

THE HOLIDAYS OF GOD

The Fall Feasts

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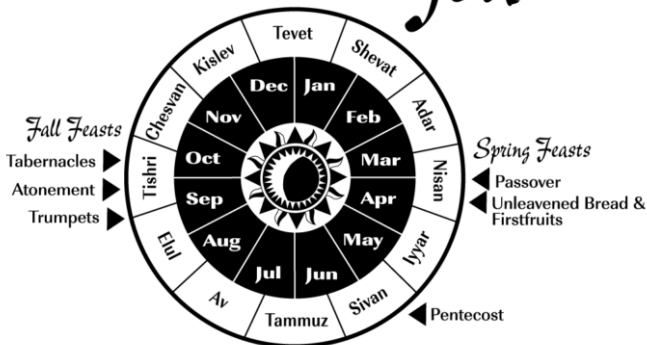
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If observant Jewish people are right, the ancient festival cycle of Israel is a timeless source of spiritual renewal. If those who call themselves messianic believers are right, the seven holidays of God are more than mere Jewish tradition. Those who believe that the Messiah has already made an appearance believe He fulfilled the spiritual meaning of the first four feasts, leaving the three final feasts for fulfillment in the last days.

In the following pages, RBC staff member Kevin Williams gives us the second of a two-part study on the "Holidays Of God"—this one focusing on the three fall feasts. With years of experience in messianic congregations, Kevin shows us the profound relationship between the annual cycle of Jewish holidays and their amazing spiritual and prophetic significance for people of all nations.

Martin R. De Haan II

The Holidays of God



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*)

GOD'S FALL FEASTS

The Lord spoke to Moses, saying, "Speak to the children of Israel, and say to them: 'The feasts of the Lord, which you shall proclaim to be holy convocations, these are My feasts'" (Lev. 23:1-2).

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.

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 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

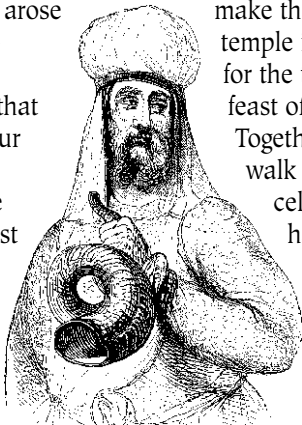
***These holidays
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and together, these feasts paint a compelling picture of the past, present, and future work of a Messiah who is the source of life, hope, and peace for all the nations of the world.

As we saw in *The Holidays Of God: The Spring Feasts* (Q0407), many Jewish and Gentile believers in Jesus share the conviction that the first phase of Messiah's deliverance has been recorded on the center page of human history. According to a group of Jewish eyewitnesses, the plan of God was revealed during the holy days of Passover, Unleavened Bread, Firstfruits, 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 Firstfruits, 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



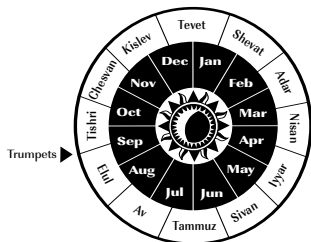
getting ready to thank God for the harvest. Families all across Israel prepare to make their way to the temple in Jerusalem for the third pilgrim feast of the year.

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.

THE FEAST OF TRUMPETS (ROSH HASHANAH OR YOM TERUAH)



Speak to the children of Israel, saying: “In the seventh month, on the first day of the month, you shall have a sabbath-rest, a memorial of blowing of trumpets, a holy convocation” (Lev. 23:24).

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 gives 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.’”

THE SHOFAR'S LOOK TO THE FUTURE

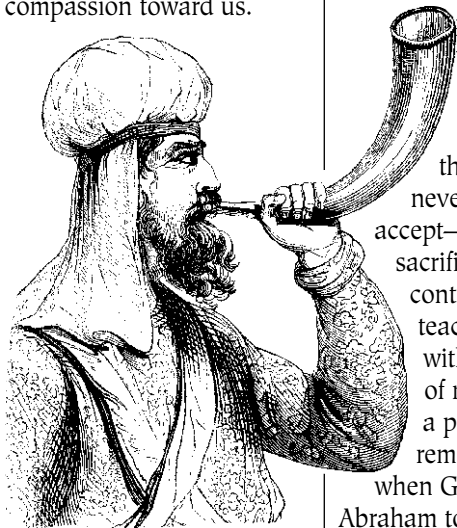
Many believe that *Yom Teruah* also has a prophetic significance. The first four feasts have a striking correlation with final events in the life of Jesus (His first advent). Many Bible scholars believe that the Feast of Trumpets refers prophetically to the last-

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.

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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 the

Face [i.e. 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" (Birnbaum, *Behind The Curtain*, p.282).

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.

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.

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!

A book titled *Rosh Hashanah: Its Significance, Laws, & 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

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

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 on 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
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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 of the rabbis even

teach: “Isaac’s ashes are before [God] always a living reminder of Isaac’s covenant—because an ascent to such spiritual

Hoshanah—Its Significance, Laws, & Prayers, p.34).

Are these comparisons, whether scriptural or traditional,

PICTURES OF JESUS IN THE PERSON OF ISAAC

Parallels

A Hebrew

A son of promise

Foretold by an angel

Miraculous birth

A blessing to the world

Beloved by father

Only son

Undeserving of capital

punishment

Carried wood to the

sacrifice

Around 30 years old

Brought to a mount

Went willingly to slaughter

Sacrificed

Resurrected

Lived to see offspring

Isaac

Gen. 21:3

Gen. 17:19

Gen. 18:10

Gen. 18:13

Gen. 22:18

Gen. 22:2

Gen. 22:2

assumed

Gen. 22:6

rabbinic

Gen. 22:2

Gen. 22:9

rabbinic

rabbinic

Gen. 25:21

Jesus

Mt. 1:1

Lk. 2:29-32

Lk. 1:26-33

Lk. 1:34-35

Lk. 2:29-32

Mt. 3:17

Jn. 3:16

Heb. 7:26

Jn. 19:17

Lk. 3:23

Jn. 19:17

Acts 8:32

1 Cor. 5:7

Acts 2:31

Heb. 2:10

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” (*Rosh*

mere coincidences? Or has God placed within rabbinic theology and tradition a clue to the identity of His own Messiah?

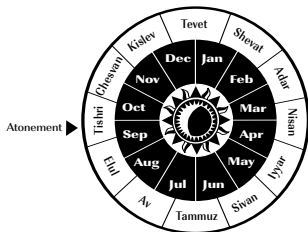
DAYS OF AWE

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.

THE DAY OF ATONEMENT (YOM KIPPUR)



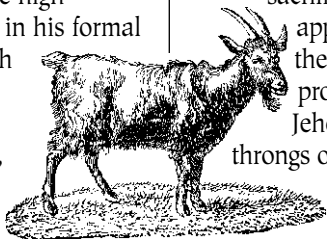
The Lord spoke to Moses, saying: “Also the tenth day of this seventh month shall be the Day of Atonement. It shall be a holy convocation for you; you shall afflict your souls, and offer an offering made by fire to the Lord” (Lev. 23:26-27).

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

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

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.

An additional fact about the scapegoat is worth noting. In 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.

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That God would accept 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 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 sins has been paid in full and that we have been accepted by God. Now we can confess, “Yes, I have gossiped. Yes, I have had lust in my heart. Yes, I have been angry with my brother. Yes, I have been arrogant. Yes, I withheld love from God and sinned against Him in countless ways. Yes, I have withheld love from my neighbors, and sinned against God by not giving others the consideration I want for myself. Yes, I have sinned, but by the blood of His own Messiah, the Father has paid the penalty.” As we have trusted Him, so 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

Yom Kippur, the Day of Atonement, is a day to be mindful of our sin and the offering that was made on our behalf.

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. Here we can let the Scriptures speak for themselves.

The Lord gives voice before His army, for His camp is very great; for strong is the One who executes His word. For the day of the Lord is great and very terrible; who can endure it? . . .

The sun shall be turned into darkness, and the moon into blood, before the coming of the great and awesome day of the Lord (Joel 2:11,31).

"Behold, the day is coming, burning like an oven, and all the proud, yes, all who do wickedly will be stubble. And the day which is coming shall

burn them up," says the Lord of hosts, "that will leave them neither root nor branch" (Mal. 4:1).

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

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

inexpressibly hopeless for all those who have spent the days of their lives resisting the evidence and claims of God's Messiah! It will be the kind of regret anticipated by the prophet Zechariah when he wrote:

I will pour on the house of David and on the

inhabitants of Jerusalem the Spirit of grace and supplication; then they will look on Me whom they pierced. Yes, they will mourn for Him as one mourns for his only son, and grieve for Him as one grieves for a firstborn. In that day there shall be a great mourning in Jerusalem, like the mourning at Hadad Rimmon in the plain of Megiddo. And the land shall mourn, every family by itself (Zech. 12:10-14).

What is the future hope of those who—rejecting Jesus as Messiah—still have no 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? Moses said:

The life of the flesh is in the blood, and I have given it to you upon the altar to make atonement for your souls; for it is the blood that makes atonement for the soul (Lev. 17:11).

After the temple was destroyed in AD 70, the rabbis from the known world gathered for a council—the Yavneh Council. Their purpose was to decide the future of Jewish worship without 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*).

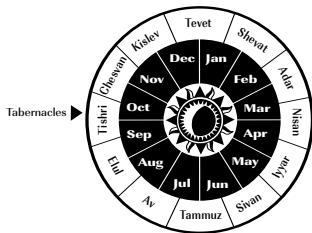
Yet, in fulfillment of the Day of Atonement, there is evidence declaring that God has not left us without hope or atonement. He has not left us devoid of hope,

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

***In fulfillment
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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.

THE FEAST OF TABERNACLES (*SUKKOT*)



Speak to the children of Israel, saying: “The fifteenth day of this seventh month shall be the Feast of Tabernacles for seven days to the Lord” (Lev. 23:34).

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. As we will see, this feast presents a beautiful 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:

You shall dwell in booths for seven days. All who are native Israelites shall dwell in booths, that your generations may know that I made the children of Israel dwell in booths when I brought them out of the land of Egypt: I am the Lord your God (Lev. 23:42-43).

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

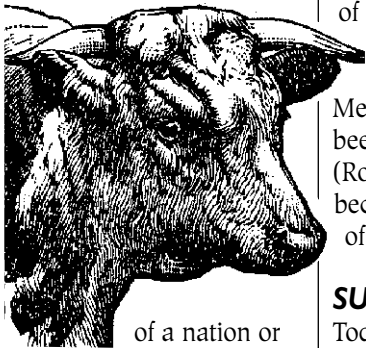
Tishri 15, the normal population of about 600,000 people swelled to between 2 and 3 million.

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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



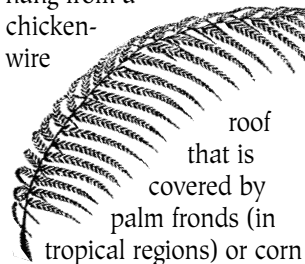
of a nation or nations. On *Yom Kippur*, the high priest sacrificed a bull for his own sins as he represented the nation of Israel. During *Sukkot*, many rabbis assert, the 70 bulls represented the 70 nations that descended from Noah, the ancestors of all the Gentiles of the world. These bulls, according 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 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 in (Rom. 11:17-24) and have become adopted children of Abraham (Gal. 3:29).

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.

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

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

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 on our way, just as He did for the children of Israel in the wilderness. In our wanderings through life, He has been the unseen Provider who has been faithful to us even when we have forgotten Him. He is the One who says, “I will never leave you nor forsake you” (Heb. 13:5).

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:

It shall come to pass that everyone who is left of all the nations which came against Jerusalem shall go up from year to year to worship the King, the Lord of hosts, and to keep the Feast of Tabernacles (Zech. 14:16).

During the millennial reign, when 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:

It shall be that whichever of the families of the earth do not come up to Jerusalem to worship the King, the Lord of hosts, on them there will be no rain. If the family of Egypt will not come up

and enter in, they shall have no rain; they shall receive the plague with which the Lord strikes the nations who do not come up to keep the Feast of Tabernacles (Zech. 14:17-18).

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.

In this dramatic day of 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.

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

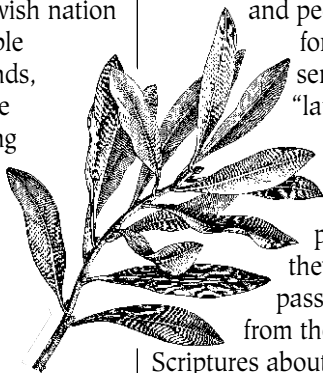
needed rain for the next growing season, the grain harvest that coincides with Passover and Pentecost.

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:

*Ask the Lord for rain
in the time of the latter
rain. The Lord will make
flashing clouds; He will
give them showers of rain
(Zech. 10:1).*

*I will pour water on
him who is thirsty, and
floods on the dry ground;
I will pour My Spirit on
your descendants, and
My blessing on your
offspring (Isa. 44:3).*

It was at this service, as the water and “blood” (of grapes) were being poured out, as the people prayed for God’s Spirit, that Jesus stood and cried out, saying, “If anyone thirsts, let him come to Me and drink. He who believes in Me, as the Scripture has said, out of his heart will flow rivers of living water” (Jn. 7:37-38).

He who poured out water and blood from His side (Jn. 19:34; 1 Jn. 5:6) promised that living water

would flow from those who believe in Him. In this He was referring to the Spirit of God.

**“If anyone thirsts,
let him come to
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of living water.”**
Jesus (Jn. 7:37-38)

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, “Therefore with joy you will draw water from

the wells 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 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:

Since then there has not arisen in Israel a prophet like Moses, whom the Lord knew face to face, in all the signs and wonders which the Lord sent him to do in the land of Egypt, before Pharaoh, before all his servants, and in all his land, and by all that mighty power and all the great terror which Moses performed in the sight of all Israel (34:10-12).

Great celebration, music, and dancing ensues as the scroll is wound back to “the beginning,” when they listen to the first declarations of Genesis: “In the beginning God created the heavens and the earth” (Gen. 1:1).

In the first century, one of Jesus’ titles was the “Living Torah”—Living Word of the Most High.

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:

In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God. He was in the beginning with God. All things were made through Him, and without Him nothing was made that was made. In Him was life, and the life was the light of men (1:1-2).

ENCOUNTERING THE MESSIAH

If you have read all the way through this study, you have encountered the Messiah of whom the apostle John spoke time and again. His presence 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.

Or, it might also be that you have found yourself asking, "Could Jesus be the promised Messiah?" Along with millions of Gentiles, there are hundreds of thousands of Jewish men and women who believe that Jesus is the promised *Moshiach* (Messiah):

He Himself is our peace, who has made both one, and has broken down the middle wall of separation, having abolished in His flesh the enmity, that is, the law of commandments contained in ordinances, so as to create in Himself one new man from the two, thus making peace, and that He might reconcile them both to God in one body through the cross, thereby putting to death the enmity (Eph. 2:14-16).

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.

Followers of Jesus believe that 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, we encourage you to 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 and enter into my heart and to remove my iniquities according to Your divine plan. Though my transgressions are as scarlet, make them white as snow through Your holy sacrifice, Jesus the Messiah. In His name I pray. Amen.

If you prayed that prayer and meant it with all your being, please write and let us know. And may this be a day of rejoicing for you!

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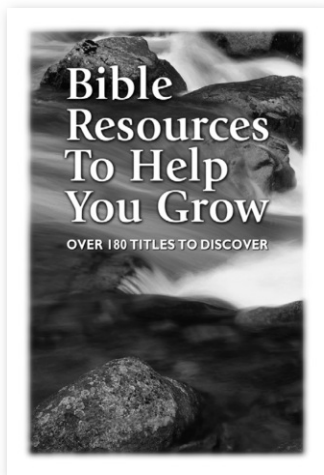
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