Yahweh Reveals Plan for Mankind with His Annual Holy Days

Summary

The anchor article of this whole library — a complete walk through all seven annual Holy Days, and the single unfolding plan of salvation they picture together.

- Section-by-section coverage of all seven: Passover, Unleavened Bread, Pentecost, Trumpets, the Day of Atonement, Tabernacles, and the Last Great Day.
- Each Holy Day tied to a specific stage of Yahweh's plan: the Messiah's sacrifice, the believer's calling, the gift of the Spirit, the Messiah's return, Satan's removal, the Millennium, and a final resurrection and judgment offered to everyone who has ever lived.
- A contrast between these Biblical festivals and widely observed but non-Biblical holidays such as Christmas and Easter.
- Practical instruction on how the Holy Days are to be kept today.

The full article begins on the next page.

Yahweh Reveals Plan for Mankind with His Annual Holy Days

Is it possible to know what the future holds for us? The Creator of mankind does have a plan for us, and He reveals it to us through an annual cycle of festivals described in the Scriptures. It is an astounding plan offering an incredible future to every man, woman, and child who has ever lived. This article will help you understand the incredible truth about what lies ahead for all humanity.

Every nation observes patriotic or public holidays. These special days are reminders of important events in a country's history. They provide continuity between a nation's past and the present.

Usually citizens can understand and explain at least some of the significance of these celebrations. Yet, paradoxically, those same citizens seldom understand much about the days on which they worship and honour Yahweh. The non-biblical roots of these religious practices are quietly ignored in their celebrations.

As a result, people usually assume that popular observances such as Easter and Christmas serve as true representations of the themes of the Bible. Yet the Bible nowhere commands their observance, nor does the Bible record their observance by the early New Covenant Congregation. However, Yahweh does command other, rarely noticed, festivals.

Some people realize that the Bible mentions specific days for religious celebration. But only a few can name any of them or explain their significance.

Those aware of these festivals generally believe they were meant only for ancient Israel and ceased after Yah'shua the Messiah's crucifixion. They assume these days simply pointed toward the Messiah, and they think that, since He lived on earth 2,000 years ago, their importance has long since passed. Most people consider these biblical festivals as nothing more than relics of history with no relevance to the modern world.

Believe it or not, the Bible itself contradicts these commonly held views. An objective look at the biblical record reveals that both Christmas and Easter—the two main observances on the Christian calendar—are nowhere to be found, except where Passover is mistranslated to Easter in Acts 12:4 in the King James Version. Surprising to many, the New Covenant shows Yah'shua the Messiah observing Yahweh's Holy Days, with Yah'shua the Messiah's disciples and His natural Congregation members following His example many decades and centuries after His death, burial and resurrection.

The teaching of the apostles in the years of the first century after the resurrection also differs from most people's assumptions. The apostles' instructions reveal a God who intended for all Israelites to observe the biblical Holy Days-for a remarkable reason.

What these Holy Days reveal

Why does Yahweh want us to observe the Holy Days? Because Yahweh wants us to know about our future, He reveals to us His great purpose for humanity.

He explains why He puts us on earth, reveals our ultimate destiny and tells us how we can attain it! The observance of Yahweh's Holy Days provides the key to understanding that elusive sense or purpose of human existence. The observance of these days reveals Yahweh's great plan for the future of mankind.

The biblical Holy Days, or festivals, fall during three seasons of the year—the early-spring harvest, late-spring harvest and early-autumn harvest in the land of biblical Israel. The themes these days portray reflect Yahweh's spiritual harvest of mankind to eternal life spoken of by Yah'shua the Messiah.

These observances serve as timeless reminders of how Yahweh's plan gives eternal life to mortal man. Our Creator will bring His plan to fruition in spite of man's choices and actions, which have consistently led to separation from Yahweh, suffering and death *(Proverbs 14:12; 16:25; Isaiah 59:1-8; Jeremiah 10:23).* These festivals reveal the unfolding of Yahweh's plan for humanity and how He will establish His Kingdom on earth. This is the good news, or gospel, Yah'shua the Messiah preached *(Mark 1:14-15)*.

Yahweh's design to grant humanity eternal life has existed since "the foundation of the world" *(Matthew 25:34).* The Holy Days teach humanity about that remarkable plan. The apostle Paul beautifully summed up its essence in his letter to the Ephesians: "He has made known to us his secret purpose, in accordance with the plan which he determined beforehand in the Messiah, to be put into effect when the time was ripe: namely, that the universe, everything in heaven and earth, might be brought into unity in the Messiah. In the Messiah indeed we have been given our share in this heritage, as was decreed in his design whose purpose is everywhere at work" *(Ephesians 1:9-11, Revised English Bible)*.

The Holy Days help us comprehend the master plan—the very purpose for mankind, how we truly become Yahweh's people. Notice this description of our destiny: "Behold, the tabernacle of Yahweh is with men, and He will dwell with them, and they shall be His people. Yahweh Himself will be with them and be their God" *(Revelation 21:3)*. Step by step, the Holy Days show us how this beautiful picture will become a reality.

In Leviticus 23 we find a listing of the Holy Days. After discussing the weekly Sabbath, the text describes special observances with unusual names such as the Feast of Unleavened Bread, the Feast of Weeks and the Feast of Tabernacles. In giving these Holy Days, Yahweh instructed Moses to make it clear that "These are the Feasts of Yahweh" *(verses 4, 37, emphasis added throughout).*

The Bible teaches that eventually Yahweh will teach everyone to observe these days *(Zechariah 14:16).* In the pages of this article you will learn the fascinating purpose of each of Yahweh's Holy Days, along with their promise of hope for mankind.

Are Yahweh's Holy Days Relevant Today?

When Yahweh begins something in this present age of mankind, He nearly always starts small. In Matthew 13:31-33 Yah'shua the Messiah compared Yahweh's Kingdom to both a mustard seed and leaven. Both analogies start with something small that expands into something much larger. Similarly, Yahweh called only a relatively few people in Old Covenant times who were willing to follow His ways.

The biblical record shows that, early in the account spoken of in the Bible, only a few people decided to obey Yahweh. However, early patriarchs including Abel, Enoch and Noah did respond to the revelation of Yahweh's plan of salvation *(Matthew 23:35).* After the great flood of Noah's time, Yahweh found He could work with Abraham and his wife, Sarah. Of Yahweh's obedient people of those times, Hebrews 11:13 says they "all died in faith" with the sure knowledge that they would gain eternal life *(verse 40).*

We should note that the plan for providing eternal life was already at work in the lives of these early people of Yahweh. The plan did not start with a covenant Yahweh made with ancient Israel; nor did it start with Yah'shua's earthly ministry.

Yahweh loved the world so much "that He gave His only begotten Son, that whoever believes in Him should not perish but have everlasting life" *(John 3:16).* Yahweh's love in giving His Son continued His plan of salvation from the foundation of the world *(Matthew 25:34; Revelation 13:8).* The blueprint of the Holy Days would reveal in due time the plan Yahweh had designed from the very beginning. These festival observances were not just a cosmic afterthought.

With Abraham's family we see Yahweh beginning to reveal the good news about His plan of salvation *(Galatians 3:8).* Genesis 26:3-4 identifies specific blessings Yahweh promised to Abraham and Abraham's descendants. The Creator pledged to bestow them "because Abraham obeyed My voice and kept My charge, My commandments, My statutes, and My laws" *(verse 5).* Perhaps this is why the Bible calls Abraham "the friend of Yahweh" and "the father of all those who believe" *(James 2:23; Romans 4:11; Genesis 18:17-19).*

A nation singled out

Abraham's descendants grew into a mighty nation *(Genesis 18:18).* They were named after Jacob, the grandson of Abraham whose name was changed to Israel *(Genesis 32:28).* After settling in Egypt, before long they became slaves *(Exodus 1).* The story of Yahweh's deliverance from their bondage and His delivering of people today is part of the intricately woven fabric of Yahweh's festivals.

In due time the Creator set in motion a series of events that illustrated for the Israelites His plan as depicted in the Holy Day observances and led to their freedom from slavery in Egypt. When Moses and Aaron appeared before Pharaoh, they told the Egyptian ruler that the God of Israel commanded him to "let My people go, that they may hold a feast to Me in the wilderness" *(Exodus 5:1).*

Moses and Aaron had earlier called for the elders of Israel to assemble and had explained to them Yahweh's plan to deliver them *(Exodus 3:16-18).* Then Moses and his brother, Aaron, performed a series of Yahweh-directed miracles in sight of the people (Exodus 4:29-30). As a result, the Israelites *(although they later faltered)* believed Yahweh would deliver them and fulfill His covenant with Abraham, as He had promised *(Exodus 4:31; 6:4-8).*

What followed was ancient Israel's first Passover and Feast of Unleavened Bread. Much later the New Covenant Congregation kept these same days as a reminder of Israelites' deliverance through Yah'shua the Messiah. For instance, Paul told members of the Congregation at Corinth-both Jews and gentiles-that they should be "unleavened," or without sin, because "the Messiah, our Passover, was sacrificed for us" *(1 Corinthians 5:7).* In the next verse Paul said, "Therefore let us keep the feast," referring to the same festival Yahweh had instituted in ancient Israel many centuries before.

<u>The Holy Days in the New Covenant</u>

From Yah'shua's earliest childhood years, He observed the Holy Days with His parents. "His parents went to Jerusalem every year at the Feast of the Passover," Luke 2:41 tells us. The following verses describe Yah'shua, at age 12, engaging the theologians of His day in a spirited discussion during this festival season *(verses 42-48)*. Clearly, He astonished these religious leaders with His understanding and insight. John writes of Yah'shua continuing to observe the annual Holy Days as an adult during His ministry *(John 2:23; 4:45).*

In one of the most instructive examples, Yah'shua risked His personal safety to attend two of the festivals, the annual Feast of Tabernacles and the Last Great Day *(John 7:1*-2, 7-10, 14). "On the last day, that great day of the feast, Yah'shua 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.' But this He spoke concerning His Spirit, [which] those believing in Him would receive; for His Holy Spirit was not yet given, because Yah'shua was not yet glorified" (John 7:37-39).

Many false churches believe that the apostle Paul fundamentally changed the way Israelites are to worship. This notion assumes Paul taught gentiles that observance of the Holy Days was unnecessary. Although some of his writings were difficult to understand, even by his contemporaries (2 Peter 3:15-16), Paul's explicit statements and actions contradict any notion that he annulled or abolished Holy Day observance.

In 1 Corinthians 11:1-2, for example, Paul told his followers to "imitate me, just as I also imitate the Messiah," and "keep the traditions as I delivered them to you." A few verses later he explained: "For I

received from Yahweh that which I also delivered to you: that the Lord Yah'shua on the same night in which He was betrayed took bread; and when He had given thanks, He broke it and said, 'Take, eat; this is My body which is broken for you; do this in remembrance of Me'" (verses 23-24).

If Paul's practice had not been to observe the Holy Days, his comments to the Jews and gentiles in Corinth would have been meaningless. Clearly, evidence is lacking that Paul ever discouraged anyone from keeping the annual festivals; such a notion would have been for him unthinkable (Acts 24:12-14; 25:7-8; 28:17).

On the contrary, the biblical record of Paul's ministry repeatedly depicts the Holy Days as important observances, milestones in his life. For example, he told the Ephesians that "I must by all means keep this coming feast in Jerusalem" (Acts 18:21). In Acts 20:16 and 1 Corinthians 16:8 we find Paul arranging his travel schedule to accommodate the Feast of Pentecost. In Acts 27:9 Luke, Paul's companion in his travels, referred to the time of year as after "the Fast," a reference to the Day of Atonement.

The Expositor's Bible Commentary, in a reference to Acts 20:6, notes that Paul, unable to arrive at Jerusalem for the Passover, "remained at Philippi to celebrate it and the week-long Feast of Unleavened Bread ..." (Richard N. Longenecker, Zondervan, Grand Rapids, 1981, Vol. 9, p. 507). Regarding Acts 20:16, the same commentary notes that Paul "wanted, if at all possible, to get to Jerusalem for Pentecost on the fiftieth day after Passover ..." (p. 510).

Paul's ministry included observing the Holy Days with the Congregation. In defending the gospel he preached, Paul said he brought the same message the other apostles taught: "Therefore, whether it was I or they, so we preach and so you believed" (1 Corinthians 15:11).

Paul and all the apostles taught a consistent message of the Israelite's obligation to follow the example of Yah'shua the Messiah in all matters. The apostle John, who wrote near the close of the first century, summed up this message: "He who says he abides in Him ought himself also to walk just as He walked" (1 John 2:6).

Jewish believers continued to uphold the Holy Days, as did gentile Israelites. Notice that Colossians 2:16 shows Gentile Israelites kept the Holy Days. From all these references we can conclude only that the practice of the early Congregation was to continue the observance of these Yahweh-given festivals, the first of which is the Passover.

The Passover: Why Did Yah'shua the Messiah Have to Die?

Most of us have heard that Yah'shua the Messiah died for our sins, but what does that really mean? Why was His death necessary? What part does the Messiah's sacrifice play in Yahweh's plan for mankind? How is Yah'shua the Messiah's death reflected in Yahweh's holy festivals? This chapter on the New Covenant Passover will address these important questions.

Yah'shua's sacrifice is the pivotal event in Yahweh's plan to save humanity. Speaking of His certain death, the Messiah said He, referring to Himself as the Son of Man, must be "lifted up" *(crucified)* even as "Moses lifted up the serpent in the wilderness," so that "whoever believes in Him should not perish but have eternal life. For Yahweh so loved the world that He gave His only begotten Son, that whoever believes in Him should not perish but have everlasting life" *(John 3:14-16)*.

We see here that Yah'shua's sacrifice, the central message of the Passover, was a supreme act of love for humanity. This important event laid the foundation for the remaining annual Holy Days and festivals. It is the most momentous step in Yahweh's plan.

Just before the Passover feast that would see His execution, Yah'shua said that "for this purpose I came to this hour ... And I, if I am lifted up from the earth, will draw all peoples to Myself" *(John 12:27, 32).*

The day on which this profound event, the crucifixion, transpired was the 14th day of the first month of Yahweh's calendar, the same day on which the Passover lambs were to be killed *(Leviticus 23:5).* Paul later wrote the congregation at Corinth that "the Messiah, our Passover, was sacrificed for us" *(1 Corinthians 5:7).*

Now let's look back through the Bible for the instructions and meaning Yahweh gave concerning this day. Doing this will help us understand why Yahweh expects us to continue observing the Passover.

Yahweh's Passover instruction

Yahweh, through Moses, told Pharaoh to "let My people go, that they may hold a feast to Me in the wilderness" (Exodus 5:1). Through a series of plagues, Yahweh displayed His great power and delivered the Israelites from slavery in Egypt. After nine plagues He gave Israel specific instructions about the imminent 10th in the series of terrifying calamities and the steps each Israelite family should take to escape it.

Yahweh said that, on the 10th day of the first month, each Israelite was to select a lamb or goat large enough to feed each household *(Exodus 12:3)*. It was to be a yearling male, without any sort of defect. On the 14th day of that month at evening, the Israelites were to kill the animals and place some of their blood on the doorposts of their homes. The animals were then to be roasted and eaten along with unleavened bread and bitter herbs. The Israelites hurriedly ate this meal.

The Creator further instructed the Israelites that on this evening He would kill all the firstborn of Egypt to convince Pharaoh to release the Israelites from slavery. The firstborn of each Israelite family would be protected if the sign of the blood were on the entrance of their homes. Yahweh would "pass over" their homes—thus the meaning of the name of this observance *(verse 13).*

Yahweh said this day would be to the Israelites a memorial, "and you shall keep it as a feast to Yahweh throughout your generations. You shall keep it as a feast by an everlasting ordinance" *(verse 14)*. Bible writers later explained that the annual Passover observance symbolized the Messiah. Paul referred to the

Messiah as "our Passover" *(1 Corinthians 5:7),* and John recorded that John the Baptist recognized the Messiah as "the Lamb of Yahweh who takes away the sin of the world!" *(John 1:29).*

The unblemished male animal represented Yah'shua the Messiah as the perfect, sinless sacrifice for our sins. Hebrews 9:11-12 tells us that "the Messiah came as High Priest of the good things to come ... not with the blood of goats and calves, but with His own blood He entered the Most Holy Place once for all, having obtained eternal redemption." Yah'shua the Messiah bought us with His blood, pouring out His life as our Passover lamb to become our High Priest, our mediator so that through Him Yahweh could forgive our sins.

The Bible tells us that sin is the violation of Yahweh's law of love *(1 John 3:4)*. We have all sinned and fallen short of the glory of Yahweh *(Romans 3:23)*. We have each earned the death penalty for our disobedience *(Romans 5:12; 6:23)*.

Paul illustrated the profound love of Yah'shua the Messiah in giving up His life on our behalf *(Romans 5:6-8)*. All would be doomed eternally had not somehow the penalty for our sins been paid. The Messiah, who lived a perfect life as the unblemished Lamb of Yahweh, substituted His death in the flesh for ours. In fact, His death was the only possible substitution for ours. His sacrifice became the payment for our sins. He died on our behalf so we could share life with Him forever. We can no longer live according to our own desires. We become Yahweh's redeemed, or bought and paid-for, possession *(1 Corinthians 6:19-20).*

Both Yah'shua and the apostle Paul made it clear that the Passover is to continue as an Israelite observance. Yah'shua Himself instituted new Passover symbols and practices to teach Israelites important truths about Himself and Yahweh's continuing plan of salvation.

The Passover in the Old Covenant foreshadowed the Messiah's crucifixion. The New Covenant Passover is a memorial of that crucifixion. By observing it, we "proclaim the Messiah's death till He comes" *(1 Corinthians 11:26).* Now let's examine the Messiah's specific instructions concerning the Passover ceremony and the lessons we should learn from it.

A lesson in humility and service

The apostle John described the events of Yah'shua the Messiah's last evening with His disciples: "Now before the feast of the Passover, when Yah'shua knew that His hour had come that He should depart from this world to the Father, having loved His own who were in the world, He loved them to the end." During the meal Yah'shua "rose from supper and laid aside His garments, took a towel and girded Himself. After that, He poured water into a basin and began to wash the disciples' feet, and to wipe them with the towel with which He was girded" *(John 13:1-5).*

Washing guests' feet was normally the job of the lowliest household servant. In the first century it was an act of hospitality. Rather than ask a servant to perform this function for His guests, Yah'shua humbly chose to carry it out Himself to teach an important spiritual lesson. The account continues: "So when He

had washed their feet, taken His garments, and sat down again, He said to them, 'Do you know what I have done to you? You call me Teacher and Lord, and you say well, for so I am. If I then, your Lord and Teacher, have washed your feet, you also ought to wash one another's feet'" *(verses 12-14).*

Yah'shua left His disciples with a lasting reminder of the importance of humble service to others. This reinforced an earlier lesson He had given them that is recorded in Matthew 20:25-28, where He warned His disciples about presuming to rule over their brethren: "You know that the rulers of the Gentiles lord it over them, and those who are great exercise authority over them. Yet it shall not be so among you; but whoever desires to become great among you, let him be your servant. And whoever desires to be first among you, let him be your slave—just as the Son of Man did not come to be served, but to serve, and to give His life a ransom for many."

This simple example of washing the feet of others teaches us a vital lesson intimately associated with the Passover. He concluded: "I have given you an example, that you should do as I have done to you" *(John 13:15).* How many Christians today obey this simple instruction to humbly offer their services to others, and exemplify that attitude in their lives? As the redeemed possession of Yahweh through the Messiah's sacrifice, our lives should be devoted to the service of Yahweh and our fellowman.

The bread: symbol of the Messiah's

body

Later, while the disciples were eating, Yah'shua explained that one of them would soon betray Him *(Matthew 26:21-25)*. But notice verse 26: "And as they were eating, Yah'shua took bread, blessed it and broke it, and gave it to the disciples and said, 'Take, eat; this is My body.'"

The Messiah's body was to become a sacrificial offering for sin, for indeed "we have been sanctified through the offering of the body of Yah'shua the Messiah once for all. And every priest stands ministering daily and offering repeatedly the same sacrifices, which can never take away sins. But this man ... offered one sacrifice for sins forever ... For by one offering He has perfected forever those who are being sanctified" *(Hebrews 10:10-14).* Yahweh forgives us through Yah'shua the Messiah's sacrifice, and He "sanctifies" us—sets us apart—for the holy purpose of obedience to Him.

Our decision to eat the Passover bread means we understand that Yah'shua the Messiah has "put away sin by the sacrifice of Himself" *(Hebrews 9:26)*. He willingly consented to suffer an excruciating death for us. The Messiah bore in His body mental and physical suffering brought on by sin.

Yah'shua's sacrifice is also intricately associated with our spiritual healing. Peter wrote of the Messiah's suffering that He "bore our sins in His own body on the tree, that we, having died to sins, might live for righteousness-by whose stripes you were healed" *(1 Peter 2:24)*.

Isaiah prophesied of Yah'shua's suffering on our behalf: "Surely He has borne our grief and carried our sorrows; yet we esteemed Him stricken, smitten by Yahweh, and afflicted. But He was wounded for our transgressions, He was bruised for our iniquities; the chastisement for our peace was upon Him, and by His stripes we are healed" *(Isaiah 53:4-5).*

Matthew 8:16-17 depicts incidents of healing in Yah'shua's ministry. Yah'shua helped "many who were demon-possessed. And He cast out the spirits with a word, and healed all who were sick, that it might be fulfilled which was spoken by Isaiah the prophet, saying: 'He Himself took our infirmities and bore our sicknesses.'"

Yah'shua the Messiah showed that He was the promised Messiah by miraculous healings. But, besides demonstrating His compassion, such healings showed that the Messiah possessed the power to forgive sin *(Matthew 9:2-6)*. Sin brings suffering! The ultimate spiritual healing made possible by the Messiah's complete sacrifice includes the whole person, alleviating and eliminating the mental, emotional and physical sufferings that result from our sins.

Through the opportunity for the forgiveness of our sins, the Messiah also made possible our receiving eternal life. "I am the bread of life," He said. "Your fathers ate the manna in the wilderness, and are dead. This is the bread which comes down from heaven, that one may eat of it and not die. I am the living bread which came down from heaven. If anyone eats of this bread, he will live forever; and the bread that I shall give is My flesh, which I shall give for the life of the world" *(John 6:48-51).*

A relationship leading to a new way

of life

The Passover bread reminds us of the close relationship Israelites have with Yah'shua the Messiah. In Romans 6:1-6 Paul shows that, once we are symbolically united with the Messiah in death through baptism, "we should no longer be slaves of sin" but "should walk in newness of life." Eating the bread demonstrates our commitment to allow the Messiah to live in us.

The apostle Paul describes this uniting with the Messiah in Galatians 2:20: "I have been crucified with the Messiah; it is no longer I who live, but the Messiah lives in me; and the life which I now live in the flesh I live by faith in the Son of Yahweh, who loved me and gave Himself for me." Paul understood that pursuing his own ways was no longer his life's focus. His relationship with Yah'shua the Messiah became supremely important to him.

The apostle John tells us what the Messiah expects of us in our relationship with Him: "Now by this we know that we know Him, if we keep His commandments ... He who says he abides in Him ought himself also to walk just as He walked" *(1 John 2:3-6).*

The Passover bread reinforces our understanding that Yah'shua the Messiah, the true "bread of life," must live within us, enabling us to live an entirely new life. Yahweh forgives our sins to sanctify us—to continue to set us apart for a holy purpose, to redeem us *(that is, purchase us for a price).* We now belong to Yahweh so He can fulfill His purpose in us.

The meaning of the Passover wine

Why did Yah'shua command His disciples to drink wine as a symbol of His blood during the Passover service? What does this symbolize?

Notice Matthew's account: "Then He took the cup, and gave thanks, and gave it to them, saying, 'Drink from it, all of you. For this is My blood of the new covenant, which is shed for many for the remission of sins. But I say unto you, I will not drink of this fruit of the vine from now on until that day when I drink it new with you in My Father's kingdom'" *(Matthew 26:27-29).*

What are we to learn from this symbol? First, the Messiah knew that drinking wine as a symbol of His shed blood would impress deeply on our minds that His death was for the opportunity for us to access Yahweh's forgiveness of our sins. "This do, as often as you drink it, in remembrance of Me" *(1 Corinthians 11:25).* Yah'shua "loved us and washed us from our sins in His own blood" *(Revelation 1:5).* Yahweh forgives our sins through our faith in Yah'shua's shed blood – when we repent and ask for that forgiveness. *(1 John 1:7).*

Many people normally understand this tenet—that Yahweh forgives our sins through Yah'shua the Messiah's blood—but not everyone realizes how it occurs. Paul explained that "according to the Law ... all things are cleansed with blood, and without shedding of blood there is no forgiveness *[of sin]" (Hebrews 9:22, New American Standard Bible).*

The Old Covenant records Yahweh instructing the priesthood to perform certain duties that included a system of cleansing and purification using the blood of sacrificed animals, thus foreshadowing the shedding of the Messiah's blood, the ultimate sacrifice for sin. He commanded the nation of Israel to follow this temporary system of the ritualistic cleansing of sin *(Hebrews 9:9-10).* Animal sacrifices served as a type of the one and only real and future sacrifice, Yah'shua the Messiah, who would pay the penalty for everyone's sins once and for all. Our only obligations are to believe, repent and ask!

The Bible teaches that one's life is in his blood *(Genesis 9:4).* When a person loses sufficient blood, he or she dies. Therefore blood, when poured out, makes the atonement for sin, which produces death *(Leviticus 17:11).* Yah'shua lost His blood when He was crucified *(Luke 22:20; Isaiah 53:12)*. He poured out His blood, dying for the sins of humanity.

In partaking of the wine at the Passover service, we should carefully consider its meaning. That small portion of wine represents the very life blood that flowed from Yah'shua the Messiah's dying body for the remission of our sins *(Ephesians 1:7)*. With this forgiveness comes freedom from the eternal, or second death.

Not only does Yah'shua the Messiah's blood completely cover our sins upon our belief, repentance and asking, but it makes possible the removal of our guilt. Hebrews 9:13-14 compares the physical sacrifice of an animal with the blood of the Messiah: "For if the blood of bulls and goats and the ashes of a heifer, sprinkling the unclean, sanctifies for the purifying of the flesh, how much more shall the blood of the Messiah, who through the eternal Spirit offered Himself without spot to Yahweh, purge your conscience from dead works to serve the living Yahweh?"

The word conscience comes from the Latin word *conscire*, meaning "to be conscious of guilt." Our conscience is our awareness of right and wrong.

Our taking wine in the New Covenant Passover ceremony is an expression of faith that Yahweh really will forgive us. We are free from sin and guilt *(John 3:17-18)*, and our hearts are "made free from the sense of sin" *(Hebrews 10:22, Bible in Basic English)*. We live in newness of life with a clear conscience *(Romans 6:14).*

Some people, however, feel guilty even after they have repented. Although our consciences should readily convict us when we sin again, we should not continue to condemn ourselves because of sins Yahweh has already forgiven. Instead, we should be fully confident in our Yahweh-given freedom from such guilt *(1 John 1:9; 3:19-20).*

Access to the Father

The Messiah's shed blood also makes possible our access to the very throne of Yahweh the Father. Under the Old Covenant only the high priest could enter the area of the tabernacle known as the Holiest of All *(Hebrews 9:6-10)*. The "mercy seat" positioned there represented God's throne. Leviticus 16 describes the ceremony that took place each year on another Holy Day, the Day of Atonement. At that time the high priest took the blood of a goat, representing the future sacrifice of Yah'shua the Messiah, and sprinkled it on the mercy seat so the Israelites could be symbolically cleansed of all their sins *(verses 15-16).*

Because the blood of Yah'shua the Messiah effectively removes sin, making us potentially pure before Yahweh, we can conditionally enjoy direct access to the Father *(Hebrews 9:24).* Yah'shua, as our High Priest, entered into the Most Holy Place through His own blood *(Hebrews 9:11-12)*. We can now approach Yahweh the Father through the Messiah as our High Priest, without hesitation or fear of rejection, but with confidence and assurance *(Hebrews 10:19-22).*

Hebrews 4:16 speaks of the confidence we can have when we approach Yahweh: "Let us therefore come boldly to the throne of grace, that we may obtain mercy and find grace to help in time of need." Yah'shua the Messiah makes it possible for us to experience this intimate relationship with our Father.

Our covenant with Yahweh

The blood of the Messiah also signifies that He has entered into a covenant, or agreement. When Yah'shua instituted wine for the New Covenant Passover, He said drink it because "this is My blood of the new covenant" *(Matthew 26:27-28).*

Why is this wine called the "blood of the new covenant"? The writer of the book of Hebrews explains that, after Yahweh enjoined the Old Covenant on ancient Israel, and after the Israelites' response of obedient commitment, the covenant was ratified by the ceremony of the sprinkling of blood. The Bible writers called this the "blood of the covenant" *(Hebrews 9:18-20; 13:20; Exodus 24:3-8).*

We must understand that belief, repentance, and the acceptance of the sacrifice of Yah'shua the Messiah-along with belief in Yahweh's promise to forgive our sin-constitutes a covenant with Yahweh. Through this covenant, which we gratefully accept and can completely rely on (Hebrews 6:17-20), Yahweh grants us eternal life. By accepting the sacrifice of the Messiah for the remission of our sin, we enter into a covenant relationship with the God of the universe. The terms of this covenant are absolute, because it was sealed with the shed blood of Yah'shua the Messiah *(Hebrews 9:11-12, 15).* This covenant is renewed every year when we partake of the Passover.

What are the terms of this covenant relationship? "'This is the covenant that I will make with them after those days, says Yahweh: I will put My laws into their hearts, and in their minds I will write them,' then He adds, 'Their sins and lawless deeds I will remember no more'" *(Hebrews 10:16-17).*

Ancient Israel did not have the heart to faithfully keep Yahweh's commandments *(Deuteronomy 5:29).* Under the New Covenant, however, Yahweh writes His law in our hearts and minds. His laws are not those of physical purification contained in the system of sacrifices, washings and service in the tabernacle. Instead, they are the holy and righteous laws that define right behaviour toward Yahweh and neighbour *(Romans 7:12)* and lead to eternal life *(Matthew 19:17)*. The Passover wine is symbolic of this covenant relationship that is ratified by the blood of Yah'shua the Messiah.

Annual observance in the early Congregation

The New Covenant pictures Israelites continuing to observe the annual festivals at the times commanded by Yahweh. As a youth, the Messiah kept the Passover annually on the specified day *(Luke 2:41),* and He continued the practice with His disciples. The early Congregation as well continued to observe the other Holy Days at their specified times. For example, Acts records that Yah'shua's followers met to observe the Feast of Pentecost: "Now when the Day of Pentecost had fully come, they were all with one accord in one place" *(Acts 2:1).*

Scripture gives no hint of the early Congregation adding to or changing the dates Yahweh ordained for His festivals. The phrase in 1 Corinthians 11:26—"for as often as you eat this bread and drink this cup"—simply points out that, by observing the Passover each year on the appropriate day, members of the Congregation were proclaiming "the Messiah's death till He comes."

The Bible specifies the yearly observance of the Passover, and history records its annual celebration as the natural practice of the early Congregation. Passover, as a memorial of Yah'shua's death, is to be observed annually rather than whenever or however often one chooses, just as all of the other annual festivals are to be kept once a year. Neither Yah'shua the Messiah nor the apostles indicated that we should change when or how often we observe any of Yahweh's festivals.

Following their example, today we should observe the Passover at the beginning of the evening of the 14th day of the first month *(Abib, or Nisan)* of the Hebrew calendar.

During His last Passover with His disciples, Yah'shua explained that this celebration has significant implications for the future as well. In Matthew 26:29 He told them, "I will not drink of this fruit of the vine from now on until that day when I drink it new with you in My Father's kingdom."

Keeping the Passover each year reminds us that Yahweh is the forgiver of sin who grants us eternal life in His Kingdom through the sacrifice of Yah'shua the Messiah, our Passover. This observance is a memorial of our Creator's continuing role in humanity's salvation.

The Feast of Unleavened Bread: The Lesson of Leaving Sin

Immediately after the Passover comes a festival that depicts the next step in the fulfillment of Yahweh's master plan. After Yahweh, through our faith in the Messiah's sacrifice, has forgiven us of our sins, how do we continue to avoid sin, since we must go on living in newness of life? How do we live as Yahweh's redeemed people? We find the answer in the remarkable symbolism of the Feast of Unleavened Bread.

When Yahweh freed Israel from slavery in Egypt, He told His people that for "seven days you shall eat unleavened bread" *(Exodus 12:15).* Verse 39 further explains: "And they baked unleavened cakes of the dough which they had brought out of Egypt; for it was not leavened, because they were driven out of Egypt and could not wait, nor had they prepared provisions for themselves."

The leavening process, which makes bread rise, takes time. The Israelites had no time to spare when they left Egypt, so they baked and ate flat bread. What started out as a necessity continued for a week. Yahweh appropriately named this time the Feast of Unleavened Bread *(Leviticus 23:6)*, or Days of Unleavened Bread *(Acts 12:3).*

When Yah'shua came to earth as a human, He observed this seven-day festival—sometimes called the Feast of Passover by the Jews because of the proximity of the Passover to the Days of Unleavened Bread. Yah'shua kept it as a child and later as an adult *(Luke 2:41; Matthew 26:17).* The early natural Congregation, imitating the Messiah in His actions, kept it as well.

Earliest instructions and the Messiah's teachings

Yahweh gave His earliest instructions concerning this festival to the Israelites as they prepared to leave Egypt. "This is a day you are to commemorate; for the generations to come you shall celebrate it as a

festival to Yahweh—a lasting ordinance. For seven days you are to eat bread made without yeast. On the first day remove the yeast from your houses, for whoever eats anything with yeast in it from the first day through the seventh must be cut off from Israel. On the first day hold a sacred assembly, and another one on the seventh day. Do no work at all on these days, except to prepare food for everyone to eat-that is all you may do" *(Exodus 12:14-16, New International Version).*

Each year as the Israelites observed this feast, it reminded them of Yahweh's deliverance of their forefathers from Egypt. The Creator instructed, "Celebrate the Feast of Unleavened Bread, because it was on this very day that I brought your divisions out of Egypt" *(verse 17, NIV).* The exodus from Egypt remains as a foundational reason for observing this feast today. Just as Yahweh delivered ancient Israel, He delivers us from our sins and difficulties.

Now notice Yah'shua the Messiah's teaching about leaven, which expands the meaning of this feast. During the Messiah's ministry He performed two miracles in which a few fish and loaves of bread fed thousands of people. After one of these incidents, when His disciples had gone around the Sea of Galilee, they forgot to bring bread with them. So Yah'shua told them, "Watch out and beware of the leaven of the Pharisees and Sadducees."

The disciples thought Yah'shua was referring to their lack of bread. However, He was using the occasion to teach them by calling on the symbolism of leaven. The Messiah asked them, "How is it that you do not understand that I did not speak to you concerning bread? But beware of the leaven of the Pharisees and Sadducees." Then the disciples "understood that He did not say to beware of the leaven of bread, but of the teaching of the Pharisees and Sadducees" *(Matthew 16:5-12, NASB).*

Some of the members of the religious establishment of the Messiah's day appeared to be righteous, yet they secretly practiced sinful behavior. Yah'shua let them know He knew their hearts. They may have appeared righteous to other people, "but inside you are full of hypocrisy and lawlessness" *(Matthew 23:28).*

The Days of Unleavened Bread remind us that with Yahweh's help we must remove and avoid all types of sin-symbolized by leaven—in all areas of our life.

Continued importance of these days

During the Feast of Unleavened Bread, the apostle Paul taught the same spiritual lessons as had Yah'shua the Messiah, invoking the comparison of sin to leaven. In the context of reprimanding the Corinthian congregation for its divisions, jealousies and tolerance of sexual misconduct, Paul wrote: "Your glorying is not good. Do you not know that a little leaven leavens the whole lump? Therefore purge out the old leaven, that you may be a new lump, since you truly are unleavened. For indeed the Messiah, our Passover, was sacrificed for us. Therefore let us keep the feast, not with old leaven, nor with the leaven of malice and wickedness, but with the unleavened bread of sincerity and truth" *(1 Corinthians 5:6-8).*

Yahweh's natural Congregation at Corinth was obviously and unmistakably keeping the Feast of Unleavened Bread, to which Paul repeatedly alluded. However, Paul used the Corinthians' faithful obedience in keeping the feast physically (removing leaven from their homes) as a basis to encourage them to celebrate this feast with proper understanding of its spiritual intent.

Today removing leaven from our homes for seven days reminds us that we, too, through prayer and Yahweh's help and understanding, must recognize, expel and avoid sin. The Feast of Unleavened Bread is thus a time of personal reflection. We should meditate on our attitudes and conduct and ask Yahweh to help us recognize and overcome our shortcomings.

Paul spoke of this much-needed self-reflection in 2 Corinthians 13:5 when he told the Corinthian assembly of His natural Congregation: "Examine yourselves as to whether you are in the faith. Test yourselves. Do you not know yourselves, that Yah'shua the Messiah is in you?—unless indeed you are disqualified."

Paul explained the significance of the phrase "Yah'shua the Messiah is in you" in Galatians 2:20: "I have been crucified with the Messiah; it is no longer I who live, but the Messiah lives in me; and the life I now live in the flesh I live by faith in the Son of Yahweh, who loved me and gave Himself for me."

These seven days of self-examination prove invaluable in helping us to devote our lives to Yahweh and Yah'shua the Messiah. This week-long period also pictures our eventual triumph over sin. As Yahweh delivered the ancient Israelites from enslavement to Egypt, so He delivers us from our enslavement to sin *(Romans 6:12-18).*

Applying the spiritual lessons

We learn by doing. We learn spiritual lessons by doing physical things. Performing the task of de-leavening our homes reminds us to vigilantly watch for sinful thoughts and actions so we can avoid them. Yahweh knows that, in spite of our good intentions, we all sin.

Many years after his conversion, Paul described the powerful human tendency to sin. "I find then a law, that evil is present with me, the one who wills to do good. For I delight in the law of Yahweh according to the inward man. But I see another law in my members, warring against the law of my mind, and bringing me into captivity to the law of sin which is in my members. O wretched man that I am! Who will deliver me from this body of death? I thank Yahweh-through Yah'shua the Messiah our Lord! So then, with the mind I myself serve the law of Yahweh, but with the flesh the law of sin" *(Romans 7:21-25).*

Paul knew life itself is a battle with sin. The Bible speaks of "the sin which so easily ensnares us" *(Hebrews 12:1)*. We have our own part to play in struggling to overcome sin. Yet, paradoxically, we must rely on Yahweh to help us. Paul explained this to the Philippians by telling them to "work out your own salvation with fear and trembling, for it is Yahweh who works in you both to will and to do of his good pleasure" *(Philippians 2:12-13, King James Version).*

Our observance of the Days of Unleavened Bread helps us realize our need for our faith in Yah'shua the Messiah's ability to intercede for us, thereby strengthening our resolve as a help in overcoming our weaknesses. Yet this feast is certainly a time for rejoicing because the Messiah freely gives us the help we need. Yah'shua, the Lamb of Yahweh, was sacrificed for the forgiveness of our sins, thus unleavening, or cleansing, our lives. He continues to help us live obediently through Yahweh's Spirit dwelling in us—which brings us to the subject of the next chapter.

The Feast of Pentecost: The

Firstfruits of Yahweh's Harvest

In the process of revealing His plan of salvation for mankind, Yahweh established His annual Holy Days around the harvest seasons in the Middle East *(Leviticus 23:9-16; Exodus 23:14-16).* Just as His people harvested their crops around these three festival seasons, Yahweh's Holy Days show us how He is harvesting people for eternal life in His Kingdom.

The Holy Days have meanings that build upon each other. Together they progressively reveal how Yahweh works with humanity. Earlier we saw Passover symbolizing the Messiah's giving of Himself for us so our sins could be forgiven. We also learned how the Days of Unleavened Bread teach us that we must remove and avoid sin, whether in actions or attitudes. The next Holy Day, Pentecost, builds on this important foundation.

This festival is known by several names, which derive from its meaning and timing. Also known as the Feast of Harvest *(Exodus 23:16),* it represents the firstfruits *(Numbers 28:26)* gathered as the result of the labor of those who completed the spring grain harvests in ancient Israel *(Exodus 23:16).*

It is also called the Feast of Weeks (*Exodus 34:22)*, with this name coming from the seven weeks plus one day (*50 days in all)* that are counted to determine when to celebrate this festival *(Leviticus 23:16).* Similarly, in the New Covenant, which was written in Greek, this festival is known as Pentecost *(Pentekostos in the original),* which means "fiftieth" *(Vine's Complete Expository Dictionary of Old and New Covenant Words, "Pentecost").*

Among Jews the most popular name for this festival is the Feast of Weeks, or shavuot, in Hebrew. When celebrating this festival, many Jewish people recall one of the greatest events in history; Yahweh's revealing of the law at Mount Sinai.

But Pentecost doesn't just picture the giving of the law; it also shows—through a great miracle that occurred on the first Pentecost in the early Congregation—how to keep the spiritual intent of Yahweh's laws.

The gift of Pentecost: His Holy Spirit

Yahweh chose the first Pentecost after Yah'shua the Messiah's resurrection to pour out His Holy Spirit on 120 believers *(Acts 1:15).* "Now when the Day of Pentecost had fully come, they were all with one accord in one place. And suddenly there came a sound from the sky, as of a rushing mighty wind, and it filled the whole house where they were sitting. Then there appeared to them divided tongues, as of fire, and one sat upon each of them. And they were all filled with His Holy Spirit and began to speak with other tongues [languages], as His Spirit gave them utterance" *(Acts 2:1-4).*

The speaking in various languages occurred as a crowd of people gathered in Jerusalem, with each visitor hearing the speech of the disciples in his own native tongue *(verses 6-11).* These astounding events demonstrated the presence of His Holy Spirit.

At first the people of Jerusalem who witnessed this miraculous phenomenon were astonished, with some attributing the actions of the Israelites to drunkenness *(Acts 2:12-13).* The apostle Peter, now filled with His Holy Spirit, boldly explained the event to the crowd as a fulfillment of Joel's prophecy: "And it shall come to pass in the last days, says Yahweh, that I will pour out of My Spirit on all flesh" *(Acts 2:17; Joel 2:28).*

Peter explained how his listeners could also receive this Spirit: "Repent, and let every one of you be immersed [baptized] in the name of Yah'shua the Messiah for the remission of sins; and you shall receive the gift of His Holy Spirit. For the promise is to you and to your children, and to all who are afar off, as many as Yahweh our God will call" *(Acts 2:38-39).*

Yahweh used these miracles and Peter's preaching to add 3,000 people to His Congregation in one day. These converts were all baptized by His Holy Spirit *(verses 40-41).* From this pivotal point, Yahweh's Spirit has been available to all who believe and truly repent and are then properly baptized, or immersed in His Holy Spirit. The Day of Pentecost is an annual reminder that Yahweh poured out His Spirit to establish His Congregation; the group of believers who are led by His Spirit to this very day!

Why we need Yahweh's Spirit

Humanly speaking, no matter how hard we try not to, we still sin *(1 Kings 8:46; Romans 3:23).* Acknowledging this inherent weakness of humanity, Yahweh lamented in Deuteronomy 5:29, "Oh, that they had such a heart in them that they would fear Me and always keep all My commandments that it might be well with them and with their children forever!"

Here Yahweh explains that humankind has a heart problem. Academic knowledge of the law does not enable us to think like Yahweh. Becoming godly in our thoughts, attitudes and actions is beyond the comprehension and ability of men and women without an additional ingredient: Yahweh's Spirit or “will”.

Yahweh's way of thinking produces peace, happiness and concern for others. Yah'shua complimented a lawyer who correctly quoted the essence of Yahweh's law: "You shall love Yahweh your God with all your heart, with all your soul, with all your strength, and with all your mind" and "[love] your neighbor as

yourself" *(Luke 10:27).* This man cited Deuteronomy 6:5 and Leviticus 19:18, from two books of the Pentateuch. Yah'shua here confirmed that the Old Covenant scriptures are based on these two great principles of love *(Matthew 22:40).*

The essence of Yahweh's law is love *(Romans 13:8-10; 1 Thessalonians 4:9).* Yahweh gave His commandments because He loves us. Writing to brethren who had Yahweh's Spirit, John said, "By this we know that we love the children of Yahweh, when we love Yahweh and keep His commandments. For this is the love of Yahweh, that we keep His commandments. And His commandments are not burdensome" *(1 John 5:2-3).*

Because Yahweh's Spirit was now residing in the Congregation, its members could express genuine love. "A new commandment I give to you," Yah'shua had said, "that you love one another; as I have loved you ... By this all will know that you are My disciples, if you have love for one another" *(John 13:34-35).* Yahweh's gift of His Holy Spirit on Pentecost made it possible for the Congregation to fully express Yahweh's commandments of love.

Yah'shua the Messiah: the firstfruits

of eternal life

Firstfruits are the first agricultural products to mature and ripen. Throughout the Bible, Yahweh uses the analogy of the harvest—and, particularly on Pentecost, firstfruits—to illustrate aspects of His plan of salvation. Israel observed this day in the late spring after the barley and wheat harvests. A special offering of the first ripe grain during the Days of Unleavened Bread, called the wave-sheaf offering, marked the beginning of these harvests, which continued during the next 50 days and led up to Pentecost *(Leviticus 23:11).* This spring harvest was the firstfruits of the yearly agricultural cycle.

One of the first harvest lessons of the New Covenant is that Yah'shua the Messiah "is risen from the dead, and has become the firstfruits of those who have fallen asleep" *(1 Corinthians 15:20).* The wave-sheaf offering represented Yah'shua the Messiah, who was the "firstborn over all creation" and the "firstborn from the dead" *(Colossians 1:15, 18).* He presented Himself to Yahweh the Father as a type, or example, of firstfruits on the Sunday after His resurrection, the same day during the Days of Unleavened Bread on which the first sheaf of grain of the spring harvest was waved before Yahweh.

Early on the first day of the week *(Sunday morning)*, while it was still dark and Yah'shua had already been resurrected (John 20:1), Mary Magdalene came to the tomb and discovered that the rock in front of it had already been rolled away. She ran to notify Peter and John that Yah'shua was no longer in His grave. The two men hurried to the tomb and verified that Yah'shua was gone (John 20:2-10). After Peter and John left for their homes, Mary Magdalene stood outside Yah'shua's place of interment *(verse 11).* As she wept, Yah'shua appeared to her but would not allow her to touch Him because He had "not yet ascended" to the Father *(John 20:17).*

The wave-sheaf ceremony Yahweh gave to ancient Israel thus represents Yah'shua the Messiah's acceptance by His Father as "the firstfruits of those who have fallen asleep" *(1 Corinthians 15:20).*

The Messiah's Natural Congregation

as firstfruits

Romans 8:29 speaks of Yah'shua the Messiah as "the firstborn of many brethren." Yet the New Covenant Congregation in its natural form as founded by the Messiah, is also considered to be firstfruits. In speaking of the Father, James said, "Of His own will He brought us forth by the word of truth, that we might be a kind of firstfruits of His creatures" *(James 1:18).*

Yahweh's Spirit within us identifies us and sanctifies us-sets us apart as Israelites. "If anyone does not have the Spirit of the Messiah," wrote Paul, "he is not His," and "as many as are led by the Spirit of Yahweh, these are sons of Yahweh" *(Romans 8:9, 14).*

Paul also referred to the brethren as those "who have the firstfruits of His Spirit" *(verse 23).* He alluded to several first-century Israelites as the firstfruits of Yahweh's calling *(Romans 16:5; 1 Corinthians 16:15).*

The significance of the Bible writers calling these people of Yahweh firstfruits becomes evident when we consider John 14:6. Here Yah'shua said, "I am the way, the truth, and the life. No one comes to the Father except through Me."

How many, throughout the centuries, have really accepted and practiced the way of life Yah'shua taught? Even today many people have simply never heard much, if anything, about Yah'shua the Messiah. How will Yahweh offer them salvation?

Few people understand that Yahweh follows a systematic plan, symbolized by His Holy Days, to save all humanity by offering all people eternal life in His Kingdom. In this world we are simply at the beginning of the harvest for the Kingdom of Yahweh.

The apostle Paul understood this: "But now the Messiah is risen from the dead, and has become the firstfruits of those who have fallen asleep ... For as in Adam all die, even so in the Messiah all shall be made alive. But each one in his own order: the Messiah the firstfruits, afterward those who are the Messiah's at His coming" *(1 Corinthians 15:20, 22-23).* Anyone who is now called and chosen by Yahweh is included with the Messiah as Yahweh's firstfruits *(James 1:18).*

The Bible teaches us that Yahweh must call people *(John 6:44; 6:63).* Our Creator, therefore, controls the timing of His harvest. When Yahweh founded His Congregation by imparting His Spirit to certain believers on the Day of Pentecost in A.D. 31, He was expanding His spiritual harvest. It was the beginning of what Joel prophesied, that Yahweh will ultimately pour out His Spirit on "all flesh" *(Joel 2:28-29; Acts 2:14-17).*

His Holy Spirit at work

The giving of His Holy Spirit dramatically changed the lives of these early Israelites. The book of Acts is filled with accounts of the early Congregation's remarkable spiritual impact on the surrounding society. A transformation was so evident that nonbelievers accused the Israelites of "turning the world upside down" *(Acts 17:6).* Such was the dynamic, miraculous power of His Holy Spirit.

To fully grasp how Yahweh's Spirit can work with us, we must comprehend what His Holy Spirit is. It is not a person who, along with Yahweh the Father and Yah'shua the Son, forms a "Holy Trinity." In Scripture His Holy Spirit is described as the power of Yahweh at work in our lives *(Acts 1:8; Romans 15:13, 19)*, the same power that was at work in the ministry of Yah'shua the Messiah *(Luke 4:14; Acts 10:38).*

This divine power allows us to be "led by the Spirit of Yahweh" *(Romans 8:14).* It was this same power that transformed the lives of the early Israelites and is the power working in the natural Congregation today. Paul told Timothy that Yahweh's Spirit is a "spirit of ... power and of love and of a sound mind" *(2 Timothy 1:7).*

Pentecost serves as an annual reminder that our Creator still works miracles, granting His Spirit to the firstfruits of His spiritual harvest, empowering them to carry out His work in this world.

The Feast of Trumpets: A Turning

Point in History

The Feast of Trumpets introduces the autumn festivals—representing the culmination of the present age of man and the beginning of an incredible time during which Yahweh will play a much more direct part in world events. The previous festivals constitute personal responses to the workings of Yahweh in the people He calls and chooses. But the Day of Trumpets heralds the intervention of Yahweh in the affairs of humanity on a global basis. This Holy Day represents a dramatic turning point in world history.

This particular festival also marks the beginning of the third and final feast season *(Exodus 23:14; Deuteronomy 16:16),* which includes the final four Holy Days of the year.

The return of Yah'shua the Messiah!

The Feast of Trumpets depicts nothing less than the return of Yah'shua the Messiah to this earth to establish the Kingdom of Yahweh! The book of Revelation reveals a sequence of earth-shaking events depicted by angels sounding a series of seven trumpet blasts. The seventh angel's sounding of the last trumpet signifies that "the kingdoms of this world have become the kingdoms of our Lord and of His Messiah" *(Revelation 11:15).* The return of Yah'shua the Messiah stands as the final and most significant event associated with the blowing of the prophetic trumpets. Of all the prophecies in the Bible, this one surely heralds the most exciting news possible for this weary, sin-filled world!

The Feast of Trumpets also marks the future fulfillment of the many Old Covenant prophecies that speak of a Messiah coming as a king who will rule with power and authority. The concept of a conquering Messiah was on the minds of the apostles immediately after Yah'shua's resurrection. When He appeared to them in those early days, they asked questions such as: "Lord, will You at this time restore the kingdom to Israel?" *(Acts 1:6).*

Even in His earthly ministry, Yah'shua had spoken of distinctions between His first and second coming. When Pontius Pilate, the governor of Judea, questioned Yah'shua just before the crucifixion, Yah'shua stated clearly that He had not come to rule at that time.

"My kingdom is not of this world," Yah'shua told the government official. "If My kingdom were of this world, My servants would fight, so that I should not be delivered to the Jews; but now My kingdom is not from here." Then Pilate asked Him, "Are You a king then?" Yah'shua answered in the affirmative: "You say rightly that I am a king. For this cause I was born, and for this cause I have come into the world, that I should bear witness to the truth" *(John 18:36-37).*

After the Messiah's resurrection, the apostles excitedly anticipated the fulfillment of Yah'shua's promises. They were aware of messianic prophecies such as Isaiah's that describe a time during which "the government will be upon His shoulder" and "of the increase of His government and peace there will be no end" *(Isaiah 9:6-7).*

In answer to the apostles' question when they asked Him if He would soon establish the Kingdom, Yah'shua told them they were not to know "times or seasons which the Father has put in His own authority" *(Acts 1:7).* Instead, the Messiah told them to focus on spreading the gospel—the good news—throughout the world. Later, in due time, the apostles realized that the Messiah's second coming was not necessarily imminent. Numerous scriptures describe the saints as eagerly looking forward to the Messiah's return. Why the symbolism of Trumpets?

The excitement of this Holy Day, picturing these monumental events, is captured in the symbolism of this festival. Ancient Israel celebrated it with "a sacred assembly commemorated with trumpet blasts" *(Leviticus 23:24, NIV).*

What is the significance of the dramatic sounds accompanying the observance of this day? To help us understand the symbol of trumpets, let's take a brief look at the use of that musical instrument in the Bible.

Yahweh instructed ancient Israel in the appropriate use of trumpets to communicate important messages. The sounding of one trumpet meant a meeting of the leaders of Israel. Two trumpets sounded to call a gathering of all of the people *(Numbers 10:3-4).* Yahweh also used a trumpet to herald His meeting with Israel when He descended upon Mount Sinai *(Exodus 19:16).*

Trumpets could also sound a warning. Numbers 10:9 states, "When you go to war in your land against the enemy who oppresses you, then you shall sound an alarm with the trumpets." In this case the trumpets resounded a warning of impending danger and imminent warfare.

Trumpets could also furnish a festive sound: "Also in the day of your gladness, in your appointed feasts, and at the beginning of your months, you shall blow the trumpets ... and they shall be a memorial for you before your God" *(Numbers 10:10).*

With their ability to transmit sound over great distances, trumpets were excellent instruments for attracting people's attention. In connection with this Feast Day, Psalm 81:3 exhorts: "Blow the trumpet at the time of the New Moon, at the full moon, on our solemn feast day."

Amplification of trumpets' meaning

The writers of the New Covenant revealed additional understanding of the significance of the blowing of trumpets. Notice Paul's description of the return of Yah'shua the Messiah: "For Yah'shua Himself will descend from heaven with a shout, with the voice of an archangel, and with the trumpet of Yahweh. And the dead in the Messiah will rise first. Then we who are alive and remain shall be caught up together with them in the clouds to meet the Messiah in the air" *(1 Thessalonians 4:16-17).*

Paul also spoke of the day when the firstfruits pictured by Pentecost will be resurrected to immortal life. In 1 Corinthians 15:52 he says this will happen "in a moment, in the twinkling of an eye, at the last trumpet. For the trumpet will sound, and the dead will be raised incorruptible, and we shall be changed."

The apostle John associated the blowing of a trumpet with the Messiah's return when he wrote, "Then the seventh angel sounded: And there were loud voices in heaven, saying, 'The kingdoms of this world have become the kingdoms of our Lord and of His Messiah, and He shall reign forever and ever!'" *(Revelation 11:15).* These passages dramatically attest to the significance of the Feast of Trumpets.

Although the Trumpets festival isn't mentioned by name in the New Covenant, we have no valid reason for assuming that this Holy Day should not be kept. On the contrary, the early Congregation used the Hebrew scriptures as their foundation for doctrine *(2 Timothy 3:16).*

Like the Ten Commandments *(James 2:10-11)*, each of Yahweh's festivals is intimately and intricately related to the others and they were all commanded as "everlasting ordinances". By keeping all of them, we can understand Yahweh's remarkable plan for humanity as it unfolds.

Yah'shua's prophetic teaching

Near the end of the Messiah's physical ministry, the apostles asked Him about the end of the present era. Notice Matthew 24:3: "Now as He sat on the Mount of Olives, the disciples came to Him privately, saying, 'Tell us, when will these things be? And what will be the sign of Your coming, and of the end of the age?'"

Earlier, Daniel had prophesied about the establishment of the Kingdom of Yahweh and how the saints, or Yahweh's people, would inherit that kingdom *(Daniel 2:44; 7:18).* Like the disciples, however, Daniel did not understand when the Kingdom would come.

Nonetheless, Yah'shua began to explain the events that would lead up to His return. Yah'shua explained a prophecy that had been "closed up and sealed" since Daniel's day *(Daniel 12:9).* In Matthew 24 Yah'shua the Messiah described to His disciples religious deception, wars, famines, disease, earthquakes and other calamities *(verses 4-13).*

He characterized the time of His return as an era of hatred and lawlessness. In this setting Yah'shua said, "this gospel of the kingdom will be preached in all the world as a witness to all the nations, and then the end will come" *(verse 14).*

More details in the book of Revelation

Later Yah'shua the Messiah revealed many more details about this pivotal time. The book of Revelation is described as "the Revelation of Yah'shua the Messiah, which Yahweh gave Him to show His servants—things which must shortly take place" *(Revelation 1:1).*

Here the Messiah repeated through the apostle John the same events He had described to His disciples decades earlier. Now, however, Yah'shua used the symbolism of a series of seals He would open one by one *(Revelation 6*).

After this, at the beginning of Yahweh's wrath against the disobedient nations, Yah'shua prophesied seven plagues to be poured out upon a sinning world, with a trumpet blast announcing each *(Revelation 8-9).* Finally Yahweh will send two "witnesses," or "prophets," to proclaim His truth to a rebellious world *(Revelation 11).* Tragically, this godless society will reject witnesses of Yahweh and kill them *(verses 7-10).*

These dramatic events set the stage for the seventh angel's trumpet sounding and Yah'shua the Messiah's return to assume rulership over the governments of the earth *(Revelation 11:15).*

*Of this same s*cenario, Matthew 24 says that "immediately after the tribulation of those days the sun will be darkened, and the moon will not give its light; the stars will fall from the sky, and the powers of the skies will be shaken. Then the sign of the Son of Man will appear in the sky, and then all the tribes of the earth will mourn, and they will see the Son of Man coming on the clouds of the sky with power and great glory. And He will send His angels with a great sound of a trumpet, and they will gather together His elect from the four winds, from one end of the sky to the other" *(verses 29-31).*

Unprecedented events at the

Messiah's return

Incredibly, when Yah'shua the Messiah returns to the Mount of Olives in Jerusalem, the nations of the earth will gather to fight against Him *(Zechariah 14:1-4)*. Revelation 19:19 describes this impending battle: "And I saw the beast, the kings of the earth, and their armies, gathered together to make war against Him [Yah'shua the Messiah] who sat on the horse and against His army." Why would anyone want to fight the Messiah? The armies will try to destroy the Messiah because Satan has deceived the whole world *(Revelation 12:9)*. The devil's influence will inspire the nations to fight against the Messiah when He returns.

The Feast of Trumpets also signals a resurrection of the dead. The apostle Paul spoke of this event: "For since by man came death, by Man also came the resurrection of the dead. For as in Adam all die, even so in the Messiah all shall be made alive. But each one in his own order: the Messiah the firstfruits, afterward those who are the Messiah's at His coming" *(1 Corinthians 15:21-23).*

Paul further explained: "For Yahweh Himself will descend from heaven with a shout, with the voice of an archangel, and with the trumpet of Yahweh. And the dead in the Messiah will rise first" *(1 Thessalonians 4:16),* immediately followed by the people of Yahweh who are alive at that time *(verse 17).* Revelation 20:5 describes this as the "first resurrection." This change to immortal life was the hope of early Israelites and remains the fervent hope of those who understand Yahweh's plan.

In the book of Romans, Paul describes this resurrection as a glorious deliverance from bondage: "For the earnest expectation of the creation eagerly waits for the revealing of the sons of Yahweh ... because the creation itself also will be delivered from the bondage of corruption into the glorious liberty of the children of Yahweh ... And not only they, but we also who have the firstfruits of His Spirit, even we ourselves groan within ourselves, eagerly waiting for the adoption, the redemption of our body" *(Romans 8:19, 21, 23).*

We see that, even though tragic events lie ahead, the good news is that Yahweh will intervene to save humanity and guide mankind into His way of life. Yah'shua the Messiah will return to establish Yahweh's millennial rule, bringing His perfect government to earth. This is the wonderful, inspiring meaning of the Feast of Trumpets. The Messiah taught us to pray "thy kingdom come" *(Matthew 6:10, KJV).* How urgently we need the answer to that prayer!

The Day of Atonement: Removal of

Sin and Reconciliation to Yahweh

We have already seen—through the symbolism involved in the Passover—that the Messiah's shed blood provides atonement for our past sins. In fact, atonement means reconciliation. The Day of Atonement symbolizes the reconciliation of Yahweh and all humanity.

If we are reconciled to Yahweh through the Messiah's sacrifice, why do we need another Holy Day to teach us about reconciliation? If we are already reconciled, why do we need to fast, as commanded on the Day of

Atonement? *(Leviticus 23:27; Acts 27:9).* What is this day's specific significance in Yahweh's master plan for the salvation of mankind?

The Day of Atonement and Passover both teach us about the forgiveness of sin and our reconciliation with Yahweh through the Messiah's sacrifice. However, although the Passover is personally and (for the time being) individually applied to Israelites whom Yahweh has called in this age, Atonement carries immediate universal implications.

Moreover, the Day of Atonement pictures an essential additional step in Yahweh's salvation plan not to be found in the symbolism of the Passover. This step must take place before humanity can experience true peace on earth. All people suffer the tragic consequences of sin. But sin doesn't happen without a cause, and Yahweh makes this cause clear in the symbolism associated with the Day of Atonement.

Satan the author of sin

The Day of Atonement involves not only the forgiveness of sin; it pictures the removal of the primary cause of sin—Satan and his demons. Until Yahweh removes the original instigator of sin, mankind will simply continue to fall back into disobedience and suffering. Although our human nature has a part to play in our sins, Satan the devil bears great responsibility for influencing mankind to disobey Yahweh.

Even though many people doubt the existence of a devil, the Bible reveals Satan as a powerful, invisible being who can sway all mankind. Revelation 12:9 tells us that his influence is so great that he "deceives the whole world."

The devil blinds people to the understanding of Yahweh's truth. The apostle Paul explained this to the Corinthians: If "our gospel is veiled, it is veiled to those who are perishing, whose minds the god of this age has blinded, who do not believe, lest the light of the gospel of the glory of the Messiah, who is the image of Yahweh, should shine on them" *(2 Corinthians 4:3-4).*

Paul also teaches us that Satan has influenced every human to walk in the ways of disobedience. He notes that those called into Yahweh's congregation "once walked according to the course of this world, according to the prince of the power of the air, the spirit who now works in the sons of disobedience" *(Ephesians 2:2).*

Paul warned the Corinthians that Satan can present himself as righteous, "For Satan himself transforms himself into an angel of light. Therefore it is no great thing if his ministers also transform themselves into ministers of righteousness, whose end will be according to their works" *(2 Corinthians 11:14-15).*

Yah'shua the Messiah plainly stated that Satan introduced sin and rebellion into the world. In John 8:44 the Messiah made this plain to those who were antagonistic to His teaching: "You are of your father the devil, and the desires of your father you want to do. He was a murderer from the beginning, and does not stand in the truth, because there is no truth in him. When he speaks a lie, he speaks from his own resources, for he is a liar and the father of it."

Tying these scriptures together lets us see the power and the influence of Satan. Paul warned us to beware of the deceitful methods of the devil: "But I am afraid that just as Eve was deceived by the serpent's cunning, your minds may somehow be led astray from your sincere and pure devotion to the Messiah" *(2 Corinthians 11:3, NIV).*

Israelites who struggle to resist Satan and stop sinning fight a spiritual battle against the devil and his demons. Paul explains: "For our struggle is not against flesh and blood, but against the rulers, against the powers, against the world forces of this darkness, against the spiritual forces of wickedness in the heavenly places" *(Ephesians 6:12, NASB).*

Paul further explains here that Yah'shua the Messiah will deliver us from the influence of the devil (verses 13-18). Of course, Yahweh is much more powerful than Satan, but we must do our part by actively resisting the devil and the pulls of the flesh. The Day of Atonement looks forward to the time during which Satan's deception will be removed and he will no longer be free to influence and deceive mankind *(Revelation 20:1-3).*

Old Covenant symbolism

Leviticus 16 describes Yahweh instructing ancient Israel to observe the Day of Atonement. Although, since the sacrifice of the Messiah, no need remains for animal sacrifices, this chapter adds significantly to our understanding of Yahweh's plan.

Notice that the priest was to select two goats for a sin offering for the people, and he was to present them before Yahweh *(verses 5, 7).* Aaron, the high priest, was to cast lots to select one "for Yahweh"; which he was to offer as a sacrifice *(verses 8-9).* This goat represented Yah'shua the Messiah, who would be slain to pay the penalty for our sins.

The other goat served a completely different purpose: "But the goat on which the lot fell to be the scapegoat shall be presented alive before Yahweh, to make atonement upon it, and to let it go as the scapegoat into the wilderness" *(verse 10).* Notice that this goat was not to be killed. The high priest was to "lay both hands on the head of the live goat and confess over it all the wickedness and rebellion of the Israelites—all their sins—and put them on the goat's head. He shall send the goat away into the desert in the care of a man appointed for the task. The goat will carry on itself all their sins to a solitary place; and the man shall release it in the desert" *(verses 21, 22, NIV).*

The priest chose by lot the "scapegoat," or Azazel, as the word appears in the original Hebrew. Many scholars identify Azazel as the name of a demon inhabiting the wilderness *(Interpreter's Dictionary of the Bible, Vol. 1, p. 326).* The Azazel goat represents Satan, who bears the responsibility for the sins of humanity *(verse 22)* because of the deception he has foisted upon mankind.

The high priest laid hands on this goat and confessed over it the wickedness, rebellion and sins of the people. Why did he do that? As present ruler of the world, the devil bears responsibility for his perversity

in beguiling and coercing humanity to sin. "The sending of the sin-laden goat ... signified the complete removal of the sins of the people and the handing them over, as it were, to the evil spirit to whom they belonged" *(The One Volume Bible Commentary, p. 95).*

A scapegoat, in modern usage, is someone unfairly held responsible for the mistakes of others. However, the modern English word scapegoat cannot properly be applied to Satan; the devil is not a scapegoat in the modern sense of the term. *(Although some Bible versions use the word "scapegoat," Green's Literal Translation more accurately calls it the "goat of departure.")* Rather than unfairly bearing the blame for sin, Satan will be held justly accountable for his own deliberate actions by which he has led humanity into sin for thousands of years.

The symbolism of the live goat parallels the fate of Satan and his demons, whom Yahweh will remove before Yah'shua the Messiah's millennial rule is established. The book of Revelation describes this event: "Then I saw an angel coming down from the sky, having the key to the bottomless pit and a great chain in his hand. He laid hold of the dragon, that serpent of old, who is the Devil and Satan, and bound him for a thousand years; and he cast him into the bottomless pit, and shut him up, and set a seal on him, so that he should deceive the nations no more till the thousand years were finished ..." *(Revelation 20:1-3).*

Thus the devil and his demons, who for thousands of years have led mankind into every evil deed imaginable, will be removed to a place of restraint *(verse 4).* Complete global reconciliation to Yahweh cannot occur until the source of so much sin and suffering—Satan—is removed.

The modern application of this festival

Now notice specific instructions on when and how we are to keep this festival. "Also the tenth day of this seventh month shall be the Day of Atonement," Yahweh says. "It shall be a holy convocation for you; you shall afflict your souls ..." *(Leviticus 23:27).*

How do you "afflict your soul" on this day? Afflict comes from the Hebrew anah, which means "to be afflicted, be bowed down, be humbled, be meek" *(Vine's Complete Expository Dictionary of Old and New Covenant Words, "To Be Humbled, Afflicted").* The same word is used in connection with fasting in Psalm 35:13 and Ezra 8:21. Fasting means abstaining from food and drink *(Esther 4:16).*

Why does Yahweh tell us to fast during this specific 24 hours? Fasting expresses our humble desire to draw closer to Yahweh. The Day of Atonement represents a coming time of reconciliation during which, with Satan banished and the world having been devastated by the horrific events leading up to this time, a humbled and repentant humanity will at last be reconciled to Yahweh.

Few understand the proper reasons for fasting. Fasting is not to bend Yahweh to our will. We don't fast to receive anything from Yahweh except to show our appreciation for His abundant mercy and forgiveness of

our human weaknesses. Fasting helps us remember how temporary our physical existence is. Without food and water, we would soon perish. Fasting helps us realize just how much we need Yahweh as the giver and sustainer of life.

We should always fast on the Day of Atonement in a repentant frame of mind. Notice Daniel's exemplary attitude while fasting: "Then I set my face toward Yahweh my God to make request by prayer and supplications, with fasting, sackcloth, and ashes. And I prayed to Yahweh my God, and made confession" *(Daniel 9:3-4).*

The early Congregation naturally kept the Day of Atonement. More than 30 years after the Messiah's death, Luke still referred to the time and seasons by mentioning this day, stating that "sailing was now dangerous because the Fast was already over" *(Acts 27:9).* Almost all Bible commentaries and dictionaries acknowledge that "the Fast" refers to the Day of Atonement.

Yet another important lesson comes to us through the Day of Atonement. We have already seen that the slain goat represented the sacrifice in our place of Yah'shua the Messiah, who took on Himself the death penalty we have earned by sinning. But Yah'shua the Messiah did not stay dead; He came back to life. What does the Day of Atonement teach us about the Messiah's role after His resurrection?

Leviticus 16:15-19 describes a solemn ceremony that was carried out only once each year, on the Day of Atonement. The high priest was to take the blood of the slain goat into the Holy Place—the most sacred part of the tabernacle—and to the mercy seat. The mercy seat was symbolic of the very throne of Almighty Yahweh. The high priest acted out the function the Messiah performs for repentant Israelites. Having ascended to the very throne of Yahweh by the blood of His sacrifice, the Messiah intercedes for us—as He has since His resurrection—as our High Priest.

The book of Hebrews makes this symbolism clear. "But the Messiah came as High Priest of the good things to come, with the greater and more perfect tabernacle not made with hands, that is, not of this [physical] creation. Not with the blood of goats and calves, but with His own blood He entered the Most Holy Place once for all, having obtained eternal redemption" *(Hebrews 9:11-12).*

Because of the Messiah's sacrifice, we enjoy direct access to the true mercy seat-the throne of our merciful, loving Creator. This was dramatically and miraculously demonstrated at the moment of the Messiah's death, when "the veil of the temple," covering the entrance to the Holy Place, "was torn in two from top to bottom" *(Matthew 27:51; Mark 15:38).* This massive curtain over the entrance to the Holy Place was torn asunder in a dramatic testimony to the access we now have to Yahweh's throne through the Messiah.

Many verses in Hebrews mention the Messiah's role as our High Priest and intercessor. Because of His sacrifice for us, we can "come boldly to the throne of grace, that we may obtain mercy and find grace to help in time of need" *(Hebrews 4:16).* The Day of Atonement thus pictures the loving reconciliation we have with Yahweh, made possible through the Messiah's sacrifice. It also shows the remarkable truth that

Satan, the author of sin, will eventually be removed so that humanity can at last attain reconciliation with Yahweh on a universal and unconditional basis.

The Day of Atonement serves as a vital preparatory step in anticipation of the next milestone in Yahweh's glorious Holy Day plan, beautifully depicted by the Feast of Tabernacles.

The Feast of Tabernacles: Yah'shua

the Messiah Reigns Over the Earth

In his first inspired sermon after receiving His Holy Spirit on Pentecost, the apostle Peter summed up Yahweh's instruction for mankind: "Repent therefore and be converted, that your sins may be blotted out, so that times of refreshing may come from the presence of Yahweh, and that He may send Yah'shua the Messiah, who was preached to you before, whom heaven must receive until the times of restoration of all things, which Yahweh has spoken by the mouth of all His holy prophets since the world began" *(Acts 3:19-21).*

What are these "times of refreshing" and "times of restoration" of which Peter spoke? Yahweh's plan for mankind involves restoration. The Feast of Tabernacles symbolizes the restoration process, which will start with the return of Yah'shua the Messiah, pictured by the Feast of Trumpets, and the banishment of Satan, depicted by the Day of Atonement. Once these events have taken place, as represented by the previous Holy Days, the foundation is in place for the restoration of the creation to peace and harmony with Yahweh.

The seven-day Feast of Tabernacles *(Leviticus 23:34)* pictures the 1,000-year reign of Yah'shua the Messiah over the earth after His second coming *(Revelation 20:4)*. This period is often called the Millennium, which simply means "1,000 years."

This Feast also reflects the "rest" symbolized by the weekly Sabbath *(Hebrews 4:1-11)* that celebrates the great harvest of humanity when all living people will learn Yahweh's ways. Humanity will at last be restored to a right relationship with Yahweh *(Isaiah 11:9-10).*

In the beginning, Yahweh created mankind to cooperate with Him in a beautiful relationship characterized by love, peace and obedience to His laws. At the completion of His creation, "Yahweh saw everything that He had made, and indeed it was very good" *(Genesis 1:31).*

This time of peace and harmony abruptly ended because of Satan's deception and man's disobedience *(Genesis 3:1-6).* Disobedience cut mankind off from Yahweh's way *(Genesis 3:21-24).* Genesis 6:5 describes the tragic result: "Then Yahweh saw that the wickedness of man was great in the earth, and that every intent of the thoughts of his heart was only evil continually."

This broken relationship between Yahweh and man has continued through history to our time. Paul reflected upon this state: "... Through one man [Adam] sin entered the world, and death through sin, and

thus death spread to all men, because all sinned ..." *(Romans 5:12)*. Paul knew that Yah'shua the Messiah would heal the breach created by man's disobedience: "For since by man *[Adam]* came death, by Man [the Messiah] also came the resurrection of the dead. For as in Adam all die, even so in the Messiah all shall be made alive" *(1 Corinthians 15:21-22).*

Isaiah prophesied the restoration of

the world

Yahweh used the prophet Isaiah to reveal parts of His magnificent plan for restoring the world. Written at a time during which Israel faced punishment for continued disobedience, the book of Isaiah was inspired by Yahweh to give the nation encouragement through the promise of a better world ahead.

Yah'shua the Messiah, after reading in the synagogue one of Isaiah's prophecies, acknowledged the special understanding given Isaiah: "These things Isaiah said when he saw His glory and spoke of Him" *(John 12:41).* Isaiah not only prophesied of the Messiah's earthly ministry; he wrote of the Messiah's return in power and glory *(Isaiah 66:15-16).*

The basis for the messianic rule of Yah'shua will be Yahweh's law. Again, as Isaiah foretold, "it shall come to pass in the latter days that the mountain of Yahweh's house shall be established on the top of the mountains, and shall be exalted above the hills; and all nations shall flow to it. Many people shall come and say, 'Come, and let us go up to the mountain of Yahweh, to the house of the God of Jacob; He will teach us His ways, and we shall walk in His paths.' For out of Zion shall go forth the law, and the word of Yahweh from Jerusalem" *(Isaiah 2:2-3).*

A world of peace and abundance

After the Messiah's return, He will bring the creation in its entirety into harmony with Yahweh, and peace will no longer be the exception. King David said, "Great peace have those who love Your law" *(Psalm 119:165)*. Imagine what the world will be like when everyone knows Yahweh's law and lives by it!

More than just knowledge is needed to bring about this amazing transformation. A spiritual change will take place among people. Yahweh, speaking through the prophet Ezekiel, describes how it will happen: "I will give you a new heart and put a new spirit within you; I will take the heart of stone out of your flesh and give you a heart of flesh. I will put My Spirit within you and cause you to walk in My statutes, and you will keep My judgments and do them" *(Ezekiel 36:26-27).*

The Spirit of Yahweh will influence people to willingly and enthusiastically obey Yahweh from their hearts. People will begin to place the interests of others before their own. They will start thinking of others as "better than themselves" *(Philippians 2:3, KJV).* Instead of exclusive self-concern, their goal will be to help their fellow human beings. Theft will cease. Disregard for others' property and feelings will be eliminated. Because the world will finally be at peace, countries will "beat their swords into plowshares, and their

spears into pruning hooks; nation shall not lift up sword against nation, neither shall they learn war anymore" *(Isaiah 2:4; Micah 4:3).*

During this 1,000-year period, Yahweh will change even the nature of wild animals, reflecting the peace that will descend upon society. Describing this idyllic time, Isaiah 11:7-9 says: "The cow and the bear shall graze; their young ones shall lie down together; and the lion shall eat straw like the ox. The nursing child shall play by the cobra's hole, and the weaned child shall put his hand in the viper's den. They shall not hurt nor destroy in all My holy mountain ..."

Reversing the effects of sin

Yahweh will heal physical infirmities. Isaiah 35:5-6 prophesies of this time during which "the eyes of the blind shall be opened, and the ears of the deaf shall be unstopped. Then the lame shall leap like a deer, and the tongue of the dumb sing ..."

Of even greater importance will be the spiritual healing that will take place. Isaiah prophesied that Yah'shua the Messiah will complete the healing He began during His ministry on earth: "The Spirit of Yahweh my GOD is upon Me, because Yahweh has anointed Me to preach good tidings to the poor; He has sent Me to heal the brokenhearted, to proclaim liberty to the captives, and the opening of the prison to those who are bound; to proclaim the acceptable year of Yahweh, and the day of vengeance of our God; to comfort all who mourn, to console those who mourn in Zion ..." *(Isaiah 61:1-3; Luke 4:18-19).* The accumulated results of generations of humans following Satan's sinful ways will begin to be reversed.

The Feast of Tabernacles is also called the Feast of Ingathering *(Exodus 23:16).* This name signified the completion of Israel's annual harvest. In this setting, Yahweh said, "you shall rejoice before Yahweh your God" *(Deuteronomy 12:12, 18; 14:26).* The Feast is a time of celebration for the abundance Yahweh has given.

This same bountiful harvest theme continues in the future fulfillment of this festival. Through Isaiah, Yahweh spoke of the desert becoming productive land, "for waters shall burst forth in the wilderness, and streams in the desert. The parched ground shall become a pool, and the thirsty land springs of water" *(Isaiah 35:6-7).*

At that time the earth will produce bountiful harvests. "Behold, the days are coming," Yahweh says, "when the plowman shall overtake the reaper, and the treader of grapes him who sows seed; the mountains shall drip with sweet wine, and all the hills shall flow" *(Amos 9:13).*

The significance of tabernacles

The name of the Feast of Tabernacles derives from Yahweh's command to ancient Israel to build temporary "tabernacles," sometimes called "booths," *[or tents or huts]* to live in during the festival. The Israelites left their houses and built temporary dwelling places *(Hebrew succah, meaning "hut of woven*

boughs") to live in while rejoicing before Yahweh. These reminded them of their release from slavery and their dwelling in booths when Yahweh brought them out of Egypt *(Leviticus 23:34, 41-43).* In stark contrast to the hardship of slavery, this festival emphasizes rest, peace and prosperity as it meets the needs of all people, including strangers, widows and the poor.

The Bible emphasizes that, as with these temporary dwellings, our physical life is transitory. The apostle Paul's writings reflect this theme: "For we know that if our earthly house of this tabernacle were dissolved, we have a building of Yahweh, an house not made with hands, eternal in the heavens. For in this we groan, earnestly desiring to be clothed upon with our house which is from heaven" *(2 Corinthians 5:1-2, KJV).*

Hebrews 11 recounts the examples of many of Yahweh's faithful servants down through the centuries. It then concludes that "these all died in faith, not having received the promises, but having seen them afar off were assured of them, embraced them and confessed that they were strangers and pilgrims on the earth" *(verse 13).*

The Feast of Tabernacles is an annual reminder of our temporary state and that we also "seek a homeland" *(verse 14)*. This lesson is reinforced when we travel to a site of the Feast of Tabernacles and stay in temporary dwellings such as hotels and campgrounds. This festival reminds us that, in spite of our material possessions, we are still mortals in need of a literal transformation so we may possess eternal life *(1 Corinthians 15:50-54).*

In the accounts of the vision that has come to be called the "transfiguration," Yah'shua gave a glimpse of the Kingdom of Yahweh to Peter, James and John. The Messiah appeared to be talking with Moses and Elijah. Peter's immediate response was to suggest that they quickly construct three tabernacles. He seemed to understand the important connection between tabernacles and our quest for eternal life in Yahweh's Kingdom *(see Matthew 17:1-9; Luke 9:27-36).*

The role of the resurrected saints in

the Millennium

The judgment of the inhabitants of the earth who live during the 1,000 years as pictured by the Feast of Tabernacles *(Isaiah 2:4; 51:4-5)* begins in earnest as the Messiah brings "many sons to glory" *(Hebrews 2:10).* These scriptures show that this judgment is a time of universal opportunity for salvation.

For this purpose Yahweh has allocated 1,000 years during which the resurrected saints, the firstfruits of Yahweh's harvest, will reign with the Messiah on earth as kings and priests so many others can enter Yahweh's Kingdom *(Revelation 5:10; 20:6).*

Yah'shua promised that "he who overcomes, and keeps My works until the end, to him I will give power over the nations" *(Revelation 2:26)*. People whom Yahweh resurrects at the Messiah's return will experience the unparalleled opportunity to work with Him to help all nations build a relationship with Yahweh.

The foundation for this relationship begins with instruction on Yahweh's law and these very Holy Days. Notice Zechariah's words: "And 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 Yahweh, the LORD of hosts, and to keep the Feast of Tabernacles" *(Zechariah 14:16).*

Other prophets described the time as an era of Yahweh's law covering the earth "as the waters cover the sea" *(Isaiah 11:9; Habakkuk 2:14).*

Many will assist Yah'shua the Messiah in this universal educational program of helping others understand Yahweh's way. Speaking of this time, Isaiah says teachers "will not be moved into a corner anymore, but your eyes shall see your teachers. Your ears shall hear a word behind you, saying, 'This is the way, walk in it,' whenever you turn to the right hand or whenever you turn to the left" *(Isaiah 30:20-21).*

The chance to help others understand and be reconciled to Yahweh is a wonderful calling. Each who serves in this way will be called "the Repairer of the Breach, The Restorer of Streets to Dwell In" *(Isaiah 58:12).*

Yahweh calls people out of the world at this time to become His chosen people, sanctified and redeemed by Him *(2 Corinthians 6:16-7:1).* They are to live exemplary lives as Yahweh prepares them for service during the Messiah's millennial reign and beyond. "Beloved, I beg you as sojourners and pilgrims, abstain from fleshly lusts which war against the soul," the apostle Peter wrote, "having your conduct honourable among the Gentiles, that when they speak against you as evildoers, they may, by your good works which they observe, glorify Yahweh in the day of visitation" *(1 Peter 2:11-12).*

<u>One final conflict</u>

All through Yahweh's plan for saving humanity, He never forces anyone to obey Him. Every person is free to choose what he or she will do and whether to accept or reject Yahweh's way of life.

After the 1,000 years, Yahweh will allow Satan to test the spiritual convictions of the earth's inhabitants. Revelation 20:7-10 describes this time. Yahweh will loose the devil from his place of restraint and allow him to deceive those who are not convicted of the perfect righteousness of Yahweh's way.

Yahweh will destroy by fire those who follow Satan in this rebellion. Satan's futile efforts will be thwarted.

This final, tragic rebellion against Yahweh will come to nothing, and Satan's destructive, deceitful influence over humanity will finally draw to a close.

The stage is now set for the events depicted by yet one more Holy Day. The Feast of Tabernacles offers a marvellous opportunity for salvation to those left alive at the Messiah's return, as well as their physical descendants during the Millennium.

But what about the thousands of millions of people of past generations who have lived and died without ever understanding—or even hearing—Yahweh's truth? And what about those who will die in the

cataclysmic upheaval preceding the Messiah's return? How will Yahweh offer them salvation?

The Last Great Day: Eternal Life Offered to All

The Bible makes abundantly clear in Acts 4:12 that "there is no other name under heaven" than that of Yah'shua the Messiah by which human beings can be saved.

This particular passage raises troubling questions for anyone who believes that Yahweh is desperately trying to save the whole world in this age. If this is the only time for salvation, we must conclude that the Messiah's mission to save humanity has largely failed. After all, billions of people have lived and died without once hearing the name of Yah'shua the Messiah. Thousands die every day never having heard or fully known of the Messiah.

In spite of the missionary zeal of so many over the centuries, far more human souls have been "lost" than "saved." If Yahweh is truly all powerful, why have so many not even heard the gospel of salvation? The traditional portrayal of conflict between Yahweh and Satan over mankind leaves Yahweh on the losing side of the struggle.

What is the fate of these people? What does Yahweh have in mind for those who have never believed in the Messiah or understood any of Yahweh's truth? How does the Creator provide for them in His plan? Are they lost forever without any hope of salvation?

We should not doubt Yahweh's saving power! Let's examine some common assumptions and come to an understanding of our Creator's marvelous solution.

Resolving the dilemma

Paul tells us that Yahweh "desires all men to be saved and to come to the knowledge of the truth" *(1 Timothy 2:4).* Peter adds that Yahweh is "not willing that any should perish but that all should come to repentance" *(2 Peter 3:9).* This is Yahweh's overriding goal in dealing with mankind: He desires as many as possible to repent, come to the knowledge of the truth and receive His gift of salvation!

Yah'shua explained how this will come to pass. John 7:1-14 describes how Yah'shua went to Jerusalem for the Feast of Tabernacles. He appeared publicly and stood in the midst of the people. "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" *(John 7:37-38).*

The Messiah's message recorded here most likely was given on the seventh day of the Feast of Tabernacles. Scholars vary on whether this was the seventh day or the day following, but the weight of evidence and the series of events indicate that John 7 describes incidents on the seventh day while the setting moves to the eighth day in John 8 and 9.

It is also possible that the Messiah's teaching recorded in John 7:37-38 came at the end of the seventh day or the very beginning of the eighth day (Yahweh's Holy Days begin with sunset and end at the following sunset), as the chapter concludes with people returning to their homes after sundown for the night. The theme of the Messiah's teaching then continues in chapter 8 *(which is clearly the next morning, verse 2)* and includes the offer of salvation to all mankind.

In Leviticus 23:39, we see that this day immediately follows the Feast of Tabernacles but is a separate festival with its own distinct meaning. Based on the Messiah's words and the theme of offering salvation to all mankind, we refer to this festival as "the Last Great Day," although the Bible simply calls it "the eighth day."

Symbolism of the Messiah's teaching

What was the significance of the Messiah's teaching about "living water"? In the Messiah's time, according to tradition, during the Feast of Tabernacles the priests would bring golden vessels of water from the stream of Siloam that had flowed from the temple hill and pour it over the altar. Joyous celebration along with the sounding of trumpets marked this ceremony as the people sang the words of Isaiah: "... With joy you will draw water from the wells of salvation" *(Isaiah 12:3)*.

Yah'shua stood where all could hear Him and drew a lesson from the water, revealing that all who were thirsty could come to Him and be refreshed-forever. In the Messiah's analogy, the water represented Yahweh's Holy Spirit, which those who believed in Yah'shua would receive (John 7:39*).* He showed that the basic wants of spiritual thirst and hunger could be satisfied only by Him as "the bread of life" *(John 6:48)* and the source of living water.

But when would this happen? Within six months the Messiah's own countrymen pressured the Roman authorities to execute Him. Less than 40 years later the temple and all its ceremonies, including those described above, were brought to an end at the hands of the Roman legions.

Humanity still hungers and thirsts for the message the Messiah brought. Yahweh's promise to "pour out My Spirit on all flesh" *(Joel 2:28)* has not yet fully taken place. Thousands of millions have died with their deepest spiritual needs unrealized. When will they be refreshed by the life-giving power of Yahweh's Spirit?

A physical resurrection to a first

opportunity for salvation

To find the answer, we must consider a question the disciples put to the Messiah just before He ascended to heaven: "Lord, will You at this time restore the kingdom to Israel?" *(Acts 1:6)*. When the disciples spoke of this restoration, they understood it in the context of the many prophecies of a reunited nation of Israel.

One such prophecy is in Ezekiel 37:3-6. This passage describes Ezekiel's vision of a valley full of bones. Yahweh asks, "Son of man, can these bones live?" To which the prophet replies: "O Lord Yahweh, You

know." Yahweh then says to the bones, "Surely I will cause breath to enter into you, and you shall live. I will put sinews on you and bring flesh upon you, cover you with skin and put breath in you; and you shall live. Then you shall know that I am Yahweh."

In this vision a physical resurrection took place. The account acknowledges the hopeless situation in which these people had found themselves: "Our bones are dry, our hope is lost, and we ourselves are cut off!" *(verse 11).*

Their Creator, however, offers them the hope of a resurrection and the gift of His Holy Spirit in the setting of a reunited nation. In this dramatic vision, ancient Israel serves as the model for other peoples that Yahweh will resurrect to physical life. Yahweh said: "Behold, O My people, I will open your graves and cause you to come up from your graves ... I will put My Spirit in you, and you shall live" *(verses 12, 14).* At this future time Yahweh will make freely available the life-giving spiritual water of His Holy Spirit.

Yahweh will "make a covenant of peace with them, and it shall be an everlasting covenant with them ... My tabernacle also shall be with them; indeed I will be their God, and they shall be My people" *(verses 26-27).*

The apostle Paul also referred to this yet-future event: "I say then, has Yahweh cast away His people? Certainly not! For I also am an Israelite, of the seed of Abraham, of the tribe of Benjamin. Yahweh has not cast away His people whom He foreknew" *(Romans 11:1-2).* As Paul wrote, "all Israel will be saved" *(verse 26).*

Not only Israel, but all who have never had a chance to drink from the living waters of Yahweh's Word and His Holy Spirit will at last be able to do so *(Romans 9:22-26).* Yahweh will freely offer them the opportunity for eternal life during a second, mortal lifetime.

The Great White Throne Judgment

In Revelation 20:5 John writes that "the rest of the dead did not live again until the thousand years were finished." Here John makes a clear distinction between the first resurrection, which occurs at the Messiah's second coming *(verses 4, 6),* and the second resurrection, which takes place at the end of the Messiah's millennial reign. Remember that the first resurrection is to eternal life. By contrast, Yahweh raises those in the second resurrection to a physical, flesh-and-blood existence.

John discusses this same second resurrection to physical life that Ezekiel wrote about: "Then I saw a great white throne and Him who sat on it, from whose face the earth and the heaven fled away. And there was found no place for them. And I saw the dead, small and great, standing before Yahweh, and books were opened. And another book was opened, which is the Book of Life. And the dead were judged according to their works, by the things which were written in the books. The sea gave up the dead who were in it, and Death and Hades delivered up the dead who were in them. And they were judged, each one according to his works" *(verses 11-13).*

The dead who stand before their Creator are all those who died never knowing the true God. Like Ezekiel's vision of dry bones coming back to life, these people emerge from their graves and begin to know their God. The books *(biblia in Greek, from which we get the word Bible)* are the Scriptures, the only source of the knowledge of eternal life. Finally all will have an opportunity to fully understand Yahweh's plan of salvation.

This physical resurrection is not a second chance for salvation. For these people it is a first opportunity to really know the Creator. The resurrected are "judged according to their works, by the things which were written in the books" *(verse 12).* This judgment will involve a period during which they will enjoy the opportunity to hear, understand and grow in Yahweh's way of life, having their names inscribed in the book of life *(verse 15).* During this time thousands of millions of people will gain access to eternal life for their first time.

This final festival of the year shows how deep and far reaching are the merciful judgments of Yahweh. Yah'shua the Messiah spoke of the wonderful truth depicted by this day when He compared three cities that failed to respond to His miraculous works with three cities of the ancient world: "Woe to you, Chorazin! Woe to you, Bethsaida! For if the mighty works which were done in you had been done in Tyre and Sidon, they would have repented long ago in sackcloth and ashes. But I say to you, it will be more tolerable for Tyre and Sidon in the day of judgment than for you. And you, Capernaum, who are exalted to the sky, will be brought down to Hades; for if the mighty works which were done in you had been done in Sodom, it would have remained until this day. But I say to you that it shall be more tolerable for the land of Sodom in the day of judgment than for you" *(Matthew 11:21-24)*.

The inhabitants of ancient Tyre, Sidon and Sodom—cities that had incurred the wrath of Yahweh for their depravities—will receive mercy in the day of judgment. Unlike Chorazin, Bethsaida and Capernaum, these cities of old had little opportunity to know Yahweh. Yahweh will resurrect these people and include them in the time of judgment that is beyond the 1,000-year reign of the Messiah, when even those who lived in bygone ages will be reconciled to Yahweh.

It will be a time of universal knowledge of Yahweh. From the least to the greatest, all will know Him *(Hebrews 8:11).* The citizens of these cities, and countless more like them, will experience their opportunity for salvation.

This final period of judgment completes Yahweh's plan of salvation for the world. It will be a time of love, deep mercy and the unsearchable judgment of Yahweh. The chance to drink of the life-giving waters of His Holy Spirit will indeed quench the deepest thirsts of men and women. This time of righteous judgment will bring back to life those long forgotten by humanity, but never forgotten by Yahweh.

What is the fate of those who die with no real knowledge of the Son of Yahweh? What hope is there for the millions who have lived and died without knowledge of Yahweh's purpose? The Scriptures show that these

are not cut off without hope. Yahweh will bring them back to life and give them their opportunity for eternal salvation. This is the astounding truth depicted by the Last Great Day, the last of Yahweh's festivals.

Yahweh will see His plan through and bring many sons to glory *(Hebrews 2:10).* Yahweh's promise to "pour out My Spirit on all flesh" *(Joel 2:28)* will find its fullest manifestation. The thirst-quenching waters of His Holy Spirit will be available to all in the time depicted by "that great day of the feast." What a marvelous plan these biblical festivals portray. How great would be our lack of understanding without them!

How to Observe Yahweh's Holy Days

After we come to realize that the Holy Days are vitally important to mankind and eminently applicable to our modern world, we naturally want to learn more about how to observe them.

Where should we celebrate them? Should we keep them at home or in some kind of religious service? What should we do on these days? Does Yahweh mind if we do our normal work on these days, or should we reserve them for other purposes? How will the observance of these days affect our families and jobs?

These are all important questions we must consider upon learning about Yahweh's festivals. Let's examine some biblical principles we should consider in dealing with these real-life issues.

Some of these festivals have designated methods of observance that set them apart from the others. For example, only the Passover involves partaking of bread and wine as symbols of the Messiah's death. The Days of Unleavened Bread are the only feast days during which Yahweh tells us to remove leaven from our homes. The Day of Atonement also stands alone as the one Holy Day observed by fasting. Proper observance of these days includes acknowledging their distinctions, which are designed to teach us spiritual lessons.

Taken as a whole, however, there are principles applicable to observing all of Yahweh's Holy Days. First, we must remember that these days are Holy to Yahweh. They are "the feasts of Yahweh, which you shall proclaim to be Holy convocations," says Yahweh *(Leviticus 23:2).*

Yahweh is the only one who can make anything Holy. Yahweh places these days on a plane higher than all humanly devised or artificial celebrations. Men and women can dedicate time to Yahweh for a special purpose, but Yahweh alone can set time aside as His Holy time *(Genesis 2:3; Exodus 20:8, 11).* When we exercise proper respect and appreciation for these special annual occasions, we also honour Yahweh Himself by acknowledging His authority over our lives. Understanding this principle is important to worshiping Yahweh properly.

Our Creator desires that people willingly and in faith follow all of His instructions (Isaiah *66:2).* A cooperative, humble attitude stands in contrast to the frame of mind of those who want only to do as little as possible to get by. The heart of the matter is whether we really believe and love Yahweh. The apostle

John illustrated the attitude Yahweh desires when he wrote: "For this is the love of Yahweh, that we keep His commandments. And His commandments are not burdensome" *(1 John 5:3).*

Yahweh commands annual

assemblies

But how does Yahweh want us to conduct ourselves on these days? Consider His basic instruction: "These are Yahweh's appointed feasts, the sacred assemblies you are to proclaim at their appointed times ..." *(Leviticus 23:4, NIV).* Other versions of the Bible, such as the King James and New King James, use the phrase "holy convocations," but the meaning is the same. These are annual occasions on which we should gather with other believers. As with the weekly Sabbath, Yahweh commands special sacred assemblies on each of the Holy Days.

Yahweh revealed to the early Israelites the principle of meeting with others of like mind on the Sabbaths and Holy Days: "Let us hold fast the confession of our hope without wavering, for He who promised is faithful. And let us consider one another in order to stir up love and good works, not forsaking the assembling of ourselves together, as is the manner of some, but exhorting one another, and so much the more as you see the Day approaching" *(Hebrews 10:23-25)*. What better time to encourage and exhort each other than on the days that depict Yahweh's great plan of salvation!

When we assemble at the times of these annual festivals, we allow ourselves a wonderful opportunity to learn more about Yahweh's plan of salvation. Nehemiah 8 records a striking instance of Yahweh's people gathering to observe the Feast of Trumpets *(verse 2).* During their religious service, the leaders "helped the people to understand the Law ... So they read distinctly from the book, in the Law of Yahweh; and they gave the sense, and helped them to understand the reading" *(verses 7-8)*. The early Congregation continued to keep these yearly feast days according to these same principles, but with much greater spiritual understanding *(Acts 2; 1 Corinthians 5:6-8).*

In Nehemiah's day, because the people had neglected Yahweh's festivals, they needed encouragement. "And Nehemiah, who was the governor, Ezra the priest and scribe, and the Levites who taught the people said to all the people, 'This day is holy to Yahweh your God; do not mourn nor weep.' For all the people wept, when they heard the words of the Law. Then he said to them, 'Go your way, eat the fat, drink the sweet, and send portions to those for whom nothing is prepared; for this day is holy to our LORD. Do not sorrow, for the joy of Yahweh is your strength'" *(Nehemiah 8:9-10).* Then, after they were taught Yahweh's law, "all the people went their way to eat and drink, to send portions and rejoice greatly, because they understood the words that were declared to them" *(verse 12).*

These special days are meant to be enjoyed by the whole family, friends, the poor and entire neighbourhoods—everyone who attends! Especially at the Feast of Tabernacles, sufficient time is available

for proper family and community activities and recreation as well as rejoicing over the knowledge Yahweh reveals.

To properly rejoice on Yahweh's days of celebration, we are not to do our customary work *(Leviticus 23:3, 7-8, 21, 25, 35-36).* Notice that, even though preparing food for the Holy Days does entail work, Yahweh says that this kind of effort is entirely appropriate. However, on the Day of Atonement we are to forgo all regular work including, of course, food preparation *(verses 28, 30-31).*

We also demonstrate our obedience and commitment to Yahweh by arranging time off from our jobs so we can observe the Holy Days. With proper planning and respectful communication with employers, most people can work out the details required to be able to take these days off. It is our responsibility to use wisdom and patience when informing family members, friends, neighbours and employers of our decision to observe the festivals.

Living by faith

Responding to Yahweh's instruction is a matter of faith. As Paul said in 2 Corinthians 5:7: "For we walk by faith, not by sight." It is, therefore, important for us to start keeping the Holy Days when we learn about them. Even though we may not understand everything at first, we will learn a great deal more as we actually begin observing them.

In summary, the Feast days of Yahweh are a time of happiness, not just because of their meaning for us, but because of the wonderful hope they promise for all mankind. Observing the Holy Days reminds us of Yahweh's great love for humanity. Worshiping Yahweh in this way is a joy and pleasure. These festivals truly are Yahweh's gifts to His people!

If you would like to learn more about observing the annual festivals, please feel free to contact us at your convenience.

← Return to the Articles Index