not yet been examined. That is the Weekly Sabbath. In actual fact, The Weekly Sabbath is the very first Festival listed:

"Six days shall work be done, but the seventh day is a Sabbath [Shabbat] of solemn rest [Shabbaton], a holy [kodesh] convocation [mikra]. You shall do no work on it; it

is the Sabbath [*Shabbat*] of the LORD in all your dwellings." (Lev. 23:3)

This verse directly connects the Weekly Sabbath with the annual Holydays. This is done in two ways. First, and most obvious, is the grouping (in this chapter) of the Weekly Sabbath with the annual Holydays by calling all of them the *Moedim* (Feasts) of the LORD. If one feels committed to keep the Weekly Sabbath because of other passages of Scripture (such as the giving of the Ten Commandments or the Creation Week account when the Sabbath was first set-apart), this passage in Leviticus 23 makes a direct connection between the Weekly Sabbath and the Annual Holydays. Therefore, it follows that if one observes the Weekly Sabbath, one would also choose to observe the Annual Holydays.

The second connection is through the two Hebrew words used for Sabbath: *Shabbat* and *Shabbaton*. The Weekly Sabbath is called a *Shabbat Shabbaton*. The *New Revised Standard Version* translates this phrase as:

"... sabbath [*Shabbat*] of complete rest [*Shabbaton*] ..." (Lev. 23:3 NRSV)

This phrase (*Shabbat Shabbaton*) is used four times in connection with the Weekly Sabbath (Ex. 16:23; 31:15; 35:2; and here in Lev. 23:3). It is also used two times in connection with *Yom Kippur* (Day of Atonement):

"It shall be to you a sabbath [*Shabbat*] of complete rest [*Shabbaton*], ..." (Lev. 23:32 NRSV)

"For on this day atonement shall be made for you, to cleanse you; from all your sins you shall be clean before the LORD. ³¹ It is a sabbath [*Shabbat*] of complete rest [*Shabbaton*] to you, and you shall deny yourselves; it is a statute forever." (Lev. 16:30-31)

Shabbaton is used by itself in connection with the first day of *Sukkot* and with *Shemini Atzeret*:

"Also on the fifteenth day of the seventh month, when you have gathered in the fruit of the land, you shall keep the feast of the LORD for seven days; on the first day there shall be a sabbath-rest [*Shabbaton*], and on the eighth day a sabbath-rest [*Shabbaton*]." (Lev. 23:39)

Shabbaton is also used twice in connection with the seventh year Land Sabbath (see Lev. 25:4 and 5).

However, *Shabbaton* is never used by itself in connection with the Weekly Sabbath. Only in the four instances given, is *Shabbaton* used in connection with the Weekly Sabbath and then it is always coupled with the normal word for the Weekly Sabbath which is *Shabbat*.

~ The Meaning of These Days ~

The question that must be asked is: Why did God establish these Annual Holydays?

God does give some reasons as to why He wants His people to observe these days. For example, the Festival of *Pesach* and *Hag HaMatzah* is to be a remembrance of our coming out of the land of Egypt:

"Observe the month of Abib, and keep the Passover to the LORD your God, for in the month of Abib the LORD your God brought you out of Egypt by night. ² Therefore you shall sacrifice the Passover to the LORD your God, from the flock and the herd, in the place where the LORD chooses to put His name. ³ You shall eat no leavened bread with it; seven days you shall eat unleavened bread with it, that is, the bread of affliction (for you came out of the land of Egypt in haste), that you may remember the day in which you came out of the land of Egypt all the days of your life." (Deut. 16:1-3)

The same is true for *Shavu'ot*:

"Then you shall keep the Feast of Weeks to the LORD your God with the tribute of a freewill offering from your hand, which you shall give as the LORD your God blesses you. ¹¹ You shall rejoice before the LORD your God, you and your son and your daughter, your male servant and your female servant, the Levite who is within your gates, the stranger and the fatherless and the widow who are among you, at the place where the LORD your God chooses to make His name abide. ¹² And you shall remember that you were a slave in Egypt, and you shall be careful to observe these statutes." (Deut. 16:10-12)

The Festival of *Sukkot* also points back to the coming out of Egypt:

"You shall dwell in booths for seven days. All who are native Israelites shall dwell in booths, ⁴³ that your generations may know that I made the children of Israel dwell in booths when I brought them out of the land of Egypt: I am the LORD your God." (Lev. 23:42-43)

The message is clear. The children of Israel were never to forget that they had been slaves to the Egyptians and that it was only by the strong arm of the LORD that they obtained their freedom. Therefore, they were to recall the specific day on which they obtained their release, that they had been slaves, and that they had to dwell in booths (*sukkot*) during their forty year journey to the Promised Land.

As Believers, we learn the same lesson on a somewhat different level. We too have been slaves. However, our slavery was to our own sins:

"But God be thanked that though you were slaves of sin, yet you obeyed from the heart that form of doctrine to which you were delivered. ¹⁸ And having been set free from sin, you became slaves of righteousness." (Rom. 6:17-18)

We also live in temporary dwellings (*sukkot*) as we await our new bodies at the time of the First Resurrection:

"Yes, I think it is right, as long as I am in this tent, to stir you up by reminding you, ¹⁴ knowing that shortly I must put off my tent, just as our Lord Jesus Christ [*Y'shua HaMashiach*] showed me." (II Pet. 1:13-14)

"For this corruptible must put on incorruption, and this mortal must put on immortality." (I Cor. 15:53)

Although these lessons are extremely important, there is yet more to these Annual Festivals which will be covered in the following two chapters.

~ What Does God Expect? ~

We believe that the *Written Torah* is God's Instruction Book for all mankind. As followers of the Messiah *Y'shua* who desire to please our Father in Heaven, it is our view that the Annual Festivals are every bit as important as the Weekly Sabbath. We believe that the same care should be taken in their observance as that put forth to honor the Weekly Sabbath.

This is not to say that keeping the Sabbath days will earn us Salvation, for that is a free gift, given to us through our acceptance of the blood of Messiah *Y'shua* in payment for our sins:

"But if we walk in the light as He is in the light, we have fellowship with one another, and the blood of Jesus Christ [*Y'shua HaMashiach*] His Son cleanses us from all sin."
(I John 1:7)

Yes, the blood of *Y'shua* does cleanse us. However, as John wrote, we are blessed with fellowship when we walk in "the light." According to the Scriptures, the *Torah* is the "light" that illuminates the pathway of our walk:

**"For the commandment is a lamp,
And the law [*Torah*] a light;
Reproofs of instruction are the way of life."**
(Prov. 6:23)

The prophet Isaiah said that if a man did not order his life according to the *Torah* and the *Testimony*, he did not have any "light" within himself:

"To the law [*Torah*] and to the testimony! If they do not speak according to this word, it is because there is no light in them."
(Isaiah 8:20)

The book of *Revelation* confirms the importance of both the Law (*Torah*) and the Testimony:

"And the dragon was enraged with the woman, and he went to make war with the rest of her offspring, who keep the commandments of God and have the testimony of Jesus Christ [*Y'shua HaMashiach*]."
(Rev. 12:17)

~ Attending the Feast ~

Our Father in heaven has set these Appointed Times (*Moedim*). It is up to us to meet Him at those set times. However, because these days often fall during the work week, it takes planning. It is important to make arrangements ahead of time with one's employer, so that the necessary time off can be scheduled.

If you are involved with a fellowship, encourage them to set these days apart for *Kodesh Mikra* (Holy Convocation), so that you can celebrate the Festivals together. In this way the entire Body of Messiah can grow in grace and knowledge.

As you may already know, it is common practice among some Messianic Believers to go to a larger site to keep the Festival of *Sukkot* (Feast of Tabernacles). This is an especially

nice way to meet Believers from other parts of your area or even other parts of the country. Meeting together in this way is also great for the children, since they get to meet other young people their age whose parents hold the same core beliefs. In fact, many married couples first met at the Festival of *Sukkot*.

~ Financing the Feast ~

As for any trip, begin saving money now, so that when the time comes you will have the funds needed for this special celebration. God established this practice so that the children of Israel could afford to attend the Feast in Jerusalem:

"You shall truly tithe all the increase of your grain that the field produces year by year. ²³ And you shall eat before the LORD your God, in the place where He chooses to make His name abide, the tithe of your grain and your new wine and your oil, of the firstborn of your herds and your flocks, that you may learn to fear the LORD your God always.

"²⁴ But if the journey is too long for you, so that you are not able to carry the tithe, or if the place where the LORD your God chooses to put His name is too far from you, when the LORD your God has blessed you, ²⁵ then you shall exchange it for money, take the money in your hand, and go to the place which the LORD your God chooses. ²⁶ And you shall spend that money for whatever your heart desires; for oxen or sheep, for wine or similar drink, for whatever your heart desires; you shall eat there before the LORD your God, and you shall rejoice, you and your household."
(Deut. 14:22-26)

This practice of saving a tithe for use at the Feast was sometimes called the "Second Tithe." It was a tithe of agricultural products that was set aside in four out of every seven years (years 1, 2, 4, and 6) for the express purpose of allowing that family to attend the Feast so they could rejoice before God.

We are not suggesting that you must set aside a "Second Tithe" today for this purpose. However, the principle of laying aside a certain amount of money each month for the purpose of going to the Feast is certainly a good thing to do.

For those who have the financial means, it is also wonderful if you can help those who do not have enough income to save for the Feast, so that they too can attend. This is also a *Torah* principle:

"At the end of every third year you shall bring out the tithe of your produce of that year and store it up within your gates. ²⁹ And the Levite, because he has no portion nor inheritance with you, and the stranger and the fatherless and the widow who are within your gates, may come and eat and be satisfied, that the LORD your God may bless you in all the work of your hand which you do."
(Deut. 14:28-29)

This was not a "Third Tithe" added on to the other two "tithes" as some church organizations teach. This tithe for the fatherless and the widow was actually the "Second Tithe" of the fourth and sixth years of a seven year cycle.

It should also be remembered that "tithes" as set forth in the *Written Torah* were only to be given on agricultural products. Wages were never tithed. However, Judaism has a long standing tradition of generous giving, both to their Synagogues and to those in need. While wage earners were not required to save the "Second Tithe" as such, they were expected to set aside funds so at least the heads of house could celebrate at the three pilgrimage festivals:

"Three times a year all your males shall appear before the LORD your God in the place which He chooses: at the Feast of Unleavened Bread, at the Feast of Weeks, and at the Feast of Tabernacles; and they shall not appear before the LORD empty-handed. ¹⁷ Every man shall give as he is able, according to the blessing of the LORD your God which He has given you." (Deut. 16:16-17)

It is clear from Scripture that the entire family of *Y'shua* attended the pilgrimage Festivals, not just the head of the household:

"His parents went to Jerusalem every year at the Feast of the Passover. ⁴² And when He was twelve years old, they went up to Jerusalem according to the custom of the feast." (Luke 2:41-42)

One other thing. The passage just quoted speaks about **"... the place which He chooses ..."** This special place was always understood to be wherever the Tabernacle or Temple stood. Of course, from about 900 BCE to 70 CE that place was

Jerusalem. God does not "place His name" (as some like to phrase it) at various sites around the United States or Europe. Thus, there is no direct *Torah* command that says we must gather together at specific places in order to properly keep the Feast. Therefore, it is perfectly acceptable to celebrate the Festivals in your own home. The important thing, in our opinion, is that we celebrate Annual Festivals wherever we are.

~ Summary ~

God has set aside His *Moedim* (Appointed Times) to meet with us. They have been given for our benefit, not for His. Therefore, as the Apostle Paul said in reference to the upcoming Festival of Passover:

"Therefore purge out the old leaven, that you may be a new lump, since you truly are unleavened. For indeed Christ [*Messiah*], our Passover, was sacrificed for us. ⁸Therefore let us keep the feast, not with old leaven, nor with the leaven of malice and wickedness, but with the unleavened bread of sincerity and truth." (I Cor. 5:7-8)

Let us resolve here and now to keep all of God's Appointed Times.

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~ Festival Memorials ~

So this day shall be to you a memorial;
And you shall keep it as a feast to the LORD
Throughout your generations.
You shall keep it as a feast
By an everlasting ordinance.
Exodus 12:14



As we saw in the chapter, *Festival Celebration*, the pilgrimage Festivals of God are designed to cause us to look back to the time when the firstborn were spared by the blood of the Passover lamb, and the children of Israel came out of Egyptian slavery. Throughout the generations, God has wanted His people to remember (i.e. never forget) that at one time each one of us was a slave to sin, and that we all need to have the blood of the Lamb applied to the doorposts of our hearts, so we can be set free from our bondage to sin. Therefore, all of the Pilgrimage Festivals are, in some way, a Memorial of the Exodus.

The most obvious Festival which looks back to the Exodus is, of course, *Pesach* (Passover) and the Days of Unleavened Bread:

"... that you may remember the day in which you came out of the land of Egypt all the days of your life."
(Deut. 16:3)

With *Shavu'ot* (Pentecost), God made a direct association between freedom from slavery and keeping the commands of the *Written Torah*:

"And you shall remember that you were a slave in Egypt, and you shall be careful to observe these statutes."
(Deut. 16:12)

For the Festival of *Sukkot* (the Feast of Tabernacles), the emphasis is upon the children of Israel living in temporary dwellings prior to their entry into the Promised Land:

"... that your generations may know that I made the children of Israel dwell in booths when I brought them out of the land of Egypt: I am the LORD your God."
(Lev. 23:43)

~ Looking Forward ~

What Scripture never explicitly states, but was always understood in ancient Jewish teaching, was that the Annual Festivals were also prophetic in nature. Jewish eschatology (the study of the end times) teaches that, in some way, they all picture the coming of the Messiah.

Please remember that when the Festivals were first given at Mount Sinai, *Y'shua's* incarnation was yet some 1500 years in the future. Yet for those ancients who had eyes to see, the Spring Festivals were a preview of Messiah's first visit to earth, when He gave Himself as our Passover Lamb so that we too could be set free from our own personal Egypt. In retrospect

we know this is a correct interpretation, because of the time and place of the sacrifice of *Y'shua*, and also by what the Apostle Paul wrote:

"Therefore purge out the old leaven, that you may be a new lump, since you truly are unleavened. For indeed Christ [*Messiah*], our Passover, was sacrificed for us."
(I Cor. 5:7)

Y'shua is our Passover Lamb. He is the One whose blood will save us from the Second Death and will allow us to have a part in the First Resurrection:

"Blessed and holy is he who has part in the first resurrection. Over such the second death has no power, but they shall be priests of God and of Christ [*Messiah*], and shall reign with Him a thousand years." (Rev. 20:6)

~ The Plan of God ~

Let us take a look at these wonderful Festival days, so that we can have a better understanding of the great plan which God set in motion from the foundation of the world; the climax of which will take place when *Y'shua* returns to establish His Kingdom on earth:

"When the Son of Man comes in His glory, and all the holy angels with Him, then He will sit on the throne of His glory. ³² All the nations will be gathered before Him, and He will separate them one from another, as a shepherd divides his sheep from the goats. ³³ And He will set the sheep on His right hand, but the goats on the left. ³⁴ Then the King will say to those on His right hand, 'Come, you blessed of My Father, inherit the kingdom prepared for you from the foundation of the world ...'" (Matt. 25:31-34)

The first goal of God's Plan is for those who have been made righteous through the blood of *Y'shua* to inherit the *Malchut Shamayim* (Mahl-hoot' Sha-mah'-eem = the Kingdom of Heaven). However, God's Plan does not end there, for after the Millennium there will be a time when all the nations and all people will be judged, and those found worthy will obtain a place in the *Olam Haba* (Oh-lahm' Hah-Bah' = the World to Come). There are several major steps along the way before all of these events are fulfilled.

The seven Festivals portray the major steps in God's Plan. For this reason, the Festivals are often thought of as being "Rehearsals," for they give us an opportunity each year to preview the events which have not yet taken place. However, they also give us an opportunity to look back at what has already been fulfilled. Thus, we have the Spring Festivals serving us today as Memorials of the First Coming of Messiah *Y'shua*, while the Fall Festivals are Rehearsals of what is to take place at His Second Coming.

~ Multiple Meanings ~

A mistake which is often made, when it comes to Biblical interpretation, is to assume Scripture passages have only one meaning, when in fact there may be multiple meanings, all of which have lessons to offer. This misunderstanding has its origins in our Western culture, which stems primarily from the

philosophies and culture of Greece and Rome. In the Western mindset, things are seen as "black or white," or "right or wrong." This view fails to take into consideration the nuances which exist within Hebrew thought and culture.

While Greek logic demands the linear approach of human reasoning (where one begins with a premise and takes it to its logical conclusion), Hebrew thought is like a spiral. It begins at the bottom and moves in a circular fashion, with each turn of the spiral being a repetition, yet also representing a higher degree of understanding. For this reason, do not take this article to be the end all concerning information about the meaning of the Festivals, for it is only one turn of the spiral. There are many other lessons to be learned from the study of the Festivals and especially from their observance.

~ Wedding Pictures ~

Each one of the Festivals is a picture or "Rehearsal" of an aspect of the *Wedding of the Messiah*. (For more information on the *Wedding of the Messiah*, write for our recorded teachings of the same title.):

"For I am jealous for you with godly jealousy. For I have betrothed you to one husband, that I may present you as a chaste virgin to Christ [Messiah]." (II Cor. 11:2)

This wedding theme is carried from *Genesis* (where the descendants of Abraham were first chosen to become the Bride) through to the book of *Revelation*, where the final step in the *Wedding of the Messiah* is prophesied to take place, in heaven, just prior to *Y'shua's* return to the earth:

"And I heard, as it were, the voice of a great multitude, as the sound of many waters and as the sound of mighty thunderings, saying, 'Alleluia! For the Lord God Omnipotent reigns! ⁷ Let us be glad and rejoice and give Him glory, for the marriage of the Lamb has come, and His wife has made herself ready.' ⁸ And to her it was granted to be arrayed in fine linen, clean and bright, for the fine linen is the righteous acts of the saints." (Rev. 19:6-8)

After their time in the *Chuppah* (Who-pah' = Wedding Chamber), *Y'shua* and His Bride will return to earth to set up housekeeping:

"Now I saw heaven opened, and behold, a white horse. And He who sat on him was called Faithful and True, and in righteousness He judges and makes war. ¹² His eyes were like a flame of fire, and on His head were many crowns. He had a name written that no one knew except Himself. ¹³ He was clothed with a robe dipped in blood, and His name is called The Word of God. ¹⁴ And the armies in heaven [the Bride], clothed in fine linen, white and clean, followed Him on white horses." (Rev. 19:11-14)

With all of this as background, let us now delve into the Plan of God as portrayed by the annual Festivals. Along the way we will also take occasional glances at the Wedding pictures.

* The Spring Festivals *

For some 1500 years, the Spring Festivals only looked back to the Exodus from Egypt and their journey to Mount Sinai. However, today we can see that all of the Spring Festivals had dual fulfillments; a Type (the first fulfillment) and an Antitype (the ultimate fulfillment foreshadowed by the earlier Type).

There were very important events which happened on each one of the Spring Festivals as the children of Israel left Egypt. These events were Types, and pointed to the Antitypes which were to occur some 1500 or so years later when *Y'shua* arrived on the earth as the "Suffering Servant Messiah:"

**"Behold, My Servant shall deal prudently;
He shall be exalted and extolled and be very high.**

¹⁴ Just as many were astonished at you,

So His visage was marred more than any man,

And His form more than the sons of men;

¹⁵ So shall He sprinkle many nations.

Kings shall shut their mouths at Him;

For what had not been told them they shall see,

And what they had not heard they shall consider."

(Isa. 52:13-15)

(See also Isaiah 53)

The "Suffering Servant Messiah" was a major eschatological teaching during *Y'shua's* time. John the Baptist recognized *Y'shua* as the "Suffering Servant" *Messiah ben Joseph*, the one who was to take away the sins of His people:

"The next day John saw Jesus [Y'shua] coming toward him, and said, 'Behold! The Lamb of God who takes away the sin of the world!'" (John 1:29)

Today, Judaism teaches that the "Suffering Servant" is Israel in the Diaspora. However, in ancient times He was recognized as the Messiah who must suffer and die for the sins of His people. The well known Jewish author, Raphael Patai, in his book *The Messiah Texts*, mentions an ancient legend:

"... the Messiah himself summons all the diseases, pains, and sufferings of Israel to come upon him, in order thus to ease the anguish of Israel, which otherwise would be unbearable." (p. 104)

"Scholars have repeatedly speculated about the origin of the Messiah ben Joseph legend and the curious fact that the Messiah figure has thus been split in two. It would seem that in the early legend, the death of the Messiah was envisaged perhaps as a development of the Suffering Servant motif." (p. 166)

In this ancient Hebraic teaching, it was believed that a second Messiah would follow *Messiah ben Joseph*, bringing with Him the *Malchut Shamayim* (Kingdom of Heaven). This second Messiah was known as *Messiah ben David*, or the King Messiah.

"The other, Messiah ben David, will come after him [*Messiah ben Joseph*], ... and will lead Israel to the

ultimate victory, the triumph, and the Messianic era of bliss." (p. 166)

So it was that, prior to the time of *Y'shua*, the children of Israel were looking for a "Suffering Servant Messiah" who would take upon Himself their sins and free them from the Second Death, just as the Passover Lamb in Egypt (the Type) had saved all of the firstborn who resided in homes where the blood of the Lamb was found applied to the lintels and doorposts.

It was this belief in two Messiahs that led John the Baptist to instruct his disciples to ask *Y'shua* the following question:

"And when John had heard in prison about the works of Christ [Messiah], he sent two of his disciples ³ and said to Him, 'Are You the Coming One, or do we look for another?'" (Matt. 11:2-3)

From all that had transpired in the lives of both John the Baptist and *Y'shua*, it was clear that John already knew that *Y'shua* was *Messiah ben Joseph*. (As we have just seen, John knew *Y'shua* was to take away the sins of the world, the job assigned to *Messiah ben Joseph*.) What John now wanted to know was if *Y'shua* was also *Messiah ben David*. *Y'shua's* answer was that He was indeed both:

"Jesus [*Y'shua*] answered and said to them, 'Go and tell John the things which you hear and see: ⁵ The blind see and the lame walk; the lepers are cleansed and the deaf hear; the dead are raised up and the poor have the gospel preached to them. ⁶ And blessed is he who is not offended because of Me.'" (Matt. 11:4-6)

The healing of the sick was believed to be a task assigned to *Messiah ben Joseph*, while the raising of the dead was to be accomplished by *Messiah ben David*. In fact, some taught that the first person *Messiah ben David* would resurrect upon His arrival would be the "Suffering Servant," *Messiah ben Joseph*, who had died for the sins of Israel. In this manner, *Y'shua* demonstrated, to the disciples of John the Baptist, that He indeed was to be both the Messiah who had already arrived, and the "Coming One."

~ Passover ~

The day of Passover (*Aviv* 14) is not a *Kodesh Mikra* (a Holy Convocation on which no work should be done) for this was the day on which the Passover sacrifice was offered. The work of the sacrifice had to be done on this day:

"Now you shall keep it [*the Passover Lamb*] until the fourteenth day of the same month. Then the whole assembly of the congregation of Israel shall kill it at twilight [*between the two evenings or mid-afternoon*]. ⁷ And they shall take some of the blood and put it on the two doorposts and on the lintel of the houses where they eat it.'" (Ex. 12:6-7)

This was the year's greatest Preparation Day, for it was the day on which the children of Israel prepared and slaughtered their Passover lambs for the Festival of *Hag HaMatzah*, which began at sundown. It was also the final day to remove all leavening agents from their homes.

It was on this very day (*Aviv* 14) that *Y'shua* was executed on the crucifixion stake:

"Now it was the Preparation Day of the Passover [*Aviv* 14], and about the sixth hour. And he said to the Jews, 'Behold your King!' ¹⁵ But they cried out, 'Away with Him, away with Him! Crucify Him!' Pilate said to them, 'Shall I crucify your King?' The chief priests answered, 'We have no king but Caesar!' ¹⁶ Then he delivered Him to them to be crucified. So they took Jesus [*Y'shua*] and led Him away." (John 19:14-16)

Y'shua died at mid-afternoon, just as the Passover Lambs were being offered at the Temple:

"⁴⁶ And about the ninth hour Jesus [*Y'shua*] cried out with a loud voice, ... ⁵⁰ And Jesus [*Y'shua*] cried out again with a loud voice, and yielded up His spirit." (Matt. 27:46, 50)

Y'shua is our Passover Lamb who died "between the two evenings" (mid-afternoon) on *Aviv* 14, the precise time when the Passover Lambs were to be killed.

~ The First Day of Unleavened Bread ~

In Egypt, the miracle was not the offering of the lambs on the 14th, it was the saving of the firstborn who were in the houses which had the blood of the lamb on the lintel and the doorposts. That event (the passing over of the marked homes) took place during the night portion of *Aviv* 15. For this reason the First Day of Unleavened Bread (*Aviv* 15) is a memorial of the saving of the firstborn:

"Now the blood shall be a sign for you on the houses where you are. And when I see the blood, I will pass over you; and the plague shall not be on you to destroy you when I strike the land of Egypt. ¹⁴ So this day shall be to you a memorial; and you shall keep it as a feast to the LORD throughout your generations. You shall keep it as a feast by an everlasting ordinance." (Ex. 12:13-14)

"For the LORD will pass through to strike the Egyptians; and when He sees the blood on the lintel and on the two doorposts, the LORD will pass over the door and not allow the destroyer to come into your houses to strike you." (Ex. 12:23)

This was also the day (*Aviv* 15) on which the children of Israel left Egypt and started their trek to the Promised Land:

"On the first day there shall be a holy convocation [*kodesh mikra*], and on the seventh day there shall be a holy convocation [*kodesh mikra*] for you. No manner of work shall be done on them; but that which everyone must eat -- that only may be prepared by you. ¹⁷ So you shall observe the Feast of Unleavened Bread, for on this same day I will have brought your armies out of the land of Egypt. Therefore you shall observe this day throughout your generations as an everlasting ordinance." (Ex. 12:16-17)

Y'shua was crucified on the afternoon of *Aviv* 14 (the day of the Passover Sacrifice). He was placed in the ground about sunset at the end of *Aviv* 14 near the beginning of *Aviv* 15:

"⁵⁷ As evening approached, there came a rich man from Arimathea, named Joseph, who had himself become a disciple of Jesus [*Y'shua*]. ⁵⁸ Going to Pilate, he asked for Jesus' [*Y'shua*] body, and Pilate ordered that it be given to him. ⁵⁹ Joseph took the body, wrapped it in a clean linen cloth, ⁶⁰ and placed it in his own new tomb that he had cut out of the rock. He rolled a big stone in front of the entrance to the tomb and went away." (Matt. 27:57-60 NIV)

Y'shua's death and burial was the most significant event in human history from the creation of the world up to that time, for through His death, sinners could be reconciled to God:

" ... we were reconciled to God through the death of His Son ..." (Rom. 5:10)

Thus, the First Day of Unleavened Bread, as it was acted out in Egypt (through the saving of the firstborn and the coming out of Egypt), was a foreshadow or type of God's reconciliation with man through the offering of *Y'shua's* blood on the crucifixion stake.

~ The Omer Wave Offering ~

During the seven Days of Unleavened Bread there is another special day which, like Passover (*Aviv* 14), is not a *Kodesh Mikra* (Holy Convocation). That day is called the *Omer Wave Offering* (sometimes incorrectly called the Wave Sheaf Offering). The *Omer Wave Offering* occurs on the first day of the week during the Days of Unleavened Bread. For this reason it does not have a firm calendar date.

The *Omer Wave Offering* was an offering of the firstfruits of the barley grain at the Tabernacle (or Temple). Barley is the first grain to ripen in Israel and no harvest could take place until this ritual had been satisfied.

The barley grain for the offering was cut at the end of the Weekly Sabbath during the Days of Unleavened Bread. It was then prepared into fine flour during the night, and offered at the Temple on the next morning (the first day of the week):

"Speak to the children of Israel, and say to them: "When you come into the land which I give to you, and reap its harvest, then you shall bring a sheaf of the firstfruits of your harvest to the priest. ¹¹ He shall wave the sheaf before the LORD, to be accepted on your behalf; on the day after the Sabbath [*weekly Sabbath*] the priest shall wave it..." (Lev. 23:10-11)

This service at the Temple took place at the very time when *Y'shua* was being accepted, in heaven, as the Firstfruit Resurrection from death. On the night following the Sabbath (which was the first day of the week), just after *Y'shua* had been resurrected, He met Mary Magdalene in the garden where the tomb was located:

"Now on the first day of the week Mary Magdalene went to the tomb early, while it was still dark, and saw that the stone had been taken away from the tomb." (John 20:1)

It is clear from this passage that *Y'shua* was resurrected prior to sunrise, since it was still dark and the tomb was already empty when Mary arrived.

During Mary's encounter with *Y'shua*, He told her that He must go to the Father before appearing to His disciples:

"Jesus [*Y'shua*] said to her, 'Do not cling to Me, for I have not yet ascended to My Father; but go to My brethren and say to them, "I am ascending to My Father and your Father, and to My God and your God.'" (John 20:17)

The day of the *Omer Wave Offering* is the very day on which the resurrected *Y'shua* had His sacrifice accepted (as our Passover Lamb), by the Father. His acceptance confirmed that *Y'shua's* sacrifice was sufficient for the salvation of those whom God has called to be in the First Resurrection:

"For if when we were enemies we were reconciled to God through the death of His Son, much more, having been reconciled, we shall be saved by His life." (Rom. 5:10)

The day of the *Omer Wave Offering* is a memorial of both the resurrection of *Y'shua* and of our salvation.

~ The Last Day of Unleavened Bread ~

The Last Day of Unleavened Bread is also a *Kodesh Mikra* (Holy Convocation). In Jewish tradition, this is the day on which the children of Israel crossed the Reed Sea and finally escaped forever from the clutches of the Pharaoh of Egypt:

"Then the waters returned and covered the chariots, the horsemen, and all the army of Pharaoh that came into the sea after them. Not so much as one of them remained. ²⁹ But the children of Israel had walked on dry land in the midst of the sea, and the waters were a wall to them on their right hand and on their left. ³⁰ So the LORD saved Israel that day out of the hand of the Egyptians, and Israel saw the Egyptians dead on the seashore. ³¹ Thus Israel saw the great work which the LORD had done in Egypt; so the people feared the LORD, and believed the LORD and His servant Moses." (Ex. 14:28-31)

The Apostle Paul referred to this event as a type of Baptism for the children of Israel. He said that the very One who followed them in their travels was none other than the Messiah Himself:

"Moreover, brethren, I do not want you to be unaware that all our fathers were under the cloud, all passed through the sea, ² all were baptized into Moses in the cloud and in the sea, ³ all ate the same spiritual food, ⁴ and all drank the same spiritual drink. For they drank of that spiritual Rock that followed them, and that Rock was Christ [*Messiah*]." (1 Cor. 10:1-4)

This event is paralleled in our lives by our own baptism, when our past sins were forever expunged from our lives. One difference; we have been baptized "into *Messiah Y'shua*" not "into Moses:"

"Or do you not know that as many of us as were baptized into Christ Jesus [*Messiah Y'shua*] were baptized into His death? ⁴ Therefore we were buried with Him

through baptism into death, that just as Christ [*Messiah*] was raised from the dead by the glory of the Father, even so we also should walk in newness of life." (Rom. 6:3-4)

Just as the children of Israel walked as free men after crossing the Reed Sea, even so Messianic Believers should walk in a new way of life after being freed from their sins:

"But God demonstrates His own love toward us, in that while we were still sinners, Christ [*Messiah*] died for us. ⁹Much more then, having now been justified by His blood, we shall be saved from wrath through Him. ¹⁰For if when we were enemies we were reconciled to God through the death of His Son, much more, having been reconciled, we shall be saved by His life. ¹¹And not only *that*, but we also rejoice in God through our Lord Jesus Christ [*Y'shua HaMashiach*], through whom we have now received the reconciliation." (Rom. 5:8-11)

~ Shavu'ot ~

The Festival of *Shavu'ot* (Pentecost) is a harvest Festival which occurs in late spring. It was special to the children of Israel, for it was on this day when God gave them the first of two great gifts, the *Written Torah*, God's Instruction Book for mankind:

¹¹ In the third month [*Sivan*] after the children of Israel had gone out of the land of Egypt, on the same day, they came to the Wilderness of Sinai. ...

¹⁶ Then it came to pass on the third day, in the morning, that there were thunderings and lightnings, and a thick cloud on the mountain; and the sound of the trumpet was very loud, so that all the people who *were* in the camp trembled. ...

²⁰ Then the LORD came down upon Mount Sinai, on the top of the mountain. And the LORD called Moses to the top of the mountain, and Moses went up.

...

"And God spoke all these words, saying: ² *I am the LORD your God, who brought you out of the land of Egypt, out of the house of bondage.* ³ *You shall have no other gods before Me.*" (Exodus 19:1, 16, 20; 20:1-3)

By giving the gift of the *Torah* on the Festival of *Shavu'ot*, God confirmed that the children of Israel were His Chosen People:

"For you *are* a holy people to the LORD your God, and the LORD has chosen you to be a people for Himself, a special treasure above all the peoples who *are* on the face of the earth." (Deut. 14:2)

The children of Israel were expected to follow His Instruction Book (the *Written Torah*) and by so doing become a light for all the other tribes and nations of the earth:

"Also today the LORD has proclaimed you to be His special people, just as He promised you, that *you* should keep all His commandments, ¹⁹ and that **He will set you high above all nations** which He has made, in praise, in name, and in honor, and that you may be a holy people to the LORD your God, just as He has spoken." (Deut. 26:18-19)

Israel failed in this charge, so God continued forward with His plan by sending a Savior. Actually, this part of the plan had existed from the foundation of the world, for God knew ahead of time that the children of Israel would not be able to keep the *Torah* perfectly:

"He indeed was foreordained before the foundation of the world, but was manifest in these last times for you ²¹who through Him believe in God, who raised Him from the dead and gave Him glory, so that your faith and hope are in God." (I Pet. 1:20-21)

However, this Savior *Y'shua* was not going to be just for the children of Israel, but for the entire world:

"For God so loved the world that He gave His only begotten Son, that whoever believes in Him should not perish but have everlasting life." (John 3:16)

Y'shua came as a light to the world:

"I have come *as a light into the world, that whoever believes in Me should not abide in darkness.* ⁴⁷ *And if anyone hears My words and does not believe, I do not judge him; for I did not come to judge the world but to save the world.*" (John 12:46-47)

As a result of *Y'shua's* sacrifice, God the Father sent another great *Shavu'ot* gift. This gift is reserved for those who, by faith, accept that *Y'shua*, the *Suffering Servant Messiah ben Joseph*, died for their sins. The first ones to receive this precious gift were the Disciples:

"When the Day of Pentecost had fully come, they were all with one accord in one place. ² And suddenly there came a sound from heaven, as of a rushing mighty wind, and it filled the whole house where they were sitting. ³ Then there appeared to them divided tongues, as of fire, and *one* sat upon each of them. ⁴ And they were all filled with the Holy Spirit and began to speak with other tongues, as the Spirit gave them utterance." (Acts 2:1-4)

Later on that very day, this gift of the *Ruach HaKodesh* (Rue-ach' Hah Koh-dehsh' = the Holy Spirit) was freely given to those Jews who believed as a result of the testimony of the Disciples:

"Then Peter said to them, 'Repent, and let every one of you be baptized in the name of Jesus Christ [*Y'shua HaMashiach*] for the remission of sins; and you shall receive the gift of the Holy Spirit. ... ⁴¹ Then those who gladly received his word were baptized; and that day about three thousand souls were added to them.'" (Acts 2:38, 41)

Some years later this same gift was also given to believing Gentiles:

"While Peter was still speaking these words, the Holy Spirit fell upon all those who heard the word. ⁴⁵ And those of the circumcision who believed were astonished, as many as came with Peter, because the gift of the Holy Spirit had been poured out on the Gentiles also." (Acts 10:44-45)

So it is that everyone who receives the earnest gift of the Holy Spirit, is betrothed as a part of the Bride of Messiah and is likened to the Firstfruits of the wheat harvest of *Shavu'ot*:

"And you shall observe the Feast of Weeks, of the firstfruits of wheat harvest, ..." (Ex. 34:22)

Inwardly they are identified by the fact that they have the gift of the *Ruach HaKodesh* (Holy Spirit) which has come to them as a result of *Y'shua's* ministry of salvation. Outwardly, Believers are identified by their fruits:

"But the fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, longsuffering, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, ²³gentleness, self-control. Against such there is no law." (Gal. 5:22-23)

Compared to the great fall harvest (when all of the fruits, vegetables, nuts, and grapes were harvested) the two spring harvest Festivals (*Omer Wave Offering* and *Shavu'ot*) were relatively small.

It is true that *Shavu'ot* was the Festival on which the firstfruits of certain crops were presented (such as the early fruits and vegetables), however, the primary harvest that began at *Shavu'ot* was wheat. This harvest was larger than the barley harvest, but relatively small when compared to all the produce that would be gathered in during the late summer months.

Thus we see that the two smaller Spring Harvests represent the Resurrection of *Y'shua* and the Salvation of those who will be in the First Resurrection:

"But each one in his own order: Christ [Messiah] the firstfruits, afterward those who are Christ's [Messiah's] at His coming." (I Cor. 15:23)

~ Spring Festival Recap ~

- ◆ *Passover* - is a memorial of the day (*Aviv* 14) the children of Israel killed the Passover lambs in Egypt and painted, with blood, their lintels and doorposts.
 - Passover is also a memorial of the day on which *Y'shua* paid the Brideprice by giving up His life, thus enabling us (as members of His Bride) to paint His blood on the lintels and doorposts of our hearts and thereby receive forgiveness.
- ◆ *First Day of Unleavened Bread* - is the very day on which the children of Israel had their firstborn protected from death, and when they began their Exodus out of Egypt.
 - This was the first full day on which *Y'shua* lay dead in the tomb. Therefore, based on Romans 5:10, it is the day on which sinful man gained the opportunity to be reconciled to God.
- ◆ *Omer Wave Offering* - is the day on which the firstfruits of the barley harvest were offered in the Temple to be accepted by God. The first grain harvest of the year (barley) could not begin until that ceremony had taken place.
 - This is the very day on which the newly resurrected *Y'shua* went to His Father in heaven to

be accepted as the First of the Firstfruits. The harvest of souls for the First Resurrection could not begin until *Y'shua's* sacrifice had been properly accepted.

- ◆ *Last Day of Unleavened Bread* - is the day on which the children of Israel received their baptism in the Reed Sea and when their enemy, the army of Pharaoh was defeated.
 - This day also represents the day of the baptism of the Believer, when our personal enemy (sin) is washed away.
- ◆ *Shavu'ot* - is the day on which the children of Israel received their first great gift, the *Written Torah*. Armed with this Instruction Book from God, Israel could have become the premier nation on the face of the earth. However, they did not have the power to keep it as it was intended to be kept.
 - This is also the very day on which God gave a second great gift to His people (those Jews of Israel who were the Disciples of *Y'shua*) the gift of the *Ruach HaKodesh* (Holy Spirit). Armed with this power from on high, the followers of *Y'shua* are able to keep the *Written Torah* as it was intended to be kept.

All of the Spring Festivals have been fulfilled both in Type (the forerunner) and Antitype (the ultimate fulfillment). Therefore, the Spring Festivals remain as Memorials or Remembrances of those parts of God's Plan which have already come to pass:

"And He took bread, gave thanks and broke it, and gave it to them, saying, 'This is My body which is given for you; do this in remembrance of Me.'" (Luke 22:19)

In the following chapter we will explore the prophetic implications of the Fall Festivals.

~ ~ ~ ~ ~

~ Festival Rehearsals ~

And you shall rejoice in your feast,
You and your son and your daughter,
Your male servant and your female servant and the Levite,
The stranger and the fatherless and the widow,
Who are within your gates.
Deuteronomy 16:14



By and large, the Fall Festivals have not had previous fulfillments (either Type or Antitype) as have the Spring Festivals. Therefore, instead of being Memorials of events which have already occurred, the Fall Festivals are primarily prophetic in nature. They picture the various steps in the process of the return of *Y'shua HaMashiach* to this earth as *King Messiah ben David*, the King of kings and Lord of lords:

"Now out of His mouth goes a sharp sword, that with it He should strike the nations. And He Himself will rule them with a rod of iron. He Himself treads the winepress of the fierceness and wrath of Almighty God. ¹⁶ And He has on His robe and on His thigh a name written: KING OF KINGS AND LORD OF LORDS." (Rev. 19:15-16)

The Fall Festivals are very important to Messianic Believers, for they picture those events which are still ahead. This is another reason why it is so important to celebrate these days, for they help to prepare us for what is to come by drawing our attention to their meaning.

~ Yom Teruah ~

The first of the Fall Festivals is correctly called *Yom Teruah*, the Day of Blowing or Shouting (more commonly known as *Rosh HaShannah* = Head of the Year). There is very little direct information about *Yom Teruah* to be found in Scripture:

"Speak to the children of Israel, saying: "In the seventh month, on the first day of the month, you shall have a sabbath-rest [*shabbaton*], a memorial of blowing of trumpets, a holy [*kodesh*] convocation [*mikra*]. ²⁵ You shall do no customary work on it; and you shall offer an offering made by fire to the LORD."" (Lev. 23:24-25)

Because of the dearth of information found in this passage, one must look elsewhere to learn what it might mean.

The Hebrew word *teruah* (teh-rue-ah;' Strong's #8643) means:

- 1) alarm, signal, sound of tempest, shout, shout or blast of war or alarm or joy
- 1a) alarm of war, war-cry, battle-cry
- 1b) blast (for march)
- 1c) shout of joy (with religious impulse)
- 1d) shout of joy (in general)

As can be seen, the word *Teruah* is used to depict a loud shout (either in alarm or in joy). In the context of Lev. 23 it is generally understood to be a loud blast on a trumpet or *shofar*

(show'-fahr = ram's horn). The trumpet connection is made because of the following passage:

"Also in the day of your gladness, in your appointed feasts [*moedim*], and at the beginning of your months, you shall blow the trumpets [*hatzotzerah*] over your burnt offerings and over the sacrifices of your peace offerings; and they shall be a memorial for you before your God: I am the LORD your God." (Num. 10:10)

Here we find that the trumpet (*hatzotzerah* [*haht-tzoht'-tzeh-rah'*]) was to be blown on the *moedim* (Appointed Festivals) and at the beginning of the months. Since *Yom Teruah* is both a *Moedim* and the beginning of a month, it stands to reason that the trumpet would be blown on that day. Therefore, the loud "signal or alarm" associated with *Yom Teruah* can be understood to be the blast of a trumpet.

The *shofar* connection with *Yom Teruah* is found in the Psalms:

"Blow the trumpet [*shofar*] at the time of the New Moon [*includes Yom Teruah*], At the full moon, on our solemn feast day. ⁴For this is a statute for Israel, A law of the God of Jacob." (Psalm 81:3-4)

At the time of *Y'shua*, the common practice was to blow the *shofar* both at the Temple and in the Synagogues on *Yom Teruah* as part of the Festival celebration.

Yom Teruah is commonly known in Judaism as *Rosh HaShannah*, the Head of the Year, because it is believed this was the time of year when the world was created by God. Therefore, it is considered to be the original New Year's day. (The calendar was modified in the time of Moses so that *Aviv* (a.k.a. *Nisan*)* became the first month of the religious year. See Ex. 12:1-2)

Actually, Judaism teaches there are four New Years. The following quotes are taken from *The Rosh Hashanah Anthology*, by Philip Goodman:

"There are four New Years: on the first day of Nisan is the New Year for kings and festivals; on the first of Elul is the New Year for the tithe of cattle; ... on the first of Tishri is the New Year for reckoning of the years, and for release and jubilee years for planting and vegetables; on the first of Shevat is the New Year for trees ..." (p. 17)

Because the Rabbis teach that the world was created on *Yom Teruah*, it became known as the first Day of Judgment; the beginning of a ten day period called the *Days of Awe*. It was taught that:

"Three books are opened [in heaven] on New Year [*Rosh HaShannah*], one for the thoroughly wicked, one for the thoroughly righteous, and one for the intermediate. The thoroughly righteous are forthwith inscribed definitively in the book of life; the thoroughly wicked are forthwith inscribed definitively in the book of death; the doom of the intermediate is suspended from New Year till the Day of Atonement [*Yom Kippur*]; if they deserve well, they are inscribed in the book of life; if they do not deserve

* *Nisan* is Babylonian, *Aviv* is Hebrew.

well, they are inscribed in the book of death." [taken from *Rosh Hashanah 16b*], (p.21, *ibid.*)

Because of *Yom Teruah's* traditional connection with the blowing of trumpets (*shofars*) and judgment, the early Messianic Believers tied this day to the coming of the Messiah to take His Bride to the *Chuppah* (Wedding Chamber) in heaven:

"Behold, I tell you a mystery: We shall not all sleep, but we shall all be changed -- ⁵² in a moment, in the twinkling of an eye, at the last trumpet. For the trumpet will sound, and the dead will be raised incorruptible, and we shall be changed." (I Cor. 15:51-52)

Paul also indicated that shouting, along with the trumpet blast, would accompany the coming of Messiah *Y'shua* for His Bride. This combination ties that event directly to *Yom Teruah*:

"For the Lord Himself will descend from heaven with a shout, with the voice of an archangel, and with the trumpet of God. And the dead in Christ [*Messiah*] will rise first." (I Thess. 4:16)

Y'shua taught that He would come for His Bride at the end of the Great Tribulation, but prior to the Day of the Lord. (For more information on this subject, write for our recorded teaching: *Believer's and the Birth Pains - PPI*):

"Immediately after the tribulation of those days the sun will be darkened, and the moon will not give its light; the stars will fall from heaven, and the powers of the heavens will be shaken. ³⁰ Then the sign of the Son of Man will appear in heaven, and then all the tribes of the earth will mourn, and they will see the Son of Man coming on the clouds of heaven with power and great glory. ³¹ And He will send His angels with a great sound of a trumpet, and they will gather together His elect from the four winds, from one end of heaven to the other." (Matt. 24:29-31)

This event will fulfill the promise *Y'shua* made to His Disciples (His Bride) at the *Last Supper* when He betrothed them to Himself:

"Let not your heart be troubled; you believe in God, believe also in Me. ² In My Father's house are many mansions; if *it were not so*, I would have told you. I go to prepare a place for you. ³ And if I go and prepare a place for you, I will come again and receive you to Myself; that where I am, *there you may be also*." (John 14:1-3)

During this time, the Bride will be in the *Chuppah* (Wedding Chamber) in heaven with her Husband, *Y'shua*. She is entitled to this right because she has been made thoroughly righteous (and thereby reconciled to the Father) through her acceptance of the blood of *Y'shua* in total payment for her sins:

"Let us be glad and rejoice and give Him glory, for the marriage of the Lamb has come, and His wife has made herself ready." ⁸ And to her it was granted to be arrayed in fine linen, clean and bright, for the fine linen is the righteous acts of the saints." (Rev. 19:7-8)

Meanwhile, those who are totally wicked and those who are in the intermediate class will be going through the awesome *Day of the Lord* punishment on earth:

"Alas for the day!

For the day of the LORD is at hand;

It shall come as destruction from the Almighty."

(Joel 1:15)

It is our view that *Yom Teruah* is the first Day of Judgment on which those who are deemed thoroughly righteous, through the Blood of the Lamb (*Y'shua*), are taken to safety in heaven (during the *Great Tribulation* but prior to the *Day of God's Wrath*) where the marriage of the Lamb will take place:

"And we know that all things work together for good to those who love God, to those who are called according to His purpose. ²⁹ For whom He foreknew, He also predestined to be conformed to the image of His Son, that He might be the firstborn among many brethren. ³⁰ Moreover whom He predestined, these He also called; whom He called, these He also justified; and whom He justified, these He also glorified. ³¹ What then shall we say to these things? If God is for us, who can be against us?" (Rom. 8:28-31)

Meanwhile the remainder of the earth's population will experience the awesome *Day of the Lord* here on earth.

~ Yom Kippur ~

The next Festival is *Yom Kippur*, the Day of Atonement:

"Also the tenth day of this seventh month shall be the Day of Atonement. It shall be a holy [*kodesh*] convocation [*mikra*] for you; you shall afflict your souls, and offer an offering made by fire to the LORD. ²⁸ 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. ²⁹ For any person who is not afflicted in soul on that same day shall be cut off from his people. ³⁰ And any person who does any work on that same day, that person I will destroy from among his people. ³¹ You shall do no manner of work; it shall be a statute forever throughout your generations in all your dwellings. ³² It shall be to you a sabbath of solemn rest, and you shall afflict your souls; on the ninth day of the month at evening, from evening to evening, you shall celebrate your sabbath." (Lev. 23:27-32)

To afflict one's soul means to fast. This connection is shown in Isaiah 58:

"Is it a fast that I have chosen,

A day for a man to afflict his soul?"

(Isa. 58:5)

Yom Kippur is considered to be the holiest day of the year, for it was only on this day that the High Priest went into the Holy of Holies (the innermost room of the Temple) to make expiation for the sins of the people of Israel.

This is also the day on which the two Atonement Goats were offered at the Temple. One was sacrificed and its blood was sprinkled on the Mercy Seat (within the Holy of Holies), while the other one had the sins of Israel placed on its head and

was sent into the wilderness. (See Leviticus 16) This day pictures the complete removal of sin from the nation of Israel.

Jewish tradition teaches that it was on *Yom Kippur* that Moses returned from Mount Sinai with the second set of Tablets written by the finger of God. During the forty days on which he was gone, the children of Israel had been doing *Teshuvah* (Teh-shoe'-vah = repentance and return) and therefore God had forgiven them for the sin of the golden calf, which took place during *Moshe's* first ascent.

Because of the great importance attached to *Yom Kippur*, it is most important for us to confess our sins prior to the beginning of this day at sundown. The traditional time to begin *Teshuvah* is on *Elul 1* (the month preceding *Tishri*). *Teshuvah* culminates during the days between *Yom Teruah* and *Yom Kippur*. For this reason, those ten days are appropriately called the *Days of Awe*.

Another aspect of *Yom Kippur* was that it marked the beginning of the year of Jubilee. The Jubilee year occurred every fifty years. This is when all of the family property, which had been leased to others during the previous fifty years, was returned to the original family to whom God gave it when the children of Israel first settled the Promised Land. The Jubilee was known as the great year of release:*

""That fiftieth year shall be a Jubilee to you; in it you shall neither sow nor reap what grows of its own accord, nor gather the grapes of your untended vine. ¹² For it is the Jubilee; it shall be holy to you; you shall eat its produce from the field. ¹³ In this Year of Jubilee, each of you shall return to his possession."" (Lev. 25:11-13)

The year of Jubilee pictures the Kingdom of God, when the earth will be restored to the condition that existed in the Garden of Eden.

It is interesting to note that the Year of Jubilee did not begin on *Aviv 1*, it began on *Tishri 1* and was announced on *Tishri 10*, (*Yom Kippur*).

""Then you shall cause the trumpet of the Jubilee to sound on the tenth day of the seventh month; on the Day of Atonement you shall make the trumpet to sound through out all your land. ¹⁰ And you shall consecrate the fiftieth year, and proclaim liberty throughout all the land to all its inhabitants. It shall be a Jubilee for you; and each of you shall return to his possession, and each of you shall return to his family."" (Lev. 25:9-10)

When *Y'shua* came to His home town of Nazareth He was invited to read from the Prophets at the local synagogue. The passage for that particular Sabbath was from Isaiah 61:1-2, which is directly related to the Year of Jubilee:

**""The Spirit of the LORD is upon Me,
Because He has anointed Me
To preach the gospel to the poor;
He has sent Me to heal the brokenhearted,
To proclaim liberty to the captives
And recovery of sight to the blind,
To set at liberty those who are oppressed;**

* Each seventh year was designated a year of release for debts.

¹⁹ To proclaim the acceptable year of the LORD.""
(Luke 4:18-19)

The term "**acceptable year of the LORD**" was recognized as a Hebrew idiom for the year of Jubilee.

Following His reading *Y'shua* announced:

""Today this Scripture is fulfilled in your hearing.""
(Luke 4:21)

Thus we see the connection between the coming of *Y'shua* and the Year of Jubilee, which was always announced on *Yom Kippur*. It is a day which pictures the earth being restored to the way it was originally intended to be. It is a day which pictures the world coming to be "At One" with God.

For these reasons, we believe that *Yom Kippur* pictures the day on which *Y'shua* will return to earth, with His Bride, to set up His government and fully establish the Kingdom of Heaven on earth. Through *Y'shua's* own words, we learn that the coming of the Kingdom of God (or Kingdom of Heaven in Matthew's terms) is the Gospel:

""Now after John was put in prison, Jesus [*Y'shua*] came to Galilee, preaching the gospel of the kingdom of God, ¹⁵and saying, 'The time is fulfilled, and the kingdom of God is at hand. Repent, and believe in the gospel.'""
(Mark 1:14-15)

Y'shua continued to teach His Disciples about the Kingdom of God right up to the time of His ascension:

" ... He [*Y'shua*] also presented Himself alive after His suffering by many infallible proofs, being seen by them during forty days and speaking of the things pertaining to the kingdom of God." (Acts 1:3)

On some future *Yom Kippur*, the Kingdom of God in its fullness will become the world's reality. That will be the day when *Y'shua* returns to take over the governments of this world and incorporate them all into His One World Government:

""Then the seventh angel sounded: And there were loud voices in heaven, saying, 'The kingdoms of this world have become the kingdoms of our Lord and of His Christ [*Messiah*], and He shall reign forever and ever!""
(Rev. 11:15)

Accompanying Him will be His Bride:

""... the armies in heaven, clothed in fine linen, white and clean, followed Him on white horses."" (Rev. 19:14)

Jude taught that this army will be composed of the Bride of Messiah, the resurrected Saints:

""Now Enoch, the seventh from Adam, prophesied about these men also, saying, 'Behold, the Lord comes with ten thousands of His saints, ..."" (Jude 1:14)

Thus begins not just the Year of Jubilee, but the Millennium of Jubilee, when all the people on earth will come to be at peace with God and with one another:

""And I saw thrones, and they sat on them, and judgment was committed to them. Then I saw the souls of those who had been beheaded for their witness to Jesus

[Y'shua] and for the word of God, who had not worshiped the beast or his image, and had not received his mark on their foreheads or on their hands. And they lived and reigned with Christ [Messiah] for a thousand years."

(Rev. 20:4)

May He come quickly and in our time.

~ Sukkot ~

When you hear someone speak about "The Feast," they are usually referring to the Festival of *Sukkot*, the Feast of Tabernacles:

"Speak to the children of Israel, saying: "The fifteenth day of this seventh month shall be the Feast of Tabernacles for seven days to the LORD. ³⁵ On the first day there shall be a holy [kodesh] convocation [mikra]. You shall do no customary work on it. ³⁶ For seven days you shall offer an offering made by fire to the LORD."" (Lev. 23:34-36)

Sukkot is a seven day Festival with the first day being a *Kodesh Mikra* (Holy Convocation) on which no work is to be done. As we will see, the seventh day also has special significance but it is not a *Kodesh Mikra*. There is another *Kodesh Mikra* on the Eighth Day, after *Sukkot* is completed. It is called *Shemini Atzeret*.

Of all the Festivals, *Sukkot* was the most joyous. In fact, three *Torah* passages command rejoicing during the Festival of *Sukkot*:

"You shall rejoice in your festival, ..."

(Deut. 16:14 TNK = Tanakh)

"... you shall have nothing but joy." (Deut. 16:15 TNK)

"... you shall rejoice before the LORD your God seven days." (Lev. 23:40 TNK)

There are no references to rejoicing during the Passover season and only one to rejoice at *Shavu'ot* (Deut. 16:10-11). The reason the Sages give for these differences is that at Passover the crops have not yet been harvested, and at *Shavu'ot* only some of them have been harvested. However, at *Sukkot*, the harvest for the year is complete. Another reason given for the great rejoicing at *Sukkot* is because man has had his sins atoned for on *Yom Kippur*. Whatever the reason, *Sukkot* has become known as *The Season of Our Joy*.

Sukkot is, without a doubt, a harvest festival:

"Also on the fifteenth day of the seventh month, when you have gathered in the fruit of the land, you shall keep the feast of the LORD for seven days; ..."

(Lev. 23:39)

The completion of the year's harvest (especially when it was all done by hand) was indeed a reason to rejoice. But *Sukkot* was, and is, more than just a time to rejoice for the bountiful crops which were secure in the barns. It also pictures a far greater harvest when all mankind will joyously celebrate the culmination of God's Plan.

The primary symbol for the Festival of *Sukkot* is, of course, the *sukkah*, the temporary dwelling. As we have already seen, the *sukkah* was, and is, to be a reminder to the children of Israel of the temporary dwellings in which they lived when they went out from Egypt:

"You shall dwell in booths [sukkah] for seven days. All who are native Israelites shall dwell in booths [sukkah], ⁴³that your generations may know that I made the children of Israel dwell in booths [sukkah] when I brought them out of the land of Egypt: I am the LORD your God."

(Lev. 23:42-43)

While living in a *sukkah* might seem like a symbol of homelessness, the Scriptures indicate otherwise. Actually, the *Sukkah* is a symbol of God's protection, just as it was for the children of Israel when they came out of Egypt. At that time they had the Pillar of Cloud by day and the Pillar of Fire by night. Two passages found in the Psalms picture the *sukkah* as a symbol of protection:

"For in the time of trouble

He shall hide me in His pavilion [sohk, the root word of sukka];

In the secret place of His tabernacle

He shall hide me;

He shall set me high upon a rock." (Psalm 27:5)

"You shall hide them in the secret place of Your presence

From the plots of man;

You shall keep them secretly in a pavilion [sukkah]

From the strife of tongues." (Psalm 31:20)

Because the *sukkah* is a place of protection, it also is a symbol of *shalom* (peace).

In Jewish teaching, the Festival of *Sukkot* also became a symbol for national independence:

"Passover marks the attainment of the end of bondage and religious freedom. *Sukkot* marks the attainment of national and territorial independence, the essential ingredients of sovereignty." (*The Biblical and Historical Background of the Jewish Holy Days*, by Abraham P. Bloch, p.42)

This theme is emphasized by the prophet Zechariah, when all nations will be required to come to Jerusalem:

"And it shall come to pass that everyone who is left of all the nations which came against Jerusalem shall go up from year to year to worship the King, the LORD of hosts, and to keep the Feast of Tabernacles." (Zech. 14:16)

This passage clearly connects *Sukkot* with the Kingdom of God during the Millennium, the time when *Messiah Y'shua* will be ruling on earth. Only when *Y'shua* is in total control will the nations of the earth be willing to come to Jerusalem to worship, what they would consider to be, a "Jewish" King. Thus we see that the Festival of *Sukkot* is a picture of the Millennium, when peace and prosperity will prevail over all the earth:

"And the LORD shall be King over all the earth.

In that day it shall be --

**'The LORD is one,'
And His name one.'** (Zech. 14:9)

The seventh day of *Sukkot* is a special day called *Hoshanna Rabbah* or the Great Hosanna. This was the day of the great *Water Pouring Ceremony*. The purpose of this ceremony was to pray for rain for the coming season, so that during the following year there would be an abundance of crops. During this ceremony, the High Priest poured, onto the Altar, a pitcher of wine together with a pitcher of water from the Pool of Siloam.

It was on this day (the seventh or Great Day of the Feast) that *Y'shua* spoke about Living Water:

"On the last day, that great day of the feast, Jesus [*Y'shua*] stood and cried out, saying, 'If anyone thirsts, let him come to Me and drink [of the Spirit].³⁸ He who believes in Me, as the Scripture has said, out of his heart will flow rivers of living water.'

"³⁹ But this He spoke concerning the Spirit, whom those believing in Him would receive; for the Holy Spirit was not yet given, because Jesus [*Y'shua*] was not yet glorified." (John 7:37-39)

The *Hoshanna Rabbah* symbolism for rain is a metaphor for an abundant harvest of souls, which *Y'shua* instructed His disciples to harvest:

"And He said to them, 'Go into all the world and preach the gospel to every creature.¹⁶ He who believes and is baptized will be saved; but he who does not believe will be condemned.'" (Mark 16:15-16)

Which Gospel were they to preach? The Gospel of the coming Kingdom of God; the very thing which is pictured by the Festival of *Sukkot*.

Hoshanna Rabbah also represents another event that takes place at the close of the Millennium; the *Great White Throne Judgment*:

"Then I saw a great white throne and Him who sat on it, from whose face the earth and the heaven fled away. And there was found no place for them.¹² And I saw the dead, small and great, standing before God, and books were opened. And another book was opened, which is the Book of Life. And the dead were judged according to their works, by the things which were written in the books.¹³ The sea gave up the dead who were in it, and Death and Hades delivered up the dead who were in them. And they were judged, each one according to his works.¹⁴ Then Death and Hades were cast into the lake of fire. This is the second death.¹⁵ And anyone not found written in the Book of Life was cast into the lake of fire." (Rev. 20:11-15)

Here we see the final judgment for all of those who were not in the First Resurrection at the beginning of the Millennium. It is most comforting to note that some of these people will have their names written into the *Book of Life*. This is contrary to the popular teaching that everyone who comes up before the *Great White Throne Judgment* will automatically be thrown into the Lake of Fire to suffer the Second Death.

We believe this event is the culmination of the Three Books of Judgment mentioned earlier in conjunction with *Yom*

Teruah. At that time, all of those found totally righteous (through their acceptance of the shed blood of *Y'shua* as payment for their sins) will be resurrected in the First Resurrection. Now, at the *Great White Throne Judgment*, all of the totally Wicked and the Intermediates will be resurrected to life. The totally Wicked may not have much of a chance to have their names written into the *Book of Life*, for this judgment is said to be based on **"their works."** However, it seems to us that at least some of those who were originally found in the Book of the Intermediates will now find their names transferred into the Book of Life.

One way to not have to worry about this problem is to make sure that your name is written in the Book of the Righteous. This can only be done through acceptance of the shed blood of *Y'shua*:

"Whoever eats My flesh and drinks My blood has eternal life, and I will raise him up at the last day.⁵⁵ For My flesh is food indeed, and My blood is drink indeed.⁵⁶ He who eats My flesh and drinks My blood abides in Me, and I in him." (John 6:54-56)

This passage points us back to the Passover symbolism.

~ Shemini Atzeret ~

There is one final Festival in the great Plan of God, *Shemini Atzeret* or the Eighth Day. This Festival is the most enigmatic of them all and it receives the least mention in the Scriptures (or so it seems). It almost seems to be an afterthought:

"For seven days you shall offer an offering made by fire to the LORD. On the eighth day you shall have a holy [kodesh] convocation [mikra], and you shall offer an offering made by fire to the LORD. It is a sacred assembly, and you shall do no customary work on it." (Lev. 23:36)

To understand this day one must understand the implied meaning of the number eight. It is the number of New Beginnings. There are several ceremonies mentioned in the *Torah* which indicate this. For example, a new born boy is named and circumcised on the eighth day of his life. A leper is considered to be clean after completing a seven day ritual. On the eighth day he begins his new life in purity. A woman is also cleansed of the impurity of her monthly cycle on the eighth day.

It is our belief that *Shemini Atzeret* represents a New Beginning for both mankind and the earth. This New Beginning is pictured in the book of *Revelation*, chapters 21 and 22:

"Now I saw a new heaven and a new earth, for the first heaven and the first earth had passed away. Also there was no more sea." (Rev. 21:1)

According to the chronology of the book of *Revelation*, the New Heaven and New Earth occur after the Millennium:

"... when the thousand years have expired, ..." (Rev. 20:7)

The New Heaven and Earth will be even greater than the Millennium because:

"Behold, the tabernacle of God is with men, and He will dwell with them, and they shall be His people. God Himself will be with them and be their God." (Rev. 21:3)

All of the former things will be gone:

"And God will wipe away every tear from their eyes; there shall be no more death, nor sorrow, nor crying. There shall be no more pain, for the former things have passed away." (Rev. 21:4)

It truly will be a New Beginning!

~ Fall Festival Recap ~

The Fall Festivals all look forward to events which are yet to occur:

- ◆ *Yom Teruah* - points toward the coming of Messiah *Y'shua* to take His Bride to the *Chuppah* in heaven. There the Marriage between *Y'shua* and His Bride will be consummated. During that time (*The Days of Awe*), the Wrath of God comes against those who are left on earth.
- ◆ *Yom Kippur* - represents the day on which *Y'shua* and His Bride return to take control over the nations of the earth. *Y'shua* will then declare the Jubilee year and fully establish the Kingdom of God on earth as a One World Government.
- ◆ *Sukkot* - pictures that blessed time of world peace, the one thousand year reign of *Y'shua* as King of kings and Lord of lords.
- ◆ *Hoshanna Rabbah* - was the day of the Great Water Pouring Ceremony and points to the time of the *Great White Throne Judgment*.
- ◆ *Shemini Atzeret* - is the time, after the Millennium and the *Great White Throne Judgment*, when the Father Himself comes to dwell on the New Earth.

~ Additional Study Materials ~

Hebrew Roots has additional articles and recorded teachings available which cover, in more detail, the Annual Festivals. For more information, request the Special Publications *Passover in Egypt and Jerusalem, Shavu'ot: The Feast of Weeks, The High Holydays, and Sukkot and Shemini Atzeret*.

In addition, the *Festival Series* of recorded messages cover various aspects of the Festivals.

Please write (or call) if you would like to obtain any of these items.

~ Summary ~

The Annual Festivals have been established by our Father in heaven as Appointed Times (*Moedim*), when we are to come together and worship Him. They are times to rejoice in the salvation which we have been given through our Savior *Y'shua HaMashiach*. In addition, the Annual Festivals are teaching tools which the Father uses to instruct us about what has already taken place and what is yet to occur.

The Spring Festivals have all been fulfilled; both at the time they were established, when the children of Israel came out of Egypt, but even more important, through the first coming of Messiah *Y'shua*. The Fall Festivals are yet future. They teach us about what is yet to come in God's Plan for mankind.

This is why it is so important that we, as Messianic Believers, assemble together on these days to hear teaching about the meaning of each Festival and rejoice before the God of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob. As the writer of the book of *Hebrews* states:

"And let us consider one another in order to stir up love and good works, ²⁵ not forsaking the assembling of ourselves together, as is the manner of some, but exhorting one another, and so much the more as you see the Day approaching." (Heb. 10:24-25)

The "Day" of *Y'shua's* return is fast approaching. May we all be prepared.

Shalom!

Dean and Susan Wheelock

Beit Shalom, 2009

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