

## Holy Feasts Of The Lord

'The set feasts of the Lord (appointed seasons, holy convocations, sacred assemblies, summoned assemblies) which you are to proclaim, are My appointed feasts ... These are the appointed feasts of the Lord which you shall proclaim to be holy assemblies to present an offering made by fire to the Lord; a burnt offering and cereal offering, sacrifices and drink offering, each on its own day' (Leviticus 23:2 & 37).

This Bible study is to teach us a little bit about our Hebraic/Jewish roots. As believers in the Messiah, we should learn all we can about the life of Jesus, and that includes the feasts and celebrations He adhered to. The early Jewish/Gentile church once celebrated all these feasts as they united together, until anti-Semitism took hold within the church. The following feasts were not ideas from the Jewish people, they were appointed by God Himself to bring coherence to the new nation of Israel, and to reveal the timing of the coming of our Messiah. Each of these feasts spoke prophetically about the great plan of salvation that was to come from the Jews, and only from the Jews (John 4:22), through the blood of Jesus. If Gentiles desire to be saved, the only way to salvation is to be 'grafted' onto the Jewish 'olive tree' (Romans 11:17 to 29). The Lord repeated Himself several times regarding the location, hour, date, method and reasons for the feasts the Israelites were to adhere to, which indicates they were very important feasts to the Lord. When Christians dismiss details written in the scriptures as being unimportant, they rob themselves of some very important facts that the Lord placed within the pages of the Bible, and He only reveals these details to those who take the time to search the scriptures.

Each of these feasts has a Hebrew title. The Hebrew word for feast is 'Moed' which also means 'an appointed time'. This study will be easier to follow if we know what date each of these feasts occurred. Some of the months have two names. The spelling of each month can vary according to how the word is translated from the written character and spoken accent of both the ancient and the modern Hebrew language, into the English script and phonetic sound. According to the Lord's unmistakable command, the Hebrew New Year falls in their month of **Nisan** also called **Abib** or **Aviv** – mid March to mid April in the Western calendar. 'This month shall be to you the beginning of months, the first month of the year to you' (Exodus 12:2; Exodus 23:15; Exodus 34:18). Passover, the Feast of Unleavened Bread and the counting of the barley harvest or omer occurred in this first month of their year (Exodus 16:36). The seven-week Feast of Firstfruits began. Nisan was the season for the latter rains.

**Iyar** or **Ziv** – April/May, is the second month (1 Kings 6:1). The Feast of Firstfruits ended during Ziv.

**Sivan** – May/June, is the third month (Esther 8:9).

**Tammuz** – June/July. This month is not named in the scriptures, but is called only 'the fourth month'.

**Av** or **Ab** – July/August. This month is not named in the scriptures, but is called only 'the fifth month'.

**Elul** – August/September, is the sixth month (Nehemiah 6:15).

**Tishrei**, **Ethanim** or **Etanim** – September/October, is the seventh month (1 Kings 8:2). The Feast of Trumpets, the Day of Atonement, the Feast of Tabernacles and the Celebration of the Torah occurs during Ethanim. This month was the season for the early rains.

**Cheshvan**, **Marchesvan** or **Bul** – October/November, is the eighth month (1 Kings 6:38).

**Kislev** or **Chislev** – November/December, is the ninth month (Zechariah 7:1). The feast of Dedication, also called the Festival of Lights and Hanukkah took place during Kislev.

**Tevet**, **Tebet** or **Tebeth** – December/January, is the tenth month (Esther 2:16).

**Shvat** or **Shebat** – January/February, is the eleventh month (Zechariah 1:7)

**Adar** – February/March, is the twelfth month (Esther 8:12). The Feast of Purim was held during Adar (Esther 9:18 to 32). Notice that the leader of the Jews sought the welfare of his people and spoke peace to his whole race during the last month of the Hebrew year (Esther 10:3).

The celebrations and feasts appointed by the Lord are the Sabbath Day, Passover, The Feast of Unleavened Bread, The Feast of Firstfruits also called The Feast of Weeks and the Feast of Harvest, the Feast of Trumpets, The Day of Atonement, The Feast of Tabernacles, Purim and the newest celebration, The Feast of Dedication. They were specially appointed dates on the Hebrew calendar that belonged to God and He gave them to His people. Each one of these feasts prophetically pointed to the entire plan of salvation; the ministry, life, death, burial, resurrection and second coming of Jesus our Messiah, so they were to be held in divine order according to the Lord's master plan of salvation. These feasts are all associated with God's deliverance of the Israelites out of slavery from Egypt, then when we accept Jesus as our Messiah, we are delivered out of slavery to sin (Romans 6:6). Jesus fulfilled all these prophetic feasts at the correct time of the year, and they prophesy about His return. There is some confusion regarding the Jewish New Year. We can see by the Lord's command, the first month of the Hebrew calendar was the month of Abib/Nisan, but for many years the Jews have been celebrating their New Year in Elul or Tishrei –

the sixth and seventh months. Some people believe this is because the seventh month, like the seventh day, should be a time of rest. That thought is opposite to what the Lord had in mind when He set the time for these prophetic feasts 'each on its own day', as we will see by the end of this Bible study.

All Jewish men were required to go up to Jerusalem three times every year to celebrate Passover, Shavuot and Sukkot (Exodus 34:23). During Shavuot, Jews came from whatever country they lived and travelled to Jerusalem to worship God and celebrate. The men brought their firstfruits of the harvest. Those who lived near Jerusalem brought perishable foods like fresh fruit, vegetables and grain. The travellers from far countries brought dried or preserved foods. They also brought two loaves of bread, symbolising the double portion of manna collected by the children of Israel the day before Shabbat (Exodus 16:14 to 30).

**Sabbath** ... Shabbat ... Celebrated every week from sunset on the sixth day to sunset on the seventh day, or in the Western calendar, from sunset on Friday till sunset on Saturday. 'Six days shall work be done but the seventh day is the Shabbat of complete rest, a holy assembly by summons. You shall do no work on that day; it is the Shabbat of the Lord in all your homes' (Leviticus 23:3). 'The seventh day is a Shabbat to the Lord your God. In it you shall not do any work; you, or your son, your daughter, your servant, your domestic animals or your visitors within your gates ... so they may rest as well as you' (Exodus 20:10; Deuteronomy 5:14). The Sabbath was a day of complete rest for every person plus every working animal on their farms. The Sabbath was created for people to rest and be rejuvenated for the week ahead. However, some light work was necessary and was permissible; work like watering the domestic animals (Luke 13:15), caring for our animals or doing good (Matthew 12:11 & 12). Jesus said He was the Lord of the Sabbath (Matthew 12:8; Mark 2:28; Luke 6:5). He also said the Sabbath was made for mankind – mankind was not made for the Sabbath (Mark 2:27). In six days the Lord created the heavens and the earth and on the seventh day He rested (Genesis 2:2 & 3). Six days the Jews could work but on the seventh day they and their livestock rested (Exodus 20:11). For six years the Jews could plant and reap from a field, then on the seventh year, the land had to be rested (Leviticus 25:4). For six thousand years this earth will be 'worked over' by the devil, then for one thousand years while he is in chains, the earth will be rested from the influence of evil (Revelation 20:1 to 6). The Hebrew word Shabbat means to stop and have a complete rest. It does not mean 'Saturday' as some erroneously believe.

**Feast of Passover** ... Pesach ... Celebrated 'On the fourteenth day of the first month at sunset is the Lord's Passover' (Leviticus 23:5). 'Observe the month of Abib/Nisan and keep the Passover to the Lord your God, for in the month of Abib the Lord your God brought you out of Egypt ... You shall offer the Passover sacrifice to the Lord your God ... You shall eat no leavened bread for seven days' (Deuteronomy 16: 1 to 3). The original Passover took place in Egypt, and that was when the Lord established the Hebrew calendar. 'This month shall be to you the beginning of months; the first month of the year to you. Tell all the people of Israel, on the tenth of this month every man shall take a lamb according to the size of the family of which he is the father, a lamb for each household ... You shall keep it until the fourteenth day of the same month ... This day shall be to you a memorial. You shall keep it as a feast to the Lord forever'. The whole explanation regarding the Passover can be studied in Exodus 12:1 to 35. The Last Supper of Jesus was a Passover meal, which is an eight-day feast; one He strongly desired to celebrate with His disciples before He was so cruelly murdered (Luke 22:15). The Passover meal is accompanied with songs and special foods that represent different stages of the Exodus from Egypt. The Passover was fulfilled by Jesus' death on the cross as the Passover Lamb of God Who took away the sins of the world (John 1:29). The whole purpose of the Law and the sacrificial system, was to reveal what sin is (Romans 3:20; 7:7) and that sin needed to be atoned for by the shedding of blood (Hebrews 9:22) from an animal without blemish (Exodus 12:5; Hebrews 9:14). He died the day before Shabbat (John 19:30 & 31) and rose on the third day, the day after Shabbat (Matthew 28:1). He rose on the third day, not three days later. One day after Passover began, there was another feast.

**Feast of Unleavened Bread** ... Matzah ... 'On the fifteenth day of the first month is the Feast of Unleavened Bread. For seven days you shall eat unleavened bread. On the first day you shall have a holy assembly; you shall do no work on that day but you shall offer an offering made by fire to the Lord for seven days; the seventh day is a holy, summoned gathering' (Leviticus 23:6 to 8). 'You shall keep the Feast of Unleavened Bread; seven days you shall eat unleavened bread as I commanded you at the time appointed in the month of Abib, for in it you came out of Egypt' (Exodus 23:15). 'No leaven shall be seen in all of your territory for seven days ... For six days you shall eat unleavened bread, and on the seventh day there shall be a solemn assembly to the Lord your God' (Deuteronomy 16:4 to 8). During the feasts of Passover and Unleavened Bread, the Lord required His people to go without leaven (yeast) which is symbolic of sin. It was to remember the hastened journey out of Egypt when they fled in a desperate rush (Exodus 12:33 to 39; Deuteronomy 16:3). When Jesus presented the bread as His body at His last supper (Matthew 26:26), it would have been

unleavened bread. The bread or matzah made in Israel, has a striped and pierced appearance. Jesus' body was our sinless 'unleavened Bread'. He was whipped (given 'stripes') for our healing and was pierced (wounded) for our transgressions (Isaiah 53:5). He was pierced in His hands and feet with nails (John 20:25), and gashed with a spear in the side of His stomach. 'One of the soldiers pierced His side with a spear and immediately blood and water flowed out. He who saw it gives this evidence and his testimony is true ... for these things took place so that the scriptures might be fulfilled; not one of His legs shall be broken (Exodus 12:46; Numbers 9:12; Psalm 34:20) and they shall look upon Him whom they pierced' (John 19:34 to 37; Zechariah 12:10). The gash was large enough to fit a man's hand (John 20:25 & 27). Those who pierced Him looked upon Him. According to the Apostle John, that was a complete fulfilment of scripture.

**Feast of Firstfruits** ... Shavuot ... also known as the **Feast of Weeks** or the **Feast of the Harvest** ... 'When you have come into the land I will give you and reap its harvest, you shall bring the sheaf of the firstfruits of your harvest to the priest and he shall wave the sheaf before the Lord on the next day after the Sabbath, that you may be accepted. You shall offer on that day a male lamb a year old, without blemish for a burnt offering to the Lord ... It is a statute forever throughout your generations in all your homes. You shall count from the day after the Sabbath ... seven Sabbaths ... seven full weeks; fifty days to the day after the seventh Sabbath' (Leviticus 23:10 to 16). 'You shall keep the Feast of the Harvest; the firstfruits of your toil of what you sow in the field' (Exodus 23:16). 'You shall count seven weeks from the time you begin to harvest the grain. Then shall you keep the Feast of Weeks to the Lord your God with a gift from your hand which you will give to the Lord as He blesses you' (Deuteronomy 16:9 & 10). God chose the people – the descendants of Abraham (Deuteronomy 14:2), and He chose the land proclaimed holy by the Lord Himself (Zechariah 2:12). This feast is a feast of thanksgiving for the abundance of food given to the Jews from the Lord when they were living in the holy land (Leviticus 27:30). The Feast of Firstfruits was fulfilled by Jesus in several ways; He was a male Lamb without blemish, He rose the day after the Sabbath and He was the Firstfruits from among the dead' (1 Corinthians 15:20). After Jesus rose from the dead, He appeared to hundreds of people for forty days and nights. That occurred between the Feast of the Firstfruits and the Shavuot – which is now called Pentecost. Ten days after Jesus ascended came the outpouring of the Holy Spirit; and that was exactly fifty days (seven weeks) after He rose from the dead. If we look at history, the first Shavuot was held fifty days (seven weeks) after the exodus from slavery in Egypt when the Law was written on stone by the finger of God. Now the Laws of God are written on our hearts (Hebrews 8:10) by the Holy Spirit – also called the Finger of God. We need the power of the Holy Spirit to live in obedience to His Word. The Lord gave Adam the spoken Word of God, which he disobeyed. The Lord gave Moses and the Israelites the written Word of God, which was again disobeyed. Jesus is the second Adam and He is the Word of God in the flesh, and He sent the Holy Spirit to us so we can obey the Word of God. We can see here, for fifty days (seven weeks) from the beginning of the New Year, there were virtual non-stop celebrations, feasting, fellowshiping and rest days. Later in the year, for almost a month, the Jews had another round of feasts and rest days.

**Feast of Trumpets** ... Rosh Hashanah ... 'On the first day of the seventh month (Tishrei) you should observe a day of rest; a memorial day of blowing of trumpets; a holy assembly' (Leviticus 23:24). 'On the first day of the seventh month, you shall have a holy assembly. You shall do no work. It is a day of blowing trumpets for you' (Numbers 29:1). A ram's horn called a shofar is sounded all over Israel which heralds in the Feast of Trumpets. When Jesus returns to earth on the clouds of heaven and with power and great glory, He will be heralded in by an angel blowing a trumpet (Matthew 24:31). There were ten days between the ascension of Jesus into the clouds of heaven and the outpouring of the Holy Spirit. If we consider this in a spiritual light, we may be able to assume Jesus will return to earth on or near the Feast of Trumpets. Another feast was to be held ten days after the Feast of Trumpets.

**Day of Atonement** ... Yom Kippur ... 'The tenth day of the seventh month is the Day of Atonement. Hold a sacred assembly and fast and present an offering made by fire to the Lord. You shall do no work on this day for it is the Day of Atonement to make atonement for you before the Lord your God ... It is a statute forever throughout your generations in every home. It shall be to you a Sabbath of rest and you shall fast. On the ninth day of the month from evening to evening you shall keep your Sabbath' (Leviticus 23:27 to 32). 'One male goat for a sin offering to make atonement for you ... and you shall have on the tenth day of this seventh month a holy assembly and you shall humble yourself (fast) and you shall not do any work on this day' (Numbers 29:5 & 7). The ten days between the Feast of Trumpets and the Day of Atonement are known as the 'Ten days of Awe'. They are ten days set aside for soul-searching and repairing relationships between people and families; between individuals and God. The scriptures encourage us to examine our attitudes before partaking bread and wine (1 Corinthians 11:28), which we are to take in remembrance of the Lord until He returns (Luke 22:19). The Day of Atonement is a special day of fasting and repentance, chosen and set aside by God Himself. The Lord has said, "For as we all know, Jesus did not take hold of (fallen) angels,

but He did take hold of the fallen descendants of Abraham. It was necessary that He become like His Brethren in every way, so that He may become a faithful High Priest to make atonement for our sins" (Hebrews 2:16 & 17). If we study the scriptures, we can work out that Jesus was actually born on or near the Day of Atonement. Five days later there was another feast.

**Feast of Tabernacles or Booths** ... Sukkot ... 'The fifteenth day of the seventh month for seven days is the Feast of Tabernacles to the Lord. The first day shall be a holy assembly; you shall do no work on that day. For seven days you shall offer an offering made by fire to the Lord; on the eighth day there shall be a holy assembly and you shall present an offering made by fire to the Lord. It is a solemn assembly ... All native Israelites shall dwell in booths for seven days ... Thus Moses declared to the Israelites all the appointed feasts of the Lord' (Leviticus 23:34 to 44). 'You shall keep the Feast of Ingathering at the end of the year' (Exodus 23:16). 'On the fifteenth day of the seventh month you shall have a holy assembly; you shall do no work and you shall keep the feast for seven days' (Numbers 29:12). Ever since the Lord appointed this feast, some Jewish people have been building small booths to sleep in overnight for a week. One day the whole world will celebrate the joyous Feast of Tabernacles. 'Everyone ... shall go up from year to year to worship the King (Jesus) the Lord of hosts and to keep the Feast of Tabernacles' (Zechariah 14:16).

The day after Sukkot is completed, there is a celebration for the receiving of the Law of Moses called the **Simchat Torah**. Torah is the Hebrew word for the first five books of the Bible as written by Moses; Genesis, Exodus, Leviticus, Numbers and Deuteronomy. The children of Israel left Egypt in a rush immediately after eating the Passover lamb, then they walked on dry land as they passed through the waters of the Red Sea (Exodus 14:21 & 22). They travelled through deserts until they reached the mountains and camped at the base of Mount Sinai, where God called Moses to go up the mountain and receive the Ten Commandments and the Law of the Covenant – the Torah (Exodus 19:1 to 25; 24:12). It is in the Torah where we find details of the God-appointed feasts and their dates. After these appointed feasts, the Jews had two more occasions to celebrate divine victories; Hanukkah and Purim.

**Feast of Dedication** ... Hanukkah or Chanukah ... 'The Feast of Dedication was taking place at Jerusalem. It was winter and Jesus was walking in Solomon's Porch in the temple' (John 10:22 & 23). Hanukkah is known as the Feast of Dedication and the Festival of Lights. The above scripture infers Jesus was involved in this Jewish festival. The word Hanukkah means dedication. This festival is about the rededication of the restored Jewish temple after it was destroyed in 167 BC. It is held during Kislev. The new temple was made ready for the presence of the Lord but there was not enough oil for the Menorah (the lampstand; Exodus 25:31 to 40) and it would take eight days to prepare another jar of suitable pure oil. There was just enough oil to burn for one day, but they decided to light it anyway, and miraculously the Menorah burned for the eight days it took to prepare the new oil. That is why the Hanukkah Menorah has eight, and sometimes nine branches, and why the Jews celebrate the feast and festival for eight days. When the small number of Jews led by Judah Maccabee won the war as they fought against a vast army, it really was an historic and miraculous victory. As believers in the Messiah, we should observe and respect the eight days of Hanukkah, because without the Maccabee's War, the stage would not have been set for Jesus to come and we would not have our salvation. We must thank God for the Jews who have brought light to this dark world.

**Feast of Purim** ... In the Book of Esther, we have the account of Queen Esther who was chosen to marry King Ahasuerus who ruled Persia during 485 and 465 BC. The story is set in Shushan, the capital of Persia about 120 years after Nebuchadnezzar forced thousands of Jews into exile. Esther was adopted by her older cousin Mordecai after being orphaned. After Esther married the king, the Jews came up against an evil courtier named Haman who hated all Jews and wanted them destroyed; much like the modern day attitude of the rulers in Iran, which was once called Persia. Haman deceived the king into making a decree, essentially allowing the Persian population to destroy every Jew in the Persian Empire. Through Mordecai's influence and Esther's bravery, the decree backfired on Haman and he was hanged along with his ten sons. It was another divine victory for the Jews, and in gratitude they ordained the victory should be celebrated for two days, on the fourteenth and fifteenth of Adar every year, throughout future generations and the days of Purim would not cease from among the Jews.

The Jewish people celebrated all these feasts for centuries, right up until the birth of our Messiah at the God-appointed set time, and continue to be celebrated by Jews today. If we study the list of the divine prophetic feasts, we can see that Jesus fulfilled all of them. When we study the dates that these prophetic feasts took place, we can see the Lord was revealing the exact timing of the coming of the Lord Jesus, and the correct sequence of events; His birth, His life, the Passover, the Day of Atonement etc. By studying these scriptures closely, we can see how Jesus fulfilled all the prophecies that were represented by the feasts. When Jesus

said "It is finished" (John 19:30) He meant He had completed His God-given task of bringing salvation to the world and fulfilled each and every prophecy made about Him, and none of these prophecies need to be fulfilled again. The children of Israel adhered closely to these dates. By changing the month of their New Year from Nisan to Tishrei, the modern Jews have inadvertently covered the divine revelation of the timing of the coming of Jesus. The Jews may have changed the date of their New Year, but the Lord has not, and He will return at the correct time.

Amen and God bless you.

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