

## A Brief Overview<sup>1</sup>

There has been a long-standing schism in the body of the Messiah because many have falsely concluded that there is little practical connection between Christianity and the Jewish life.

Today, as more Believers are getting reconnected to their Jewish roots, "The Olive Tree", they are discovering the Jewishness of their faith. Understanding and celebrating the Jewish holidays and festivals is one of the practical applications of this discovery.

These biblical feasts were given by G-d to Israel, and through them all Believers can be blessed. Believers in Yeshua can learn more about Him and His ways by using the "teaching tools" of the biblical festivals as well as the rabbinic holidays.

As one objectively studies the Apostolic Writings (New Testament), one finds that Yeshua was a traditional Jew living in the land of Israel. His early followers were Jews who found the promised Messiah and naturally continued the Jewish expression of their faith. Know that Yeshua observed the various feasts.

A careful reading of the Gospels shows that it was His custom to worship on the Sabbath (Luke 4:16). During the feast of Tabernacles (Sukkot), Yeshua offered "living water" to the Jewish multitude (John 7:37-39). One of His most powerful sermons took place in the Temple at Hanukkah (John 10:22-30).

The biblical feasts can be divided into two groups: fall and spring.

### FALL FESTIVALS

Rosh HaShanah (Leviticus 23:23-25) is considered to be the beginning of the Jewish new year and occurs in September or October of our calendar. The purpose of this holy day is summed up in one word--regathering. Since the fall holidays are a call to regather to a pure faith in God, Rosh HaShanah has come to represent the day of repentance.

In the Scriptures, this day is referred to as the "day of blowing". So it became known as the Feast of Trumpets, Yom Teruah . The blowing of the trumpets became the distinguishing characteristic of the day, calling the people's attention to the awesome festival to follow this one.

The Messiah Connection: Many classical rabbis saw a link between Rosh HaShanah as the holy day of regathering and the Messiah who would be the agent of regathering. (pg 65, God's Appointed Times by Barney Kasdan)

While there are many prophetic fulfillments, consider how this feast day is a beautiful picture of the regathering of Believers, both Jew and Gentile, in the future when Yeshua returns.

Yom Kippur, The Day of Atonement, (Lev 23:26-32) is the most holy day in the Jewish calendar. Holiness is the theme. What began with Rosh HaShanah ten days earlier, namely repentance and self-evaluation, was completed with the Day of Atonement and regeneration.

G-d desired Israel to live sanctified lives and gave the Mosaic law to instruct His people in holy living and to show His grace through the sacrificial system.

The theme of atonement is central in the Apostolic Writings therefore the observance of Yom Kippur can hold special significance for followers of Yeshua. The evening of Yom Kippur is a wonderful time for a Messianic worship service to celebrate the true meaning of the day: atonement in Yeshua.

Sukkot, Feast of Tabernacles or Booths, (Lev 23:33-44) can be thought of as the Jewish "Thanksgiving". Some believe that the Puritans based their first American Thanksgiving on Sukkot. This is a time of remembering and rejoicing. Booths are constructed as part of the celebrations. (usually occurs in October)

Sukkot has many rich spiritual lessons and not surprisingly Yeshua is pictured in this feast. Some even believe that He was born on Sukkot! (pg 95-6, G-d's Appointed Times by Barney Kasdan) Messianic Believers can joyfully celebrate this feast day as well.

Hanukkah concludes the fall festivals in the Jewish calendar. While it is not mentioned in the Hebrew Scriptures, it has significance in the Apostolic Writings. Yeshua celebrated it! (John 10:22-23). The symbolism points to the Messiah. For one, it is referred to as the Festival of Lights. (usually occurs in December)

### SPRING FESTIVALS

Pesach and Hag HaMatzah, Passover and the Feast of Unleavened Bread,(Lev 23:5-8, Luke2:41, John 5:1,6:4, Acts 12:3-4) is rich with meaning for Believers for it epitomizes redemption and purification. To participate in a Messianic Passover seder is to begin to fathom the full meaning of this biblical holy day. This experience will open up new meaning to a follower of Yeshua.

Pesach marks the beginning of the biblical year.

Yom HaBikkurim or Sfirat Haomer, Early First Fruits, (Lev 23:9-14; 1 Cor 15:20-23) is the day after Pesach. It was the first harvest of the spring and marks the beginning of the Counting the Omer, a 49 day period that links Pesach and Shavuot.

The traditional observance of this feast points us to the resurrection of Messiah.

Shavuot, Festival of Weeks or The Latter First Fruits,(Lev 23:15-21) occurs seven weeks (49 days) after Passover. It is also known as Pentecost. Shavuot is one of the three festivals for which every Jewish male was required to go to Jerusalem.

The New Covenant significance is probably well known. Through Yeshua, the first fruits have come in; the implicit promise of the latter harvest will also come. Increasing numbers of Jewish people will believe in the Messiah until the final day. With all the spiritual meaning behind Shavuot, Believers can find great blessing in celebrating it.

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<sup>1</sup> C:\My Documents\bible\FeastsTabernacle\Feasts2#.doc

Sabbath We can not leave this subject without making the observation that almost every one of the feasts begins with a day of rest from work. This day of rest is commanded to be observed at the end of each week, on the seventh day. (Lev 23:1-3)

#### RABBINIC FESTIVALS

Simchat Torah: means "joy of the Torah" and celebrates the completion of reading through the Torah in one year; usually in October

Tu Bishvat: New Year of the trees, Jewish arbor day; celebrates G-d as Creator. It marks the tithing year for the fruit from trees; usually in February

Purim: from the book of Esther: celebrates G-d's protection of His people; usually in March

Lag baOmer: The 33rd day of the Counting of the Omer; the first of the count are observed in partial mourning because of plague that killed thousands of the disciples of Rabbi Akiva in the second century. Lag BaOmer commemorates the day the plague stopped; usually in May

The Jewish festivals and holidays are, for the most part, very joyous occasions full of family, food and festivities. There are exciting new truths waiting to be discovered through participating in them. This is a great time to learn about the biblical cycle of the annual festivals. Many messianic congregations hold services to celebrate these biblical feasts. Check your local area.

Details for observing these holidays in a messianic way may be found in the book: God's Appointed Times by Barney Kasdan, and The Fall Feasts of Israel by Mitch and Zhava Glaser. Both books are available through First Fruits of Zion.