



MBS062

A MESSIANIC BIBLE STUDY FROM ARIEL MINISTRIES



THE FEASTS OF ISRAEL



By Dr. Arnold G. Fruchtenbaum



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TABLE OF CONTENTS

INTRODUCTION	5
I. THE PASSOVER: LEVITICUS 23:4-5	5
A. The Biblical Practice	6
1. The Killing of the Lamb	6
2. The Eating of the Lamb	6
B. The Jewish Observance	7
1. The Unleavened Bread	7
2. The Wine	7
C. The Messianic Significance.....	7
1. The Passover Lamb Identified	7
2. The Unleavened Bread Identified	9
3. The Wine Identified	9
II. THE FEAST OF UNLEAVENED BREAD: LEVITICUS 23:6-8	10
A. The Biblical Practice	10
B. The Jewish Observance	10
C. The Messianic Significance.....	10
III. THE FEAST OF THE FIRSTFRUITS: LEVITICUS 23:9-14	11
A. The Biblical Practice	12
B. The Jewish Observance	12
C. The Messianic Significance.....	12
IV. THE FEAST OF WEEKS: LEVITICUS 23:15-21	13
A. The Biblical Practice	14

B. The Jewish Observance	14
C. The Messianic Significance.....	15
1. The Birth of the Church	15
2. The Two Loaves	16
3. The Application	16
V. THE FOUR-MONTH INTERVAL: LEVITICUS 23:22	16
VI. THE FEAST OF TRUMPETS: LEVITICUS 23:23-25	17
A. The Biblical Practice.....	18
B. The Jewish Observance	18
1. The Blowing of the <i>Shofar</i>	18
2. The Meaning of the Blowing of the <i>Shofar</i>	19
3. The Trumpet Blasts	19
4. The <i>Tashlich</i> Ceremony.....	20
5. The Legends of the Feast of Trumpets	20
6. The Special Foods	20
C. The Messianic Significance.....	20
1. The Regathering of Israel	20
2. The Rapture of the Church.....	20
a. I Thessalonians 4:13-18	21
b. I Corinthians 15:15-58.....	21
VII. THE DAY OF ATONEMENT: LEVITICUS 23:26-32	21
A. The Biblical Practice.....	22
1. The Affliction of the Soul	22
2. The Details of the Biblical Practice	22
3. The Two Key Elements	23
B. The Jewish Observance	23

C. The Messianic Significance	24
VIII. THE FEAST OF TABERNACLES: LEVITICUS 23:33-44	25
A. The Biblical Practice	27
B. The Jewish Observance	27
1. The Three Key Symbols	27
2. The Two Key Ceremonies	28
3. The Reading of the Book of Ecclesiastes	28
4. The Prayer for Rain	28
5. The Time for Rejoicing	28
6. The Special Foods	28
C. The Messianic Significance.....	29
1. The Messiah's Response to the Ceremonies	29
2. The Fulfillment of the Feast.....	29
CONCLUSION	30

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*These are the
set feasts of Jehovah,
even holy convocations,
which ye shall
proclaim in their
appointed season.
Leviticus 23:4*

INTRODUCTION

This study is on the feasts of Israel, or perhaps more specifically, the prophetic significance of the feasts of Israel as contained in Leviticus 23 where Moses spelled out the seven holy seasons of Israel. At the same time, these seven feasts or holy seasons of Israel are an outline of the entire program of redemption, from the death of Yeshua (Jesus) to the establishment of the Messianic Kingdom. The first four festivals were fulfilled by the program of the First Coming, while the last three festivals of Leviticus 23 will be fulfilled by the program of the Second Coming.

These festivals will be studied one by one from three perspectives to see how they are fulfilled in the Messianic Program: first, how they are celebrated in accordance with the Old Testament Mosaic Law; secondly, how modern Judaism practices them in addition to the biblical ones; and thirdly, the Messianic implications of each holy season.

Leviticus 23:1-3 deal with the issue of the Sabbath, emphasizing its sanctity. These verses merely summarize some earlier details of the observance of the Sabbath. Their purpose is to point out that the laws of the Sabbath are still valid even during the observances of these seven holy seasons.

I. THE PASSOVER: LEVITICUS 23:4-5

These are the set feasts of Jehovah, even holy convocations, which ye shall proclaim in their appointed season. In the first month, on the fourteenth day of the month at even, is Jehovah's passover.

The first holy season, the Feast of Passover, is the most frequently mentioned festival of all the feasts of Israel in both testaments. It is mentioned over fifty times in the Old Testament and twenty-seven times in the New Testament. Within the framework of Judaism, this is the most important festival of the entire Jewish religious calendar.

There are two different names given for this feast. The first name, *pesach* is the Hebrew name, originating from the Angel of Death motif found in Exodus 12. The Jews were commanded to take a lamb, slay it, then take the blood of the lamb and sprinkle it upon the lintel and doorposts of each home. That night the Angel of Death passed through the land of Egypt. When he came to a Jewish home and saw the blood upon the lintel and doorposts, he would pass over that Jewish home. But when he came to an Egyptian home and did not see the blood upon the lintel and doorposts, instead of “passing-over,” he would “pass through” and slay the firstborn son of that Egyptian family. This is the origin of the name for this feast: the passing-over of the Jewish homes by the Angel of Death.

The second Hebrew name for this festival is *zman cheruteinu*, which means the “season of our emancipation.” This name emphasizes the result of the first Passover: freedom from Egyptian slavery.

A. The Biblical Practice

There were two key elements in the biblical practice of Passover: first the killing of the lamb; secondly, the eating of the lamb.

1. The Killing of the Lamb

Two things should be kept in mind concerning the killing of the lamb. First, a distinction should be made between the lamb for the Passover or paschal meal and the lamb for the Passover sacrifice. Secondly, that the Jewish reckoning of a day begins with sundown and ends with sundown so that the first night always precedes the first day. In Gentile reckoning, the day begins at midnight and ends at midnight.

The lamb for the paschal meal was to be set aside on the tenth day of the first month, *Aviv* or *Nissan*. From the tenth day to the fourteenth day, the lamb was to be tested to make sure it was “without spot and without blemish.” If it proved to be without spot and without blemish, the lamb for the Passover meal was killed by each Jewish family on the first night of Passover, the evening of the fourteenth. Thus on the first night of the Passover, the paschal meal was eaten. Another key point concerning the paschal lamb for the evening meal was that not a bone of the lamb was to be broken (Ex. 12:46). On the following morning, the first day of the Passover, a special, sacrificial lamb would be killed on the altar by the priesthood.

2. The Eating of the Lamb

The second main element was the paschal meal (Ex. 12:8). The

paschal meal included the eating of the lamb with two other items: unleavened bread and bitter herbs.

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B. The Jewish Observance

There are two key elements in the Jewish observance of the Passover or paschal meal: unleavened bread and wine.

1. The Unleavened Bread

Three things had to be true of the unleavened bread to qualify for the Passover. First, it had to be unleavened. Because leaven is a symbol of sin in the Bible, God would not permit even the symbol of sin to be in the Jewish home. Secondly, the bread had to be striped. Thirdly, it had to be pierced so that, if the loaf of unleavened bread was held up to the light, light would penetrate through it.

The *Afikomen* ceremony is a special ceremony with the unleavened bread that is conducted during the paschal meal. There would be a bag containing three compartments in the center of the Passover table. This bag was usually square and it was sewn up on three sides, leaving one side open. A loaf or cake of unleavened bread is placed into each compartment, each one separated from the other by a single sheet. In the Afikomen ceremony, the middle cake is taken out of the bag and broken in two. Half of it is wrapped in linen cloth and hidden away. After it has been hidden for a time, it is removed from its hiding place, unwrapped, and broken up so that each person has his own piece to eat.

2. The Wine

The second key element in the Jewish observance of Passover is the wine. Each person will drink four cups of wine in the course of the paschal meal, and each cup has its own name. The first cup is called “the cup of blessing” or “the cup of thanksgiving.” The second cup, called “the cup of plagues,” symbolizes the ten plagues that fell upon Egypt. The third cup, called “the cup of redemption,” symbolizes the physical redemption of Israel from Egypt by means of the shedding of the blood of the paschal lamb. The fourth cup is called “the cup of praise” with which the Jewish people sing Psalms 113-118.

C. The Messianic Significance

Within the framework of the Old Testament, the messianic significance is found in Isaiah 52:13-53:12. The coming Messiah is pictured in terms of a lamb in that statements made of the Servant of Jehovah in Isaiah 53 are similar to statements used of the paschal lamb. In this passage, Isaiah teaches that the Messiah would be the final Passover Lamb.

1. The Passover Lamb Identified

The New Testament sees the death of the Messiah as the fulfillment of the Passover motif: the slaying of the lamb. For example, four New

Testament passages clearly connect the Messiah with the Passover Lamb. First, John the Baptist introduced Yeshua to the Jewish people in John 1:29, 35, and 36 as *the Lamb of God, that takes away the sin of the world*. In this way, John identified Yeshua in terms of the paschal lamb of Exodus 12 and with the Messianic Lamb of Isaiah 53. Secondly, the Messiah is also pictured as *a lamb* in I Peter 1:18-19. Thirdly, He is seen as *the Lamb that has been slain* in Revelation 5:12. And fourthly, not only is Jesus identified with the lamb itself, but Paul identifies Him with the entire Feast of Passover in I Corinthians 5:7: *Purge out the old leaven, that ye may be a new lump, even as ye are unleavened. For our passover also has been sacrificed, even Christ.*

According to the biblical practice, the lamb was to be set aside on the tenth day of the month. From the tenth until the fourteenth day of the month the lamb was to be tested to be sure it was “without spot and without blemish.” Yeshua was set aside on the tenth day of the month with the Triumphal Entry. The purpose of the Triumphal Entry was not so much to present Himself as King of the Jews, for He had already done that. The purpose was to set Himself aside as the Lamb of God. From the tenth day of the month until the fourteenth day of the month, He was tested by four groups: the Pharisees, Sadducees, Scribes, and Herodians. After their testing showed Him to be “without spot and without blemish,” He was qualified to be the final Passover sacrifice.

Remember, the Jewish day begins at sundown so that the first night precedes the first day. On the first night of the Passover, the paschal lamb is eaten. On the first day of the Passover, there was a special Passover sacrifice at 9 o'clock in the morning. The paschal meal that Jesus ate with His disciples is often called the “Last Supper,” but it should be called the “Last Passover.” He ate the Passover on the night of the fourteenth, the same night Jewish people normally eat it. He was crucified the next morning at 9 o'clock; the exact hour that the Passover sacrifice was being offered in the Temple Compound, He was nailed to the cross. Just as no bone was to be broken with the Passover lamb, so no bone of Jesus was broken (Jn. 19:36). Again, Passover was fulfilled by the death of the Messiah.

Some of the Jewish observances of the Passover discussed earlier are reflected in the Gospel accounts of the last Passover or the first Lord's Supper. The passage that gives the most details is Luke 22:14-20. As mentioned earlier, there are two major elements in the Jewish observance. First, the unleavened bread with its three requirements: unleavened, striped, and pierced. Furthermore, during the Afikomen ceremony, the middle loaf or cake is removed, broken in two, wrapped in linen cloth, and hidden for a time. It is then removed from its hiding place, unwrapped from the linen cloth, and pieces are broken off to distribute to each participant in the Passover.

2. The Unleavened Bread Identified

Yeshua referred to that bread as representing His body in Luke 22:19: *And he took bread, and when he had given thanks, he broke it, and gave to them, saying, This is my body which is given for you: this do in remembrance of me.*

The three requirements for unleavened bread in the Jewish observance of Passover are true of the body of the Messiah. First, the bread had to be unleavened because leaven is the symbol of sin; His body was also unleavened in that it was sinless. If He had committed only one sin, He would have been disqualified from becoming the Passover sacrifice. But Yeshua was the only Jew who ever lived that kept the Mosaic Law perfectly. Therefore, having an “unleavened” body, He was qualified to make the sacrifice for sin. Secondly, the unleavened bread had to be striped; the body of the Messiah was also striped by way of the Roman whip at the scourging. Isaiah 53:5 states: *with his stripes we are healed.* Thirdly, the bread also had to be pierced; the body of the Messiah was also pierced by the nails in His hands and feet and by the spear thrust into His side. Zechariah 12:10 states: *they shall look unto me whom they have pierced.* By being striped, pierced, and unleavened, the Jewish Passover bread is a unique picture of the body of the Messiah.

The bag with three compartments in the Afikomen ceremony portrays the One God who exists in three Persons: the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit. In this ceremony the middle loaf is removed; this is a picture of the Incarnation when the Second Person of the Trinity became man in the person of Jesus of Nazareth. The loaf is broken in two; this is a picture of His death. When the Messiah came to this part of the ceremony, He stated: *This is my body which is given for you.* Part of the loaf is wrapped in linen cloth. The Gospels make it clear that the body of Jesus was also wrapped in linen cloth when He was removed from the cross. The broken loaf is then hidden for a time; this is a picture of His burial. Later, it is removed from its hiding place and unwrapped; this is a picture of His Resurrection. Finally, pieces are broken off and distributed to everyone around the table; this is a picture of John 6:51, where Jesus stated that all must partake of His body. In that same chapter, He clearly interprets the “eating” of His body as believing that He is the Messiah.

3. The Wine Identified

Furthermore, there are four cups of wine in the Jewish observance of Passover. Luke mentions only the first and third cups. The first cup is in Luke 22:17-18, the cup of thanksgiving over which the observance begins. When Yeshua began His observance, He drank the first cup and said a thanksgiving over it. The third cup is mentioned in Luke 22:20. The third cup is called “the cup of redemption” by the Jewish people because it symbolizes their physical redemption brought about in the land of Egypt by the blood of the paschal lamb. Now it becomes a symbol of a spiritual redemption from enslavement to sin. Yeshua clearly identified Himself in terms of the Jewish observance of

the Passover, therefore, the Passover is fulfilled by the death of the Messiah.

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II. THE FEAST OF UNLEAVENED BREAD: LEVITICUS 23:6-8

And on the fifteenth day of the same month is the feast of unleavened bread unto Jehovah: seven days ye shall eat unleavened bread. In the first day ye shall have a holy convocation: ye shall do no servile work. But ye shall offer an offering made by fire unto Jehovah seven days: in the seventh day is a holy convocation; ye shall do no servile work.

In addition to this passage, the Feast of Unleavened Bread is mentioned in six other passages; five of them are in the Old Testament and one in the New Testament. First, Numbers 28:17-25 emphasizes the various sacrifices and the special sacrifices that were obligatory for this feast. Secondly, Deuteronomy 16:3-8 emphasizes the necessity of a total absence of leaven during the Feast of Unleavened Bread. Thirdly, II Chronicles 29:23-27 records how this feast was kept by Hezekiah the king. Fourthly, Ezra 6:21-22 states that it was also kept in the days of Ezra. Fifth, Ezekiel 45:21-24 prophesies that it will be observed during the Messianic Kingdom. Not all of the festivals will be observed during the Messianic Kingdom, but this one will. Sixth, the one place this feast is mentioned in the New Testament is Mark 14:1, and records Jesus' observance of this feast.

The Hebrew name for this feast is *Hag Hamatzot* which means "the feast of unleavened bread," emphasizing the necessity of the absence of leaven.

A. The Biblical Practice

The biblical practice was that no leaven could be eaten during these seven days, but the Jews were free to eat anything allowable under the Mosaic Law.

B. The Jewish Observance

Two things should be noted in the Jewish observance of the feast. First, it follows the biblical practice of not eating leaven for seven days. Secondly, there are specially prepared foods made for this occasion, often containing unleavened bread. For example, there is a Jewish pancake that is made with broken pieces of unleavened bread mixed with scrambled eggs that is quite tasty. Also all sandwiches are made with unleavened bread.

C. The Messianic Significance

Three things should be noted in the messianic significance of the Feast of Unleavened Bread. First, leaven, when used symbolically in the Scriptures, is a symbol of sin. Secondly, the Feast of Unleavened

Bread is fulfilled by the offering of the sinless blood of the Messiah. This is the point that the writer of Hebrews makes quite extensively in Hebrews 9:11-10:18. While the Passover was fulfilled by the actual death of Yeshua, the Feast of Unleavened Bread was fulfilled by the offering of His sinless blood. When He was offered up as a sacrifice and shed sinless blood, the moment His blood was spilled outside His body, the Feast of Unleavened Bread was fulfilled. The Feast of Unleavened Bread was to begin on the fifteenth day of the month; that is also the very day Yeshua died on the cross and, therefore, shed innocent blood.

Another implication of the Feast of Unleavened Bread is that believers are to keep the Feast of Unleavened Bread by a holy walk as stated in I Corinthians 5:6-8. In verse 7, believers are admonished to: *Purge out the old leaven* in their lives because *our passover was sacrificed, even Christ*. Again, leaven is the symbol of sin. Of course, believers commit sin, and this leaven or sin in their lives must be purged out. A person is born again when he accepts Jesus as his Passover sacrifice in fulfillment of this feast. At that point, he experiences the regenerating work of the Holy Spirit; he is baptized into the Body of the Messiah; and he is placed into the family of God. Once a believer is in the family of God, he can never fall out. However, fellowship within the family can be broken by sin or leaven in the believer's life.

The means of purging out leaven from the believer's life in order to restore the fellowship within the family of God is in found I John 1:9: *If we confess our sins, he is faithful and righteous to forgive us our sins, and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness.*

By means of confession, the believer can purge his life of leaven. In that way, he will keep the Feast of Unleavened Bread in its spiritual sense.

The Feast of the Passover was fulfilled by the death of the Messiah. The Feast of Unleavened Bread was fulfilled by the sinlessness of His sacrifice.

III. THE FEAST OF THE FIRSTFRUITS: LEVITICUS 23:9-14

And Jehovah spoke unto Moses, saying, Speak unto the children of Israel, and say unto them, When ye are come into the land which I give unto you, and shall reap the harvest thereof, then ye shall bring the sheaf of the first-fruits of your harvest unto the priest: and he shall wave the sheaf before Jehovah, to be accepted for you: on the morrow after the sabbath the priest shall wave it. And in the day when ye wave the sheaf, ye shall offer a he-lamb without blemish a year old for a burnt-offering unto Jehovah. And the meal-offering thereof shall be two tenth parts of an ephah of fine flour mingled with oil, an offering made by fire unto Jehovah for a

sweet savor; and the drink-offering thereof shall be of wine, the fourth part of a hin. And ye shall eat neither bread, nor parched grain, nor fresh ears, until this selfsame day, until ye have brought the oblation of your God: it is a statute for ever throughout your generations in all your dwellings.

This feast is mentioned only one other time, Numbers 28:26-31, where Moses spells out the special sacrifices that are obligatory for the Feast of the Firstfruits.

All together, this feast has three different names. First, one Hebrew name is *Reshit Ketziachem*, which means “the firstfruits of your harvest.” Secondly, it is called the “Feast of Omer” because of a special Jewish ceremony, the counting of the omer, that begins on this occasion. Thirdly, it is called the “Feast of the Wave-sheath” because of what was obligatory for the feast.

A. The Biblical Practice

Insofar as the biblical practice is concerned, four things should be noted. First, it was the firstfruits of the barley and grain harvests. Secondly, there was to be a one-sheath offering. Thirdly, it was offered the day after the Sabbath, which would be the first day of the week or Sunday. Fourthly, it marked the beginning of the two-month spring harvest.

B. The Jewish Observance

Insofar as the Jewish observance is concerned, in biblical times the Jewish practice followed largely the biblical practice. Since A.D. 70, this feast was largely ignored because it is a feast of agriculture. Jews of the Diaspora were not allowed to own land because of Gentile law, therefore, they could not farm the land and the feast could not be practiced for most of the centuries since A.D. 70. Today in Israel, however, some new innovations are being brought into practice in the observance of the Feast of the Firstfruits.

C. The Messianic Significance

Insofar as the messianic significance is concerned, the Feast of Firstfruits was fulfilled by the Resurrection of Yeshua. This is what Paul brings out in I Corinthians 15:20-23: *But now has Christ been raised from the dead, the firstfruits of them that are asleep. For since by man came death, by man came also the resurrection of the dead. For as in Adam all die, so also in Christ shall all be made alive. But each in his own order: Christ the firstfruits; then they that are Christ's, at his coming*

According to Paul, Yeshua was the firstfruits of the Resurrection. According to the biblical practice, the Feast of Firstfruits came the day after the Sabbath, meaning Sunday. Even so, the Messiah was resurrected the day after the Sabbath, Sunday. While the Feast of the Passover was fulfilled by His death, and the Feast of Unleavened Bread was fulfilled by the sinlessness of His sacrifice, the Feast of Firstfruits is fulfilled by His Resurrection. Yeshua was not the first one

to be raised from the dead, but all the other resurrections were merely “restorations” back to natural life because these people died again. However, in the case of Yeshua, He was the first One resurrected into true resurrection life where “corruption puts on incorruption and mortality puts on immortality.” Being the only One who has experienced this type of resurrection, He is the firstfruits of the first resurrection. The firstfruits always means “the first of more to come later.” Indeed, some day believers will be the “more to come later.”

NOTES

IV. THE FEAST OF WEEKS: LEVITICUS 23:15-21

And ye shall count unto you from the morrow after the sabbath, from the day that ye brought the sheaf of the wave-offering; seven sabbaths shall there be complete: even unto the morrow after the seventh sabbath shall ye number fifty days; and ye shall offer a new meal-offering unto Jehovah. Ye shall bring out of your habitations two wave-loaves of two tenth parts of an ephah: they shall be of fine flour, they shall be baked with leaven, for first-fruits unto Jehovah. And ye shall present with the bread seven lambs without blemish a year old, and one young bullock, and two rams: they shall be a burnt-offering unto Jehovah, with their meal-offering, and their drink-offerings, even an offering made by fire, of a sweet savor unto Jehovah. And ye shall offer one he-goat for a sin-offering, and two he-lambs a year old for a sacrifice of peace-offerings. And the priest shall wave them with the bread of the first-fruits for a wave-offering before Jehovah, with the two lambs: they shall be holy to Jehovah for the priest. And ye shall make proclamation on the selfsame day; there shall be a holy convocation unto you; ye shall do no servile work: it is a statute for ever in all your dwellings throughout your generations.

Because it occurs seven weeks after Passover, this feast is called *Shavuot*, meaning “weeks.” The Feast of Weeks is mentioned in seven other passages, four of which are in the Old Testament and three in the New Testament. First, the Feast of Weeks is also called *the first-fruits of your labors* in Exodus 23:16. Secondly, it is called *the first-fruits of wheat harvest* in Exodus 34:22. Thirdly, it is called *the feast of weeks* in Numbers 28:26. Fourthly, the Jewish people were commanded to rejoice on this occasion in Deuteronomy 16:9-12. Fifth, the Holy Spirit began His work of Spirit baptism in Acts 2:1-4 and the Church was born. The sixth passage tells of Paul’s desire to be in Jerusalem to observe this feast in Acts 20:16. Seventh, Paul mentioned that he would be in Ephesus until this feast in I Corinthians 16:8.

There are a total of seven different names for Feast of Weeks. First, it is called the “Feast of Weeks” because it takes place seven weeks after the Passover. Secondly, it is called the “Feast of Harvest” because it marked the end of the first or the spring harvest season that began with the Passover. Thirdly, it is called the “Day of the Firstfruits” to distinguish it from the “Feast of the Firstfruits.” The firstfruits of the summer harvest are offered on this occasion while the firstfruits of the spring harvest were offered in the Feast of the Firstfruits. Fourthly, it is called the “Closing Festival” because it marked the end of the first

cycle of festivals. As stated earlier, there are seven different festivals mentioned in Leviticus 23 that are grouped in two sets. The first four feasts come within fifty days of each other; the next three come within two weeks of each other. Between the first cycle of festivals and the second cycle of feasts, there is a period of four months. Because the Feast of Weeks closes the first cycle of feasts that began with Passover, it is called the Closing Festival. Fifth, it is called the “Closing Season of the Passover,” for the same reason as the previous name. Sixth, it is called the “Season of the Giving of the Law” because of a Jewish tradition that the Mosaic Law, particularly the Ten Commandments, were given on this occasion. And seventh, the most familiar name among Gentile believers is the “Feast of Pentecost.” This name comes from a Greek term that means “fifty” because it occurs fifty days after Passover.

A. The Biblical Practice

Insofar as the biblical practice is concerned, three things should be noted. First, there were two wave-loaves offered on a single sheet on this occasion. Secondly, these loaves were to be leavened. This is the only festival where leaven was permitted to be added to the sacrifice. Leaven is a symbol of sin, and those who are represented by this sacrifice are sinners. Thirdly, the date of this feast was the sixth day of the month of Sivan, seven weeks plus one day after the second day of Passover.

B. The Jewish Observance

Concerning the Jewish observance of the Feast of Weeks, several things should be noted. First, it is observed by the reading of the Book of Ruth because the story took place during the time of harvest. One reason given for the reading of this book is because Ruth was a Gentile who became a convert to the Law and the rabbis taught that the Law was given on this occasion. Furthermore, the Book of Ruth is read because of another Jewish tradition that King David, a descendant of Ruth, was born during the Feast of Weeks.

A second Jewish practice is to stay up all night in order to study the Mosaic Law. The reason the rabbis give for this custom is that there was thunder and lightning at the time the Law was given and this kept the Jews awake all night.

A third Jewish practice is the eating of a special food item called *kreplach*. Kreplach is a form of Jewish ravioli, consisting of chopped meat, garlic, and onions enclosed in pasta. Whereas Italian ravioli is generally made in squares, Jewish kreplach comes in triangular fashion. The three sides signify several things. It signifies the three Patriarchs: Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob. It signifies the three divisions of the Old Testament: the Law, the Prophets, and the Writings. It signifies that Moses was the third of the three children of that family.

And it signifies the three days that were necessary in the preparation for the receiving of the Law. Rather than being served in tomato sauce, kreplach is usually served fried or in chicken soup. A second Jewish custom for this occasion is the eating of cheese. Cheese is produced from milk, one of the products of the Holy Land. God was bringing them to a Land that was to be flowing with “milk and honey.” Another special food item is the cheese blintz, closely resembling a crepe suzette. This is a very thin pancake, usually filled with cream cheese, folded into a rectangular form, and then fried or baked. It is usually eaten with some kind of sour cream sauce or fruit topping. Usually two of these are served side by side to represent the two tablets of the Law which, according to the teaching of the rabbis, was given to Moses on this occasion.

One other Jewish practice to mention is that branches from trees and grass from the field are spread over the floor of the synagogue on this occasion, as a reminder that Jewish people should be praying for a bumper crop of fruit.

C. The Messianic Significance

Three elements should be noted in the messianic significance of the Feast of Weeks: first, the birth of the Church; secondly, the two loaves; and thirdly, the application.

1. The Birth of the Church

The Feast of Weeks is specifically fulfilled by the birth of the Church (Acts 2:1-4). It is no accident that the Church was born on the Feast of Weeks or the Feast of Pentecost. It was on this occasion that the Holy Spirit began a new ministry. Some have taught that this is the first appearance of the Holy Spirit, but that is simply not so. The activity of the Holy Spirit is seen throughout the pages of the Old Testament and the Gospels. What was new in Acts 2 was not the coming of the Holy Spirit as such, but rather, a new ministry of the Holy Spirit: the ministry of Spirit baptism. No one was ever baptized by the Holy Spirit throughout the pages of the Old Testament; neither was anyone ever baptized by the Spirit in the Gospels. The first time the Holy Spirit began to do His work of baptism was in Acts 2. It is a unique ministry that concerns the Church and the Church alone. This occasion, the birth of the Church, was the fulfillment of the Feast of Weeks.

That Spirit baptism and the birth of the Church are intertwined is obvious from several lines of evidence. First, it is stated in Colossians 1:18 that the Church is the Body of the Messiah. Secondly, it is stated in Ephesians 2:11-16 that this Body, the Church, is composed of Jewish and Gentile believers united into one Body. Thirdly, it is stated that entrance into this Body is by Spirit baptism in I Corinthians 12:13: *For in one Spirit were we all baptized into one body, whether Jews or*

Greeks, whether bond or free; and were all made to drink of one Spirit.

If the Church is the Body of the Messiah, and it is; and if the Body is composed of Jewish and Gentile believers, and it is; and if the entrance into the Body is by means of Spirit baptism, and it is; that in itself means two more things. First, it means that no one could be part of the Body until Acts 2, because only then did Spirit baptism begin. Spirit baptism is absolutely essential for the membership and growth of the Body. Secondly, it means that every believer is baptized by the Spirit. That is why Paul makes this so clear in I Corinthians 12:13: *For in one Spirit were we all baptized into one body.* The coming of the Holy Spirit in Acts 2 began His work of Spirit baptism giving birth to the Church, the Body of the Messiah. Because every believer is a member of the Body of the Messiah, every believer, at the moment he believes, is baptized by the Holy Spirit into the Body of the Messiah. Therefore, the Feast of Weeks was fulfilled by the birthday of the Church.

2. The Two Loaves

The second element by way of messianic significance is to remember that there were to be two loaves offered on a single sheet in the biblical practice of this feast. These two loaves represent two types of people in the Church: Jews and Gentiles, united into one Body (Eph. 2:11-16; 3:5-6). Furthermore, these loaves were to be leavened. Since leaven is a symbol of sin, this means that Jewish and Gentile sinners are brought into the Church, the Body of the Messiah.

3. The Application

It was pointed out that the Feast of Weeks is also called the “Day of Firstfruits” because it marked the firstfruits of the summer harvest. The application is that the firstfruits were Jewish believers. For example, the firstfruits of the Church are the three thousand Jews who were saved on that occasion according to Acts 2:41-42. They comprised the Church of that day. Furthermore, James, who wrote specifically to Jewish believers (Jas. 1:1-2), called these Jewish believers “firstfruits” in James 1:18.

The Feast of Weeks is fulfilled by the birthday of the Church that is constituted of Jewish and Gentile believers into one Body. The firstfruits aspect is fulfilled by virtue of the fact that Jewish believers were the first ones in this Body during the first century.

V. THE FOUR-MONTH INTERVAL: LEVITICUS 23:22

The first four feasts were fulfilled by the program of the First Coming of the Messiah and occur within fifty days of each other. Between the first four feasts and the last three feasts, there is a four-month interval mentioned in passing in Leviticus 23:22: *And when ye reap the harvest of your land, you shall not wholly reap the corners of your field, neither shall you gather the gleaning of your harvest: you shall leave them for the poor, and for the*

sojourner: I am Jehovah your God.

NOTES

During the pause between the two sets of festivals, life is to continue along normal lines. This interval is pictured as a summertime of labor in the fields in preparation for the final harvest of the summer and before the fall harvest. This verse is not related to any feast. Unless one understands what is really happening, it almost seems like an unnecessary interruption. However, it is the pause between the festivals that fulfilled the program of the First Coming as opposed to the festivals to be fulfilled by the program of the Second Coming. This interval of four months does have a messianic implication.

The messianic implication is the insertion of the Church Age, interrupting the program of the feasts of Israel. Indeed, “the gleanings for the poor and the stranger” is a very good picture of the mission of the Church itself in gospel evangelism. For example, John 4:35 states: *look on the fields, that they are white already unto harvest.* Thus, it becomes a fitting symbol of the obligation of the Church to do the work of gospel evangelism. Leviticus 23:22, being a parenthetical verse interrupting the discussion of the feasts of Israel, is significant in that it symbolizes the present age in which we now live and in which the program of the feasts of Israel has been temporarily interrupted.

The last three festivals in the second cycle of festivals also come close together, even closer than those of the first cycle of feasts. In fact, they all come within two weeks of each other. The last three feasts of the second cycle are to be fulfilled by the program of the Second Coming.

VI. THE FEAST OF TRUMPETS: LEVITICUS 23:23-25

And Jehovah spoke unto Moses, saying, Speak unto the children of Israel, saying, In the seventh month, on the first day of the month, shall be a solemn rest unto you, a memorial of blowing of trumpets, a holy convocation. Ye shall do no servile work; and ye shall offer an offering made by fire unto Jehovah.

These three verses very simply describe the Feast of Trumpets. It is mentioned in two other passages in Scripture. First, Numbers 29:1-6 emphasizes the various sacrifices which were obligatory for this festival. Secondly, Nehemiah 8:1-12 states that it was during the Feast of Trumpets that Ezra read the Law of Moses before the people.

This feast has a total of five different names. The first is *Yom Truah*, which means “the day of the blowing of the trumpets.” This is a biblical name for this feast. It is taught in modern Judaism that this name was given because there is a call to Jews to remember their sins on this day.

The second name is the “Memorial of Triumph” or the “Shouting of

Joy.” This name is based on Job 38:7, which stated that when God created the heavens and the earth on this day *all the sons of God shouted for joy*. In this context, the sons of God are angels. There is a Jewish tradition that the world was created on the Feast of Trumpets, which gave rise to the second name.

A third name for this feast is the “Day of Remembrance.” Jewish theology teaches that it is given this name because there is a call to Jews to remember their sins on this day before the next holy season, which is *Yom Kippur* or the Day of Atonement.

The fourth name is the “Day of Judgment.” A Jewish tradition teaches that on this day all Jews pass in judgment to see if their sins will be forgiven or not.

The fifth name is the most common name among Jewish people today for this feast, *Rosh Hashanah*, which means “the head of the year.” It is the beginning of the Jewish civil year. Technically speaking, the Jewish calendar has two New Years. The religious New Year begins in the spring with the Feast of Passover. The civil year begins in the fall with the Feast of Trumpets. This is called the Jewish New Year because it is based on the Jewish tradition that it was on this day that God created the heavens and the earth.

A. The Biblical Practice

Insofar as the biblical practice is concerned, four things should be mentioned. First, it was a one-day festival only. Secondly, it was to be a day on which there was to be no labor; it was a day of rest like the Sabbath. Thirdly, it was to be celebrated by the blowing of trumpets. Fourthly, the “trumpet” was not a long, silver trumpet as often depicted in many Bible picture books. Rather, the trumpet in this case was the horn of a ram called the *shofar*. By Jewish law, horns of all kosher animals are permitted except for bulls, but the ram’s horn has been preferred because of its symbolic link with the offering of Isaac in Genesis 22.

B. The Jewish Observance

Insofar as the Jewish observance of this particular feast is concerned, six things should be noted: the blowing of the shofar, the meaning of the blowing, the trumpet blasts, the *Taslich* ceremony, the legends of the feast, and the special foods.

1. The Blowing of the Shofar

On this occasion the trumpet is blown in the synagogue. In Jewish theology, there are three reasons for blowing the trumpet. First, it is a call to remembrance and repentance. On this day there is a call for all Jews to return to Judaism, for on this day all Jews will pass under judgment. The second reason for the blowing of the trumpet is as a

reminder of Israel's covenant-relationship with God. The third reason for the blowing of the ram's horn is to confuse Satan on the day that he accuses Israel, according to Zechariah 3:1.

2. The Meaning of the Blowing of the *Shofar*

There are three meanings of the blowing of the shofar or ram's horn. First, it is a symbol of the regathering of Israel; Israel's regathering is to be signaled by the blowing of a trumpet according to Isaiah 27:12-13. The second meaning is that it is a symbol of the resurrection of the dead, for a trumpet will sound when the dead are raised. The third meaning for the blowing of the trumpet is that on this day, when the trumpet is blown on earth, three books are opened in Heaven. The first book is the Book of the Righteous, in which the righteous have their names inscribed. This means that they are in the Book of Life and will survive another year. The second book is the Book of the Wicked, in which the names of the wicked are inscribed. This is also known as the Book of the Dead. These are the ones who are completely wicked, which means that they will die during that year. There is a third book called the Book of the In-Between. Since most Jews are neither totally righteous nor totally wicked, they are inscribed in the Book of the In-Between on this day and are given the ten days between the Feast of Trumpets and the Day of Atonement to repent. Since one can never be sure in which book his name will be inscribed, the Jewish teaching is that he should assume his name is in this book and repent during these ten days.

3. The Trumpet Blasts

The third thing about the Jewish observance concerns the trumpet blasts. There will be a total of one hundred blasts, divided into four different types.

The first type is called *tekiah*, which is a long, single blast. It is a straight, plain, smooth, continuous note, symbolizing the expression of joy and contentment.

The second type of trumpet blast is the *shevarim*, which is three short blasts, a combination of three broken notes.

The third type is called the *truah*, which are extremely short blasts consisting of nine staccato notes. It is a quick succession of short trills, symbolizing trepidation and sorrow. These first three types of blasts, the *tekiah*, *shevarim*, and *truah*, are intermixed back and forth, until a total of ninety-nine blasts are sounded.

Finally comes the fourth and the last type called the *tekiah gedolah*, which means "the great *tekiah*," "the great blast," "the last trump." This is a long, single, sustained note that concludes the blowing of the trumpets, the one hundredth trumpet blast.

4. The *Tashlich* Ceremony

A fourth thing to mention about the Jewish observance is a ceremony practiced by orthodox Jewish people called *Tashlich*. This ceremony is based on Micah 7:19, where Micah prophesied that the day will come when God will cast the sins of Israel into the depths of the sea. The *Tashlich* ceremony is done in the afternoon of that day. Jewish people come to a body of water such as a river, lake, or ocean beach and empty their pockets into the water, symbolizing the day when God will cast the sins of Israel into the depths of the sea.

5. The Legends of the Feast of Trumpets

The fifth thing concerning the Jewish observance of the Feast of Trumpets today is the many legends concerning the significance of this day. Here are a few of those legends connected with this feast: it was on this day that the world was created; it was on this day that Adam was created; it was on this day that Adam fell; it was on this day that Cain was born with a twin sister and Abel was born with a twin sister; it was on this day that Cain killed Abel; it was on this day that the waters of the flood dried up; it was on this day that Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob were born and all subsequently died on this day; it was on this day that Sarah, Rebecca, and Hannah all gave birth; it was on this day that Elisha blessed the woman of Shunem with a child; and it was on this day that the sacrifices were resumed when the Temple was rebuilt after the Jews returned from Babylonian captivity.

6. The Special Foods

One last thing to mention concerning the Jewish practice of this feast concerns the special food items such as, eating bread that is dipped in honey on this occasion to symbolize the hope for a sweet year, for the civil new year begins. Apples that are also dipped in honey are eaten. A hot dish known as “honey carrots” is eaten. The festive meal of this occasion includes some type of a head meat. Sometimes it is a ram’s head, in memory of the sacrifice of Isaac. Sometimes it is a fish head, in the hope that Jews will be the “head” some day and not the “tail.” The popular fruits for this occasion are apples, grapes, and pomegranates.

C. The Messianic Significance

Two basic elements make up the messianic significance of the Feast of Trumpets: the regathering of Israel and the Rapture of the Church.

1. The Regathering of Israel

The regathering of Israel is signaled by the blowing of a trumpet in Isaiah 27:13. One significance of the Feast of Trumpets is that Israel will become a state before the Great Tribulation itself.

2. The Rapture of the Church

The Rapture of the Church will be the ultimate fulfillment of the Feast of Trumpets. There are two main passages that give the details of the Rapture of the Church, both of which mention a trumpet.

a. I Thessalonians 4:13-18

Verse 16 of that passage reads: *For the Lord himself shall descend from heaven, with a shout, with the voice of the archangel, and with the trump of God: and the dead in Christ shall rise first;*

One of the things that will sound on the day the Rapture occurs will be the trump of God. On one hand, Yeshua will give a shout; on the other hand, the archangel will repeat that shout, but then a trumpet will be blown, setting into motion the events of the Rapture.

b. I Corinthians 15:15-58

The presence of a trumpet is mentioned twice in verse 52: *in a moment, in the twinkling of an eye, at the last trump: for the trumpet shall sound, and the dead shall be raised incorruptible, and we shall be changed.*

The events of the Rapture are: first, the resurrection of the dead saints; this is when “corruption puts on incorruption.” And secondly, the catching up or “rapturing,” of the living saints; this is when “mortality puts on immortality.” This will be signaled by the blowing of a trumpet, which is clearly said to be *the last trump*.

Posttribulationists believe that the Church will go through the Tribulation and will often use this verse as evidence to support their view. They argue that since the Rapture occurs at the last trump and that since the last trump is the seventh trumpet of the Book of Revelation, this proves that the Church will go through the Tribulation. One thing to keep in mind is that Paul could not possibly have been referring to the seventh trumpet of Revelation simply because the Book of Revelation was not written when Paul wrote I Corinthians. Obviously, when he wrote that chapter, he was expecting his readers at the Corinthian Church to know what he was talking about when he used the term the last trump. The Corinthians could not have turned to the Book of Revelation; it had not been written.

Paul is writing from his own Pharisaic, rabbinic background. The last trump is the technical term for the final, long, and most significant trumpet blast of the Feast of Trumpets. When Paul used this term, he did not mean the seventh trumpet of the Book of Revelation; rather, he meant the final trumpet blast of the Feast of Trumpets. Paul was saying that the Feast of Trumpets was going to be fulfilled by the Rapture of the Church.

In light of the fact that the Feast of Trumpets precedes the Day of Atonement, even so the Rapture actually has to precede the Tribulation itself, thus fulfilling the Feast of Trumpets.

VII. THE DAY OF ATONEMENT: LEVITICUS 23:26-32

And Jehovah spoke unto Moses, saying, Howbeit on the tenth day of this seventh month is the day of atonement: it shall be a holy convocation unto you, and ye shall afflict your souls; and ye shall offer an offering made by fire unto Jehovah. And ye

shall do no manner of work in that same day; for it is a day of atonement, to make atonement for you before Jehovah your God. For whatsoever soul it be that shall not be afflicted in that same day; he shall be cut off from his people. And whatsoever soul it be that does any manner of work in that same day, that soul will I destroy from among his people. Ye shall do no manner of work: it is a statute for ever throughout your generations in all your dwellings. It shall be unto you a sabbath of solemn rest, and ye shall afflict your souls: in the ninth day of the month at even, from even unto even, shall ye keep your sabbath.

Because the Day of Atonement is not a festival, the expression “holy season” is a better way to describe it. This holy season is also mentioned in five other passages. First, in Leviticus 16:1-34, which will be discussed in the section detailing the biblical practices of this feast. Secondly, Leviticus 25:8-12 spells out some special rules for observances that fall on a Sabbatical year, every seventh year, or during the year of the jubilee, every fiftieth year. Thirdly, Numbers 29:7-11 emphasizes the special offerings and sacrifices for this occasion. Fourthly, Hebrews 9:11-10:18 compares the blood-sacrifice of the animal to the blood of the Messiah and shows the superiority of the blood of the Messiah. Fifth, Hebrews 13:10-16 draws a comparison between the sacrifices being burned outside the camp and the Messiah’s dying outside the gates of Jerusalem. The connection is that just as the Day of Atonement sacrifice was burnt outside the camp, even so Jesus suffered outside the camp, outside the gate and walls of Jerusalem.

There are three different names for this particular holy season. The most common name is Yom Kippur, which means “the day of atonement.” The second name, *Yom Hakippurim*, is very similar and means “the day of atonements.” This name uses the plural form of the word “atonement” because, in Jewish tradition, atonements on this day were made for both the living and the dead. The third name is *Shabbat Shabbaton*, which means “the Sabbath of Sabbaths” because this is by far the holiest of rest days. All the laws that apply to the Sabbath also apply to this day, and more so.

A. The Biblical Practice

Three things should be noted insofar as the biblical practice is concerned: the affliction of the soul, the details of the biblical practice, and the two key elements.

1. The Affliction of the Soul

In the biblical practice, it was to be a time of the affliction of the soul, a day of individual and national atonement.

2. The Details of the Biblical Practice

The second thing about the biblical practice of the Day of Atonement is the details that are given by Leviticus 16:1-34. To summarize this passage, verses 1-2 spell out the restrictions concerning the Holy of

Holies in that the Holy of Holies was limited to only one person, the high priest. Even then, he was allowed to enter only on one day of the year: the Day of Atonement.

Verses 3-5 concern the preparations of the sacrifices; an offering, consisting of a bullock, was to be made for the high priest. The high priest was dressed in the special high-priestly clothing for this occasion. There was also to be the offering for the people that consisted of two goats.

Verses 6-10 concern the presentation of the sacrifices; the bullock or calf was presented for the high priest, and the two goats were presented on behalf of the people. The two goats were brought before the high priest, and lots were cast to determine which goat would be the offering for Jehovah as a sin-offering and which goat would be the scapegoat, the goat of removal or the goat for *Azazel*. Once it was decided by the casting of lots which goat would live and which goat would die, atonement would be made for the high priest.

Verses 11-14 concern the atonement for the high priest; the calf would be killed and the blood brought into the Holy of Holies of the Tabernacle or the Temple. This was the first time that the high priest would enter the Holy of Holies on this occasion. Once the sins of the high priest were atoned for, then came the atonement for the people.

Verses 15-19 concern the goat that was selected to die; this was the sin-offering on behalf of the people. The blood of the goat would then be taken into the Holy of Holies, and for the second time on this occasion, the high priest entered the Holy of Holies.

Verses 20-22 concern the second goat; the goat for removal, for Azazel. The high priest laid his hands upon the head of the live goat and confessed the sins of Israel. The goat was then driven out into the wilderness, picturing the removal of Israel's sins. The principal is: following the shedding of blood, came the removal of sins.

Verses 23-28 concern the cleansing of the participants; this included the burning of the remainder of the Day of Atonement sacrifice outside the camp.

Verses 29-34 spell out further restrictions and specifications.

3. The Two Key Elements

There were two key elements concerning the biblical practice of the Day of Atonement. First, it was a time of the affliction of the soul. Secondly, it was a time when two goats would be offered: one to die and one to live to remove the sins.

B. The Jewish Observance

In dealing with the Jewish observance on this occasion, several things

should be mentioned. First, the basic tenet in modern Judaism is that man can achieve atonement for his sins by his own efforts; this is not a biblical teaching however.

The second thing about the Jewish observance is a substitution for the biblical practices. Instead of the affliction of the soul, the first key element of the biblical observance, Judaism practices the affliction of the body. This day is a day of fasting. It used to be a common practice for some Jews to have themselves flogged on the day before the Day of Atonement.

Because the Temple with its sacrificial system is no longer standing, most Jewish people do not practice any form of blood-sacrifice. The teaching of the rabbis is that repentance, prayer, and charity are valid substitutes for sacrifice. Ultra-orthodox Jews still practice a form of blood-sacrifice; instead of the goat, the sacrifice is that of a chicken, a rooster for a male and a hen for a female. Before the fowl is sacrificed, it is raised over the head and the following prayer is recited: "This is my substitute. This is my exchange. This is my atonement. This fowl will go to its death, and I shall enter into a good and long life and peace."

A third thing by way of Jewish observance concerns the Jewish practice of self-denials. In keeping with the motif of the affliction of the body, Jews are forbidden five things. First, in order to enhance spirituality, there is to be no eating or drinking. Secondly, because one is not to be comfortable on this day, there is to be no washing and bathing. Thirdly, there is to be no anointing of oil, which includes modern-day hand and face creams. Fourthly, there is to be no cohabitation with the spouse. Fifth, because one is not to enjoy luxury on this occasion, items such as leather shoes or sandals cannot be worn. Furthermore, the rabbis taught that all the earth is holy on the Day of Atonement, thus Jews must wear shoes made of rubber or canvas so they could feel that holy ground.

A fourth observance is the reading of the Book of Jonah because it teaches that a man cannot run away from God and also teaches the efficacy of repentance. Just as God heard the repentance of Nineveh and spared them, He will do so again.

C. The Messianic Significance

The Day of Atonement is, of course, fulfilled with the Messiah. This concept is taught in the Old Testament in Isaiah 52:13-53:12. Here the Messiah is pictured as the final Day of Atonement sacrifice which contains the concept of substitution and the concept of atonement. Contextually, Isaiah 52:13-53:12 is not only a prophecy of the Crucifixion, it is also the words of Israel's confession of her national sin for salvation as a nation.

The key element of the Day of Atonement is the element of affliction. In the biblical practice, it was the affliction of the soul. In the Jewish practice, it is the affliction of the body. The Day of Atonement is to be fulfilled by the Great Tribulation where both types of affliction will be present. It is no accident that the Tribulation is often referred to in the Scriptures by the term *affliction*. It is a time of tremendous affliction in fulfillment of the affliction of the Day of Atonement. During the Great Tribulation, there will be the affliction of both the body and the soul.

The affliction of the body of Israel is detailed by Hosea 5:15-6:3 when Israel as a nation will be afflicted during the course of the Great Tribulation. Hosea 5:15 states: *I will go and return to my place, till they acknowledge their offence, and seek my face: in their affliction they will seek me earnestly.*

Zechariah 13:8-9 also details this affliction that will destroy two-thirds of the nation of that day and leads to a second type of affliction: the affliction of the soul.

The affliction of the soul is given in Zechariah 12:10-13:1 when the Spirit is poured out on the people of Israel, and they will then “look unto the One they pierced and mourn for Him as one mourns for an only son.” The national regeneration of Israel will come by means of the afflictions of the Great Tribulation and that, in turn, will lead to Israel’s confession of her national offense with the words of Isaiah 53:1-9.

The Feast of Trumpets is to be fulfilled by the Rapture of the Church, and the Day of Atonement is to be fulfilled by the Tribulation. Just as the Feast of Trumpets precedes the Day of Atonement, by the same token, the Rapture will precede the Great Tribulation.

VIII. THE FEAST OF TABERNACLES: LEVITICUS 23:33-44

And Jehovah spoke unto Moses, saying, Speak unto the children of Israel, saying, On the fifteenth day of this seventh month is the feast of tabernacles for seven days unto Jehovah. On the first day shall be a holy convocation: ye shall do no servile work. Seven days ye shall offer an offering made by fire unto Jehovah: on the eighth day shall be a holy convocation unto you; and ye shall offer an offering made by fire unto Jehovah: it is a solemn assembly; ye shall do no servile work. These are the set feasts of Jehovah, which ye shall proclaim to be holy convocations, to offer an offering made by fire unto Jehovah, a burnt-offering, and a meal-offering, a sacrifice, and drink-offerings, each on its own day; besides the sabbaths of Jehovah, and besides your gifts, and besides all your vows, and besides all your freewill-offerings, which ye give unto Jehovah. Howbeit on the fifteenth day of the seventh month, when ye have gathered in the fruits of the land, ye shall keep the feast of

Jehovah seven days: on the first day shall be a solemn rest, and on the eighth day shall be a solemn rest. And ye shall take you on the first day the fruit of goodly trees, branches of palm-trees, and boughs of thick trees, and willows of the brook; and ye shall rejoice before Jehovah your God seven days. And ye shall keep it a feast unto Jehovah seven days in the year: it is a statute for ever throughout your generations; ye shall keep it in the seventh month. Ye shall dwell in booths seven days; all that are home-born in Israel shall dwell in booths; that your generations may know that I made the children of Israel to dwell in booths, when I brought them out of the land of Egypt: I am Jehovah your God. And Moses declared unto the children of Israel the set feasts of Jehovah.

NOTES

Besides this passage, the Feast of Tabernacles is mentioned in five other passages. First, Numbers 29:12-34 spells out the sacrifices for each day of the seven days of the Feast of Tabernacles. All together, a total of seventy bulls are offered during this period. According to Judaism, these seventy bulls represent the seventy Gentile nations of Genesis 10. What is significant about this is that Judaism has connected this feast with the Gentiles, something that is not true with the other festivals. Secondly, Deuteronomy 16:13-15 places special emphasis on the issue of rejoicing. Thirdly, Nehemiah 8:13-18 reveals the startling fact that this feast was kept for the first time since the days of Joshua. In other words, after Joshua, the Feast of Tabernacles was not observed for centuries, not even during the righteous reigns of David and Solomon. While the dates of the dedication of the First Temple coincided with the Feast of Tabernacles, the Feast of Tabernacles was not actually observed, only the dedication of the Temple. The fourth passage that mentions this feast is Zechariah 14:16-19, which will be discussed in the messianic significance portion of this feast. And fifth, John 7:1-10:21 records the Messiah's observance of this particular feast.

All together, there are five different names for this feast. The first name is simply the "Feast." When Jews talk about the Feast, they always mean the Feast of Tabernacles because there is a lot of unusual pomp and ceremony connected with it. Secondly, it is called *Succot* or the "Feast of Booths" or the "Feast of Tabernacles" because Jews were obligated to live in a *succah*, a booth, or a tabernacle on this occasion. Thirdly, it is called the "Feast of the Ingathering" in Exodus 23:13 because it marks the end of the summer harvest. The fourth name is the "Eighth Day of Assembly." This is actually an independent holiday from the Feast of Tabernacles, but it is connected to it because it follows immediately the day after. It marks the conclusion of the festivities and observances of the Feast of Tabernacles. The fifth name is *Simchat Torah*, which means "the rejoicing over the Law." It is also a name given to the added eighth day based on Numbers 29:35-38, because the cycle of the reading of the Law begins anew on this day. The Jewish rabbis divided the five books of Moses into fifty-two parts. Each part is read in the morning

Sabbath service, and in this way, the entire Mosaic Law has been read in the synagogue by the end of each year. It is on this occasion, the eighth day of the Feast of Tabernacles, that Judaism concludes the reading of Deuteronomy and begins the reading of Genesis.

A. The Biblical Practice

Insofar as the biblical practices are concerned, five things should be mentioned. First, it was a seven-day festival with an eighth day added to it. Secondly, it was to be observed by the building of booths or tabernacles to commemorate the forty years of Wilderness Wanderings. During those forty years, the Jews had to live in booths or tabernacles emphasizing their temporary abodes. Each year, in remembrance of those forty years, Jews were to live in booths for these seven days. Thirdly, it is to be celebrated with the four species: a fruit, the citron, and three types of branches, the palm branch, the myrtle branch, and the willow branch. The fourth thing about the biblical practice is that it was to be a time of rejoicing after the affliction of the Day of Atonement. And the fifth thing about the biblical celebration is it, too, was a feast of firstfruits; in this case, it was the firstfruits of the fall harvest.

B. The Jewish Observance

Concerning Jewish observance, six things should be mentioned: three key symbols, two key ceremonies, the reading of the Book of Ecclesiastes, the prayer for rain, the time for rejoicing, and the special foods.

1. The Three Key Symbols

There are three key symbols in the Jewish observance of this feast. The first key symbol is the booth or tabernacle, which became a symbol of the wasted national hope. At the same time, it provided the hope for a future restoration based on Amos 9:11 where Amos promised the day would come when the hut, booth, or tabernacle of David would be restored. By Jewish practice the booth is to be made of flimsy material to give the feeling of a temporary abode and to give a sense of the insecurity the Jewish people felt during the Wilderness Wanderings. The roof, which is to be made of branches, should have a density that provides more shade than sunlight, and at night, the stars should still be visible through it. The inside of the booth or tabernacle is decorated with fruits, nuts, and other things.

The second symbol is called the lulav. The *lulav* combines the three types of branches that are required for the observation of this feast: palm branches, myrtle branches, and willow branches. This is practiced by tying one palm branch to three myrtle branches and two willow branches. It is carried in the hand and waved in every direction. It is used especially during the prayer for rain, because the rainy season begins at this time of year in Israel.

The third symbol is the citron, a citrus fruit that symbolizes the fruit of the Promised Land. It is considered to be the most important symbol of the four species because of both its fragrance and fruit. The palm branch has fruit, but no fragrance. The myrtle has fragrance but no fruit. The willow has neither fragrance nor fruit.

2. The Two Key Ceremonies

The second item to mention by way of Jewish observance concerns the two key ceremonies during the Second Temple Period, the time of Yeshua. The first key ceremony was called the “Pouring Out of the Water.” In this ceremony, the priests marched from the Temple Mount down the Kidron Valley to the Pool of Siloam, where pitchers were filled with water. The priests then marched back up the Temple Mount, singing the Psalms of Ascent, Psalms 120-134, as they ascended the fifteen steps into the Temple Compound. The priests then poured out the water into the large Laver in the Temple Compound. This was followed by great rejoicing. The Jewish rabbis said, “He who has not seen the rejoicing at the pouring out of the water has not seen rejoicing in all his life.” The rabbis interpreted the pouring out of the water as a symbol of the outpouring of the Holy Spirit upon the whole nation of Israel in the last days. The prophets predicted the day would come when the Holy Spirit would be poured out upon the whole nation of Israel.

The second key ceremony was the kindling of the lights. There were huge, golden lampstands set up in the Temple Compound. Each lampstand had four golden cups, which were lit toward sundown. Because there were so many lamps and the light was so great, the rabbis said that there was not a house in Jerusalem which was not lit by the light coming from those huge lampstands. In Judaism, this was a symbol of the Shechinah Glory light.

3. The Reading of the Book of Ecclesiastes

A third traditional Jewish observance on this occasion is the reading of the Book of Ecclesiastes, a book of pessimism. It is read to show the pessimism that tends to be the mood of the masses who just experienced the long holiday season beginning with the Feast of Trumpets and culminating with the Feast of Tabernacles.

4. The Prayer for Rain

The fourth Jewish observance is that Jewish people pray for rain during this time, for in Israel the rainy season begins shortly after this feast.

5. The Time for Rejoicing

The fifth Jewish observance is that it is a period of great rejoicing; it is a time when the Jewish people sing and dance, especially doing dances that are done in circuits.

6. The Special Foods

And the sixth Jewish observance is the eating of kreplach. This is a form of Jewish ravioli, pasta filled with beaten meat and onions. It symbolizes the beating of the branches with which Jews prayed for rain.

C. The Messianic Significance

The messianic significance of the Feast of Tabernacles is seen in two ways: first, in the Messiah's response to the key ceremonies of the feast; and secondly, in the fulfillment of the feast.

1. The Messiah's Response to the Ceremonies

The Feast of Tabernacles was observed by Jesus while He was on earth. When He observed the Feast of Tabernacles, He responded to both key ceremonies. First, at the pouring out of the water, Jesus gave an invitation in John 7:37-39: *If any man thirst, let him come unto me and drink. He that believes on me, as the scriptures have said, from within him shall flow rivers of living water.*

John pointed out that what Jesus was referring to was the coming of the Holy Spirit who would indwell every believer. This had not yet happened because Jesus had not been glorified. The pouring out of the water of the Feast of Tabernacles symbolizes the indwelling Holy Spirit that Jewish and Gentile believers now have.

Secondly, in response to the second key ceremony, the lighting of the lampstands, Jesus stated in John 8:12: *I am the light of the world.*

2. The Fulfillment of the Feast

Ultimately, the Feast of Tabernacles is to be fulfilled by the establishment of the Messianic Kingdom according to Zechariah 14:16-19: *And it shall come to pass, that every one that is left of all the nations that came against Jerusalem shall go up from year to year to worship the King, Jehovah of hosts, and to keep the feast of tabernacles. And it shall be, that whoso of all the families of the earth goes not up unto Jerusalem to worship the King, Jehovah of hosts, upon them there shall be no rain. And if the family of Egypt go not up, and come not, neither shall it be upon them; there shall be the plague wherewith Jehovah will smite the nations that go not up to keep the feast of tabernacles. This shall be the punishment of Egypt, and the punishment of all the nations that go not up to keep the feast of tabernacles.*

Under the Mosaic Law, the Feast of Tabernacles was obligatory only for the Jewish people. Under the Kingdom law, the Feast of Tabernacles will be obligatory for all Gentile nations in the Messianic Kingdom. Once a year, every Gentile nation will be required to send a delegation to Jerusalem to observe this particular festival. Just as the Feast of Tabernacles was a time of rejoicing following the affliction of the Day of Atonement, even so the Messianic Kingdom will be a time of rejoicing following the affliction of the Great Tribulation.

CONCLUSION

The seven holy seasons of Israel contain the outline of the entire redemptive program. The first cycle of four festivals was fulfilled by the program of the First Coming. The Feast of Passover was fulfilled by the death of the Messiah. The Feast of Unleavened Bread was fulfilled by the sinlessness of His offering. The Feast of Firstfruits was fulfilled by the Resurrection of the Messiah. The Feast of Weeks was fulfilled by the birthday of the Church.

Then came a four-month interval between the first cycle and the second cycle of feasts. This four-month interval is now being fulfilled by the insertion of the Church Age.

The second cycle of three festivals will be fulfilled by the program of the Second Coming. The Feast of Trumpets will be fulfilled by the Rapture of the Church. The Day of Atonement will be fulfilled by the Great Tribulation, during which time there will be the affliction of Israel's body and soul that will lead to Israel's salvation and national atonement. The Feast of Tabernacles will be fulfilled by the Messianic Kingdom. ☆

NOTES

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*MBS114, 115, 116, 117, 118,
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