

The Festivals of the L-rd

And

Their Spiritual Significance

By R. Eliyahu

The most complete listing of all the festivals of the L-rd is found in Leviticus 23. We will use that as our guide, and our launching spot. This will not be a deep treatment of any of the festivals of G-d, and you are urged to study further to gain insight and wisdom.

Whose Festivals Are They, Anyhow?

The normative church has for generations called the festivals described in Leviticus 23 as “Jewish Festivals.” In fact, many church teachers will say, “The Jews have their festivals and the Christians have ours.” By using the terms “ours” most Christians mean Easter and Christmas.

Although you can discover with a minimal amount of research the fact that the traditional Oestre pagan fertility festival morphed at some point into what the church now calls Easter, the modern church has closely-tied it to the resurrection of Messiah. I do not fault them for celebrating the resurrection, and I believe they actually did get the day of the week correct – Sunday. But you will search in vain for the word “Easter” in Scripture (other than when it describes the pagan festival). However, the translators responsible for the King James version did insert that term into their translation, but it was an artificial insertion, and is not found in the original source language.

And just looking at the word Christmas gives a strong hint that this festival is of Catholic origin. Again, only a short time of research will reveal that the pagan festival of Saturnalia, which occurred on this same time of year, was adopted and christened the “Christ mass” by the Catholic church, and the date of Messiah’s birth was fixed by papal decree to be December 25. This Catholic celebration has spread throughout the body of Christianity, and is now almost universal. But no

one will be able to find anywhere in Scripture any mention of Christmas, nor even a declaration of the date of Messiah's birth.

After the normative church has adopted these two shined-up pagan festivals, they have rejected any festivals which are actually found in Scripture. The question remains, "Whose festivals are those as listed in Leviticus 23?" To resolve that question, let's allow Scripture to speak for itself.

Lev 23:1-2

23 The Lord spoke again to Moses, saying, 2 "Speak to the sons of Israel and say to them, 'The Lord's appointed times which you shall proclaim as holy convocations — My appointed times are these:

So, G-d declared the festivals of Leviticus 23 as *His* festivals. It then follows, that if you are one of the household of G-d, then these holy times were established as a time when you and G-d could have special, holy times together. Why would any person who is a worshipper of the G-d of Israel not wish to accept G-d's meeting invitation? Which would refuse then to follow what the G-d of Israel has told His followers to do?

And regardless of the fact that these are not in fact "Jewish festivals" but rather are "G-d's appointed times" some in the normative church have taught that these are not for us as believers today. We can address that as well.

Are The Festivals for Us Today?

The first thing we should determine, is whether these festivals are to be observed in this age, or not. Many in the church today call them the "Jewish festivals" as if they are only the traditions of one people group. And it seems since many in the church have determined that G-d has abandoned the Jewish people, due to their national rejection of Yeshua as Messiah, then G-d also discarded all those people's traditions. Further, since we find these festivals located deeply within what the church calls the Old Testament, and since most in today's churches believe that the Law of G-d was done away with at the cross, then they insist that these festivals are part of what is today found in G-d's rubbish pile, long forgotten.

These doctrines may be right, or wrong, for they are doctrines created by men. But we must resort to Scripture to test all doctrines, and either give them honor, or to

reject them as false. Yeshua was clear that the commands of G-d are superior to any contrary doctrines or traditions of men,

Matt 15:3

3 And He answered and said to them, "Why do you yourselves transgress the commandment of God for the sake of your tradition?"

Certainly, some in the religious community at the time Yeshua spoke these words were in error regarding their doctrines and traditions. But the religious community of this age is not immune to this same error. So, we should first determine whether anything in Leviticus would be applicable today to a believer in the G-d of Israel and expressing faith in His Messiah. Thankfully, Scripture gives us that answer as well.

Ps 119:159-160

Consider how I love Your precepts; Revive me, O Lord, according to Your lovingkindness. 160 The sum of Your word is truth, And every one of Your righteous ordinances¹ is everlasting.

Certainly, King David considered the contents of Torah to be “everlasting.” Did Yeshua speak of this topic?

Matt 5:17-19

17 "Do not think that I came to abolish the Law or the Prophets²; I did not come to abolish but to fulfill. 18 "For truly I say to you, until heaven and earth pass away, not the smallest letter or stroke³ shall pass from the Law until all is accomplished. 19 "Whoever then annuls one of the least of these commandments⁴, and teaches others to do the same, shall be called least in the kingdom of heaven; but whoever keeps and teaches them, he shall be called great in the kingdom of heaven.

¹ This is an idiom for Torah.

² The “law and prophets” refers to two of what is now three segments of the Hebrew Bible. Law = Torah. Prophets = Neveim. At this time, the final segment, the Writings (C’tovim) had not yet been fully adopted as Scripture.

³ In the scrolls of Torah and Neveim, the letters were hand-written by scribes, who created the various words using letters, and also some decorative strokes on some.

⁴ “These commandments” clearly refers to Torah.

It would seem that Yeshua is teaching that there is to be rank in the kingdom of heaven, and that ranking is based upon our individual decision to keep Torah and teaching others to do the same.

But did the Torah come to an end at the cross? Then when Paul stood twice accused of teaching that the Torah was done away with, if he were actually teaching that doctrine, he would have confessed and used that opportunity to elaborate on why such an unthinkable thing had happened. What actually happened in response to those accusations is found also in Scripture, and we can hear from his own lips the defense he made to those accusations.

Acts 21:17-25

17 After we arrived in Jerusalem, the brethren received us gladly. 18 And the following day Paul went in with us to James, and all the elders were present. 19 After he had greeted them, he began to relate one by one the things which God had done among the Gentiles through his ministry. 20 And when they heard it they began glorifying God; and they said to him, "You see, brother, how many thousands there are among the Jews of those who have believed, and they are all zealous for the Law; 21 and they have been told about you, that you are teaching all the Jews who are among the Gentiles to forsake Moses, telling them not to circumcise their children nor to walk according to the customs. 22 "What, then, is to be done? They will certainly hear that you have come. 23 "Therefore do this that we tell you. We have four men who are under a vow; 24 take them and purify yourself along with them, and pay their expenses so that they may shave their heads; and all will know that there is nothing to the things which they have been told about you, but that you yourself also walk orderly, keeping the Law.

And we see in the passage that Paul followed this advice, and then made a public demonstration that those accusations were false. Then, Paul was also accused of the same thing, in Roman courts.

Acts 24:13-15

13 "Nor can they prove to you the charges of which they now accuse me. 14 "But this I admit to you, that according to the Way which they

call a sect I do serve the God of our fathers, believing everything that is in accordance with the Law and that is written in the Prophets;

Acts 25:7-8

7 After Paul arrived, the Jews who had come down from Jerusalem stood around him, bringing many and serious charges against him which they could not prove, 8 while Paul said in his own defense, "I have committed no offense either against the Law of the Jews⁵ or against the temple or against Caesar."

It is clear that Paul was obedient to Torah, and he offered not only testimony but proofs that he was observant. He was clear that he not only lived a life of Torah, but taught that life to others.

But will the Torah have any applicability to believers during the time when Yeshua reigns in the Ezekiel temple in Jerusalem? Scripture gives us that answer as well. There shall be a priesthood in that Temple to make offerings on the altar, and G-d reveals what they shall teach, and under what laws they will judge any matter that comes to them.

Ezek 44:15-24

15 "But the Levitical priests, the sons of Zadok, who kept charge of My sanctuary when the sons of Israel went astray from Me, shall come near to Me to minister to Me; and they shall stand before Me to offer Me the fat and the blood," declares the Lord God. 16 "They shall enter My sanctuary; they shall come near to My table to minister to Me and keep My charge.

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23 "Moreover, they shall teach My people the difference between the holy and the profane, and cause them to discern between the unclean and the clean.⁶ 24 "In a dispute they shall take their stand to judge; they shall judge it according to My ordinances.⁷ They shall also keep

⁵ The "Law of the Jews" is Torah. His statement differentiated his keeping of that Law from the other bodies of law that other cultures adhered to.

⁶ The teaching of clean and unclean is found in Torah.

⁷ This refers to the commands of Torah.

My laws and My statutes⁸ in all My appointed feasts and sanctify My sabbaths.⁹

Thus, it appears that in the kingdom Temple, which shall be constructed in the future on the Temple Mount in Jerusalem, that the Torah will yet be the standard for conduct, not only for the priests, but for all the people in the kingdom.

After G-d has finished the complete ingathering of all peoples to Himself, to worship in Jerusalem, He declares that his Sabbath, together with His holy days (which are also sabbaths), shall be observed by all people on the Earth. And His holy calendar, which was initiated in Egypt at the Exodus, and which is also referenced in Leviticus 23, will be the calendar of the Kingdom on Earth,,

Isa 66:22-23

22 "For just as the new heavens and the new earth Which I make will endure before Me," declares the Lord, "So your offspring and your name will endure. 23 "And it shall be from new moon to new moon And from sabbath to sabbath, All mankind will come to bow down before Me," says the Lord.

There are two more witnesses of the connection between faith in this age and the Torah, the commandments, of G-d. Those are found in the book of Revelation. They describe the attributes of the believers who are most hated by Satan, and thus by implication must be most loved by G-d.

Rev 12:15-17

And the serpent poured water like a river out of his mouth after the woman, so that he might cause her to be swept away with the flood. 16 But the earth helped the woman, and the earth opened its mouth and drank up the river which the dragon poured out of his mouth. 17 So the dragon was enraged with the woman, and went off to make war with the rest of her children, who keep the commandments of God and hold to the testimony of Jesus.

Rev 14:9-12

⁸ Another way of saying "the commandments of Torah."

⁹ This is a direct reference to the commands of Leviticus 23.

9 Then another angel, a third one, followed them, saying with a loud voice, "If anyone worships the beast and his image, and receives a mark on his forehead or on his hand, 10 he also will drink of the wine of the wrath of God, which is mixed in full strength in the cup of His anger; and he will be tormented with fire and brimstone in the presence of the holy angels and in the presence of the Lamb. 11 "And the smoke of their torment goes up forever and ever; they have no rest day and night, those who worship the beast and his image, and whoever receives the mark of his name." 12 Here is the perseverance of the saints who keep the commandments of God and their faith in Jesus.

These two passages make it abundantly clear that there are two main characteristics of the believers who Satan finds most threatening to him, and his agenda. One characteristic is their faith in Yeshua, and the other is keeping the commandments of G-d (Torah).

So, we have now seen that the Leviticus 23 festivals were for Israel during the time before and after entering the Promised Land. The festivals were being observed during the time Yeshua walked this Earth as a man. And the Festivals will be observed in the kingdom age. It follows that they are not in any way done away with, and are proper for all believers in G-d today, who wished to be grafted-in to the cultivated olive tree that G-d has nurtured since the beginning. See Romans 11.

Let's examine the festivals of Leviticus 23.

Sabbath.

Lev 23:3

3 'For six days work may be done, but on the seventh day there is a sabbath of complete rest, a holy convocation. You shall not do any work; it is a sabbath to the Lord in all your dwellings.

The first, and highest of holy days, is the Sabbath. There is a reason it was named first, even before the other holy days in the festival year. Following, in this passage, are the other festivals, each of which is *a Sabbath*. But the weekly Sabbath is *the Sabbath*.

We have seen above that the Sabbaths of the L-rd will be observed for eternity in the kingdom on earth. Yeshua honored the Sabbath, as well.

Luke 4:16-17

16 And He came to Nazareth, where He had been brought up; and as was His custom, He entered the synagogue on the Sabbath, and stood up to read.

I liken the weekly Sabbath to the hourly chiming of G-d's clock, marking time until the end of the age. We are to turn from our own pursuits on this day, and commune with Him. Once a week, at a minimum, we are to recognize that G-d is our provider and our salvation, and none should make us afraid. The Sabbath is a day for worship, study of Torah, and fellowship between believers.

Passover

Lev 23:5

5 'In the first month, on the fourteenth day of the month at twilight is the Lord's Passover.

This passage only serves to remind us of the greater instructions which were given for the keeping of the first Passover in Egypt.

Ex 12:1-8

12 Now the Lord said to Moses and Aaron in the land of Egypt, 2 "This month shall be the beginning of months for you; it is to be the first month of the year to you. 3 "Speak to all the congregation of Israel, saying, 'On the tenth of this month they are each one to take a lamb for themselves, according to their fathers' households, a lamb for each household. 4 'Now if the household is too small for a lamb, then he and his neighbor nearest to his house are to take one according to the number of persons in them; according to what each man should eat, you are to divide the lamb. 5 'Your lamb shall be an unblemished male a year old; you may take it from the sheep or from the goats. 6 'You shall keep it until the fourteenth day of the same month, then the whole assembly of the congregation of Israel is to kill it at twilight. 7 'Moreover, they shall take some of the blood and put it on the two

doorposts and on the lintel of the houses in which they eat it. 8 'They shall eat the flesh that same night, roasted with fire, and they shall eat it with unleavened bread and bitter herbs.

Because G-d's months are governed by the new moon (and not by man's artificial calendars), the 14th of the month will always be a full moon night.

Over the millennia, a number of traditions have been added-into the Passover celebration by our people, but a few things have always been recognized as an essential part of this celebration: The selection of the unblemished male lamb, and it dying to be part of the meal¹⁰; The eating of the lamb, bitter herbs, and unleavened bread. Yeshua celebrated Passover the night just before His betrayal.

Matt 26:20-30

20 Now when evening came, Jesus was reclining at the table with the twelve disciples. 21 As they were eating, He said, "Truly I say to you that one of you will betray Me." 22 Being deeply grieved, they each one began to say to Him, "Surely not I, Lord?" 23 And He answered, "He who dipped his hand with Me in the bowl is the one who will betray Me. 24 "The Son of Man is to go, just as it is written of Him; but woe to that man by whom the Son of Man is betrayed! It would have been good for that man if he had not been born." 25 And Judas, who was betraying Him, said, "Surely it is not I, Rabbi?" Jesus said to him, "You have said it yourself." 26 While they were eating, Jesus took some bread, and after a blessing, He broke it and gave it to the disciples, and said, "Take, eat; this is My body." 27 And when He had taken a cup and given thanks, He gave it to them, saying, "Drink from it, all of you; 28 for this is My blood of the covenant, which is poured out for many for forgiveness of sins. 29 "But I say to you, I will not drink of this fruit of the vine from now on until that day when I drink it new with you in My Father's kingdom." 30 After singing a hymn, they went out to the Mount of Olives.

¹⁰ In modern times, many Jewish families don't eat lamb, because of the destruction of the Temple. They substitute another kosher meat, often chicken.

The betrayal and illegal trial of Yeshua came quickly, and He was actually killed later on the same day as the Passover. Yeshua was identified as the “Lamb of G-d” indicating He was the fulfillment of this sacrifice.

John 1:29-30

29 The next day he saw Jesus coming to him and said, "Behold, the Lamb of God who takes away the sin of the world!

The angels of heaven also recognize Yeshua as the Passover Lamb.

Rev 5:11-14

11 Then I looked, and I heard the voice of many angels around the throne and the living creatures and the elders; and the number of them was myriads of myriads, and thousands of thousands, 12 saying with a loud voice, "Worthy is the Lamb that was slain to receive power and riches and wisdom and might and honor and glory and blessing." 13 And every created thing which is in heaven and on the earth and under the earth and on the sea, and all things in them, I heard saying, "To Him who sits on the throne, and to the Lamb, be blessing and honor and glory and dominion forever and ever." 14 And the four living creatures kept saying, "Amen." And the elders fell down and worshiped.

Unleavened Bread

Lev 23:6-8

6 'Then on the fifteenth day of the same month there is the Feast of Unleavened Bread to the Lord; for seven days you shall eat unleavened bread. 7 'On the first day you shall have a holy convocation; you shall not do any laborious work. 8 'But for seven days you shall present an offering by fire to the Lord. On the seventh day is a holy convocation; you shall not do any laborious work.'"

Since the Passover Lamb is to be killed at twilight on the 14th, and since the day begins at sunset the night before, that makes the Passover meal eaten during the next day. So, the Passover is eaten also during the first day of Unleavened Bread. For seven days we eat unleavened bread.

Since leaven represents sin in Scriptural symbolism, then we are to have a week-long period where we put away the symbols of sin (all things leavened), and live a life of higher holiness.

I use the personal discipline of abstaining from anything leavened during this week, to also strengthen my resolve to likewise put away a matter of sinful behavior that I have discovered in my life. If I can put away leaven, then I can most certainly use that same discipline to purge another area of sin from my life.

Yeshua died, and was placed into the grave on Unleavened Bread.

Matt 27:57-61

57 When it was evening, there came a rich man from Arimathea, named Joseph, who himself had also become a disciple of Jesus. 58 This man went to Pilate and asked for the body of Jesus. Then Pilate ordered it to be given to him. 59 And Joseph took the body and wrapped it in a clean linen cloth, 60 and laid it in his own new tomb, which he had hewn out in the rock; and he rolled a large stone against the entrance of the tomb and went away. 61 And Mary Magdalene was there, and the other Mary, sitting opposite the grave.

During this seven-day period, there will be a weekly Sabbath. And that takes us to the next festival.

First Fruits.

Lev 23:9-14

9 Then the Lord spoke to Moses, saying, 10 "Speak to the sons of Israel and say to them, 'When you enter the land which I am going to give to you and reap its harvest, then you shall bring in the sheaf of the first fruits of your harvest to the priest. 11 'He shall wave the sheaf before the Lord for you to be accepted; on the day after the sabbath the priest shall wave it. 12 'Now on the day when you wave the sheaf, you shall offer a male lamb one year old without defect for a burnt offering to the Lord. 13 'Its grain offering shall then be two-tenths of an ephah of fine flour mixed with oil, an offering by fire to the Lord for a soothing aroma, with its drink offering, a fourth of a hin of wine. 14 'Until this same day, until you have brought in the offering of your

God, you shall eat neither bread nor roasted grain nor new growth. It is to be a perpetual statute throughout your generations in all your dwelling places.

This observance did not apply to the people when they were in the wanderings. It became a command once the people entered the Land of Israel and brought in the first harvest of grain.

The text is clear that this observance is to be accomplished on the “day after the Sabbath.” Although there is an argument that since Passover is a Sabbath as well, this must refer to the day following Passover. I reject that analysis, since it would have been easier to say “the next day,” rather than the more specific about “the Sabbath.” And since Passover can fall on any day of the week (since it is tied to the Hebrew date and not the weekly days), it makes far more sense that this event is to fall on the day following the weekly Sabbath, known as “The Sabbath.” So, this waving ceremony will always occur on a Sunday.

The waving of the first fruits to the L-rd signifies a thanksgiving offering recognizing that the L-rd has given us an early harvest, which is the promise of a greater harvest to come later in time.

Yeshua rose on First Fruits, a Sunday in our current calendar.

Matt 28:1-7

28 Now after the Sabbath, as it began to dawn toward the first day of the week, Mary Magdalene and the other Mary came to look at the grave. 2 And behold, a severe earthquake had occurred, for an angel of the Lord descended from heaven and came and rolled away the stone and sat upon it. 3 And his appearance was like lightning, and his clothing as white as snow. 4 The guards shook for fear of him and became like dead men. 5 The angel said to the women, "Do not be afraid; for I know that you are looking for Jesus who has been crucified. 6 "He is not here, for He has risen, just as He said. Come, see the place where He was lying. 7 "Go quickly and tell His disciples that He has risen from the dead; and behold, He is going ahead of you into Galilee, there you will see Him; behold, I have told you."

And there is a curious statement, found oddly intermixed in the account of the death of Yeshua, and it shows us how He celebrated the First Fruits festival.

Matt 27:52-54

52 The tombs were opened, and many bodies of the saints who had fallen asleep were raised; 53 and coming out of the tombs after His resurrection they entered the holy city and appeared to many.

Note that these people who were resurrected are described as “saints.” This can only be referring to believers in G-d who have believed Yeshua as Messiah. What was the purpose of this resurrection? In context of the festival, it is clear. Yeshua used His resurrection power to wave before his Father an early harvest of souls, showing the promise of a much larger one at a later time. Since those souls appeared to many in Jerusalem as well, the waving of this early harvest sheaf was clear for all to see, if they had eyes to see.

Shavuot (Pentecost)

Lev 23:15-21

15 'You shall also count for yourselves from the day after the sabbath, from the day when you brought in the sheaf of the wave offering; there shall be seven complete sabbaths. 16 'You shall count fifty days to the day after the seventh sabbath; then you shall present a new grain offering to the Lord. 17 'You shall bring in from your dwelling places two loaves of bread for a wave offering, made of two-tenths of an ephah; they shall be of a fine flour, baked with leaven as first fruits to the Lord. 18 'Along with the bread you shall present seven one year old male lambs without defect, and a bull of the herd and two rams; they are to be a burnt offering to the Lord, with their grain offering and their drink offerings, an offering by fire of a soothing aroma to the Lord. 19 'You shall also offer one male goat for a sin offering and two male lambs one year old for a sacrifice of peace offerings. 20 'The priest shall then wave them with the bread of the first fruits for a wave offering with two lambs before the Lord; they are to be holy to the Lord for the priest. 21 'On this same day you shall make a proclamation as well; you are to have a holy convocation. You shall do no laborious work. It is to be a perpetual statute in all your dwelling places throughout your generations.

This particular festival is called the “Feast of Weeks,” since it is seven weeks and one day following the First Fruits festival. Since it is 50 days after that festival, it will also always fall upon a Sunday. Jewish tradition is to carefully count and mark every day in some manner, to be certain to get to the correct date.

We can see how this particular festival also was important in a spiritual fulfillment.

Acts 1:3-8

He also presented Himself alive after His suffering, by many convincing proofs, appearing to them over a period of forty days and speaking of the things concerning the kingdom of God. 4 Gathering them together, He commanded them not to leave Jerusalem, but to wait for what the Father had promised, "Which," He said, "you heard of from Me; 5 for John baptized with water, but you will be baptized with the Holy Spirit not many days from now."

6 So when they had come together, they were asking Him, saying, "Lord, is it at this time You are restoring the kingdom to Israel?" 7 He said to them, "It is not for you to know times or epochs which the Father has fixed by His own authority; 8 but you will receive power when the Holy Spirit has come upon you; and you shall be My witnesses both in Jerusalem, and in all Judea and Samaria, and even to the remotest part of the earth."

Acts 2:1-13

2 When the day of Pentecost had come, they were all together in one place. 2 And suddenly there came from heaven a noise like a violent rushing wind, and it filled the whole house where they were sitting. 3 And there appeared to them tongues as of fire distributing themselves, and they rested on each one of them. 4 And they were all filled with the Holy Spirit and began to speak with other tongues, as the Spirit was giving them utterance.

5 Now there were Jews living in Jerusalem, devout men from every nation under heaven. 6 And when this sound occurred, the crowd came together, and were bewildered because each one of them was hearing them speak in his own language. 7 They were amazed and astonished, saying, "Why, are not all these who are speaking Galileans? 8 "And how is it that we each hear them in our own

language to which we were born? 9 "Parthians and Medes and Elamites, and residents of Mesopotamia, Judea and Cappadocia, Pontus and Asia, 10 Phrygia and Pamphylia, Egypt and the districts of Libya around Cyrene, and visitors from Rome, both Jews and proselytes, 11 Cretans and Arabs — we hear them in our own tongues speaking of the mighty deeds of God." 12 And they all continued in amazement and great perplexity, saying to one another, "What does this mean?" 13 But others were mocking and saying, "They are full of sweet wine."

Shavuot is one of the pilgrimage festivals as found in Exodus 23:14-17. So, people who were of the family of G-d would come to the Temple every year on this date, to present an offering of the larger harvest, and to worship the L-rd.

We see that the Spirit of G-d came upon these disciples of Yeshua in a very visible and spectacular way. They uttered words of witness to these people from many nations and many languages, and a miracle occurred. Each of these people, who did not speak Hebrew, heard the witness of Yeshua in their own language! A large number of people came to understand that Yeshua was Messiah right then and there, and those people carried that good news back to their own cities and towns in foreign lands, and provided a witness to others there.

And following this festival, we have a long period of waiting, before the next festival. During that time, the wheat and tares grow together.

Yom Teruah / Rosh Hashanah

Lev 23:23-25

23 Again the Lord spoke to Moses, saying, 24 "Speak to the sons of Israel, saying, 'In the seventh month on the first of the month you shall have a rest, a reminder by blowing of trumpets, a holy convocation. 25 'You shall not do any laborious work, but you shall present an offering by fire to the Lord.'"

The ancient term for this festival is Yom Teruah, or “day of the [shofar] blast.” The more modern term is Rosh Hashanah or “Head of the Year.” It is also called the “Jewish new year.” Why is that, since it occurs in the 7th month of the year? It is because it is the first day of the New Year of Repentance.

When the shofar sounds on this day, it begins a 10-day count-down to Yom Kippur, which is the most solemn day of all the year. We will speak of that in the next section. In the traditional services, the shofar is now sounded only once. It is sounded 100 times, over the period of three separate times on this day. There are a number of very specific, and quite different, shofar blasts which are sounded by a skilled shofar blower. They are sounded in a specific order, in a specific way, and at a specific time. It is all quite precise.

In modern Jewish practice, when this day arrives, announced by the sound of the shofar it is time to do two things. One is to settle any issues of dispute or sin we might have with one another, and the other is to do the same with G-d. Of course, we are to keep short accounts with one another, and certainly not allow the sun to go down on an offense. But we as human beings are not always diligent to pursue reconciliation, G-d has ordained a period of time at the end of His calendar during which we need to take care of unfinished business.

Our people have a tradition that the gates of repentance open on Rosh Hashanah, and close at the end of Yom Kippur. Of course, we can (and should) repent each day when we are in sin, but if we have delayed, this time gives us a second chance.

In the spiritual realm, the coming shofar is the one that will signal the end of this age, the dead will rise, and the great Judge will take His seat to judge the world.

1 Cor 15:50-57

50 Now I say this, brethren, that flesh and blood cannot inherit the kingdom of God; nor does the perishable inherit the imperishable. 51 Behold, I tell you a mystery; we will not all sleep, but we will all be changed, 52 in a moment, in the twinkling of an eye, at the last trumpet; for the trumpet will sound, and the dead will be raised imperishable, and we will be changed. 53 For this perishable must put on the imperishable, and this mortal must put on immortality. 54 But when this perishable will have put on the imperishable, and this mortal will have put on immortality, then will come about the saying that is written, "DEATH IS SWALLOWED UP in victory. 55 "O DEATH, WHERE IS YOUR VICTORY? O DEATH, WHERE IS YOUR STING?" 56 The sting of death is sin, and the power of sin is the law; 57 but thanks be to God, who gives us the victory through our Lord Jesus Christ.

1 Thess 4:15-18

15 For this we say to you by the word of the Lord, that we who are alive and remain until the coming of the Lord, will not precede those who have fallen asleep. 16 For the Lord Himself will descend from heaven with a shout, with the voice of the archangel and with the trumpet of God, and the dead in Christ will rise first. 17 Then we who are alive and remain will be caught up together with them in the clouds to meet the Lord in the air, and so we shall always be with the Lord. 18 Therefore comfort one another with these words.

And after the resurrection, comes the judgment.

Yom Kippur / Day of Atonement

Lev 23:26-32

26 The Lord spoke to Moses, saying, 27 "On exactly the tenth day of this seventh month is the day of atonement; it shall be a holy convocation for you, and you shall humble your souls and present an offering by fire to the Lord. 28 "You shall not do any work on this same day, for it is a day of atonement, to make atonement on your behalf before the Lord your God. 29 "If there is any person who will not humble himself on this same day, he shall be cut off from his people. 30 "As for any person who does any work on this same day, that person I will destroy from among his people. 31 "You shall do no work at all. It is to be a perpetual statute throughout your generations in all your dwelling places. 32 "It is to be a sabbath of complete rest to you, and you shall humble your souls; on the ninth of the month at evening, from evening until evening you shall keep your sabbath."

There is a fairly elaborate ceremony associated with the Yom Kippur festival. It is set out in Leviticus 16.

Lev 16:1-22

16 Now the Lord spoke to Moses after the death of the two sons of Aaron, when they had approached the presence of the Lord and died.
2 The Lord said to Moses:

"Tell your brother Aaron that he shall not enter at any time into the holy place inside the veil, before the mercy seat which is on the ark, or he will die; for I will appear in the cloud over the mercy seat. 3

"Aaron shall enter the holy place with this: with a bull for a sin offering and a ram for a burnt offering. 4 "He shall put on the holy linen tunic, and the linen undergarments shall be next to his body, and he shall be girded with the linen sash and attired with the linen turban (these are holy garments). Then he shall bathe his body in water and put them on. 5 "He shall take from the congregation of the sons of Israel two male goats for a sin offering and one ram for a burnt offering. 6 "Then Aaron shall offer the bull for the sin offering which is for himself, that he may make atonement for himself and for his household. 7 "He shall take the two goats and present them before the Lord at the doorway of the tent of meeting. 8 "Aaron shall cast lots for the two goats, one lot for the Lord and the other lot for the scapegoat. 9 "Then Aaron shall offer the goat on which the lot for the Lord fell, and make it a sin offering. 10 "But the goat on which the lot for the scapegoat fell shall be presented alive before the Lord, to make atonement upon it, to send it into the wilderness as the scapegoat.

11 "Then Aaron shall offer the bull of the sin offering which is for himself and make atonement for himself and for his household, and he shall slaughter the bull of the sin offering which is for himself. 12 "He shall take a firepan full of coals of fire from upon the altar before the Lord and two handfuls of finely ground sweet incense, and bring it inside the veil. 13 "He shall put the incense on the fire before the Lord, that the cloud of incense may cover the mercy seat that is on the ark of the testimony, otherwise he will die. 14 "Moreover, he shall take some of the blood of the bull and sprinkle it with his finger on the mercy seat on the east side; also in front of the mercy seat he shall sprinkle some of the blood with his finger seven times.

15 "Then he shall slaughter the goat of the sin offering which is for the people, and bring its blood inside the veil and do with its blood as he did with the blood of the bull, and sprinkle it on the mercy seat and in front of the mercy seat. 16 "He shall make atonement for the holy place, because of the impurities of the sons of Israel and because of their transgressions in regard to all their sins; and thus he shall do for

the tent of meeting which abides with them in the midst of their impurities. 17 "When he goes in to make atonement in the holy place, no one shall be in the tent of meeting until he comes out, that he may make atonement for himself and for his household and for all the assembly of Israel. 18 "Then he shall go out to the altar that is before the Lord and make atonement for it, and shall take some of the blood of the bull and of the blood of the goat and put it on the horns of the altar on all sides. 19 "With his finger he shall sprinkle some of the blood on it seven times and cleanse it, and from the impurities of the sons of Israel consecrate it.

20 "When he finishes atoning for the holy place and the tent of meeting and the altar, he shall offer the live goat. 21 "Then Aaron shall lay both of his hands on the head of the live goat, and confess over it all the iniquities of the sons of Israel and all their transgressions in regard to all their sins; and he shall lay them on the head of the goat and send it away into the wilderness by the hand of a man who stands in readiness. 22 "The goat shall bear on itself all their iniquities to a solitary land; and he shall release the goat in the wilderness.

There is much to say about the two goats, and space does not permit that teaching to be given here, but suffice it to say that the one goat who was slain as the sacrifice, was identical in every possible way with the goat that was driven into the wilderness to die.

One part of this ceremony is not found in Scripture, but in our ancient writings. The Priest placed his hands on the head of the scapegoat, and pronounced all the sins of Israel onto that goat. Then, there was a strip of white cloth which was dipped in the blood of the slain goat, and that strip of bloody cloth was tied around the horn of the scapegoat. The scapegoat was driven into the wilderness, and off a cliff, where it died a terrible death. At its death, the bloody cloth around its horn miraculously turned pure white, in a fulfillment of the passage.

Isa 1:18-20

18 "Come now, and let us reason together," Says the Lord,
"Though your sins are as scarlet, They will be as white as snow;
Though they are red like crimson, They will be like wool.
19 "If you consent and obey, You will eat the best of the land;

20 "But if you refuse and rebel, You will be devoured by the sword."
Truly, the mouth of the Lord has spoken.

But our ancient writings also record that this miracle ceased all at once. And the timing of the cessation of this miracle concurred with the death of Yeshua on the cross. This was G-ds's way of showing us that something important had changed. I believe it was this: The sacrifice of bulls and goats covered our sins, and hid them from the sight of our G-d. But the blood of the Lamb of G-d did far more. It actually cleansed us from those sins, and made them actually go away.

Heb 9:11-14

11 But when Christ appeared as a high priest of the good things to come, He entered through the greater and more perfect tabernacle, not made with hands, that is to say, not of this creation; 12 and not through the blood of goats and calves, but through His own blood, He entered the holy place once for all, having obtained eternal redemption. 13 For if the blood of goats and bulls and the ashes of a heifer sprinkling those who have been defiled sanctify for the cleansing of the flesh, 14 how much more will the blood of Christ, who through the eternal Spirit offered Himself without blemish to God, cleanse your conscience from dead works to serve the living God?

1 Peter 1:17-20

17 If you address as Father the One who impartially judges according to each one's work, conduct yourselves in fear during the time of your stay on earth; 18 knowing that you were not redeemed with perishable things like silver or gold from your futile way of life inherited from your forefathers, 19 but with precious blood, as of a lamb unblemished and spotless, the blood of Christ.

1 John 1:5-10

5 This is the message we have heard from Him and announce to you, that God is Light, and in Him there is no darkness at all. 6 If we say that we have fellowship with Him and yet walk in the darkness, we lie and do not practice the truth; 7 but if we walk in the Light as He Himself is in the Light, we have fellowship with one another, and the

blood of Jesus His Son cleanses us from all sin. 8 If we say that we have no sin, we are deceiving ourselves and the truth is not in us. 9 If we confess our sins, He is faithful and righteous to forgive us our sins and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness.

The traditional thought surrounding Yom Kippur is that G-d sits as Judge on this day, and he determines the fate of all people. That judgment day will certainly come in its fullness, as Scripture declares.

Rev 20:11-15

11 Then I saw a great white throne and Him who sat upon it, from whose presence earth and heaven fled away, and no place was found for them. 12 And I saw the dead, the great and the small, standing before the throne, and books were opened; and another book was opened, which is the book of life; and the dead were judged from the things which were written in the books, according to their deeds. 13 And the sea gave up the dead which were in it, and death and Hades gave up the dead which were in them; and they were judged, every one of them according to their deeds. 14 Then death and Hades were thrown into the lake of fire. This is the second death, the lake of fire. 15 And if anyone's name was not found written in the book of life, he was thrown into the lake of fire.

What will be the criteria for judgment? We find that stated by Yeshua Himself.

Matt 7:21-23

21 "Not everyone who says to Me, 'Lord, Lord,' will enter the kingdom of heaven, but he who does the will of My Father who is in heaven will enter. 22 "Many will say to Me on that day, 'Lord, Lord, did we not prophesy in Your name, and in Your name cast out demons, and in Your name perform many miracles?' 23 "And then I will declare to them, 'I never knew you; DEPART FROM ME, YOU WHO PRACTICE LAWLESSNESS.'

And once we pass through judgment, because our names were written in the Book of Life, what happens next? That we can see in the next festival.

Succot / Booths / Tabernacles

Lev 23:33-44

33 Again the Lord spoke to Moses, saying, 34 "Speak to the sons of Israel, saying, 'On the fifteenth of this seventh month is the Feast of Booths for seven days to the Lord. 35 'On the first day is a holy convocation; you shall do no laborious work of any kind. 36 'For seven days you shall present an offering by fire to the Lord. On the eighth day you shall have a holy convocation and present an offering by fire to the Lord; it is an assembly. You shall do no laborious work.

39 'On exactly the fifteenth day of the seventh month, when you have gathered in the crops of the land, you shall celebrate the feast of the Lord for seven days, with a rest on the first day and a rest on the eighth day. 40 'Now on the first day you shall take for yourselves the foliage of beautiful trees, palm branches and boughs of leafy trees and willows of the brook, and you shall rejoice before the Lord your God for seven days. 41 'You shall thus celebrate it as a feast to the Lord for seven days in the year. It shall be a perpetual statute throughout your generations; you shall celebrate it in the seventh month. 42 'You shall live in booths for seven days; all the native-born in Israel shall live in booths, 43 so that your generations may know that I had the sons of Israel live in booths when I brought them out from the land of Egypt. I am the Lord your God."

This festival is the most joyous of all the Festivals of the L-rd. There were a number of ceremonies associated with this lengthy festival as well. One of the most remarkable is the Water-Drawing ceremony which occurred on the last day of the festival. It is also known as the "great day of the feast."

During this ceremony the priests would parade from the altar of the L-rd in the Temple, down to the Pool of Siloam. There they would draw water from that pool, and proceed upwards once again to the altar. On either side of the procession would be people shouting praise to the L-rd. Shofars would be sounding as well. When they reached the altar again, they would pour this water, as well as some wine, into a single beaker with a spout on one side. It was arranged above the altar so that the water and wine flowed out downward past the grating, and onto the

flaming coals below. The fire would then be put out. It is recorded in our ancient writings that if you have not seen the joy of the Water Drawing, you have never seen joy in your life.

It was on this final day of the feast, the “Great Day” that Yeshua made an amazing proclamation about His followers having a ministry after His time was finished.

John 7:37-39

37 Now on the last day, the great day of the feast, Jesus stood and cried out, saying, "If anyone is thirsty, let him come to Me and drink. 38 "He who believes in Me, as the Scripture said, 'From his innermost being will flow rivers of living water.'" 39 But this He spoke of the Spirit, whom those who believed in Him were to receive; for the Spirit was not yet given, because Jesus was not yet glorified.

This festival represents our joining with Messiah as His own, and the joy that comes from living with our King without the company of those who have turned their backs upon G-d. They are gone forever.

And we recall that some of our sweet brothers and sisters have concluded that the Torah, together with all the festivals and new moons found as G-d's appointments with mankind, were abolished at the cross. I can address that as a final note.

I can assure you with the greatest level of confidence possible, that such is not the case. And one of the best examples of how I can prove such a statement is found in the final verses of the book of Zechariah, and the festival of Booths is specifically mentioned there as a world-wide celebration for mandatory attendance.

Zech 14:9-21

9 And the Lord will be king over all the earth; in that day the Lord will be the only one, and His name the only one. 10 All the land will be changed into a plain from Geba to Rimmon south of Jerusalem; but Jerusalem will rise and remain on its site from Benjamin's Gate as far as the place of the First Gate to the Corner Gate, and from the Tower of Hananel to the king's wine presses. 11 And people will live in it, and there will be no more curse, for Jerusalem will dwell in security.

12 Now this will be the plague with which the Lord will strike all the peoples who have gone to war against Jerusalem; their flesh will rot while they stand on their feet, and their eyes will rot in their sockets,

and their tongue will rot in their mouth. 13 And it will come about in that day that a great panic from the Lord will fall on them; and they will seize one another's hand, and the hand of one will be lifted against the hand of another. 14 And Judah also will fight at Jerusalem; and the wealth of all the surrounding nations will be gathered, gold and silver and garments in great abundance. 15 So also like this plague, will be the plague on the horse, the mule, the camel, the donkey, and all the cattle that will be in those camps.

16 Then it will come about that any who are left of all the nations that went against Jerusalem will go up from year to year to worship the King, the Lord of hosts, and to celebrate the Feast of Booths. 17 And it will be that whichever of the families of the earth does not go up to Jerusalem to worship the King, the Lord of hosts, there will be no rain on them. 18 And if the family of Egypt does not go up or enter, then no rain will fall on them; it will be the plague with which the Lord smites the nations who do not go up to celebrate the Feast of Booths. 19 This will be the punishment of Egypt, and the punishment of all the nations who do not go up to celebrate the Feast of Booths. 20 In that day there will be inscribed on the bells of the horses, "HOLY TO THE LORD." And the cooking pots in the Lord's house will be like the bowls before the altar. 21 And every cooking pot in Jerusalem and in Judah will be holy to the Lord of hosts; and all who sacrifice will come and take of them and boil in them. And there will no longer be a Canaanite in the house of the Lord of hosts in that day.

Conclusion

The festivals set out in Leviticus 23 are a roadmap for the advancement of G-d's plan of salvation. We currently have seen a spiritual fulfillment of all the festivals up through Shavuot. We await the fulfillment of the final ones. We most certainly are anxiously waiting for that great shofar to sound from heaven, and our Husband to come to take us home with Him. Let us be diligent brides-in-waiting until that day, keeping our wedding dresses nice and clean, and plenty of oil for our lamps.

The Festival Year

Leviticus 23

