

The apostle Timothy<sup>1</sup> was one of Paul's most trusted friends and confidants – even to the point of Paul calling him his “son”. Because they were so close, we can assume Paul shared some of his most deeply held beliefs with him, one of which can be found in the opening comments of his 1<sup>st</sup> letter to his beloved ‘son’ where he said -

<sup>ESV</sup> **1 Timothy 2:1** First of all, then, I urge that supplications, prayers, intercessions, and thanksgivings be made for all people, <sup>2</sup> for kings and all who are in high positions, that we may lead a peaceful and quiet life, godly and dignified in every way. <sup>3</sup> This is good, and it is pleasing in the sight of God our Savior, <sup>4</sup> who desires all people to be saved and to come to the knowledge of the truth.

Paul understood that God was determined<sup>2</sup> for all mankind – even those who were not believers to first “be saved”, and secondly “to come to the knowledge of the truth” – which we understand to be God's instructions for life as found in His word – the Torah<sup>3</sup>.

Did Paul really believe that God was going to be able to bring his desire to fruition? Is that really possible? Think about it – Paul was living in the beginning years of the 5<sup>th</sup> millennia. Four thousand years of human history had preceded him, and up to that point, about the only people who knew and believed in the God of Israel were the Jewish people living in the “Promised Land”. In his day, besides those “in the land” and the “lost tribes” (who had apparently turned to idolatry), there were also a few Jewish congregations in Italy and Asia Minor ... clearly a very small number when considering all those living on the earth in his day.

What's more – Paul believed he was living in the last days – that the Messiah's return was imminent. Did he really believe God was going to be able to save and bring all the rest of mankind to the knowledge of God's way in such a short time?

I submit that Paul did believe those things, and why? Because he believed the message of the prophets of old; prophecies which were, and are fulfilled in the God's Biblical festivals.

The Biblical festivals, listed in Leviticus 23 and again in Deuteronomy 16 are Passover, which includes the “Days of Unleavened Bread”), Shavuot (which means “weeks” because of how they are counted), Yom Teruah – the Festival of Shouting which is closely followed by Yom Kippur – the Day of Coverings. The two final festivals are called “Sukkot”, which means “booths”, which is immediately followed by the final festival which is called “Shemini Atzoret” which – though attached to Sukkot, is a separate festival.

The festivals follow the yearly harvest cycle in the middle east. Passover and the Day's of Unleavened Bread fall within the barley harvest. The one-day festival of Shavuot is during the wheat harvest, and the fall festivals (Yom Teruah, Yom Kippur, Sukkot, and Shemini Atzoreth) all occur in one month during the general vegetable and grape harvest.

The association of the festivals with the various harvests is shown in Exodus where Moses gave the terms of the covenant to Israel at Mount Sinai –

<sup>ESV</sup> **Exodus 23:14-16** "Three times in the year you shall keep a feast to me. <sup>15</sup> You shall keep the Feast of Unleavened Bread. As I commanded you, you shall eat unleavened bread

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<sup>1</sup> Being that he was “sent” (‘apostello’ – Strong's 649), he was by definition “an apostle” (see Acts 19:22)

<sup>2</sup> ‘desire’ = ‘thelo’ (Strong's 2309) which means “to will, having in mind, intend, to be resolved or determined”

<sup>3</sup> Deut. 32:46-47; John 17:17



for seven days at the appointed time in the month of Abib, for in it you came out of Egypt. None shall appear before me empty-handed. <sup>16</sup> You shall keep the Feast of Harvest, of the firstfruits of your labor, of what you sow in the field. You shall keep the Feast of Ingathering at the end of the year, when you gather in from the field the fruit of your labor.

In many places in scripture, a harvest is compared to a resurrection. A good example of that is in Yeshua's parable of the wheat and the tares<sup>4</sup> which clearly speaks of a resurrection of the just and the unjust. Thus it can be assumed that the three festival seasons each represent a specific resurrection.<sup>5</sup>

In addition to representing specific harvests, the festivals also follow a pattern that is found in the ancient Hebrew wedding. Though we will get into more detail a little later, we can clearly see various aspects of a wedding in the festivals.

When put together, the festivals present a yearly reminder of how God will not only bring salvation to all who are willing, but how He will restore the relationship between Himself and mankind, and thus fulfill the purpose for which man was created –

<sup>ESV</sup> **Genesis 1:28** And God blessed them. And God said to them, "Be fruitful and multiply and fill the earth and subdue it ..."

Filling the earth with God-fearing people is why we were created, and when we have fulfilled our purpose, the earth will return to the state that it was in when God created it – the state of being "tov meod" – very good!

With this background, let's take a glimpse at the seven Biblical festivals.

## Passover

The first Biblical festival is a fulfillment of God's promise to Abraham. Though childless, God had promised that Abram's descendants would become a great nation, through which all the earth would be blessed. To confirm His promise, God entered into a one-sided covenant with Abram saying -

<sup>ESV</sup> **Genesis 15:13-14** "Know for certain that your offspring will be sojourners in a land that is not theirs and will be servants there, and they will be afflicted for four hundred years. <sup>14</sup> But I will bring judgment on the nation that they serve, and afterward they shall come out with great possessions.

By this promise, God entered into a covenant with Abram whereby He would be responsible for making sure Abram's descendants would fulfill the promise He had made with him – specifically that through Abram, all the families of the earth would be blessed. In order to do that, YHVH would enter into a marriage covenant with Israel and be responsible for her. Thus as was mentioned earlier, the festivals carry with them the connotation of a wedding.

Roughly 400 years later, God's promise to Abram<sup>6</sup> came to pass as the Hebrew people were thrust out of Egypt. This event is documented in the first 14 chapters of Exodus.

The Passover event took place on the evening of the 15<sup>th</sup> day of the 1<sup>st</sup> month of the Hebrew calendar just a few hours after the Hebrews had killed a firstborn lamb and spread its blood on their doorposts.<sup>7</sup>

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<sup>4</sup> Matt. 13:24-30; 36-43

<sup>5</sup> <https://www.amiyisrael.org/articles/Firstfruits-WhoAreThe/who-are-the-firstfruits.html>

<sup>6</sup> Ex. 2:24; 6:5

<sup>7</sup> Ex. 12:14



By believing God and subsequently following His instructions pertaining to the lamb, the firstborn of each family was redeemed from certain death. God instructed us to memorialize that day by ceasing from work so that we can assemble together and rehearse what happened that day.

<sup>ESV</sup> **Exodus 12:14-16** "This day shall be for you a memorial day, and you shall keep it as a feast to the LORD; throughout your generations, as a statute forever, you shall keep it as a feast. <sup>15</sup> Seven days you shall eat unleavened bread ... <sup>16</sup> On the first day you shall hold a holy assembly, and on the seventh day a holy assembly. No work shall be done on those days. But what everyone needs to eat, that alone may be prepared by you.

Though redemption is certainly the main theme of Passover, God used the events leading up to Passover to begin to show us how He intends to save us as well. Tucked away in the Exodus story is the story of Moses and Zipporah – the daughter of Jethro the priest of Midian. In the story, Moses had left Egypt fearing reprisal for killing an Egyptian. On the way, he came upon a well where a number of shepherd girls were being driven away and denied the opportunity to water their flock. Moses - seeing their plight – singlehandedly drove the other shepherds away from the well. The text states it like this –

<sup>ESV</sup> **Exodus 2:16-17** <sup>1</sup>Now the priest of Midian had seven daughters, and they came and drew water and filled the troughs to water their father's flock. <sup>17</sup> The shepherds came and drove them away, but Moses stood up and saved them, and watered their flock.

The Hebrew word used in that passage is “yasha” (יָשָׁא – 3467) which means “to save, be saved, delivered”. It is the root word from which we get “Yeshua”. In this “salvation”, we saw Moses driving away and liberating Jethro’s daughters from the other shepherds, and as the story goes, Moses eventually married the oldest daughter. A similar event happens at the end of the story that further explains what salvation means for the believer.

## 7<sup>th</sup> Day Of Unleavened Bread

According to tradition, it was on the 7<sup>th</sup> Day of Unleavened Bread that the Hebrews walked through the Red Sea. Though six days earlier Pharaoh had commanded them to leave, he was now in hot pursuit, hoping to capture and bring the Hebrews back into slavery, but his plan was foiled when he and his army followed the Hebrews into the sea.

As the last of the Hebrews reached the other side of the sea, the waters crashed down on the Egyptians and killed them. The scripture says -

<sup>ESV</sup> **Exodus 14:26-28** Then the LORD said to Moses, "Stretch out your hand over the sea, that the water may come back upon the Egyptians, upon their chariots, and upon their horsemen." <sup>27</sup> So Moses stretched out his hand over the sea, and the sea returned to its normal course when the morning appeared. And as the Egyptians fled into it, the LORD threw the Egyptians into the midst of the sea. <sup>28</sup> The waters returned and covered the chariots and the horsemen; of all the host of Pharaoh that had followed them into the sea, not one of them remained.

When the Hebrews saw what had happened to their captors, they rejoiced saying –

<sup>ESV</sup> **Exodus 15:1-2** "I will sing to the LORD, for he has triumphed gloriously; the horse and his rider he has thrown into the sea. <sup>2</sup> The LORD is my strength and my song, and he has become my salvation; this is my God, and I will praise him, my father's God, and I will exalt him.



According to chapter 14, verse 30, God “saved” Israel that day – just as Moses had ‘saved’ Jethro’s daughter. He had brought them salvation, and as we move to the next festival, we can see why they had been saved.

## Shavuot

Roughly 50 days after leaving Egypt, the Hebrews arrived at Mount Sinai. During their journey, God courted them by continually revealing to them what He would do for them if they would follow Him, and by the time they arrived at the mountain, they were convinced. So just as Moses had previously proposed to Zipporah, God now proposed to Israel. On Shavuot<sup>8</sup>, He told Moses to say to the Hebrews –

<sup>ESV</sup> **Exodus 19:4-6** You yourselves have seen what I did to the Egyptians, and how I bore you on eagles’ wings and brought you to myself. <sup>5</sup> Now therefore, if you will indeed obey my voice and keep my covenant, you shall be my treasured possession among all peoples, for all the earth is mine; <sup>6</sup> and you shall be to me a kingdom of priests and a holy nation ....”

Because they were so enamored with Him, the Hebrews agreed to follow God’s instructions even before they knew what those instructions would be, and just a few days later God gave them the Ten Commandments and followed that with the terms of the marriage covenant.

Taking that salvation that was freely given to Israel at the Red Sea, and that a marriage covenant was made at Shavuot, we can see that the reason God saved Israel was so they could join into marriage with Him and keep His commandments<sup>9</sup>. This connection is clearly made in the beginning of the Exodus story when Moses asks God for a sign -

<sup>ESV</sup> **Exodus 3:11-12** But Moses said to God, "Who am I that I should go to Pharaoh and bring the children of Israel out of Egypt?" <sup>12</sup> He said, "But I will be with you, and this shall be the sign for you, that I have sent you: when you have brought the people out of Egypt, you shall serve God on this mountain."

Shavuot is mentioned in the New Testament under the term “Pentecost”.

<sup>ESV</sup> **Acts 2:1-3** When the day of Pentecost arrived, they were all together in one place. <sup>2</sup> And suddenly there came from heaven a sound like a mighty rushing wind, and it filled the entire house where they were sitting. <sup>3</sup> And divided tongues as of fire appeared to them and rested on each one of them.

A careful examination of both instances reveals a number of similarities between the events of the first Shavuot and the one mentioned in Acts 2. 1 Peter 1:1 along with 1 Peter 2:8-9 show that the people Peter spoke to on Pentecost were the descendants of those who received the covenant on Mount Sinai. Though many evangelical teachers claim that the Acts 2 Pentecost was the “birth” of the church, closer examination will reveal that it is instead the “re-birth” of the church – the congregation of Israel.<sup>10</sup>

So the first three festivals – Passover, the 7<sup>th</sup> Day of Unleavened Bread, and Shavuot teach us that we have been redeemed by the blood of The Lamb and saved from our enemy so that we can serve God as He instructs us. Like the previous festivals, Shavuot is a day to cease from working so you can assemble together.

<sup>8</sup> Though we cannot definitively say that this happened of Shavuot, all indications are that it did.

<sup>9</sup> Since the Torah states that a man shall have dominion over his wife (Gen. 3:16)

<sup>10</sup> Acts 7:38



## Yom Teruah

We have now visited the spring and summer harvests and festivals. The next festival – Yom Teruah (the Feast of Trumpets) - occurs near the beginning of the fall harvest, but there is no specific event that coincides with it in the Tnakh. Instead we learn more about it through the example of the Hebrew wedding (after all, God is “betrothed” to Israel) and Jewish tradition.

Much of what we understand of the end times is from the letters of Paul. Being that he was fully “Jewish” and of the sect of the Pharisees (who believed in resurrection of the dead), it is understandable that he would use concepts they understood to explain end-time events.

For instance, in ancient Jewish understanding, there were three significant trumpet blasts. The “First” trumpet was the one blown on Mount Sinai at the first Shavuot. This marked the betrothal of Israel to God. The “Last” trumpet is the one blown on Yom Teruah to mark the beginning of the Birthpains of the Messiah. The “Great” trumpet is the one Blown on Yom Kippur that marks the return of the Messiah and the gathering of the Exiles of Israel.

Paul’s understanding of the Hebrew wedding also played heavily into his teaching. For instance, in the marriage context of the day, the groom and his entourage would show up at the bride’s home – oftentimes at night – blowing trumpets to announce that he had arrived to claim his bride. The noise of the trumpets would wake out of sleep the entire town, who knew that the bride would be taken away and that a marriage supper was imminent.

Paul was writing to predominately Jewish audiences and thus used terms they understood. Thus he explained Yom Teruah as being like the day the bridegroom would come to “catch away” his bride and take her to his Chuppah - a temporary residence where they consummate the marriage. In regards to the “catching away” he wrote –

<sup>ESV</sup> **1 Thessalonians 4:15-17** For this we declare to you by a word from the Lord, that we who are alive, who are left until the coming of the Lord, will not precede those who have fallen asleep. <sup>16</sup> For the Lord himself will descend from heaven with a cry of command, with the voice of an archangel, and with the sound of the trumpet of God. And the dead in Christ will rise first. <sup>17</sup> Then we who are alive, who are left, will be caught up together with them in the clouds to meet the Lord in the air, and so we will always be with the Lord.

In this analogy, the “dead in Christ” along with “we who are alive ...” are the “bride” of the Messiah and He is simply following Hebrew tradition. In the following passage, Paul nails down the timing -

<sup>ESV</sup> **1 Corinthians 15:51-52** Behold! I tell you a mystery. We shall not all sleep, but we shall all be changed, <sup>52</sup> 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 shall be changed.

The “last trumpet” in the above passage indicates that the “catching away” will commence on Yom Teruah, the Feast of Trumpets.

When you consider the festivals up to this point, you see the following themes:

Festival Name	Impact on the Bride	Impact on Un-Repentant Israel
Passover	Covenant of the fathers	Redemption is available
7 <sup>th</sup> DUB	Courting the bride	Salvation is available
Shavuot	Betrothal	The terms of the covenant
Yom Teruah	Bring bride to Chuppah	The birthpains – result of living outside covenant



Though some may think Yom Teruah would be the end of the story, we must think as if we were a king. A king with a queen is still nothing more than a man unless he has a kingdom. The next two festivals picture the Kingdom of God being re-established on the earth.

## Yom Kippur

Yom Kippur is the 5<sup>th</sup> of the seven Biblical festivals. It falls just 5 days after Yom Teruah, signaling that end-time events will develop quickly behind the previous event. In fact, the “Birth Pains of the Messiah” (traditionally called “the Tribulation”) begin with Yom Teruah and end at Yom Kippur.

Based on Leviticus 16 and Hebrews 9:7, we understand Yom Kippur to be the day each year when the unintentional sins of Israel were forgiven. It is a day of fasting – not as penitence – but as a way to draw closer to God. In Judaism, it is considered to be the most holy day of the year.

Yom Kippur is often misunderstood – especially in regards to the two goats on which the High Priest lays his hands. Some believe the two goats are one sacrifice, while others believe they are two sacrifices. One often-forgotten aspect of Yom Kippur is that it marks the beginning of the Jubilee year.

<sup>NKJ</sup> **Leviticus 25:8-10** And you shall count seven sabbaths of years for yourself, seven times seven years; and the time of the seven sabbaths of years shall be to you forty-nine years. <sup>9</sup>Then you shall cause the trumpet of the Jubilee to sound (literally – ‘cause to pass over the shofar of shouting’) on the tenth day of the seventh month; on the Day of Atonement you shall make the trumpet to sound throughout all your land. <sup>10</sup>And you shall consecrate the fiftieth year, and proclaim liberty throughout all the land to all its inhabitants. It shall be a Jubilee for you; and each of you shall return to his possession, and each of you shall return to his family.

It is on this day that Yeshua will begin to draw his people from the four corners of the earth; from wherever they are scattered. Yeshua explains it in His “Olivet Prophecy” -

<sup>NKJ</sup> **Matthew 24:29-31** " Immediately after the tribulation of those days the sun will be darkened, and the moon will not give its light; the stars will fall from heaven, and the powers of the heavens will be shaken. <sup>30</sup> Then the sign of the Son of Man will appear in heaven, and then all the tribes of the earth will mourn, and they will see the Son of Man coming on the clouds of heaven with power and great glory. <sup>31</sup> And He will send His angels with a **great sound of a trumpet**, and they will gather together His elect from the four winds, from one end of heaven to the other.

Yeshua clearly places the beginning of the re-gathering of the exiles on Yom Kippur. Based on His words and those of the prophets, He will gather them together as one people and will – as happened in the Exodus story – lead them to Mount Sinai once again. This, I believe, is the “second exodus” mentioned in Jeremiah 16 and 23 as well as a number of other places.

The purpose of the second exodus is the same as the first exodus – God wants to save His people so they will serve him. He will take them to Mount Sinai and re-introduce them to the proper application of the Torah. When He is satisfied that they are properly trained, He will lead them to Jerusalem where He will reign as the King of a united Israel and Judah, and within a short period of time, will usher in the next festival – Sukkot, the Feast of Tabernacles.

## Sukkot

The 7-day festival of Sukkot pictures the millennial Kingdom of God, or as it is sometimes called, the “Messianic Age”. It begins 5 days after Yom Kippur. It is also considered to be the “wedding feast” of King Yeshua and His bride.



Sukkot is a time of joy. For seven days God’s people enjoy the fruits of a bountiful harvest. It is a time of rejoicing, feasting, and and fun as God’s people relish in the benefits of living a godly lifestyle. But there is much work to do as well.

The purpose of this 1000 year period is for the nations to observe God’s people living happily under His righteous laws. Thus God’s people will be ambassadors to the nations, encouraging them to visit Jerusalem and adopt the Hebrew lifestyle that brings nothing but joy. It will be like it was in Solomon’s day when the Queen of Sheba proclaimed that the glory of his kingdom excelled beyond her wildest imagination. Spreading this word – the message of the Kingdom of God, is what we’ve been called to do.

Though Sukkot is a time of unparalleled prosperity and joy, it is called “Sukkot” because Sukkot means “Booths”, and during this time we will still be living in temporary housing. Why? Because the Messianic Kingdom is not our permanent home. There is something even better still ahead!

## Shemini Atzoret

On the heels of Sukkot, in fact connected directly to it, is the final fall festival. It’s called “Shemini Atzoret”<sup>11</sup> which means “eighth day assembly”. Though it is a separate festival, it is considered to be the “eighth day” of Sukkot, and thus in Hebrew thought, it is a “new beginning”.<sup>12</sup>

Shimini Atzoreth pictures a new age, what the Jewish sages call the “Olam Haba” – the age to come. It is the earth spoken of in the book of Revelation that has been burned up to remove the impurity of death. It is a world where there will be no more death.

It is the New Jerusalem – a return to the Garden of Eden. It is to be our permanent home. Thus, after the seven days of Sukkot we can finally abandon our booths and move into permanent structures. We have finally arrived.

By adding these final three festivals to what we’ve already seen, we can see how God is working to save mankind.

Festival Name	Impact on the Bride	Impact on Un-Repentant Israel
Passover	Covenant of the fathers	Redemption is available
7 <sup>th</sup> DUB	Courting the bride	Salvation is available
Shavuot	Betrothal	The terms of the covenant
Yom Teruah	Bringi bride to Chuppah	Birthpains – result of living outside covenant
Yom Kippur	Exiting the Chuppah	Gather the repentant exiles
Sukkot	King builds a kingdom	Drawing the nations to God
Shemini Atzoreth	The Eternal Kingdom	Eternal Peace

The festivals are actually a blueprint of salvation. As Paul said in his letter to the Colossians –

<sup>YLT</sup> **Colossians 2:16-17** Let no one, then, judge you in eating or in drinking, or in respect of a feast, or of a new moon, or of sabbaths,<sup>17</sup> which are a shadow of the coming things, and the body *is* of the Christ ...

<sup>11</sup> Lev. 23:36 – “eighth” = “shemiyniy” and “assembly” = “atsaret”

<sup>12</sup> See <https://www.amiyisrael.org/articles/WaterPouring/Water-Pouring.htm> for more information on the concept of the 8<sup>th</sup> period in a 7-period cycle



Paul calls God's set apart times "shadows". We know what a shadow is; it is an image of something real after light has been cast on it. When Yeshua's light is cast on the festivals we see an image of God's plan. But we also see ourselves in that plan.

In that passage, the word "is" is not in the Greek text but was added by the translators in order to make the passage more understandable. I believe it actually clouds what Paul was saying. I think he wrote exactly what he meant – the festivals, new months, and the Sabbath are an image of God's people which is the body of the Messiah.

As we walk out these festival year by year, we are walking out God's plan of redemption and salvation for all the world to see. Once you see it, you realize that Israel is just a pattern of how God intends to bring salvation to the world. As Paul said in his letter to the Romans –

<sup>ESV</sup> **Romans 1:16** For I am not ashamed of the gospel, for it is the power of God for salvation to everyone who believes, to the Jew first and also to the Greek.

He goes on to say –

<sup>ESV</sup> **Romans 2:9-11** There will be tribulation and distress for every human being who does evil, the Jew first and also the Greek, <sup>10</sup> but glory and honor and peace for everyone who does good, the Jew first and also the Greek. <sup>11</sup> For God shows no partiality.

These are not Jewish festivals; they are God's festivals. We all, both "Jew and Greek", have a part to play in them.

So in his letter to Timothy, Paul was right – God does intend to save all those who are willing to be saved and who are willing to walk in His ways. There is much more detail available to us as to how this all comes to pass, and as we walk the festivals out each year, we learn more about them and our place in them.

Shalom Alecheim