

Why Study & Celebrate the Biblical Feasts?

An Introduction to the Biblical Feasts

By Ya'acov Natan Lawrence

IF YOU HAD TO SUM UP THE ENTIRE MESSAGE OF THE BIBLE IN ONE WORD what would it be? Probably words such as love, hope, salvation, eternal life or heaven are coming to your mind. But I challenge you to find a better word than the following: r-e-c-o-n-c-i-l-i-a-t-i-o-n. The dictionary defines *reconciliation* as “to restore to friendship or harmony, to settle or resolve a quarrel, to make consistent or congruous.”

When the first humans chose to listen to the lies of the serpent and to rebel against YHVH by giving in to sin at the tree of the knowledge of good and evil at the very beginning, our first parents chose the path of separation from their Heavenly Father. Sin causes man to be separated from our totally holy, righteous, sinless and loving Creator.

Since that time YHVH has been endeavoring to reconcile man to himself. He has laid out the criteria for this to occur — for man to once again have a loving and intimate relationship with his Heavenly Father as did Adam and Eve before they sinned.

The seven biblical feasts of YHVH prophetically represent the steps man must take to be reconciled to his Heavenly Father. They are the complete plan of salvation or redemption rolled up into an easy-to-understand seven-step plan. Though a child can understand these steps, the truths contained therein can, at the same time, be expanded and unfolded until one literally has rolled out before oneself the entire message of the Bible from Genesis to Revelation — a message that to the human comprehension is staggering, deep and rich beyond understanding. The biblical feasts are literally the skeletal structure upon which the truths of the entire Bible hang. The message of redemption, sanctification, salvation, the atonement, glorification, end-times eschatology, the history of Israel, the entire gospel message, the covenants, the marriage of the Lamb of Elohim, the truth about the bride of Messiah, and Yeshua the Messiah are all prefigured within the glorious spiritual container of YHVH's feasts contained in seven steps. Seven is the biblical number of divine perfection and completion, thus revealing to us that his plan of salvation is complete in that it will bring man back into an eternal and spiritual relationship with Elohim.

Quite assuredly, without a deep, walking-it-out comprehension of YHVH's feasts, no matter how learned one may be in biblical knowledge, one will miss key elemental truths pertaining to YHVH's plan of salvation. For example, there is no way to correctly or fully understand end-time events such as the second coming of Yeshua, the great tribulation, the wrath of Elohim, the resurrection of the righteous, the marriage of the Lamb, the Millennium, or the New Jerusalem unless one understands the feasts from a deep Hebraic perspective. Spiritual pride may not allow one to handle this fact, but it is the truth none the less! It's illogical to think that one can throw out the foundation of a building and expect it to stand, or to eliminate the skeleton from a human body and expect a person to stand upright. Similarly, the feasts are both the foundation and the skeletal framework upon which is built or hangs the whole corpus of biblical truth.

What's more, at Mount Sinai, YHVH gave to his people Israel the Ten Commandments. These words from the mouth of the Creator himself literally formed the foundation and cornerstone to the rest of the Torah's (the 5 books of Moses) 613 commandments, which YHVH gave to man through Moses. The Jewish sages have understood this for thousands of years. From the Ten Commandments, all the rest of the commandments can be extrapolated. For example, the prohibition against adultery includes not only marital infidelity, but all manner of sexual sin, for the cornerstone of sexual holiness is a righteous and undefiled marital union. The same can be said of all the other commands. Similarly, from the Sabbath command springs forth all the biblical feasts, for they too are sabbaths. From the fourth commandment also comes the land sabbath and jubilee years. These sabbaths were so vital in YHVH's eyes and so fundamental to his relationship with his people that he said that they would be a

token of his wedding agreement with Israel, even as a ring is a symbol of a modern marriage covenant. About the Sabbath, we read the following in Exodus 31:13,

Speak thou also unto the children of Israel, saying, Verily my **Sabbaths** ye shall keep: for it is a sign between me and you throughout your generations; that ye may know that I am YHVH that doth sanctify you.

Please note that the word *Sabbaths* is in the plural. It refers not only to the weekly, seventh day Sabbath, but to all the Sabbaths of YHVH, including the biblical feasts. These days are so important that they would actually form the basis for his reconciliatory relationship with his people throughout their generations, which means *forever!*

Now with these preliminary statements made, we encourage you to read on to further explore the rich and deep truths pertaining to your spiritual destiny that are revealed through the biblical feasts. Please receive the blessing that YHVH offers man through them.

Why Study and Celebrate the Biblical Feasts?

1. The biblical feasts are prophetic shadow-pictures of things to come (Col 2:16-17; Heb 10:1). When they were given to ancient Israel they pointed forward to future events that would occur to the nation of Israel. The spring feasts (Passover, Unleavened Bread, and Pentecost) mostly, for example, pointed to Messiah's first coming while the fall feasts (Trumpets, Atonement, Tabernacles, the Eighth Day) point to his second coming leading into the Messianic Age (or Millennium) and then beyond that into eternity.
2. All the feasts point to Yeshua. The name *Yeshua* means "salvation," and each of these days point to the various steps of the path of salvation that believers find themselves on.
3. Many of the feasts point back to and commemorate historical events that occurred in Israel's history. By studying and celebrating these feasts, we can learn valuable historical spiritual lessons, and that are, at the same time, representative of our own spiritual journey (1 Cor 10:1-6, 11).
4. The Scriptures call the biblical festivals *appointed times* that the people of YHVH are commanded to observe. At these special times involving commanded assemblies, Israelites gather together and YHVH promises to meet with his people (Lev 23:1-2,4). There YHVH will teach his people about his wonderful plan of salvation through Yeshua the Messiah.
5. The feasts are in the Bible, and believers need to study and obey the whole Bible, which is the inspired word of Elohim (2 Tim 3:16). Man is to live by every word that proceeds from the mouth of Elohim (Matt 4:4)
6. The feasts set forth the pattern of heavenly things on earth (Heb 8:1-2,5; 9:8-9,23; Exod 25:8-9,40; 26:30; Num 8:4; Ezek 43:1-6,10-12), and, therefore, reveal to us spiritual mysteries about things in heaven.
7. We as physical beings need physical means and methods to help us to understand spiritual things. YHVH gives us the natural to help us to understand the supernatural or spiritual (1 Cor 2:9-13).
8. Yeshua, the apostles and early believers celebrated the biblical feasts. The apostles walked as Yeshua walked, and instructed us to do the same (1 Cor 11:1; 1 John 2:6).
9. The biblical feasts will be celebrated during the Millennium (see below).
10. Yeshua said that if you love him, you'll be keeping his commandments (John 14:15). Elsewhere, Yeshua equated the commandments with the Torah (Luke 18:20), of which the biblical feasts are a part.
11. If you want to know YHVH, you will be keeping his Torah-commandments of which the feasts are a part (1 John 2:3-6).

The Feast Days Were Ordained at Creation

Some people have been led to believe that the feasts were invented by Moses or the Jewish people. Actually, they came from YHVH who gave the feasts to the Israelites through Moses. The feasts predate the physical creation. For example we read in Genesis,

And Elohim said, Let there be lights in the firmament of the heaven to divide the day from the night; and let them be for signs, and for seasons, and for days, and years. (Gen 1:14)

Here we see the linking of the sun and moon with the seasons and biblical feasts of YHVH Elohim. The word

signs (H226) is the Hebrew word *owth* meaning “a distinguishing mark, banner, a remembrance, a proof, an omen, a warning, a token, an ensign, a miracle.” The sun and moon were created as signs or signals of something. The word *seasons* (H4150) is the Hebrew word *moed* meaning “a congregation, feast, season, appointed time, assembly.” What learn from the Hebrew here is that the sun and moon are signals that establish the appointed times of YHVH’s feasts for his people. In Leviticus 23:4 we see further proof of this point. There we read, “These are the feasts of YHVH, even holy convocations, which ye shall proclaim *in their seasons*.” Note the possessive pronoun *their* indicating that the biblical feasts “own” or “possess” the seasons and thus predate the seasons, which are determined by the sun, earth and moon. In other words, YHVH created these heavenly bodies and seasons for the feasts, which are a shadow-picture of his plan of salvation or redemption for the world. It could be said that the entire physical creation was made in order to have a place wherein to implement and showcase YHVH’s glorious plan of salvation.

The Feast Days Are Forever

A number of scriptures in the Torah show us that YHVH gave the feasts to his people forever. A couple of passages illustrate this point.

And this day shall be unto you for a memorial; and ye shall keep it a feast to YHVH throughout your generations; ye shall keep it a feast by an ordinance forever. (Exod 12:14)

[I]t shall be a statute forever throughout your generations in all your dwellings (see also verses 21 and 31). (Lev 23:14)

In the Gospels, Yeshua speaking to his disciples says,

“Do not think that I came to destroy the Law or the Prophets. I did not come to destroy but to fulfill. For assuredly, I say to you, till heaven and earth pass away, one jot or one tittle will by no means pass from the law till all is fulfilled. Whoever therefore breaks one of the least of these commandments, and teaches men so, shall be called least in the kingdom of heaven; but whoever does and teaches them, he shall be called great in the kingdom of heaven.” (Matt 5:17–19)

The word *forever* as used in the Torah (*Strong’s* H5769) is the Hebrew word *olam* meaning “everlasting, perpetual, evermore, always, continuous, unending future, for eternity.” When Yeshua spoke his words (in Matt 5:17–19), he was dealing with religious leaders who are attempting to preempt the laws of Elohim (including the biblical feasts) with their own man-made doctrines (Matt 15:3–9). Sadly, religious men are playing the same games with the word of Elohim today! Despite this, YHVH’s instructions in righteousness will never pass away as long as the earth still exists.

The Feasts Were Celebrated in Apostolic Times

The biblical record of the first century believers (both Jews and non-Jews) celebrating the biblical feasts is undeniable. The traditional Christian holidays that are now celebrated found their way into the church, in some cases, hundreds of years after the apostolic era. Here is the biblical record of the early believers celebrating the biblical feasts.

- Jewish believers from all over the known world gathered in Jerusalem to celebrate *Shavuot* or Pentecost (Acts 2:1).
- Paul considered it a priority to make the long and perilous trip to celebrate one of the biblical feasts (in this case, one of the pilgrimage feasts — either Passover/Unleavened Bread, Pentecost or Tabernacles) in Jerusalem (Acts 18:21).
- Paul and the early believers (both Jewish and non-Jewish) honored the Feast of Unleavened Bread in Philippi (Acts 20:6).
- Paul was anxious to be in Jerusalem to celebrate the feast of Pentecost (*Shavuot*) (Acts 20:16).
- Paul references the Day of Atonement (Acts 27:9).
- Paul admonished the believers (both Jews and non-Jews) to celebrate Passover and the Feast of Unleavened Bread (1 Cor 5:7–8).
- Paul publicly confessed his adherence to YHVH’s Torah, which would have included obedience to laws

concerning the biblical feasts (Acts 24:24; 25:8; 28:23).

- Paul had a reputation among the early believers for being Torah-obedient including observing the biblical feasts (Acts 21:24).
- Paul preaches to both Jews and non-Jews the importance of obeying YHVH's Torah, of which the biblical feasts are a part (1 Cor 7:19; Rom 3:31; 7:12,22,25).

The Feasts Will Be Celebrated in the Millennium

There are a number of scriptures in the Tanakh (Old Testament) that many Jewish and Christian Bible scholars consider to be prophecies about the Messianic Age or Millennium, which occurs after the coming of the Messiah — for the Christians, the second coming or return of Yeshua the Messiah. Several of these scriptures contain clear references to the weekly Sabbath, and the biblical feasts.

- The weekly Sabbath (Isa 66:23; Ezek 46:1,4,12)
- YHVH's feasts and Sabbaths (Ezek 45:17; 46:9,11)
- YHVH's Sabbaths — a reference to both the weekly and annual festival Sabbaths (Ezek 44:24; 46:3)
- The Passover and Feast of Unleavened Bread (Ezek 45:21)
- The Feast of Tabernacles (Ezek 45:25; Zech 14:16,18,19).

