

# FAQ About Biblical Feasts 2011

For the Restoration of Israel



**Q: Why do the dates of Jewish holidays change from year to year?**

A: Actually, Biblical and Jewish holidays occur on the same day year after year. The difference is the Jewish people use the Biblical calendar. This calendar is based on the lunar cycle rather than the solar and loses about 11 days per year, but then makes up for it by adding a month every two or three years—similar to the solar calendar's Leap Year adding a day in February.



**Q: What is the difference between a Biblical holiday and a Jewish holiday?**

A: Simply stated, Biblical holidays (*Shabbat*, *Pesach/Passover*, *Bikkurim/FirstFruits*, *Shavuot/Pentacost*, *Yom Teruah/Rosh HaShana*, *Yom Kippur/Day of Atonement*, and *Sukkot/Feast of Tabernacles*) were commanded by God in the *Torah*—the first five books of the Bible. Additional Jewish holidays and special “days of remembrance” commemorate historical events such as *Purim*, *Hanukkah*, the Holocaust, and events associated with the State of Israel.

**Q: When does a Biblical Feast begin and end?**

A: The day begins at sunset and ends at sundown the following day. The Bible began this observance at Creation (see Genesis 1:5, 8, 13, 19, 23, 31). Therefore, when our modern Gregorian calendar shows a Biblical holiday such as Passover on a certain date, actually the Jewish people began celebrating Passover the evening before.

**Q: Why are the Biblical Feasts also noteworthy to Christians?**

A: More and more Christians and churches are learning about and embracing the Jewish roots of their faith and are celebrating some of the Biblical Feasts such as Passover. Others have traveled to Israel to celebrate the Feast of Tabernacles. One of the lovely aspects about the Biblical Feasts is that many of the Festivals can be celebrated at home with families and friends as a joyful opportunity for parents to teach their children about the Lord.



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The following very brief definitions\* are based on  
Leviticus 23, Numbers 28 & 29, and Deuteronomy 16:1-17

## Shabbat



*Shabbat* is Hebrew for Sabbath. You may be surprised to learn that the Sabbath is one of God's appointed festivals (Leviticus 23:3 Genesis 2:2). After six days of Creation, God set apart the seventh day as a day of rest and remembrance for the whole world. After God rescued the Children of Israel from Egypt's bondage, God further delineated that the Sabbath should have a sacred assembly—which in modern days essentially encourages doing no regular work and going to services. In Jewish households around the world, the Sabbath is a joyful celebration of God's goodness.

As believers in Yeshua (Jesus) the Jewish Messiah and Savior of the world, we know that our salvation does not **rest** in **our** works, but what **He has done** for us (Ephesians 2:9). How beautiful that we can celebrate this miraculous event every week!

## Pesach

*Pesach* is Hebrew for Passover and commemorates God's miraculous deliverance of the Jewish people from slavery—when God "passed-over" their homes and protected them from death. For thousands of years, on the first night of Passover, (Leviticus 23:9) families around the world have hosted special meals called Seders in their homes and remember through delicious food, songs, scripture readings, and prayers the salvation of their ancestors. The next day and the seventh day, sacred assemblies are held. Also, during those seven days the Jewish people, as God commanded, do not eat any foods with leaven (yeast). A staple during this festival is the unleavened bread *matzah*. In the Bible leaven represents sin (1 Corinthians 5: 6, 8).

When Yeshua (Jesus) celebrated what is known as The Last Supper, He was adhering to the appointed Festival of Passover. Today, many Christians around the world join with the Jewish people in celebrating Passover as another meaningful way to rejoice that the Lamb of God was sacrificed so that the penalty of sin would "pass-over" us

*"Six days work may be done, but on the seventh day there must be a Sabbath of complete rest, a holy assembly. You must not do any work; it is a Sabbath to the Lord in all the places where you live." Leviticus 23:3*



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## Bikkurim

*Bikkurim* is Hebrew for First Fruits and is sometimes known as *Sfirat Haomer*, the Early First Fruits. This little known feast is sometimes overlooked; however *Bikkurim* packs a powerful prophetic punch. The end of the Passover Sabbath (Saturday at sundown) began the First Fruits. The first day after the Passover Sabbath, the Jewish people were to offer barley as the first fruits of the Spring harvest. That morning (Sunday) a sheaf or handful of the early barley harvest was reverently cut and the barley removed, filling a bowl. This “firstfruits” was then taken to the Temple and waved before the Lord. Yeshua (Jesus) was crucified as the Passover Lamb and arose from the dead on Sunday, the very day of the Feast of the First Fruits.

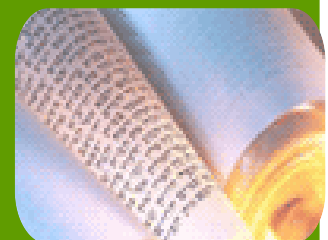
Yeshua (Jesus) also spoke of how grain must die when planted in order for the harvest to come (John 12:23-24, 32). What an encouragement to us when Paul refers to the Messiah as the first fruits of the dead (1 Corinthians 15:20), that one day we will also be a part of that Final Harvest.

*Bikkurim*  
*Firstfruits*

## Shavuot

*Shavuot* is Hebrew for Weeks—Christians may better know this Festival as Pentecost. God commanded the Jewish people to count seven full weeks (to count for 50 days) from the Festival of First Fruits to celebrate with a sacred assembly and animal and harvest sacrifices. Like Passover and Sukkot, families were to come to Jerusalem to celebrate.

What is most significant to us historically—as believers in Yeshua (Jesus)—is that after Yeshua’s ascension into heaven, His disciples were in Jerusalem along with the Jewish people from other countries during Shavuot (Pentecost). It was during this Festival that the Holy Spirit was given to the disciples and great Jewish revival for repentance and salvation broke out. The reason why there were people who spoke different languages was that these Jewish people from other countries had adhered to God’s command to come to Jerusalem for Shavuot.



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## Yom Teruah/ Rosh HaShana



Yom Teruah/Rosh HaShana. The Bible calls this feast *Yom Teruah*, the Day of Sounding the Trumpets (Leviticus 23:24). Today it is more commonly known as *Rosh HaShana*, the “Head of the Year” or Jewish New Year. This festival occurs in the Fall. So why is it known as the “Head of the Year” or Jewish New Year, when the Biblical calendar’s New Year begins in the Spring?

To understand the significance of *Yom Teruah* is to understand the subsequent festivals of *Yom Kippur* and *Sukkot*. Traditionally, sounding the trumpet or *shofar* (ram’s horn) meant that the Children of Israel were to take note—whether a battle call, a call to assemble at the Tabernacle, or other major event, the Jewish people knew to give great importance to the call. In this case the call was intended to set apart the day in preparation for the holiest day of the Biblical calendar, *Yom Kippur*—the Day of Atonement. The ten days preceding *Yom Kippur* are spent in introspection, repentance, and an attitude of awe of God’s grace and mercy—in fact these days were later called by the Jewish people, the Days of Awe.

As believers in the Messiah who was the eternal Atonement of our sins, *Yom Teruah/Rosh HaShana* is a call to take notice of God’s loving sacrifice by sending His Son to die for us. It reminds us to reflect on our own walk and relationship with God and others.

## Yom Kippur



Yom Kippur is Hebrew for the Day of Atonement. To atone means to cover—in the blood covering over sin. Held ten days after *Yom Teruah/Rosh HaShana*, the Day of Atonement was and is considered the holiest day of the year (Leviticus 23:26-32). It was this day and this day only that the high priest went into the Tabernacle/Temple’s Holy of Holies. Here he placed the sacrificial blood on the Ark of the Covenant to make atonement for the nation of Israel. Leviticus 16 goes into great detail about the ceremony.

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The symbolisms of God's grace and mercy, and most especially what Yeshua/Jesus would do thousands of years later, are worthy of study. Of all the Biblical Feasts, only *Yom Kippur* is a day of fasting and prayer. Breaking the fast occurs at sundown.



It's clear why the Day of Atonement is considered the holiest day of the year. For us as believers in the eternal High Priest Yeshua/Jesus, this day is a beautiful reminder of His sacrifice. According to Hebrews chapters 3-10, Yeshua, as High Priest, brought His own blood to the **heavenly** Ark of the Covenant and sprinkled it there as an eternal atonement for those who accept Him. Hebrews 9:16-28 is one of the most beautiful images of how Yeshua fulfilled that commandment of God—not only on earth, but also in heaven.

## Sukkot

*Sukkot* is Hebrew for tabernacles. The last festival of the Biblical calendar, the Feast of Tabernacles also closes the holy season. And what a joyous Festival it is. For eight days the Jewish people celebrate the final harvest and God's provision for them in the wilderness. Around the world, many Jewish families build a temporary hut called a *sukkah* and spend eight days eating and fellowshiping with family and friends as a reminder of their forty years in the wilderness until they reached the Promise Land--Israel. Families, or a family member, had to come to Jerusalem to celebrate, and the first and last days were sacred assemblies. Interestingly, this is the only festival God commands all of the nations to celebrate (Zechariah 14:16-19) in Jerusalem.

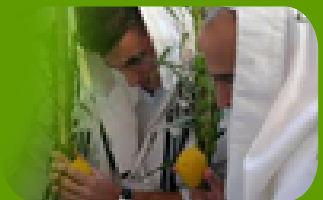
It would take volumes to delve into the wonderful symbolisms of *Sukkot*: the exquisiteness of these last three Festivals being the Call, the Atonement and the Final Harvest; that our bodies are only temporary dwellings until we reach our "Promised Land" and find our eternal home (2 Corinthians 5); that Yeshua/Jesus "tabernacled" among us (John 1:14); when Yeshua/Jesus celebrated Sukkot in the Temple, He announced He was the Living Waters in fulfillment of Isaiah 12:3 (John 7:37-39) and so much more.

This is just a tiny peek into the wonder of the Biblical Festivals. We hope this little booklet will merely whet your appetite to learn more about the roots of your faith and cause you to read more about it in the Bible. God bless you in this endeavor and may the Holy Spirit edify your hearts. Shalom, shalom.

\* For more information on the Biblical Feasts and fun and meaningful instructions how you and your family can celebrate these precious appointed times, we recommend purchasing *God's Appointed Times* by Barney Kasdan at your local bookstore or order online via [www.christianbook.com](http://www.christianbook.com).

*Then all who survive from all the nations that came to attack Jerusalem will go up annually to worship the King, the Lord who rules over all, and to observe the Feast of Tabernacles. But if any of the nations anywhere on earth refuse to go up to Jerusalem to worship the King, the Lord who rules over all, they will get no rain. If the Egyptians will not do so, they will get no rain - instead there will be the kind of plague which the Lord inflicts on any nations that do not go up to celebrate the Feast of Tabernacles. This will be the punishment of Egypt and of all nations that do not go up to celebrate the Feast of Tabernacles.*

*Zechariah 14:16-19*



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