

The Seven Annual Festivals¹

The Passover Service

The Passover Service introduces us to the first of the annual festivals in the Sacred Calendar. It was first kept by the Israelites in ancient Egypt when after four hundred years of slavery the Almighty rescued His people from the hand of Pharaoh. In that well known episode Yahweh "passed over" the houses of the believers who in obedience to His command had applied a literal lamb's blood to the lintel and doorposts of their homes. He spared the lives of Israel's eldest sons but authorised the Destroyer to kill all the firstborn of the Egyptians.

Exodus 12:29-30 "And it came to pass that at midnight the Lord smote all the firstborn in the land of Egypt, from the firstborn of the Pharaoh that sat on his throne unto the firstborn of the captive that was in the dungeon, and all the firstborn of the cattle. And Pharaoh rose up in the night, he and all his servants and all the Egyptians and there was a great cry in Egypt, for there was not a house where there was not one dead."

Surprising as it may sound, that awesome experience in ancient Egypt on the night of the 14th Abib (the first month in the Sacred Calendar) was merely a "scaled-down preview", a "miniature object lesson", a "prophetic drama" of a far greater deliverance of Yahweh's people scheduled to occur at the midnight of this age. For the real meaning of the Passover is this:

Yahweh's son, Yahshua the Messiah, commonly known as Jesus Christ, is the real Passover Lamb (John 1:29, 1 Cor. 5:7).

He sacrificed His life on the Passover, at the appointed time to rescue mankind from the slavery of sin and its consequences - eternal death. And all those who by faith apply His blood to themselves will be pardoned, spared and granted eternal life according to His promise.

"And how," you may well ask, "is the blood of the real Passover Lamb (the Son of the Almighty) applied to a believer in this electronic age?" The answer is: By taking part in a special memorial service called the Passover Service at the appointed time each year. The Passover Service is the appointed memorial of the Saviour's death on Calvary and every believer in the Messiah is commanded to keep it. "Keep this in remembrance of me" said the Messiah, the Lamb of God.

The new covenant emblems of the Saviour's body and blood are "unleavened bread and wine." (Luke 22:14-20, 1 Corinthians 11:23-26) These emblems have replaced the need to slay a literal lamb each Passover, for the Messiah is the Passover Lamb. But the time set apart for this memorial service is still the same. It is the evening of the 14th day of the first month in the Sacred Calendar (Exodus 13:5-11). The date is important and can never be altered, because it is the memorial date of our Saviour's death, when he paid with His life to rescue mankind from extinction at the hands of the Destroyer. When a believer takes part in this service he/she is, figuratively speaking, applying the blood of the Saviour to his/her mind, which is the lintel of the soul. And that act of faith is a clear sign to the Almighty that that soul seeks pardon, protection and salvation. That is how the Passover Lamb's blood is applied to the lintel of a believer's mind in this 20th century.

Also, incredible as this may seem, the fulfilment of the Passover is still future; it is scheduled to come to pass in the coming Kingdom of God. Even the Saviour is awaiting the approaching midnight of this age when the Destroyer will be compelled to spare or passover all those who are displaying the sign of the Lamb's blood.

Luke 22:15-16 "I have longed to eat this Passover with you before I suffer" said the Master, "because I tell you, I shall not eat it again until it is fulfilled in the Kingdom of God."

Note the words, "until it is fulfilled in the Kingdom of God". This points to a still future fulfilment of the Passover, just prior to our entry into the Kingdom when the great Destroyer will again be commissioned by the Almighty to slay those who have refused to apply the Lamb's blood to the lintels of their minds.

Believers in the Almighty who, therefore, celebrate the Passover Service on the appointed evening each year will be greatly blessed; for as they eat the unleavened bread and drink the wine (the new covenant emblems of the Saviour's body and blood) they are in truth applying the Saviour's life-giving blood to the lintels of their minds.

Put differently, we may say that Yahweh's main purpose in staging such a breathtaking display at that first Passover night in ancient Egypt was His way of giving the entire universe a 'prophetic preview' of His earth- encompassing plan to 'pass over' or deliver His people in the closing days of this age. Yes, the Almighty God of Israel is in the near future going to personally visit all the nations of the world, and as before, 'pass-over' (pity spare and deliver) all those who are faithfully displaying the Sign of His Son's blood on the lintels of their minds. The true Passover Lamb (Yashua the Messiah) has already been sacrificed. It now remains for every believer to symbolically apply His blood to the lintel of his/her mind.

Thus we can see that ancient Israel's exodus from Egypt was a "prophetic drama," a "living blueprint" of a far greater deliverance of Yahweh's people which is scheduled to take place on a world scale in our day. In view of this, believers in the Messiah should beware of failing to keep this memorial service at its appointed time. (See How to hold the Passover in your own home.)

The Week of Unleavened Bread

The week of unleavened bread is usually referred to as the Passover week. The first and last days of this week (15th and 21st Abib) are Sabbath days upon which all believers are commanded to rest from their labours and to assemble to worship the Almighty. (Leviticus 23:5-8)

¹ C:\My Documents\Downloads\Fests7.txt

This week is a shadow of the time when Yahweh will cleanse His "house" (the church) of sin: a memorial for all eternity of the leaven-free dwelling place of God. The church, that is the congregation rather than the physical building, is the "Temple of God," the spiritual home in which the Almighty is going to live for all eternity. But before He takes up permanent residence in His house, Yahweh has scheduled Himself to purge the church of sin.

Leaven (yeast) is a symbol of sin, hypocrisy and false doctrine (Matt. 16:6-12, 1 Cor. 5:6-8, Luke 12:1). A week of seven days represents eternity, the complete cycle of time. Thus the Week of Unleavened Bread typifies the holiness and truth Yahweh's spirit will bring about in the lives of His people when He totally rids us of sin forever.

Yes, there is coming a time when the Almighty will purge hypocrisy and false doctrine (leaven) from the minds of His people; and when that time arrives the Week of Unleavened Bread will have found its fulfilment.

The Feast of Pentecost

The Feast of Pentecost, also called the Feast of First Fruits, falls on the 50th day after the Passover Sabbath. This feast is a reminder, a guarantee of Yahweh's power to produce spiritual fruit in the field of human salvation. The literal first fruits of the soil are merely the physical types or expressions of the real first fruits of the Spirit.

The first fruits of the Spirit are the true believers won to God by His Son the firstborn. (1 Cor. 15:20&23, James 1:18, Rev. 14:4)

The ancient ceremony of presenting the Almighty with the firstfruits of the earth (Deut. 26:1-11) with two oven-baked loaves, in which the leaven had been de-activated (Lev. 23:15-17), was a figure, a type, a shadow of the spiritual harvest of human souls in whom the yeast of sin will one day cease to exist. There is coming a day when the power of sin will be de-activated in us believers just as the power of leaven is neutralised in an oven baked loaf.

That breathtaking experience recorded in Acts 2 was but the early harvest, a kind of "firstfruits" of even greater out-pouring of divine power scheduled to fall upon the church in the near future when the main harvest of human beings will be gathered in.

The Feast of Pentecost, in short, prefigures, guarantees and commemorates the early harvest of first fruits of human souls: and those who celebrate it declare their willingness to be part of that spiritual multitude which will one day be gathered in and presented to the Almighty by His Son - the firstborn.

The Feast of Trumpets

The Feast of Trumpets is celebrated on the first day of Ethanim (Tishri) the seventh month in the sacred calendar. (Lev. 23:24)

Trumpets were used by Yahweh's command in ancient Israel:

- to assemble the congregation and to start journeying (Numbers 10:2)
- to call the leaders of Israel together (verse 4)
- to sound the alarm for war and to signal an attack (verse 9, Judges 3:27, Job 39:25)
- to accompany the praises of Israel at the appointed festivals and the days of the new moon (Numbers 10:10)
- to proclaim the accession of kings (2 Sam. 15:10, 1 Kings 1:34, 2 Kings 9:13)
- and to announce the jubilee year of freedom (Lev. 25:9)

The Feast of Trumpets is a memorial Sabbath, a day of special significance, designed to bring the faithful into remembrance before the Almighty. The two silver trumpets mentioned in Numbers 10 were types of the great originals in the heavens - the TRUMPETS OF YAHWEH. Those divine originals are mentioned several times in the Scriptures and at their sounding events of awesome importance have and still will take place. We read about the trumpets past and future used in:

- the giving of the Ten Commandments (Exodus 19:14-19)
- the world wide warning still scheduled for the future when Yahweh Himself will blow the trumpet. (Zech. 9:14, Isaiah 18:3, Zeph. 1:14-16)
- signalling the events scheduled for the close of this age. (Revelation chapters 8&9)
- the Second Advent of Christ at which the resurrection will take place. (Matt. 24:31, 1 Cor. 15:51-52)

A study of the texts listed above will show how Yahweh Himself has planned to use His heavenly trumpets again - He and His Son will blow them - to gather His people as in days gone by for the climatic events about to take place at Messiah's return. Did he not say:

Isaiah 18:3 "Let all on earth, let all the men in the world, watch when the signal is raised, hark when the bugle (trumpet) is blown!" (Moffat Bible)

Zechariah 9:14 "Yahweh will sound the trumpet and advance in the storms of the south. Yahweh (Sabaoth) will protect them." (Jerusalem Bible)

The prophecy of the revelation strongly suggests that the sounding of the heavenly trumpets - possibly at a Feast of Trumpets - will coincide with the gathering of Yahweh's people in the last days and the final war in heaven between the forces of good and evil. (Rev 12) A booklet entitled Understand the Revelation, in which the Seven Trumpets are explained, is available online.

No one will doubt but that the Feast of Trumpets has still to find even partial fulfilment; and it is because of this fact and the many texts which tell of the use of the trumpets of God in the future that believers should beware of ignoring this important festival.

On some future Feast of Trumpets the mighty Trumpet of Yahweh will sound. It will be heard around the world and will reverberate with tones as awesome as the rushing sound that filled Jerusalem on the Day of Pentecost some 2000 years ago (Acts 2:2). All of mankind will hear it, for the Bible says:

Zechariah 9:14 "Yahweh shall blow the trumpet." (Jerusalem Bible)

Isaiah 18:3 "Let all on earth harken ... when the trumpet is blown."

Only when that event happens can we justifiably say that the Feast of Trumpets has found fulfilment.

The Day of Atonement

The Day of Atonement is observed on the 10th day of the seventh month (Ethanim) by abstinence from daily labour, by a holy convocation and by fasting. It is the only commanded fast in the year and is, doubtless, the most solemn day in the sacred calendar. (Lev. 16 also Lev. 23:27-32). On this day the high priest laid aside his official ornaments and dressed in a white linen garment entered the Holy of Holies to make atonement for himself, the priesthood and the congregation of Israel. The Epistle to the Hebrews (chapter 9) explains that this annual entry by the High Priest in the Holy of Holies foreshadowed the entrance of the Messiah the High Priest of the Melchizedek order (Heb. 7:15-17) into Yahweh's presence to secure salvation for His people. Our salvation, in other words, will only be complete when we are actually brought into the very presence of the Almighty.

The word "atonement" means to make amends for, to reconcile, to restore, to repair, to make at-one again. And that is exactly what the Day of Atonement prefigures. It points to an appointed time in the future when the great High Priest of the Melchizedek Priesthood (Yashua the Messiah) will literally bring the redeemed host of mankind right into the very presence of His Father, in order that we may be AT-ONE with YAHWEH.

That indeed will be a reconciliation beyond compare, when Yahweh's estranged human family - alienated from Him by sin - will actually be brought into His presence to be AT ONE with Him. Can you now begin to see the plan of salvation prefigured in the feasts? Yahweh's family of true believers:

- Ransomed at the Passover and liberated by the blood of His son - the Passover Lamb.
- Purged of sin, hypocrisy and false doctrine during the Days of Unleavened Bread to become a holy Temple of God.
- Filled with the power of the Holy Spirit in order to bear for all eternity.
- Victoriously gathered and defended at the Feast of Trumpets when the trumpet of Yahweh will sound throughout the earth.
- And finally on the Great Day of Atonement, brought into the very presence of the Almighty by his Son the High Priest to be at-one with Him for all eternity.

Oh what a glorious day of reconciliation that will be! Catch a glimpse of it in these words from that famous parable of the Prodigal Son.

Luke 15:11-32 "Quick, bring the best robe and put it on him. Give him a ring for his hand and sandals for his feet. Bring the fatted calf, kill it and let us eat and be merry. For my son here was dead and he has come to life. He was lost and he is found."

The Feast of Tabernacles

The Feast of Tabernacles (Booths or Shelters) is celebrated on the 15th day of Ethanim the seventh month in the sacred calendar. This feast begins a week during which all native Israelites are required to live in temporary dwellings or shelters. (Lev. 23:39-43). It is, at that basic level, a memorial of the time when Yahweh made His people live in tents in the wilderness when He brought them out of the Land of Egypt.

It is also a reminder or memorial of the fact that the Almighty came down from Heaven to live in a Tabernacle (a tent) amidst His people Israel. (Exodus 33:7-11 & chapters 35 to 40)

The Westminster Dictionary of the Bible has this to say about the Tabernacle in the wilderness.

"The movable sanctuary in the form of a tent which God directed Moses at Sinai to make, that God might dwell as king among His people." (Exodus 25:8-9) Hence it was called:

- "the dwelling" (chs 25:9 margin of RV 26:1) and as the place where Jehovah met His people.
- "the tent of meeting" (Exodus 40:34,35 RV), and as the depository of the tables of the Law of testimony,
- "the tabernacle of the testimony" (Exodus 38:21, ch 25:21,22, Numbers 9:15)
- It was also known by the general designation "house of Jehovah" (Exodus 34:26, Josh. 6:24)"

From these and other passages we can see that the literal Tabernacle which Moses built according to the Almighty's design was merely a type, a shadow, a physical expression of:

- Yahweh's real spiritual habitation
- His point of contact with His people
- His law court or seat of justice, which not only housed his commandments but from where He personally dealt out Judgement.

These three functions of the physical Tabernacle find fulfilment in Yashua the Messiah. (Yashua is the Hebrew name of the only begotten Son of the Most High, Jesus is the Greek form).

Consequently, we may say that the Feast of Tabernacles is also a memorial of the Almighty's astonishing condescension to come down to earth to tabernacle or pitch His tent with humanity in the person of His Son. For Christ is Immanuel, God with us, God incarnate; that is Yahweh's Son taking up his abode in the tabernacle of a human body, in order to redeem and enable mankind to obey His Father's law. (Romans 8:3-4)

Is it any wonder that the profound reality of this fact (that God is going to tabernacle with mankind for eternity) drew from the lips of an angel these amazing words:

Revelation 21:3 "Behold, the Tabernacle of God is with men and He will dwell with them and they shall be his people and God himself shall be with them and be their God."

Oh yes, the Messiah is the Tabernacle of Yahweh, and on the earth made new he will again dwell in the midst of His people just as surely as He occupied the tabernacle built by Moses in the days of old. That is what the Feast of Tabernacles is a reminder and a foretaste of.

The Last Great Day

The festival known as the Last Great Day occurs just after the week of Tabernacles: it is celebrated on the 22nd Ethanim. (Lev. 23:36)

This Great Day prefigures the life-giving power that will flow to and through the Church when the Saviour takes up His abode with us on the earth made new. At the moment (1985) the reality of the Great Day of the Feast is still for most believers an event to look forward to; but in the hereafter when all the saints have experienced the breathtaking fulfilment of this Great Day it will be a beautiful anniversary of the unspeakable bliss we will enjoy as we live in Yahweh's company for all time.

A special invitation to this great spiritual banquet is given to you by the Master Himself in John 7:37-39.

John 7:37-39 "In the Last day, the Great Day of the Feast, Jesus stood and cried, saying, If any man thirst, let him come unto me and drink. He that believeth in me, as the Scripture hath said, 'out of his belly shall flow rivers of living water.' But this spake he of the Spirit which they that believe in him would receive: for the Holy Ghost was not yet given."

Here is an invitation that tells of how the true church will not only live with the Almighty for all time, but will go on with the Creator to become the channel and co-producer of life everlasting to others, just as a young wife is the potential mother of many generations to come. Oh! the astonishing wonder of that declaration in John 7:37-39. Can you afford to ignore it?

 These, then, are the appointed memorial festivals in the Almighty's Programme of Salvation. As you can see each and every one of them commemorates in a special way a unique accomplishment of the Most High.

•Passover - when Yahweh paid the price for the redemption of mankind by sacrificing His Son. •Unleavened Bread - when He puts sin, hypocrisy and the false doctrine out of His church - His house •Pentecost - when the Almighty begins to produce spiritual fruit in the lives of His people. •Trumpets - when He gathers, protects and battles in their defence. •Atonement - when the ransomed church is brought by the Son onto the very presence of the Most High to be made at-one with Him. •Tabernacles - when Yahweh takes up His abode - tabernacles with His people for all time. •The Last Great Day - when through the power of the Holy Spirit Yahweh's Church will become the channel of blessing to the entire universe.

This is the message of the Bible concerning the Festivals of Yahweh the Holy One of Israel. And it is concerning these festivals that He says:

Leviticus 23:2 "These are the solemn festivals of Yahweh to which you are to invite the children of Israel."

Who are the children of Israel? The true children of Israel, astonishing as this may sound, are all those who have put their faith in Christ the only begotten Son of God. (Rom. 2:28-29, Gal. 3:7&29)

Galatians 3:29 "And if you belong to Christ (are in Him, who is Abraham's seed), then you are Abraham's offspring and spiritual heirs according to promise." (Amplified Bible)

Gentiles who believe in the Messiah are according to the Scriptures grafted into the olive of Israel. They become part of the commonwealth of spiritual Israel and share all the blessings of the chosen race. Paul's letter to the Romans (chapter 11:15-26) makes this fact abundantly clear.

What do these facts mean? They mean exactly what they say: that all true believers in the Saviour are Israelites and are included in this gracious invitation.

Leviticus 23:37 "These are the solemn festivals of Yahweh to which you are to invite the children of Israel."

If you are a believer in the Son of the Most High, then that invitation is extended to you.

SBS:Calendar:Festivals

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Last Updated: 1985

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