

THE FEASTS OF YHWH

THE FEASTS OF YHWH

Reflections on the Moedim for Judah and Ephraim

Rabbi Mordechai Silver



THE FEASTS OF YHWH

Reflections on the Moedim for Judah and Ephraim

by Rabbi Mordechai Silver

© 2003, Tree of Life Publications, Organ, NM.

Cover by Gene Tipps Las Cruces, NM

All rights are reserved under International and Pan-American Copyright Conventions. To use or reproduce any part of this book, electronically or otherwise, written permission must first be secured from the author and publisher. Brief quotations with credits may be used in critical reviews or articles.

Published and Distributed by:
Tree of Life Publications, PO Box 467, Organ, NM 88052
<http://www.etz-chayim.org>



Printed in the United States of America.
All quotations used by permission.

Unless otherwise noted, Scripture quotations for the Tanach (Hebrew Scriptures) or "Old Testament" are from the *Artscroll Tanach*, © 1996, published by Mesorah Publications, Ltd.

Unless otherwise noted, Scripture quotations for the Brit Chadashah or "New Testament" are from the *Jewish New Testament* by David H. Stern, © 1979, 1989, 1990, 1991, published by Jewish New Testament Publications and *Hebraic-Roots Version "New Testament"* by James S. Trimm, © 2001, published by Society for the Advancement of Nazarene Judaism

Note:

Wherever HASHEM is used in the Tanach the author has inserted Yahweh, which is "one" of the best assumptions for the pronunciation of the actual Name of God, *yod-hey-vav-hey* (hwhy), which does appear in the Hebrew text. The form Yahweh is agreed upon by many Christian and Jewish scholars.

To emphasize some Scriptures, italics or an alternate word choice has been used, especially for the names of the father and Son. Also, with all verses brackets [] indicate text added by the author.

Dedication

All that I do is dedicated to YHWH and to Yeshua and after them to my wife, Sharan, who is my love and my life.

Vayikra/Leviticus 23

“1 Yahweh spoke to Moses, saying: 2 Speak to the Children of Israel and say to them: Yahweh’s appointed festivals that you are to designate as holy convocations – these are My appointed festivals. 3 For six days labor may be done, and the seventh day is a day of complete rest, a holy convocation, you shall not do any work; it is a Sabbath for Yahweh in all your dwelling places. 4 These are the appointed festivals of Yahweh, the holy convocations, which you shall designate in their appropriate time. 5 In the first month on the fourteenth of the month in the afternoon is the time of the pesach-offering to Yahweh. 6 And on the fifteenth day of this month is the Festival of Matzos to Yahweh; you shall eat matzos for a seven-day period. 7 On the first say there shall be a holy convocation for you; you shall do no laborious work. 8 You shall bring a fire-offering to Yahweh for a seven-day period; on the seventh day shall be a holy convocation; you shall do no laborious work. 9 Yahweh spoke to Moses, saying: 10 Speak to the Children of Israel and say to them: When you shall enter the Land that I give you and you reap its harvest, you shall bring an Omer from your first harvest to the Kohen. 11 He shall wave the Omer before Yahweh to gain favor for you; on the morrow of the rest day the Kohen shall wave it. 12 On the day you wave the Omer, you shall perform the service of an unblemished lamb in its first year as a burnt-offering to Yahweh. 13 Its meal-offering shall be two tenth-ephah of fine flour mixed with oil, a fire-offering to Yahweh, a satisfying aroma; and its libation shall be wine, a quarter-hin. 14 You shall not eat bread or roasted kernels or plump kernels until this very day, until you bring the offering of your God; it is an eternal decree for your generations in all your dwelling places. 15 You shall count for yourselves – from the morrow of the rest day, from the day when you bring the Omer of the waving – seven weeks, they shall be complete. 16 Until the morrow of the seventh week you shall count, fifty days; and you shall offer a new meal-offering to Yahweh. 17 From your dwelling places you shall bring bread that shall be waved, two loaves made of two tenth-ephah, they shall be fine flour, they shall be baked leavened; first-offerings to Yahweh. 18 With the bread you shall offer seven unblemished lambs in their first year, one young bull, and two rams; they shall be a burnt-offering to Yahweh, with their meal-offering and their libations – a fire-

offering, a satisfying aroma to Yahweh. 19 You shall make one he-goat as a sin-offering, and two lambs in their first year as feast peace-offerings. 20 The Kohen shall wave them upon the first-offering breads as a wave-service before Yahweh – upon the two sheep – they shall be holy, for Yahweh and for the Kohen. 21 You shall convoke on this very day – there shall be a holy convocation for yourselves – you shall do no laborious work; it is an eternal decree in your dwelling places for your generations. 22 When you reap the harvest of your land, you shall not remove completely the corners of your field as you reap and you shall not gather the gleanings of your harvest; for the poor and the ger [stranger or sojourner] shall you leave them; I am Yahweh, your God. 23 Yahweh spoke to Moses, saying: 24 Speak to the Children of Israel, saying: In the seventh month, on the first of the month, there shall be a rest day for you, a remembrance with shofar blasts, a holy convocation. 25 You shall not do any laborious work, and you shall offer a fire-offering to Yahweh. 26 Yahweh spoke to Moses, saying: 27 But on the tenth day of this month it is the day of Atonement; there shall be a holy convocation for you, and you shall afflict yourselves; you shall offer a fire-offering to Yahweh. 28 You shall not do any work on this very day, for it is the Day of Atonement to provide you atonement before Yahweh, your God. 29 For any soul who will not be afflicted on this very day will be cut off from its people. 30 And any soul who will do any work on this very day, I will destroy that soul from among its people. 31 You shall not do any work; it is an eternal decree throughout your generations in all your dwelling places. 32 It is a day of complete rest for you and you shall afflict yourselves; on the ninth of the month in the evening – from evening to evening – shall you rest on your rest day. 33 Yahweh spoke to Moses, saying: 34 Speak to the Children of Israel, saying: On the fifteenth day of this seventh month is the Festival of Succos, a seven-day period for Yahweh. 35 On the first day is a holy convocation, you shall not do any laborious work. 36 For a seven-day period you shall offer a fire-offering to Yahweh; on the eighth day there shall be a holy convocation for you and you shall offer a fire-offering to Yahweh, it is an assembly, you shall not do any laborious work. 37 These are the appointed festivals of Yahweh that you shall proclaim as holy convocations, to offer a fire-offering to Yahweh: a burnt-offering and its meal-offering, a feast-offering and its libation, each day's requirement on its day. 38 Aside from

Yahweh's Sabbaths, and aside from your gifts, aside from all your vows, and aside from all your free-will offerings, which you will present to Yahweh. 39 But on the fifteenth day of the seventh month, when you gather in the crop of the land, you shall celebrate Yahweh's festival for a seven-day period; the first day is a rest day and the eighth day is a rest day. 40 You shall take for yourselves on the first day the fruit of a citron tree, the branches of date palms, twigs of a plaited tree, and brook willows; and you shall rejoice before Yahweh, your God, for a seven-day period. 41 You shall celebrate it as a festival for Yahweh, a seven-day period in the year, an eternal decree for your generations; in the seventh month shall you celebrate it. 42 You shall dwell in booths for a seven-day period; every native in Israel shall dwell in booths. 43 So that your generations will know that I caused the Children of Israel to dwell in booths when I took them from the land of Egypt; I am Yahweh, your God. 44 And Moses declared the appointed festivals of Yahweh to the Children of Israel.

Contents

Foreword.....	i
Introduction.....	iii
1 Shabbat tbX The Sabbath	1
2 Pesach xsp Passover	5
3 Chag HaMatzot twcmh gx Unleavened Bread	9
4 Chag HaBikkurim ~yrwkbh gx Festival of First Fruits	15
5 Shavuot tw[bX Feast of Weeks/Pentecost	19
6 Yom Teruah h[wrt ~wy Day of the Awakening Blast	23
7 Yom HaKippurim ~yrpkh ~wy Day of Atonements	29
8 Sukkot twks Feast of Booths/Tabernacles	35
9 Sh'mini Atzeret trc[yymX Eighth Day of Assembly	41
Simchat Torah hrwt txmX Joy of the Torah	41
10 Hoshana Rabbah hbbr hixh The Great Deliverance	47
Other Feasts In and Out of the Bible	
11 Rosh Chodesh Xdx Xar The New Moon	55
12 Chanukah hkix Feast of Dedication	57
13 Purim ~yrwp Lots	63
Non-Biblical Replacements to YHWH's Feasts	
14 Sunday Church	67
15 Christmas	85
16 Easter	95
Appendix: YHWH and Yeshua	97
Closing Thoughts	111
About the Author	113

Foreword

The times we are living in are truly exciting as we see the fulfillment of prophesy all around us. Looking to the Tanach and The Messianic Scriptures we can clearly see how close we are to Y'shua's return and possibility of the Messianic Kingdom being established during our lives. Judah and Ephraim are also beginning to recognize each other, and in the case of Ephraim he is simultaneously learning what his own unique identity is. With all these events taking place, there is a definite need for study material that instructs new believers and believers coming out of the "church" system in the rudiments of a Messianic lifestyle.

As one looks at what the basic study topics should be, it becomes apparent that the appointed festivals that were instituted by YHVH are of great important as well as foundational to the Messianic Believer. What Rabbi Mordechai Silver has provided for us in this new book answers this need, as the reader will find himself confronted with scriptural proof of the validity and need to observe and celebrate these appointed times (moedim). I believe that by providing excellent foundational study material such as this the Messianic disciple will mature into a strong observant Believer that is pleasing to YHVH. As Rav Shaul (Apostle Paul) encourages us in Colossians 1:10; ***“so that you may live lives worthy of YHVH and entirely pleasing to Him, being fruitful in every good work and multiplying in the full knowledge of Elohim.”***

Rabbi Silver takes us first through the appointed festivals as outlined in Vayikra (Leviticus) 23. Starting with Shabbat, our weekly moed (appointed time), the reader is given proof positive, from both the Tenach and the Messianic Scriptures, of the correct sabbath observance, the seventh day. Next the spring feasts of Pesach (Passover), Hag HaMatzot (Unleavened Bread) and Hag HaBikkurim (Festival of First Fruits) are presented with their unmistakable fulfillment in Y'shua and our subsequent salvation.

The next Moed that is addressed is that of Shavuot. Rabbi Silver teaches us how this feast is the conclusion to the spring feasts in that the giving of the Torah to all people represented at Mt Sinai completed the work of deliverance that was initiated during Pesach. As for Believers, we can see our own deliverance being completed through our observance of Shavuot in the giving of the Ruach HaKodesh (Holy Spirit) at this appointed time after the resurrection of Y'shua. ***Acts 2:1 And when the day of Pentecost (Feast of Shavuot) had come, they were all together in one place. 2 And suddenly there came from heaven a noise***

The Feasts of YHWH

like a violent, rushing wind, and it filled the whole house where they were sitting. 3 And there appeared to them tongues as of fire distributing themselves, and they rested on each one of them. 4 And they were all filled with the Holy Spirit and began to speak with other tongues, as the Spirit was giving them utterance.

With the completion of Shavuot we move on to the fall feasts and we are shown the relevance that these Moedim have to us as Believers as we look forward to the return of Y'shua. For it will be during the fall feasts that Believers will hear the shofar blown at Yom Teruah, will experience in some fashion the Ten Days of Teshuvah , Yom Kippur and the climax of the atonement of Yisrael, the blowing of the Great Trump (Shofar HaGadol) and the final Moed; Sukkot, when Y'shua sets up His millennial kingdom. What Rabbi Silver gives the reader in this portion of his book is a concise and clear look at what we can look forward to during the fulfillment of these feasts and beyond into eternity with Y'shua and YHVH. ***Revelation 22:3 And there shall no longer be any curse; and the throne of Elohim and of the Lamb shall be in it, and His bond-servants shall serve Him; 4 and they shall see His face, and His name shall be on their foreheads. 5 And there shall no longer be any night; and they shall not have need of the light of a lamp nor the light of the sun, because YHVH Elohim shall illumine them; and they shall reign forever and ever.***

Thus completing the teaching on the 7 Moedim, Rabbi Silver treats us to some additional information regarding Rosh Chodesh (the New Moon), Chanukah, and Purim. These festivals are not included in the listing of the Moedim in Leviticus 23, but as explained by Rabbi Silver, "Can we find Yahweh and Yeshua in these festivals? Yes, you can find Yahweh and Yeshua in these festivals. You can find Yahweh and Yeshua in the Book of Esther even though the name of Yahweh is not mentioned once. Yet the symbolism is evident throughout Purim and the other festivals."

The motivation for adding these festivals to this book would be to show the Believer that the hand of the Almighty is evident in these celebrations as well as in the appointed feasts that were expounded upon earlier. YHVH has given us His Feasts to understand His plan of redemption through Y'shua as well as to lead us to the place where we can see our Messiah on every page of scripture. This book will whet the appetite of the reader and instill a desire for implementing the observance of YHVH's appointed times in his life as well as to help establish his identity as a Yisraelite.

Richard Seitzinger
Y'shua Malkenu Beit Midrash
Santa Fe, NM

Introduction

The purpose of this book is not to bring to you an in-depth analysis of the Moedim—the Appointed Times of Yahweh. Consider this an introduction to the Feasts or Festivals of the Holy One of Israel.

What I have tried to do with this book is to introduce you to the Feasts of Yahweh contained in Leviticus Chapter 23 and to share with you some insights into two Feasts that are not in Leviticus Chapter 23—Chanukkah and Purim.

These Festivals teach us about the plan of our heavenly Father and Yeshua's part in these plans. Don't doubt for a minute that Yeshua does not play a very important part in the Moedim of His Father. He is central to the Moedim. In addition, Yeshua can be seen in the Festivals of Channukah and Purim.

I have also included in this book the Holiday of Simchat Torah—the icing in the Torah. This is not a Biblical festival, but it is commonly attached, by Orthodox Judaism, to the Festival of Sukkot.

The purpose of this book is to give you an overview of the Feasts of Yahweh as outlined in Leviticus Chapter 23. Included in that outline are some details that will hopefully give you, the reader, some insights into the Feasts and how they relate to Yahweh. Also, it is my desire that you can see the centrality of our Messiah Yeshua in these feasts.

These are the Feasts as given to Israel by our Creator—the Holy One of Israel. They are part of His covenant with His covenant people—Israel. Unfortunately, too many who call themselves Christians or Messianics disregard the Biblical Festivals in exchange for man-made ones. Can this be pleasing to YHWH? If this book does anything, I hope and pray that it helps you come to a better understanding of why Yahweh gave us these Moedim/Appointed Times.

These are Moedim/Appointed Times. Yahweh specifies in His word that we are to gather together to honor these days when He told us to. Yes, there are some differences as to when we celebrate some of these festivals, but the bottom line is that we celebrate them. One difference is when we actually begin calculating Passover. Most of Judaism celebrate the eight days of Passover when in actuality there is one day for Passover, seven days for Unleavened Bread and First Fruits in somewhere during Unleavened Bread. Another problem time is when do we actually celebrate Shavuot. Many follow the Hebrew calendar of today that was put in place by the rabbis of old. Many of us, myself included, believe that we should be

The Feasts of YHWH

celebrating Shavuot according to the Sadducean reckoning. Whatever your preference, as long as you are at least celebrating His times, isn't that what counts?

It is my desire that this book can, in some small way, help you to learn what and when His Moedim are. I pray that if you are not celebrating His Moedim that you will. The Moedim show us Yahweh's plan and Yeshua's place in this plan. They are given as remembrances of Him and what is to come. Consider them an outline that He has set up for us and, when we do not follow that outline, we veer off course. The Moedim are contained in His Torah—the written covenant He made with the Children of Israel. Aside from the Moedim that are contained in the Torah in Leviticus Chapter 23, the first Moed/Appointed Time is the Shabbat. He defines what the Shabbat is and when we are to celebrate the Shabbat. So aside from the annual Moedim, we have the weekly Moed of Shabbat. It is the Shabbat that leads us into the rest of the Moedim. This is important to remember and take stock of.

If we neglect His first Moed, then what happens to the remainder of the Moedim? This applies just as much to Judah as it does to Ephraim. Many in Judah are trying to fit into the world around them. This poses a problem. Why? Because Judah was never meant to fit in with the rest of mankind. By extension, despite what Ephraim might claim, Ephraim was never meant to fit in, because he is part of Israel and Yahweh called Israel out from among the nations. Israel—Judah and Ephraim—was never meant to blend in. Though in his exile Ephraim was scattered to the four corners of the earth and made the same as the nations for their sin. Judah was kept intact to the extent that his identity was not lost, for the most part. It is my belief that this was in fulfillment of the blessing or prophecy, however you look at it, that Jacob gave to Judah on his death bed.

The Moedim are part of Yahweh's blessing to His people. Should the Church be celebrating the Moedim? Or are they somehow exempt from them, because Yahweh has made a "new" covenant with them? Is it really a "new" covenant or one that has always been, but is now being re-interpreted? Are the festivals of the Church, specifically Christmas and Easter, approved by Yahweh and are we commanded to celebrate them? Why the need to replace or substitute what Yahweh has already given to us? Is Easter necessary when it is a replacement for First Fruits? If it already exists in Scripture, why the need to replace what already is? Is Christmas Biblically commanded and is it necessary? Unfortunately, as many Believer's return to their Hebraic Roots, and stop celebrating Christmas and Easter, they are judged by Christianity as somehow no longer being saved. Why is it necessary to celebrate man-made festivals in place of the Biblical ones to show our salvation?

Wouldn't it be correct to show our faith and redemption in Messiah Yeshua by celebrating the God-given feasts? If we are truly Israel, then isn't it time to get back to the basics of our faith and return to our foundation—the Torah—and follow the example that has been given to us through Messiah Yeshua?

If we are called to imitate Yeshua in all ways, then should we not be doing what He did? If it was good enough for Yeshua, why isn't it good enough for you and for me? The Moedim are a starting point. This book is a starting point. You have

Introduction

to start somewhere. Use this book as a guide but not as an exhaustive reference on the subject. It is not meant to do that. Welcome to Israel.

Mordechai Silver

The Feasts of YHWH

-1-

Shabbat tbX The Sabbath

Leviticus/Vayikra 23:1-3
Nehemiah/Nechemyah 9:14
Mark 1:21; 6:2; Luke 4:16

Leviticus/Vayikra 23:1-4

***“1 Yahweh spoke to Moses, saying: 2 Speak to the Children of Israel and say to them: Yahweh’s appointed festivals that you are to designate as holy convocations—these are My appointed festivals. 3 For six days labor may be done, and the seventh day is a day of complete rest, a holy convocation, you shall not do any work; it is a Sabbath for Yahweh in all your dwelling places.*”**

The Sabbath is the first of the Moedim. The Sabbath leads into the rest of the Moedim of Yahweh and that should set a pattern for us. It can set a pattern of doing what Yahweh has instructed us to do or it can set a pattern for disobeying Yahweh and how we approach the Sabbath will affect how we approach the rest of the Moedim and, for that matter, the remainder of the Torah.

Yahweh says very simply, *“And the seventh day is a day of complete rest, a holy convocation...”* Nowhere does He give us any indication that He is open for discussion on the possibility that the Sabbath can be whenever we decide to celebrate it. That would leave it up to the imagination of man to do as he pleases with one of Yahweh’s Moedim. If we do as we choose on His Sabbath and celebrate when we choose, are we doing His will or our own?

Many will say that we are given the freedom to do as we choose to now as long as we are doing it in the spirit. What is important is the spirit and not the actual time or day. If that were true then why would Yahweh have gone to such lengths to instruct us when He wanted us to honor the Sabbath day? The Sabbath was the final

The Feasts of YHWH

act of creation and Yahweh chose to rest on that day. Did He need to rest? I do not believe so. He was setting an example for us—His creation.

Nehemiah/Nechemyah 9:14

You made known Your sacred Sabbath to them; and You instructed them with commandments, decrees, and teaching through the hand of Your servant Moses.

The Sabbath is His. While it may be translated as “sacred” in this translation, the Hebrew word used is “kodesh” which means holy or set-apart. The prophet then follows up the statement about the Sabbath with the statement about Yahweh instructing His people with the commandments, decrees and teaching, which is actually Torah. The Sabbath is tied intimately to the Torah. This is a very important observation to pay attention to. The Torah is tied up with the Sabbath. So if one is going to disregard the Sabbath, then it might follow that one will disregard the rest of the Torah. The Sabbath seems to set the tone for our walk. When we walk in disobedience to the Sabbath, what happens to the remainder of our walk?

If the timing of the “when” of the Sabbath were not important then why was Yahweh so specific about the day of the week? If we are allowed to celebrate the Sabbath on any other day of the week, shouldn't we be looking to our Messiah Yeshua and see what He did regarding the Sabbath?

Mark 1:21

And when they entered K'far-Nachum, immediately He was teaching on the Sabbath in their synagogues.

Mark 6:2

And when the Sabbath came, He began to teach in the synagogue.

Luke 4:16

And He came to Natzaret where He had been raised. And He entered the Synagogue, as He was accustomed, on the day of the Sabbath.

So what do we see from these verses of Scriptures? Did Yeshua change the Sabbath day from the seventh day to the first day? Did He have the authority to do so? The passage from Luke says, “*as He was accustomed.*” It was Yeshua's custom to celebrate the Sabbath day on the seventh day of the week.

Now some of you might say that Shaul/Paul gave us a new interpretation of the Torah. In fact he released us from the Torah and that would release us from the seventh day Sabbath. If that were true, then why do we read the following in the Books of Acts:

Acts 17:2

And Paul, as he was accustomed, entered unto them and three Sabbaths spoke with them from the Scriptures.

Now we see something that perhaps we had overlooked before. Shaul/Paul did exactly what the Messiah Yeshua did. As it was Yeshua's custom to honor the seventh day Sabbath, so too, was it Paul's. How then could it have been possible for Paul to overrule the Messiah Yeshua? If Yeshua is the Living Word of Yahweh, then is He not in authority over Paul? If you think that Paul did change the Torah and allows us the freedom to move the Sabbath to another day, would this not transgress the actions of Yeshua Himself?

If we truly believe that the Sabbath day has been moved, would that not affect all of Creation? Wasn't the Sabbath the final act of Creation on the part of Yahweh and wasn't Creation brought about by the Word of Yahweh? Is not the Word of Yahweh—Yeshua? Do the actions of the Messiah Yeshua set our example or not? Are we called to be imitators of Him in all that we do? So if Yeshua honored the seventh day as the Sabbath, **AS WAS HIS CUSTOM**, then should we not be doing the same?

Many believe that the Sabbath is a taste of the Messianic Age to come. This is supposed to take place in the seven thousand year plan of Yahweh. What day of the week is the Sabbath?—the seventh. Is the Sabbath a picture of what will be? Should we not be preparing for what is to come? As with all the other Moedim, does not the Sabbath serve as a visual reminder of something in Yahweh's plan that has come to pass or is coming to come to pass?

The Feasts of YHWH

-2-

Pesach xsp Passover

Numbers/Bamidbar 28:19-25
Ezekiel/Yechezkel 37:1-14
John/Yochanan 1:29

Exodus/Shemot 33:12 -34:26

Moses pleads with the Almighty not to send an angel in His place, but to accompany the Israelites Himself through the trek in the wilderness, even though they had sinned with the Golden Calf. Moses asks the Almighty to reveal how He interacts with the universe (it is a mystical interchange). Then the Almighty commands Moses to carve two stone tablets and to ascend Mt. Sinai, so that He can engrave the replacement tablets for the set that Moses broke at the transgression with the Golden Calf.

The Almighty reveals his Thirteen Attributes of Mercy (Exodus 34:5) which we repeat on Yom Kippur and other times of seeking the Almighty's mercy. Moses asks the Almighty to forgive the Israelite people. The Almighty renews the Covenant with the Israelites commanding them not to enter into a covenant with the inhabitants of the land, not make molten gods, to observe the Festival of Matzos, laws of first born issue, to keep the Shabbat, celebrate Shavuot and Sukkot and ends with assorted laws of offerings.¹

Numbers/Bamidbar 28:16-25

16 In the first month, on the fourteenth day of the month, shall be a pesach offering to Yahweh. 17 And on the fifteenth day of this month is a festival; for a seven day period matzos shall be eaten. 18 On the first day is a holy convocation; you shall not do any laborious work. 19 You shall

¹ Aish.com Shabbat Shalom Rabbi Kalman Packouz.

The Feasts of YHWH

offer a fire offering, a burnt offering to Yahweh: two young bulls, one ram, seven male lambs within their first year, unblemished shall they be for you. 20 And their meal offering: fine flour mixed with oil; you shall make three tenth ephah for each bull two tenth ephah for the ram. 21 One tenth ephah shall you make for each lamb of the seven lambs. 22 And one he goat for a sin offering, to atone for you. 23 Aside from the burnt offering of the morning that is for the continual burnt offering shall you make these. 24 Like these shall you make each day of the seven day period: food, a fire offering, a satisfying aroma to Yahweh; in addition to the continual burnt offering shall it be made, and its libation. 25 The seventh day shall be a holy convocation for you; you shall not do any laborious work.

As you notice the first and the seventh day of Unleavened Bread are Shabbats. Passover is not a Shabbat and Passover is a one-day Moed-Appointed Time. This day is usually what is considered to be the preparation day, as it is on Passover that the lambs are brought to the Temple and sacrificed in order to be used for the Passover Seder. The slaying of the Passover lamb by the High Priest took place at 3:00pm. This was precisely when Yeshua died and uttered the words, "It is finished," which Jewish tradition tells us are the same words that the High Priest said after he had slain the lamb.

The other interesting point that I would like to bring up is that while the lamb was being slain in the Temple Yeshua was being slain outside the camp, as He had become the embodiment of sin and was suffering a criminal's death by crucifixion. Yeshua becoming sin for our sake shed His blood and offered up His body on the altar, so that we could become Children of the Living God-the nation of Israel reborn anew through our High Priest Yeshua.

Yeshua would become our High Priest after the example of Melchizedek who was a king and priest of Yahweh. Many believe that Melchizedek was actually Yeshua but Jewish tradition says that Melchizedek was Shem, the son of Noah, whose name was changed after the Tower of Babel. If Melchizedek actually was Shem, then he would be empowered to be a High Priest of Yahweh. Shem was the eldest son of Noah and it was traditionally the first born son who was the priest of the family.

So Yeshua, being the first born and only son of Yahweh, would be the High Priest of the family and, therefore, He becomes our High Priest when we accept Him as Messiah and become part of Yahweh's people-Israel!

Ezekiel/Yechezkel 37:11-14

11 He said to me, "Son of Man, these bones—they are the whole House of Israel. Behold, they are saying, 'Our bones are dried out and our hope is lost; we are doomed!' 12 Therefore, prophesy and say to them:

Thus said the Lord Yahweh/God: Behold, I am opening your graves and raising you up from your graves, My people, and I will bring you to the soil of Israel. 13 Then you will know that I am Yahweh, when I open your graves and when I raise you up from your graves, My people, 14 and when I put My spirit into you, and you come to life, and I set you on your soil. Then you will know that I Yahweh have spoken and I have fulfilled—the word of Yahweh.”

How does He raise us up and put new life into us? When we accept Yeshua as Messiah He becomes our Passover lamb as well as our Yom Kippur blood atonement. Through Him we receive the promise of eternal life and are given the Ruach HaKodesh—the Holy Spirit who helps to guide us on the road to Yahweh.

The bones that are spoken about here are the bones of all of Israel. Israel will be raised up from its grave and new life will be given to the Children of Israel. This new life will be through Yeshua and the Ruach. Yahweh will rebuild the House of Israel by uniting Judah and Ephraim and returning them to the land that He had promised to Israel so long ago. The death that we are raised from is the death that came about when Israel was torn in two and Judah and Ephraim came into being as separate houses or kingdoms. Israel cannot exist as two separate kingdoms. It is the Father’s plan to bring Judah and Ephraim back together as one and join Israel to His Son as bride and bridegroom.

This is the new life that awaits us when we accept the Passover sacrifice of Yeshua. He was offered up as the Passover lamb, who kept the Israelites from death in Egypt, and He was raised up on First Fruits as the first fruits from the dead and in His resurrection He overcame death and satan. As He lay in the tomb He became our bread of life fulfilling the Moed of Unleavened Bread.

John/Yochanan 1:29

29 And on the day that followed, Yochanan saw Yeshua, who was walking toward him, and said, Behold, the lamb of God who takes away the sin of the world.

Here we have a prophetic declaration by John the Immerser who saw Yeshua for whom He was and what He would do. John prepared the way in the Wilderness crying out that he would come before Yeshua. He would immerse with water to show the people that they needed to be cleansed from their sin. But the people already knew about immersion, because they had been doing it since the time of the Tabernacle in the wilderness. But now John was bringing new meaning to the act of ritual immersion in that as he immersed with water. Yeshua would come and immerse with fire—the fire of the Ruach HaKodesh from Yahweh.

Water would only cleanse the outside, while fire would refine all of our being preparing us to receive the gift of the Ruach HaKodesh from on high. It would be

The Feasts of YHWH

through the fire and water and our asking Yeshua to forgive us for our sins that we would become sons and daughters of the Most High—Yahweh! In the time to come, we will become the bride of Yeshua who will be not only our husband, but our High Priest who stands at the right hand of the Father interceding on our behalf and keeping us set apart for the marriage that would join ALL of Israel with Yeshua.

The Two Houses made up of the twelve tribes would be made as one people that God would bring back to Him. All of this was foretold through the Spring and Fall festivals of Yahweh. These Moedim - Appointed Times set the plan of the Father before us—His creation. We have eyes, we need only see. We have ears, we need only hear. We have mouths, we need only call out and ask Yeshua to enter into our hearts and cleanse us as we become one with Him being redeemed by the shed blood and body of the lamb of Yahweh.

Eternal God, I humbly ask Your help, for my need is great. My days fly past in quick succession, and I cannot look back without regret or ahead without misgiving. I seek to understand the mystery of my life, but in vain. And when suffering and death strike those I love, my faith all but fails me, and I forget that I am Your child. O God, help me now to feel Your presence. When my own weaknesses and the storms of life hide You from my sight, help me to know that You are with me still, and uphold me with the comfort of Your love...Gates of Prayer

-3-

Chag HaMatzot twcmh gx
Unleavened Bread

Numbers/Bamidbar 28:17-25
2 Samuel/Sh'muel 22:1-51
1 Corinthians 10:1-11:1

The portion Chag HaMatzot celebrates the Festival of Unleavened Bread, which is a seven-day Festival to Yahweh that begins on the day after Passover. Passover is a one-day Feast day that is set apart to Yahweh for the offering up of the sacrificial lambs that are to be used in the Passover Seder. The first and the seventh day of Unleavened Bread are holy convocations to Yahweh and are to be treated as Sabbath Days in which no work is to be done. In addition to the weekly Sabbath there are seven additional Sabbath Days that are connected to the various Festivals of Yahweh. He defines when these times are. In the two Festivals that are seven-day festivals to Him, Unleavened Bread and Sukkot-Tabernacles, he allows work to be done during the intermediate days except on the seventh day of Unleavened Bread.

Numbers/Bamidbar 28:17-25

17 The fifteenth day of this month is a festival; for a seven day period matzos shall be eaten. 18 On the first day is a holy convocation; you shall not do any laborious work. 19 You shall offer a fire-offering, a burnt-offering to Yahweh: two young bulls, one ram, seven male lambs within their first year, unblemished shall they be for you. 20 And their meal-offering: fine flour mixed with oil; you shall make three tenth-ephah for each bull and two tenth-ephah for the ram. 21 One tenth-ephah shall you make for each lamb of the seven lambs. 22 And one he-goat for a sin-offering, to provide you atonement. 23 Aside from the burnt-offering of the morning that is for the continual burnt-offering shall you make these. 24 Like these shall you make each day of the seven-day period: food, a fire-

The Feasts of YHWH

offering, a satisfying aroma to Yahweh; in addition to the continual burnt-offering shall it be made, and its libation. 25 The seventh day shall be a holy convocation for you; you shall not do any laborious work.

Despite what most people think Passover is not an eight-day festival. Passover is a one day Feast Day on which the Passover lambs were sacrificed and the Seder took place afterwards. Following the one day Passover is the seven day Festival of Unleavened Bread which is tied to Passover. It exists as a separate Festival in its own right with the added dimension of having the first and seventh day of this Festival set apart as Sabbath days, unlike the Passover which is not a Sabbath day. So despite what Judaism may teach about this period of time, while connected, they are separate. Add to this the Festival of First Fruits, that occurs the day after the weekly Sabbath, and you have your three Passover season festivals that are tied together. Then the Festival of Shavuot falls 50 days later and closes out the Spring Festivals of Yahweh.

What significance does Unleavened Bread hold for us? The obvious answer to this question is that it teaches us about removing the sin or leaven from our lives. It teaches us through the sacrificial system that we need to draw close to Yahweh in order to be cleansed of that leaven which can rise up within us and cause us to stray from our first love—Yeshua. It is through Yeshua that we can draw close to Yahweh. We are not saved through the offering of sacrifices or the shed blood of an animal. We receive our salvation through Yeshua's sacrifice of His shed blood and His offering up of His body on the tree.

The Church says that Good Friday and Easter are the Christian celebrations for Yeshua's death and resurrection but the truth be known is that Good Friday celebrates the Passover sacrifice and Easter celebrates the resurrection of Messiah which occurred on the Festival of First Fruits. But why the need to replace the Biblical Festivals as given to us by Yahweh with different names and customs that obviously do not exalt Him and more than likely anger Him because of their idolatrous practices.

Yes I know that what I am saying may sound harsh to many, but the truth is sometimes hard to take. We may think that it is all right with Yahweh if what we are doing we claim we are doing in honoring Him. But if what the Israelites of old did offend Him and they justified it for the same reasons that people are justifying their practices today, how can it be right for us today if it was wrong for them back then? Think about it!

2 Samuel/Sh'muel 22:1-7, 22-33, 47-51

1 David spoke to Yahweh the words of this song on the day that Yahweh delivered him from the hand of all his enemies and from the hand of Saul. 2 He said: Yahweh is my Rock, my Fortress, and my Rescuer. 3 God, my Rock in Whom I take shelter, my Shield, and the Horn of my

Salvation, my Stronghold and my Refuge. My Savior, You save me from violence. 4 With praises I call unto Yahweh, and I am saved from my enemies. 5 When the pains of death encircled me and torrents of godless men would frighten me, 6 the pains of the grave surrounded me, the snares of death confronted me - 7 in my distress I would call upon Yahweh, and to my God I would call; from His abode He heard my voice, and my cry was in His ears. 22 For I have kept the ways of Yahweh, and I have not departed wickedly from my God. 23 For all His judgments are before me; I do not remove myself from His decrees. 24 I have been perfectly innocent with Him, and I was vigilant against my sin. 25 Yahweh repaid me in accordance with my righteousness, according to my purity before His eyes. 26 With the devout You deal devoutly. With the one who is strong in his wholeheartedness You act wholeheartedly. 27 With the pure You act purely, with the corrupt You act perversely. 28 You save the humble people, while Your eyes are upon the haughty to lower them. 29 For you are my lamp, Yahweh; Yahweh illuminates my darkness. 30 For with you I smash a troop, with my God I leap over a wall. 31 The God! His way is perfect; the promise of Yahweh is flawless. He is a shield for all who take refuge in Him. 32 For who is God besides Yahweh, and who is a Rock besides our God? 33 God! My Fortress of strength; He cleared my way, with perfection.

This passage of Scripture brings it all together for us as Believers. In verses 2 and 3 we see just who Yahweh is.

2 He said: Yahweh is my Rock, my Fortress, and my Rescuer. 3 God, my Rock in Whom I take shelter, my Shield, and the Horn of my Salvation, my Stronghold and my Refuge. My Savior, You save me from violence.

These terms that are used here to describe Yahweh reveal more than you can realize about who Yahweh is. The version of Scripture that I am using, the Artscroll Tanach, is an Orthodox Jewish translation and in this passage they capitalize the words, Rock, Fortress, Rescuer, Shield, Salvation, Stronghold, Refuge and last but not least Savior, which in this passage in the Hebrew is the word, “Mosh-ee,” which is a form of the Hebrew word Moshiach which has come to be translated as Messiah.

So what are these verses saying to us? They are describing Yahweh as Yeshua, the Moshiach—the Messiah of David, the King of Israel. In the prophetic, David is telling us about the nature of Yahweh that He is also Yeshua our Savior. In verse 32 he ties it all up very neatly when he says:

The Feasts of YHWH

32 For who is God besides Yahweh, and who is a Rock besides our God?

The term Rock has always been associated with a description of the Messiah and David in this verse is saying that God is Yahweh and that Yahweh is the Rock, which means that He is Yeshua, and Yeshua is God!

1 Corinthians 10:1-5, 9, 13

1 For, brothers, I don't want you to miss the significance of what happened to our fathers. All of them were guided by the pillar of cloud, and they all passed through the sea, 2 and in connection with the cloud and with the sea they all immersed themselves into Moshe, 3 also they all ate the same food from the Spirit, 4 and they all drank the same drink from the Spirit—for they drank from a Spirit-sent Rock which followed them, and that Rock was the Messiah. 5 Yet with the majority of them God was not pleased, so their bodies were strewn across the desert. 9 And let us not put the Messiah to the test, as some of them did, and were destroyed by snakes. 13 No temptation has seized you beyond what people normally experience, and God can be trusted not to allow you to be tempted beyond what you can bear. On the contrary, along with the temptation he will also provide the way out, so that you will be able to endure.

The Rock that David talks about in 2 Samuel Chapter 22 is the same Rock that Rav Shaul-Paul is talking about in this section from 1 Corinthians 10.

4 and they all drank the same drink from the Spirit—for they drank from a Spirit-sent Rock which followed them, and that Rock was the Messiah.

The Spirit-sent Rock was the Messiah Yeshua. Yahweh sent His Spirit and the Spirit sent the Rock—the Messiah Yeshua. So God sent God sent God! Confused? Just accept that God is who He says He is and believe in Him. Trying to rationalize who or what God is or how He is formed is beyond the bounds of our understanding, because we have access to only a minute amount of the power of our brain. How can the creation understand the Creator? God is God and He is the Source of all things in the heavens and on the earth. When all else did not exist, He did. If all else ceased to exist, He would still be. In Him and through Him did all things come to be. Yahweh is Yeshua and the Ruach and they exist as One.

13 No temptation has seized you beyond what people normally experience, and God can be trusted not to allow you to be tempted

beyond what you can bear. On the contrary, along with the temptation he will also provide the way out, so that you will be able to endure.

Yahweh will not lay upon you more than you are capable of handling. But in the final analysis it may take bending you to your limits to make you see God for who He is. As Rav Shaul/Paul writes... “*On the contrary, along with the temptation he will also provide the way out...*” The way out is Yeshua and He has been there since before the beginning.

Father, we come before You and offer ourselves to You. Please accept our offering and let it be a sweet fragrance, an aroma pleasing to You. We ask this not in our name but in the Name above all other names, Yeshua HaMashiach. Amen!

The Feasts of YHWH

-4-

Chag HaBikkurim ~yrwkbh gx
Festival of First Fruits

Leviticus/Vayikra 23:9-11
Psalm/Tehellim 88:5
1 Corinthians 15:20

Leviticus/Vayikra 23:9-11

9 Yahweh spoke to Moses, saying: 10 Speak to the Children of Israel and say to them: When you shall enter the Land that I give you and you reap its harvest, you shall bring an Omer from your first harvest to the Kohen. 11 He shall wave the Omer before Yahweh to gain favor for you; on the morrow of the rest day the Kohen shall wave it.

The Festival of First Fruits is one that many in Judaism no longer celebrate, but among the Orthodox they know that it is a separate festival of Yahweh. Today we lump together Passover, Unleavened Bread and First Fruits, and when we do this, we lose the significance of Yahweh's Moedim. In Christianity, they have also forgotten about the separate Moedim or that they are even Moedim or the Appointed Times of Yahweh. The Church is beginning to see the significance of Passover and for many years many Churches have held a Passover Seder to honor Yeshua. The problem is they do so because they mistakenly believe that it is His resurrection they are honoring and that Passover somehow coincides with Easter.

Nothing could be further from the truth and once again this shows us what happens when man tampers with the ways of Yahweh. To be "politically correct" one would have to line up Good Friday with Passover as that is when Yeshua died. The Festival of First Fruits would then line up with Easter—a celebration of His resurrection. When He was placed in the tomb He was fulfilling the Festival of Unleavened Bread as He was the bread of life who would come forth from the earth to redeem us. This does **not** in any way validate the replacement of Biblical feasts from Yahweh.

The Feasts of YHWH

Psalm/Tehellim 88:5

I was reckoned with those who descend to the pit, I was like a man without strength among the dead who are free; like the corpses lying in the grave, whom You remember no more, for they were cut off by Your hand.

David feels helpless and cries out to Yahweh that he feels like a man who is counted among the dead, forgotten by the Creator of the Universe. He believes that Yahweh no longer remembers those who have gone before, who have descended into the pit. How telling this passage is, as it shows us what the thoughts of man can bring us to. If faith in Yahweh shows anything—it shows us that we are remembered by our God—and we are inscribed in His Book of Life.

If the Festival of First Fruits teaches us nothing else, it should be remembered that Yahweh does remember those who are His own. He remembers them, because we are written in the Lamb's Book of Life. It is the Lamb Yeshua who was slaughtered as the Passover sacrifice and His blood was spread over us, so that we could be redeemed from the penalty of death as given in the Torah.

The Torah lays down the penalty for sin. The ultimate penalty is death. When Paul spoke about being released from the Torah he was speaking about being released from its penalty—death! Nothing more—because if Paul was Torah observant, as many believe, then he could not say that the Torah is done away with. That would go against everything that he was. He upheld the Torah. He did not advocate a two covenant system as many believe. That would have gone against the covenant of Yahweh. He taught about our release from the pit. He taught about life everlasting—freedom from the penalty of the transgression of the Torah—death!

1 Corinthians 15:20

But now the Messiah has risen from the dead and become the first-fruits of those asleep.

Paul makes it very clear that Yeshua is the fulfillment of the Festival of First Fruits. In His resurrection from the dead, Yeshua overcomes the death penalty laid out for sin in the Torah. He does not overcome the Torah, because Yeshua **is** the Torah. He overcomes death on our behalf. Death is the ultimate penalty for breaking the Torah, but we know that we cannot keep the Torah as Yeshua did, so Yeshua did it for us. But that does not release us from trying to follow what the Torah teaches. Because when we fall He will be there to pick us up. We should not worry about our failures. We should focus on the positive that we find in the promise and the reality of the resurrection of Yeshua.

Without what Yeshua did we would have nothing more than a empty hole in the ground. We would return to the earth from where we came. As Adam was

~yrwkbh gx ***Chag HaBikkurim***—Festival of First Fruits

created from the dust of the earth, so we all return to the earth. But we have a way out of that hole in the ground. He has already climbed up out of it and stands waiting for us at the top.

We look to Him—the Source of our redemption—Yeshua HaMashiach. He is the first-fruits from the grave. He has overcome death for us. Yahweh could have just let us rot in the ground, but He chose to raise us up in order to show us that He loves us beyond all measure and that He did not waste His time when He chose to create us. God cannot fail and neither can His Creation, if we stay focused on the Rock of our Salvation—Yeshua!

The Feasts of YHWH

-5-

Shavuot תּוֹבַחַ
Feast of Weeks/Pentecost

Exodus/Shemot 19:1-20:23
Ezekiel/Yechezkel 1:1-28; 3:12
John/Yochanan 1:32-34

The Children of Israel were released from bondage, the waters of the Red Sea parted before them, and the Egyptian army was destroyed. They saw God's great power, beholding it with their own eyes. Nourished by the manna from heaven, their thirst quenched by the water from Miriam's well, the Children of Israel marched into the wilderness at God's command.

On the sixth of Sivan, in the year 2448 of Creation, God revealed Himself to the people of Israel. In the wilderness, Israel received the Torah and its mission to "a kingdom of priests and a holy nation."

It was through Israel that God's master plan for the universe would be implemented. Israel was to be a "light unto the nations," and its mission was to show the peoples of the earth that God is the Source of all blessing and that fulfillment of His will means the attainment of all happiness.

Exodus/Shemot 19:16-19

16 And on the third day, it being morning, it happened: There were thunders and lightnings, and a heavy cloud on the mountain, and the sound of a shofar, very strong! And all the people in the camp trembled. 17 And Moses caused the people to go up from the camp to meet God. And they took their stand at the lower part of the mountain. 18 And the mountain of Sinai was smoking, all of it, because Yahweh came down on it in fire. And its smoke went up like the smoke of a furnace; and the mountain quaked exceedingly. 19 And it happened, while the sound of the

The Feasts of YHWH

shofar was sounding, and becoming very strong, Moses spoke. And God answered him by a voice.

All the people saw the sounds, the lightning, the blast of the shofar, and the mountain's smoking. The people trembled when they saw it, standing at a distance.

"All the people saw the sounds." This phrase gives rise to a question: How could the people see the sounds? Sound is heard, not seen. Rabbi Chaim Sanzer offers this insight: of the five senses, vision is the preferred one, as it affords the most accurate perception of the subject matter and makes the deepest impression on our soul. By contrast, in the case of hearing, although we believe what we hear, hearing does not have as strong an impact as seeing. However, the sense of vision has the drawback that we cannot always see clearly. In the dark, we cannot see at all.

Candlelight, dim light, atmospheric conditions, and poor eyesight distort our view, but our hearing is not affected by any of these factors. Strange as it may seem, there exists also a combined form of hearing and seeing. It occurs in an individual who is capable of rising above the limitations of the senses. Such a person can see sound and hear a vision. A prophet can do this. When receiving divine prophecy, the prophet puts off his physical limitations, and his sense of hearing and vision blend into one. At Mount Sinai, after undergoing fifty days of spiritual refinement, the Children of Israel attained the level of prophecy. They "saw the sounds," and thereby the belief in God was anchored in their hearts.

Ezekiel/Yechezkel 1:4; 25-28

4 And I looked, and behold! A windstorm came out of the north, a great cloud and a fire flashing itself, and a brightness to it all around and out of its midst, like the color of polished bronze out of the midst of the fire. 25 And there was a voice from on the expanse which was over their heads, when they would halt, they would release their wings. 26 Above the expanse that was over their heads looking like a sapphire stone, the likeness of a throne. And on the likeness of the throne was a likeness on it from above, looking like a man. 27 And I saw Him looking like the color of polished bronze with fire within it all around. From the likeness of His loins and upward, and from the likeness of His loins downward, I saw Him looking like fire, and brightness to it all around. 28 As the appearance of the bow that is in the cloud in the day of the rain, so the brightness appeared all around. This was the appearance of the likeness of the glory of Yahweh. And I saw; and I fell on my face, and I heard a voice of One speaking.

Who sat on the throne? If the Father is described as a Spirit and Judaism describes God as a ball of fire, then who sat on the throne? Only one face of God takes on the form of a man and, here in Ezekiel 1:26, He is described by the prophet

as a man and that aspect of God is the Son—Yeshua. Verse 27 describes Him as looking like fire and in verse 28 He is described as having the appearance of a rainbow. Fires, color, brightness, all part of the glory that is God's. Yeshua sits on the throne given to Him by His Father—Yahweh. At the first Shavuot, the Torah was given to the mixed multitude that had come up out of Egypt and had been called together as a people at Mount Sinai. At the second Shavuot, the fire of God's Spirit had been given to all those who would believe in Yeshua as the Messiah and the Son of God, He who sits upon the throne given to Him by the Father.

John/Yochanan 1:32-34

32 Then Yochanan gave this testimony: "I saw the Spirit coming down from heaven like a dove, and remaining on Him. 33 I myself did not know who He was, but the One who sent me to immerse in water said to me, 'The one on whom you see the Spirit descending and remaining, this is the one who immerses in the Ruach HaKodesh (Holy Spirit).' 34 And I have seen and borne witness that this is the Son of God."

What was given to Yeshua was what would be given to all those who would come after Him. He received the power of the Spirit of God, the Father, and the Father would send His Spirit to every Believer in His Son after His Son returned to His Father in order that prophecy might be fulfilled.

Shavuot is also called *Zeman Mattan Torateinu*, "The Time of the Giving of our Torah." Why isn't this Festival called "The Time of the Receiving of our Torah?" The reason is that on that momentous day at Mount Sinai, only the giving of the Torah occurred, whereas our receiving of the Torah is taking place each and every day. In addition, the Torah was given to all of Israel, each and every person who stood there that day at Mount Sinai, whether of physical Israel or one of the many who were not of Israel but became part of Israel that day. There were more than just the twelve tribes there that day and their descendants would inherit what had been given that day—the Torah—later to be embodied in the physical form of Yeshua, and later released through the giving of the Spirit of God. The Torah is given without distinction between one person and another. On the other hand, each person has received the Torah differently, each according to his perception and level of understanding.

When God gave the Torah, not a bird chirped, no fowl flew, no ox lowed, angels did not fly, seraphim did not say "Holy, holy, holy," the sea did not stir, no creature spoke. The world was utterly silent, when a voice was heard: "I am the Lord."

The rabbis say that each word that was uttered by Yahweh was divided into the seventy known languages of the world at that time. They said, it was "*like a hammer that shatters a rock*" (Jeremiah 23:29). Just as a hammer striking a rock

The Feasts of YHWH

produces many sparks, so was each divine word divided into the seventy major languages of mankind.

Shavuot is also known by the following names: Festival of the Harvest, Festival of Weeks, The Festival of the First Fruits, Atzeret, the Last Assembly Day, implying that the festival is the closing day of a continuous religious observance that starts with Passover, in the same way that Shemini Atzeret is the closing day of Sukkot. Indeed, as the Passover season begins with Passover and ends with Shavuot, starting with the sacrifice of our Messiah Yeshua, continuing with His resurrection from the dead on First Fruits and being completed with the coming of the Spirit of God on Shavuot so, too, will His second coming be done in a series of festivals that have yet to be fulfilled. And in the same way that the Spring festivals came to fulfillment through their prophetic and physical completion so, too, will the fall festivals come to completion in the same way.

While we have the Torah in its physical form, we also can have it in its spiritual power through the acceptance of Yeshua as Messiah, He who sits on the throne. When we accept Yeshua as Lord and Savior, we receive the power of the Holy Spirit that allows the Torah to live inside of us.

And so, every year, in a reenactment of the *Ma'amad Har Sinai*, the Stand at Mount Sinai, we celebrate Shavuot and commit ourselves anew to the task our ancestors received and accepted with the words *naaseh venishma*, “*we shall do and we shall listen.*” That task will be completed with the coming of the Messiah, when “*the glory of God will be revealed and all flesh—as one—shall see that the mouth of God has spoken*” (Isaiah 40:5).

One of the customs of Shavuot is to read the Book of Ruth. Let me share with you this passage from the Book of Ruth.

Ruth 1:16-17

“But Ruth said, ‘Do not urge me to leave you, to turn back and not follow you. For wherever you go, I will go; where you lodge, I will lodge; your people are my people, and your God is my God; where you die, I will die, and there I will be buried. Thus may God do to me—and more—if anything but death separates me from you.’”

This is the promise of Israel, the Children of the Living God.

-6-

***Yom Teruah* h[wr t ~wy**

Day of the Awakening Blast

(Rosh HaShanah/Head of the Year)

Leviticus/Vayikra 23:1-2, 4, 23-25

1 Samuel/Sh'muel 1:1-2:10

1 Thessalonians 4:13-18

The essence of Rosh Hashanah-Yom Teruah is to recognize that Yahweh is King—the Creator, Sustainer and Supervisor. Our goal is to renew our relationship with the Almighty. Each of us must make our own accounting with ourselves as well as with the Almighty. What are we living for? Are our actions leading us toward our goals or away from our goals? What can we do better? What goal would be worthier to live for? If you have trouble identifying what is important to live for, then ask yourself, “What would I die for?” Then, instead of dying for it, live for it!

Rosh Hashanah is called the Jewish New Year, but you will not find a mention of it in the Tanach-Hebrew Scriptures. Why? Because in the Tanach it is called Yom Teruah or Day of the Awakening Blast or Trumpets. It is observed on the first and second days of Tishri. It is called the Yom Hadin, the Day of Judgment, and marks the beginning of the Ten Days of Teshuvah, which climaxes in Yom Kippur, the Day of Atonement. It is a solemn season, a time of self-examination, when we reflect on our mistakes of the past and deeply regret our offenses against Yahweh and the hurts we may have inflicted on others. We want to return to our Father in Heaven, ask His forgiveness, and resolve to make amends, to improve our conduct, and not to repeat the errors of the past; in short we do teshuvah—the Hebrew word for repentance or returning to Yahweh. With love, Yahweh welcomes our sincere repentance, and on Yom Kippur, the climatic close of the Yamim Nora'im-Days of Awe, He grants us forgiveness, and in the Book of Life, seals us for life during the coming year.

The Feasts of YHWH

Leviticus/Vayikra 23:1-2, 4, 23-25

1: Yahweh spoke to Moses, saying: 2: Speak to the Children of Israel and say to them: Yahweh's appointed festivals that you are to designate as holy convocations—these are My appointed festivals. 4: These are the appointed festivals of Yahweh, the holy convocations, which you shall designate, in their appropriate time. 23: Yahweh spoke to Moses, saying: 24: Speak to the Children of Israel, saying: In the seventh month, on the first of the month, there shall be a rest day for you, a remembrance with shofar blasts, a holy convocation. 25: You shall not do any laborious work, and you shall offer a fire offering to Yahweh.

The festivals, including the Shabbat, are called Moedim, appointed times, because they are special days when we “meet” with Yahweh, as it were. Just as moed in space refers to the locality which people have as their appointed place of assembly [e.g. the Ohel Moed, the tent of Meeting], so moed in time is a point in time which summons us communally to an appointed activity—in this case an inner activity.

The shofar is a call to repentance. As Rambam (Maimonides) puts it, the shofar calls out: Although the blowing of the shofar is a biblical decree [and must therefore be observed whether or not you know the reason for it], there is an allusion in it. It tells you: Wake up from your sleep, you sleepers! Arise from your slumber, you slumberers! Examine your deeds! Return to Yahweh! Remember your creator! Those of you who forget the truth in the futility's of the times and spend all year in vanity and emptiness, look into your soul, improve your ways and your deeds. Let each of you abandon his evil ways and his immoral thoughts.

The Torah describes Yom Teruah as “*a sacred holiday for remembrance and sounding [of the ram's horn]*” (Leviticus 23:24 and Numbers 29:1).

Yom Teruah is also described in the following ways:

- Day of New Beginnings-Teshuvah-Repentance
- Day of Judgment-Yom HaDin
- Inscribe us in the Book of Life
- Divine Scales of Justice
- A Day of Rejoicing
- Confusing satan
- Yoma Arichta: One Long Day
- The King-HaMelech
- Chevlay shel Mashiach-The time of Jacob's Trouble or the birthpangs of the Messiah
- The opening of the gates
- Kiddushin/Nesu'in-the wedding ceremony
- The natzal-resurrection of the Dead
- Yom Hakesh-the hidden day

h[wr̄t ~wy *Yom Teruah*—Day of the Awakening Blast

The Midrash says the shofar was created specifically for the good of Israel. It was with the blowing of the shofar that the Torah was given to Israel, as it is stated, “*The sound of the shofar grew louder and louder*” (Exodus 19:19). With the blowing of the shofar, the wall of Jericho fell down, as it is written, “*When the people heard the sound of the shofar...the wall collapsed*” (Joshua 6:20).

The blowing of the shofar will proclaim the coming of Mashiach, as it is written, “*And Yahweh will manifest Himself to them [Israel} and His arrow will flash like lightning; My Yahweh Elohim will sound the shofar...*” (Zechariah 9:14).

It is the shofar that the Holy One, blessed is He, will blow when He gathers in the exiles, as it is stated, “*And in that day He will blow on the great shofar; and the strayed who are in the land of Assyria and the expelled who are in the land of Egypt will come and worship Yahweh on the holy mountain, in Jerusalem*” (Isaiah 27:13).

And so it is written, “*Cry with a full throat, without restraint; raise your voice like a shofar!*” (Isaiah 58:1).

Now let's take a look at 1 Samuel/Sh'muel.

1 Samuel/Sh'muel 2:1-10

1: Then Hannah prayed and said: My heart exults in Yahweh, my pride has been raised through Yahweh; my mouth is opened wide against my antagonists, for I rejoice in Your salvation. 2: There is none as holy as Yahweh, for there is none besides You, and there is no Rock like our God. 3: Do not abound in speaking with arrogance upon arrogance, let not haughtiness come from your mouth; for Yahweh is the God of thoughts, and [men's] deeds are accounted by Him. 4: The bow of the mighty is broken, while the foundering are girded with strength. 5: The sated ones are hired out for bread, while the hungry ones cease to be so; while the barren woman bears seven, the one with many children becomes bereft. 6: Yahweh brings death and gives life, He lowers to the grave and raises up. 7: Yahweh impoverishes and makes rich, He humbles and He elevates. 8: He raises the needy from the dirt, from the trash heaps He lifts the destitute, to seat [them] with nobles and to endow them with a seat of honor – for Yahweh's are the pillars of the earth, and upon them He set the world. 9: He guards the steps of his devout ones, but the wicked are stilled in darkness; for not through strength does man prevail. 10: Yahweh—may those that contend with Him be shattered, let the heavens thunder against them. May Yahweh judge to the ends of the earth; may He give power to His king and raise the pride of His anointed one.

The last verse of this section is very prophetic in nature and speaks about the tribulation to come. Traditional Jewish commentary says that verse ten is referring to Yahweh crushing Samuel's enemies and the blessings that would be upon Saul and David. But how they could say that when it clearly says power to His king and His

The Feasts of YHWH

anointed one. Both instances of the Hebrew words used here are in the singular form not the plural. This verse speaks about Yahweh's judging of the earth, His King and Mashiach-Messiah or anointed one. What a picture of the Days of Awe-Yom Teruah to Sukkot, that fall period of time when Yahweh will call His people, judge the earth and set up Messiah as King during the Messianic Age.

When the shofar calls will you be ready? Rabbi Aharon II of Karlin offered the following poignant interpretation of the various sounds. He said, "God created man upright and flawless. Man, however, through his sins, became warped and twisted. But by returning to God in teshuvah, he is straightened out again."

This thought is reflected in the sounds of the shofar: tekiah-shevarim-teruah-tekiah. The first tekiah, a straight, clear sound, represents man's original sinless condition. The broken shevarim sound is indicative of the spiritual breakdown that comes as a result of his sinning. This is followed by the sobbing teruah sound, which mirrors his broken-heartedness, inner turmoil, and deep remorse, the forerunners of repentance. The culmination is reached in the steady tone of the final tekiah, which signifies the inner tranquility of the baal teshuvah whose missteps have been forgiven. The baal teshuvah is literally the one who returns or turns back to Yahweh. How do we do this? By responding to the call of the shofar and opening up our hearts to the cleansing power of the Messiah Yeshua.

Listen to the words penned by Rav Shaul-the Apostle Paul. These words are our promise through our faith in Messiah. They are especially relevant during this special time of the year.

1 Thessalonians 4:13-18

13: Now, brothers, we want you to know the truth about those who have died; otherwise, you might become sad the way other people do who have nothing to hope for. 14: For since we believe that Yeshua died and rose again, we also believe that in the same way Yahweh, through Yeshua, will take Him those who have died. 15: When we say this, we base it on the Lord's own word: we who remain alive when the Lord comes will certainly not take precedence over those who have died. 16: For the Lord Himself will come down from heaven with a rousing cry, with a call from one of the ruling angels, and with Yahweh's shofar; those who died united with the Messiah will be the first to rise; 17: then we who are left still alive will be caught up with them in the clouds to meet the Lord in the air; and thus we will always be with the Lord. 18: So encourage each other with these words.

Many want to say that this is speaking about that event that we know as the "Rapture" or in Biblical terminology "the catching away." Many associate Yom Teruah with this event and use that as the basis for their belief that the Believers will all be out of here before the trouble or the Tribulation period begins. But a

h[wr t ~wy *Yom Teruah*—Day of the Awakening Blast

misunderstanding about when this happens is in play here. During Yom Teruah many shofar blasts are sounded and you can not associate the catching away with the first blast or series of blasts, but understanding that shofar blasts take place at the close of the festival and that what is known as the great shofar blast takes place at the close of Yom HaKippurim.

So as I am prone to say that if you place all your faith in the belief that you will be out of here before the trouble starts and it does not happen, what then will happen to your faith in Yeshua? Be prepared for all things especially the unexpected.

Rabbi Nachman of Bratzlav used the following parable to explain teshuvah, the central idea of Rosh Hashanah-Yom Teruah:

A king sent his son abroad to study the sciences of the world. After mastering all the sciences, the son returned home. The father, eager to test his son's wisdom, asked him to transport a large rock to the top of a mountain. Straining every muscle, the son arduously rolled the rock to the summit. Thereupon he proudly reported to his father that after laboring with all his might, he had managed to roll the rock to the peak. In response, the father shook his head and said, "For this I had to send you to the great universities? If you had broken up the rock into small pieces, you would have been able to carry it up effortlessly!"

It is the same with us. Yahweh wants us to lift up our hearts to Him, which are as rigid and heavy as a flinty rock. The only way we can do it is by shattering our hearts of stone and smashing them into small pieces through teshuvah-repentance. And once that heart of stone is broken and becomes a heart of flesh, then Yeshua can write the Torah of life in us.

The Feasts of YHWH

-7-

Yom HaKippurim ~yrpkh ~wy
Day of Atonements

Leviticus/Vayikra 16:1-34
Numbers/Bamidbar 29:7-11
Isaiah/Yeshayahu 57:14-58:14
2 Corinthians 5:10-21

Yom HaKippurim, the holiest day on the Hebrew calendar, is the culmination of the Ten Days of Teshuvah, which begin with Yom Teruah/Rosh Hashanah. It was on this day, the tenth of Tishri of the year 2449 of Creation, that Moses came down from Mount Sinai bearing the second tablets, after Yahweh had forgiven Israel for the sin of worshipping the Golden Calf. This act of divine pardon marked the tenth of Tishri for all time as the Day of Atonements and reconciliation with Yahweh. It is the day on which Yahweh purifies us from all our errors, forgives our missteps, and turns His ear to our pleas. The Torah sums it up in the words In Leviticus-Vayikra 16:29-34

Leviticus/Vayikra 16:29-34

29:This shall remain for you an eternal decree: In the seventh month, on the tenth of the month, you shall afflict yourselves and you shall not do any work, neither the native nor the proselyte who dwells among you. 30:For on this day he shall provide atonement for you to cleanse you; from all your sins before Yahweh shall you be cleansed. 31:It is a Sabbath of complete rest for you, and you shall afflict yourselves; an eternal decree. 32:The Kohen, who has been anointed or who has been given the authority to serve in place of his father, shall provide atonement; he shall don the linen vestments, the sacred vestments. 33:He shall bring atonement upon the Holy of Holies, and he shall bring atonement upon the Tent of Meeting and the Altar; and upon the Kohanim and upon all the

The Feasts of YHWH

people of the congregation shall he bring atonement. 34:This shall be to you an eternal decree to bring atonement upon the Children of Israel for all their sins once a year; and [Aaron] did as Yahweh commanded Moses.

Again the importance of Yom HaKippurim is stressed in the Book of Bamidbar-Numbers.

Numbers/Bamidbar 29:7-11

7:On the tenth day of this seventh month there shall be a holy convocation for you and you shall afflict yourselves; you shall not do any work. 8:You shall offer a burnt offering to Yahweh for a satisfying aroma—one young bull, one ram, seven male lambs in their first year; they shall be unblemished for you. 9:And their meal-offering: fine flour mixed with oil—three tenth-ephah for the bull; two tenth-ephah for the one ram; 10:and one tenth-ephah for each lamb of the seven lambs. 11:One male of the goats for a sin-offering, aside from the sin-offering and the continual burnt-offering, with its meal-offering, and their libations.

Leviticus/Vayikra 29:34 sums up whether keeping this Festival is still relevant even today, in the so-called dispensation, of the “Age of Grace.”

H5769 ~|w[`owlam {o-lawm'} or ~| [`olam {o-lawm'}
long duration, antiquity, futurity, for ever, ever, everlasting,
evermore, perpetual, old, ancient, world ancient time, long time (of
past) (of future) for ever, always) continuous existence, perpetual
everlasting, indefinite or unending future, eternity

This cannot be made any clearer. Yahweh’s word states that it is for all eternity from the days of old to the future to come. And it goes even further than that. Read what it says in Leviticus/Vayikra 16:29. It says, “*neither the native nor the proselyte who dwells among you.*” The interesting thing here is that the word in the Hebrew translated as native and proselyte is the same. It is Ger. Ger would be better translated as God-fearer but one of the meanings of the word Ger is a *sojourner, a temporary inhabitant, a newcomer lacking inherited rights, of foreigners in Israel, though conceded rights.* So the Gerim have certain rights conceded to them from being amongst Israel. And who is Israel? Judah and Ephraim. So if you believe in the word of Yahweh and believe that His word is eternal, then the Torah is relevant to you. This means that the Festivals, all of the Festivals apply to you. The Torah—all of the Torah applies to you. But if you choose to reside within Israel and choose not to follow Torah—which is Messiah Yeshua in the flesh, then shame on you.

Listen to what Isaiah/Yeshayahu says.

Isaiah/Yeshayahu 57:14-58:14

14:He will say, “Pave, pave! Clear the road! Remove the obstacle from My people’s path.” 15:For thus said the exalted and uplifted One, Who abides forever and Whose Name is holy: I abide in exaltedness and holiness, but I am with the despondent and lowly of spirit, to revive the spirit of the lowly and to revive the heart of the despondent. 16:For not forever will I contend, nor will I be eternally wrathful, when the spirit that envelops [them] is from Me, and I made [their] souls. 17:I became angry because of his sinful thievery; I struck him, I hid Myself and became angry, because he continued waywardly in the path of his heart. 18:But when I see his [contrite] ways, I will heal him; I will guide him and recompense him and his mourners with consolations. 19:I create the speech of the lips: ‘Peace, peace, for the far and near,’ said Yahweh, ‘and I will heal him.’ 20:But the wicked will be like the driven sea that cannot rest, and whose waters disgorge mire and mud. 21:‘There is no peace,’ said my God, ‘for the wicked.’ 58:1:Cry out vociferously, do not restrain yourself; raise your voice like a shofar – proclaim to My people their willful sins, to the House of Jacob their transgressions. 2:They [pretend to] seek Me every day and to desire to know My ways, like a nation that acts righteously and has not forsaken the justice of its God; they inquire of Me about the laws of justice, as if they desire the nearness of God, [asking.] 3: “Why did we fast and You did not see? Why did we afflict our souls and You did not know?” Behold on your fast day you seek out personal gain and you exhort all your debts. 4:Because you fast for grievance and strife, to strike [each other] with a wicked fist; you do not fast as befits this day, to make your voice heard above. 5:Can such be the fast I choose, a day when man merely afflicts himself? Can it be merely bowing one’s head like a bulrush and spreading [a mattress of] sackcloth and ashes? Do you call this a fast and a day of favor to Yahweh? 6:Surely, this is the fast I choose: To break open the shackles of wickedness, to undo the bonds of injustice, and to let the oppressed go free, and annul all perversion. 7:Surely you should break your bread for the hungry, and bring the moaning poor [to your] home; when you see a naked person, clothe him; and do not hide yourself from your kin. 8:Then your light will burst out like the dawn and your healing will speedily sprout; your righteous deed will precede you and the glory of Yahweh will gather you in. 9:Then you will call and Yahweh will respond; you will cry out and He will say, ‘Here I am!’ If you remove from your midst perversion, finger-pointing, and evil speech, 10:and offer your soul to the hungry and satisfy the afflicted soul; then your light will shine [even] in the darkness, and your deepest gloom will be like the noon. 11:Then Yahweh will guide you always, sate your soul in times of drought and strengthen your bones; and you will be like a well-

The Feasts of YHWH

watered garden and a spring of water whose waters never fail. 12: Ancient ruins will be rebuilt through you, and you will restore generations-old foundations; and they will call you, "repairer of the breach" and "restorer of paths for habitation." 13: If you restrain your foot because it is the Sabbath; refrain from accomplishing your own needs on My holy day; if you proclaim the Sabbath "delight," and the holy [day] of Yahweh 'honored,' and you honor it by not engaging in your own affairs, from seeking your own needs or discussing the forbidden - 14: then you will delight in Yahweh, and I will mount you astride the heights of the world; I will provide you the heritage of your forefather Jacob, for the mouth of Yahweh has spoken.

If you follow the Torah you will be one who helps to restore the breach in the Kingdom. In other words, you will be helping in allowing the Kingdom of Yahweh to break through into the world. You will be a restorer of the paths for habitation. In other words, you will be one of those who helps put the Kingdom on the right road through the keeping of Yahweh's Torah and by living out the Torah by caring for those less fortunate than yourself. No matter how bad you think that things might be, there is always someone else in worse shape than you are. So let your love of doing Yahweh's Torah shine through. Let your faith in Messiah show you the way.

Yom HaKippurim is the most solemn of all the feast days. It was the day of cleansing for the nation and for the sanctuary. On this day alone, once a year, the high priest entered into the Holy of Holies in the Temple, within the veil of the Temple, with the blood of Yahweh's goat, the sin offering. Here he sprinkled the blood on the mercy seat, the top covering of the Ark of the Covenant. The blood of the sin offering on the Day of Atonement brought about the cleansing of all sin for the priesthood, the sanctuary, and Israel as a nation.

It is on Yom HaKippurim when the Great Trumpet, known in Hebrew as the Shofar HaGadol, is blown. When the final blast of the shofar is heard at the end of the neilah service, the closing of the Gates of Heaven, those who have observed the day with sincerity should feel that they have been inscribed and sealed in the Book of Life.

But without teshuvah-repentance and an acceptance of Messiah Yeshua, you will not be written into the Book of Life. People, this is a serious time of the year. Yahweh takes His Moedim-Appointed Times very seriously, otherwise why would He say that they are eternal? Turn back to Messiah and Torah. Turn back.

Let me share these words with you written by Rav Shaul in the Book of 2 Corinthians.

2 Corinthians 5:10-21

10: for we must all appear before the Messiah's court of judgment, where everyone will receive the good or bad consequences of what he did

while he was in the body. 11:So it is with the fear of the Lord before us that we try to persuade people. Moreover, God knows us as we really are; and I hope that in your consciences you too know us as we really are. 12:We are not recommending ourselves to you again but giving you a reason to be proud of us, so that you will be able to answer those who boast about a person's appearance rather than his inner qualities. 13:If we are insane, it is for God's sake; and if we are sane, it is for your sake. 14:For the Messiah's love has hold of us, because we are convinced that one man died on behalf of all mankind (which implies that all mankind was already dead), 15:and that he died on behalf of all in order that those who live should not live any longer for themselves but for the one who on their behalf died and was raised. 16:So from now on, we do not look at anyone from a worldly viewpoint. Even if we once regarded the Messiah from a worldly viewpoint, we do so no longer. 17:Therefore, if anyone is united with the Messiah, he is a new creation—the old has passed; look, what has come is fresh and new! 18:And it is all from God, who through the Messiah has reconciled us to himself and has given us the work of that reconciliation, 19:which is that God in the Messiah was reconciling mankind to himself, not counting their sins against them, and entrusting to us the message of reconciliation. 20:Therefore we are ambassadors of the Messiah; in effect, God is making his appeal through us. What we do is appeal on behalf of the Messiah, "Be reconciled to God! 21:God made this sinless man be a sin offering on our behalf, so that in union with him we might fully share in God's righteousness."

Yeshua will come back after the tribulation, and Jerusalem is under siege. Yeshua saves Jerusalem. His feet are placed on the Mount of Olives. There is a great earthquake, and the Messianic Kingdom comes in full power. There is no nighttime anymore, and the Lord will rule the whole earth. At this time, the gates of Heaven are closed. The last Yom HaKippurim ceremony is called neilah, the closing of the gates, and is the concluding service to Yom Kippur. Remember this, this is not the rehearsal (miqra), but it is the real thing. At this point, it is too late to make a decision to accept Yeshua the Messiah into your life.

The Shofar HaGadol—the Great shofar is blown at the neilah service at the close of Yom HaKippurim. This shofar will announce the return of Yeshua to rule as Messiah ben David during the Messianic Age. It will be too late for you if you wait to accept Yeshua as your Messiah. The atonement has been already made, accept it and know eternal life in Messiah Yeshua.

****Yahweh's Answer: Wisdom was asked; What shall be done to a sinner? Wisdom replied: May misfortune pursue him (Proverbs 13:21). Prophecy was asked: What shall be done to a sinner? Prophecy replied: The sinner***

The Feasts of YHWH

shall die (Ezekiel 18:4). The Torah was asked: What shall be done to a sinner? The Torah replied: Let him bring a sin offering. Yahweh was asked: What shall be done to a sinner? Yahweh replied: Let him do teshuvah-repentance and he shall be forgiven.

-8-

Sukkot tWKS
Feast of Booths/Tabernacles

Leviticus/Vayikra 23:33-36
Numbers/Bamidbar 29:12
Zechariah/Zekaryah 14:1-21
Revelation 7:1-10

Sukkot, the time of our gladness, is the third in the cycle of pilgrimage festivals. On Passover we celebrate our redemption from Egypt and our freedom from physical bondage. Shavuot commemorates the Giving of the Torah, whereby we gained our spiritual freedom by learning what Yahweh considered to be sin. With Sukkot, the cycle reaches its culmination in an exhilarating outburst of joy and wealth of symbols that evoke memories of divine protection in the past, that lift our present to a higher spiritual plateau, and that point the way to the Messianic future.

Leviticus/Vayikra 23:33-36

33: Yahweh spoke to Moses, saying: 34: Speak to the Children of Israel, saying: On the fifteenth day of this seventh month is the Festival of Sukkot, a seven-day period for Yahweh. 35: On the first day is a holy convocation, you shall not do any laborious work. 36: For a seven-day period you shall offer a fire offering to Yahweh...

And once again in Numbers-Bamidbar...

Numbers/Bamidbar 29:12

12: On the fifteenth day of the seventh month, there shall be a holy convocation for you; you shall do no laborious work; you shall celebrate a festival to Yahweh for a seven-day period.

The Feasts of YHWH

In the autumn of the year, after the harvest has been gathered, when a man's thoughts tend to focus on the rich profits he has reaped, and he dreams of acquiring material things, the Torah tells us to build a sukkah, to exchange his solid home for a frail, makeshift dwelling. The sukkah is a reminder of what the children of Israel lived in during their forty-year journey through the wilderness and of the Clouds of Glory that protected them on their wanderings. As we sit in the sukkah we cannot help but feel Yahweh's sheltering hand around us. Our spirit soars as we realize that true happiness is found only in the eternal values of Torah, that material possessions offer no security, and that the shield of faith is the only protection we can rely on. We realize that, like our stay in the sukkah, life on earth is unstable and temporary. Looking up at the stars through the shrubs that make up the roof, we experience a closeness to Yahweh. This nearness to Yahweh is the source of our joy, the exciting gladness that marks the Festival of Sukkot.

And when we take the Arba Minim (the Four Species) in hand, our one-on-one relationship with Yahweh is broadened to embrace all of Israel. For symbolically, the Four Species represent all the strata that make up the Children of Israel: the etrog, a tasty fruit with a pleasant aroma, represents the Believers who possess both Torah, good works and the Ruach. The lulav, the branch of a date palm, produces a sweet fruit but has no fragrance; it stands for those Believers who are learned in Torah but lack good works and the Ruach-Spirit. The sweet-smelling myrtle, hadassim, which produces no edible fruit, symbolizes the Believer's who perform good works and have the Ruach but do not know the Torah. Finally, the odorless and tasteless willow, aravot, represents the Believer's who lack the Torah, good works and the Ruach. Thus, the lulav bundle symbolizes the totality of the Children of Israel, Judah, Ephraim and the Ger, all extending a helping hand to one another, all striving toward the same goals: fulfillment of the Torah to the best of their abilities, but realizing that they will fall short of the mark without the help of Messiah Yeshua and the Ruach HaKodesh. We also proclaim to each other and the world around us that Yahweh is the Creator and Master of the universe.

But there is a promise of something more that is hidden in Sukkot. Listen to what the Prophet Zechariah says:

Zechariah/Zekaryah 14:1-21

1: Behold, a day is coming for Yahweh, when your spoils will be divided up in your midst. 2: I will gather all the nations to Jerusalem for the war; the city will be captured, the houses will be pillaged and the women will be violated; half of the city will go out into exile, but the rest of the people will not be eliminated from the city. 3: Yahweh will go out and wage war with those nations, as He waged war on the day of battle. 4: His feet will stand on that day on the Mount of Olives, which faces Jerusalem on the east, and the Mount of Olives will split open at its middle, east to west, [forming] a very wide valley; half of the mountain will

move to the north and half of it to the south. 5: And you will flee to the valley of the mountains, for the valley of the mountains will reach to Azal, and you will flee as you fled from the earthquake that was in the days of Uzziah, king of Judah. And Yahweh, My God, will come; all of His Holy Ones will be with you. 6: It will be on that day, the light will not be either very bright or very dim. 7: It will be a unique day; it will be known as Yahweh's [day], neither day nor night, but it will happen towards evening time that there will be light. 8: It shall be on that day, spring water will flow out of Jerusalem; half of it [will flow] to the Eastern Sea and half of it to the Western Sea. This will be in summer and in winter. 9: Yahweh will be King over all the land; on that day Yahweh will be One and His Name will be One. 10: The entire land will change to a plain, from Geba to Rimmon, south of Jerusalem, and [Jerusalem] will become lofty and it will be settled in its place, from the Gate of Benjamin to the place of the first gate, to the Corner Gate, and [from] the Tower of Hananel up to the king's winery. 11: People will live in it, and there will be no more devastation; and Jerusalem will settle in security. 12: This will be the plague with which Yahweh will strike all the peoples that have organized against Jerusalem: Each one's flesh will melt away while he is standing on his feet; each one's eyes will melt away in their sockets; and each one's tongue will melt away in their mouths. 13: It shall be on that day that there will be a great panic of Yahweh among them; each one will grab the hand of his fellow, and his hand will be raised up against the hand of his fellow. 14: Also Judah will wage war against Jerusalem; and the wealth of all the nations all around will be gathered—gold, silver and garments in great abundance. 15: And similarly will be the plague of the horse, the mule, the camel and the donkey, all the animals that will be in those camps, just like this plague. 16: It shall be that all who are left over from all the nations who had invaded Jerusalem will come up every year to worship the King Yahweh, Master of Legions, and to celebrate the festival of Sukkot. 17: And it shall be that whichever of the families of the land does not go up to Jerusalem to bow down before the King, Yahweh, Master of Legions, there will be no rain upon them. 18: But if it is the family of Egypt that does not go up and does not come [to Jerusalem], there will be no [water] for them; the same plague will come to pass with which Yahweh will strike the nations that do not go up to celebrate the festival of Sukkot. 19: This will be the punishment of the Egyptians and the punishment of all the nations that will not go up to celebrate the festival of Sukkot. 20: On that day will be [written] on the horse's bells, 'Holy unto Yahweh'; and the pots in the Temple of Yahweh will be as [numerous] as the bowls before the Altar. 21: And it will happen that every pot in Jerusalem and in Judah will be holy unto Yahweh, Master of

The Feasts of YHWH

Legions; all those who sacrifice will come and take from them and cook in them; and there will no longer be any merchants in the Temple of Yahweh, Master of Legions, on that day.

It is interesting to note here that while the Jewish rabbis acknowledge that this passage is speaking about the End of Days and the War of Gog and Magog, listen to what they say about verse 4. They describe this passage as follows: anthropomorphism (the attribution of human characteristics to non-human beings or things) indicating the cataclysmic events that will occur. Radak suggest that the splitting of the Mount of Olives is to be understood as a metaphor for the total routing of the invading armies.

While they can see the truth in some things, the veil that covers their eyes was securely in place and still is, but it is slowly slipping away. It is Yeshua who stands on the Mount of Olives when He returns at His Second Coming as Messiah ben David—the King of Kings.

This is the truth. The rabbis of old saw it, but would not acknowledge it. Listen to what they have to say about verse 7. “It will become famous as the unique day when Yahweh revealed His might and His wonders. When the tragedy of exile is about to begin (vv. 2-3), there will be great light, which is Yahweh’s salvation, as described in the preceding verses.”

Who is Yahweh’s salvation? Yeshua! That’s what His name means. How much clearer can it be people?

This is the time when the Messianic Age will be beginning. The 6,000 years of human history will be coming to a close with a new chapter to begin. But before this happens, hear what the Book of Revelation has to say on the subject.

Revelation 7:1-10

1 After this, I saw four angels standing at the four corners of the earth, holding back the four winds of the earth, so that no wind would blow on the land, on the sea or on any tree. 2 I saw another angel coming up from the east with a seal from the living God, and he shouted to the four angels who had been given power to harm the land and the sea, 3 “Do not harm the land or the sea or the trees until we have sealed the servants of our God on their foreheads!” 4 I heard how many were sealed—144,000 from every tribe of the people of Israel: 5 From the tribe of Y’hudah, 12,000 were sealed; from the tribe of Re’uven, 12,000; from the tribe of Gad, 12,000 6 from the tribe of Asher, 12,000; from the tribe of Naftali, 12,000; from the tribe of M’nasheh, 12,000 7 from the tribe of Shim’on, 12,000; from the tribe of L’vi, 12,000; from the tribe of Yissass’khar, 12,000; 8 from the tribe of Z’vulun, 12,000; from the tribe of Yosef, 12,000; from the tribe of Binyamin, 12,000. 9 After this, I looked; and there before me was a huge crowd, too large for anyone to

count, from every nation, tribe, people and language. They were standing in front of the throne and in front of the Lamb, dressed in white robes and holding palm branches in their hands; 10 and they shouted, “Victory to our God, who sits on the throne, and to the Lamb!”

Part of Sukkot is the water drawing ceremony. It was called Simchat bet Hasho'evah, Celebration of the Water Drawing. In Isaiah 12:3 it says: “*Joyfully shall you draw water, from the fountains or the wells of salvation.*” Who is the source of this water? Messiah Yeshua! Water gives life, Yeshua gives life, the Torah gives life and when the water is poured out it is like the pouring out of the Ruach HaKodesh in Joel 2:28-29. Except that what took place at Mt. Sinai with the Giving of the Torah and what happened in Acts will pale in comparison to the outpouring of Yahweh's Spirit upon the world. This is the Festival of Sukkot.

The Feasts of YHWH

trc[ynymX *Sh'mini Atzeret*—Eighth Day of Assembly
hrwt txmX *Simchat Torah*—Joy of the Torah

-9-

Sh'mini Atzeret trc[ynymX
Eighth Day of Assembly

Simchat Torah hrwt txmX
Joy of the Torah

<p>Leviticus/Vayikra 23:36b-37a Numbers/Bamidbar 29:35-39 1 Kings/Melachim 8:51-61 Matthew/Mattityahu 5:17-20 Revelation 21:1-4 Deuteronomy/Devarim 29:9-14</p>

The seven days of Sukkot, which end with Hoshana Rabbah, are followed by another festival, Shemini Atzeret, the Eighth Day of Assembly. The Torah says, “*The eighth day shall be an assembly for you; you may not do any mundane work*” (Numbers 29:35). It is a festival in its own right, independent of Sukkot, and is observed one day in Eretz Yisrael; outside the Land of Israel it is observed two days. The fact that Shemini Atzeret is a separate Yom Tov (Good Day or Holiday) is evident in the blessing of Shehecheyanu (Blessed are You, O Lord our God, King of the universe, who has kept us alive, sustained us, and brought us to this season), which is recited by the woman when lighting the candles and by the man when reciting the Kiddush.

The final day of Sukkot is called Simchat Torah, the Rejoicing of the Torah. In Eretz Yisrael, the holidays of Shemini Atzeret and Simchat Torah are celebrated on the same day. Outside Eretz Yisrael, an extra day is added so that Simchat Torah is observed as the second day of Shemini Atzeret, on the twenty-third of Tishri.

The holiday is called Simchat Torah, the Rejoicing of the Torah, because we conclude the reading of the last portion of the Torah. Although the name Simchat

The Feasts of YHWH

Torah does not occur in the Talmud, the festive character of the holiday is mentioned in the Zohar (Pinechas) and many other early writings.

Traditionally, the conclusion of the Torah or a tractate of the Talmud has been an occasion for a joyous feast. The Midrash derives this from the Scripture, which relates that King Solomon made a feast for all his servants after he was granted wisdom (1 Kings 3:15).

Leviticus/Vayikra 23:36b-37a

36b on the eighth day there shall be a holy convocation for you and you shall offer a fire offering to Yahweh, it is an assembly, you shall not do any laborious work. 37a These are the appointed festivals of Yahweh that you shall proclaim as holy convocations...

Numbers/Bamidbar 29:35-39

35 The eighth day shall be a restriction for you; you shall not do any laborious work. 36 You shall offer a burnt offering, a fire offering, a satisfying aroma to Yahweh; one bull, one ram, seven lambs within their first year, unblemished. 37 Their meal offering and libations for the bull, the ram, and the lambs shall be in their proper numbers, as required. 38 One he-goat for a sin offering; aside from the continual burnt-offering, its meal-offering and its libation. 39 These are what you shall make for Yahweh on your appointed festivals, aside from your vows and your free-will offerings for your burnt-offerings, your meal-offerings, your libations, and your peace-offerings.

The word atzeret is derived from atzar, to collect, to store. The purpose of this festival is to recap and to store in our memories everything we experienced and gained during the preceding Yamim Tovim (High Holidays), so that we will carry out the resolutions we have made, will retain the spiritual elevation we have reached, and will not lose them in the everyday life to which we are about to return.

But even more important than all of this, is the idea behind Shemini Atzeret. What Yahweh is saying here is that after spending the Messianic Age with us, He desires that we remain behind for another day or, literally, He is asking us to remain with Him forever. For this is what this day means. It is the Eighth Day of Assembly where we are instructed to remain at the close of Sukkot, the Festival of Tabernacles, where Yeshua now dwells among us or tabernacles among us to where, instead of leaving, Yahweh tells us to stay longer and remain with Him entering into the eighth day or into that period that transcends time itself that realm known as eternity.

1 Kings/Melachim 8:51-61

51 "For they are Your people and Your heritage, whom You have taken out of Egypt, from the midst of the iron furnace; 52 may Your eyes

Trc[ynymX *Sh'mini Atzeret—Eighth Day of Assembly*
hrwt txmX *Simchat Torah—Joy of the Torah*

thus be open to the supplication of Your servant and the supplication of Your people Israel, to listen to them whenever they call out to You. 53 For You have separated them for Yourself as a heritage from all the peoples of the earth, as You spoke through Your servant Moses, when You took our forefathers out of Egypt, O my Lord, Yahweh/Elohim.” 54 And it was when Solomon had finished praying to Yahweh this entire prayer and supplication, he stood up from having knelt on his knees before the Altar of Yahweh with his hands spread out heavenward. 55 He stood and blessed the entire congregation of Israel in a loud voice, saying, 56 “Blessed is Yahweh Who has granted rest to His people Israel, according to all that He has spoken; not one word has gone unfulfilled from the entire gracious promise that He pronounced through the hand of His servant Moses. 57 May Yahweh, our God, be with us as He was with our forefathers, may He not forsake us nor cast us off, 58 to turn our hearts to Him, to walk in all His ways and to observe His commandments, decrees and statutes that He commanded our forefathers. 59 And may these words of mine that I have supplicated before Yahweh be near to Yahweh, our God, day and night, that He may grant the just due of His servant and the just due of His people Israel, each day’s need in its day, 60 so that all the peoples of the earth shall know that Yahweh is God—there is no other. 61 may your hearts remain perfect with Yahweh our God, to follow His decrees and to observe His commandments as on this very day.”

During the week of Sukkot, seventy bulls were brought as offerings on the altar in the Temple. However, on Shemini Atzeret, only one bull was sacrificed. Why? The seventy represent the seventy nations of the world; the one bull of Shemini Atzeret represents the unique nation of Israel. You may compare it to a king who had held a festival for seven days and invited all of the country’s inhabitants (the nations of the world) to the seven days of feasting. When the seven days of feasting were over, he said to his friend (Israel), “Let us now have a small meal together, just you and I.”

And this takes us into the festival of Simchat Torah. Simchat Torah is not biblically ordained by Yahweh as one of His appointed times. The rabbis of old brought this festival into being to celebrate the end of the reading cycle of the Torah and its beginning. The significance of this particular festival is that it shows us the Word of Yahweh, who is Yeshua, is never-ending but a constant in our lives forever. I think that this is a very important point and ties in beautifully with Shemini Atzeret. In entering Shemini Atzeret, we come into our full relationship with Yahweh. In the same way through Simchat Torah, we celebrate the eternal Word of Yahweh, the Torah, through our relationship with the Living Torah Yeshua HaMashiach.

The Feasts of YHWH

Matthew/Mattityahu 5:17-20

17 “Don’t think that I have come to abolish the Torah or the Prophets. I have come not to abolish but to complete. 18 Yes, indeed! I tell you that until heaven and earth pass away, not so much as a yud or a stroke will pass from the Torah—not until everything that must happen has happened. 19 So whoever disobeys the least of these mitzvot and teaches others to do so will be called the least in the Kingdom of Heaven. But whoever obeys them and so teaches will be called great in the Kingdom of Heaven. 20 For I tell you that unless your righteousness is far greater than that of the Torah-teachers and P’rushim (Pharisees), you will certainly not enter the Kingdom of Heaven!”

Revelation 21:1-4

1 Then I saw a new heaven and a new earth [Isaiah 65:17, 66:22], for the old heaven and the old earth had passed away, and there was no longer any sea. 2 Also I saw the holy city, New Yerushalayim, coming down out of heaven from God, prepared like a bride beautifully dressed for her husband. 3 I heard a loud voice from the throne say, “See! God’s Sh’khinah is with mankind, and He will live with them. They will be His peoples, and He Himself, God-with-them, will be their God [Lev. 26:11-12; Isa. 7:14; 8:8, 10; Jer. 31:33(34); Eze. 37:27; 2 Chron. 6:18]. 4 He will wipe away every tear from their eyes. There will no longer be any death; and there will no longer be any mourning, crying or pain; because the old order has passed away.”

The theme of Shemini Atzeret may be better understood if we think of it in terms of a bride and groom. During the wedding, they are both decked out in a wardrobe of exquisite, elegant clothes and jewelry. However, when they come together in their private chamber, they remove their garments and jewelry.

It is the same with Shemini Atzeret. During the seven days of Sukkot, seventy bulls were offered up on the altar, but on Shemini Atzeret - the moment they achieve unification with Yeshua—they brought only one bull. We have become echad, one in a unity; Israel joined to her groom, Yeshua.

And while Jewish tradition may say that the promises were for them as the descendants of those who stood at Mt. Sinai, the word of Yahweh says otherwise.

Deuteronomy/Devarim 29:9-14

9 You are standing today, all of you, before Yahweh, your God: the heads of your tribes, your elders, and your officers—all the men of Israel; 10 your small children, from the hewer of your wood to the drawer of your water, 11 for you to pass into the covenant of Yahweh, your God, and into

Trc[ynymX *Sh'mini Atzeret*—Eighth Day of Assembly
hrwt txmX *Simchat Torah*—Joy of the Torah

His imprecation that Yahweh, your God, seals with you today, 12 in order to establish you today as a people to Him and that He be a God to you, as He spoke to you and as He swore to your forefathers, to Abraham, to Isaac, and to Jacob. 13 Not with you alone do I seal this covenant and this imprecation, 14 but with whoever is here, standing with us today before Yahweh, our God, and with whoever is not here with us today.

****On Simchat Torah we end the Torah with the words le'einei kol Yisrael, "before the eyes of all Israel," and we begin with Bereisheet, "In the beginning Yahweh created." The last letter of the Torah is a lamed: the first letter is a bet. Together they form the word lev, "heart." This teaches us that the most important thing is to love Yahweh and His Torah-Yeshua with our hearts, with burning enthusiasm-that fire of the Ruach HaKodesh.***

The Feasts of YHWH

-10-

Hoshana Rabbah hbbr h1Xh The Great Deliverance

Numbers/Bamidbar 29:26-34 Habakuk/Havakuk 2:20-3:19 John/Yochanan 7:1-50 Revelation 19:1-20:15

Hoshanna Rabbah literally means the Great Praise and is the final day of the Festival of Sukkot or Tabernacles. Traditional Judaism teaches that this day is actually the next to the last day of Sukkot, but from a biblical perspective this is not true. The Festival of Sukkot is a seven day festival and the eighth day, which is the day most Jews believe is the last day, is actually the Festival of Shemini Atzeret a separate Festival. It is somehow attached to Sukkot much in the same way that Passover and Unleavened Bread are joined together, though they are separate Festivals in their own right.

This is the day of the great water pouring ceremony in the Temple and as we will see it had great significance relating to the Messiah.

Numbers/Bamidbar 29:26-34

26 And on the fifth day: nine bulls, two rams, fourteen male lambs within their first year, unblemished. 27 And their meal-offering and their libations for the bulls, the rams, and the lambs, in their proper numbers, as required. 28 One he-goat for a sin-offering; aside from the continual elevation-offering, its meal-offering and its libation. 29 And on the sixth day: eight bulls, two rams, fourteen male lambs within their first year, unblemished. 30 And their meal-offering and their libations for the bulls, the rams, and the lambs, in their proper numbers, as required. 31 One he-goat for a sin-offering; aside from the continual elevation-offering, its meal-offering and its libations. 32 And on the seventh day: seven bulls,

The Feasts of YHWH

two rams, fourteen lambs within their first year, unblemished. 33 And their meal-offering and their libations for the bulls, the rams, and the lambs, in their proper numbers, in their requirements. 34 One he-goat for a sin-offering; aside from the continual elevation-offering, its meal-offering and its libation.

The ArtScroll commentary in the Chumash says this about the water drawing ceremony associated with Sukkot: The water was poured into pipes at the top of the southwest corner of the Altar every morning of Sukkot. The Water-Drawing Ceremony, known as the Celebration of the Place of Water-Drawing, was performed every evening, accompanied by intense, night-long festivity, which was led by the most distinguished scholars and tzaddikim (righteous men) of Israel.

The Talmud says that one who never witnessed the joy of the water drawing never saw a true celebration in his life.

Many of the observances and prayers of Sukkot are associated with water and rain—including the water drawing, the prayer for rain, and the Four Species, which are agricultural products that require plentiful water. The reason for this is that, as the Mishnah states: “On the Sukkot festival they [i.e., the world] is judged for water.” Moreover, Sukkot celebrates the harvest and comes shortly before the next planting season. Thus, it is a time to thank God for His past kindness and to beseech His continued benevolence in the form of plentiful rain for crops.

Of interest concerning the seventh day of Sukkot-Hoshanna Rabbah is that many Jews consider this day to be equated in some way to Yom HaKippurim in that judgment is rendered concerning the rainfall for the entire world. The economic fortunes of the world depend on abundant rainfall, so our prayers for rain are of crucial importance for the global economy as a whole and for the Land of Israel in particular.

It is also promised by God that those who do not come up to Jerusalem to celebrate Sukkot will have the rain withheld during the Messianic Age.

Rainfall and the resurrection of the dead are closely associated; their common denominator is the concept of revival. Just as rain imparts life to the parched earth, making the dormant seeds sprout, so do the dead come back to life through God’s abundant compassion at the time of techiyat hemeitim, the resuscitation of the dead.

Habakkuk/Havakuk 2:8-13, 18-19

2:8 Was Yahweh angry with the rivers, was Your wrath with the rivers, or Your fury upon the sea? Rather You rode upon Your horses, Your chariots of salvation! 9 Your bow was bared because of the oath regarding the tribes, an enduring word, so the earth split into rivers. 10 Mountains saw You and shuddered, and a stream of water flowed; the depth raised its voice, His uplifted hands were exalted. 11 The sun and

the moon stood still in their habitat; [Israel] would travel by the light of Your arrows, by the glow of Your flashing spear. 12 Angriily You trod the earth, wrathfully You threshed nations. 13 You went forth for the salvation of Your people; for the salvation of Your anointed one, You trampled a head from the wicked one's house, baring the foundation until the neck, Selah. 18 But I shall exult in Yahweh, I shall rejoice in the God of my salvation. 19 My Lord, Yahweh/the Mighty One, is my army; He shall make my legs like the harts' and make me walk upon my high places - for the Conductor of my sweet songs.

In this passage of Scripture, we see Judah and Ephraim. In verse 9 the bow is Judah, because Judah is compared to a bow in Scripture, and in verse 11 the arrows are Ephraim. Israel is called to walk in Yeshua who leads us, followed by Judah and Ephraim—together as Israel. Yahweh went forth to lead the way for His people Israel. He brings salvation to us, from His anointed One Yeshua, who is the source of the salvation of His people--Israel.

In the end we, the ones redeemed by Yeshua—Israel, will rejoice and celebrate, because Yahweh leads the way into battle and He will fight the battle for us and will be our army that none of the nations will be able to overcome.

John/Yochanan 7:37-38

37 And on the great day, which is the last of the feast, Yeshua stood and cried out and said, If anyone thirsts, let him come to me and drink. 38 Whoever believes in me, as the scriptures have said, rivers of water of life will flow from his belly.

The great day that the Scripture is referring to here is the seventh day of Sukkot called Hoshanah Rabbah. That is why the reference to water is here because an element of the Sukkot festival is water and the water drawing ceremony. It takes place every night of the Festival until the final day when it all reaches a crescendo. We can see this in the final days of the Messianic Age, which is what Sukkot is a picture of. The last day of the festival is a solemn time and can foreshadow the season that satan is released to go about and stir things up for one final great battle.

But another picture of the water drawing and water pouring ceremony is what it shows us about Yeshua who cries out during this ceremony that if anyone thirsts let him come to Yeshua and drink. What is it that we drink of? Salvation! He pours out His salvation on each and every person that calls upon Him.

The water of life that we read about in verse 38 is the salvation offered to us through Yeshua who poured out His life upon the tree in order that we could have eternal life. From Him came water and blood, so that we would be cleansed from the sin that separates us from the Father.

The Feasts of YHWH

In this we see the salvation of God poured out on us so that we can enter into the eighth day—the time beyond time—eternity.

Summation

Hoshanah Rabbah, the seventh day of Sukkot is closely linked to Yom Kippur, for it is on this day that the final seal is placed on the verdict that was pronounced on Yom Kippur.

On Hoshanah Rabbah, we are mindful of the fact that during Sukkot, judgment is rendered concerning the rainfall for the entire world. The economic fortunes of the world depend on abundant rainfall, so our prayers for rain are of crucial importance for the world and for Israel in particular.

This is evident in the special prayers of Hoshanah Rabbah. During the morning services of the first six days of Sukkot, the entire congregation makes one circuit around the bema with lulav and etrog in hand while the cantor leads the recitation of the hoshanah prayer that is enforced by the congregation saying “Hoshanah-Please Save!” On the seventh day of Sukkot-Hoshanah Rabbah—seven circuits are made. This is where the name Hoshanah Rabbah, which means “Many hoshanas.”

In the hoshanah prayers we ask for rain, “to give life to the forsaken wastes, to sustain with trees, to enhance with sweet fruits, to rain on the sprouting, to elevate the thirsty earth.”

The Midrash says, “God told Abraham: I am one and you are one. I shall give your children a day that is uniquely suited to atone for their sins—Hoshanah Rabbah. If Yom Teruah/Rosh Hashanah did not atone for your children, Yom HaKippurim will. If not, let Hoshanah Rabbah do so.”

Why was this promise given specifically to Abraham?

Just as Abraham's light began to shine twenty-one generations after Adam, so will the light of Abraham's children shine brightly no later than twenty-one days after the beginning of judgment on Rosh Hashanah/Yom Teruah (Hoshanah Rabbah falls on the twenty-first of Tishri).

The seven days of Sukkot which end with Hoshanah Rabbah are followed by Shemini Atzeret, the Eighth Day of Assembly. The Torah says: “*The eighth day shall be an assembly for you; you may not do any mundane work*” (Numbers 29:35). It is a festival in its own right, independent of Sukkot, and is observed one day in Israel and outside of Israel it is observed for two days.

The word *atzeret* comes from *atzar*, to collect, to store. The purpose of this festival is to remember and store in our memories everything we experienced and learned during the preceding Holidays, so that we will carry out the resolutions we have made, and will hold onto the spiritual level we have reached, and will not lose them in the everyday life to which we are about to return.

Shemini Atzeret is a Holiday that is not identified with any specific symbol or teaching of the Torah. The reason is that we enter into a new relationship with God. We enter into an eternal relationship that will never end.

hbbr h1Xh *Hoshana Rabbah*—The Great Deliverance

The words *mashiv haruach*, “You cause the wind to blow and the rain to fall,” are inserted into the liturgy after the words “You revive the dead with great salvation.” Rainfall and the resurrection of the dead are closely associated; their common denominator is the concept of revival. Just as rain brings life to the dry earth, making the seeds sprout, so do the dead come back to life through God’s compassion.

Shemini Atzeret can be compared to the wedding ceremony. During the wedding the bride and groom are dressed in their finest clothing and jewelry. When they come together in their private chamber, they remove their garments and jewelry.

It is the same with Shemini Atzeret. We become one with God.

The final day of Sukkot is called Simchat Torah, the Rejoicing of the Torah. In Israel, the holidays of Shemini Atzeret and Simchat Torah are celebrated on the same day. Outside of Israel these holidays are celebrated on separate days. It is called Rejoicing in the Torah because we conclude the reading of the last portion of the Torah. This Holiday does not occur in the Torah or Talmud but is mentioned in the Zohar and other early writings.

Traditionally, the conclusion of the Torah or a section of the Talmud has been an occasion for a joyous feast. The Midrash gets this from Scripture, where it tells us that King Solomon made a feast for all his servants after he was granted wisdom (1 Kings 3:15).

The Torah scroll is paraded around the synagogue and we dance and rejoice with the word of God.

The following question is asked: “Why do we rejoice at the completion of the reading of the Torah?”

“The reason for the happiness is that you know that you completed the Torah, and yet you realize that you have not even started. This awareness is the real source for your joyous celebration.”

People think that we rejoice on Simchat Torah, because on this day we conclude the Torah. They are wrong. Our happiness comes from the fact that we are beginning the Torah all over again.

Today we have come together to celebrate three festivals. These three festivals follow each other and are the last of the fall festivals. In one we celebrate the close of Sukkot, in the other we linger on one more day to spend this time with God and in the last we celebrate the Torah.

But I want to take this time to share with you some thoughts about Moses, the giver of the Torah. Even as he died, Moses was still the Lord’s servant—obeying His command willingly.

When he was alive he was called man of God, but in death he is called a servant for the first time, to bring attention to a new and higher status, for a servant is permitted, as it were to enter the inner chamber of the king. So, too, once the confine of his body was removed from him, Moses’ soul was able to see and understand even more than before.

The Feasts of YHWH

An “eh-vehd,” Hebrew for slave, is unique in that he is the property of his master and has no independent identity or legal status; he lives totally for his owner. In receiving this title, Moses was given the highest possible compliment: he lived completely and solely for the sake of God.

I always used to struggle with that concept of being a slave to the Lord. Rav Shaul—the Apostle Paul uses that phrase a lot in his writings. He was a slave of Yeshua.

When you think it through it makes complete sense. The ultimate believer in Messiah Yeshua loses himself in Him. We no longer exist because He lives in us. This is what is meant by the first will be last. This is fulfillment of putting off the old and putting on the new.

In order to exist we must become a servant, a servant of God, who exist only to do His will. This is total immersion. This is true Echad—becoming One with God in its fullest sense.

This is our life in Torah - the living Word of God—Yeshua. This is the Torah of the Spirit, our joining with Him.

A rabbi made the following observation: “On Simchat Torah we end the Torah with the words *le'inei kol Yisrael*, ‘before the eyes of all Israel,’” and we begin with *Bereishit*, “In the beginning God created.” The last letter of the Torah is a *lamed*: the first letter is a *bet*. Together they form the word *lev*, “heart.” This teaches us that the most important thing is to observe the Torah with heart, with burning enthusiasm. It is the Torah of life and not of death. The Torah binds us completely to God because in it we are bound to Yeshua, the author of all.

OTHER FEASTS

In and Out of the Bible

-11-

Rosh Chodesh Xdx Xar The New Moon

Isaiah/Yeshayahu 66:23 1 Chronicles/Divrei-HaYamim 23:31 2 Chronicles/Divrei-HaYamim 2:4
--

Isaiah/Yeshayahu 66:23

It shall be that at every New Moon and on every Sabbath all mankind will come to prostrate themselves before Me, says Yahweh.

1 Chronicles/Divrei-HaYamim 23:31

And over all the burnt-offerings that were offered to Yahweh on the Sabbaths, on the New Moons and on the Festivals, according to their number ordained for them, continually, before Yahweh.

2 Chronicles/Divrei-HaYamim 2:3[4]

Behold, I am building a temple for the Name of Yahweh, my God, in which to sanctify Him, to burn incense of spices before Him, to [set] a permanent stack [of show-bread] and [to bring] burnt-offerings each morning and evening, and on Sabbaths and on New Moons and on the festivals of Yahweh, our God—a permanent duty upon Israel.

It is apparent from these few Scriptures that we have been commanded to celebrate the New Moon. Yet this festival does not appear in Leviticus Chapter 23 among the Moedim we are commanded to observe. Yet Isaiah upholds that the New Moons were to be celebrated. As we return to the ways of Yahweh, how do we deal with this festival? Is it a Sabbath like the other Moedim? As far as I can tell it is not commanded to be a Sabbath. We order many of the other Moedim around the lunar cycle, because it is with the coming of the New Moon that the month begins.

The Feasts of YHWH

The ancients did not have the luxury of a calendar like we have today where we are able to plan out the days, months, etc. to ad infinitum. They had to rely upon the visual sighting of the New Moon. It is interesting that the New Moon, in Jewish teaching, is regarded to be the last sliver of the old moon before it fades into total darkness. One would have thought that the New Moon would be when the full moon would appear to the naked eye.

This sighting is based upon rabbinical teaching so I cannot say what is the correct way as we have very little evidence to the contrary. Many congregations today are returning to honoring the New Moon sightings. Among traditional Judaism this does not happen very often except among the Orthodox. The Church has no idea, at all, about the New Moon celebration. If we are commanded in Scripture to do so, then we should try our best to fulfill what we are instructed to do.

So, how do we decide when the New Moon begins? Some say – total darkness, other says the New Moon begins with the 1st sliver of the moon after the darkness. This issue is a controversial one, and one that I believe needs, for now, to be left up to the individual or the congregation to decide.

The New Moon celebration is different than the celebration of Purim. Purim appears in the Book of Esther but was not commanded by Yahweh. It was ordered by Mordechai, as a celebration, for the defeat of the enemies of the Jewish people. Purim is very unique to Judah. Can those of us not of Judah join in this celebration? I would think so. The same can be said about Chanukkah. Chanukkah takes place during the time of the Maccabees. This was a time not recorded in the canon of Scripture that we use that is “official.” Yet the events are mentioned in what could be regarded as an historical book that appears between the time of the two Testaments. Can we find Yahweh and Yeshua in these festivals? Yes, you can find Yahweh and Yeshua in these festivals. You can find Yahweh and Yeshua in the Book of Esther even though the Name of Yahweh is not mentioned once. Yet the symbolism is evident throughout Purim and the other festivals.

-12-

Chanukah הכניח Feast of Dedication

Daniel/Dani'el 8:21-22, 23-25
John/Yochanan 10:22-23

Some people may question the inclusion of Chanukah with the biblical holy days. It is not mentioned in the feasts of Leviticus 23. However, the Tanach (Hebrew Scriptures) reveals that Chanukah is predicted in later prophetic writings.

The vision given to the prophet Daniel is an amazingly, detailed description of the events surrounding Chanukah. As he describes the coming kingdoms that would have an impact on Israel, Daniel writes:

Daniel/Dani'el 8:21-22

The he-goat, the kingdom of Greece, and the large horn that is between its eyes is its first king. As for the broken one, in whose place four arose, four kingdoms will arise from one nation, but lacking its strength.

Verse 21 speaks about Alexander the Great, who conquered the Persians. Verse 22 refers to the four kingdoms that came out of Alexander's empire after his death. Yet there were even more specific details given by Daniel:

Daniel/Dani'el 8:23-25

At the end of their kingdom, when the sinners are annihilated, a brazen-faced king, an understander of mysteries, will arise. His power will grow, but not through his [own] power, and he will destroy mightily; he will succeed and accomplish, and will destroy mighty ones and the nation of holy ones, because of his cunning, and [because] he will proceed with deceit in his hand, he will grow proud in his heart. He will destroy many in

The Feasts of YHWH

peace; but he will stand up against the Master of masters and he will be broken, not through a [human] hand.

Verse 23 is a reference to Antiochus who desecrated the Temple. Verse 25 refers to the peace treaties Antichus made and then broke and that in the end he died through a miraculous illness.

The fanatical persecution by the Seleucids is predicted along with the miraculous deliverance by Yahweh! The miracle of Chanukah is mentioned in the Hebrew Scriptures with such detail that some scholars have suggested that Daniel was writing after the fact and not prophetically. What an important time of history to understand!

Chanukah: Historical Background

Chanukah stands out among the celebrations of the Bible. This is because it does not appear among the Feasts of the Lord in Leviticus 23. Despite the fact that Chanukah is not spoken of by Moses, we should not assume that it is non-biblical. As we shall see, it is indeed mentioned in later scriptural passages.

The miracle of Chanukah is the culmination of a story that began 162 years earlier, with the conquest of the Middle East and Asia by Alexander the Great (356-323 BCE). In 332 BCE, on one of his military campaigns, Alexander conquered Israel, which until then had been a vassal state of the Persian Empire. For the Hebrew people, the encounter of Torah ethics and morality with the pagan creed of ancient Greece proved to be a traumatic shock and a clash of cultures, which threatened to undermine the very existence of Israel.

After Alexander's death the Land of Israel became a province of Syria under the rule of the Seleucid dynasty. Greek culture was making serious inroads among the Israelites. Many of them, especially those of the wealthy aristocracy, began adopting Greek customs and beliefs. They were called "Hellenists," and the Greek way of life they followed is called "Hellenism," a term Derived from the word *Hellas*, which means "Greece."

When a new king, Antiochus IV (also called Antiochus Epiphanes), ascended the throne in Syria in 175 BCE, the stage was set for a historic confrontation between Hellenist depravity and the defenders of the Torah. Under Antiochus' rule, Jerusalem began to look like a Greek city. Hellenistic Jews studied the Greek language and literature and gradually abandoned the Torah and its lifestyle, eating nonkosher meats and participating in worship of the Greek gods.

Anger at the imposed Hellenization came to a head in 164 BCE, in Modi'in, a small town not far from Jerusalem, where Mattityahu—the Hasmonean priest—and his five sons were. When the forces of Antiochus arrived in Modi'in to erect an altar to Zeus and tried to persuade Mattityahu to offer a sacrifice to their god, Mattityahu declared his loyalty to Yahweh. As he was speaking, a Hellenistic Jew approached the altar to offer his pig. Mattityahu and his five sons pulled out the short swords they

had been hiding. Mattityahu mounted the altar and killed the Hellenistic Jew, calling out, “Whoever clings to the Torah and is steadfast in the covenant, let him join me!”

Their act of defiance marked the beginning of a guerrilla war of those loyal to the Torah against the Syrians and the Hellenists. When Mattityahu died the following year, his son Judah (Yehudah) became the leader of the rebellion.

In the end, Yehudah and his men captured Jerusalem and marched toward the Bet HaMikdash, the Holy Temple. They were devastated by what they saw: the sanctuary in desolation, the altar desecrated, the walls of the sanctuary breached, grass sprouting in the courtyards—a heartbreaking spectacle. Wasting no time, Yehudah issued orders to cleanse the temple, to tear down the altar that had been defiled, and to build a new altar. The men repaired the walls of the sanctuary, purified the holy vessels, and built a new, makeshift *menorah* to replace the golden *menorah* that had been stolen.

On the twenty-fifth of *Kislev*, 165 BCE, and three years to the day after the Syrians/Greeks had defiled the Temple and sacrificed a pig to their idol, the Hasmoneans rededicated the Bet HaMikdash and reinstated the offering of sacrifices to Yahweh in a ceremony that lasted eight days.

When the kohamin/priests searched for oil to light the *menorah*, they found only one jar of holy oil that had not been defiled. The oil in that jar was sufficient to burn for only one day, and it would take eight days until a new supply of holy oil could be produced. Miraculously, the one-day supply of oil in the jar burned in the *menorah* for eight days. The sages of that time then ordered that the eight days, beginning with the twenty-fifth of *Kislev*, should be celebrated as days of rejoicing, that *Hallel* should be recited, and that lights should be lit in all Hebrew homes on each of the eight nights in order to publicize the miracle.

This eight-day Festival is called Chanukah, “Dedication”; it is the Festival of Lights. The name Chanukah is also seen as a contraction of *cahnu kof hei*, “they rested on the twenty-fifth [of Kislev].”

John/Yochanan 10:22-23

Then came Chanukah in Yerushalayim. It was winter, and Yeshua was walking around inside the Temple area, in Shlomo’s Colonnade...

Chanukah is a beautiful festival celebrated by Jewish people. Many are aware of the customs and history of Chanukah. Perhaps some even know Scripture well enough to know that this festival is prophetically mentioned in the book of Daniel. Most surprising to both the Jewish and the Christian communities is that the clearest mention of Chanukah in the Bible is in the Newer Testament!

Many Jewish scholars see deeper spiritual meaning to Chanukah. As the editors of the *Artscroll Mesorah Series* state:

Then, the light is kindled to give inspiration, for the light of Messiah must burn brightly in our hearts (Chanukah, Mesorah Publications, Brooklyn, 1981, p. 104).

The Feasts of YHWH

This is a logical conclusion. Because Chanukah is a celebration of deliverance, it has also become a time to express Messianic hope. Just as the Maccabees were used by Yahweh to redeem Israel, perhaps the greatest redeemer, the Messiah, would also come at this time!

With this understanding, we more fully appreciate the scenes that unfolded as Yeshua celebrated the feast 2000 years ago in Jerusalem. Amidst the festivities, Yeshua was approached by some rabbis who asked a simple question.

John/Yochanan 10:24

“How much longer are you going to keep us in suspense? If you are the Messiah, tell us publicly.”

The answer to this very appropriate question is contained in Yeshua's Chanukah message. He clearly reiterates His claim and the proofs of His Messiahship.

John/Yochanan 10:25-39

25 Yeshua answered them, “I have already told you, and you don't trust me. The works I do in my Father's name testify on my behalf, 26 but the reason you don't trust is that you are not included among my sheep. 27 My sheep listen to my voice, I recognize them, they follow me, 28 and I give them eternal life. They will absolutely never be destroyed, and no one will snatch them from my hands. 29 My Father, who gave them to me, is greater than all; and no one can snatch from the Father's hands. 30 I and the Father are one.” 31 Once again the Judeans picked up rocks in order to stone him. 32 Yeshua answered them, “You have seen me do many good deeds that reflect the Father's power; for which one of these deeds are you stoning me?” 33 The Judeans replied, “We are not stoning you for any good deed, but for blasphemy—because you, who are only a man, are making yourself out to be God [Elohim] 34 Yeshua answered them, “Isn't it written in your Wlohim, ‘You people are Elohim’?[Psalm 82:6] 35 If he called ‘Elohim’ the people to whom the word of Elohim was addressed (and the Elohim cannot be broken), 36 then are you telling the one whom the Father set apart as holy and sent into the world, ‘You are committing blasphemy,’ just because I said, ‘I am a son of Elohim’? 37 “If I am not doing deeds that reflect my Father's power, don't trust me. 38 But if I am, then, even if you don't trust me, trust the deeds; so that you may understand once and for all that the Father is united with me, and I am united with the Father.”

This shows the real connection between Chanukah and the birth of Yeshua. Chanukah recalls a military victory for Israel, and the implications are vast. If

Antiochus had succeeded in his campaign of destruction, there would have been no Israel by the time of Yeshua. The miracle of the birth of Yeshua could only take place after the miracle of Chanukah! Certainly all believers in Yeshua have important reasons to remember this Festival of Dedication. Messiah, our deliverer, has come!

The Prophetic Fulfillment

As with all the biblical festivals, there are spiritual lessons to be learned from Chanukah—light, courage, and faith, to name a few. Perhaps the most vital one is seen in its name. This festival commemorates a time when the true worship of Yahweh was restored in Jerusalem. The Temple in Jerusalem no longer stands today. The heart of each true believer in Yeshua the Messiah and savior is the Temple where the Spirit of Yahweh dwells. Too often believers endanger the cleanliness of this Temple by allowing idolatry into their lives. Hence the timeless exhortation from Scripture.

1 Corinthians 6:18-20

Run from sexual immorality! Every other sin a person commits is outside the body, but the fornicator sins against his own body. Or don't you know that your body is a Temple for the Ruach HaKodesh (the Holy Spirit) who lives inside you, whom you received from Yahweh? The fact is, you don't belong to yourselves; for you were bought at a price. So use your bodies to glorify Yahweh.

Miracle of the Oil

Why did the miracle happen with oil? Oil does not blend with any other liquid but will rise to the top. In that aspect, oil is symbolic of the Ruach HaKodesh (the Holy Spirit). Like oil, the Ruach HaKodesh does not intermingle with other nations/goyim/unbelievers but rises to a higher plane.

The people who normally celebrate this festival, the Jewish people, have scant biblical references for it; yet the people who do not normally celebrate Chanukah have the most explicit reference to it, in the Newer Testament!

This brings us to the first reason believers in Messiah might want to understand and celebrate this festival. The Messiah celebrated it. Not only did Yeshua celebrate Chanukah, but He observed it in the same Temple that had been cleansed and rededicated just a few generations earlier under the Maccabees.

May we indeed be temples for the Messiah, cleansed and dedicated and filled with the oil of the Ruach HaKodesh for the Master's use!

The Feasts of YHWH

-13-

Purim ~yrwp

Lots

(Story of Queen Esther)

<p>Psalms/Tehellim 3:1-9 Hebrews/Ivrim 11:1-2; 12:1-2</p>

Psalm/Tehellim 3:1-9

1: A psalm by David, as he fled from Absalom his son. 2: Yahweh, how numerous are my tormentors! The great rise up against me! 3: The great say of my soul, "There is no salvation for him from God, Selah!" 4: But You, Yahweh, are a shield for me, for my soul, and the One Who raises my head. 5: With my voice I call out to Yahweh, and He answers me from His holy mountain, Selah. 6: I lay down and slept, yet I awoke, for Yahweh supports me. 7: I fear not the myriad's of people deployed against me all around. 8: Rise up, Yahweh; save me, my God, for You struck all of my enemies on the cheek. You broke the teeth of the wicked. 9: Salvation is Yahweh's, [La-Adonai Ha-Y'shua] upon Your people is Your blessing, Selah.

On the surface, Purim is nothing more than a joyous day of feasting, drinking, singing, masquerading, boisterous laughing, and exchanging of gifts of food and delicacies. It is a festival on which noisemaking during the reading of the *Megillah* is encouraged, a day when even the rabbi may be subjected to good-natured ribbing.

But there is more to Purim than feasting and fun. At first glance, the story of Purim has the appearance of a tale of palace intrigue and political infighting, a power struggle in which God plays no part at all. The fact that neither the name of God nor the word *miracle* is mentioned in the Book of Esther seems to lend credence to the assumption. However, on closer examination it becomes clear that God is present on every page of the book. It is He who guides the destiny of kings

The Feasts of YHWH

and nations. When things looked bleak, and the doom of the Jewish people seemed to be sealed, a man like Mordechai did not bow to the demands of Haman but found strength in his faith in God. Esther was ready to give her life to save her people. And the people repented and prayed to God. In response, God, performing a *nes nistar*, a “hidden miracle,” turned things around, *venahafoch hu*, “and the opposite happened.” All of Haman’s plans boomeranged. The gallows he prepared for Mordechai was used for him; the day he designated for the destruction of the Jews became the day on which they overpowered their enemies. Haman wanted to kill all the Jewish children, but his own children were hanged instead.

The message of Purim is that all of nature and history are hidden manifestations of God. Purim tells us to recognize God’s hand in our everyday life, to ascribe our successes and failures in business, our health, our joys and sorrows to *Hashgachah*, divine providence. As in the days of Mordechai and Esther, circumstances may appear to be hopeless, but we can remove evil decrees and change the course of history through repentance, prayer, and faith in Messiah Yeshua—our source of salvation—God’s Salvation.

Hebrews/Ivrim 11:1-2

1: Trusting is being confident of what we hope for, convinced about things we do not see. 2: It was for this that Scripture attested the merit of the people of old.

Hebrews/Ivrim 12:1-2

1: So then, since we are surrounded by such a great cloud of witnesses, let us, too, put aside every impediment—that is, the sin which easily hampers our forward movement - and keep running with endurance in the contest set before us, 2: looking away to the Initiator and Completer of that trusting [Habakkuk 2:4], Yeshua—who, in exchange for obtaining the joy set before him, endured execution on a stake as a criminal, scorning the shame, and has sat down at the right hand of the throne of God [Psalm 110:1].

Purim is not just the story of the redemption of the Jewish people. It is the story of our redemption. Every last one of you who believe in Yeshua as Messiah. And if you don’t believe in Yeshua as Messiah, the Redeemer, think about what happened to Haman and his sons.

NON-BIBLICAL

Replacements to YHWH's Feasts

-14-

Sunday Church

Much has been said and written about the Sabbath. What I would like to do is to present to you, from a Biblical and Scriptural perspective, why I believe the Sabbath Day is still the 7th Day and has never been changed by YHWH to the 1st day Sunday.

It is my hope and prayer that you will see the truth in what I present to you here and if you already are convinced that the Sabbath is the 7th Day then I hope that perhaps you can use the information to help you show others the Biblical and Scriptural reality of the Sabbath Day.

The Sabbath Day

By Rav Mordechai Silver
From < www.etz-chayim.org >

Bereisheet-Genesis 22:3 By the seventh day God completed His work which He had done, and He abstained on the seventh day from all His work which He had done. 3 God blessed the seventh day and sanctified it because on it He abstained from all His work which God created to make.

Here we have it! Plain and simple! God said it and God did it and God created it—the Sabbath. Did you catch what I said there? **God created it!** It was not created by man nor was it created by satan, the seventh day was created by God and in that act of creation He brought into being what we know to be the Sabbath Day. Now if God created the Sabbath day as part of creation, did He re-create another day at some other time as some believe? I have read through the Bible from front to back and back to front and no where have I seen any passage in Scripture where it says that God undid creation and created a new Sabbath day.

What significance does this have for us? What it means is that any claim by anyone from whatever religion or belief system they are a part of that says that the Sabbath day is the first day instead of the seventh day has done that under their own power and not with God's approval.

The Feasts of YHWH

Shemot-Exodus 16:25-30 Moses said, "Eat it today, for today is a Sabbath for Yahweh; today you shall not find it in the field. 26 Six days shall you gather it, but the seventh day is a Sabbath, on it there will be none." 27 It happened on the seventh day that some of the people went out to gather, and they did not find. 28 Yahweh said to Moses, "How long will you refuse to observe My commandments and My teachings? 29 See that Yahweh has given you the Sabbath; that is why He gives you on the sixth day a two-day portion of bread. Let every man remain in his place; let no man leave his place on the seventh day." 30 The people rested on the seventh day.

4687 מצוה mitsvah {mits-vaw'}

commandment, commandment (of man), the commandment (of God),
commandment (of code of wisdom)

8451 תורה torah {to-law'} or torah {to-law'}

law, direction, instruction, instruction, direction (human or divine), body of prophetic teaching, instruction in Messianic age, body of priestly direction or instruction, body of legal directives, law, law of the burnt offering, of special law, codes of law, custom, manner, the Deuteronomic or Mosaic Law

What is God saying to the people here? He is saying in verse 28 how long will the people keep refusing to follow my commandments and my Torah. The word translated as teaching in this verse is actually in the Hebrew, Torah. Torah means teaching and instruction. As you can see from the Strong's definition that Torah is also translated as law or Mosaic Law. It is not really the Law as indicated, but should be always rendered as teaching or instruction because that is exactly what it is. The Torah is the teaching of God given to man. Part of the Torah is the Sabbath. In fact the command and the creation of the Sabbath precedes the giving of the Torah back in Genesis as part of creation. So for someone to say that the Sabbath on the seventh day is for the Jew only and that Sunday is the sabbath for the Christian is to effectively change the day that God created and set in place as a sign between Him and His people.

Shemot-Exodus 20:8-11 Remember the Sabbath day to sanctify it. 9 Six days shall you work and accomplish all your work; 10 but the seventh day is Sabbath to Yahweh, your God; you shall not do any work—you, your son, your daughter, your slave, your maidservant, your animal, and your convert within your gates—11 for in six days Yahweh made the heavens and the earth, the sea and all that is in them, and He rested on the seventh day. Therefore, Yahweh blessed the Sabbath day and sanctified it.

1616 גֵר ger {gare} or (fully) גֵיִר geyr (gare)

sojourner, a temporary inhabitant, a newcomer lacking inherited rights, of foreigners in Israel, though conceded rights

The word translated as convert is actually sojourner or foreigner who has chosen to reside among Israel. In doing this the individual has chosen to take upon himself all that Israel has taken upon itself as God's people. God makes it perfectly clear here that there is no other day that can be called the Sabbath day and that trying to mix Sunday worship and elevating Sunday to a place that God has not given to it Himself is to transgress the Torah of God and His teachings as He has set them down and given them to us. To mix the seventh day and the first day together in some way or combination of ways, is as strange a fire to God as was the fire that Nadab and Abihu brought before God and you know what happened to them.

Now many will say, when they read this, that I am being harsh about those who are worshipping on Sunday or calling Sunday the Sabbath. Anyway, they will say, didn't Paul say that we could worship on any day of the week and call any day the Sabbath? **No he did not!** What was the sin of Ephraim? He mixed the God given with the idolatry and called it holy and dedicated it to his gods. Were his gods the God of Abraham, Isaac and Jacob? No! Is the god that is honored on Sunday the same God that created the seventh day and called it the Sabbath day? Think about it people.

How can Ephraim ever hope to make Judah jealous and to have Judah seek after what he has if Ephraim will not give up those things that made God angry with him in the first place! Many say what harm is there in worshipping on Sunday? After all as long as we honor Him on some day isn't that what counts? Then what was the purpose in God creating the Sabbath Day in the first place, if we can change it to any day that we choose to?

Shemot-Exodus 31:12-17 Yahweh said to Moses, saying 13 `Now you, speak to the Children of Israel, saying 'However, you must observe My Sabbaths, for it is a sign between Me and you for your generations, to know that I am Yahweh, Who makes you holy. 14 You shall observe the Sabbath, for it is holy to you; its desecrators shall be put to death, for whoever does work on it, that soul shall be cut off from among its people. 15 For six days work may be done and the seventh day is a day of complete rest, it is sacred to Yahweh; whoever does work on the Sabbath day shall be put to death.' 16 The Children of Israel shall observe the Sabbath, to make the Sabbath an eternal covenant for their generations. 17 Between Me and the Children of Israel it is a sign forever that in a six-day period Yahweh made heaven and earth, and on the seventh day He rested and was refreshed."

0226 תִּוְּא 'owth {oth}

sign, signal, a distinguishing mark, banner, remembrance, miraculous sign, omen, warning, token, ensign, standard, miracle, proof

Interesting is it not, that the Sabbath is a sign between God and Israel? As you can see in the list of definitions above one of the meanings of the Hebrew word 'oht' is proof. What do you think of that meaning? God is the one who is making the statement in this passage of Scripture so God is the one who is stating that the

The Feasts of YHWH

Sabbath is a sign or is proof of His relationship between Himself and His people—Israel. And He says that **it is the seventh day not the first!** He goes on to say that it is an eternal covenant. We have looked at the Hebrew word before in other articles and have seen that it means just what it says—eternal—forever—has always been and will always be.

So then how can we have the audacity to say that it has been changed and the arrogance to say that it is for the Jews only? That is taking liberty with the word of God that He never intended. The only one that intended this to take place is satan. He desires that the Sabbath day should be changed, because in provoking man to do so he knows that we will be breaking the covenant that Yahweh made with His people. The seventh day Sabbath is a sign of His covenant. It is a covenant that precedes Mount Sinai and goes all the way back to the Creation. Creation itself was capped off with the creation of the Sabbath. It was the highlight, so to speak, of God's work. In giving us the Sabbath, He gave us a taste of what will come when mankind truly enters into that time beyond time when Sabbath peace will reign supreme.

Shemot-Exodus 35:2 On six days, work may be done, but the seventh day shall be holy for you, a day of complete rest for Yahweh; whoever does work on it shall be put to death.

This is a hard thing for us to understand, but one that is necessary for us to come to a complete acceptance of, if we are to realize just how seriously God takes the Sabbath. Yes, I know, that many of you will be saying that if the Sabbath was really the seventh day then those of us who are keeping the Sabbath on the 1st day should be dead. So, you rationalize, that it must be alright to keep the Sabbath on the 1st day. Why is it that you think that God has to strike you down to show you the validity of His Sabbath day? Could this not be one of the things that God will judge you on in that day that He sits in judgment of all of mankind and those who have disregarded His Torah? Think about it long and hard. It could affect your eternal life.

Vayikra-Leviticus 16:31 It is a Sabbath of complete rest for you, and you shall afflict yourselves; an eternal decree.

I have thrown this passage in at this point to show you that God has chosen other days to be equivalent to the Sabbath and should be observed as such. **Remember that it is God who made this choice not us.** And when you study His word you see that He has not created or instructed us to observe any other day of the week or time of the year the same as the weekly Sabbath. The Sabbath day in question in this passage of Scripture is the one of Yom Kippur—The Day of Atonement—one of God's Moedim or Appointed Times. For more on God's Appointed Times please read Vayikra-Leviticus Chapter 23. This chapter contains all of God's Moedim and, lo and behold, the first Moedim in God's list is the seventh day Sabbath.

Vayikra-Leviticus 23:3 For six days labor may be done, and the seventh day is a day of complete rest, a holy convocation, you shall not do any work; it is a Sabbath for Yahweh in all your dwelling places.

Now some have said in defense of worshipping on the seventh day that to worship would be a form of work not rest. This is nothing more than justification for worshipping on Sunday. You can clearly see in this passage that we are instructed to come together in a holy convocation. The Hebrew word for convocation used here is 'mikra.'

4744 אָרַם מִקְרָא' {mik-raw'}

convocation, convoking, reading, a calling together, convocation, sacred assembly, convoking, reading

So how could it be work to worship God, if He is the one who is telling us to gather together to worship Him? That just does not make sense at all. He tells us to rest from our everyday labors and come together in an assembly and worship Him on the seventh day. Any other day than this is an ordinary day and you are not restricted from coming together and worshipping Him, but you cannot call any day the Sabbath unless He has designated it as so.

Vayikra-Leviticus 23:24 Speak to the Children of Israel, saying In the seventh month, on the first of the month, there shall be a rest day for you, a remembrance with shofar blasts, a holy convocation.

Once again we see God setting apart another day to be kept as a Sabbath as in the way of the weekly Sabbath. We see that this is, once again, one of His Moedim—Appointed Times—what Judaism calls Rosh Hashanah or Head of the Year, but Biblically it is called Yom Teruah or Day of the Blast.

Remember that God sets the times, not us. We seem to have a lapse of memory when it comes to understanding that God is the Creator, not us. We create nothing, but adapt that which God has already brought into being or enables us to bring about. Satan cannot create. He just uses what God has already given to us and makes it into his own thing. We do the same. We have taken liberties with what God has given to us. Along with these liberties come responsibility. Have we handled what He has given to us responsibly? One only needs to take a look at what we have done to the Torah and with the Torah. We have interpreted the Torah as we have seen fit saying that we have the authority of God to do so. It is one thing to interpret, it is another matter altogether to throw it out.

Essential to the heart of the Torah are God's covenants—which He declares to be eternal.

Vayikra-Leviticus 25:2-4 Speak to the Children of Israel and say to them When you come into the land that I give you, the land shall observe a Sabbath rest for Yahweh. 3 For six years you may sow your field and for six years you may prune your vineyard; and you may gather in its crop. 4 But the seventh year shall be a complete rest for the land, A Sabbath for Yahweh; your field you shall not sow and your vineyard you shall not prune.

Once again we see instructions from God concerning a Sabbath time. This time it refers to allowing the land to have a Sabbath rest every seven years as we

The Feasts of YHWH

have a day of rest every seven days. In fact when you study Scripture you see that one of the reasons that Israel was exiled from the land was because she did not honor the Sabbath rest for the land. What does that say to us when our society is predicated on the belief of 24/7—24 hours a day seven days a week. Where is the rest that God commands? Should not our example be God and not man? God rested on the seventh day and set it apart and instructed us to do the same thing. How many of us really obey the Sabbath command whether we do it on the seventh day or the first? Do we rest and gather together in a holy convocation for Him or do we begrudgingly give Him maybe an hour or two? Is this honoring the Sabbath day, let alone honoring the right day?

Bamidbar-Numbers 15:32-34 The Children of Israel were in the Wilderness and they found a man gathering wood on the Sabbath day. 33 Those who found him gathering wood brought him to Moses and Aaron, and to the entire assembly. 34 They placed him in custody, for it had not been clarified what should be done to him.

The rabbinical commentary says this about this particular incident: Since the Torah stresses that he was found while committing the sin, the Sages derive that the witnesses had warned him that he was committing a capital offense and he persisted in doing it. This satisfied the halachic requirement that one is not liable to the death penalty unless he ignores a warning and his act is seen by two valid witnesses. Thereupon they brought him to the entire assembly or those who served as Moses' court.

Only the nature and procedure of the death penalty had not been clarified, but they knew, as stated in Exodus 31:14, that Sabbath desecration incurs the death penalty. Had it not been known that Sabbath desecration was a capital offense, the transgressor would not have been executed, because part of the necessary warning is notification of the gravity of the penalty.

The penalty was to be carried out in the presence of the assembly, so that others would see the consequences of sin and be deterred from committing it.

The above is all rabbinic commentary on the passage in question and represents various rabbinical opinions and not just one. Whether you accept the commentary or not, what is being shown here is just how seriously God takes His Sabbath day. It is a sign of His covenant with His people. When our earliest ancestors refused to follow the ways of God, He chose individuals to carry His truth and ultimately He chose a people that He would call His own. This people would place their faith in Him and He would give them His Torah to guide them until the coming of His Son Yeshua. Then it would, through faith in Yeshua and following the Torah, set apart God's people who He had named Israel. Compromise was not in God's instruction. The mixing of clean and unclean together was not His intention. These things were done by man and man alone under the prodding of satan. It was not under the power of the Ruach HaKodesh.

When man begins to tamper or, I should say, alter the word of Yahweh by changing His commands which involve His Sabbaths and Moedim among other things, then we are not just interpreting the Word but we are doing away with His

Word and bringing it to naught. This is not what He allows us to do and when we do this He is not pleased with our efforts. That is because it is not our efforts on His behalf, but it is our efforts on our behalf. It is what we desire and not what He desires.

Devarim-Deuteronomy 5:12-15 Safeguard the Sabbath day to sanctify it, as Yahweh, your God, has commanded you. 13 Six days shall you labor and accomplish all your work; 14 but the seventh day is Sabbath to Yahweh, your God; you shall not do any work—you, your son, your daughter, your slave, your maidservant, your ox, your donkey, and your every animal, and your sojourner within your gates, in order that your slave and your maidservant may rest like you. 15 And you shall remember that you were a slave in the land of Egypt, and Yahweh, your God, has taken you out from there with a strong hand and an outstretched arm; therefore Yahweh, your God, has commanded you to make the Sabbath day.

1616 rj ger {gare} or (fully) rj geyr (gare)

sojourner, a temporary inhabitant, a newcomer lacking inherited rights, of foreigners in Israel, though conceded rights

In the translation of the Bible that I am using the word rendered stranger is translated as convert, but for the sake of faithfulness to the Hebrew translation, I have used stranger. Convert, in my estimation, is a poor translation as it is indicating to us that the stranger or foreigner who resides among Israel has converted to the faith of Israel, but in reality what he has done is not convert but has made teshuvah or has turned back to God from his former practices which were against God's word—the Torah.

Another interesting point in this passage of Scripture is the fact that the Sabbath rest is extended to and expected to be kept by the servants or slaves of the Israelites. This brings us into a new understanding of the application of the Sabbath rest. The Sabbath rest applies to all Israel and that includes any and all persons residing in Israel and even down to the animals. In other words all mankind including the animal kingdom shall keep the Sabbath day. **No exceptions!**

2 Chronicles 36:21 This was in fulfillment of the word of Yahweh spoken by Jeremiah, until the land would be appeased of its Sabbatical yeas—all the years of its desolation it rested, to the completion of seventy years.

The rabbinical commentary on this passage has this to say: Most of Jeremiah's fifty-two chapters warned of the impending Destruction and Exile. Leviticus 26:34-35 foretells that in retribution for Israel's failure to observe the Sabbatical years properly, the land would rest because its inhabitants would be banished. The Sages teach that seventy such years were violated, and this exile lasted for seventy years.

What we now see is that the Sabbath rest did not apply solely to the people or the animals alone, but was also to apply to the Land itself. Every seven years the land was to be left to rest. One of the main reasons that the Children of Israel were

The Feasts of YHWH

exiled from the Land was because of this violation of the Sabbatical year of rest for the Land. What we learn from this, and the other Scriptures that we have read so far, is that God takes His Sabbath rest seriously. So seriously, in fact, that violation of the Sabbath brings upon the person who does so the death penalty and, in the case of violating the Sabbatical year, exile from the Land.

Now I realize that some will make the comment or observation that if violating the Sabbath day brings the death penalty, then it must be alright for Christianity to observe the Sabbath on the first day of the week because they are not being killed by God. Before one can make that assumption, we need to remember that as most of Ephraim cast off the ways of God they were not killed but dispersed into all the nations of the earth. They lost their identity as Israelites which in many ways could be considered a fate worse than death.

Christianity has lost its identity and has continued to follow the ways of their Ephraimite ancestors in casting off the ways of God. Yes, they have accepted Yeshua as Messiah but they have accepted very little else that God has promised to Israel. First and foremost among the instructions of God is His Sabbath and in that teaching He tells us that His Sabbath day is the seventh day!

Nehemiah 9:14 You made known Your sacred Sabbath to them; and You instructed them with commandments, decrees, and teaching through the hand of Your servant Moses.

4687 h^wcm mitsvah {mits-vaw'}

commandment, commandment (of man), the commandment (of God), commandment (of code of wisdom)

2706 qx choq {khole}

statute, ordinance, limit, something prescribed, due, prescribed task, prescribed portion, action prescribed (for oneself), resolve, prescribed due, prescribed limit, boundary, enactment, decree, ordinance, specific decree, law in general, enactments, statutes, conditions, enactments, decrees, civil enactments prescribed by God

8451 h^wit towrah {to-law'} or hrt torah {to-law'}

law, direction, instruction, instruction, direction (human or divine), body of prophetic teaching, instruction in Messianic age, body of priestly direction or instruction, body of legal directives, law, law of the burnt offering, of special law, codes of law, custom, manner, the Deuteronomic or Mosaic Law

This passage from Nehemiah shows us that the Sabbath is part of the commandments and statutes that are contained in the Torah that God gave to Israel at Mount Sinai by the hand of Moses. And yet we also know that the Sabbath was given prior to Mount Sinai as evidenced in the opening verses of Genesis describing what God created. The Sabbath was God's crowning achievement and capped off Creation.

Sunday Church

Nehemiah 13:15-22 In those days I observed in Judah [people] bringing sheaves and loading them on the donkeys, as well as wine, grapes and figs and every burden, bringing them to Jerusalem on the Sabbath day. I warned them on the day they sold their provisions. 16 [Also, the Tyrians who dwelled there would bring fish and every merchandise and sell [them] on the Sabbath to the people of Judah—and in Jerusalem! 17 So I contended with the aristocrats of Judah, and I said to them, 'What is this wicked thing that you are doing, desecrating the Sabbath day? 18 Did not your ancestors do this, and then our God brought all this evil upon us and upon this city? And now you bring additional wrath against Israel by desecrating the Sabbath!' 19 It happened when the gates of Jerusalem cast shadows before the Sabbath, that I spoke [the order] and the doors were closed, and I spoke [the order] not to open them until after the Sabbath. I stationed some of my servants at the gates, [so that] no burden could come in on the Sabbath. 20 So the merchants and the sellers of every merchandise lodged outside Jerusalem once and then a second time. 21 I warned them, and said to them, 'Why do you lodge across from the wall? If you repeat this, I will send a force against you!' From that time onward they did not come on the Sabbath. 22 Then I told the Levites that they should regularly purify themselves and come as guards of the gates, to sanctify the Sabbath day.

This is one of the most difficult things that I have to deal with as a congregational leader. What I mean is that I have felt that God is dealing with me on this matter concerning what I allow to happen within my two congregations concerning buying and selling on the Sabbath. What I do concerning the books and tapes, etc., that we have to offer to the people, I put out on tables for the people to look at and buy if they so desire? I have them put the money in our offering box on the table and do not handle the money myself. But in the end I have sanctioned buying and selling on the Sabbath day which would have to be considered a violation of God's instructions concerning the Sabbath day.

I have not found a solution to this dilemma as when else would I be able to offer these materials to the people as these materials are good for the people. If I offered them on the days we hold Bible study, the problem that I would have is that only a small portion of the people attend the Bible study. This is no small issue to me as it has been weighing heavy on my mind for some time now.

A probable solution to the problem is to have the people wait until Shabbat is over, once we finish the Havdallah service.

Psalm 9:21-16 1 A psalm, a song for the Sabbath day. 2 It is good to thank Yahweh and to sing praise to Your Name, O Exalted One; 3 to relate Your kindness in the dawn and Your faith in the nights. 4 Upon a ten-stringed instrument and upon lyre, with singing accompanied by a harp. 5 For You have gladdened me, Yahweh, with Your deeds; at the works of Your hands I sing glad song. 6 How great are Your deeds, Yahweh; exceedingly profound are Your thoughts. 7 A boor cannot know nor can a fool understand this 8 When the wicked bloom like grass and all the doers of iniquity blossom, it is to destroy them till eternity. 9 But You remain exalted forever, Yahweh. 10 For behold Your enemies, O Yahweh, for behold, Your enemies shall

The Feasts of YHWH

perish; dispersed shall be all doers of iniquity. 11 You raised my pride as a re'aim's, I was saturated with ever-fresh oil. 12 My eyes have seen my vigilant foes; when those who would harm me rise up against me, my ears have heard. 13 A righteous man will flourish like a date palm, like a cedar in the Lebanon he will grow tall. 14 Planted in the house of Yahweh, in the courtyards of our God they will flourish. 15 They will still be fruitful in old age, vigorous and fresh they will be, 16 to declare that Yahweh is just, my Rock in Whom there is no wrong.

6697 רֶכֶס tsuwr {tsoor} or רֶסֶס tsur {tsoor}

rock, cliff, rocky wall, cliff, rock (with flat surface), block of stone, boulder, rock (specific), rock (of God), rock (of heathen gods), Rock

It is very apparent that this Psalm was written for the Sabbath and it says so at the beginning. And in this Psalm we see how we are to celebrate the Sabbath. We are to sing songs and play instruments and give thanks and praise to the Name of Yahweh. We are to admire what God has done. The Sabbath rest is not for the wicked, because we see in this Psalm that their fate is destruction for all eternity. Only those of Israel can enter into the Sabbath rest that He has given to the people of Israel.

Connected to all of this is the statement at the end of the Psalm that Yahweh is the Rock of Israel. He is the foundation stone upon which Israel is built. We, who are Believers in Yeshua, know that this Rock that is being described here is none other than Yeshua our Messiah—God Himself.

Are we celebrating the Sabbath the way that God intended us to? How many of you are setting the Sabbath day aside to honor Him **all** the day long? Does the Church truly set aside the day that they consider the Sabbath and give the whole time over to Him? Does Judah? Remember that one of the reasons that Judah and Ephraim were punished by Yahweh **is because they did not keep His Sabbaths!** This is not a little thing to God. Honor Him and He will honor us. Disobey Him and change that which He has given to us and be prepared to face His judgment. Remember that it is terrifying to fall into the hands of the Living God.

Yeshayahu-Isaiah 56:2-6 Praiseworthy is the man who does this and the person who grasps it tightly who guards the Sabbath against desecrating it and guards his hand against doing any evil. 3 Let not the foreigner, who has joined himself to Yahweh, speak, saying, 'Yahweh will utterly separate me from His people'; and let not the barren one say, 'Behold I am a shriveled tree.' 4 For thus said Yahweh to the barren ones who observe My Sabbaths and choose what I desire, and grasp My covenant tightly 5 In My house and within My walls I will give them a place of honor and renown, which is better than sons and daughters; eternal renown will I give them, which will never be terminated. 6 And the foreigners who join themselves to Yahweh to serve Him and to love the Name of Yahweh to become servants unto Him, all who guard the Sabbath against desecration, and grasp My covenant tightly.

Verse 4 has some very important words that we need to allow to sink in and pay very close attention to what Yahweh is saying to us. He says...**AND CHOOSE WHAT I DESIRE, AND GRASP MY COVENANT TIGHTLY.** God desires the best for us but we have the free will to choose that which He does not desire for us. It is evident from this passage of Scripture that one of the foremost desires of Yahweh is that we observe His Sabbath. He and He alone has applied the title of Sabbath to those days that He has chosen. Among those days are the weekly Sabbath and those Sabbaths that are part of or stand alone as one of His moedim or Appointed Times. **He has not**, anywhere else in His word, chosen any other day that He has called a Sabbath and that means most significantly the first day of the week or what we commonly now call Sunday. Nowhere in His word, both Old and New Testaments, does He address the first day of the week as anything special nor did He ever intend it to be so. To apply the title of Lord's Day or Resurrection Day to Sunday is to elevate that day out of the other six to something that God never intended.

He chose the days and times that we were to hold apart and honor in a special way that He chose. He did not do this with the first day nor any other day of the week other than the 7th Day Sabbath. When we understand this fundamental teaching of God, we will understand how it all fits into His plan and not ours.

Isaiah 58:13-14 If you restrain your foot because it is the Sabbath; refrain from accomplishing your own needs on MY holy day; if you proclaim the Sabbath 'a delight,' and the holy [day] of Yahweh 'honored,' and you honor it by not engaging in your own affairs, from seeking your own needs or discussing the forbidden—14 then you will delight in Yahweh, and I will mount you astride the heights of the world; I will provide you the heritage of your forefather Jacob, for the mouth of Yahweh has spoken.

When we change the Sabbath day, we are doing our own thing, not His! When we do our own thing, we are doing what Ephraim and Judah both have done time and time again in that we have changed the ways of Yahweh to suit our needs rather than what is pleasing to God. Judah has returned to Torah and to God's ways, but lost the Spirit along the way as well as being blinded to the truth of Yeshua. The people of Ephraim found Yeshua but made Him over into someone that was pleasing to them rather than accepting Him for who He was and is. While Judah has attempted to stay the course in Yahweh's Moedim, Ephraim has rejected His Moedim and created his own, much in the same way that Ephraim/Israel of old did after splitting from Judah. Now it has come to the point where the days that Ephraim has created on her own are now being used as the benchmark against which all other Believers are being tested. **That which God declared unclean has now been made clean by man and not by God.**

Isaiah 66:23 It shall be that at every New Moon and on every Sabbath all mankind will come to prostrate themselves before Me, says Yahweh.

Yahweh declared the seventh day to be the Sabbath Day and some of the Moedim. He did not declare the first day to be the 'new' Sabbath. Everything He did He did by using that which He had created, not that which man had. Yes, Yeshua

The Feasts of YHWH

rose from the dead on the first day of the week **but** in fulfillment of the Festival of First Fruits—Hag HaBikkurim — hence the connection to Rav Shaul's many references to Yeshua being the first fruits from the dead. This does not make the first day anything special as it was in fulfillment of one of Yahweh's Moedim that came to pass on that day. Anything else accorded to that day is of man's creation not Yahweh's.

Jeremiah 17:21-23 Thus said Yahweh 'Beware for your souls; do not carry a burden on the Sabbath day to bring it into the gates of Jerusalem. 22 And do not bring a burden out from your houses on the Sabbath day; you shall not do any [manner of] work. Sanctify the Sabbath day as I commanded your forefathers.' 23 But they did not listen and did not incline their ear; they stiffened their neck, in order not to hear and in order not to accept rebuke.

It has always been attributed to the Jewish people that they are stiff-necked and stubborn while that description should be applied equally to **ALL** of Israel—both Judah and Ephraim. Being stiff-necked and stubborn is not something that describes just Judah, for I have met many of Ephraim who fit the same description. How many of Ephraim and those who have joined themselves to Ephraim keep the Sabbath Day the way Yahweh instructed us to keep it, even if they are keeping it on the wrong day? Do they completely set apart that day to Him or do they figure that giving Him an hour or so is enough? The Jewish people may go overboard at times, but they are trying to honor Him totally.

Yes, Judah is the elder son in the parable of the prodigal son and when Ephraim tries to return Judah gets angry and asks his Father why have you allowed him to come back after he squandered the inheritance you gave to him and turned his back on you and your ways? The Father answers that all that He has left is given to Judah, but that his brother has returned to His Father's house and we must accept him back with no animosity or anger. When Ephraim repents of his ways and comes home, Judah must open the door and welcome him back. The Father desires this and the Son gives us the ability to do this. Our love for the Father and the Son given to us through the Ruach—the Spirit will help pave the way home for Ephraim.

Ezekiel 46:1 Thus said the Lord Yahweh/the Mighty One 'The gate of the inner courtyard that faces eastward shall be closed during the six days of labor, but on the Sabbath day it shall be opened, and on the day of the New Moon it shall be opened.'

In order for us to change the seventh day Sabbath to the first day we would have to undo all of Scripture from Genesis through Revelation including all of the prophecies that are tied to the seventh day Sabbath. Maybe you want to tamper with what God has put in place, but I certainly do not. Do you notice how closely at times the Sabbath day and the New Moon are tied together? How many of us keep the New Moon as Yahweh instructs? There are many things that Yahweh commands us to do that we simply just ignore. We all need to develop better habits concerning the ways of the Lord.

Mattityahu-Matthew 12:8 For the Son of Man is Lord even of the Sabbath.

Sunday Church

The power and authority over the Sabbath day is given to the Messiah, the Son of Man, the Son of God. It is into His hands that the authority is given, because He was the instrument that the Father used to create all things. The authority over the Sabbath was not given to us. When authority is given to man, we tend to abuse it. And in doing that we abuse His creation. The Holy Roman Catholic or just plain Roman Church claimed that as the true church of God it had the authority to change the Sabbath day and yet it also has admitted that it knew that the seventh day is the Biblical Sabbath day. So what has man done to the ways of Yahweh? And while the rest of Christianity rebukes the ways of the Catholic Church, they still cling to many of its creations like the Sunday Sabbath, Christmas, Good Friday and Easter and many other practices that the Catholic Church brought into being, not the early Believers of the Book of Acts.

Mark 12:1 They went into K'far-Nachum (Capernaum), and on Shabbat Yeshua went into the synagogue and began teaching.

Mark 6:2 On Shabbat he started to teach in the synagogue, and many who heard him were astounded.

In both of these passages from the New or Renewed Testament, we see that Yeshua was in the synagogue on the Shabbat. Since synagogue is always associated with the Jewish people and the Jewish people do not consider the first day to be the Sabbath, then Yeshua was teaching in the synagogue on the seventh day Sabbath. If you want to disregard the Tanach (Hebrew Scriptures or Old Testament), here you have New or Renewed Testament confirmation that Yeshua observed the seventh day Sabbath. If we are called to imitate our Messiah, is this not in all things that He did?

First and foremost is our call to follow Yeshua our Messiah in **ALL** that He said and did. So in that understanding, we are called to imitate Him in all that He taught us, not only through His teachings, but also through His actions.

Luke 41:6 Now when he went to Natzeret, where he had been brought up, on Shabbat he went to the synagogue as usual.

1486 eqw etho {eth'-o}

to be accustomed, used, that which is wont, usage, custom

The word translated as usual here is also translated as custom or, in this meaning, accustomed to. So it is speaking about the usual things that Yeshua did in His everyday life. According to this and other passages of Scripture, He was accustomed to going to the synagogue on the Sabbath day which was the seventh day. So if it was good enough for Yeshua, why isn't it good enough for us?

Luke 43:1 He went down to K'far-Nachum, a town in the Galil, and made a practice of teaching them on Shabbat.

Luke 6:6 On another Shabbat, when Yeshua had gone into the synagogue and was teaching...

Luke 13:10 Yeshua was teaching in one of the synagogues on Shabbat.

The Feasts of YHWH

So far we have not seen any indication that our Messiah Yeshua, the Author of all and the Living Torah—the Word made flesh, did anything other than worship on the seventh day, the Shabbat. Once again I say to you, if it was good enough for Yeshua, it should be good enough for us. When one says to me, and they have, that what Paul wrote is scripture and if Paul indicates that one can worship on the first day as the Shabbat that that is from the inspiration of God so it is the word of God, how can that be if it goes against the words and actions of the Living Word Yeshua?

Could this be what is said to be another gospel or another Yeshua? Shaul-Paul would not go against Yeshua as He knew Yeshua to be God. He would not violate the word of God to come up with his own interpretation. So the bottom line is that if Yeshua was worshipping on the seventh day then shouldn't we?

Acts 13:14 But the others went on from Perga to Pisidian Antioch, and on the Shabbat they went into the synagogue and sat down.

Now this passage is talking about Shaul and those who were with him. Once again we see the Scriptural evidence that Shaul worshipped on the Sabbath day. He did nothing against the Torah as he said he did not.

Acts 13:27 For the people living in Yerushalayim and their leaders did not recognize who Yeshua was or understand the message of the Prophets read every Shabbat...

Acts 13:42 As they left, the people invited Shaul and Bar-Nabba to tell them more about these matters the following Shabbat.

Acts 13:44 The next Shabbat, nearly the whole city gathered together to hear the message about the Lord.

Interesting enough if you really take a close look at these passages of Scripture one of the connections to the Shabbat is the reading of the Torah and the Prophets. If you take Acts 13:44 at face value you would have to assume that even those who were not Jewish showed up at the synagogue the following Shabbat to hear Shaul share about Yeshua. So the seventh day was a day of rest to apparently more than just the Jewish people. Could there have been perhaps some of the ten tribes thrown in the mix here?

Acts 15:21 For from the earliest times, Moshe has had in every city those who proclaim him, with his words being read in the synagogues every Shabbat.

This is a very oft ignored Scripture because in it we see not only the mention of being in the synagogues every Shabbat **but** that Moshe was being proclaimed. What does it mean that Moshe was being proclaimed? The Torah was being proclaimed in connection with the seventh day Shabbat. The Shabbat that Yahweh had created as the seventh day—**not the first!**

Acts 17:2 According to his usual practice, Shaul went in; and on three Shabbatot he gave them drashot from the Tanakh.

Do you see the connection between Shaul's usual customs and those of Yeshua? They both went to the synagogues on the Sabbath and taught about Torah. So for one to claim that Shaul did otherwise would go against what Shaul did in the everyday course of his life, just as Yeshua had done.

Acts 18:4 Shaul also began carrying on discussions every Shabbat in the synagogue, where he tried to convince both Jews and Greeks.

So we see that both Jews and Greeks were in the synagogue on the seventh day—the Sabbath day. How can one even intimate that Shaul or for that matter the other Believers did anything other than honor the seventh day as the Sabbath? That would fly in the reality of the Scriptures that we are reading here.

Hebrews 4:4 For there is a place where it is said, concerning the seventh day, "And God rested on the seventh day from all his works [Genesis 22]."

Shaul makes the connection back to the Creation account and what it has to say concerning the Sabbath. He is establishing the seventh day Sabbath as being created by God thereby saying that only God can change it **not man!**

Exodus 31:13 Now you speak to the Children of Israel, saying 'However, you must observe My Sabbaths, for it is a sign between Me and you for your generations, to know that I am Yahweh, Who makes you holy.'

0226 תִּיָּא 'owth {oth}

sign, signal, a distinguishing mark, banner, remembrance, miraculous sign, omen, warning, token, ensign, standard, miracle, proof

The seventh day Sabbath is a sign, a distinguishing mark, a banner, a remembrance, proof of the covenant between God and the Children of Israel. If the Church's claim that it is the new Israel is true then one of those signs would be its observance of the seventh day Sabbath. Is it? If the Church is who it claims, the new Israel, then does that mean that the seventh day Sabbath is a sign for the Jews and the first day a sign for the Church? If that is so then one of those days is not the Sabbath and a sign from God. Since God never mentions the first day as being the Sabbath day, then we must assume from Scripture that the first day is false and therefore it is not a sign of God's covenant with His people.

So then we must come to the conclusion that the seventh day is still the Sabbath day and that His covenant between Himself and His people is marked by that day. So, the Church cannot be Israel. Judah can be part of Israel though he needs to come to faith in Yeshua to remain a part of the Olive tree that is Israel. Ephraim must return to his Biblical heritage in order to remain part of the Olive tree that is the reunited, redeemed people of the covenant—Israel!

Leviticus 19:3 Every man Your mother and father shall you revere, and My Sabbaths shall you observe—I am Yahweh, your God.

Leviticus 19:30 My Sabbaths shall you observe and My Sanctuary shall you revere—I am Yahweh.

Leviticus 26:2 My Sabbaths shall you observe and My Sanctuary shall you revere—I am Yahweh.

God has a tendency to repeat Himself, but it must be something that is very near and dear to His heart for Him to do so. So I have to conclude that the Sabbath is something that God does not take lightly. He talks about it enough.

The Feasts of YHWH

Leviticus 26:34-35 Then the land will be appeased for its sabbaticals during all the years of its desolation, while you are in the land of your foes; then the land will rest and it will appease for its sabbaticals. All the years of its desolation it will rest, whatever it did not rest during your sabbaticals when you dwelled upon her.

The important thing here is that even the land was entitled to a Sabbath rest of its own. That was one of the things that caused God to punish the Children of Israel. They did not give the land its sabbatical rest. All of God's creation was entitled to rest on the Sabbath and the land was given a rest every seven years besides the weekly Sabbath rest when no work was to be done.

Leviticus 26:43 The Land will be bereft of them; and it will be appeased for its sabbaticals having become desolate of them; and they must gain appeasement for their iniquity; because they were revolted by My ordinances and because their spirit rejected My decrees.

Are we not doing this same thing today? Are we not rejecting His ordinances, not just by physically turning away from them, but by rejecting the commandments of God in our spirits? Yahweh is a holy and just God and He must turn His face away from His people until the time comes when they begin to turn back to Him and to His ways—His Torah! Contained within the Torah is the teaching of the Sabbath day and what He expects from us on this day. He set the pattern we are called to follow it. For if no one knows better than God, then who are we to refuse to follow Him?

Isaiah 11:3 Bring your worthless meal-offering no longer; it is incense of abomination to Me. [As for] the New Moon and Sabbath, and your calling of convocations, I cannot abide mendacity with solemn assembly.

As defined by the dictionary, mendacity means untruthful or false. Taken in context with what Yahweh is saying here is that He cannot stand our convocations in His name because we are hypocrites. We do one thing and say something else. And yet has this not been the problem with us all along? Instead of doing as He has instructed us, we choose our own way and then say that it is dedicated to Him and in our own minds we have sanctified that which is not holy to Him or what He told us to do.

Both Ephraim and Judah are guilty of this. We need to stop pointing fingers at one another and take a look in the mirror and examine ourselves first before we dare point to another.

Lamentations 2:6 He stripped His booth like a garden, He destroyed His place of assembly. Yahweh made Zion oblivious of festival and Sabbath, and in His fierce anger He spurned king and Kohen.

Turn away from Yahweh and do not expect that He will bless you if you reject His ways. Now some will say that if this is true then the Church must be doing what He wants because He is blessing the Church. If we take this premise as being true how do we explain that Judah, who for the most part has rejected Yeshua and Torah, is kept intact. No one would argue that His hand is not upon the state of Israel, because how else do you explain its miraculous rebirth and being kept safe

despite the attacks of its enemies? Is it not possible that Yahweh can bless us in spite of ourselves? Yet how much more could we have if we just surrendered ourselves to Him and followed His ways, which includes the Sabbath.

Ezekiel 20:10-12 So I took them out of the land of Egypt and brought them to the Wilderness. 11 I gave them My decrees and My laws I made known to them, through which, if a man fulfills them, he will live through them. 12 I also gave them My Sabbaths, to be a sign between Me and them, to know that I am Yahweh Who sanctifies them.

Ezekiel 44:24 Concerning a disagreement, they shall stand in judgment, and shall adjudicate them according to My laws; they shall safeguard My teachings and My decrees regarding all My appointed times and they shall sanctify My Sabbaths.

We know what happened to the Children of Israel in the Wilderness. Because of their disobedience, those who had come out of Egypt 20 years of age and older were to die in the wilderness and would not enter into the Promised Land. Of that generation only Caleb and Joshua would enter into the Promised Land. Not even Moses would enter in.

In Caleb and Joshua, we have Judah and Ephraim standing side by side as they leave one home for a promise. They remain faithful to God and His commands and remain faithful to one another. Would it be that in our day Judah and Ephraim would once again stand side by side as equals partaking of the promises and the covenant mediated through Yeshua the Messiah.

The Sabbath is one of the signs of those promises and that covenant that Yahweh made between Himself and with Israel. Circumventing the Sabbath and changing it is changing His Word and His covenant. To do this one must be prepared for the consequences that go with adding to or taking away from the word of Yahweh. Are you prepared to walk this path? Do you place your faith in the word of man or in the Word of God? He sets the times and their seasons. He created the physical and spiritual worlds. He is the source of all life.

He gave the Sabbath day as a sign between Him and us. It is the seal of His covenant, a sign of His word. He has not changed so His sign has not changed. Only man changes and therein lies the problem.

The Feasts of YHWH

-15-

Christmas

Christmas is a holiday that can cause much ado about nothing. It can be a source of heartache and a bone of contention between Messianics and Christians as well as between ourselves and our loved ones who may not believe in Yeshua but will celebrate Christmas for all the wrong reasons.

Despite what many may claim or say, Christmas **is not** a Biblically/Scripturally ordained festival of YHWH. I have reproduced, with his permission, a chapter from John McKee's book *Torah In the Balance, Volume I* John deals with the issue of the Christmas holiday in a very even-handed manner.

I was one of the proof readers for John's book and I highly recommend it to you as well as his other books. For a list of John's books check out his website at < www.tnnonline.net > .

The Christmas Challenge

by John K. McKee

reproduced from Chapter 21 of *Torah In the Balance, Volume I*

No matter who you are or what religious ideology you hold to, the Winter holiday season involving Christmas will be a challenge. It is first a challenge to non-Believers as they are continually presented with the message of the birth of Yeshua the Messiah (Jesus Christ) into a world that is lost in sin. Secondly, the Christmas holiday is a challenging time for many Christians who seek to remember the birth of our Savior, but yet at the same time all too often indulge themselves in overly frivolous gift-giving. And thirdly, the Christmas season is a challenge to Messianic Believers, as we choose not to celebrate this holiday.

The Reformation certainly did a great deal of work eliminating many non-Biblical Roman Catholic traditions and theologies from the faith. Today, Protestants fortunately believe in salvation by grace through faith and in the priesthood of all Believers, rejecting the claim that the pope is the "vicar of Christ" on Earth. Many recognize that if something is primarily Catholic it should be tested against the

The Feasts of YHWH

inspired Word of God to see if it is truly Biblical. The Bible does not tell us to pray to saints or confess sin to a priest. Scripture does not teach transubstantiation.² Furthermore, Scripture does not tell us that Mary, the mother of our Lord Yeshua, is the “Mother of God,” for Yahweh has always been and ever will be.

Many Protestants pride themselves on being *Sola Scriptura*—Scripture Only. However, it is an unfortunate reality that many Protestants today still adhere, unknowingly, to non-Biblical *Catholic* tradition. There are many practices and traditions among those who claim to serve the Messiah that cannot be found in Scripture, but rather on customs established long since the death of the Apostles and early Believers.

All too often, it has been our unfortunate observation that many in the Messianic community strongly and vehemently criticize those in mainstream Christianity during the Winter holidays. Statements along the lines of “Christmas is a pagan holiday” are all too commonplace and it turns many away from hearing the truth about something about a holiday which cannot be found in Scripture, but yet is seemingly good. For many Christians believe that when you denounce Christmas, you are denying the Biblical reality of the virgin birth of our Lord and Savior. Certainly, Loukas/Luke 2 is a part of our Holy Scriptures, and the miracle of the birth of Yeshua is Scriptural. In an effort to stress balance, grace, and understanding during the Winter season among both Christians and Messianic Believers, we offer our analysis of “the Christmas challenge.”

A Brief History of Christmas

Why is it asserted among many Christians that if there are those who do not celebrate Christmas, then obviously such people cannot be true Believers? Are we dangerous cultists who do not believe in the virgin birth of the Messiah?

Obviously, Loukas/Luke chapter 2, which fully details the miraculous birth of Yeshua the Messiah, the Savior of all mankind, is something that none of us should ever deny or consider unimportant. If Yeshua had not been born, He would not have grown up to become the perfect sacrifice for our sin.

But what of the holiday we in the West now call “Christmas”? Where did it come from? If its celebration is not specified in Holy Scripture itself, then how did we get it?

Author Susan E. Richardson makes some interesting observations in her book *Holidays & Holy Days*:

“During the Roman Empire, people usually celebrated the birthdays of rulers and other outstanding people, though not necessarily on the exact date of their birth. The early Christians’ desire to honor Christ’s birth may come from the fact that they gave him the title and other honors that pagans gave to the ‘divine’ emperors. These

² Transubstantiation: the belief that during the communion service the bread and wine actually become the body and blood of Messiah.

Christians lived in a culture where the birth of a ruler was a major celebration. What could be more natural than celebrating the birth of the King of Kings?

“Despite the logic of this, Christmas has long been surrounded by controversy. In A.D. 245, Origen wrote that even to consider observing it was a sin. Early Christians in Armenia and Syrians accused Roman Christians of sun worship for celebrating Christmas on December twenty-fifth.”³

We would probably **not** fall into the same category as Origen saying that commemorating the birth of the King of Kings is “sin,” because if that were the case then we should probably strike Loukas/Luke 2 from our Bibles. However, we can find serious problems celebrating it at a time that has historically been associated with the honoring of pagan deities, for Richardson later comments that “pagan celebrations held on December 25 included Mesopotamian celebrations for Marduk, Greek ones for Zeus, and Roman *Saturnalia* in honor of Saturn.”⁴

The celebration of Messiah’s birth on December 25 came as a result of generations of Believers, long after the death of the Apostles, incorporating pagan holidays and celebrations into the faith. Without any doubt, the motives of many of these Believers were sincere, as they wanted to “adapt their faith” for the heathen around them and use Biblical overtones to the holidays to spread the gospel. However, such adaptations came at a time after the destruction of Jerusalem when anti-Semitism was at a serious high in the Roman Empire. So, anything perceived as “Jewish,” namely the Biblical feasts of Vayikra/Leviticus 23, would be looked down upon and not be observed. Substitute and replacement holidays had to be created instead and Christmas is a reality to this very day.

How Christmas, of course, has been celebrated over the centuries has been determinant on a variety of world regions and Christian denominations. The name Christmas comes from “Christ’s mass,” or a service that is held in Roman Catholic churches. Many Protestants realize many of the non-Biblical elements of the Roman Catholic service certainly derive from paganism, the foremost of which is transubstantiation, so the name Christmas has already to an extent been *seriously* tainted. What is perhaps more disturbing is that other such “masses” exist on the Roman Catholic service calendar, such as Michaelmass, a service to be held for the Archangel Michael, which we must admit is very strange.

What About the Christmas Tree?

For many Protestants throughout the centuries, Christmas was not like we consider it today. For those living in Great Britain and colonial America, Christmas Day was a very serious occasion where a family would attend church services, sing hymns about the birth of Messiah, and return home and sometimes would exchange small gifts in remembrance of the three Magi who gave gifts to Yeshua. There would

³ Susan E. Richardson, *Holidays & Holy Days* (Ann Arbor, MI: Vine Books, 2001), 119.

⁴ *Ibid.*, 123.

The Feasts of YHWH

have been no Christmas tree. Up until the mid-Nineteenth Century, Christmas trees were unheard of in either Britain or the United States.

“The earliest recorded account of a Christmas tree is from 1605 in Strassburg, Germany. By the 1700s, the custom was firmly imbedded in Germany, and Christmas trees were mainly a German custom. When German settlers came to Pennsylvania in the early nineteenth century, they brought the Christmas tree with them.

“President Franklin Pierce set up the first Christmas tree inside the White House in 1856. By 1877, the custom was well established. In 1923, President and Mrs. Calvin Coolidge began the custom of lighting the National Christmas tree on the White House grounds.

“In England, Prince Albert [of the German principality Saxe-Coburg, and husband to Queen Victoria,] popularized the Christmas tree in the 1840s. The English people had heard of Christmas trees before then, but his decision to set up a tree for his family spread the custom.”⁵

The most common modern day association with Christmas is obviously the Christmas tree. Its usage for “honoring Messiah,” of course, is not detailed anywhere in the Bible. Rather, it was a tradition introduced from Germany into Britain and the United States and has become quite popular all around the modern world. Unfortunately for those Christmas tree lovers, Holy Scripture strongly prohibits us from introducing decorated trees into our home for adoration. Yirmayahu/Jeremiah 10:2-5 clearly states,

“Thus said Yahweh: Do not learn the way of the nations; do not be frightened by the signs of the heavens, though the nations are frightened by them. For the practices of the nations are foolish; [for one takes] wood that he cut down from the forest, fashioned by an artisan with an adze, embellishes it with silver and gold, fastens it with nails and with hammers so that it does not come apart. They are like a sculpted palm tree—they do not speak; they are carried about for they cannot walk. Do not fear them; for they can do no harm, nor can they do good.”

The “wood” or *etz* (#[]) is very clearly speaking of a “tree.”⁶ Many Christians have astutely observed that these Bible verses speak of pagan idolatry. Now are we accusing Christians today, who truly know Messiah, of participating in idol worship? No. But let us also be aware of what the Torah tells us:

“You shall not plant for yourselves an idolatrous tree—any tree—near the Altar of Yahweh, your God, that you shall make for yourself” (Devarim/Deuteronomy 16:21).

Certainly, we cannot accuse all Believers of participating in idolatrous worship of trees. However, the Word of God clearly prohibits us from adorning trees in our home such as this and these quotations from Jeremiah and Deuteronomy, respectively, are the most explicit example of such a thing as the Christmas tree. For

⁵ Ibid., 132.

⁶ Strong’s #H6086.

even if Believers who in ignorance have Christmas trees in their homes do not worship them, as the author has many fond personal Christmas memories and former Christmas trees of his family are no doubt still growing tall around the house of his youth, what of non-Believers who have Christmas trees? What of the non-Believers who have rejected salvation in Messiah Yeshua (Christ Jesus) who celebrate Christmas by indulging themselves? What is the god that they worship during the Christmas season? Richardson observes,

“Using trees as part of religious celebrations goes back well beyond the first recorded Christmas tree. Egyptians decorated green date palms indoors for winter solstice rites. Romans hung trinkets on pine trees during *Saturnalia* and used evergreens for *Natalis Sol Invicti*. In Britain, Druids placed candles, cakes, and gilded apples in tree branches as offerings.”⁷

Some Believers when confronted with the truth forbidding Christmas trees have stated things along the lines of, “In many cultures, trees symbolized life,”⁸ justifying their usage of something that has its roots in paganism. In addition to just the Christmas tree, an evergreen is employed in various decorations throughout the Christmas season. Unfortunately, this is not what Holy Scripture says. “For the life of any creature—its blood represents its life, so I say to the Children of Israel, ‘You shall not consume the blood of any creature; for the life of any creature is its blood, whoever consumes it will be cut off’” (Vayikra/Leviticus 17:14[11]). Our eternal life is neither found nor represented in evergreen trees but rather in the shed blood of Messiah Yeshua in which “we have confidence to *pass through* the entrance to the holy place by the blood of Yeshua” (Ivrim/Hebrews 10:19) and ask God the Father for forgiveness for our sins.

The argument that to the ancients evergreen trees symbolized life and thus we should have them in our homes is patently weak. What did the ancients do when they celebrated? They held wild orgies where they would take hallucinogenic drugs, consume vast amounts of alcohol, and have illicit group sex. Following in their pattern, should we do these things when we celebrate? **God forbid!** Scripture clearly tells us “do not get drunk with wine” (Ephesians 5:18) and “let the *marriage* bed be undefiled; for fornicators and adulterers God will judge” (Ivrim/Hebrews 13:4). Certainly we should rejoice in our Messiah Yeshua and remember Him every day of the year, but we should not knowingly participate in things that are directly forbidden in Scripture and are connected to idolatry.

We cannot judge the heart intent of those who have Christmas trees in their homes during the Winter season. But Scripture forbids this practice. Christmas trees have nothing to do with the birth of our Messiah; they are rather a vain tradition that

⁷ Richardson, 130.

Please note that these comments specifically speak of trees involving religious ceremonies; they do not speak of having potted trees or plants for decoration as you would find in many public buildings throughout the year, *not* including Christmas trees.

⁸ L. Smith (2001). *The History of Christmas*. Christian Study Center. Retrieved 02 December, 2001 from < <http://www.christianstudycenter.com> > .

The Feasts of YHWH

has been adapted by Christianity based on paganism. Certainly, the many Christians who have Christmas trees certainly do not worship them, but knowing their origin should hopefully be conviction enough to repent of this sin. For if it is acceptable to have Christmas trees in one's house, is it likewise acceptable to have a statue of Buddha, Shiva, or some other pagan god?⁹

Santa Claus is a Child's Myth

We do not feel the need at all to address Santa Claus and the "eight tiny reindeer." Such things are as factual as the Tooth Fairy and the Easter Bunny. They are child's myths and have no place among Believers, even in seemingly "Biblical" celebrations such as Christmas. (The science of Star Trek is more real than Santa Claus.) The propagation of the existence of Santa Claus during Christmas time to young children and the revelation of him not being real in later years has resulted in many people also denying the truth of Yeshua (Jesus) being real as well. Even when this writer's family celebrated Christmas many years ago as strong fundamentalist Methodists, we did not play the "Santa game." Why should others?

Is Christmas Mentioned in Scripture?

Is there any specific reference to Christmas in Scripture? As we have already stated in this chapter, there are many prophecies that speak of the virgin birth of our Messiah and then Scriptures that speak of the event itself—but this is *not* Christmas itself, per se.

But is the holiday of Christmas mentioned in Scripture at all? Some Christians would actually say yes—and if it is indeed Christmas, then it is in a place that should get us all very concerned.

"And their corpses *will lie* in the street of the great city which is spiritually called Sodom and Mitzrayim, where also their Lord was crucified, and those from the peoples and tribes and tongues and nations *will* look at their corpses for three and a half days, and will not permit their corpses to be laid in a tomb. And those who dwell on the Earth *will* rejoice over them and make merry; and they will send gifts to one another, because these two prophets tormented those who dwell on the Earth. And after three and a half days the breath of life from God came into them, and they stood on their feet; and great fear fell upon those who were beholding them" (Revelation 11:8-10).

When the author was taking a correspondence prophecy course several years ago, he was taught in eschatology classes that after the two witnesses of Revelation are killed that the holiday of Christmas will occur. This is based on the assumption that since the world will "make merry; and they will send gifts to one another," that it

⁹ It is interesting to point out that many Anglican clergymen living in India during the time of British imperial rule actually had statues of Hindu idols in their homes. Would such people be in violation of the Second Commandment? Clearly yes. So why is there is a strong attempt by Christians to keep the Christmas tree? Is it out of a love for non-Biblical *tradition*?

must be Christmas time. While it is more likely that this is referring to some future ecumenical holiday where people exchange gifts and not “Christmas” itself, suffice it to say, the fact that many Christians believe that this holiday is Christmas is extremely disturbing.

If the only reference to “Christmas” in the Bible that Christians can present us with is in a passage that speaks about the murder of Yahweh’s two witnesses, then we should most certainly reevaluate our participation in it. Already, many secularists are doing their best to “eliminate Christ from Christmas,” which most Christians would view as a sign of apostasy—but Christmas is not a Biblical holiday so technically it is not. But this might be what is necessary to encourage Believers to participate in the God-given festivals as specified in Vayikra/Leviticus 23, rather than in substitute holidays that are tainted by false practices.

Should Chanukah Be Celebrated as an Alternative to Christmas?

Many Messianic Believers who decide to give up the Christmas tree and the trappings of the holiday want to know what they should do. An alternative that many discover is the celebration of the Jewish holiday of Chanukah, which occurs in December around the same time as Christmas. But, as has unfortunately been the case, for many Chanukah presents become substitutes for Christmas presents¹⁰ and the birth of the Messiah is something that is readily looked down upon.

It must be readily emphasized that Chanukah, surprisingly to many Christians and some Messianic Believers, is also not a Biblical holiday. Its celebration, like Christmas, has not been mandated in Holy Scripture. Although the story of Chanukah is quite moving, as it speaks of the Maccabees’ defeat of the Syrian Greeks and the rededication of the Temple in approximately 160 B.C.E., it is entirely a Jewish holiday. The events surrounding the story of Chanukah took place long after the division of Ancient Israel into the House of Judah and the House of Ephraim and the Ephraimites had been long since dispersed into the nations by this time. The feasts of Vayikra/Leviticus 23 are for all Israel and are Biblical Israelite *moedim*; the festival of Chanukah is related to events in Jewish history and is a Jewish holiday.

We are certainly not against people celebrating Chanukah, but we must keep it in proper perspective. We must not uplift this celebration over the birth of our Messiah Yeshua, Who many actually believe was conceived around the time of Chanukah. If you decide to celebrate this holiday with your family, do not forget Who the Light of the World is and please remember that this is not an Ephraimite holiday. On the contrary, the Ephraimites who were probably involved in the events of Chanukah were the Syrian Greeks who defiled the Temple by sacrificing a pig in it.

¹⁰ Please note that in saying this we are **not** against giving gifts. We are only making the statement that the indulgence that usually occurs with Christmas gifts is transferred into Chanukah gifts.

The Feasts of YHWH

The only reference in Scripture to Chanukah [the Feast of Dedication, NASB] occurs in Yochanan/John 10:22-23: “At that time Chanukah took place at Yerushalayim; it was winter, and Yeshua was walking in the Temple in the Portico of Shlomo.” These verses do not clearly indicate whether or not Yeshua actually celebrated Chanukah, but by all accounts we may safely assume that He did. But He did not celebrate it the way that it is today with gelt and potato latkes, things which came much later in Eastern European Jewry. Chanukah in the First Century was a national commemoration, much like Fourth of July or V-E or V-J Day celebrations, albeit with strong religious overtones. We should have no problem rejoicing in the historical triumphs of our brother Judah, but likewise we should not uplift them over the miraculous birth of our Lord and Savior, which substantially more Scripture is dedicated to.

Christmas In Perspective

It is an unfortunate predicament that many Messianics who do not celebrate Christmas mercilessly and vehemently criticize Christians who do. This, in the long run, will not work well for the Messianic movement and will turn many Christians off to the truths that Yahweh is restoring to His people through it. Calling Christmas “utterly pagan” will seriously deter the reunification of the two houses of Israel and will not encourage people to reexamine the holiday. It may be true that Christmas is not a Biblical holiday, but by calling it “pagan” many Christians will interpret these statements as meaning that we reject the virgin birth of Messiah Yeshua, which we do not. This writer prefers to simply call Christmas a non-Biblical holiday, which is an accurate description that should not get as many people heated or turned off to the truth as the term “pagan” does.

Fortunately, we serve a Creator Who is much bigger than we are and He looks beyond our many shortcomings. “Yahweh, Slow to Anger, Abundant in Kindness, Forgiver of Iniquity and Willful Sin, and Who cleanses” (Bamidbar/Numbers 14:18). This writer believes that He honors those who celebrate Christmas in ignorance, who do not realize its questionable connections. During the Christmas season, many Christians will seek to please the Lord, and Yahweh, Who is in control of all things, will use nativity scenes and the proclamation of the birth of Messiah Yeshua to bring many to Himself. During the Christmas season, Yahweh will also no doubt look beyond the contentious attitudes of many Messianic Believers who unwarrantedly criticize Christians without love, grace, or mercy.

There is also another major aspect to Christmas that we must consider. This is a time of year where many non-Believers, people who are not religious or perhaps do not even believe in God, will continually hear about Jesus Christ, the Messiah Yeshua, the One Who was born in Bethlehem and died for their sin at Calvary. This seldom happens any other time of the year on such a scale. For when was it wrong to readily talk about the birth of Yeshua? If we were to speak about it in the Summer time would we be criticized more then if we talk about it during the Winter? Above all, remember that during this time of year many atheists and agnostics **have to**

hear about God. May we pray that while such people watch a motion picture adaptation of Dickens' *A Christmas Carol*, or a film about the life of Yeshua, or a Nativity play, that our Heavenly Father convicts them and stirs their hearts to repentance. Let us not be a people who criticize Christmas so much that our hostility to the holiday results in us seeing these people before the Great White Throne, as they face the eternal punishment of the Lake of Fire. May we not have their eternal fate on our conscience in such a way!

We Need to be Careful in our Criticism

We as Messianic Believers need to be very tactful during the Christmas holidays. We should not vehemently and cruelly criticize those who celebrate Christmas, lest they think we are denying Messiah's birth. We must not be "glass half-empty" people who only emphasize negative aspects of the holiday. For many "Messianics" who honor the Biblical feasts of Vayikra/Leviticus 23 have been found wanting all too often by **excluding** Messiah Yeshua's substance in them. At many "Messianic" Passovers the sacrifice of Yeshua at Calvary is barely spoken of. Shavuot is all about Yahweh's Torah **and** His Holy Spirit being poured out in the Upper Room, and the latter is seldom talked about at many commemorations. At *Yom Teruah* and *Yom Kippur*, the gathering of the saints and the return of Yeshua on the Day of the LORD/*Yom Yahweh*, are not usually emphasized. And, we might just find it appropriate to *emphasize* His birth during *Sukkot*, the Feast of Tabernacles, instead of the false Christian practice of honoring it on December 25. Furthermore, how many "Messianic" Chanukah celebrations will be devoid of honoring the Light of the World and instead uplifting gelt and the dreidl?

What you do during the Winter holiday season is ultimately up to you and is between you and God, whether you celebrate Christmas, Chanukah, or do nothing at all. This writer cannot be the Holy Spirit for you because God Himself is the One Who must judge the intentions of the heart.

The Christmas challenge for Messianic Believers is not going away any time soon, so we must endeavor to be as loving and grace-filled as possible when showing Christians the problems with Christmas. We must not forget the words of our Messiah Yeshua Who said "for with whatever judgment you judge, you will be judged; and by your standard of measure, it will be measured to you" (Mattityahu/Matthew 7:2). If we mercilessly attack people for celebrating Christmas, who in their minds are honoring the birth of the King of Kings, we will be mercilessly attacked by the same for honoring Yahweh's *moedim*. We will become part of the problem as opposed to the solution and Satan will have won once again.

The Feasts of YHWH

-16-

Easter

This is how The Software Toolworks Multimedia Encyclopedia describes the holiday of Easter.

The Christian festival of Easter celebrates the RESURRECTION of Yeshua HaMashiach-Jesus Christ. The spring festival has its roots in the Jewish PASSOVER, which commemorates Israel's deliverance from the bondage of Egypt, and in the Christian reinterpretation of its meaning after the crucifixion of Yeshua-Jesus during the Passover of AD c.30 and the proclamation of his resurrection three days later. Early Christians observed Easter on the same day as Passover (14-15 Nisan, a date governed by a lunar calendar). In the 2nd century, the Christian celebration was transferred to the Sunday following the 14-15 Nisan, if that day fell on a weekday. Originally, the Christian Easter was a unitive celebration, but in the 4th century GOOD FRIDAY became a separate commemoration of the death of Messiah-Christ, and Easter was thereafter devoted exclusively to the resurrection.

According to the Venerable Bede, the name Easter is derived from the pagan spring festival of the Anglo-Saxon goddess Eostre, and many folk customs associated with Easter (for example, Easter eggs) are of pagan origin. Easter Day is currently determined as the first Sunday after the full moon on or after March 21. The Eastern Orthodox churches, however, follow the Julian rather than the Gregorian calendar, so their celebration usually falls several weeks later than the Western Easter. Easter is preceded by the period of preparation called LENT.

Reginald H. Fuller

Bibliography: Dix, Gregory, *The Shape of the Liturgy*, 2nd ed. (1945); McArthur, A. A., *The Evolution of the Christian Year* (1953); Perry, C.A., *The Resurrection Promise* (1986)

So you see how man describes the origins of Easter. Even Church sources admit that Easter has pagan roots to it. Easter is described as being the Christian

The Feasts of YHWH

equivalent to the Jewish Passover. We have one very fundamental problem with this assertion. Easter is **not** the equivalent of Passover because Easter celebrates the resurrection of Yeshua and Yeshua rose on the Biblical Festival of First Fruits. Passover would be the equivalent of the Christian holiday of Good Friday.

In the definition given above it equates Easter to the Jewish holiday of Passover. I submit to you here and now that Passover may be celebrated by the Jewish people but it is not, I repeat, it is not solely a Jewish holiday. It is a Festival Biblically appointed by Yahweh Himself and given to **ALL** the Children of Israel. So if Passover is a Biblically appointed Moed of Yahweh, why the need to change it's Scripturally mandated time and change its Scripturally given name?

Could it be the desire of Christianity to separate itself from anything that may have been remotely connected to Judaism and its practices? Could it also have been possible that the Roman Church wanted to incorporate into the Church those peoples who were considered pagan and who did not want to give up their paganistic practices? So by allowing them to continue to celebrate their pagan rites but now telling them that what they were doing was to the glory of Yahweh, somehow made it right?

Is it quite possible that in celebrating Easter and Christmas could we be doing exactly what Israel did when they took to following the gods of other nations yet said that they were doing this to the glory of Yahweh?

I am not going to spend too much time on the issue of Easter. To me it is nothing more than an attempt on the part of man to erase a Biblical Festival that Yahweh Himself commanded us to observe. When we remove ourselves from the ways of Yahweh, we draw further away from His covenant people Israel. Both Judah and Ephraim strayed from the Torah wherein lay the ways of YHWH. In doing this, both houses were punished by Yahweh. Yet He brought Judah back from his exile and now He is calling out to Ephraim to come home. Let's leave the baggage behind us and return to His Moedim—His Appointed Times.

Appendix

YHWH and Yeshua

The purpose of this appendix is to point out that Yeshua is YHWH because He is the central focus of the Moedim/Appointed Times of YHWH. If Yeshua is not YHWH then there would be no point in celebrating the feasts of YHWH because there would be no spiritual meaning to them. I would like to share with you a paper I wrote giving the Scriptural evidence that Yeshua is YHWH.

There is a belief that is raising its ugly head in these last days. Perhaps it is a sign of the Messiah imminent return because of the prevalence of false teachings that are coming out.

One of these teachings is that Yeshua is not YHWH but only a Messiah that was a man—although possibly one empowered by YHWH. If all of Scripture points to its central idea of Yeshua then it would certainly be relevant that if Yeshua were only a man then why does Scripture rotate around a man and not around YHWH?

Is Yeshua Yahweh?

By Rav Mordechai Silver
from < www.etz-chayim.org >

Is Yeshua God? Is He Yahweh in the flesh? There are some in the Messianic Jewish Movement who believe that Yeshua was only a man and not God. Their belief follows after a traditional Jewish view put forth by Rabbi Abraham Maimonides, also known as the Rambam, a rabbi and physician during the Middle Ages. Modern Jewish thought and belief is based, for the most part, on the teachings of Rambam but it should be noted here that there are those in traditional Judaism, especially among the Chassidic or Ultra-Orthodox Jews, who believe in a multiple God that they describe as being the three pillars.

What I hope to accomplish from this article is to present from Scripture, both Hebrew and Renewed, that Yeshua is Yahweh. Now I know that some will not accept the writings of Rav Shaul-Paul as authoritative, but we are instructed to take the whole counsel of Scripture not just bits and pieces. So to you who reject the

The Feasts of YHWH

writings of Rav Shaul I can only say that you are no better than those in Christianity who reject the authority of the Torah based on the writings of Rav Shaul and not on the authority of the Messiah.

To you I can only quote from the Book of John-Yochanan 14:15:

“If you love me, you will keep my commands...”

And again in John-Yochanan 14:21:

“Whoever has my commands and keeps them is the one who loves me, and the one who loves me will be loved by my Father, and I will love him and reveal myself to him.”

And if your gut reaction to this is that I follow what Yeshua taught in the Renewed Covenant, then I say to you what you are following is the Torah.

We begin our journey towards the truth with the Book of Ruth-Rut. Let's look at Ruth 4:4 and 4:6.

“I resolved that I should inform you to this effect: Buy it in the presence of those sitting here and in the presence of the elders of my people. If you are willing to redeem, redeem! But if it will not be redeemed, tell me, that I may know; for there is no one else to redeem it but you, and I am after you.” And he said, “I am willing to redeem.” The redeemer said, “Then I cannot redeem it for myself, lest I imperil my own inheritance. Take over my redemption responsibility on yourself for I am unable to redeem.”

The first concept that we need to understand is the idea of what redeem means in these two verses of Scripture. There are two uses of the word redeem here and one applies to the person referred to as the redeemer and the other refers to the actual act of redemption.

l aq (gaal) **redeem, avenge, revenge, ransom, do the part of a kinsman**

yl waq (giulay) **redemption**

hl aq (giulā) **redemption, right of redemption, price of redemption, kindred**

l aq (goel) **redeemer**

The act of redemption or to redeem as used in these passages of Scripture is ga-al. The person who is performing the redeeming is the go-al. As you can see these are both words that originate from the same root.

1350 l aq ga'al {ga-al}

to redeem, act as kinsman-redeemer, avenge, revenge, ransom, do the part of a kinsman, to act as kinsman, do the part of next of kin, act as kinsman-redeemer, by marrying brother's widow to beget a child for him, to redeem from slavery, to redeem land, to exact vengeance, to redeem (by payment), to redeem (with God as subject), individuals from death, Israel from Egyptian bondage, Israel from exile, to redeem oneself, to be redeemed

We need to understand the concept of the kinsman redeemer as practiced in the Hebrew nation of Israel and probably other nations in the Middle East. The kinsman redeemer was a blood relative who had the right to redeem, avenge, revenge, ransom, etc. We see this role played out between Abraham and Lot when Lot and his family were taken captive. Abraham goes and frees his nephew. In the case of Ruth, Boaz was a relative to her deceased husband and her mother-in-law Naomi. But in this case it turns out that there is one relative who is closer than Boaz and therefore he has the first right of redemption. What happens here is that the relative realizes that in accepting the role of kinsman redeemer he will have to give up his right to inherit the property of Ruth and Naomi as his own. He would have to purchase the property from both Naomi and Ruth and Ruth's name would remain attached to the inheritance. Why is this important in the context of what we are studying here?

The concept of the kinsman redeemer applies to the Messiah Yeshua because He is the only begotten Son of the Father so, therefore, He inherits the right to the role of kinsman redeemer through His Father Yahweh. So how would that affect us? It affects us because if we grasp the concept of the kinsman redeemer we realize that if we were created by Yahweh through His Son Yeshua then we are **ALL**, each and every one of us, related by blood to Yeshua. And if that were not enough in and of itself, each and every one of us who accepts Yeshua as Messiah become further entwined with Yeshua through the Ruach of Yahweh in that we become spiritually connected to Yeshua. So this extends the idea of the kinsman redeemer right on down from Yeshua to you and me and everyone who will ever be or has been. It is only through the rejection of Yeshua as Messiah which causes us to then reject Him as our kinsman redeemer. When we do this, we are acting just like the relative in Ruth who rejected the role of kinsman redeemer, because he did not want to forfeit his own inheritance.

So having laid out the premise for understanding the concept of the kinsman redeemer and the role he plays, let's get on with showing how this role ties in Yeshua to Yahweh and in doing that we can show that Yahweh and Yeshua are entwined. One cannot exist without the other and that they are joined 'at the hip' as they say.

Exodus-Shemot 15:13: *With Your kindness You guided this people that You redeemed; You led with Your might to Your holy abode.*

This passage of Scripture lays out that it is Yahweh who redeems. He has redeemed His people and His people is Israel. Now what we need to consider at this point is who is Israel? Is Israel just the Jewish people? Many would have you think so because the House of Ephraim was scattered to the four corners of the earth and only Judah returned from their exile intact. But let us look at Deuteronomy 29:13-14.

*Not with you alone do I seal this covenant and this imprecation, but with whoever is here, standing with us today before Yahweh, our God, **and with whoever is not here** with us today.*

The Feasts of YHWH

The covenant that was established between Israel and Yahweh involved each and every person that was standing before Yahweh that day and each and every person who was not there that day. What does that mean? The implication is very strong that all who joined themselves to Israel would become part of Israel and entitled to the covenant that Yahweh made with Israel. That means you and me!

Job 19:25: *But I know that my Redeemer lives, and that He will be the final one remaining upon the earth.*

Once again the concept of the Redeemer but in this instance it is reaffirmed that the Redeemer is a direct reference to Yahweh. Why? Because even in the Orthodox translation of the Tanach, the word Redeemer is capitalized indicating that the Redeemer is God.

This idea is re-enforced in Psalm 78:35: *They would remember that God was their Rock, and the Most High God their Redeemer.*

And again in Isaiah 41:14: *Fear not, O worm of Jacob, O men of Israel, [for] I help you—the word of Yahweh and your Redeemer, the Holy One of Israel.*

Isaiah 44:6: *Thus said Yahweh, King of Israel and its Redeemer, Yahweh, Master of Legions: I am the first and I am the last, and aside from Me there is no God.*

He is the Redeemer and God! This is from the mouth of the prophet Isaiah put there by Yahweh Himself. Could it be made any plainer than this? God is the Redeemer and He is God.

Isaiah 49:26: *And I will feed your tormentors their own flesh, and they will become drunk on their own blood as on sweet wine; then all flesh will know that I am Yahweh, your Savior and your Redeemer, the Mighty One of Jacob.*

In this passage we see Yahweh referring to Himself as not only the Redeemer but as Savior. This is very important because the Hebrew used in this passage is:

xywml Moshiach which is the Hebrew word for anointed one and while it can be used to identify a king, prophet, etc., it is used in this passage to identify Yahweh, God, as both Savior and Redeemer and this is from the Orthodox Jewish translation of the Tanach. The concept of a Savior was not a foreign idea to the Israelites of old. It is a foreign idea to the Jewish people of today in the sense that it relates to Yeshua, but in Orthodox Judaism the idea of the Messiah is one that is prayed for daily. So in their own Scriptures Yahweh identifies Himself as both Savior and Redeemer taking on the aspects of the kinsman redeemer (blood relative) and Savior, the Messiah. Can it be shown any plainer than this that Yahweh is God and as God He has chosen to take upon Himself both aspects of the requirements for redeeming His people and saving them. But I know that you might be saying at this point that he has not shown us that Yeshua is God. Is not Yeshua accepted as the Messiah and, if so, then is not Yahweh identifying Himself as the Messiah in this passage of Scripture?

Isaiah 60:16: *You will nurse from the milk of the nations and from the breast of kings will you nurse; then you will realize that I, Yahweh, am your Savior and your Redeemer, the Mighty One of Jacob.*

Isaiah 63:16: *For You are our Father; though Abraham may not know us and Israel may not recognize us, You, Yahweh, are our Father; “our Eternal Redeemer is Your Name.*

5769 אֶלְמָוּלַם {o-lawm'} or אֶלְעוֹלָם {o-lawm'} long duration, antiquity, futurity, for ever, ever, everlasting, evermore, perpetual, old, ancient, world 1a) ancient time, long time (of past) 1b) (of future) 1b1) for ever, always 1b2) continuous existence, perpetual 1b3) everlasting, indefinite or unending future, eternity

Yahweh has always been and will always be. He is our Father and Eternal Redeemer forever. This idea of forever means what has been, is and will be which perfectly describes the nature of God. He has always been. As He said Himself—I AM! So from this we must conclude that Yeshua has always been, because He is the Moshiach, the anointed One. He has not simply been chosen by Yahweh for a purpose, but He has always been the same as Yahweh has always been. So they are one and the same, yet different. Now please do not jump on me for that statement. You are probably saying to yourself, if he is saying that they are one yet different, then he is saying that there is more than one God and if he is saying that then he buys into the trinity concept.

Please keep in mind that just because a concept or idea has become tainted with paganistic trappings that it does not mean that the whole concept of idea is bad. Remember that the Torah has existed from the beginning and that paganism has its birth in Babylon with Nimrod. The truth of who God is preceded the paganistic ideas that came later. Why does the nature of God have to line up with our thinking? Why do we find it necessary to put God into a limited box or confine just so that we can be comfortable with our thoughts or beliefs? God is God and can do whatever He desires.

1 Corinthians 1:30: *It is His doing that you are united with the Messiah Yeshua. He has become wisdom for us from God, and righteousness and holiness and redemption as well!*

629 אָפּוֹלֹטְרוֹסִיָּה {ap-ol-oo'-tro-sis}
a releasing effected by payment of ransom, redemption, deliverance, liberation procured by the payment of a ransom

This is the same concept as the Hebrew word for redeemer or redemption. That one has bought the redemption for a price.

Ephesians 1:7: *In union with Him, through the shedding of His blood, we are set free—our sins are forgiven; this accords with the wealth of the grace.*

859 אֶפְהִיִּס {af-es-is}

4498 שׁוּמָן מַנּוֹעַ {maw-noce'}

flight, refuge, place of escape, flight, refuge, place of escape

3467 [חַי יָשָׁאׁ {yaw-shah'}

to save, be saved, be delivered, to be liberated, be saved, be delivered, to be saved (in battle), be victorious, to save, deliver, to save from moral troubles, to give victory to

This passage just about sums it all up about who God is. After reading this passage if you don't come to the same conclusions that I do that Yahweh and Yeshua are the same or share the same attributes then nothing much beyond what I am saying will sink in. We need to drop our preconceived notions about God and accept what He says about Himself in Scripture. He could not make it any clearer that Yahweh is Yeshua and that He and He alone can forgive sins and is Salvation and our Redeemer

1 Chronicles 16:23: *Sing to Yahweh, everyone on earth, announce His salvation daily.*

וַתִּשְׁבַּח יְשׁוּעָה בְּיָמָיו Salvation in this passage is in the Hebrew *Yeshuato* which is translated as His salvation. His is capitalized once more to indicate that this is referring to God. Once again the translation that I am using in all the Old Testament or First Testament Scriptures are from an Orthodox Jewish translation from Artscroll. Clearly in this passage we can see the Name of Yeshua being used here. If we are instructed to sing to Yahweh and to announce His salvation daily, what are we being instructed to do here? Are we being told to announce the salvation of Yahweh in terms that this salvation is something separate from Yahweh and He is just the Source of it or are we being instructed that the salvation is Yahweh and we are to praise Him every day for it? Well to my mind and understanding whether or not it is Yahweh or Yahweh's salvation, it still comes from Him and its Source is contained in Him. So Yeshua is the salvation of Yahweh and is Yahweh.

Not too long ago a brother in the faith wrote an article about the oneness of Yahweh. In it he stated that Yahweh is one and that Yeshua comes from Yahweh. I have no problem with that concept. He went on to say that if we accept that Yeshua is separate from Yahweh then we are invoking the belief in a triune God or the trinity of three separate Gods which is a pagan concept. I love my brother dearly but who are we to say that we understand the nature of God so clearly that we can make statements that to believe in three separate Gods is to believe in a paganistic belief. Are we so sure of ourselves that we are infallible to the point of making judgments about our fellow brothers and sisters. I would be very careful about making statements that condemn our brothers and sisters while lifting ourselves up as the absolute source of the truth associated with understanding the nature or composition of God.

Only God knows His nature. He allows us glimpses of it now and again, but leaves room for speculation within a Scriptural boundary. Whatever way we want to

The Feasts of YHWH

envison the nature of God, we have to assume that because He is omnipotent and omnipresent that He can darn well do whatever He chooses to do and we are the last ones He has to explain Himself to. Whatever way we choose to approach the concept of the nature of God, is there an absolute right way and an absolute wrong way?

Luke 1:69: *By raising up for us a mighty Deliverer who is a descendant of His servant David.*

Acts 4:11-12: *“This Yeshua is the **stone rejected by** you builders which **has become the cornerstone [Psalm 118:22]**. There is salvation in no one else! For there is no other name under heaven given to mankind by whom we must be saved!”*

How can it be said any plainer than this. **There is salvation in no one else!** If there is no salvation in anybody except Yeshua, then is this not a statement that Yeshua is God. Think about it. If Yeshua is not God then would He not be blaspheming and breaking His own commandments, His own Torah, by making this claim? Of course these words being spoken here are not direct quotes from Yeshua Himself, but are accepted to have been written by Luke a talmid (student) of Rav Shaul-Paul. But in an accepted teaching style of the rabbis of old, it was allowed that one could quote from the Scriptures and then offer an opinion on that passage of Scripture. Yeshua did this Himself when He went to the synagogue in His home town and read from Isaiah and then made the statement that He was the fulfillment of that prophetic passage. Could a man have said that? Would not have a man or a false Messiah been proven wrong in that? Have not false Messiahs risen up throughout the millenia and been proven false time and time again?

Many say that the death and resurrection of Yeshua was a plot by His talmidim to affirm His statements about Himself and their intent to confirm Him as Messiah. Some say that he did not really die on the tree, that He just passed out and that His followers took Him away and He lived His life in seclusion. And people believe this! How amazing is the delusion that hasatan can place upon us. The only one that can benefit from this lie straight from the pit of hell is satan! How can we benefit from a lie of this magnitude except to deny who Yeshua is and what His purpose was and is.

Revelation 7:10: *and they shouted, “Victory to our God, who sits on the throne, and to the Lamb!”*

Now, of course, you can make the claim that in this passage it is referring to God, Yahweh, sitting on His throne and to Yeshua, the Lamb, standing at His right hand and, if so, then Yeshua could not be Yahweh because He is separate from Yahweh.

It says this in Psalm 110:1: *Regarding David, a psalm. The word of Yahweh to my master, “Wait at My right, until I make your enemies a stool for your feet.”*

In other translations it is commonly rendered as *The affirmation of Jehovah to my Lord: ‘Sit at My right hand, Till I make thine enemies thy footstool.’*

3068 hwhY Y@hovah {yeh-ho-vaw'}

Jehovah = "the existing One", the proper name of the one true God, unpronounced except with the vowel pointings of 0136

0113 !Ada' {aw-done'} or (shortened) !da' 'adon {aw-done'}

firm, strong, lord, master, lord, master, reference to men, superintendent of household, of affairs, master, king, reference to God, the Lord God, Lord of the whole earth, lords, kings, reference to men, proprietor of hill of Samaria, master, husband, prophet, governor, prince, king, reference to God, Lord of lords (probably = "thy husband, Yahweh"), my lord, my master, reference to men, master, husband, prophet, prince, king, father, Moses, priest, theophanic angel, captain, general recognition of superiority, reference to God, my Lord, my Lord and my God, Adonai (parallel with Yahweh)

The Jewish interpretation here is that the second reference to Lord is to mean not Lord but master, a secondary meaning to imply that Yahweh, who they acknowledge, is the first reference but is not the second reference, because if they acknowledged that the second Lord was the same as the first then they would have to be acknowledging that Yahweh is more than one and they will not do that.

2 Samuel 22:32: *For who is God besides Yahweh, and who is a Rock besides our God?*

Yahweh is God and the Rock is God.

Matthew-Mattityahu 16:18: *I also tell you this: you are Kefa" [which means 'Rock'], and on this rock I will build my Community, and the gates of Sh'ol will not overcome it.*

Is this Rock Peter? Not in the context of 2 Samuel 22:32. The Rock is Yahweh and therefore Yeshua and Yeshua is making a statement about Himself to Peter in this passage from Matthew based on this passage from 2 Samuel and many other passages in the Tanach that speak about the Messiah being a Rock and that Rock being God.

It says this in Colossians 1:14-17: *It is through His Son that we have redemption—that is, our sins have been forgiven. He is the visible image of the invisible God. He is supreme over all creation, because in connection with Him were created all things—in heaven and on earth, visible and invisible, whether thrones, lordships, rulers or authorities—they have all been created through Him and for Him. He existed before all things, and He holds everything together.*

If this is not a description of Yahweh then you tell me what it is. Of course, once again, if you want to disregard this passage, because it was written by Rav Shaul-Paul then by all means please be my guest. People, just open yourselves up to the truth of what God's Word has to say to you. How God manifests Himself is His concern alone. He does not need any help from us to describe just who God is and how He chooses to show Himself. If this passage of Scripture has one thing in common with the Tanach (Hebrew Scriptures), it is that they acknowledge and

The Feasts of YHWH

accept that God is the Source for all things in creation. All that this passage is going further with is to say that Yeshua is that manifestation of Yahweh who existed in the beginning as God, who created all things because He is God and that we have redemption, forgiveness for our sins because He is God and only God can offer that.

If Yeshua were not Yahweh then how could He have forgiven sins? Because if He were not Yahweh how could He offer Himself as the sacrifice that takes away the sin of the world when only Yahweh can do that. If He were only a man His sacrifice would have been meaningless no matter how perfect He was, because He would have only been a man and if the blood of animals could not remove sin how more so could the blood of man? Only the shed blood of God could remove sin once and for all!

*Acts 5:31: God has exalted this man **at his right hand [Psalm 110:1]** as Ruler and Savior, in order to enable Israel to do t'shuvah [repent, turn from sin to God] and have her sins forgiven.*

747 archgoj archehos {ar-khay-gos'}

the chief leader, prince, of Messiah, one that takes the lead in any thing and thus affords an example, a predecessor in a matter, pioneer, the author

4990 swthr soter {so-tare'}

saviour, deliverer, preserver

The name was given by the ancients to deities, esp. tutelary deities, to princes, kings, and in general to men who had conferred signal benefits upon their country, and in more degenerate days by the way of flattery to personages of influence.

Though the title was used to denote pagan deities, I would have to believe that the Greeks lacked a suitable word to describe Yeshua in their language and used the terminology on hand to show that Yeshua was a deity. To claim that because of this, this becomes a pagan belief and not a Biblical truth, is ridiculous and brings shame down on the head of the accuser.

The Greek word 'archegos' is perfect to describe who Yeshua was. He was the model from whom all else would look to as their example much in the way of a ruler. But the difference was He was the chief or head and all else descends from Him.

Psalm-Tehillim 25:18: See my afflictions and my toil, and forgive all my sins.

Matthew-Mattityahu 9:6-7: But look! I will prove to you that the Son of Man has authority on earth to forgive sins." He then said to the paralyzed man, "Get up, pick up your mattress, and go home!" 7 And the man got up and went home.

In the Psalm David is pleading with Yahweh to forgive his sins, something only God can do. In this passage from Matthew-Mattityahu, Yeshua is demonstrating to the people that He has been given the power to forgive sins, **something** that only God can do.

Mark 2:7: "How can this fellow say such a thing? He is blaspheming! Who can forgive sins except God?"

This passage from Mark ties in directly with the passage from Matthew. It establishes Yeshua's right to forgive sins thereby proving that He is God, with God's authority, to do and say the things that He is doing because only the Messiah, the Son of God, could do these things.

Luke 5:21: The Torah-teachers and the P'rushim began thinking, "Who is this fellow that speaks such blasphemies? Who can forgive sin except God?"

You see, the crime that Yeshua was accused of before the Romans was one of claiming to be a king. He was not accused by the Jewish leaders of being a false god, because they knew that this would not carry any weight before the Romans because the Romans believed in many gods. To the Jewish leaders Yeshua forgiving sins and claiming to be God was the real crime in their eyes, but they needed charges that would stand before Pilate and those charges would be that He had claimed to be a king. In the Jewish mind God could not be before them since He was above them and supposed to be an invisible being, a spirit. They did not grasp the meaning of the Scriptures where God is defined as being one but yet this oneness is in a plurality. When we say this today we are immediately branded as being heretics and no longer entitled to be part of the Jewish people because we now worship the Christian god. But the God of Abraham, Isaac and Jacob is the God of Israel, not just of the Jewish people. He is the God who created all things and all mankind.

Don't you find it interesting that Yahweh is always referred to as the God of Abraham, Isaac and Jacob, a threesome. Why cannot God manifest Himself as He chooses? To declare it as a pagan belief is to brand a Godly belief as being wrong. Why? Because since hasatan cannot create anything on his own he counterfeits what God has created. So if it is a pagan belief could it not have its basis in Biblical truth? God brought it about and satan twisted it for his own purposes. Think about it!

Luke 11:4: Forgive us our sins, for we too forgive everyone who has wronged us. And do not lead us to hard testing."

Here we see Yeshua teaching the people how to pray. This is not a new prayer but has its basis or foundation in the Torah. We are instructed to forgive those who have wronged us. This is not to forgive them for the purpose of receiving salvation, but this is to teach us how God forgives us for the wrongs we have done to Him. But in the case of God the wrongs that we have done to Him can be forgiven to the point that He can extend salvation to us for transgressing His Torah. But this can only be done through the atoning sacrifice of Yeshua through whose shed blood we have received cleansing from our sins.

Colossians 2:13-14: You were dead because of your sins, that is, because of your "foreskin" your old nature. But God made you alive along with the Messiah by forgiving you all your sins. 14 He wiped away the bill of charges against us. Because of the regulations, it stood as a testimony against us; but he removed it by nailing it to the execution-stake.

The Feasts of YHWH

I just could not resist including verse 14 along with verse 13 because verse 14 is one of the main passages that Christians use as a basis for claiming that the 'law' is no more. **And I couldn't agree more!** It was the 'law' that was nailed to the tree along with the Messiah. It is the Torah that we follow as the Messiah followed it. The penalty that was in the Torah or 'law' for sin was death. So what was nailed to the tree that day along with the Messiah was not the Torah or law, but the death penalty that comes from transgressing the Torah! Yeshua said that He came to fulfill the Torah and until every jot and tittle and until heaven and earth pass away **the Torah stands**. Even Rav Shaul-Paul said that the Torah was holy, just and good. Why do we seek to find a way to get around what God has declared to be His teachings to us?

If it comes from the mouth of Yahweh and, therefore, it comes from Yeshua then it stands forever. That is what He said. Not me, not Paul, not any Church scholar. Yeshua said it and Yahweh confirmed it. It came from God!

Psalm 32:1-2: By David. A maskil (wise man). Praiseworthy is one whose transgression is forgiven, whose sin is covered over. 2 Praiseworthy is the man to whom Yahweh does not ascribe iniquity, and in whose spirit there is no deceit.

[Xp, noun common masculine singular absolute
1846.0 [Xp (pisha`) **rebel, transgress, revolt.**
(1846a) [Xp (pisha`) **rebellion**

2401 hatx chata'ah {khat-aw-aw'}
sin, sin offering, sin, sin offering

The Hebrew word 'pasha' means to transgress, rebel or revolt. What are we transgressing, rebelling against or revolting against? **The Torah!** So what is sin? Sin is the transgression of the Torah, plain and simple. No needed explanations here. Sin is sin in the eyes of God and no one sin is more important or greater in His eyes, because all sin is a transgression or rebellion against God and His word Yeshua.

Psalm 85:3-14: 3 You have forgiven the iniquity of Your people; You have covered up their entire sin, Selah. 4 You have withheld Your entire fury; You have retreated from the fierceness of Your anger. 5 Return us, O God of our salvation, and annul Your anger with us. 6 Will you forever be angry with us, allowing Your wrath to endure for generation to generation? 7 Will you not revive us again, that Your people may rejoice in You? 8 Show us Your kindness, Yahweh, and grant us Your salvation. 9 I can hear what the Almighty, Yahweh, will speak; for He speaks peace to His people and to His devout ones, and they will not revert to folly. 10 Surely His salvation is close to those who fear Him, that [His] glory may again dwell in our land. 11 Kindness and truth have met, Righteousness and Peace have kissed; 12 Truth will sprout from earth, and Righteousness will peer from heaven. 13 Yahweh, too, will provide what is good, and our land will yield its produce. 14 [The man of] righteousness will walk before Him, and set his footsteps on the way.

God is the One who will forgive sin and He is the One who judges sin. David is talking about God withholding His wrath or His anger from His people and this is exactly what God does until the Book of Revelation. The tribulation precedes the time of God's wrath being poured out upon the earth. God's judgment upon the earth comes upon those who have rejected Him. I believe that even as Believers we will not be spared from the tribulation period but we will be spared from His wrath. When His anger is ready to be poured out upon those who have rejected Him, those of us who have held faith in Him and His Messiah Yeshua and have followed His Torah as best as we can will be caught up into the clouds, not only as the Brit Chadashah-Renewed covenant speaks about it, but as Daniel first tells us about it.

Exodus-Shemot 32:32-34: 32 And now if You would but forgive their sin! - but if not, erase me now from Your book that You have written." 33 Yahweh said to Moses, "Whoever has sinned against Me, I shall erase him from My book. 34 Now, go and lead the people to where I have told you. Behold! My angel shall go before you, and on the day that I make my account, I shall bring their sin to account against them."

1 Kings-Melachim 8:34, 36: 34 May You hear from Heaven and forgive the sin of Your people Israel, and return them to the land that You gave their forefathers. 36 May You hear from Heaven and forgive the sin of Your servants and Your people Israel, when You teach them the proper path in which they should walk...

Yahweh is the One who forgives sin. Only He can forgive sin so when Yeshua took it upon Himself to forgive sin He was only doing that which His Father allowed Him to do as He was God as the Father is God. If that concept sounds pagan to you, because I am referring to Yeshua and Yahweh as opposed to Yahweh alone, I am only following the way the Scripture puts forth who God is. God is One and everything that comes forth from God is God given. If He chooses to do it through the Ruach, so be it. If He chooses to do it through His Son, so be it. As God He can do whatever He wants to. If we cannot understand how God presents Himself to us that's our problem and the reason that everything is so mixed up.

Jeremiah 36:3: Perhaps the House of Judah will hear of all the evil that I intend to do to them, so that they will repent, each man from his evil way, and then I can forgive their sin and transgression."

Jeremiah 31:34-36: Thus said Yahweh, Who gives the sun as a light by day and the laws of the moon and the stars by night; Who agitates the sea so that its waves roar; Yahweh, Master of Legions, is His Name; If these laws could be removed from before Me—the word of Yahweh—so could the seed of Israel cease from being a people before Me forever. 36 Thus said Yahweh: If the heavens above could be measured or the foundations of the earth plumbed below, so too would I reject the entire seed of Israel because of everything they did—the word of Yahweh.

God cannot change. That is what He is saying here. He is confirming His covenant with Israel by declaring that He is the Creator and that the laws that govern His creation would have to be set aside in order for Him to remove His promises from Israel despite their sin. And He confirms this twice in this passage by saying it is

The Feasts of YHWH

the word of Yahweh. Who is the word of Yahweh? Yochanan-John tells us in the beginning of his gospel.

In the beginning was the word and the word was with God and the word was God.

The Greek for word is logos and the Hebrew word that is its equivalent is davar. The logos and the davar are the same thing and that is word and the word of God is Yeshua and Yeshua is God! So if the word of God is Yeshua and He is God then He has the right to forgive sin as that is the right of God.

All of creation stands as a witness to the word of God and God swears by His creation that all He says is true. So if we say that Yeshua is only an “essence” of God or is only a man empowered by God then how in the Name of Yahweh could He forgive sin if He were not God? An “essence” of God could not forgive sin and have that sin removed. A man, no matter how perfect, could not forgive sin as he is only a man. So, since God is the only One who can forgive sin and blot it out of His book, then Yeshua has to be God and if He is not then He can not be the Messiah and we would be worshipping a false god and that would make us idolaters.

But I have presented enough Scripture in this article to prove beyond a shadow of a doubt that Yeshua is the Redeemer and Savior and that because He is the Redeemer and Savior, He is God. The God of Israel **IS** Yeshua who is Yahweh made flesh by God. Is anything too hard for our God? I think not!

Closing Thoughts

It is my heartfelt prayer and desire that you seek to dig deeper into the Moedim/Appointed Times of Yahweh. It is Yeshua who is at the heart of all of these Festivals of the Father. In many of the other holidays, both in and out of the Bible, we can see Yeshua in them.

But we need to use extreme caution when we try to legitimize holidays that were not originally given by Yahweh and were for the express purpose of glorifying pagan gods or pagan ways.

Customs and traditions are good. They lend something more to what the Bible does not show us. Yet we need to use discernment when applying these customs and traditions, because they tend to be man made and man brings many things to the mix that Yahweh never intended.

There are only two ways to go in this life. First and foremost is Yahweh's way. Secondly is satan's way. There is no such thing as a middle ground. That is called fence sitting.

Revelation 3:15-16: "I know your works, that you are neither cold nor hot; I would *prefer* that you were cold or hot. So because you are lukewarm, and neither hot nor cold, I will vomit you out of My mouth." (Messianic Renewed Covenant)

I am not trying to condemn you, but I am trying to make you stop, sit up and take notice. The time is growing short and the day of Yeshua's return is drawing near. Are you ready?

The Feasts of YHWH

About the Author

Michael “Mordechai” Silver is the spiritual leader of a Messianic Congregation located in Las Cruces, New Mexico, which is in the southern central part of the State of New Mexico. He moved there in 1993 with his wife Sharan and their two children, Joshua and Kristen.



Mordechai Silver was born in Philadelphia, Pennsylvania into a Jewish family and was raised in Conservative Judaism attending synagogue and Hebrew school. He was raised in the Jewish customs and traditions and lived in Jewish areas of the city. In 1976

Mordechai came to the understanding that Yeshua was the Messiah of the Jew as well as of the Christian. He accepted Yeshua as his Messiah and thereby began a journey that would take him into Messianic Judaism and then into the Church and then back to Messianic Judaism and finally into Messianic Israel.

Some may ask why Mordechai and not Michael? In the Ashkenazic or European Jewish tradition the child is given two names, one English and one Hebrew. Following this tradition the author was given these two names.

Mordechai started his ministry in 1995 with the planting of a Messianic Jewish congregation in Las Cruces, New Mexico. The first congregation started out as a home group and quickly grew but there was hesitancy on the part of many in the group to study their Hebraic or Jewish roots. Mordechai then parted from the group and followed what he felt what Yahweh's leading and started up a Messianic Jewish congregation following the traditions and customs of the Jewish people.

Over time as he studied he scriptures he encountered a problem. The problem was that in almost all cases that the term Israel was used it was not referring to the Jewish people alone. Being raised Jewish the author had always been taught that being Hebrew, Jewish and Israel were all one and the same. But as Mordechai continued to study the Scriptures the veil that had been placed over his eyes was slowly being removed and he saw that Israel was not Judah alone. That there was more to this than he had been taught.

Then several years back he came across the teaching of the Two Houses of Israel. Finally he saw the truth that been hidden away and entered into a new phase

The Feasts of YHWH

in his spiritual walk as part of Judah and as part of Israel. Yahweh has been blessing the congregation and drawing in those who are becoming part of the re-uniting of Judah and Ephraim.

Mordechai had received smicha or ordination as a rabbi from a Messianic Jewish organization in 1996 but when the truth of Who is Israel was revealed to him he encountered resistance from his Messianic Jewish brethren. After requesting his Messianic Jewish brethren to refute the Messianic Israel teachings and the concept of Ephraim from Scripture, the only response he received was “to go talk to the other rabbis.” After prayer and seeking the counsel of his congregation Mordechai resigned from the Messianic Jewish organization and joined with a Messianic Israel organization where he received smicha or ordination, this time, as a Messianic Israel rabbi. Mordechai has since resigned from that organization and now devotes his time to his congregation and a ministry outreach called Tree of Life Messianic Ministries that offers help to new groups.

While being rejected by his Jewish brethren for being a Believer in Yeshua now Mordechai was being rejected by his Messianic Jewish brethren for daring to accept non-Jews as equals and part of Israel. The Church, for the most part, deals with Mordechai with an arms length approach not being sure of this movement called Messianic Israel or what Judah and Ephraim are.

As one who has been raised in the traditions, customs and beliefs of traditional Judaism, Mordechai has been able to bridge the gap between Judah and Ephraim and teaches the truth of who is Israel. He has been placed in a unique position by the Father, because of his upbringing as a Jew and then as a Believer in Yeshua who traveled the road through Christianity and then into Messianic Judaism. This journey has given Mordechai an understanding of both Judaism, Messianic Judaism and Christianity that he has been able to use in reaching out to Judah and Ephraim and showing them the problems in each one of the belief systems while being able to guide them to Messianic Israel.

Mordechai has appeared several times on Light of the Southwest, a prime time program, shown by Prime Time Christian Broadcasting out of Midland, Texas that reaches into the Southwest region of the United States. He has had the opportunity to share the truth of Torah and Yeshua and is now working to get the truth of the Two Houses out.

Mordechai has been married for twenty-eight years to Sharan, a non-Jewish Believer in Messiah Yeshua since 1975. They are indeed living examples of Judah and Ephraim. They have two children, Joshua and Kristen. Both of their children were a blessing from Yahweh as they were adopted from Korea as babies, Joshua at 9 1/2 months and who is now 21 and Kristen at 3 1/2 months and who is now 19. They have both been truly a blessing from God.

Mordechai is the owner and moderator of an internet e-list called judahephraim at <http://lists.laplaza.org/mailman/listinfo/judahephraim>, that serves to distribute his weekly Torah commentary and other items of interest. He also publishes a quarterly teaching journal called *The Messianic Observer* and is the

About the Author

director of a new ministry outreach called Tree of Life Messianic Ministries that includes Tree of Life Messianic Ministries Press. Mordechai is also co-founder and a Director of AIM – The Association of Independent Messianics. To learn more about AIM go to <http://www.aim-messianics.org>. He leads a Shabbat service on Saturday in Las Cruces followed by a Bible study. He also leads a Bible study on Wednesday's. The congregation also has Davidic Dance on Saturday morning and Saturday afternoon and closes out the Shabbat with a Havdalah Service. For more information you can check out his congregational website at www.etz-chayim.org or e-mail him at treelife@etz-chayim.org. You can also write or call him care of: Etz Chayim-Tree of Life, Messianic Congregation, PO Box 467, Organ, NM 88052. The phone number is 505-382-0193 or 505-644-7706.

Mordechai has written not only the book you hold in your hands, but also *Journey Through Torah Volume 1* and *The Two Houses of Israel: Q & A With Judah and Ephraim* co-authored with John K. McKee. John and Mordechai also co-edit the new quarterly magazine, *The Messianic Observer*. Mordechai is currently working on *Journey Through Torah Volume 2* and *The Torah IS Valid! The Covenant of Israel*.

Mordechai's desire is to work with anyone in the Messianic Movement who loves Yeshua, loves the Torah and desires unity between the Two Houses of Israel – Judah and Ephraim.

The Feasts of YHWH

Articles of Faith for Judah and Ephraim

Articles of Faith for Judah and Ephraim

Statement of Belief for the Association of Independent Messianics

GUIDING PRINCIPLES

The guiding principles of our Biblical faith, practice, and walk are found in the *Shema* of Devarim/Deuteronomy 6:4-9 and the Lord's Prayer of Mattityahu/Matthew 6:9-13:

"Hear, O Israel: Yahweh is our God, Yahweh is the One and Only. You shall love Yahweh, your God, with all your heart, with all your soul, and with all your resources. And these matters that I command you today shall be upon your heart. You shall teach them thoroughly to your children and you shall speak of them while you sit in your home, while you walk on the way, when you retire and when you arise. Bind them as a sign upon your arm and let them be ornaments between your eyes. And write them on the doorposts of your house and upon your gates."

"Pray, therefore, in this way: 'Our Father Who is in Heaven, hallowed be Your name. Let Your Kingdom come, *and* Your Will be done on Earth as it is in Heaven. Give us this day our daily bread, and forgive us our debts as we also forgive our debtors. And do not lead us into temptation, but deliver us from the evil one. *For Yours is the Kingdom, and the power, and the glory, forever. Amen.*'"

These principles proclaim the sovereignty of the Holy One of Israel, Yahweh Elohim, over our lives, and the necessity of living the life of Messiah Yeshua, seeking our Heavenly Father in all things.

THE HOLY SCRIPTURES

The Holy Scriptures or Bible, Genesis-Revelation, comprises the inspired, infallible, Word of God as revealed in the original Hebrew, Aramaic, *and* Greek texts. The Bible must be our final authority for faith, doctrine, and practice. While the Bible has been traditionally divided into what are commonly known as the Old and New Testaments, or the Tanakh/Old Covenant and Renewed Covenant/B'rit Chadashah, we do not believe that the New Testament replaces the Old Testament or that the Old Testament is "superior" to the New Testament.

All of Scripture is inspired and paints the picture of our Heavenly Father's progressive plan for the ages. In forming Biblical theology, we commit ourselves to an holistic view of Scripture, insomuch that we will not limit ourselves exclusively to the Tanakh or to the Renewed Covenant. We will seek to examine *all* of God's Word.

THE PLURALITY OF GOD

The Scriptures tell us quite clearly that there is one Creator God of the universe. There is only one Being that is to remain supreme over our lives. Yet at the same time while there is but one God, *Elohim*, as He is referred to in the Hebrew Scriptures, is a *plural* word. This is evidenced by the first line of the *Shema* which says "Yahweh is our Elohim, Yahweh is One." The Hebrew word for "one" is *echad* and denotes a *composite*, **not** an absolute oneness. We affirm that in this composite oneness God has revealed Himself to humanity in the manifestations of Father, Son, and Holy Spirit. We also cede the possibility that there may be additional components of the Godhead that He has chosen not to reveal to us at this present time.

THE MESSIAH

We fully affirm that Yeshua the Messiah (Jesus Christ) is indeed the prophesied Messiah of Israel, that salvation is only available through Him and Him alone, and that He is Deity, being

The Feasts of YHWH

nothing less than Elohim/God made manifest in the flesh. Through Messiah's sacrifice at Calvary He atoned for all of sins of mankind, He was indeed resurrected from the dead, and now sits at the right hand of the Father in Heaven, waiting to return to establish His Kingdom on Earth.

Unlike many other doctrinal issues, the Deity of Yeshua is something that we **must** consider to be a salvation issue as we must believe in a Divine Redeemer to be saved.

SALVATION

Salvation is a free gift of God available to all who acknowledge Yeshua the Messiah as Lord and confess and repent of their sins. The true salvation experience will result in a person being spiritually regenerated and born again and inhabited by God's Holy Spirit or *Ruach HaKodesh*. The true salvation experience will also result in the Believer living an abundant life, seeking a greater walk of faith and maturity, by ceding more and more control of his life over to Yahweh by following His commandments, even though following commandments and having good works of themselves do not bring salvation.

We believe that all of those who receive Yeshua the Messiah as their personal savior will spend eternity with Him, whether in Heaven if they die in the faith prior to the resurrection, or on Planet Earth during His millennial reign.

ETERNAL PUNISHMENT

Those who reject the salvation available in Messiah Yeshua will spend a conscious eternity in Hell and ultimately the Lake of Fire. We do not believe that an annihilation of the condemned constitutes a viable "eternal" punishment. Just as the Father's Word is eternal and so are its ordinances, *never-ending*, **not** eternal in that their effects are eternal, so is eternal punishment to be *never-ending*.

While we recognize that this is not a salvation issue, an annihilation of the condemned is not a sustainable punishment for sin.

THE ELECT

Yahweh has only one chosen people or group of elect, known as the Body of Messiah or *kahal/ekklesia*. This assembly/congregation is the Israel of God composed of all who are of faith in Messiah Yeshua, both the physical descendants of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob, and those who are not. All are citizens of our Heavenly Father's Commonwealth of Israel.

We totally disavow the widespread notion that God has two groups of elect: Israel and "the Church." We believe that Messiah's mission was to come and restore the people of Israel, and all who might enjoin Israel, not "build" a separate "Church." We believe that the teaching which says that Yahweh has two groups of elect has done considerable damage today and it is something we dedicate ourselves to repairing. In saying this, we denounce all forms of dispensational and replacement theology.

THE TORAH

All Believers are called to uphold Yahweh's Eternal Torah or "Teaching" contained in the five Books of Moses: Bereisheet/Genesis, Shemot/Exodus, Vayikra/Leviticus, Bamidbar/Numbers, Devarim/Deuteronomy. These five books of Scripture give us the foundation for the rest of Scripture. By not understanding God's fundamental guidelines contained in the Torah, we run the risk of misinterpreting many parts of the Bible, especially parts of the Renewed Covenant/New Testament where the Law is commented on.

Insomuch that we believe that the Torah is an eternal document, we do not believe that Messiah Yeshua came to abolish or do away with it. On the contrary, as the Living Word of God, Yeshua came to show us how to live Torah, as He was sinless and lived it without error, and He

Articles of Faith for Judah and Ephraim

came in fulfillment of its sacrificial requirements. Yeshua is our example of how to properly follow God's commandments. **Disobedience to Torah is sin** and is Yahweh's holy standard for living.

The Torah is commonly referred to as the Law. This, sadly, has caused much confusion in the minds of many Christians as Torah is often viewed as a series of rules and regulations rather than as the fundamental principles of God's people. The term "Law" derives from the Greek *nomos*, which specifically refers to the ruling constitution of a society. We believe that it is critical that Yahweh's Torah be viewed in both terms of personal Teaching and Instruction and the national Law or Constitution of His people.

THE NAME OF GOD

In our day our Heavenly Father is revealing His name to His people. The Father's name as contained in the Hebrew Scriptures is *yud* (י), *hey* (ה), *vav* (ו), *hey* (ה): *hwhy* or YHVH/YHWH, usually replaced in Bibles with the titles "the LORD" or "HASHEM," and sometimes with Elohim. While pronunciations of *hwhy* vary, the most common ones as agreed by Christian and Jewish scholars are Yahweh and Yahveh. We encourage people to use and pronounce *hwhy* as they feel so led, provided it is done in proper respect and sensitivity to others, and most important that it glorifies the Holy One.

We recognize that God and Lord are not names of our Creator, but they are titles. We will use and treat God, Lord, Master, Elohim, Adonai, Kurios, Theos, etc., as titles and not as "names."

The original name of our Messiah, Yeshua/Y'shua, is also being revealed to the Father's people. Yeshua is what Messiah was known by to His early followers and this Hebrew name means "Salvation." We encourage Believers to use Yeshua, but also recognize that many have come to faith through the English name Jesus Christ. Unlike some in the Messianic community, we do not believe that the English name "Jesus" comes from pagan origins and is derived from "Zeus." Rather, the English name "Jesus" stems from the Greek name *Iesous*, which is the Greek transliteration used in the Septuagint for Yeshua by the Jewish translator rabbis some 300 years before Messiah. However, even so, we do not encourage usage of the name Jesus.

We do not consider the "names" issue to be one of salvation, but rather one of greater richness that the Father is revealing to His people.

THE TWO HOUSES OF ISRAEL

Yahweh promised the Patriarchs Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob that their physical descendants would be innumerable. The ancient nation of Israel following the reign of King Solomon was divided into the Southern Kingdom of Judah and the Northern Kingdom of Ephraim/Israel. The Northern Kingdom of Ephraim/Israel was prophesied to become the fullness of the nations/Gentiles and was taken into Assyrian exile in 721 B.C.E. and never corporately returned to the Land of Israel. While Judah was taken into Babylonian exile some two-hundred years later, Judah returned to the Land of Israel.

We believe that as the Northern Kingdom of Ephraim was assimilated into the nations that they have multiplied exponentially and that there are many more Israelites on Planet Earth than just the 14 million Jews of today. While these 14 million Jews are legitimate Israelites and descendants of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob, we also believe that many non-Jews or "Gentiles" are as well. As Yeshua told His Disciples to go to the lost sheep of the House of Israel, we believe that this was a reference to go to the scattered tribes and believe that this was to whom the gospel message was first proclaimed.

We believe that in these end-times, in fulfillment of Bible prophecy, Yahweh is awakening many lost Israelites to their Hebraic heritage as many non-Jewish Believers in Messiah are now honoring the Torah and endeavoring to live as Biblical "Israelites." The awakening of

The Feasts of YHWH

Ephraim to his Israelite heritage, coupled with faith in Messiah Yeshua, will enable him to truly provoke the House of Judah to jealousy *for faith* in Messiah.

Just as Judah returned to the Land, so do we believe in fulfillment of end-time prophecy that those of Ephraim too will one day return to Israel prior to Yeshua's return. Between now and then, God has given us the necessary time to train Israelite Believers up in the truths of His Torah.

(We recognize that there have been groups in the past that have emphasized the scattering of the Lost Tribes, be they British-Israel or Christian Identity. The problem with many in these groups is that they disclude the people of Judah and many of their teachings are laced with blatant anti-Semitism. We believe that these movements, British-Israelism in particular, have been used by the enemy as they limit the scattered seed of the Northern Kingdom to areas of Caucasian European ethnicity, while we believe that many Middle Easterners, Africans, Asians, and other races have lost Israelites in them, in addition to just Europeans.)

ON THE NON-ISRAELITES

Although Israel was divided into the Two Houses of Judah and Ephraim, citizenship in Israel has always been available to those who are not physically Israelites. In proclaiming that there will be a reunion of the Two Houses of Israel, within that reunion will be many people who are not physical Israelites but have enjoined themselves to either Judah or Ephraim and are considered part of Israel.

Personal salvation and redemption is not something that is ethnic or racial by any means. Simply because one is part of Israel, either as a member of the Two Houses of Judah or Ephraim or as a companion, does not guarantee him a position in God's Kingdom. Salvation is available to *all* who receive Messiah Yeshua, and there will be those who are part of the reunion of Judah and Ephraim who do not see Yahweh's Kingdom and will experience eternal punishment.

NECESSARY REPENTANCE BY JUDAH AND EPHRAIM

Both of the houses of Israel experienced their dispersions because they disobeyed the Torah of Yahweh and sought after paganism. Ephraim experienced his dispersion to Assyria because the Northern Kingdom broke away from the Southern Kingdom and established its own replacement religious system. Judah experienced his dispersion to Babylon because of likewise seeking after pagan gods and not following the Torah, but returned to the Land of Israel, to only later be dispersed and then return again to establish the State of Israel in 1948.

While in the dispersion, we believe that many of the scattered Northern Kingdom of Israel/Ephraim have come to faith in Messiah Yeshua. But even while they have come to faith, most of the lost Ephraimites continue to follow the pattern of replacing God's commandments with their own ordinances. We believe that as Yahweh reunites Ephraim with Judah, Ephraim will return to the Biblical truths contained in Torah and will repent of his sin.

When Ephraim returns to Torah and to his Biblical Israelite heritage, coupled with faith in Messiah Yeshua, we believe that then and only then will Judah be able to corporately acknowledge Yeshua as the Messiah. Judah will be able to repent for rejecting Yeshua because he will see Him as the One Who came to bring the Torah to a greater fullness, not abolish the Law as has been falsely preached.

ON THE CHURCH AND SYNAGOGUE

In our day, many of us are coming out of man-made religious systems as we seek greater Biblical truth. But as we come out of these religious systems, be they of the Church or Synagogue, are we to criticize and berate them without mercy? Or are we to recognize that they have had a place in God's eternal plan?

We recognize that Yahweh has had a role for both the Church and the Synagogue to play and that both Christianity and Judaism have some important and critical truths. This does not

Articles of Faith for Judah and Ephraim

mean that all Christian or Jewish teaching is 100% Biblical, but in order to remain in proper balance we realize that the Church and Synagogue have been used by God and that we must continue to reach out to those who are still in these institutions.

THE MESSIANIC LIFESTYLE

We believe that all who know Messiah Yeshua as Lord are called to emulate His Torah-obedient lifestyle. We do not follow the Torah or observe Biblical commandments for salvation, but rather to be part of the holy and set-apart people that our Heavenly Father desires. While each Believer must be led of the Holy Spirit in his individual life, critical components of the Messianic lifestyle consistent with the life of Messiah are honoring the Sabbath/*Shabbat*, the Biblical feasts/appointed times/*moedim*, and eating Biblically kosher.

As each individual will be honoring Torah differently, we urge understanding and grace between all Believers, provided that they have an interpretation of Torah commandments and do not simply ignore them.

THE BIBLICAL APPOINTMENTS

A necessary element of a true return to Biblical Torah is the following of Yahweh's appointed times/*moedim* of Vayikra/Leviticus 23. These prescribed appointments include the weekly seventh-day Sabbath/*Shabbat*, the monthly New Month/*Rosh Chodesh*, Passover/*Pesach*, Unleavened Bread/*Chag HaMatzah*, First Fruits/*Yom HaBikkurim*, Pentecost/*Shavuot*, Day of Blowing/*Yom Teruah*, Day of Atonement/*Yom Kippur*, Tabernacles/*Sukkot*, and *The Eighth Day of Assembly/Shemini Atzeret*.

We believe that these appointed times reveal the nature of God's plans for the ages and the plan of salvation. The *moedim* portray the picture of Messiah's First Coming, death, burial, resurrection, and the giving of the Holy Spirit, and also His Second Coming where He will gather the saints, judge the world, and establish His Kingdom from Jerusalem.

We do not recognize Sunday as a legitimate "sabbath" day nor Christian holidays such as Christmas or Easter as being legitimate expressions of Biblical faith. The Sabbath is the seventh day, and while the birth and resurrection of Messiah are events worthy of celebration, the practices of Christmas and Easter stem from paganism. It is more appropriate to honor Yeshua's birth and resurrection in correspondence with one of the Biblical *moedim*. However, we do recognize that most Christians celebrate Christmas and Easter in ignorance, not realizing their non-Biblical origins.

In regard to Jewish holidays such as Purim or Chanukah, we recognize that while these are not in the list of the Biblical *moedim*, they do nevertheless commemorate important events in Jewish history and by no means discourage their celebration.

THE LAST DAYS

We believe that we are presently living in the Last Days or end-times. While interpretations of future events are not salvation issues, it is important, nevertheless, that we follow world events that signal that we are drawing closer to the return of Messiah Yeshua.

We believe that the Messiah will physically return to Earth following the end or close of the Seventieth Week of Israel, commonly referred to as the Tribulation period. A world leader known as the antimessiah/antichrist will come to power in the Last Days and there will be a world government and world religious system. During the Tribulation, the final judgments of Yahweh will be poured out upon humanity.

While we believe in a gathering of the saints into the clouds to meet Yeshua, we disavow any belief in a pre-tribulation rapture, and rather promote the idea of a post-tribulation/pre-wrath gathering of the elect.

The Feasts of YHWH

DEFINING TITLES

There are many groups, organizations, and ministries that use the title “Messianic Israel” or the terms Two-House and Judah and Ephraim. We fully affirm that just like the titles “Christianity” or “Judaism,” titles such as “Messianic Israel” or “Two-House” have become generic enough so that all seeking to use them may do so. We do not believe that these can be limited to one particular group or organization and may be used by all, even if definitions of “Messianic Israel” or “Two-House” vary from group to group, person to person.

A COMMITMENT TO TRUTH AND FAIRNESS

We commit ourselves to a continual pursuit of Biblical truth and understanding, ceding more and more control of our lives over to Yahweh Elohim, the Holy One of Israel. We commit ourselves to research of God’s Word, deeper spiritual insights, and not compromising ourselves. We commit ourselves to being scholarly, fair, balanced, understanding, and loving to others, treating those who do not agree with us as Messiah Yeshua would. We pledge ourselves to not insult others but rather disagree with respect.



www.aim-messianics.org