



Preparing for the Fall Festivals: Rise to Holiness

I. INTRODUCTION

A. Seven festivals in God's Ecclesiastical calendar

1. All are Hebrew stories about the history of Israel and to commemorate the saving acts of God.
2. All are applicable to all present-day Believers who are grafted into the believing remnant of (Romans 11:17-24).
3. All give opportunity for believers to draw in to God to participate in His redemptive plan.
4. All are divinely appointed by God Himself.
¹The LORD said to Moses, ²"Speak to the Israelites and say to them: 'These are my appointed festivals, the appointed festivals of the LORD, which you are to proclaim as sacred assemblies.'
(Leviticus 23:1-2)
5. The feasts (served) as annual celebration in Israel and as types foreshadowing the future unfolding of the plan of salvation, though the latter was dimly understood by the participants (Bacchiocchi, Kindle location 553).
6. All are misunderstood by the traditional Christian Church. The prevailing view among Christians today is that the annual feasts were strictly socio-ceremonial institutions given to Israel. Their function terminated at the Cross with all the sacrificial system of the Old Testament (Bacchiocchi, Kindle location 535).
7. The Spring Feasts celebrated how God brought Israel into existence as a nation by liberating the people from physical oppression. The Fall Feasts challenged the people to reach to God for moral and spiritual freedom in order to experience the ultimate blessedness (Bacchiocchi, Kindle location 630).
8. As present-day believers we are called to walk in the ancient paths
¹⁶This is what the LORD says: "Stand at the crossroads and look; ask for the ancient paths, ask where the good way is, and walk in it, and you will find rest for your souls. But you said, 'We will not walk in it.' ¹⁷I appointed watchmen over you and said, 'Listen to the sound of the trumpet!' But you said, 'We will not listen.'

B. Spring Festivals

1. Passover: Justification
2. Unleavened Bread: Sanctification
3. Firstfruits: Resurrection
Note: The Counting of the Omer, coming next in the calendar, is not actually a festival but a time of building anticipation and expectancy for the provision of Yeshua
4. Shavuot: Yeshua as Provider

II. THE THREE R's

- A. When we were kids, certainly when our parents were kids, our lives circled around learning the three R's. They were the main focus of our early years at school, and until we mastered them we were not allowed to proceed to more advanced study. What are the Three R's?
1. Reading
 2. Writing
 3. 'Rithmetic
- B. Now as Messianic adults, I want to put before you that it is time to learn three new Rs, and with these also we won't proceed to more advanced study until we learn them too. They are
1. Repent
 2. Redeem
 3. Rejoice

- C. The Fall Festivals, among other reasons, are provided by God to underscore the need for understanding and the practice of these three new Rs.

III. FALL FESTIVAL OVERVIEW

A. Elul

1. Not an actual Festival, but a time in advance of the High Holy Days traditionally viewed as a time to prepare for the Fall Festivals.
2. Thirty days of the month plus ten days between Yom Teruah and Yom Kippur are the 40 days of awe leading to the Day of Atonement.
3. The Sixth Month in the Biblical calendar.
4. Traditionally seen as a time of repentance.

B. Yom Teruah: Yeshua as returning King (Lev. 23:4-5; Num. 29:1-6)

1. In Hebrew, the 'Day of the Blowing' or 'Day of the Awakening Blast'.
2. Reflects God's desire to summon His people to repentance so He can vindicate them on the Day of Judgment.
3. An alert that the Heavenly Trial is beginning.
4. Seen by the Jews as a time of judgment of their lives over the previous year. A time to repent for sins of the year.
5. A reminder that God is not solely punitive God, but a merciful God who suffered to bring salvation to all who would receive it.
6. Messianics see it as a sign that Yeshua is on His way.

C. Yom Kippur: Yeshua as Judge and Redeemer (Ex. 30:10; Lev. 16; Lev. 23:26-32; Num. 29:7-11)

1. The grand climax of the religious year of ancient Israel.
2. Provided for purification of sanctuary, priesthood, and people (Lev. 16:16-19, 30, 33-34).
3. Showed sins had to be removed from the camp through sacrifice.
4. A day of life as God blessed those who had confessed their sins and accepted God's provision of redemption; a day of death for impenitent sinners who rejected God's provision for cleansing of their sins.
5. Underscores the seriousness of sin by showing need for confession, sacrifice, judgement, redemption and disposition.

D. Sukkot: Yeshua as Protector. A time to rejoice (Lev. 23:33-36, 39-43; Num. 29:12-39; Deut. 16:13-15; 31:9-13).

1. Thanksgiving for the blessing of the harvest.
2. Thanksgiving for protection during their travels in the wilderness.
3. Many Messianics see it as representing the millennial reign of Messiah.
4. The celebration of the material blessings of the harvest and of the spiritual blessings of the divine sheltering during the Exodus experience, served to foreshadow the blessings of the Messianic age when "there shall be neither cold nor frost . . . continuous day . . . living water, and . . . security (Zech. 14:6, 7, 11) (Bacchiocchi, Kindle location 975).
5. A time of rejoicing at the redemption offered by Yeshua and the blessings of the Messianic age.
6. **Shemini Atzeret** (The 8th Day)
 - a. Some see it as the last (8th) day of Sukkot
 - b. Seen by some as a festival in its own right.
 - c. Viewed by many Messianics as representing the Age to Come.

IV. WHY ARE THEY IMPORTANT?

A. Dress Rehearsals

1. The historic fulfillment of the Fall Feasts occurred in the wilderness of Sinai. The prophetic fulfillment will come when Yeshua returns for his Bride.
2. Fall Feasts prefigure the return of Messiah
 - a. Yom Teruah (Feast of Trumpets) foreshadows Yeshua's glorious return to earth

¹⁶For the Lord himself will come down from heaven, with a loud command, with the voice of the archangel and with the trumpet call of God, and the dead in Christ will rise first. ¹⁷After that, we who are still alive and are left will be caught up together with them in the clouds to meet the Lord in the air. And so we will be with the Lord forever (1Thess. 14:16-17).

 - 1) Trumpets is the only Festival that occurs on the first day of the month, when the moon is dark. It had to be confirmed by the testimony of two witnesses who had seen the first sliver of light. So no one knew exactly when the Festival would start: they had to be in a continual state of alertness. Since it was a High Sabbath day, all the preparatory work for the feast had to be done ahead of time. Watchfulness and preparedness were the words of the day and so should they be for us.
 - 2) The darkening of the night sky announced the approaching Feast. Also for the Day of the Lord.

³¹The sun will be turned to darkness and the moon to blood before the coming of the great and dreadful day of the LORD (Joel 2:31).
 - 3) Yom Teruah calls us to regather to a pure and holy faith in YHWH; a day to take stock of our spiritual condition and make the necessary changes to make our lives pleasing to God.
 - b. Yom Kippur (Day of Atonement) foreshadows the day all Israel will be saved.

²⁵I do not want you to be ignorant of this mystery, brothers and sisters, so that you may not be conceited: Israel has experienced a hardening in part until the full number of the Gentiles has come in, ²⁶and in this way all Israel will be saved (Rom. 11:25-26).

 - 1) Yom Kippur is the only day the High Priest was allowed to enter the Holy of Holies. On any other day he would die if he entered. On entering on Yom Kippur, the High Priest would sprinkle the blood of the sacrifice on the altar to cleanse it of the people's sins of the previous year.

¹⁴He is to take some of the bull's blood and with his finger sprinkle it on the front of the atonement cover; then he shall sprinkle some of it with his finger seven times before the atonement cover. ¹⁵“ He shall then slaughter the goat for the sin offering for the people and take its blood behind the curtain and do with it as he did with the bull's blood: He shall sprinkle it on the atonement cover and in front of it. ¹⁶In this way he will make atonement for the Most Holy Place because of the uncleanness and rebellion of the Israelites, whatever their sins have been (Lev. 16:14-16).
 - 2) So also, on His return, does Yeshua do the same. He will sprinkle his sacrificial blood over the nations of the earth to cleanse them and prepare them for His return.

*¹⁴Just as there were many who were appalled at him— his appearance was so disfigured beyond that of any human being and his form marred beyond human likeness— ¹⁵so **he will sprinkle many nations**, and kings will shut their mouths because of him. For what they were not told, they will see, and what they have not heard, they will understand (Isaiah 52:14-15).*
 - c. Sukkot (Feast of Tabernacles) points to the ingathering of the saints (the spiritual harvest) and the thousand year reign of Yeshua

³And I heard a loud voice from the throne saying, “Look! God's dwelling place is now among the people, and he will dwell with them. They will be his people, and God himself will be with them and be their God. ⁴He will wipe every tear from their eyes. There will be no more death' or mourning or crying or pain, for the old order of things has passed away.” Rev. 21:3-4

 - 1) Tabernacles is a celebration of YHWH's provision during the desert wanderings, but also

- 2) Is a celebration of Yeshua's return to dwell with His people.
- d. Shemini Atzeret (The 8th Day) prefigures the reign of Messiah in eternity.
 - 1) In the case of the journey of blessing contained in the Messianic understanding of the Festivals, the eighth day, Shemini Atzeret, teaches that there will be an end; that there is a final, eternal goal to which all of creation moves. The flow of thought is that the eighth day, the final sacred assembly, is the celebration of the coming eternal Sabbath rest with the King, that is, the new heaven and the new earth.
3. Must not be caught by surprise; must be ready.

B. Not a Check-off

1. Traditional Church thinks Festivals no longer apply.
2. Messianic Congregations recognize
 - a. We are fellow heirs with the remnant of Israel (Eph. 3:4-6)

⁴In reading this, then, you will be able to understand my insight into the mystery of Christ, ⁵which was not made known to people in other generations as it has now been revealed by the Spirit to God's holy apostles and prophets. ⁶This mystery is that through the gospel the Gentiles are heirs together with Israel, members together of one body, and sharers together in the promise in Christ Jesus.
 - b. We are grafted into the believing remnant (Rom. 11:17-27)
 - c. As a result we are partakers with the remnant of all biblical covenants and promises.
3. The Fall Festivals are all about Yeshua. He is our Sustainer, our foundation. The Fall Festivals help us love and worship him all the more through our heart-felt observance.

C. A Call to Holiness

1. We will all celebrate these Festivals at His return; we should start now.

²³From one New Moon to another and from one Sabbath to another, all mankind will come and bow down before me," says the LORD (Isaiah 66:23)
2. When we sound the Shofar at service, we are calling the people to worship before the King. When the Trumpet is sounded at the King's return, it calls the people to holiness to welcome and worship the King also.
3. The sounding of the Shofar/Trumpet is our 'wake-up call'; an alarm to call us to our appointed time with Yeshua.
4. The sound of the shofar is also a reminder of the blessed hope every messianic believer possesses: we could enter Messiah's presence at any time (Titus 2:13). Let us give heed to the sound of the shofar and all that the Fall Festivals have to teach.
5. The sprinkling by Yeshua is a preparation and declaration of the holiness of His people. Eyes will be opened and understanding given.
6. We are called to be holy; the Fall Festivals are all about the removal of sin and the striving toward holiness in order to meet with the King.
7. We must not 'check-off' the Fall Festivals; we must prepare our hearts for the holiness of the King.

V. BIBLIOGRAPHY

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