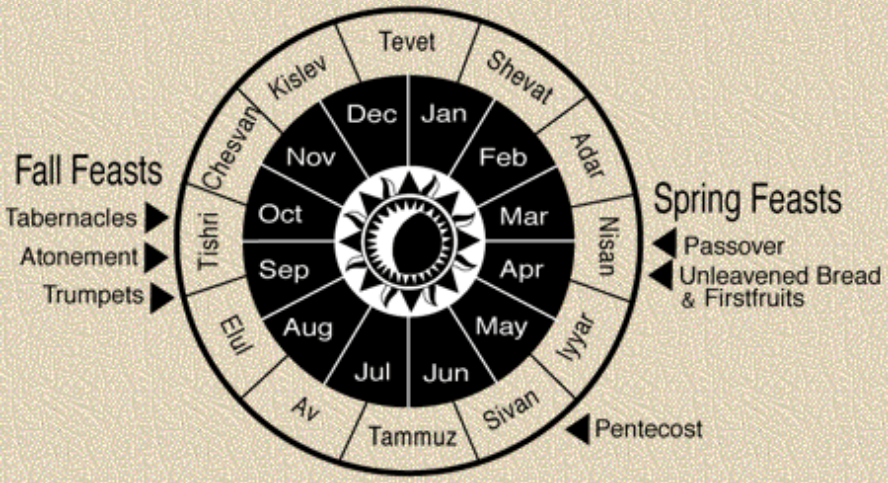
THE HOLIDAYS OF GOD

Reveal The Messiah - Jesus Christ



Spring Feasts:

1. Passover *(Pesach)*
2. Unleavened Bread *(Chag HaMatzot)*
3. Firstfruits *(HaBikkurim)*
4. Pentecost *(Shavuot)*

Fall Feasts:

5. Trumpets *(Rosh Hashanah)*
6. Atonement *(Yom Kippur)*
7. Tabernacles *(Sukkot)*

The destruction of the Jewish Temple in 70 A.D. altered the way the Jewish holidays were celebrated.

Without a temple and authorized priesthood, many of the activities central to holiday observance could not be practiced.

Jesus prophesized this would happen.

Matthew 24:1 After Jesus left the temple, his disciples came over and said, "Look at all these buildings!"

Matthew 24:2 Jesus replied, "Do you see these buildings? They will certainly be torn down! Not one stone will be left in place."

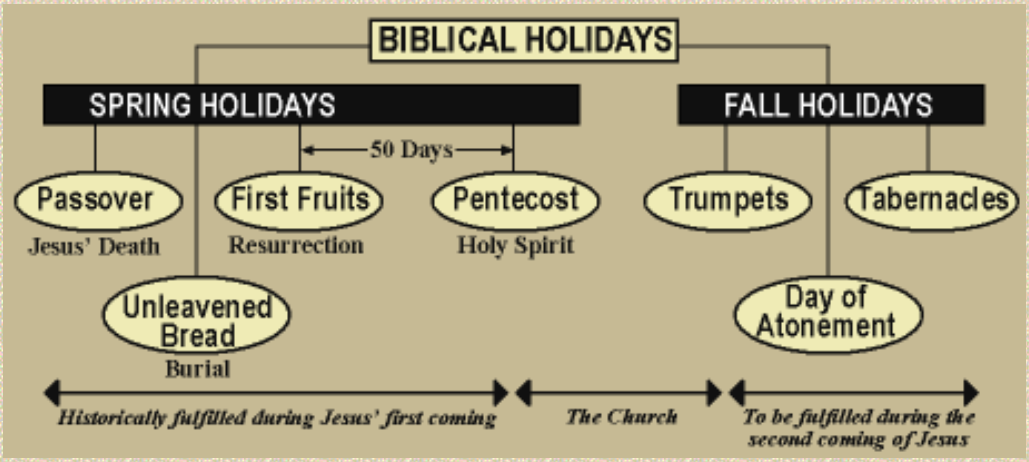
Luke 19:41 When Jesus came closer and could see Jerusalem, he cried

Luke 19:42 and said: It is too bad that today your people don't know what will bring them peace! Now it is hidden from them.

Luke 19:43 Jerusalem, the time will come when your enemies will build walls around you to attack you.

Armies will surround you and close in on you from every side.

Luke 19:44 They will level you to the ground and kill your people. Not one stone in your buildings will be left on top of another. **This will happen because you did not see that God had come to save you.**



THE HOLIDAYS OF GOD
The Spring Feasts

The ancient festival cycle of Israel is of timeless importance in remembering God's provisions for the past, present, and future of His people.

This same festival cycle is more than a timeless treasure of Israel.

The biblical holidays of God are also a pattern of shadows fulfilled in a Messiah who has already come in the first phase of a two-part plan to save His people and rule the world.

- Leviticus 23:1 The LORD told Moses
- Leviticus 23:2 to say to the community of Israel: "I have chosen certain times for you to come together and worship me. "

With these words, the Lord of Israel established an annual cycle of holidays still honored in Jewish communities all over the world. Whether these communities are Orthodox, Conservative, or Reform; whether they are Russian, Yemenite, or American, these feasts form a common thread in global Jewish culture.



In the Hebrew language, the word for "My feasts" can be phonetically spelled *mo-a-dim'*. It is a word that is best translated in English as "appointed times" or "appointed feasts." This additional emphasis reflects the importance the God of the Bible attached to these days.

These appointed times of the Lord are important for many reasons:

1. They are part of a national system of "time-outs."

2. They provide weekly, monthly, and yearly occasions to rest from the routines and common work of daily life.

3. The Provider of Israel designed these "time-outs" and appointed times for **rest, reflection, and worship**.

4. They are sacred convocations that call the people of God together not only in the grandeur and majesty of the temple, but also in the quiet shelter and simplicity of every home of the land.

5. These appointed times form a system of remembrance. The appointed times of the Lord give every household, whether rich or poor, an occasion to recount the awesome power and love of the God of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob.

It's important for us to understand, however, that this cycle of holidays is not just about Jewish culture. Even though they are linked to the agricultural cycle of the land of Israel and the occasions are used to retell stories of Jewish life and origins.

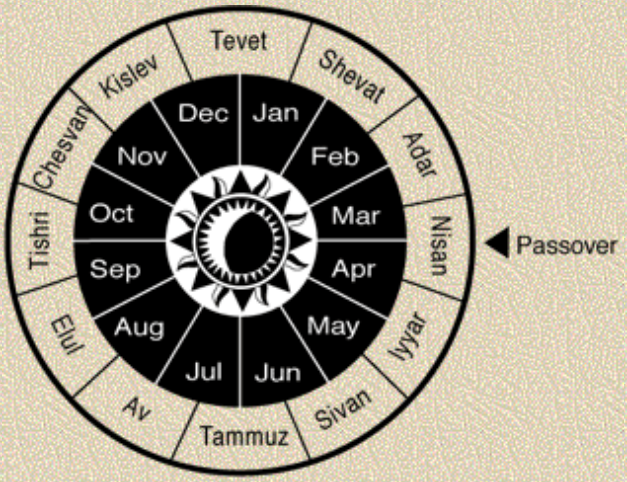
This series of holidays has significance reaching far beyond the nation and culture of Israel.

These holidays provide a panorama of history that has strong implications for all the families of the earth.

These feasts paint a compelling picture of the past, present, and future work of the Messiah - Jesus Christ, who is the source of life and hope and peace for all the nations of the world.

GOD'S SPRING FEASTS

1. PASSOVER *(Pesach)*



- Leviticus 23:4-6 The Passover is another time when you must come together to worship me, and it must be celebrated on the evening of the fourteenth day of the first month of each year.
- The Festival of Thin Bread begins on the fifteenth day of that same month; it lasts seven days, and during this time you must honor me by eating bread made without yeast.

The holiday of Passover is celebrated on the 14th of the Jewish month of Nisan. Ever since its beginning, Passover, or *Pesach* as it is called in Hebrew, has been celebrated on the full moon of a month that literally means "their flight." Even though Nisan usually corresponds with March/April on the Roman calendar, and even though modern Jewish communities celebrate their New Year on the first day of the seventh month (Oct.-Nov.), Nisan is the first month of the "appointed feasts of the Lord."

The 14th of the month of "their flight" looks back to the origin of the first Passover and to the birth of the nation of Israel. Ever since Israel's exodus from Egypt in about 1450 BC, the God of the Bible has asked His people to use this day to remember how He delivered their ancestors from the idols and slave-yards of Egypt.

The Passover has been honored. On the 14th of Nisan, observant Jewish fathers tell their children how the God of their fathers delivered their ancestors from economic bondage and spiritual darkness. It is at the feast of Passover that Jewish parents still describe how God used 10 plagues to break the stubborn grip of the Pharaoh. The plagues began with the "killing of the Nile River," which was worshiped by the Egyptians as a source of life. The plagues ended only after God took the life of every firstborn son of Egypt.

- Exodus 12:29-32 At midnight the LORD killed the first-born son of every Egyptian family, from the son of

the king to the son of every prisoner in jail. He also killed the first-born male of every animal that belonged to the Egyptians.

- That night the king, his officials, and everyone else in Egypt got up and started crying bitterly. In every Egyptian home, someone was dead.
- During the night the king sent for Moses and Aaron and told them, "Get your people out of my country and leave us alone! Go and worship the LORD, as you have asked.
- Take your sheep, goats, and cattle, and get out. But ask your God to be kind to me."

That final decisive plague came during the full moon of Nisan 14. Moses, the leader of the Jewish people, had instructed every Israelite home to sacrifice a lamb, collect its blood—the biblical sign of life—and with a hyssop brush paint the lamb's blood on the lintel and door posts of their houses.

The story of Israel's rescue from Egypt is a picture not only of the past but of a future rescue as well.

- Exodus 12:21-23 Moses called the leaders of Israel together and said: Each family is to pick out a sheep and kill it for Passover.
- Make a brush from a few small branches of a hyssop plant and dip the brush in the bowl that has the blood of the animal in it. Then brush some of the blood above the door and on the posts at each side of the door of your house. After this, everyone is to stay inside.

During that night the LORD will go through the country of Egypt and kill the first-born son in every Egyptian family.

He will see where you have put the blood, and he will not come into your house.

On the evening of that first Passover, the Lord visited Egypt as an angel of death. According to the Scriptures, the Lord took the life of every firstborn—people and livestock included—except where He found blood on the doorway. Only where there was blood on the doorway did He "pass over" and spare the life of the firstborn in that home.

To understand the killing of the paschal (Passover) lamb, it's important to know that in Egyptian society the lamb, or ram (a male sheep), represented a pagan god of the Egyptians named Amon. Amon, whose name means "hidden one," was considered the king of the gods and the source of all life on heaven and earth. According to the Egyptian zodiac, Nisan was the chief month of this god, and the 15th of that month during the full moon was believed to be the apex of Amon's powers.



The lamb was so sacred in Egyptian cult practice that the people of the land were forbidden to even touch a ram, let alone bring it into their home, slaughter it, roast, and then eat it as God commanded the Israelites to do.

To the Egyptians the killing of a lamb was a desecration of their religion! The Passover sacrifice was a direct challenge to their gods.

To the Jewish people, the same sacrifice fulfilled a promise of the Almighty: "Against all the gods of Egypt I will execute judgment: I am the Lord."

To the Egyptians the killing of a lamb was a desecration of their religion! The Passover sacrifice was a direct challenge to their gods.

- Exodus 12:1-12 Some time later the LORD said to Moses and Aaron:
- This month is to be the first month of the year for you.
- Tell the people of Israel that on the tenth day of this month the head of each family must choose a lamb or a young goat for his family to eat.
- If any family is too small to eat the whole animal, they must share it with their next-door neighbors. Choose either a sheep or a goat, but it must be a one-year-old male that has nothing wrong with it. And it must be large enough for everyone to have some of the meat.
- Each family must take care of its animal until the evening of the fourteenth day of the month, when the animals are to be killed.
- Some of the blood must be put on the two doorposts and above the door of each house where the animals are to be eaten.

- That night the animals are to be roasted and eaten, together with bitter herbs and thin bread made without yeast.
- Don't eat the meat raw or boiled. The entire animal, including its head, legs, and insides, must be roasted.
- Eat what you want that night, and the next morning burn whatever is left.
- When you eat the meal, be dressed and ready to travel. Have your sandals on, carry your walking stick in your hand, and eat quickly. This is the Passover Festival in honor of me, your LORD.
- That same night I will pass through Egypt and kill the first-born son in every family and the first-born male of all animals. I am the LORD, and I will punish the gods of Egypt.

On the celebrated day of Amon, and at the alleged peak of his powers, the God of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob not only overcame Pharaoh, but desecrated the worship of Amon and gave the Egyptian people reason to believe in the God of Israel.

After 40 years, the Jewish people carried these memories into a homeland that came to be known as the nation of Israel. Here the children of the Exodus began to celebrate the annual feast of Passover in remembrance of what God had done for them in Egypt. Centuries later, when Israel's King Solomon built a temple in Jerusalem, they traveled great distances to observe their *Pesach* together in Jerusalem.

This was the practice of the Jewish people until the Roman destruction of the temple complex in AD 70.

After the destruction of the temple, Jewish people had to remember Passover in a different way. **Without the temple, there could be no lamb sacrifice.** The Law said the sacrifice could be made only by qualified priests serving at the altar and place of God's choosing. **As a result, for nearly 2,000 years lamb has not been served in Jewish homes during the Passover meal.** Instead, the rabbis and sages declared that unleavened bread, "matzah" bread, would be the appropriate substitute. Eating the matzah would be equal to eating the lamb.

The destruction of the temple altered the way all the holidays were celebrated. Without a temple, and without an authorized priesthood, many of the activities central to holiday observance could not be practiced.

Those who believe that Jesus is the promised Messiah of Israel embrace the spiritual significance of the holidays of God. About 40 years before the destruction of the temple, Jesus not only claimed to be the Messiah but also that He had come to fulfill the meaning of the Passover sacrifice.

- John 4:25 The woman said, "I know that the Messiah will come. He is the one we call Christ. When he comes, he will explain everything to us."
- John 4:26 "I am that one," Jesus told her, "and I am speaking to you now."

At the Passover Seder, which later became known by His followers as "The Table of Communion," Jesus held up the elements of wine and matzah and applied them to Himself.

- Luke 22:14 When the time came for Jesus and the apostles to eat,
- Luke 22:15 he said to them, "I have very much wanted to eat this Passover meal with you before I suffer.
- Luke 22:16 I tell you that I will not eat another Passover meal until it is finally eaten in God's kingdom."
- Luke 22:17 Jesus took a cup of wine in his hands and gave thanks to God. Then he told the apostles, "Take this wine and share it with each other.
- Luke 22:18 I tell you that I will not drink any more wine until God's kingdom comes."
- Luke 22:19 Jesus took some bread in his hands and gave thanks for it. He broke the bread and handed it to his apostles. Then he said, "This is my body, which is given for you. Eat this as a way of remembering me!"
- Luke 22:20 After the meal he took another cup of wine in his hands. Then he said, "This is my blood. It is poured out for you, and with it God makes his new agreement.

Jesus' claims were outrageous and blasphemous if they were not true. But they were true, and they help to explain why the feast of the Passover would go through such a profound transition in the years ahead.

The Communion elements are treasured reminders of His broken body and shed blood. Fulfilled in Jesus, the Passover celebration then did more than remember just the birth of a nation. This annual feast also anticipated

Messiah's ultimate deliverance of an international body of people who are willing to trust in His sacrificial death for their spiritual protection.

Jesus claimed that He had come to fulfill the meaning of the Passover sacrifice.

For those Jewish people who have not yet believed in Jesus, the broken matzah, or unleavened bread, continues to be a part of the Passover meal; yet it is shrouded in mystery. This mystery, a puzzle on which the Jewish sages cannot reach consensus, need not be a mystery to those who believe in Jesus as the Messiah.

One element of mystery is found in a Passover tradition involving the "afikomen." On every Passover table there is a cloth bag called a "matzah tosh." The bag is either square or round and lies flat on the table. Within the matzah tosh are three pieces of matzah bread, each separated in its own pocket. In this way they are hidden from view, but the celebrants know they are there. During the Seder, the middle matzah is removed from its place, broken in half, and one portion is wrapped in a linen cloth. This wrapped piece of matzah is called the "afikomen." *Afikomen* is not a Hebrew word, but a Greek word that means "the coming one." The afikomen is removed from the table and hidden. Later in the meal, it becomes a children's game to search for the hidden afikomen. The child who finds it brings it back to the table where "Papa" must ransom it back. Once it is paid for, the afikomen is unwrapped and shared by all as the last food eaten —so its flavor will stay on the tongue and its memory stay in the mind the rest of the evening.



Rabbis cannot agree on the significance of this unusual observance, or its origins. Some believe the three pieces of matzah in the "matzah tosh" represent three crowns of learning. Others believe it represents the three patriarchs: Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob. Still others believe it symbolizes the three types of people in Israel: the priests, the Levites, and the commoners. Yet through the eyes of the Gospels we see in the afikomen a striking picture of the tri-unity of Deity.

In the three folds of the "matzah tosh" there is a picture of the Father, Son, and Holy Spirit. That the middle matzah represented by the Son, our Messiah is broken, wrapped in linen, hidden, and ransomed (the price paid), and then brought back for the family to accept and enjoy is too deliberate to easily dismiss. While the symbolism of this ritual remains a mystery to those who have not accepted Jesus Christ, through messianic eyes the meaning seems clear and powerful.

When Jesus said of the unleavened bread, "Take, eat; this is My body," He was not instituting an empty ritual. He was identifying Himself personally with both the matzah and the **Passover Lamb**, bringing to mind the words of the prophet Isaiah:

- Isaiah 53:3 He was hated and rejected; his life was filled with sorrow and terrible suffering. No one wanted to look at him. We despised him and said, "He is a nobody!"
- Isaiah 53:4 He suffered and endured great pain for us, but we thought his suffering was punishment from God.
- Isaiah 53:5 He was wounded and crushed because of our sins; by taking our punishment, he made us completely well.
- Isaiah 53:6 All of us were like sheep that had wandered off. We had each gone our own way, but the LORD gave him the punishment we deserved.
- Isaiah 53:7 He was painfully abused, but he did not complain. He was silent like a lamb being led to the butcher, as quiet as a sheep having its wool cut off.
- Isaiah 53:8 He was condemned to death without a fair trial. Who could have imagined what would happen to him? His life was taken away because of the sinful things my people had done.
- Isaiah 53:9 He wasn't dishonest or violent, but he was buried in a tomb of cruel and rich people.
- Isaiah 53:10 The LORD decided his servant would suffer as a sacrifice to take away the sin and guilt of others. Now the servant will live to see his own descendants. He did everything the LORD had planned.
- Isaiah 53:11 By suffering, the servant will learn the true meaning of obeying the LORD. Although he is innocent, he will take the punishment for the sins of others, so that many of them will no longer be guilty.

When we share in the bread of Communion and Passover, we share in Jesus Christ, who became our matzah. He was broken on our behalf to become our bread. Bread is the staff of life, a symbol of all the provisions we need to live.

Each time we share in the cup of Communion, we share in the Passover cup of the New Covenant.

Another important element in a traditional Jewish Passover observance is wine. During a typical Passover Seder, four cups are shared, each with its own significant picture in the ritual.



- 1. The first cup is called the "cup of sanctification," which sets the feast apart from any commonplace meal.
- 2. The second cup is the "cup of plagues," remembering the calamities visited upon the Egyptians.
- 3. The third cup is called the "cup of redemption," recognizing and memorializing the Hebrews' release from captivity.
- 4. The fourth cup is called the "cup of praise," during which the family recites Psalms 113-118, traditionally considered the praise Psalms.

- Matthew 26:29 From now on I am not going to drink any wine, until I drink new wine with you in my Father's kingdom."
- Matthew 26:30 Then they sang a hymn and went out to the Mount of Olives.

Our attention here is on the third cup, the "cup of redemption," the "Kiddush cup," which in the modern Seder comes after the eating of the afikomen. Because of the ritualistic order of the meal and the rich significance of this observance, this is the cup Jesus lifted, blessed, and declared:

- Matthew 26:27 ... "Take this and drink it.
- Matthew 26:28 This is my blood, and with it God makes his agreement with you. It will be poured out, so that many people will have their sins forgiven.
- Matthew 26:29 From now on I am not going to drink any wine, until I drink new wine with you in my Father's kingdom."

The cup of red wine is symbolic of blood in Jewish tradition. In the Pentateuch (first five books of the Bible) and throughout the ancient world, covenants were sealed and confirmed with blood. This is no less true in the Gospels. Symbolically with the cup and literally through His blood shed at the crucifixion, the Messiah proclaimed the beginnings of a new covenant predicted by the Jewish prophet Jeremiah.

- Jeremiah 31:31 The LORD said: The time will surely come when I will make a new agreement with the people of Israel and Judah.
- Jeremiah 31:32 It will be different from the agreement I made with their ancestors when I led them out of Egypt. Although I was their God, they broke that agreement.
- Jeremiah 31:33 Here is the new agreement that I, the LORD, will make with the people of Israel: "I will write my laws on their hearts and minds. I will be their God, and they will be my people.
- Jeremiah 31:34 "No longer will they have to teach one another to obey me. I, the LORD, promise that all of them will obey me, ordinary people and rulers alike. I will forgive their sins and forget the evil things they have done."

This New Covenant has not yet reached its complete fulfillment. Many thousands of Jews and millions of Gentiles have come to faith in Jesus, and God remembers their sins no more. Yet not all of the house of Israel or the house of Judah have taken this step of faith.

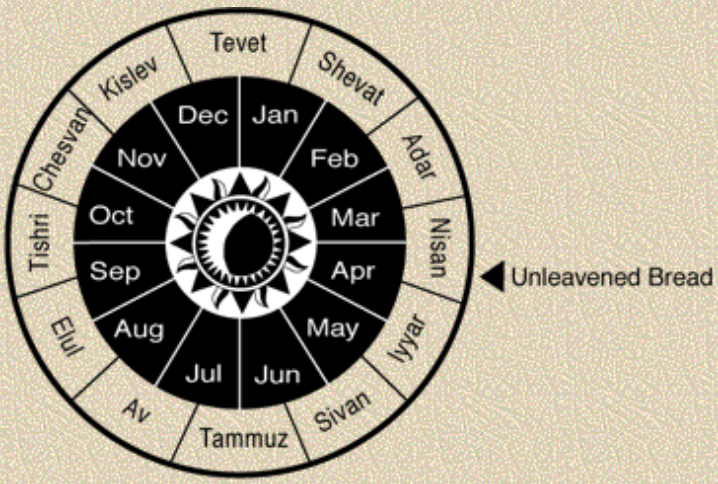
Every time we share the Cup of Communion, we share the Passover cup of the New Covenant. With this symbol of our redemption, we remember not only the death of Jesus Christ but also the blood that has sealed the New Covenant, for "in Him we have redemption through His blood, the forgiveness of sins, according to the riches of His grace."

- Colossians 1:13 God rescued us from the dark power of Satan and brought us into the kingdom of his dear Son,
- Colossians 1:14 who forgives our sins and sets us free.

God's Holiday Feasts			
The Holiday Feast	**The Biblical Event**	**Messianic Reference**	**The Spiritual Application**
1. The Passover	**Exodus from Egypt**	**Jesus is the Slain Lamb**	**God Delivers from Sin's Slavery**

GOD'S SPRING FEASTS

2. UNLEAVENED BREAD *(Chag HaMatzot)*



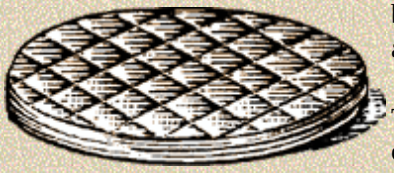
Leviticus 23:6 The Festival of Thin Bread begins on the fifteenth day of that same month; it lasts seven days, and during this time you must honor me by eating bread made without yeast.

The holiday of Passover is used interchangeably with the Feast of Unleavened Bread. God's Feast of Unleavened Bread begins on Nisan 15, the day after the Passover sacrifice. Known in synagogues as *Chag HaMatzot,* this holiday lasts for a week. For 7 days the people of Israel are to eat only unleavened bread in remembrance of the day God delivered His people from Egypt.

That historic day deserves to be remembered. In droves, a multitude estimated at 3 million men, women, and children, along with the herds and wealth of Egypt, began their exodus. In the span of a heartbeat, the children of Israel were literally transferred out of the kingdom of slavery and into the kingdom of liberty, a community redeemed. "They departed from Rameses in the first month, on the fifteenth day of the first month; on the day after the Passover the children of Israel went out with boldness in the sight of all the Egyptians."

Numbers 33:3-4 Israel left the Egyptian city of Rameses on the fifteenth day of the first month. This was the day after the LORD had punished Egypt's gods by killing the first-born sons in every Egyptian family. So while the Egyptians were burying the bodies, they watched the Israelites proudly leave their country.

They took their bread in its mixing bowls, without time for the leaven (yeast) to form or for the



bread to rise. When the order came to leave, they left—flat bread and all!

This act of leaving Egypt with unleavened bread has led to one of the most colorful traditions of the Passover season. In anticipation of the days of unleavened bread, Jewish mothers do their "spring cleaning." With great care they sweep and search and scrub their homes to remove every bit of leaven. Floors are swept, pots are boiled, cupboards are emptied—all in an effort to remove any trace of leaven. Then just before Passover, bonfires are lit in empty lots and fields all over Israel to destroy any of the bread and crumbs that have been found.

Rabbis point out that leaven puffs up bread the way pride does. Flat bread speaks of humility and obedience. Unleavened bread speaks of our readiness to put away from us the evil inclination that lives within all of us. It reminds us that freedom is not enough. God did not deliver His people from Egypt just for them to be free, but that they'd be free from the bondage of sin. He delivered His people to enjoy the liberty that is found by all who learn to live in humble dependence on the one true God.

Paul, a Jewish scholar, alludes to Unleavened Bread:

- 1Corinthians 5:6 Stop being proud! Don't you know how a little yeast can spread through the whole batch of dough?
- 1Corinthians 5:7 Get rid of the old yeast! Then you will be like fresh bread made without yeast, and that is what you are. Our Passover lamb is Christ, who has already been sacrificed.
- 1Corinthians 5:8 So don't celebrate the festival by being evil and sinful, which is like serving bread made with yeast. Be pure and truthful and celebrate by using bread made without yeast.

Leaven is an illustration of sin. The Feast of Unleavened Bread teaches the need for God's people to live new lives marked by a break from the bondage experienced in the kingdom of sin and darkness.

The Feast of Unleavened Bread speaks of our need for a break from the bondage of our old way of life.

The messianic significance Jesus claimed for the matzah of Passover is when He broke the unleavened bread of the Seder and said, "This is My body which is given for you. This do in remembrance of Me," He was saying that the matzah of the Passover had a meaning that is realized fully in Him.

There is a picture of Jesus in the way unleavened bread is made. By rabbinic decree, matzah must be striped, pierced, and burned in such a way as to appear bruised.

> Zechariah 12:10 I, the LORD, will make the descendants of David and the people of Jerusalem feel deep sorrow and pray when they see the one they pierced with a spear. They will mourn and weep for him, as parents weep over the death of their only child or their first-born.

- Isaiah 53:4 He suffered and endured great pain for us, but we thought his suffering was punishment from God.
- Isaiah 53:5 He was wounded and crushed because of our sins; by taking our punishment, he made us completely well.
- Isaiah 53:6 All of us were like sheep that had wandered off. We had each gone our own way, but the LORD gave him the punishment we deserved.
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- Isaiah 53:9 He wasn't dishonest or violent, but he was buried in a tomb of cruel and rich people.
- Isaiah 53:10 The LORD decided his servant would suffer as a sacrifice to take away the sin and guilt of others. Now the servant will live to see his own descendants. He did everything the LORD had planned.
- Isaiah 53:11 By suffering, the servant will learn the true meaning of obeying the LORD. Although he is innocent, he will take the punishment for the sins of others, so that many of them will no longer be guilty.
- Isaiah 53:12 The LORD will reward him with honor and power for sacrificing his life. Others thought he was a sinner, but he suffered for our sins and asked God to forgive us.

The God of the Bible wants us to see Jesus as our source of "sinless bread." Bethlehem, the place of Jesus' birth, is rendered in Hebrew as *Beit-lechem*, meaning "the house of bread."

Understand this picture of Jesus the Messiah as our matzah:

- John 6:51 I am that bread from heaven! Everyone who eats it will live forever. My flesh is the life-giving bread that I give to the people of this world.
- John 6:52 They started arguing with each other and asked, "How can he give us his flesh to eat?"
- John 6:53 Jesus answered: I tell you for certain that you won't live unless you eat the flesh and drink the blood of the Son of Man.
- John 6:54 But if you do eat my flesh and drink my blood, you will have eternal life, and I will raise you to life on the last day.
- John 6:55 My flesh is the true food, and my blood is the true drink.
- John 6:56 If you eat my flesh and drink my blood, you are one with me, and I am one with you.
- John 6:57 The living Father sent me, and I have life because of him. Now everyone who eats my flesh will live because of me.
- John 6:58 The bread that comes down from heaven isn't like what your ancestors ate. They died, but whoever eats this bread will live forever.
- John 6:59 Jesus was teaching in a Jewish place of worship in Capernaum when he said these things.
- John 6:60 Many of Jesus' disciples heard him and said, "This is too hard for anyone to understand."
- John 6:61 Jesus knew that his disciples were grumbling. So he asked, "Does this bother you?
- John6:62 What if you should see the Son of Man go up to heaven where he came from?
- John 6:63 The Spirit is the one who gives life! Human strength can do nothing. The words that I have spoken to you are from that life-giving Spirit.

Jesus' comments about eating His flesh and drinking His blood seem cannibalistic. Yet if Jesus was speaking figuratively of these spiritual truths (v.63), and if He is the Messiah-bread of Israel, His message is profound. Jesus who became our unleavened bread has invited us to share in Him. He invites us to give ourselves to Him and adopt His own character, purging the leaven of our old ways. We have left our own "Egypt," carrying our Bread with us—and not merely with us but in us—the very Bread of Life.

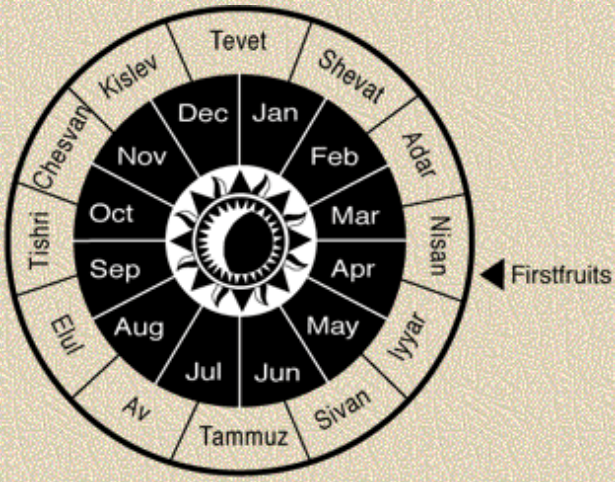
If the unleavened bread of the Passover is fulfilled by God's Messiah, it means that we are not left to live a sinless life in our own strength.

Like Lot fleeing Sodom, the Israelites were not to look back on their former life but were to take the flat bread with them, not even giving it time to rise. We too, once we come into a saving knowledge of Jesus The Messiah, must turn from our former lifestyles and walk in faith into spiritual maturity and faithfulness, putting away the childish and sinful things, and trusting God for

all that lies ahead.

God's Holiday Feasts			
The Holiday Feast	**The Biblical Event**	**Messianic Reference**	**The Spiritual Application**
1. The Passover	**Exodus from Egypt**	**Jesus is the Slain Lamb**	**God Delivers from Sin's Slavery**
2. Unleavened Bread	**Exodus from Egypt**	**Jesus is Killed**	**Live humbly before God**

3. GOD'S SPRING FEASTS
FIRSTFRUITS *(HaBikurim)*



- Leviticus 23:9 The LORD told Moses
- Leviticus 23:10 to say to the community of Israel: After you enter the land I am giving you, the first bundle of wheat from each crop must be given to me. So bring it to a priest
- Leviticus 23:11 on the day after the Sabbath. He will lift it up in dedication to me, and I will accept you.

The third appointed feast was delayed until the people of Israel took possession of their Promised Land. Once they began taking its harvest, they were to begin observing a feast of firstfruits "on the day after the Sabbath." Since Passover was a day on which no common work was to be done, "the Feast of Firstfruits" was to be observed on Nisan 15.

For as long as the Jewish people had a tabernacle or temple, they were to give to the temple priests a portion of all their increase and harvest. "This shall be the priest's due from the people, from those who offer a sacrifice, whether it is bull or sheep: they shall give to the priest the shoulder, the cheeks, and the stomach.

- Deuteronomy 18:3 When you sacrifice a bull or sheep, the priests will be given the shoulder, the jaws, and the stomach.
- Deuteronomy 18:4 In addition, they will receive the first part of your grain harvest and part of your first batches of wine and olive oil. You must also give them the first wool that is cut from your sheep each year.

When this sacrifice was given to the priests, the offerer made a proclamation: "I declare today to the Lord your God that I have come to the country which the Lord swore to our fathers to give us."

Deuteronomy 26:3 and tell the priest, "Long ago the LORD our God promised our ancestors that he would give us this land. And today, I thank him for keeping his promise and giving me a share of the land."

The priest would then take the basket, or baskets, and place them before the altar. Following the commandment of God, the man would then recite, in the presence of a priest, the following Scripture:

- Deuteronomy 26:5 Then, standing there in front of the place of worship, you must pray: My ancestor was homeless, an Aramean who went to live in Egypt. There were only a few in his family then, but they became great and powerful, a nation of many people.
- Deuteronomy 26:6 The Egyptians were cruel and had no pity on us. They mistreated our people and forced us into slavery.
- Deuteronomy 26:7 We called out for help to you, the LORD God of our ancestors. You heard our cries; you knew we were in trouble and abused.
- Deuteronomy 26:8 Then you terrified the Egyptians with your mighty miracles and rescued us from Egypt.
- Deuteronomy 26:9 You brought us here and gave us this land rich with milk and honey.
- Deuteronomy 26:10 Now, LORD, I bring to you the best of the crops that you have given me. After you say these things, place the basket in front of the LORD's altar and bow down to worship him.

The intentions behind this ritual was more than tithes and offerings, or superficial observances, but remembrance in one's heart that God had redeemed them out of slavery into a new kingdom. At this appointed time they were to acknowledge in their hearts and confess before witnesses that the fruits of their labor were a grace-gift from the Almighty, who is the source of all material and spiritual wealth, and that they no longer lived as slaves in bondage but as free citizens in God's kingdom.



- 1Corinthians 15:20 But Christ has been raised to new life! And he makes us certain that others will also be raised to new life.
- 1Co 15:21 Just as we will die because of Adam, we will be raised to new life because of Jesus Christ.
- 1Co 15:22 Adam brought death to all of us, and Jesus Christ will bring new life to all of us.
- 1Co 15:23 But we must each wait our turn. Jesus was the first to be raised to life, and his people will be raised to new life when he returns.

It is important to see how the resurrection of Jesus links Him to the historic Feast of Firstfruits.

Matthew 28:1 The Sabbath was over, and it was almost daybreak on Sunday when Mary Magdalene and the other Mary went to see the tomb.

The Feast of Firstfruits was to be observed on the first day after the Sabbath of Passover.

- Leviticus 23:10 to say to the community of Israel: After you enter the land I am giving you, the first bundle of wheat from each crop must be given to me. So bring it to a priest
- Leviticus 23:11 on the day after the Sabbath. He will lift it up in dedication to me, and I will accept you.

Jesus rose from the grave on Sunday, the first day of the week after the seventh-day Sabbath. Jesus rose from the dead not on just any day. The reality as it played out was not coincidentally on the first day of the week; rather the Messiah rose according to God's intentional design in order to fulfill the holy Torah. He rose on *HaBikkurim*—the Feast of Firstfruits. His resurrection was a promise of the life and everlasting freedom that would come to all who believe in Him.

Of the Feast of Firstfruits each family, and every individual separately acknowledged, by the yearly presentation of the firstfruits, a living relationship between them and God, in virtue of which they gratefully received at His

hands all they had or enjoyed, and solemnly dedicated both it and themselves to the Lord." How much more, then, is this true for those who confess Jesus as Messiah! Those who believe in Jesus can gratefully see Him as the resurrected firstfruit of the eternal harvest that God has promised to those who trust in Jesus for salvation.

The New Testament clearly states that Jesus became our Firstfruits, the first resurrection.

Like Passover and the Feast of Unleavened Bread, the Feast of Firstfruits is ripe with messianic overtones. Each is also rich with insights and principles for our faith. Each feast has a connection to the others and to the events of Israel's past. Each feast also has a prophetic and messianic connection to Israel's future.

What is also clear is that these feasts can no longer be kept as they were observed in ancient Israel.

Ever since the destruction of the temple in AD 70, there has been no temple in which to offer sacrifice or to bring firstfruits. As a result, synagogues remember the Feast of Firstfruits with prayers.

Intermediate Observance: Counting Of The Sheaves *(Sfirat HaOmer)*

- Leviticus 23:15 Seven weeks after you offer this bundle of grain, each family must bring another offering of new grain.
- Leviticus 23:16 Do this exactly fifty days later, which is the day following the seventh Sabbath.

This commandment is not a recognized holiday today but represents a process still observed among Orthodox, Conservative, and Messianic Jewish synagogues. Together these groups obey the commandment to count the passage of time, day by day, from the Feast of Firstfruits to the next major biblical feast: *Shavuot. Shavuot* is also known as Pentecost, and it falls exactly 50 days after the Feast of Firstfruits.

In synagogues and in Jewish homes the observant Hebrew greets each evening (the beginning of the Jewish day) with special prayers to mark off the days until *Shavuot.* This observance is not a countdown, but an anticipation of the coming appointed time of God. During this time Psalm 119 is read in the synagogues as observant Jewish people meditate on its words of encouragement.

An attitude of anticipation can also be seen in a prayer recited every evening during the Counting of the Sheaves: "May it be Your will, Lord our God, and the God of our forefathers, that in the merit of the omer count that I have counted today, may there be corrected whatever blemish I have caused . . . and may I be cleansed and sanctified with the holiness of Above."

The observant Jewish man or woman looks to these days as a time of introspection, with the nightly prayers helping to examine his or her life, in anticipation of the great work he expects the Creator to do on the 50th day, the Day of Pentecost.

Leviticus 23:15 instructs the celebrants to be mindful of the passage of time from Passover to Pentecost, the 49 intermediary days. Some rabbis teach that this time is like waiting for a friend who is coming from afar for a special visit, bearing with him great news. Certainly in the biblical history of the apostles, the 49 days between *Pesach* and *Shavuot* were spent in fellowship with and being taught by the resurrected Messiah. But He left them with the promise that a unique Counselor and helper would come. A very intimate friend did visit on *Shavuot*—the Holy Spirit.

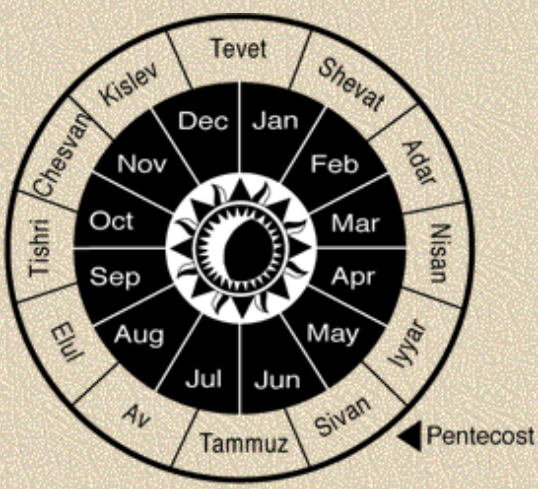
In the church today, Pentecost is calculated in the same way: 49 days after the resurrection. Few Christians, however, pay attention to the period between Easter and Pentecost. If believers followed this example of Israel, they might experience unexpected blessing. The days that mark the period from the cross to the dramatic beginning of the church (from the resurrection to the coming of the Holy Spirit) could become a time of quiet soul-searching and renewal. It could give the church an annual opportunity to contemplate the return of the Messiah in

power to the earth!

God's Holiday Feasts			
The Holiday Feast	**The Biblical Event**	**Messianic Reference**	**The Spiritual Application**
1. The Passover	**Exodus from Egypt**	**Jesus is the Slain Lamb**	**God Delivers from Sin's Slavery**
2. Unleavened Bread	**Exodus from Egypt**	**Jesus is Killed**	**Live humbly before God**
3. Firstfruits	**God Delivers from Egypt**	**Jesus is Firstfruits**	**We are New Creations in Jesus**
Counting Sheaves	The Grain Harvest	Jesus Provides a Helper	Receive the Holy Spirit

GOD'S SPRING FEASTS

4. PENTECOST *(Shavuot)*



- Leviticus 23:16 Do this exactly fifty days later, which is the day following the seventh Sabbath.
- Leviticus 23:17 Bring two loaves of bread to be lifted up in dedication to me. Each loaf is to be made with yeast and with four pounds of the finest flour from the first part of your harvest.
- Leviticus 23:18 At this same time, the entire community of Israel must bring seven lambs that are a year old, a young bull, and two rams. These animals must have nothing wrong with them, and they must be offered as a sacrifice to please me. You must also offer the proper grain and wine sacrifices with each animal.
- Leviticus 23:19 Offer a goat as a sacrifice for sin, and two rams a year old as a sacrifice to ask my blessing.
- Leviticus 23:20 The priest will lift up the rams together with the bread in dedication to me. These offerings are holy and are my gift to the priest.
- Leviticus 23:21 This is a day of celebration and worship, a time of rest from your work. You and your descendants must obey this law.

On Pentecost, the Law (or "teachings" of God), was given to Moses on Mount Sinai. Accompanied by fire, the Almighty wrote the Ten Commandments for the children of Israel. Fire is an important element in Pentecost.

In the second chapter of Acts, the disciples, along with the multitude of witnesses from other nations, had just come from the *Shavuot* service in the temple where every year the prophet Ezekiel was read:

On Pentecost all the spring feasts culminated in the New Covenant era, when the Spirit of God would begin establishing a new kingdom on earth.

Ezekiel 1:4 I saw a windstorm blowing in from the north. Lightning flashed from a huge cloud and lit up the whole sky with a dazzling brightness. The fiery center of the cloud was as shiny as polished metal,

In the presence of this assembly the sound of a mighty wind and fire announcing the presence of the Lord was about to replay the vision of Ezekiel.

- Acts 2:1 On the day of Pentecost all the Lord's followers were together in one place.
- Acts 2:2 Suddenly there was a noise from heaven like the sound of a mighty wind! It filled the house where they were meeting.
- Acts 2:3 Then they saw what looked like fiery tongues moving in all directions, and a tongue came and settled on each person there.
- Acts 2:4 The Holy Spirit took control of everyone, and they began speaking whatever languages the Spirit let them speak.

Once again the fire of God appeared, but this time to His trusted friends. Peter, the man who had backslidden and even denied knowing the Messiah three times, now rose with courage and gave his first sermon. The marvel of Messiah's Spirit, the *Ruach HaKodesh* in the Hebrew ("Holy Breath") had fallen. The same breath that gave life to Adam, transforming him from a lump of clay into a living man, now transformed lives by the thousands!

An important fact about *Shavuot* is that it is one of three pilgrim feasts when all Israelite men were required by law to come to Jerusalem and bring their offerings to the temple. On this day, as Acts 2:9-11 tells us, there would have been Hebrews from all over the known world gathered in the upper rooms of the temple. These were temple-observant men: "Parthians and Medes and Elamites, those dwelling in Mesopotamia, Judea and Cappadocia, Pontus and Asia, Phrygia and Pamphylia, Egypt and the parts of Libya adjoining Cyrene, visitors from Rome, both Jews and proselytes, Cretans and Arabs.

Peter spoke to the multitude in Acts 2:39, reminding them, "For the promise is to you and to your children, and to all who are afar off." And the key to Peter's sermon, Acts 2:39 " For whosoever calls upon the name of the Lord shall be saved," was proclaimed for the Jew and the Gentile.

While incidental to the message, note that Peter spoke of King David during his sermon:

- Acts 2:25 What David said are really the words of Jesus, "I always see the Lord near me, and I will not be afraid with him at my right side.
- Acts 2:26 Because of this, my heart will be glad, my words will be joyful, and I will live in hope.
- Acts 2:27 The Lord won't leave me in the grave. I am his holy one, and he won't let my body decay.
- Acts 2:28 He has shown me the path to life, and he makes me glad by being near me."
- Acts 2:29 My friends, it is right for me to speak to you about our ancestor David. He died and was buried, and his tomb is still here.
- Acts 2:30 But David was a prophet, and he knew that God had made a promise he would not break. He had told David that someone from his own family would someday be king.
- Acts 2:31 David knew this would happen, and so he told us that Christ would be raised to life. He said that God would not leave him in the grave or let his body decay.
- Acts 2:32 All of us can tell you that God has raised Jesus to life!
- Acts 2:33 Jesus was taken up to sit at the right side of God, and he was given the Holy Spirit, just as the Father had promised. Jesus is also the one who has given the Spirit to us, and that

is what you are now seeing and hearing.
- Acts 2:34 David didn't go up to heaven. So he wasn't talking about himself when he said, "The Lord told my Lord to sit at his right side,
- Acts 2:35 until he made my Lord's enemies into a footstool for him."
- Acts 2:36 Everyone in Israel should then know for certain that God has made Jesus both Lord and Christ, even though you put him to death on a cross.

Jewish tradition teaches that David died on *Shavuot*, and this too, like the reading from Ezekiel above, would have been in the forefront of the minds of the Hebrew men surrounding Peter. All of these events and memorials came together to touch the hearts of the unbelieving Jews, moving them act:

> Acts 2:37 When the people heard this, they were very upset. They asked Peter and the other apostles, "Friends, what shall we do?"

Because Pentecost, or the Feast of Weeks, is associated with the giving of the Law and the coming of the Spirit, it is interesting to compare the outcome of those two events. We read in Exodus 32:28 that 3,000 men died at Mount Sinai because of the sin of worshiping the golden calf. Contrast that loss of 3,000 lives with the New Testament *Shavuot* when 3,000 men came to new life in Jesus 50 days after the celebration of Passover.

The firstfruit of the resurrection was followed at Pentecost with the firstfruit of the church.

The believers of Pentecost were worthy of death but because their faith rested on the great High Priest, Jesus Christ, who had made atonement for their sins, they were now alive eternally—part of the firstfruit harvest, the first tithe, and the promise of Jeremiah 31:

- Jeremiah 31:31 The LORD said: The time will surely come when I will make a new agreement with the people of Israel and Judah.
- Jeremiah 31:32 It will be different from the agreement I made with their ancestors when I led them out of Egypt. Although I was their God, they broke that agreement.
- Jeremiah 31:33 Here is the new agreement that I, the LORD, will make with the people of Israel: "I will write my laws on their hearts and minds. I will be their God, and they will be my people.

On this Pentecost all the spring feasts culminated in the New Covenant era, when the Spirit of God would begin establishing a new kingdom on earth—not by overthrowing governments or armies, but through the humble submission of individual hearts, one at a time, over hundreds of years. " 'Not by might nor by power, but by My Spirit,' says the Lord of hosts."

- Zechariah 4:1 The angel who explained the visions woke me from what seemed like sleep.
- Zechariah 4:2 Then he asked, "What do you see?" "A solid gold lamp stand with an oil container above it," I answered. "On the stand are seven lamps, each with seven flames.
- Zechariah 4:3 One olive tree is on the right side and another on the left of the oil container.
- Zechariah 4:4 But, sir, what do these mean?"
- Zechariah 4:5 Then he asked, "Don't you know?" "No sir," I replied.
- Zechariah 4:6 So the angel explained that it was the following message of the LORD to Zerubbabel: **I am the LORD All-Powerful. So don't depend on your own power or strength, but on my Spirit.**

Shavuot is also called "Atzeret shel Pesach," the completion of Passover. It ties together the first night of Passover to the final observance of *Shavuot*, continually reminding the faithful that God is the Redeemer and Rock of our salvation, the only One who can rescue us from bondage. Several times in the Gospel of John our Messiah said that if we abide in Him, He will abide in us:

- John 15:4 Stay joined to me, and I will stay joined to you. Just as a branch cannot produce fruit unless it stays joined to the vine, you cannot produce fruit unless you stay joined to me.
- John 15:5 I am the vine, and you are the branches. If you stay joined to me, and I stay joined

to you, then you will produce lots of fruit. But you cannot do anything without me.

- John 15:6 If you don't stay joined to me, you will be thrown away. You will be like dry branches that are gathered up and burned in a fire.
- John 15:7 Stay joined to me and let my teachings become part of you. Then you can pray for whatever you want, and your prayer will be answered.
- John 15:8 When you become fruitful disciples of mine, my Father will be honored.

This was not merely some utopian teaching and a thing to humanly strive for, as if man could attain such merit on his own power. It was a promise of the Most High.

This was not merely some utopian teaching and a thing to humanly strive for, as if man could attain such merit on his own power. It was a promise of the Most High. On Pentecost, at the close of an era in human history and at the dawn of a new season of planting and bearing fruit, the Spirit came to abide in every man, woman, and child who called out in faith to the Messiah - Jesus Christ.

The stage has been set by the Ancient of Days, the pattern laid out for all to see in the first of the *mo-a-dim'*, these appointed spring-time festivals. The Messiah of Israel put aside His glory and joined the ranks of mankind, becoming the incarnate One. He "tabernacled" among us, as John's gospel said, and dwelt among His own creation. Then came the climax of His time on earth—the crucifixion. The battle had been waged in the events of the Passover week as He became both the bread and wine and the lamb of sacrifice that death might pass over both the Jewish believers and all mankind who accept Him by faith today. Three days and nights passed until the victory was declared. At Firstfruits, Jesus, the slain lamb, became the Savior, the firstfruit of our resurrection; glorified and dedicated, conquering the power of sin and death forevermore. With great anticipation, we count the days from Passover to Pentecost and the birth of the church. The first harvest of humankind, 3,000 strong, issued in the new era of messianic revelation, a perpetual spring season that continues to permit germination, blooming, and growth. Is it merely a coincidence that these New Testament events correspond so perfectly to the pictures and lessons presented to us in the feast days? And does God have pictures for us of the final harvest represented in the Fall Feasts: *Rosh Hashanah*, *Yom Kippur*, and the Feast of Tabernacles?

God's Holiday Feasts

The Holiday Feast	The Biblical Event	Messianic Reference	The Spiritual Application
1. The Passover	**Exodus from Egypt**	**Jesus is the Slain Lamb**	**God Delivers from Sin's Slavery**
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3. Firstfruits	**God Delivers from Egypt**	**Jesus is Firstfruits**	**We are New Creations in Jesus**
Counting Sheaves	The Grain Harvest	Jesus Provides a Helper	Receive the Holy Spirit
4. Pentecost	**The 10 Commandments**	**Jesus sends Holy Spirit**	**Be filled with the Spirit of God**



GOD'S FALL FEASTS

- Leviticus 23:1 The LORD told Moses
- Leviticus 23:2 to say to the community of Israel: I have chosen certain times for you to come together and worship me.

With these words, the Lord of Israel established an annual cycle of holidays that are still observed in Jewish communities all over the world. Whether these communities are Orthodox, Conservative, or Reform; whether they are Russian, Yemenite, or American, these feasts form a common thread in global Jewish culture.

In the Hebrew language, the word for "My feasts," pronounced *mo-a-deem',* literally means "appointed times" or "appointed feasts." In Jewish culture these "appointed times of the Lord" are important for many reasons. These events, as listed in Leviticus 23, are part of a national system of "time-outs." Together they provide weekly, monthly, and yearly rests from the common routines of daily life. They also provide a preplanned schedule for reflection and worship. These "holidays of God" are sacred convocations that summoned a nation not only to the grandeur and majesty of the temple, but also to quiet and simple worship in the home. Together these "appointed times of the Lord" give every home, whether rich or poor, an occasion to remember the holiness, power, and longsuffering love of the God of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob.

This cycle of holidays is not just about Jewish culture. Even though they are linked to the harvest cycle of the land of Israel, and even though the festival calendar is used to retell stories of Jewish life and origins, these holidays provide a panorama of history that has strong implications for all of the families of the earth. Seen individually and together, these feasts paint a compelling picture of the past, present, and future work of the Messiah - Jesus Christ who is the source of life, hope, and peace for all the nations of the world.

These holidays provide a panorama of history that has strong implications for all the families of the earth.

The plan of God's salvation was revealed during the holy days of Passover, Unleavened Bread, First fruits, and Pentecost. With a sudden turn of events, the first four feasts of Israel took on the

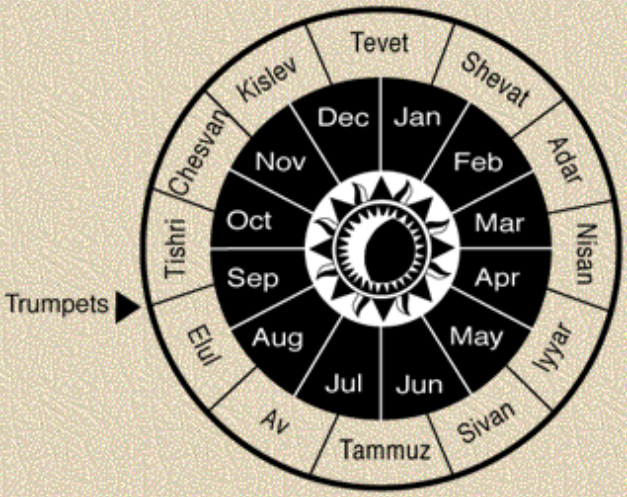
personality of a miracle worker who bore the marks of God's Messiah. On Passover, Jesus became the sacrificial Lamb whose blood marked all who believe in Him for deliverance. During the Feast of Unleavened Bread, He died to take away our sin and to give us, in the place of our own efforts, the "bread" (life-sustaining provision) of His eternal presence. On the Feast of First fruits, He arose from the dead to show that it was by God's power that He carried out our rescue. Then 50 days later on the Feast of Pentecost (also known as the Feast of Weeks, or *Shavuot),* Jesus sent His Spirit to show His presence with all who are willing to stake their lives on Him.



As you consider the fall feasts, imagine the scene in ancient Israel. Several months have passed since the end of the spring feasts. The growing season has ended. Payloads of olives, grapes, pomegranates, and citrons (a lemon-like fruit) are in from the fields, and the people of the land are getting ready to thank God for the harvest. Families all across Israel prepare to make their way to the temple in Jerusalem for the third pilgrim feast of the year. Together they will walk dusty paths to celebrate the fall harvest and to express dependence on God for the rains that will be needed for the following year.

As worshipers prepare to make their way to Jerusalem, the city of God, the blowing of a ram's horn (shofar) from the city walls of Jerusalem signals the beginning of the fall holiday season. All day, the ram's-horn trumpets are blown as a summons to gather before *El Elyon*, the Most High God.

5. THE FEAST OF TRUMPETS (*Rosh Hashanah*)



- Lev 23:23 The LORD told Moses
- Lev 23:24-25 to say to the people of Israel: The first day of the seventh month must be a day of complete rest. Then at the sound of the trumpets, you will come together to worship and to offer sacrifices on the altar.

The shofar was blown on the first of Tishri, the seventh month of the Jewish religious calendar. It was *Yom Teruah,* "the day of blowing." Traditionally called *Rosh Hashanah,* it marked the year-end harvest as an occasion for the whole nation to seek relational and spiritual renewal.

The Shofar's Call To Repentance

The blowing of the ram's-horn trumpets provided an important spiritual reminder: It was an admonition to those who had just finished bringing in the harvest by the sweat of their own labor. When workers were tempted to look at the results of their own effort and congratulate themselves for the harvest, they needed this God-centered ritual to remind them that in all of their work they were dependent on the creating and sustaining power of God on their

behalf. The worker plants, weeds, waters, and waits, but it is God who provides the increase.

Of the blowing of the shofar, Alfred Edersheim, noted 19th-century scholar, writes, "One of its main purposes was to rouse men to repentance. In fact, the commentator Maimonides (1135-1204) makes use of the following words to denote the meaning of the blowing of trumpets: 'Rouse ye, rouse ye from your slumber; awake, awake from your sleep, you who mind vanity, for slumber most heavy has fallen upon you. Take it to heart, before whom you are to give an account in the judgment.'"

Bible scholars believe that the Feast of Trumpets refers prophetically to the last-days events.

The Shofar's Look To The Future

Many believe that *Yom Teruah* also has a prophetic significance. The first four feasts have a striking correlation with final events in the life of Jesus (His first advent). Many Bible scholars believe that the Feast of Trumpets refers prophetically to the last-days events (His second advent) that will call the nation of Israel, and the whole world, to repentance in preparation for His coming messianic kingdom.

Compare this messianic hope with a *Rosh Hashanah* prayer from an Orthodox Jewish prayer book: "May it be Your will that the sounding of the shofar which we have done will be embroidered in the veil by the appointed angel, as You accepted it by Elijah of blessed memory and by Yeshua, the Prince of God's Presence and the one who sits on God's throne. May You be filled with compassion toward us. Deserving of praise are You, Lord of compassion"



With this prayer, Jewish synagogues have invoked on *Rosh Hashanah* the name of God's coming King: *Yeshua.* Most Jewish rabbis insist that this reference to *Yeshua* has nothing to do with Jesus, the anglicized name for *Yeshua* (literally "salvation"). One reason for rejecting Jesus as the Messiah of Israel has been the rabbinic opinion that God would never require—nor accept—a human sacrifice. Yet, in contrast to this teaching, there is within the tradition of many synagogues a practice that remembers a day when God did ask father Abraham to offer his only son Isaac as a sacrifice and it was God himself that provided the sacrifice.

The Shofar's Look Back To Isaac

Each autumn during the High Holy Days, synagogues all over the world remember the *Akeidah* (Hebrew term referring to "the binding of Isaac" as described in Genesis 22:1-19). The preeminent symbol of *Rosh Hashanah* or *Yom Teruah* is the ram's-horn trumpet. The rabbis see a significant connection between it and the substitutionary ram that was provided by God when Abraham offered up his only son Isaac as a sacrifice on Mount Moriah.

One reason for rejecting Jesus as the Messiah has been the rabbinic opinion that God would never require—nor accept—a human sacrifice.

In many synagogues, the *Akeidah* (the binding of Isaac) is read every weekday of the year as a memorial, but from *Rosh Hashanah* to *Yom Kippur* it is particularly emphasized. In the process, many rabbis teach that when Abraham offered up Isaac on Mount Moriah (the eventual site of the Temple Mount), Isaac actually died and was resurrected! This could not be so because Jesus is the first fruits of the resurrection.

A book titled *Rosh Hashanah: Its Significance, Laws, And Prayers* states, "A reading of the Talmudic sources makes clear that God thinks of Isaac as if he had actually been sacrificed and his remains burned on the altar" (p.31). One story claims that Isaac was so terrified that he died of fright, but at the sound of the voice of the Angel of the Lord he came to life again. If we read the biblical account in Genesis 22:1-19, we do not find any indication that Isaac died or that his body was burned or resurrected. We do learn, however, some provocative similarities between Isaac and another Son who, according to New Testament witnesses, was offered as a human sacrifice by a loving Father.

Consider the comparison between Isaac and the *Yeshua* of the New Covenant. Both were sons of promise. Their

comings were heralded by angelic beings. Both came into the world by means of a miraculous birth. Through both men the entire world was to be blessed. Both were beloved sons of their fathers. They were blameless, neither one deserving capital punishment. Both had to carry the wood of their judgment upon their shoulders.

Many believe that both Jesus and Isaac were in their early to mid-thirties at the time of their trials. Both were brought to a mount for their sacrifice. Both went willingly to the slaughter, without saying a word in their defense; yet both lived to see their heirs. These are just a few parallels of the many we can find between the Hebrew Scriptures and the Gospels of the New Covenant.

Has God placed within rabbinic theology and tradition a clue to the identity of His own Messiah?

If we add to our comparison the Orthodox Jewish view that Isaac was sacrificed, died, and was resurrected, we find even more striking parallels. Some rabbis teach: “Isaac’s ashes are before [God] always a living reminder of Isaac’s covenant because an ascent to such spiritual heights as the *Akeidah* never dies. Therefore, too, Isaac’s life after the *Akeidah* was of a different order than any other. He was a living sacrifice, sanctified, and spiritual”

Pictures of Jesus in the Person of Isaac

Parallels	Isaac	Jesus
A Hebrew	Genesis 21:3	Matthew 1:1
A son of promise	Genesis 17:19	Luke 2:29-32
Foretold by an angel	Genesis 18:10	Luke 1:26-33
Miraculous birth	Genesis 18:13	Luke 1:34-35
A blessing to the world	Genesis 22:18	Luke 2:29-32
Beloved by father	Genesis 22:2	Matthew 3:17
Only son	Genesis 22:2	John 3:16
Undeserving of capital punishment	assumed	Hebrews 7:26
Carried wood to the sacrifice	Genesis 22:6	John 19:17
Around 30 years old	rabbinic	Luke 3:23
Brought to a mount	Genesis 22:2	John 19:17
Went willingly to slaughter	Genesis 22:9	Acts 8:32
Sacrificed	rabbinic	1 Corinthians 5:7
Resurrected	rabbinic	Acts 2:31
Lived to see offspring	Genesis 25:21	Hebrews 2:10

Has God placed within rabbinic theology and tradition a clue to the identity of His own Messiah?

Days Of Awe

In the fall holiday season, *Rosh Hashanah* is the beginning of a 10-day period known as the “Days of Awe.” In Jewish communities, the blowing of the shofar is followed by a time of introspection, when worshipers look into their own hearts for misdeeds against others and for transgressions in thought or deed against God. They are days of repentance, when individuals attempt to right the wrongs they have committed. It is a time to prepare for the coming Day of Judgment, *Yom Kippur*.

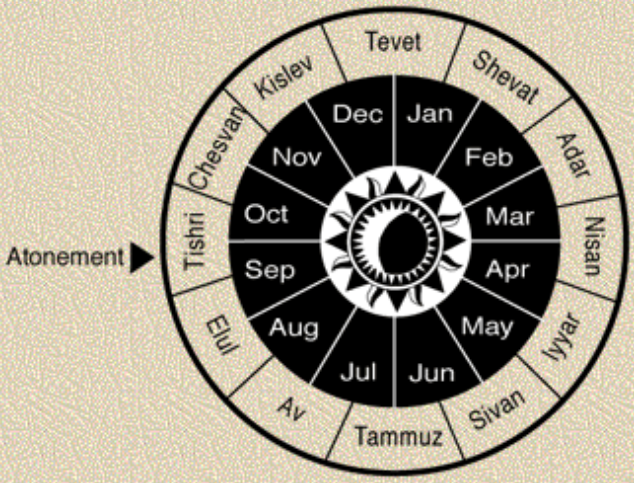


In the temple period this national time of repentance and restitution was an annual event, and it continues today as a serious practice among those who observe the Holidays of God.

God's Holiday Feasts

The Holiday Feast	The Biblical Event	Messianic Reference	The Spiritual Application
1. The Passover	**Exodus from Egypt**	**Jesus is the Slain Lamb**	**God Delivers from Sin's Slavery**
2. Unleavened Bread	**Exodus from Egypt**	**Jesus is Killed**	**Live humbly before God**
3. Firstfruits	**God Delivers from Egypt**	**Jesus is Firstfruits**	**We are New Creations in Jesus**
Counting Sheaves	The Grain Harvest	Jesus Provides a Helper	Receive the Holy Spirit
4. Pentecost	**The 10 Commandments**	**Jesus sends Holy Spirit**	**Be filled with the Spirit of God**
5. Feast of Trumpets	**Substitutionary Ram**	**Jesus is our Sacrifice**	**Repent and Receive Jesus**

6. THE DAY OF ATONEMENT (*Yom Kippur*)



- Leviticus 23:26 The LORD God said to Moses:
- Leviticus 23:27 The tenth day of the seventh month is the Great Day of Forgiveness. It is a solemn day of worship; everyone must go without eating to show sorrow for their sins, and sacrifices must be burned.

Yom Kippur (literally “day of covering”) falls on the tenth day of the month of Tishri and brings to a close the period of repentance begun on *Rosh Hashanah.* On this national Day of Atonement, the high priest of the temple used compelling and colorful ritual to show God’s willingness to forgive the sins of the previous year.

Seven days before *Yom Kippur*, every effort was taken to ensure that the high priest was kept in a state of ritual purity. On this day of days, he would undergo five immersions and have an entourage of about 500 Levites with him everywhere he went, to help guard him from anything that might render him “unclean.”

On every other day of the year, the high priest dressed in his formal uniform, which included the golden crown, colorful robes, a breastplate, and jewels inscribed with the names of the tribes of Israel. On the Day of Atonement, however, he set aside his normal splendor and wore only a white linen robe, which was symbolic of purity.

Because the Day of Atonement was a day of sacrifice, the high priest’s white linen robe was soon spattered with blood. To atone for his own sins, he sacrificed a bull before the Lord. Then to atone for the sins of the nation, the



high priest took two kid goats and cast lots to determine their fate. Depending on how the lots fell, one of the goats was sacrificed as a sin offering for the nation. When this sacrificial goat was appointed, the high priest pronounced, "For Jehovah," and the throngs of worshipers would fall on their faces and call out, "Blessed be the Name; the glory of His kingdom is forever and ever." Then the goat was slain.

The other goat, known as the *Azazel,* or **scapegoat,** became a second picture of national atonement. First the high priest symbolically placed the sins of the nation on the head of the live goat. He did this by laying both of his hands on the goat's head while confessing the sins of the people. Then, with the sins of the people on the head of the goat, the high priest sent the *Azazel* off into the wilderness. It was a dramatic picture of God's willingness to separate His people from their sins. In the second temple period (515 BC to AD 70), the scapegoat was led to a cliff and forced over the brink to make sure it didn't return.

Then, only on this one day of the year, the high priest risked his life to carry the blood of the sacrificed animal into the Most Holy Place of the Lord's house of worship. Going behind the veil that separated the Holy Place from the Most Holy Place, the high priest entered the presence of God to sprinkle the blood of the sacrifice on the golden Mercy Seat that covered the Ark of the Covenant. If any aspect of the ritual was not fulfilled according to God's instructions (Lev. 16), the high priest could be struck dead. Only when the high priest came out alive did the nation rejoice that for one more year God had accepted the sacrifice for their sins.

This sacrifice is a picture of a merciful God, concerned about wiping away even the smallest of transgressions.

During the second temple period, the Talmud records that the Levites tied a scarlet thread of wool around a horn of the *Azazel.* After the goat was driven off a cliff, witnesses were sent to examine the thread. For centuries, this thread is reported to have miraculously turned white, indicating that God had accepted their sacrifice and forgiven the nation of Israel. It was believed that this was in fulfillment of Isaiah 1:18, "Though your sins are like scarlet, they shall be as white as snow; though they are red like crimson, they shall be as wool."

The Jewish Talmud records, however, that 40 years before the destruction of the second temple, the thread ceased to turn white. Is it a mere coincidence that at the same time as the death and resurrection of Jesus, around AD 30, the rabbis themselves took note of the fact that the Most High began rejecting the *Azazel* sacrifice?

***Yom Kippur:* Looking Back**

Many believers of both Jewish and Gentile origin see in the sacrifices of the Day of Atonement a foreshadowing of a Messiah who would come to make atonement for our sins. Many believe that Isaiah 53 speaks of this suffering Savior when it says, "It pleased the LORD to bruise Him; He has put Him to grief. When You make His soul an offering for sin, He shall see His seed, He shall prolong His days, and the pleasure of the LORD shall prosper in His hand" (v.10). The message seems to be that our Messiah is pictured as both the sin offering and the *Azazel,* carrying our sins off into the wilderness of Gehenna (hell) so that our scarlet sins could be white as snow, and so that our sins could be wiped away before the Judge of all the earth.

Jews that reject the Messiah - Jesus Christ will be tricked into believing the Anti-Christ is their redeemer because he brings peace to the land of Israel and reinstitutes the Temple practices.

The idea of God accepting a messianic sacrifice for sin is still a difficult concept for Jewish people to believe. Yet the concept of such a sacrifice is rooted in the Jewish theology of rabbinic commentaries. The following quote comes from *The Stone Edition: The Chumash,* "Why is the death of the righteous mentioned in conjunction with the chapter of the *Yom Kippur* service? Because just as *Yom Kippur* brings atonement, so the death of the righteous brings atonement."

***Yom Kippur:* Looking Within**

What can *Yom Kippur* mean for us today? For those who see that the sacrifice for our sins has been made by God's Messiah - Jesus Christ once and for all, the truth of *Yom Kippur* has great meaning. We don't look back fearfully at the comment of the Talmud that the scarlet thread no longer turned white as proof of God's forgiveness.

Instead, we can reflect back on an empty tomb and on the compelling testimonies of the appearances of the One whose bodily resurrection proved that the price for our Sin has been paid in full and that we have been accepted by God. Now we can confess, I have sinned, but by the blood of His own Messiah, the Father has paid the penalty." As we have trusted Him, so now He has forgiven us.

Yom Kippur, the Day of Atonement, is a day to be mindful of our sin and the offering that was made on our behalf. It is a day to be mindful—and grateful—for the grace afforded through the perfect, everlasting sacrifice, Messiah Jesus.

***Yom Kippur:* Looking Ahead**

The Day of Atonement also points us to the future. On the heels of a last-days call to repentance there will be a day of final reckoning for all who have not repented of their sins. According to Hebrew prophets, in the last days there will be a great and awesome Day of the Lord that will reveal the judgment that awaits those who have not taken advantage of the atonement of God:

- Joel 2:11 The LORD God leads this army of countless troops, and they obey his commands. The day of his judgment is so terrible that no one can stand it.
- Joel 2:28 Later, I will give my Spirit to everyone. Your sons and daughters will prophesy. Your old men will have dreams, and your young men will see visions.
- Joel 2:29 In those days I will even give my Spirit to my servants, both men and women.
- Joel 2:30 I will work wonders in the sky above and on the earth below. There will be blood and fire and clouds of smoke.
- Joel 2:31 The sun will turn dark, and the moon will be as red as blood before that great and terrible day when I appear.
- Joel 2:32 Then the LORD will save everyone who faithfully worships him. He has promised there will be survivors on Mount Zion and in Jerusalem, and among them will be his chosen ones.

Malachi 4:1 The day of judgment is certain to come. And it will be like a red-hot furnace with flames that burn up proud and sinful people, as though they were straw. Not a branch or a root will be left. I, the LORD All-Powerful, have spoken!

No one can afford to be "uncovered" or "unatoned for" on the final *Yom Kippur*. That day will be inexpressibly hopeless for those who have spent the days of their lives resisting the evidence and claims of God's Messiah! It will be a day of regret for those who avoided salvation opportunities and even became angry with the good news of God. It will be the kind of regret anticipated by the prophet Zechariah when he wrote:

- Zechariah 12:10 I, the LORD, will make the descendants of David and the people of Jerusalem feel deep sorrow and pray when they see the one they pierced with a spear. They will mourn and weep for him, as parents weep over the death of their only child or their first-born.
- Zechariah 12:11 On that day the people of Jerusalem will mourn as much as everyone did for Hadad Rimmon on the flatlands near Megiddo.
- Zechariah 12:12 Everyone of each family in the land will mourn, and the men will mourn separately from the women. This includes those from the family of David, and the families of Nathan,
- Zechariah 12:13 Levi, Shimei,
- Zechariah 12:14 and all other families as well.

What is the future hope of those who reject the true Jesus of the Bible as the Messiah, still without a temple, no priest, and no *Yom Kippur* sacrifice to assure them of God's mercy and forgiveness? Can they find assurance in their repentance, prayer, and good deeds, hoping that God will forgive them? Moses said:

- Leviticus 17:8 Remember! No one in Israel, including foreigners, is to offer a sacrifice anywhere
- Leviticus 17:9 except at the entrance to the sacred tent. If you do, you will no longer belong to my people.
- Leviticus 17:10 I will turn against any of my people who eat blood. This also includes any foreigners living among you.

- Leviticus 17:11 Life is in the blood, and I have given you the blood of animals to sacrifice in place of your own.
- Leviticus 17:12 That's also why I have forbidden you to eat blood.
- Leviticus 17:13 Even if you should hunt and kill a bird or an animal, you must drain out the blood and cover it with soil.
- Leviticus 17:14 The life of every living creature is in its blood. That's why I have forbidden you to eat blood and why I have warned you that anyone who does will no longer belong to my people.

After the temple was destroyed in AD 70, the rabbis from the known world gathered for the Yavneh Council. Their purpose was to decide the future of Jewish worship without a temple priesthood or sacrifices. The religious customs established at Yavneh are the basis of modern rabbinic Judaism and have remained relatively unchanged over nearly 2,000 years. Rabbi Yochanan Ben-Zakkai, the most influential member of the council and still a widely studied commentator, appears to have exhibited little confidence in the new synagogue system's ability to save his soul from judgment. On his deathbed, the rabbi is quoted as saying, "Now I am being led before the supreme King of Kings, the Holy One, blessed be He, who lives and endures for ever and ever. If He is angry with me, He is angry forever. If He imprisons me, He imprisons me forever. If He puts me to death, He puts me to death forever. I cannot persuade Him with words or bribe Him with money. Moreover, there are two ways ahead of me: one leads to Paradise and the other to Hell, and I do not know which one will take me. How can I do anything but weep?" (B'rakhot 28b *Talmud).*

No one can afford to be "uncovered" or "unatoned for" on the final Yom Kippur.

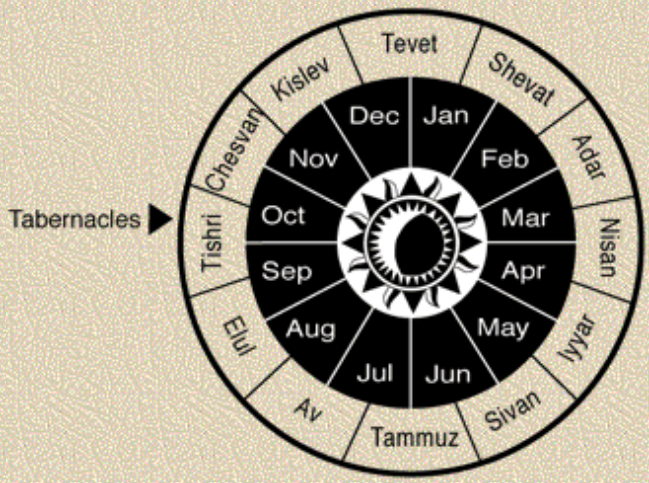
Yet, in fulfillment of the Day of Atonement, there is evidence declaring that God has not left us without hope or atonement. He has not left us devoid of hope, without sacrifice, or without a way of apprehending His mercy. In the pictures of the *Akeida,* and in the pictures of the sin offering of *Yom Kippur,* we can see the character and foreshadowing of God's Messiah, our assurance of salvation. These pictures are not just remarkable parallels or coincidences. They are God's revelation to Israel—and to all nations.

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4. Pentecost	**The 10 Commandments**	**Jesus sends Holy Spirit**	**Be filled with the Spirit of God**
5. Feast of Trumpets	**Substitutionary Ram**	**Jesus is our Sacrifice**	**Repent and Receive Jesus**
6. Day of Atonement	**Our Sorrow for Sin**	**Jesus is the Scapegoat**	**Accept Jesus as the Sin Sacrifice**

7. THE FEAST OF TABERNACLES (*Sukkot*)



- Leviticus 23:23 The LORD told Moses
- Leviticus 23:24-25 to say to the people of Israel: The first day of the seventh month must be a day of complete rest. Then at the sound of the trumpets, you will come together to worship and to offer sacrifices on the altar.

Five days after the Day of Atonement, the last of the fall feasts begins. *Sukkot* (Hebrew for "booths") is known by many different names: the Feast of Tabernacles, the Festival of Booths, the Feast of the Ingathering (Ex. 23:16), the Festival of the Lord (Lev. 23:39), and the Festival at the inauguration of Solomon's Temple (1 Ki. 8:2). Each title reflects a unique aspect of this annual observance. This feast presents a picture of how God provided for His people in the past, provides in the present, and will provide in the future.

***Sukkot* Of The Past**

Historically, *Sukkot* is a holiday that remembers in symbolic and colorful ways the 40 years the Israelites spent wandering in the wilderness living in makeshift shelters. For 4 decades, the Hebrew nation relied entirely on the provision of God Almighty. Their clothes and shoes did not wear out (Dt. 29:5), and they, and their flocks, did not lack for food or water (Neh. 9:15,20-21). God provided everything.

In remembrance of this miraculous expression of provision, the Lord God commanded the Jewish people to "camp outside" in temporary shelters to remember how He had provided for their forefathers:

- Leviticus 23:42 For seven days every Israelite must live in a shelter,
- Leviticus 23:43 so that future generations will know that I made their ancestors live in shelters when I brought them out of Egypt. I am the LORD your God.

As one of the three pilgrim festivals, along with Passover *(Pesach)* and Pentecost *(Shavuot)*, the Feast of Booths *(Sukkot)*was the third appointed time for all Jewish males to come to Jerusalem with their tithes and offerings. At this time of year, and for the 8 days of *Sukkot*, Jerusalem would have been overflowing with people. By Tishri 15, the normal population of about 600,000 people swelled to between 2 and 3 million. p>

Amid the throngs of people and the din of activity, the priests of the temple had their own endless jobs to do. Behind the scenes of temple life, they meticulously carried out instructions given to them



in the Torah. Part of their duty was to sacrifice a total of 70 bulls during the festival of *Sukkot* (Num. 29:12-39). Jewish teachers and rabbis apply great relevance to this instruction.

In the sacrificial system, bulls were offered on behalf of a nation or nations. On *Yom Kippur*, the high priest sacrificed a bull for his own sins as he represented the nation of Israel. During *Sukkot*, many rabbis assert, **the 70 bulls represented the 70 nations that descended from Noah,** the ancestors of all the Gentiles of the world. **These bulls, according to Hebrew scholars, were sacrificed for the peace and well-being of the Gentiles, that they might one day acknowledge the God of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob.** This was their doctrine for hundreds of years and, though many Jews remain unaware of it, their prayers were answered: Gentiles who believe in the Messiah of Israel have been faithfully grafted into the vine of Jesus Christ.

- Romans 11:17 You Gentiles are like branches of a wild olive tree that were made to be part of a cultivated olive tree. You have taken the place of some branches that were cut away from it. And because of this, you enjoy the blessings that come from being part of that cultivated tree.
- Romans 11:18 But don't think you are better than the branches that were cut away. Just remember that you are not supporting the roots of that tree. Its roots are supporting you.
- Romans 11:19 Maybe you think those branches were cut away, so that you could be put in their place.
- Romans 11:20 That's true enough. But they were cut away because they did not have faith, and you are where you are because you do have faith. So don't be proud, but be afraid.
- Romans 11:21 If God cut away those natural branches, couldn't he do the same to you?
- Romans 11:22 Now you see both how kind and how hard God can be. He was hard on those who fell, but he was kind to you. And he will keep on being kind to you, if you keep on trusting in his kindness. Otherwise, you will be cut away too.
- Romans 11:23 If those other branches will start having faith, they will be made a part of that tree again. God has the power to put them back.
- Romans 11:24 After all, it wasn't natural for branches to be cut from a wild olive tree and to be made part of a cultivated olive tree. So it is much more likely that God will join the natural branches back to the cultivated olive tree.
- John 15:4 Stay joined to me, and I will stay joined to you. Just as a branch cannot produce fruit unless it stays joined to the vine, you cannot produce fruit unless you stay joined to me.
- John 15:5 I am the vine, and you are the branches. If you stay joined to me, and I stay joined to you, then you will produce lots of fruit. But you cannot do anything without me.

- Galatians 3:28 Faith in Jesus Christ is what makes each of you equal with each other, whether you are a Jew or a Greek, a slave or a free person, a man or a woman.
- Galatians 3:29 So if you belong to Jesus, you are now part of Abraham's family, and you will be given what God has promised.

***Sukkot* Today**

Today the booths of *Sukkot* take on many forms and features. In Israeli cities like Jerusalem, Tiberias, Tel Aviv, or in the Jewish neighborhoods of Brooklyn, New York, you might see wooden shelters *(sukkahs)* built onto high-rise apartment patios. In residential areas, they are often constructed directly onto one's back door. They are elaborately decorated with colorful lights and vines. Fruits and "treats" hang from a chicken-wire roof that is covered by palm fronds (in tropical regions) or corn stalks. In most *sukkahs*, some picture or reference is made to "living water," because *Sukkot* is the festival that ushers in the rainy season in Israel.



The annual traditions of *Sukkot* remain a festive, realistic reminder of how good God was in taking care of His people as

they circled for 40 years in the barren wilderness of Sinai. It is a pause in an otherwise busy world, for 1 week out of 52, to remember God's faithfulness to provide for His people and to give Him the honor He deserves.

In our wanderings through life, God has been the unseen Provider who has been faithful to us even when we have forgotten Him.

The colorful object lessons of the Feast of Booths have an application for everyone who has come to know the God of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob. The application goes beyond the Jewish people. Believers in Jesus are inclined, especially in times of prosperity, to forget that everything we have comes to us from the hand of God. It is good to remember that God provides for us at every step of our way, just as He did for the children of Israel in the wilderness. In our wanderings through life, He is the unseen Provider faithful to us even when we have forgotten Him.

In a remarkable similarity to ancient Israel, we live and breathe and walk in temporary "shelters." In the transient tents of our own bodies, we wander through life's "wilderness" relying on the provision of the Most High. He is the One who provides for us as we make our way on our own amazing journey.

Sukkot In The Future

In the future, the Feast of Tabernacles will be an international holiday. According to the prophet Zechariah, in the last days this feast will be a global holiday:

> Zechariah 14:16 Afterwards, the survivors from those nations that attacked Jerusalem will go there each year to worship the King, the LORD All-Powerful, and to celebrate the Festival of Shelters.

During the millennial reign, when Jesus - The Messiah King of Israel is enthroned in Jerusalem, the institution of *Sukkot* will be more than a metaphor. It will be an annual reality. In fact, it will be so important that a grave warning is given to the nations who do not keep the Feast of Tabernacles:

- Zechariah 14:17 No rain will fall on the land of anyone in any country who refuses to go to Jerusalem to worship the King, the LORD All-Powerful.
- Zechariah 14:18-19 This horrible disaster will strike the Egyptians and everyone else who refuses to go there for the celebration.

At the Feast of Tabernacles in the last days, the whole world will celebrate what was hidden in the Messiah in the days prior to His death and resurrection. God will live among us in the person of Jesus Christ. He will be honored not just by the people of Israel but by all the world as the Provider who has given us life so that we could know Him.

As God lives among His people, all the world will make its way to Jerusalem to worship the Lamb of God, who will be revealed as the Lion of the House of Judah.

In this dramatic day of Jesus - The Messiah's presence, the Feast of Tabernacles will be the ultimate fulfillment of the first six feasts. As God lives among His people, all the world will make its way to Jerusalem to worship the Lamb of God, who will be revealed as the Lion of the House of Judah.

The Great Day Of The Feast
(Hossanah Rabbah or Sh'mini HaEretz)

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

*Sukkot*is an 8-day festival ending with what has traditionally come to be known as the *Hossanah Rabbah,* translated in most English Bibles as that "great day of the feast." Remarkably, though it is celebrated among the Jewish people, you won't find that name in the Hebrew Scriptures but only in the New Testament gospel of John (7:37).

During the second temple period, *Hossanah Rabbah* developed into a day when the Jewish nation came to the temple waving palm fronds, willow and myrtle branches, carrying citron fruit, and praying for God to usher in the rainy season. The fruit harvest of grapes, pomegranates, and citrons had come to an end. Now Israel needed rain for the next growing season, the grain harvest that coincides with Passover and Pentecost.



On this “great day of the feast,” the high priest would gather “living water” (i.e. ceremonially clean water from the Pool of Siloam that was fresh and not stagnant) into golden vessels. Amid the blowing of the temple shofars, these golden vessels were carried up to the holy altar. There the water was poured out with new wine, as priests and people prayed for God to send the “latter rains.” As the water and wine were poured out, they read passages from the Hebrew Scriptures about rain to “remind God” to pour out His Spirit, who was associated with rain in the Jewish mind. For example:

- Zechariah 10:1 I, the LORD, am the one who sends storm clouds and showers of rain to make fields produce. So when the crops need rain, you should pray to me.

- Isaiah 44:2 I am your Creator. You were in my care even before you were born. Israel, don't be terrified! You are my chosen servant, my very favorite.
- Isaiah 44:3 I will bless the thirsty land by sending streams of water; I will bless your descendants by giving them my Spirit.
- Isaiah 44:4 They will spring up like grass or like willow trees near flowing streams.

- John 7:37 On the last and most important day of the festival, Jesus stood up and shouted, "If you are thirsty, come to me and drink!
- John 7:38 Have faith in me, and you will have life-giving water flowing from deep inside you, just as the Scriptures say."
- John 7:39 Jesus was talking about the Holy Spirit, who would be given to everyone that had faith in him. The Spirit had not yet been given to anyone, since Jesus had not yet been given his full glory.

- John 19:34 One of the soldiers stuck his spear into Jesus' side, and blood and water came out.
- 1John 5:6 Water and blood came out from the side of Jesus Christ. It wasn't just water, but water and blood. The Spirit tells about this, because the Spirit is truthful.

One of Judaism’s most honored rabbis, Rashi, states that this observance of mingling water and wine was the most joyous of all Israel’s festivals and was a direct fulfillment of:

- Isaiah 12:3 With great joy, you people will get water from the well of salvation.

As in the other holidays of God (“the Lord’s appointed times”), we once again encounter Jesus, for in this verse the Hebrew word translated “salvation” is none other than Jesus’ Hebrew name—*Yeshua.* Isaiah 12:3 could then be translated, “With great joy you will draw water from the wells of *Yeshua.”*

Rejoicing In The Torah *(Simchat Torah)*
This is not a biblical holiday but a traditional one. It falls immediately after *Hossanah Rabbah* outside of Israel (but on the same day in Israel), and is another great day of celebration. In Jewish communities all over the world, worshipers gather together in their synagogues and re-roll the Torah scroll. Unlike a book that can be turned to any page, a scroll is one continuous length of parchment. When one reaches the end of Deuteronomy—as is true on the day of *Simchat Torah*—the scroll must be re-rolled all the way back to Genesis. The Jewish community gathers together to hear the final words of Deuteronomy read:

- Deuteronomy 34:10 There has never again been a prophet in Israel like Moses. The LORD spoke face to face with him
- Deuteronomy 34:11 and sent him to perform powerful miracles in the presence of the king of Egypt and his entire nation.
- Deuteronomy 34:12 No one else has ever had the power to do such great things as Moses did for everyone to see.



Great celebration, music, and dancing ensues as the scroll is wound back to "the beginning," when they listen to the first declarations of Genesis:

- Genesis 1:1 In the beginning God created the heavens and the earth.

At first glance, a non-Jewish world might look at this rabbinic holiday as having little relevance or importance. Yet, in the first century, one of Jesus' titles was the "Living Torah"—Living Word of the Most High. In the gospel of John we read:

- John 1:1 In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God.
- John 1:2 He was in *the* beginning with God.
- John 1:3 All things came into being through Him, and without Him not even one *thing* came into being that has come into being.
- John 1:4 In Him was life, and the life was the light of men.

God's Holiday Feasts			
The Holiday Feast	**The Biblical Event**	**Messianic Reference**	**The Spiritual Application**
1. The Passover	**Exodus from Egypt**	**Jesus is the Slain Lamb**	**God Delivers from Sin's Slavery**
2. Unleavened Bread	**Exodus from Egypt**	**Jesus is Killed**	**Live humbly before God**
3. Firstfruits	**God Delivers from Egypt**	**Jesus is Firstfruits**	**We are New Creations in Jesus**
Counting Sheaves	The Grain Harvest	Jesus Provides a Helper	Receive the Holy Spirit
4. Pentecost	**The 10 Commandments**	**Jesus sends Holy Spirit**	**Be filled with the Spirit of God**
5. Feast of Trumpets	**Substitutionary Ram**	**Jesus is our Sacrifice**	**Repent and Receive Jesus**
6. Day of Atonement	**Our Sorrow for Sin**	**Jesus is the Scapegoat**	**Accept Jesus as the Sin Sacrifice**
7. Feast of Tabernacles	**Wilderness Wandering**	**Jesus Provides for Us**	**Trust in God to Provide**

ENCOUNTERING THE MESSIAH

The presence of the Messiah - Jesus Christ in the feasts of God is no coincidence. Neither is the joy of these festivals a coincidence to those who discover that all of the symbolism and depth of meaning celebrated in the holidays of God has come to us in the person of God's own Presence.

There are hundreds of thousands of Jewish men and women who believe that Jesus is the promised Moshiach

(Messiah):

- Ephesians 2:14 Jesus Christ has made peace between Jews and Gentiles, and he has united us by breaking down the wall of hatred that separated us. Jesus gave his own body
- Ephesians 2:15 to destroy the Law of Moses with all its rules and commands. He even brought Jews and Gentiles together as though we were only one person, when he united us in peace.
- Ephesians 2:16 On the cross Jesus did away with our hatred for each other. He also made peace between us and God by uniting Jews and Gentiles in one body.
- Ephesians 2:17 Jesus came and preached peace to you Gentiles, who were far from God, and peace to us Jews, who were near God.
- Ephesians 2:18 And because of Jesus Christ, all of us can come to the Father by the same Spirit.

Followers of Jesus come from all walks of life and from all academic and vocational levels. They believe He came once, as Scripture foretold, and that He will return again in fulfillment of the holy prophecies.

If you are ready to receive Jesus into your life by an act of faith, pray a prayer similar to this to the Creator of your soul:

> Blessed are You, O Lord our God, King of the universe, who brings His truth to those who seek it. I now see that Jesus is the Messiah of Israel. As I come to You with no merit of my own, I invite You to come into my heart and life to remove my iniquities according to Your divine plan. Though my transgressions are as scarlet, make them white as snow through Your holy sacrifice of Jesus Christ and his blood sprinkled upon the Mercy Seat. In Jesus' Name I pray. Amen.