

Feasts of the
LORD

Bible Study

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Measuring Time

And God said, "Let there be lights in the expanse of the sky to separate the day from the night, and let them serve as signs to mark seasons and days and years, and let them be lights in the expanse of the sky to give light on the earth." And it was so. —Genesis 1:14-15

Since ancient times, people have measured time by keeping track of the regular cycles of nature. The cycle of the sun came to be called a day, the cycle of the moon was a month, and the cycle of the seasons was a year. The seven-day week is from the Genesis 1, which states that God created the universe in six days and rested on the seventh.

The Gregorian Calendar

The calendar used in the United States is called the Gregorian calendar. It was drawn up by Pope Gregory XIII in 1582. Before that time, much of the western world used the Julian calendar, drawn up by Julius Caesar in 46B.C. Caesar made January the first month of the year. Before then, March had been the first month. September used to be the seventh month. October was the eighth month. November was the ninth month and December was the tenth. Before the change the prefixes for the last four months were correct. *Sept* mean "seven" in Latin. *Oct* means "eight", *nov* means "nine" and *dec* means ten. Julius Caesar did change the name of what had been the fifth month, *Quintillis*, to "July", after himself, since he was born in that month. The next emperor, Augustus Caesar, followed suit and named "August" after himself. Augustus was emperor when Jesus was born.

The Gregorian calendar dates from what was thought to be the year of Jesus Christ's birth. The year 2004 is approximately 2,004 years after Christ's birth. (It is now known that Jesus was born a few years earlier than Pope Gregory thought.) The years before Christ's birth are counted backwards and followed by the letters B.C. (before Christ) or B.C.E. (before the common era). Years since His birth are followed by A.D. (*anno Domini*, Latin for "in the year of our Lord") or C.E. (common era).

With this calendar, each new day begins at midnight. There are twelve hours before noon (A.M.) and twelve hours after noon (P.M.). There are twelve months in a year of 365 1/4 days. The Gregorian calendar is a solar calendar, based on the cycle of the sun. What we call months have little relationship to the cycles of the moon.

The Hebrew Calendar

Although the Gregorian calendar is very popular, Jews also use the Hebrew calendar. It dates from what was thought to be the creation of the universe, 3,760 years and three months before Christ. The year 2005 is 5765 (2,004 + 3,760). It is a lunar calendar, based on the cycles of the moon rather than the cycle of the sun. This means that with a 12-month year, holidays will drift backwards and occur about 11 days earlier each year according to the cycle of the sun. So that the spring holidays remain in the spring, a 13th month is added every few years. This jumps the holidays forward 29-30 days.

Each month on the Hebrew calendar begins with the new moon, when the first sliver of moon becomes visible after the dark of the moon.

Days on the Hebrew calendar begin at sunset. This is based on Genesis 1:5. After God separated light from darkness, He said, “And there was evening, and there was morning—the first day.”

Hebrew Months

The first mention of “month” in the Bible is in Genesis 7, where it states that Noah’s Flood began in the second month. The Bible generally refers to months by their number, rather than their name. There are 12 and sometimes 13 months in the Hebrew calendar. God changed Nissan to the first month of the religious calendar in Exodus 12:2. Holidays are on the same day each year on the Hebrew calendar.

Number	English Name	Length	Gregorian equivalent
1	Nissan	30	March-April
2	Iyar	29	April-May
3	Sivan	30	May-June
4	Tammuz	29	June-July
5	Av	30	July-August
6	Elul	29	August-September
7	Tishri	30	September-October
8	Cheshvan	29 or 30	October-November
9	Kislev	30 or 29	November-December
10	Tevet	29	December-January
11	Shevat	30	January-February
12	Adar	29 or 30	February-March
13	Adar II	29	March-April

Holidays

The word “holiday” originally meant “holy day.”

American Holidays

Americans celebrate a number of special days, or holidays. Some of the most widely celebrated American holidays are listed in the chart, with the approximate date they began to be celebrated on a large scale.

Holiday	Date of Celebration	Since?
New Years Day	January 1	46 B.C.
Martin Luther King Day	3 rd Monday in January	1983
Valentine’s Day	February 14	1400s
Presidents Day	3 rd Monday in February	By 1800
Easter	Sunday after first full moon on or after March 21	325
Memorial Day	Last Monday in May	1866
Independence Day	July 4	1776
Labor Day	First Monday in September	1894
Halloween	October 31	1900s
Thanksgiving	Fourth Thursday in November	1620
Christmas	December 25	336

Hebrew Holidays

God established certain holy days soon after the Israelites were freed from slavery in Egypt in about 1446 B.C. In addition to a weekly Sabbath of rest, God gave instructions for seven Feasts of the Lord:

English Name	Hebrew	Date of Celebration	Reference
Passover	Pesach	Nissan 14	Lev. 23:5
Unleavened Bread	Hag-Matzot	Nissan 15-21	Lev. 23:6-8
Firstfruits	Bikkurim	Day after Sabbath in Unleavened Bread	Lev. 23:9-15
Weeks	Shavuot	50 days after Firstfruits	Lev. 23:15-21
Trumpets	Rosh Hashanah	Tishri 1	Lev. 23:23-25
Atonement	Yom Kippur	Tishri 10	Lev. 23:26-32
Tabernacles	Sukkot	Tishri 15-21	Lev. 23:33-36

The Jews have been celebrating these feasts for about 3,450 years, and they still celebrate them!

Since God gave his instructions for the feasts, Jews have added holidays of their own. Two of them are mentioned in the Bible:

English Name	Hebrew	Date of Celebration	Reference
Lots	Purim	Adar 14	Esther 9:28
Dedication	Hanukkah	Kislev 25-Tevet 2	John 10:22-23

The Feasts of the Lord eventually became the Feasts of the Jews, prompting God to say in Amos 5:21: “I hate, I despise your religious feasts.” By changing the perfect system He gave to Moses, they diluted and polluted the truth He wanted to teach everyone in the world.

Why Learn About the Feasts of the Lord?

Have you ever seen one of those computer-generated posters that have lots of squiggly lines? If you blur your eyes and stand at a certain distance, three-dimensional images will appear that were not apparent at first glance.

The Bible is God’s message to all people. He has placed in it clues, codes and pictures that prove it could not have been written by humans. These are not apparent at first glance. We must seek and look beyond the obvious. We must put the pieces of the puzzle together. If we do seek, we will find. Jesus promised that we would.

The feast days outline the whole plan of salvation, including things that will happen in the future, *our* future. The fact that they foretell things that would not happen until thousands of years later is proof that God is the Author. The Jews are the chosen people because they were chosen by God to receive, preserve and transmit His written word, including the feast days, and to bring forth His living Word, Jesus Christ.

All of the feasts are both historical and prophetic. All of them relate to agriculture. All of them teach about Jesus. All of them have lessons for us about how we are to relate to God.

The original word translated “feast” meant “appointed times.” These days are regular appointments God set up to meet with His people. They are sometimes called “holy convocations.” The word translated “convocation” means “rehearsal.” Each year the Israelites “rehearsed” future events, and they still do!

Sabbath (Shabat)

God established a weekly Sabbath day of rest soon after He brought Israel out of Egypt, out of the land of slavery. They had no rest in Egypt. When Moses asked Pharaoh to allow Israel three days to sacrifice to God, he became angry and made them work harder. The Sabbath looks back to deliverance from Egypt and forward to deliverance from sin through Jesus.

The fourth commandment, written by the very finger of God on tablets of stone, provided for a day of rest for all animals and people:

Remember the Sabbath day by keeping it holy. Six days you shall labor and do all your work, but the seventh day is a Sabbath to the LORD your God. On it you shall not do any work, neither you, nor your son or daughter, nor your manservant or maidservant, nor your animals, nor the alien within your gates. For in six days the LORD made the heavens and the earth, the sea, and all that is in them, but He rested on the seventh day. Therefore the LORD blessed the Sabbath day and made it holy.

—Exodus 20:8-11

The Sabbath was the sign of the Mosaic Covenant, the Old Covenant of law. (Baptism is the sign of the New Covenant of grace.) It is celebrated from sundown on Friday to sundown on Saturday. The Hebrew word, Shabat, means repose, to choose, to make to cease, to celebrate.

During the Sabbath, no work is allowed. Orthodox Jews do not light fires or even turn on lights. The beginning of Shabat is announced by the shofar.

Preparation for the Sabbath

The Sabbath is a day of complete rest. Before it begins, the house has to be cleaned and tidied. All meals are cooked in advance and the table is set with good dishes, a tablecloth, and perhaps flowers or something special. Everyone is bathed and in clean clothes.

On the table are at least two Sabbath candles, wine and cups, and two loaves of challah covered on a tray.

Celebration of the Sabbath

1. **Candles.** Before the Sabbath begins (18 minutes before sundown), the woman lights the candles. She encircles the candles with her hands three times, drawing the light to her, and repeats, “Blessed be He and Blessed be His Name.” She then covers her eyes and recites,

- “Blessed are you O Lord our God, Ruler of the Universe, Who has sanctified us with Your commandments and commanded us to kindle the light of the Sabbath.” The match is laid aside to burn out.
2. **Synagogue.** The men typically go to synagogue at this time.
 3. **Blessings.** When the father returns home, the family may greet each other by saying “Shabat shalom” which means “May you have a Sabbath day of peace.” They sing *Shalom Aleikhem* to greet the Sabbath angels. The Father blesses the children, “The LORD bless you and keep you; the LORD make His face shine upon you and be gracious to you; the LORD turn his face toward you and give you peace.” (Numbers 6:24-26). Father then sings Proverbs 31 to his wife.
 4. **Wine.** Father pours a brimming cup of wine and recites Kiddush: “There was evening, and there was morning, the sixth day. The heavens, the earth, and all their array were finished. And on the seventh day God finished the work He had been doing and rested on the seventh day from all the work which He had done. Then God blessed the seventh day and set it aside, for on it He rested from all the work of creation which was to be done by God. Blessed are You, Lord our God, Ruler of the Universe, Who sanctified us with your commandments, wanted us, and lovingly and willingly gave us Your Holy Sabbath, a commemoration of the work of creation. For it is the culmination of special events, a remembrance of the going out from Egypt. For you chose us among all the nations, made us special and lovingly and willingly gave us Your Holy Sabbath. Blessed are You, God, Who makes Shabat Holy.”
 5. **Washing hands.** Everyone ritually washes hands. “Blessed are you O Lord our God, Ruler of the Universe, Who has sanctified us through your commandments and instructed us concerning the washing of hands.”
 6. **Challah.** Remove the cover, saying, “Blessed be You O Lord our God Ruler of the Universe who brings forth bread from the earth.”
 7. **Sabbath dinner, songs, visiting, end with a blessing.** During the Sabbath, people pray, go to synagogue, read, eat, rest, take walks, or visit.

Ending the Sabbath: Havdalah

1. **Wine.** When three stars are visible in the sky, Sabbath is over (42 minutes after sundown). A wine cup is filled to the top and spilled over a little.
2. **Spice box.** A spice box filled with sweet-smelling spices like cinnamon and cloves is passed around, for everyone to sniff.
3. **Extinguish candles** by dipping them into the spilled wine.
4. **Sing** a song and say a blessing.

Feasts of the Lord

Three times a year you are to celebrate a festival to Me.

Celebrate the Feast of Unleavened Bread; for seven days eat bread made without yeast, as I commanded you. Do this at the appointed time in the month of Abib, for in that month you came out of Egypt. No one is to appear before me empty-handed.

Celebrate the Feast of Harvest with the firstfruits of the crops you sow in your field.

Celebrate the Feast of Ingathering at the end of the year, when you gather in your crops from the field.

—Exodus 23:14-16

There are seven feast days, celebrated in the first, third, and seventh months of the religious calendar.

1. The Feast of Unleavened Bread in the first month included Passover, Unleavened Bread, and Firstfruits and was at the time of the barley harvest.
2. The Feast of Harvest in the third month included Weeks and was at the time of the wheat harvest.
3. The Feast of Ingathering in the seventh month included Trumpets, Atonement and Tabernacles, and was at the time of the fruit harvest.

Leviticus 23 gives an overview of all the feasts.

The feasts can also be divided into two groups, spring feasts and fall feasts:

Spring Feasts	Fall Feasts
Passover Unleavened Bread Firstfruits Weeks	Trumpets Atonement Tabernacles

These divisions correspond to the early spring and autumn rains they needed to grow food. There was little rain between the Feast of Weeks and the fall feasts.

In Deuteronomy 11, just before the Israelites were to enter the Promised Land, God communicated through Moses:

It is a land the LORD your God cares for; the eyes of the LORD your God are continually on it from the beginning of the year to its end.

So if you faithfully obey the commands I am giving you today—to love the LORD your God and to serve Him with all your heart and with all your soul—then I will send rain on your land in its season, both autumn and spring rains, so that you may gather in your grain, new wine and oil. I will provide grass in the fields for your cattle, and you will eat and be satisfied.

—Deuteronomy 11:12-15

Rain can symbolize God's teaching:

Let My teaching fall like rain and My words descend like dew, like showers on new grass, like abundant rain on tender plants.

—Deuteronomy 32:2

It can also refer to Jesus:

After two days He will revive us; on the third day He will restore us, that we may live in His presence. Let us acknowledge the LORD; let us press on to acknowledge Him. As surely as the sun rises, He will appear; He will come to us like the winter rains, like the spring rains that water the earth.

—Hosea 6:2-3

We can learn about the first coming of Christ, the spring rains, by studying the spring feasts. The prophecies in those feasts were fulfilled some 1,446 after they were first celebrated. We learn about the second coming, the autumn rains, by studying the fall feasts. The fulfillment of those prophecies will take place in the future, perhaps the near future.

Jesus is the rain. His people are the harvest. The first harvest, Unleavened Bread, was of Jews. The second harvest, Weeks, when the Holy Spirit was poured out, was a harvest of Gentiles. ("First for the Jew, then for the Gentile." See Romans 1:16 and 2:9.) The final harvest, Ingathering, will be from every tribe and tongue and nation.

Passover (Pesach)

Passover is the first feast in the religious calendar, the first spring feast. It looks back to God's sparing the firstborn of Israel in the final plague on Egypt, and forward to Jesus' death as the true and final Passover lamb. It is a picture of salvation from death and judgment. The Hebrew word, Pesach, means "pass over" or "hover over", and shows both mercy and protection.

History

Genesis tells that God chose Abraham and promised him seed (children), land, and a blessing. Abraham's promised son was Isaac and Isaac's son was Jacob. Jacob had 12 sons, the fathers of the 12 tribes of Israel. During a terrible famine in Canaan, Jacob's family moved to Egypt and was protected by Pharaoh. They lived there for 400 years and had many children. A new Pharaoh made them slaves and oppressed them. They had to build bricks in the hot sun. When they complained, he became angry and gave them more and more work. There was no relief and no freedom.

Moses was chosen up by God to deliver Egypt from slavery. God sent him to demand that Pharaoh "Let My people go." Pharaoh refused, again and again, despite terrible plagues God sent on Egypt. The last plague was the death of the firstborn in every family. In Exodus 12, the Israelites are given instructions about what to do so that their own firstborn would not die.

The Original Passover

1. **Select a lamb** on the 10th day of the month and set it aside until the 14th day. It must be a firstborn lamb, without blemish.
2. **Kill the lamb** on the 14th day at 3:00 p.m.
3. **Take hyssop** and apply blood to the lintel and doorposts.
4. **Roast the lamb** with fire and eat with bitter herbs and unleavened bread. Eat it in haste, ready to depart at midnight. All of it must be eaten the same night. No bone can be broken.

Preparation for Passover

1. **Wash dishes** and bring out good dishes. Passover is High Sabbath.
2. **Clean all leaven** from the house and burn it.
3. **Search for the leaven (bedikat chametz)**. Mother intentionally leaves some pieces of leaven in the house. After dark, the day before Passover, the father takes a candle, a wooden spoon and a feather and leads the children on a search through all the corners of the house in darkness. Any leaven found is swept with the feather into the wooden

spoon and put into a small bag tied with string. It is burned in a fire on the morning of Passover.

4. **Seder table** set with candles, the **k'arah** (dish with ceremonial foods), and cups for wine.

Celebration of Passover

A **Haggadah** is a book that guides the Father in leading the Passover Seder. Seder means “order.” It is a teaching ceremony, with many symbols, and it takes a long time to go through it. Some parts of the ceremony include:

1. **The Afikomen.** Three pieces of matzoh are placed in a napkin with three spaces. During the service, the Father breaks the middle piece, wraps one part of it and hides it. Near the end of the ceremony, the children seek the hidden afikomen and everyone eats of it as the last food of the Seder. The word afikomen is Greek for “dessert.”
2. **Four Cups.** The first cup is the Cup of Thanksgiving. The father recites Kiddush over it. The second cup is the Cup of Sanctification. The youngest child asks the four questions and they are answered. Everyone dips the little finger into the cup for a drop as they recite the ten plagues: Blood, Frogs, Lice, Wild Beasts, Blight, Boils, Hail, Locust, Darkness, Slaying of the Firstborn. The third cup is the Cup of Blessing. “It is our duty to thank, praise, laud, glorify, exalt, honor, bless, extol, and adore Him who performed all these wonders for our fathers and for us. He brought us forth from slavery to freedom, from anguish to joy, from mourning to a holy day, from darkness to great light, and from bondage to redemption. Let us therefore sing before him a new song, Halleluyah!” The fourth cup is the Cup of Elijah. A child looks for Elijah, who will come before the great Day of the Lord. See Malachi 4:5-6.
3. **K'arah.** On a special plate are 6 ceremonial foods: Parsley, a lamb shankbone, kharoset (made of apple, walnuts, grape juice, honey and cinnamon), horseradish root or onion, bitter herbs, and a roasted egg. In the middle is a small bowl of saltwater.

Some Symbols, Shadows, and Prophecy

1. Egypt is a type of the world.
2. Pharaoh is a type of Antichrist.
3. Leaven is sin.
4. Passover lamb foreshadowed Jesus. He was unleavened (sinless).
5. Applying the blood foreshadows what we must do to be saved.
6. Afikomen is a picture of the trinity, with the middle piece broken and hidden (God the son).

Unleavened Bread (Hag-Matzot)

The Feast of Unleavened Bread immediately follows Passover. The first three feasts have been combined into one 8-day feast. The Passover, as well as the first and seventh days of Unleavened Bread, is a High Holy Sabbath.

History

In preparation for Passover, the Israelites were to cleanse all leaven from their homes. During Passover and the 7-day feast of Unleavened Bread that immediately followed, they were to eat no leaven. Leaven symbolizes sin. It puffs up (with pride). It works its way gradually and silently through the whole loaf. It ferments.

Celebrate the Feast of Unleavened Bread, because it was on this very day that I brought your divisions out of Egypt. Celebrate this day as a lasting ordinance for the generations to come. In the first month you are to eat bread made without yeast, from the evening of the fourteenth day until the evening of the twenty-first day. For seven days no yeast is to be found in your houses. And whoever eats anything with yeast in it must be cut off from the community of Israel, whether he is an alien or native-born. Eat nothing made with yeast. Wherever you live, you must eat unleavened bread.

—Exodus 12:17-20

After the Passover, the Israelites fled Egypt. God instructed them to ask the Egyptians for silver, gold and clothing as they left. The Egyptians were glad to give them those things and glad to see them leave. They were suffering from of the many plagues God had sent because of Pharaoh's hard-heartedness. Unleavened bread is sometimes called "the bread of affliction."

Symbolism and Prophecy

1. **Leaven** represents sin. Jesus warned us to beware of several types of leaven: the leaven of Herod (worldliness and pride), the leaven of the Sadducees (false doctrine), the leaven of the Pharisees (hypocrisy), the leaven of Corinth (tolerance of sin among believers), and the leaven of Galatia (legalism).
2. **Unleavened bread** represents Jesus Christ, the sinless One. Jesus took our sins upon Himself and to hell in order to burn them, thereby paying the penalty for sin and buying our freedom. *God made Him who had no sin to be sin for us, so that in Him we might become the righteousness of God.* —2 Corinthians 5:21
3. **Jesus** was crucified on Passover and was in the tomb during the first days of Unleavened Bread.

Firstfruits (Bikkurim)

History

The first spring harvest was of barley. In Leviticus 23:9-14, God tells Israel to wave a firstfruits offering before the LORD on the day after the Sabbath during the Feast of Unleavened Bread. This began the count toward the Feast of Weeks, at which the firstfruits of the wheat harvest were waved. In the fall, the firstfruits of the fruit and oil harvest were brought to the Lord.

Someone would go to the standing ripe harvest field, cut a sheaf of the choicest grain, and take it to the priest to wave before the Lord in the Temple. No one could eat of the harvest until this had been done. The first and best part of everything belongs to God, including the firstborn of man and animal. The first fruit was a promise of more to come. It acknowledged and thanked God as the source of all good things.

Symbolism and Prophecy

In Scripture, the word “sheaf” often refers to a person or persons. In Genesis 37, Joseph dreamed that his brothers’ and parents’ sheaves bowed down to his. In Micah 4:12, nations (groups of people) are referred to as sheaves: “They do not understand His plan, He who gathers them like sheaves to the threshing floor.”

The word “harvest” is used by Jesus to refer to a harvest of souls for the Lord: “The harvest is plentiful, but the workers are few.” 1Corinthians 15 calls Jesus Himself the firstfruits, the first to be raised from the dead and a promise of life to come. Christians are called the firstfruits in James 1:18: “He chose to give us birth through the word of truth, that we might be a kind of firstfruits of all He created.”

The firstfruits are the promise of life and blessing to come. Jesus died on Passover, was in the tomb on Unleavened Bread, and rose from the dead on Firstfruits, promising new life to all who follow Him.

Firstfruits also refers to the first and best portion of all that we have. Proverbs 3:9 says: “Honor the LORD with your wealth, with the firstfruits of all your crops.” For people who do not grow food for a living, the firstfruits would be the first portion of all they earn, referred to in the Bible as the tithe: “A tithe of everything from the land, whether grain from the soil or fruit from the trees, belongs to the LORD; it is holy to the LORD.” Malachi 3:10 challenges Israel to test God by faithfully tithing. “See if I will not throw open the floodgates of heaven and pour out so much blessing that you will not have room enough for it.”

Feast of Weeks (Harvest, Shavuot, Pentecost)

The Hebrew word “Shavuot” means “weeks” and the Greek word “Pentecost” means “fifty.”

From the day after the Sabbath, the day you brought the sheaf of the wave offering, count off seven full weeks. Count off fifty days up to the day after the seventh Sabbath, and then present an offering of new grain to the LORD. From wherever you live, bring two loaves made of two-tenths of an ephah of fine flour, baked with yeast, as a wave offering of firstfruits to the LORD.
—Leviticus 23:15-17

History

On this day in the Old Testament, the Lord descended from heaven to Mt. Sinai in fire and wrote the Ten Commandments (the law) on tablets of stone. Moses met with God personally on the mountain and was given the law, the feasts, the sacrificial system, and the tabernacle plan of the Torah.

On this day in the New Testament, the Holy Spirit descended from heaven in tongues of fire, to live within Jesus’ followers. Just ten days after Jesus ascended to heaven, He “put His Spirit in our hearts as a deposit, guaranteeing what is to come.” (2Corinthians 1:22)

The law was a shadow of the good things to come, not the reality, according to Hebrews 10:1. The Holy Spirit writes the law of God on the tablet of our hearts of stone and transforms people from the inside out by gradually changing us to want what God wants and hate what God hates.

Celebration

1. **Decorations.** The synagogue and homes are decorated with flowers and plants. This feast celebrates the abundance of nature.
2. **The Night Watch.** Psalm 119:148 says, “My eyes anticipate the night watches, that I may meditate on Thy Word.” It is customary to stay up all night reading, studying and discussing God’s Word.
3. **Read Ruth.** The Book of Ruth, which concerns the harvest, is read.
4. **Children Receive Bibles.** God gave the commandments on this day and it is a day parents may give a Bible to children who are old enough to begin learning to read. On the day a young child begins his formal studies, a little honey is placed on his tongue to show the sweetness of God’s Word. “How sweet are your words to my taste, sweeter than honey to my mouth!” (Psalm 119:103)

5. **Leavened bread.** For all other feasts, unleavened bread is required. For this feast, two loaves of the finest leavened bread are baked.
6. **Cheesecake.** Cheesecake, made of milk and honey, is often eaten at this time. God promised Israel “a land of milk and honey.”

Symbolism and Prophecy

This is an “in-between” festival that ends the spring cycle of feasts. It is one of the three appointed times when all Jewish men were required to travel to Jerusalem.

The feasts of Passover, Unleavened Bread, and Firstfruits teach us about Jesus’ first coming, which is in the past. Trumpets, Atonement and Tabernacles teach us about His second coming, which is in the future. The Feast of Weeks, the “in-between” feast, teaches us about the present. It is the only time when God allows leavened bread to be presented to Him. Leaven represents sin. Christ was unleavened. After His second return, His people will be made unleavened, or free of sin. But during this in-between time, He has declared sinful people to be holy.

The bread was to be made of fine flour, ground and crushed. Believers are ground and crushed by trials, temptations and suffering in this life. Although leaven (sin) is still present in believers, the presence of the fire of the Spirit in each believer slows its spread.

Some comparisons between the Old Testament and New Testament events of Shavuot are in the chart below:

Old Testament	New Testament
Giving of the Law	Giving of the Holy Spirit
Law written on tablets of stone	Law written on hearts and minds
By the finger of God	By the Spirit of God (2 Cor. 3:3)
3000 people died (Ex. 32:28)	3000 people saved (Acts 2:41)
Law of sin and death	Law of the Spirit of life
The letter kills	The Spirit gives life
Law came through Moses	Grace and truth came through Jesus

You are a letter from Christ, the result of our ministry, written not with ink but with the Spirit of the living God, not on tablets of stone but on tablets of human hearts.

—2 Corinthians 3:3

Trumpets (Rosh Hashanah)

Rosh Hashanah, meaning “head of the year”, is the Jewish New Year, the first day of the year on the civil (not religious) calendar. It is considered by Jews to be the “birthday of the universe.” It is the first day of the High Holy Days, also called the “Days of Awe” and is a time to reflect on the past and seek forgiveness, as well as look to the future and resolve to do better.

On the first day of the seventh month hold a sacred assembly and do no regular work. It is a day for you to sound the trumpets.

—Numbers 29:1

The Biblical name for this day is Yom Terah, which means “the day of the awakening blast.” A shofar is a ram’s horn that has been boiled for several hours to soften it. Then the cartilage is scraped out and a hole is drilled for the mouthpiece. The root word for shofar means “hollow.”

According to tradition, God preserved the two horns of the ram provided as a substitute sacrifice for Isaac. The first shofar sounded at Sinai (Exodus 19:16-19) and the second will be sounded in the future when Israel is regathered (Isaiah 27:13). Jericho fell at the blast of trumpets. Trumpets are mentioned in the book of Revelation. 1 Corinthians 15:52 speaks of the sounding of the last trumpet, when the dead will be raised.

Trumpets were used to sound warnings, to announce something (a new month, a Sabbath, a feast day) and to call people together. One blast would summon the leaders. Two blasts summoned all the people.

Celebration

1. **Greeting.** On the evening of the holiday, the greeting is “Leshanah tovah.”
2. **Wearing White.** Everything, including the Torah covers and curtains, are white. Men wear white linen *kittels*. White is a reminder of death and the shortness of human life, as well as of purity.
3. **Round Challah.** The bread for Rosh Hashanah is round and often baked with raisins and dipped in honey for a sweet new year. It symbolizes the circle or the year or the wheel of fate. Other popular foods are apples dipped in honey, salmon baked with its head on, and honeyed carrots.
4. **Reading the story of the Binding of Isaac.** (Genesis 22:1-24)
5. **Blowing of the Trumpet.** On Rosh Hashanah, the shofar blasts 100 times with three distinct sounds. One is long and loud, like a shout. Another is broken into three and sounds like groaning or wailing. The

- third is broken into nine and sounds like sobbing or whimpering. After it is blown, the following words are said: “Awake, you that are sleepy, and ponder your deeds; remember your Creator and go to Him for forgiveness. Don’t be like those who miss reality in their hunt after shadows, and waste your years in seeking after vain things which can neither profit nor deliver. Look well to your souls and consider your deeds; let each one of you forsake his evil ways and thoughts and return to the Lord, so that He may have mercy on you.”
6. **Unetane Tokef.** A poem written by a rabbi shortly before he was martyred in the 11th century reflects on the meaning of Rosh Hashanah and the Days of Awe to follow.
 7. **Tashlich.** In the afternoon of Rosh Hashanah, families go to a river or stream for prayer. The following verse from Micah 7:18-20 are recited: “Who is a God like You, who pardons sin and forgives the transgression of the remnant of His inheritance? You do not stay angry forever, but delight to show mercy. You will have compassion on us; You will tread our sins underfoot and hurl all our iniquities into the depths of the sea. You will be true to Jacob, and show mercy to Abraham, as You pledged on oath to our fathers in days long ago.” Then everyone casts bread crumbs, representing sins, into the running water and watches them float away.

Between Rosh Hashanah and Yom Kippur are ten Days of Awe, during which people prepare for the Day of Atonement, by reflecting on their lives and their sins of the past year and doing whatever they can to make things right. It is a time to settle disputes, confess wrongs, and grant forgiveness. It is a time to clean the slate and begin anew.

According to Jewish tradition, God opens the Book of Life on Yom Kippur and decides whose name will be in it for another year, based on how they have lived during the past year. The belief is that they can earn God’s favor by what they do. The Christian teaching is that we are saved only through grace by faith in Jesus, that we cannot earn our own salvation.

Symbolism and Prophecy

Because the Feast of Trumpets is a shadow of something yet to occur, we cannot be completely certain of how it will occur. A common interpretation is that Trumpets is a prophecy of the rapture of the Church:

The Lord Himself will come down from heaven, with a loud command, with the voice of the archangel and with the trumpet call of God, and the dead in Christ will rise first. After that, we who are still alive and are left will be caught up together with them in the clouds to meet the Lord in the air.

—1 Thessalonians 4:16-17

Atonement (Yom Kippur)

The Day of Atonement ends the ten Days of Awe that began with Rosh Hashanah. “Yom” in Hebrew means “day” and “kippur” means “covering.” The word “atone” means to make amends and bring into agreement or become reconciled. It is coming to be “at-one” with God.

The tenth day of this seventh month is the Day of Atonement. Hold a sacred assembly and deny yourselves. —Leviticus 23:27

History

In the times of the Tabernacle and Temple, the Day of Atonement was the only day on which a person was allowed to go behind the veil into the Holy of Holies. Only the High Priest could enter, to make atonement for the nation of Israel, and only with blood. It was terrifying to go into the presence of God Himself. A cord was tied around the ankle of the High Priest in case he should die behind the curtain.

The LORD said to Moses: “Tell you brother Aaron not to come whenever he chooses into the Most Holy Place behind the curtain in front of the atonement cover on the ark, or else he will die.” —Leviticus 16:2

In addition to other offerings, two identical goats were presented to the Lord. High Priest had two golden lots. One said “For YHVH” and the other said “For Azazel” (the evil one). The High Priest shuffled the lots and drew them, placing one upside down on the head of each goat. The goat for YHVH was sacrificed and his blood sprinkled in the Holy of Holies to atone for the sin and rebellion of Israel. Later, the High Priest laid both hands on the head of the goat for Azazel, the live goat, and confessed the sins of Israel, putting them on the goat’s head. That goat had a red sash tied to his horns and was led out into the wilderness and released.

Celebration

1. **Fasting.** A feast is eaten in the afternoon before Yom Kippur, but from sundown to the following sundown, no food or drink is allowed unless people are sick or young.
2. **Candle.** A 24-hour candle is lit. Memorial candles are lit for departed members of the family. The mother lights the Sabbath candles, shields her eyes, and says: “Blessed are You, O Lord our God King of the universe, who has commanded us to kindle the lights of Yom Kippur.” The synagogue is lit with white memorial candles.

3. **Wearing White.** Everything, including Torah covers and curtains, are white. Men wear white linen *kittels* and every man must wear a prayer shawl or *tallit* at synagogue.
4. **Kol Nidre.** This prayer is chanted three times in a louder and louder voice. “All vows and oaths we take, all promises and obligations we make to God between this Yom Kippur and the next, we hereby publicly retract in the event that we should forget them, and hereby declare our intention to be absolved of them.”
5. **Request for Pardon.** “Our God and God of our fathers, pardon our iniquities on this Day of Atonement; blot out and remove our transgressions and sins from thy sight, as it is said: It is I who blot out your transgressions, for My sake; I will remember your sins no more. I have swept aside your ill deeds like a mist, and your sins like a cloud; return to Me, for I have redeemed you. On this day shall atonement be made for you to cleanse you; from all your sins shall you be clean before the Lord.”
6. **Prayers of Repentance.** Men pray, tapping themselves on the chest with a closed fist as each sin is recited:
 For the sin we committed in thy sight forcibly or willingly,
 And for the sin we committed against thee by acting callously.
 For the sin we committed in thy sight unintentionally,
 And for the sin we committed against thee by idle talk.
 For the sin we committed in thy sight knowingly and deceptively,
 And for the sin we committed against thee by offensive speech. (etc.)
Forgive us all sins, O God of forgiveness, and grant us atonement.
7. **Memorial service** for those who have died, at noon.
8. **Jonah.** The book of Jonah is read to illustrate God’s mercy.
9. **Shema.** “Hear O Israel, the Lord our God, the Lord is One.” The gates of mercy, the gates of Heaven, are believed to close at sundown, so a final prayer might include the words, “May we enter Thy gates.”
10. **Shofar.** Yom Kippur ends with a long steady note from the shofar at sundown. People hurry home to break their fast.

Symbolism and Prophecy

The Day of Atonement is prophecy of a future event. A common interpretation is that the Day of Atonement points to the Tribulation and the second coming of Messiah in judgment.

There will be a time of distress such as has not happened from the beginning of the nations until then. But at that time your people—everyone whose name is found written in the book—will be delivered.... Many will be purified, made spotless and refined.

—Daniel 12:1,10

Tabernacles (Sukkot)

The final feast of the Lord is Sukkot, a word that means “booths” or “huts.” The root word is “dwell.” The Feast of Tabernacles is an 8-day celebration of the final yearly harvest of fruit, oil and wine. The entire Torah was read during this feast. The Pilgrims were inspired by Leviticus 23:39 to start what America celebrates as Thanksgiving.

After you have gathered the crops of the land, celebrate the festival to the LORD for seven days; the first day is a day of rest, and the eighth day is also a day of rest.
—Leviticus 23:39

All men were to go to Jerusalem for this festival. All citizens of Israel were to live in booths for seven days, in memory of the time that God made the Israelite people live in booths when He brought them out of Egypt. It is also a reminder that we are aliens and strangers on earth. Our days are like a shadow. (1 Chron. 29:15) Life on earth is temporary. This is not our home.

Long ago, those who were harvesting in the fields would build a Sukkah near the field during harvest season. It was a place to rest and a center of celebration when all the harvest had been gathered.

Preparation for Sukkot

1. **Building a Sukkah.** Each family builds a Sukkah, or small hut, to eat and sometimes sleep in during the festival. Usually it has three walls. The roof is the most important part. It must be made from plants that cannot be used for food and which are in their natural state (no boards). It is usually made of leafy branches and is thick enough to provide shade but open enough so that stars can be seen through it.
2. **Decorating the Sukkah.** A Sukkah must be decorated for this time of joy. Strings of popcorn or cranberries, fruits and vegetables, and other ornaments can be used. It is traditional to hang tablets on the walls with the names of seven special guests who are invited to dinner, one on each of the seven days. The seven guests are Abraham, Isaac, Jacob, Joseph, Moses, Aaron and David. Each of these men was homeless at some time during his life, but was protected by God.

Celebration

1. **Sleeping in the Sukkah.** On the first night of the festival, the family moves into the booth. The children receive their parents' blessing. The mother says the blessing for the candles, the father says, “Blessed are You O Lord our God, King of the Universe, who sanctified us and

- commanded us to dwell in the Sukkah.” The family shares wine, bread and a meal.
2. **The Lulav.** The lulav consists of one palm branch, two myrtle branches and three willow branches. The palm tree symbolizes victory, the willow weeping, and the myrtle joy.
 3. **The Etrog.** An etrog is a yellow citron fruit with a sweet smell. It looks similar to a lemon, but a lemon is sour. The etrog is held in the left hand with the spine down. It is touched to the lulav, which is held in the right hand. It is shaken it to the east, south, west, north, up and down to express thanks for the gifts that have come to us from the four corners of the earth, from the sky above and the earth below.
 4. **The Water Offering.** Long ago, a flask filled with water from the nearby Pool of Siloam was carried into the Temple and poured out in thanks for the rain, with a prayer for rain in the year to come.
 5. **Dancing and Rejoicing.**
 6. **Ending the Festival.** The willows are struck to the ground so that the leaves fly off. A concluding poem might be recited:
 For You are the Lord our God,
 causing the wind to blow and the rain to fall
 for a blessing and not for a curse (Amen)
 for life and not for death (Amen)
 for plenty and not for want (Amen)
 The book of Ecclesiastes is read on the Sabbath of Sukkot. It concludes with: Fear God and Keep His commandments, for this is the whole [duty] of man. (Ecclesiastes 12:13)

Symbolism and Prophecy

The Feast of Tabernacles foreshadows the day when the Lord will come to physically live (“tabernacle”) with men on earth during the 1000-year rule of Christ. Until then, the Holy Spirit spiritually lives within those who belong to Jesus.

The LORD will be king over the whole earth. On that day there will be one LORD, and His name the only name.... Then the survivors from all the nations that have attacked Jerusalem will go up year after year to worship the King, the LORD Almighty, and to celebrate the Feast of Tabernacles.
 —Zechariah 14:9,16

Do you not know that your body is a temple of the Holy Spirit, who is in you, whom you have received from God? You are not your own; you were bought at a price. Therefore honor God with your body.
 —1 Corinthians 3:16

Purim (Feast of Lots)

The word “Purim” means “lots.” In the Book of Esther, the wicked man Haman cast lots to select a day and a month on which to destroy the Jewish people scattered throughout the land of Media-Persia. Esther, a young Jewess who had been chosen as queen, intervened and saved her people.

In the first month, the month of Nissan, they cast the pur (that is, the lot) in the presence of Haman to select a day and a month. And the lot fell on the twelfth month, the month of Adar. —Esther 3:7

Purim is not a Feast of the Lord. It is a Feast of Israel that may have originated during the Babylonian captivity. The story of Esther has many twists and turns and reads like a dramatic work. The name of God is not mentioned in the Esther, and because of that there were those who objected to it being included in the canon of the Bible. It was eventually included, however, and the events in it show God’s protection of His chosen people.

During the Passover Seder, the following words are read concerning the persecution of the Jews throughout history: “Not just one [Pharaoh] rose against us to exterminate us, but in every generation did they rise against us to exterminate us, and each time, The Holy One Blessed Be He has rescued us from their hands.”

Celebration

1. **Reading of the Megillah.** The megillah is a handwritten scroll of the Book of Esther that is read at least once during Purim. Children go to synagogue with “groggers” (noisemakers). As the story is read, they shake them, stamp and yell whenever Haman’s name is mentioned. They cheer whenever they hear Mordecai’s name.
2. **Parade.** In Israel, there is a parade.
3. **Costumes.** Children go from house to house dressed in costumes and masks. Contests may be held for the most beautiful Esther, the most royal Mordecai, the most evil-looking Haman.
4. **Banquets** recall the party the king held, at which Queen Vashti refused to appear. Drinking is required, but no one must get so drunk that they cannot tell the difference between “Haman be cursed” and “Mordecai be blessed.”
5. **Hamentaschen** are the special food of the holiday. They are three-cornered pastries filled with meat, fruit, or poppy seed, to recall the three-cornered hat of Haman.

Hanukkah (Feast of Dedication / Feast of Lights)

Hanukkah has become one of the most popular and well-known Jewish festivals, but it is not a Feast of the Lord. It was celebrated at the time of Christ and is mentioned in John 10:22-23:

Then came the Feast of Dedication at Jerusalem. It was winter, and Jesus was in the temple area walking in Solomon's Colonnade.

After the Jews returned from the Babylonian captivity in 445 B.C., the second temple was built. In 336 B.C., Alexander the Great conquered the entire Middle East. Greek became the language of Israel by the time of Jesus. Most of the New Testament was written in Greek.

When Alexander the Great died (at the age of 33), his empire was divided and the land of the Jews became part of Syria. Antiochus IV became king of Syria in 176 B.C. He declared himself to be God and began forcing the Jews to adopt the ways of the Greeks rather than Jewish traditions. Antiochus hated the Jews and put a statue of Zeus in the Jewish temple. The Jews were forced on penalty of death to worship Greek gods and sacrifice pigs, an animal forbidden to Jews. Pigs' blood was poured on the altar and scrolls.

One man rebelled and fled with his five sons to the desert. They gathered an army that was led by his son, Judah. They came to be called the Maccabees.

Eventually, in a surprise attack on Jerusalem, Judah and his men conquered Jerusalem and entered the Temple, exactly three years after Antiochus had defiled it with pig sacrifice and Greek statues. They smashed the idols, cleaned the Temple, built a new altar, and dedicated it again to God in an eight-day celebration. The word "Hanukkah" means "dedication."

As the story goes, there was only enough oil to light the menorah for one day. But the oil miraculously lasted for the whole eight days of the ceremony. The Hanukkah menorah has nine candles rather than seven.

Celebration

The first custom of Hannukah is lighting the menorah. The tall candle in the middle of the menorah is called the shamash, the servant light. It is used to light the rest. The first candle to the right is lit first. An additional candle is lit each night, from left to right, until all nine have been lit.

The song *Maoz Tzur* is sung, games are played with a dreidel, and gifts are exchanged. Foods cooked in oil, such as *latkes*, potato pancakes, are reminders of the oil that miraculously lasted for eight days.