

CHAPTER 2

An Overview of the Festivals

UNDERSTANDING THE FEASTS

As stated in Chapter 1, the festivals are blueprints through which G-d revealed His overall plan of redemption for both man and the earth following the fall of man in the Garden of Eden (*Gan Eden*) as well as the role that the Messiah (*Yeshua*) would play in that redemption. The festivals are divided into two major portions, depending upon whether they occur in the spring or the fall. The spring festivals teach about the first coming of the Messiah *Yeshua* (Jesus) and the fall festivals teach about the second coming of the Messiah *Yeshua*. In Hosea (*Hoshea*) 6:3 it is written, "...His going forth is prepared as the morning; and He shall come unto us as the rain, as the latter and former rain unto the earth." The "latter and former rain" in this passage is commonly interpreted and understood to be the coming of the Holy Spirit (*Ruach HaKodesh*). This is indeed a valid interpretation and application; however, the former and latter rain also refers to the first and second coming of the Messiah (*Yeshua*).

G-d set up the festivals in an agricultural context. G-d gave the natural for us to understand the spiritual (*1 Corinthians 15:46-47*). During the course of the year, the rains come in Israel at two primary times--the spring and the fall. If we cross-reference Hosea (*Hoshea*) 6:3 with Joel (*Yoel*) 2:23, we see that the former rain is the Hebrew word *moreh* which means "teacher," and the word *moderately* in Joel 2:23, is the Hebrew word *tzedakah*, which means "righteousness." The teacher of righteousness was a term for the Messiah. *Yeshua* (Jesus) was the teacher of righteousness sent by G-d as can be seen in John (*Yochanan*) 3:2. *Yeshua* was sent by G-d to the earth to faithfully teach us righteousness, just as G-d faithfully sends us the rain (Isaiah [*Yeshayahu*] 55:10-11). The harvest (believers in the Messiah) is the product that the rain (the Messiah) produces.

In *Leviticus 23:2* it is written, ".....the feasts of the Lord, which ye shall proclaim to be holy convocations...." The Hebrew term translated as convocation in *Leviticus (Vayikra) 23:2,4* is *miqra*, which means "a rehearsal." From this we can see that G-d gave the festivals to be yearly "rehearsals" of the future events in the redemption. Because G-d gave the "rehearsals" to teach us about the major events in the redemption, if we want to understand the major events in the redemption, then we need to understand what G-d was teaching us by these rehearsals. The purpose of this book is to show how the "rehearsals" teach us about the real events in the redemption and the role of the Messiah (*Yeshua*) in these events.

In Deuteronomy (*Devarim*) 16:16, G-d instructed the people to come to Jerusalem (*Yerushalayim*) three times a year to observe the feasts. As they came, they observed ceremonies given by G-d that were performed in both the temple (*Beit HaMikdash*) and the home. These ceremonies were twofold in nature. They looked forward and they looked backward. Many of these ceremonies and the specific instructions concerning what was done during these feasts and how they were done can be found in the Mishnah, the oral teaching of Judaism, in the section called *Mo'ed*. The Mishnah is divided into six orders. Each order is divided into tractates, or different sections of each order. The order called *Mo'ed* speaks of the festivals. *Mo'ed*, which we saw earlier means "an appointed time," has two meanings. First, in Deuteronomy (*Devarim*) 16:16, the Jewish people have an appointment to be at a specific place (Jerusalem) at a specific time (the time of the three major pilgrimage festivals). Secondly, G-d has an appointment to perform certain events in the redemption at this time. There are four important aspects to remember when dealing with each of the seven great festivals of the L-rd:

1. All of the festivals are, at the same time, both historical and prophetic.
2. All of the festivals teach about the Messiah (*Yeshua*), or Jesus.
3. All of the festivals are agricultural in context.
4. All of the festivals teach about your personal relationship with G-d and how you are to walk (*halacha*) with Him as you grow in the knowledge of Him, from being a baby believer to a mature believer.

It is important to remember that as an entire unit, the festivals teach and reveal the complete plan of G-d; however, each festival centers on a particular theme in the plan of G-d.

OVERVIEW OF THE SPRING FESTIVALS

The four spring festivals are Passover (*Pesach*), Unleavened Bread (*Hag HaMatzah*), First Fruits (*Bikkurim*), and the Feast of Weeks (*Shavuot*), or Pentecost.

1. Passover (*Pesach*) occurs in the first month of the religious calendar (*Aviv*, also called *Nisan*), on the fourteenth day, Leviticus (*Vayikra*) 23:5.
2. Unleavened Bread (*Hag HaMatzah*) immediately follows the first day of Passover (*Pesach*). It is observed in the first month (*Aviv/Nisan*) from the fifteenth day to the twenty-first day (Leviticus [*Vayikra*] 23:6-8).
3. The Feast of First Fruits of the barley harvest (*Bikkurim*) is observed during the week of Unleavened Bread (*Hag HaMatzah*). Anciently, on this day, sheaves of barley were waved before the L-rd in a prescribed ceremony. Today, this festival is not observed in traditional Judaism.
4. The Feast of Weeks (*Shavuot*) is also known as Pentecost. Beginning on the Feast of First Fruits (*Bikkurim*), we begin to count 50 days. This is called the counting of the omer. On the fiftieth day following the Feast of First Fruits (*Bikkurim*) is

the Feast of Weeks (*Shavuot*) or Pentecost (Leviticus [*Vayikra*] 23:15-21). (Note: Pentecost is a Greek word that literally means "fiftieth.")

These four spring festivals are joined together as an interrelated unit. The Feast of Weeks (*Shavuot*) is considered the conclusion or atzeret to Passover. The season of Passover (*Pesach*) is not considered totally over until Shavuot (*Pentecost*) is completed.

The Exodus Story: From Pesach to Shavuot

Pesach (Passover) begins in Egypt (*Mitzrayim*) (a type of the world), where the children of Israel had become slaves. When the children of Israel cried out to G-d to remember the promises He made to Abraham (*Avraham*), Isaac (*Yitzchak*), and Jacob (*Ya'akov*), G-d called forth a deliverer named Moses (*Moshe*). G-d told Moses (*Moshe*) that He was going to bring the children of Israel out of Egypt (*Mitzrayim*) to the Promised Land (Exodus [*Shemot*] 3:8). When G-d sent Moses (*Moshe*) to Pharaoh, G-d did not tell Moses (*Moshe*) to ask Pharaoh to allow the children of Israel to leave Egypt and go to the Promised Land. Instead, G-d only instructed Moses (*Moshe*) to ask Pharaoh to allow the children of Israel to take a three-day journey into the wilderness to make a sacrifice to G-d (Exodus [*Shemot*] 3:18). Moses (*Moshe*) obeyed G-d's instructions exactly as can be seen in Exodus (*Shemot*) 5:1-3. Pharaoh's first deviance of the Almighty One of Israel was his refusal to allow the people of G-d to observe a feast and to sacrifice to Him!

After a remarkable series of plagues inflicted on Egypt (*Mitzrayim*) because of Pharaoh's continued stubbornness, the children of Israel were finally released to leave Egypt laden with the spoils of the Egyptians. The children of Israel came to the banks of the Red Sea on the seventeenth day of Aviv/Nisan, which is three days after the day of Passover in the first month of the religious calendar. The Passover Lamb was slain on the fourteenth of Nisan and the people left Egypt (*Mitzrayim*) before midnight in the evening of the fifteenth after the death angel struck the firstborn of Egypt (*Mitzrayim*). When Pharaoh saw that the children of Israel were trapped against the sea, he foolishly decided to pursue them with his army (Exodus [*Shemot*] 14:1-9). The children of Israel became afraid, but Moses (*Moshe*) rose up and said, as it is written, "...Fear ye not, stand still, and see the salvation [*Yeshooah* in Hebrew], of the Lord..." (Exodus [*Shemot*] 14:13). Jesus (*Yeshua*) in Hebrew means salvation or Savior (Matthew [*Mattityahu*] 1:21).

At this point, the sea divided and the children of Israel crossed the floor of the Red Sea on dry ground while the Egyptian army, along with Pharaoh, pursued the Hebrews into the Red Sea and were drowned (Exodus [*Shemot*] 14:26-28; 15:4,19). The Bible says that the L-rd's right hand destroyed the Egyptians (Exodus [*Shemot*] 15:6,12). The right hand is a term for the Messiah, *Yeshua* (Psalms [*Tehillim*] 44:3; 48:10; 63:8; 74:10-11; 89:13; 98:1; 110:1; 118:16; 138:7; Isaiah [*Yeshayahu*] 41:10; 53:1-5; 62:8; Acts 2:32-36; 5:31-32; Hebrews 1:3).

It is important to note that Pharaoh, along with his army, drowned in the sea. In the days of Joseph (*Yosef*), there was a famine in Israel and the children of Israel went down to Egypt (*Mitzrayim*) and gave themselves to rulership under Pharaoh. Because of this, Pharaoh had legal ownership over the people. This ownership could be broken only by the death of Pharaoh, thus freeing the children of Israel to go to the Promised Land. Because of this fact, G-d did not violate His word to Pharaoh through Moses (*Moshe*) when he asked Pharaoh to let the people go on a three-day journey into the wilderness, but later continued to go to the Promised Land. When Pharaoh died, his rulership over the children of Israel was legally broken and the people were free to go to the Promised Land. For this reason, the season of Passover (*Pesach*) is called "The Feast of Our Freedom".

Spiritually speaking, Pharaoh is a type of satan (*Ha satan*). Until you accept the Messiah (*Yeshua*) into your life, Satan (*Ha satan*) has legal ownership over you. By the death of *Yeshua* (Jesus), the legal ownership that satan (*Ha satan*) has over our lives is broken and we are free to enter into the spiritual promised land of G-d and receive all the promises that He has promised us.

Fifty Days From the Red Sea: Shavuot (Pentecost)

From the crossing of the Red Sea (Nisan 17) to the day Moses (*Moshe*) met G-d on Mount Sinai were 47 days. For 47 days the children of Israel traveled through the wilderness before they came to Mount Sinai on the third day of the third month (Sivan) (Exodus [*Shemot*] 19:1). G-d instructed the people through Moses (*Moshe*) to sanctify themselves before He visited them three days later on Mount Sinai, which would be the sixth day of the third month of Sivan (Exodus [*Shemot*] 19:10-11). This day would be the fiftieth day following the crossing of the Red Sea; it came to be known as the revelation of G-d at Mount Sinai. This day being the fiftieth day from the crossing of the Red Sea on Nisan 17 would be the Feast of Weeks (*Shavuot*), or Pentecost.

Therefore, from the Exodus story, we can see that the Lamb was slain on the fourteenth of Nisan, the day of Passover (*Pesach*). On the fifteenth of Nisan, the day of Unleavened Bread (*Hag HaMatzah*), the people left Egypt; on the seventeenth of Nisan the children of Israel crossed the Red Sea; and 50 days later on the Feast of Weeks (*Shavuot*), or Pentecost, G-d gave the Torah (instruction) on Mount Sinai. In the following chapters, we will see how *Yeshua* (Jesus) died on Passover (*Pesach*) (Nisan 14), was in the sepulcher on the day of Unleavened Bread (*Hag HaMatzah*) (Nisan 15), and was resurrected on the day of First Fruits (*Bikkurim*) (Nisan 17), and the Holy Spirit empowered the believers 50 days following *Yeshua's* (Jesus) resurrection on the day of Pentecost (*Shavuot*). We will also discover what these feasts mean to the individual believer and how they relate to our personal relationship with G-d.

FALL FESTIVAL OVERVIEW

The fall festival season begins with a 40-day period called, in Hebrew, *Teshuvah*, which means "to repent or return." This 40-day period begins in the sixth month of the religious calendar, the month of Elul, and concludes on the tenth day of the seventh month, which is *Yom Kippur*, the day of Atonement. Each morning in the synagogue following the morning prayers, a shofar is blown (except on sabbaths and the day preceding *Rosh HaShanah*, the Feast of Trumpets). Psalm (*Tehillim*) 27 is read every day. *Rosh HaShanah* is the thirtieth day into this 40-day period of *Teshuvah* or repentance. The biblical name for *Rosh HaShanah* is *Yom Teruah*, which means "the day of the awakening blast." Non-Jews call this the Feast of Trumpets. It is observed on the seventh month (Tishrei) and the first day of the month (Leviticus [*Vayikra*] 23:23-24). G-d gave us this day to teach us about the resurrection of the dead, the coronation of the Messiah, the wedding of the Messiah, and much more. This day is both the Jewish New Year and the beginning of a period of soul-searching known as the High Holy Days, culminating on *Yom Kippur*. Therefore, the last 10 days of the 40-day period of *Teshuvah*, beginning on Elul 1, is also called the High Holy Days.

The first and second days of the 10 High Holy Days (Tishrei 1-10) are collectively known as one day (*Nehemiah* 7:73; 8:1-2,13). The seven-day period from Tishrei 3 through Tishrei 9 is called the Days of Awe or the Awesome Days (*Yamim Nora'im*). G-d gave these special days on His calendar to teach us about the future tribulation period on earth (*Chevlai shel Mashiach*). These seven days will correspond to the seven years of the tribulation known in Hebrew as the "birthpangs of the Messiah" (*Chevlai shel Mashiach*).

Yom Kippur (the Day of Atonement) is observed on the tenth day of the seventh month (Leviticus [*Vayikra*] 23:26-32). Since *Rosh Hashanah* teaches us about the resurrection of the dead, the coronation of the Messiah and the wedding of the Messiah, and the Days of Awe teach us about the tribulation (*Chevlai shel Mashiach*), *Yom Kippur* teaches us about the literal second coming of the Messiah *Yeshua* when He will set His foot down on the Mount of Olives (*Zechariah* 14:4).

The Feast of Tabernacles (*Sukkot*) is observed the fifteenth day of the seventh month of Tishrei to the twenty-first day. This festival teaches us the joy of the Messianic Kingdom, known in Hebrew as the *Athid Lavo* or to non-Jews as the Millennium. This can be found in Leviticus (*Vayikra*) 23:33-44. The day following the twenty-first day of Tishrei, the last day of *Sukkot*, is a special day called *Shemini Atzeret*. It is known as the eighth day (Leviticus [*Vayikra*] 23:36) and is the twenty-second day of Tishrei.

Another festival called *Simchat Torah* is observed in conjunction with *Shemini Atzeret*. *Simchat* means "rejoicing" in Hebrew, so *Simchat Torah* means "rejoicing in the Torah." In ancient times, this festival was observed on the twenty-second of Tishrei, the same day as *Shemini Atzeret*. Today it is celebrated on the twenty-third of Tishrei. The celebration of *Shemini Atzeret* and *Simchat Torah* spans a 48-hour period, but it is referred to as "one long day." It is only one of two instances in the biblical year when

there is a 48-hour period known as one long day. The other is *Rosh HaShanah*, which spans the first and second days of Tishrei. *Shemini Atzeret* and *Simchat Torah* were given by G-d to teach us how things will be following the Messianic age or the Millennium when the world will enter into eternity.

FEASTS OF THE L-RD

| Biblical/Hebrew Name | English Name | Time of Observance |
|----------------------------------|--------------------------------|---|
| 1. Pesach | Passover | Nisan/Aviv 14 |
| 2. Hag HaMatzah | Feast of Unleavened Bread | Nisan/Aviv 15-21 |
| 3. Bikkurim HaMatzah | First Fruits of Barley Harvest | The morrow after the sabbath during Hag |
| 4. Shavuot Feast Fruits | Feast of Weeks/Pentecost | Fifty days from the of First |
| 5. Yom Teruah (Rosh HaShanah) | Feast of Trumpets | Tishrei 1 |
| 6. Yom Kippur | Day of Atonement | Tishrei 10 |
| 7. Sukkot | Feast of Tabernacles/Booths | Tishrei 15-21 |
| a. Shemini Atzeret | The eighth assembly/conclusion | Tishrei 22 |
| b. Simchat Torah | Rejoicing in the Torah | Tishrei 23 |

HISTORICAL APPLICATION OF THE FEASTS

| FEAST | HISTORICAL ASPECT |
|---------------------------------------|--|
| 1. Passover (Pesach) | Israel's deliverance out of Egyptian bondage |
| 2. Unleavened Bread (Hag HaMatzah) | The going out of Egypt |

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|-------------------------------------|---|
| 3. First Fruits (Bikkurim) | Crossing the Red Sea |
| 4. Pentecost (Shavuot) | Giving the Torah at Mount Sinai |
| 5. Rosh HaShanah (Yom Teruah) | Blowing the Shofar/Jewish New Year |
| 6. Day of Atonement (Yom Kippur) | Priest entered the Holy of Holies Cleansing of the people's sins |
| 7. Tabernacles (Sukkot) | Entering the Promised Land/Great Rejoicing |

MESSIANIC APPLICATION OF THE FEASTS

| FEAST | MESSIANIC FULFILLMENT |
|---------------------------------------|---|
| 1. Passover (Pesach) | Death of <i>Yeshua</i> on the tree |
| 2. Unleavened Bread (Hag HaMatzah) | The Burial of <i>Yeshua</i> |
| 3. First Fruits (Bikkurim) | Resurrection of <i>Yeshua</i> |
| 4. Pentecost (Shavuot) | Pouring out of the Holy Spirit (<i>Ruach HaKodesh</i>) on Shavuot (Acts 2) |
| 5. Rosh HaShanah (Yom Teruah) | The Resurrection of the Dead / Rapture (<i>Natzal</i>) of believers |
| 6. Day of Atonement (Yom Kippur) | The Day of Messiah's Second Coming (Zech 14:4) |
| 7. Tabernacles (Sukkot) | The Messianic Era/Millennium (<i>Athid Lavo</i>) |

SPIRITUAL APPLICATION OF THE FEASTS

FEAST

SPIRITUAL APPLICATION (*Halacha*)

1. Passover
(Pesach) Repent (*Teshuvah*) and trust by faith (*Emunah*)
in the shed blood of *Yeshua*
2. Unleavened Bread
represented
(Hag HaMatzah) Sanctification and separation from evil
by water immersion (*Mikvah*)
3. First Fruits
(Bikkurim) Walking (*Halacha*) in newness of life
4. Pentecost
(Shavuot) Immersion in the Holy Spirit (*Ruach HaKodesh*)
and growing in faith (*Emunah*) in G-d (making
spiritual aliyah)
5. Rosh HaShanah
(Yom Teruah) Hear (*Shema*) the calling (*Shofar*) of
for our lives
6. Day of Atonement
face)
(Yom Kippur) Yielding ourselves to G-d so we may live (face to
in His Presence
7. Tabernacles
(Sukkot) A daily rest (*shabbat*) in the Messiah and
having the rest (*menuchah*) of His Kingdom in
our hearts