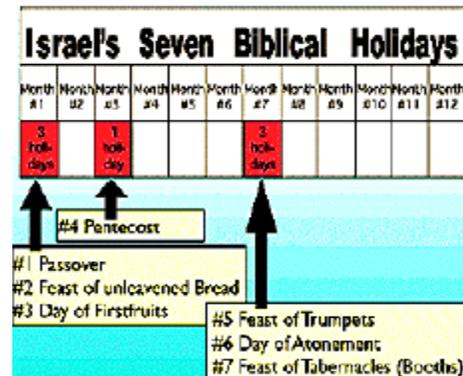


Understanding Hebrew Festivals

“Observe the month of Aviv, and keep Pesach to ADONAI your God; for in the month of Aviv, ADONAI your God brought you out of Egypt at night. You are to sacrifice the Pesach offering from flock and herd to ADONAI your God in the place where ADONAI will choose to have his name live. You are not to eat any hametz with it; for seven days you are to eat with it matzah, the bread of affliction; for you came out of the land of Egypt in haste. Thus you will remember the day you left the land of Egypt as long as you live. No leaven is to be seen with you anywhere in your territory for seven days. None of the meat from your sacrifice on the first day in the evening is to remain all night until morning. You may not sacrifice the Pesach offering in just any of the towns that ADONAI your God is giving you; but at the place where ADONAI your God will choose to have his name live—there is where you are to sacrifice the Pesach offering, in the evening, when the sun sets, at the time of year that you came out of Egypt. You are to roast it and eat it in the place ADONAI your God will choose; in the morning you will return and go to your tents. For six days you are to eat matzah; on the seventh day there is to be a festive assembly for ADONAI your God; do not do any kind of work —Deuteronomy 16:1-8

The Feasts of Israel are central not only to Israel’s worship practices, but to establishing their identity. The 7 Biblical Feasts are among what the Lord calls His appointed times; these are cyclical events based on the calendar that Yehoveh has established in order for Israel to pause and reflect on just who they are and who their God is. Of those 7 Feasts, three are especially important and their importance is emphasized by the command that the Hebrews are to make a pilgrimage (a journey) to the location of the central sanctuary in order to present themselves before the Lord on those occasions.



By Law it’s the adult males who must make this pilgrimage journey. Their distance from the Tabernacle, and later the Temple, is no excuse to forgo these 3 yearly festivals (and we look funny at Muslims for having to journey to Mecca). Now all of these pilgrimage festivals are family occasions, so the entire family is urged to come; but that’s left to the preference of each household. In reality the family usually accompanied the males because these were such special and anticipated celebrations and everyone wanted to be there.

While so much of what Israel did was quite similar to what their neighbors did and was usual for that era, making a pilgrimage for a festival to a god wasn’t known. This marked the Hebrews as a different people who worshipped a different God in a different way from all other peoples and nations. The Hebrew word for pilgrimage is *chag*; and some 2000 years after the Lord mandated these 3 yearly pilgrimages, another and new religion was formed that incorporated the same idea: Islam. In fact Islam borrowed the word for it; in Arabic it is called *haj*.

In previous studies you will see several lessons on the Biblical Feasts, but just in case you haven't read those yet, I'm going to spend some time with these 3 pilgrimage feasts of Deuteronomy because there are some aspects of them that aren't immediately apparent, especially to gentiles. Also, since virtually every great event in Christ's life centered on one or another of these Pilgrimage feasts, we should quickly suspect that the timing was no coincidence.

The first feast that's discussed is Passover, or in Hebrew *Pesach*. In the first verse, Israel is told to observe the month of Aviv and to offer a Passover sacrifice to God—*because*—this was the night that Yehoveh freed Israel from the clutches of Egypt. If we were to point to one thing that most physically identifies the people of Israel as set apart for God, and which also stirs the very depths of the soul of the Jewish people, it has to be Passover. It was that act of saving Israel from Egypt, and removing them as an identifiable group with Yehoveh as their God and king, that established them as a set apart nation.

Aviv is the Hebrew name of the month that *Pesach* is to be celebrated and it literally means, "new ears of grain." The reference to grains indicates the agricultural connection of this celebration that coincides with the Exodus-from-Egypt connection. *Aviv* corresponds to our modern months of March-April, so we're dealing with the spring season. *Aviv* is also the first month of the Hebrew religious calendar year. In another study, I explained that we shouldn't confuse the Hebrew religious calendar with the Hebrew *civil* calendar year that makes *Tishri* its first month. In the *religious* calendar year, *Tishri* marks the seventh month (which is the Fall season). So while *Aviv* resets the religious calendar year, the first day of *Aviv* isn't New Years Day; the first day of the month of *Tishri* is the Jewish New Year—Rosh Hashanna.

So, why does God ordain this separate religious calendar year with *Aviv* as its beginning? Because it was the month of *Aviv* that marks the official beginning of Israel as a nation and the Lord as the God of that nation; *Aviv* is the beginning of Israel.

Think back to the reason that Passover is called *Passover*. It's because on a single dreadful and yet wonderful night the Lord passed through the whole land of Egypt and killed the firstborn males—animals and humans—of every household *except* for those folks who sacrificed a yearling lamb and painted its blood on the doorposts of their homes. Those who did this as an act of obedience to Yehoveh (almost exclusively Hebrews) weren't touched by death on that night; and this divine judgment caused Pharaoh to finally understand that he couldn't maintain his grip on God's people any longer. Now did you notice that I didn't say that the people of Israel were excluded, I said that the only people who were excluded from punishment, were those who sacrificed a lamb and painted the doorposts with its blood.

If any Israelite didn't paint the doorpost, they experienced the judgment. If an Egyptian *had* painted their doorpost, the angel of death would have passed over their home. Did you catch the significance of that? If you refuse the offer Yehoveh has given you for Redemption—namely, Yeshua—Jesus—you'll face his judgment—regardless of how you feel about it, how righteous you feel or how special you believe you are.



So, the following morning, after the angel of death passed over, Israel gathered together up in the land of Goshen—the delta region of Egypt where most Israelites lived—and with Moses leading, they marched away from 2 centuries of slavery and oppression.

While I'm sure that in English Passover will always be called Passover, in reality the word *Pesach* doesn't mean to "pass over." It comes from the verb *pasach*, which means, "to protect." So in verse 2 where we read that, "you shall slaughter the Passover sacrifice," what it

says in Hebrew is that they shall slaughter the *Zevah Pesach*. Literally it means the “protective sacrifice,” referring to the fact

Pasach doesn't mean to “pass over,” it means “to protect.”

that Israel was protected from God's final and deadly plague on Egypt. It was only the *result* of that protection that they could say they were passed over; and that name, Passover, has stuck since Jerome

retranslated the Latin Vulgate version of the Bible in the 5th century AD and chose the term “Passover.”



Rabbis have long recognized that there are differences between the way the very first Pesach was observed in Egypt, and the way it was celebrated later. Before I demonstrate some of those differences let me point out something that confuses Christian and Jew alike about the Passover celebration.

Pesach (Passover) is just a *one-day* feast that's to occur every year on Aviv 14th (or as it was later called in the Babylonian tongue, Nisan 14th). The following day, Aviv 15th begins a *seven-day* biblical feast called The Feast of Unleavened Bread, or in Hebrew *The Feast of Matza*. Then, during the Feast of Matza, yet another festival occurs, *Bikkurim*—Firstfruits—which happens on the 16th of Aviv. So, in a rapid succession we have Passover on Aviv the 14th, then the start of Matza on the 15th (which runs for seven days), and then Firstfruits on the 16th.

Here's the thing (boy, I sound like Monk every time I say that): because these 3 springtime Biblical Feasts are so tightly interwoven, and because the feast that sits in the center of the 3 is called the Feast of Matza, it's become standard practice to refer to the entire bundle of 3 feasts as simply the Feast of Matza (Unleavened Bread). But what makes the whole thing even more of a problem is that it became just as common to call the same entire bundle of 3 feasts, Pesach (Passover), because the Passover is so symbolic of Israel's passage from Egypt. Don't make the mistake to think that this is simply about our modern tendency towards bumper-sticker theology or sloppy Biblical scholarship; nor is it the result of gentile errors in understanding the Hebrew language. Far from it; long before Christ's era this is exactly how the Hebrews dealt with the names for this series of 3 springtime feasts. So, not surprisingly, that's exactly the way the New Testament deals with it. One time The Gospels will refer to the single day of Passover as Passover; another time it will refer to the entire bundle of 3 feasts as Passover; one time it will call the 1st day of Matza plus the 6 following days the Feast of Unleavened Bread and then at other times it will call the entire bundle of 3 feasts as the Feast of Unleavened Bread. Confusing? You bet, and that's why you have to always look at Scripture—Old Testament and New Testament—from a Hebrew mindset or we'll wander off into the weeds thinking something is simple and straightforward when in fact the meaning is buried deep in Hebrew language and thought and tradition.

I'll be giving you some examples of that in a moment. But, first, back to the differences of the way these spring feasts were celebrated on their inauguration in Egypt as opposed to all those that would follow out in the Wilderness, then in Canaan, and then over the centuries right up to modern days.

The original Passover in Egypt was done in the home. The firstborn of each household behaved more or less as the family priest (although that firstborn son didn't hold the title of priest nor was he regarded as a priest), so usually he led the various rituals. It was the firstborn, appropriately, that slaughtered the lamb and painted its blood on the doorposts of his family's

home for several reasons: first, it was his job, and secondly, it was *his* life that would be protected by this act. Remember, the firstborn was the *only* family member in danger because it was only the firstborns (meaning, by definition, first born son) who were being threatened by possible death.

Remember that while Israel was in Egypt there wasn't yet an official priesthood (this would happen a couple of months after they left Egypt, at Mt. Sinai). Yet many of those Hebrews in Egypt had a distant memory of certain religious rituals that were handed down from Abraham, Isaac and Jacob, and so they followed the customs of that era by each family recognizing the firstborn male present within each household as the officiator over those traditional rituals.

So, while the original Pesach was to take place within the residence of each family, once the Law was given—as here in Deuteronomy 16—the condition changed and now the Pesach sacrifice and the eating of the sacrificial lamb was to take place *only* at the centralized sanctuary. That's the meaning of the words in verse 2 where it says the sacrifice is to take place at the location where the “Lord establishes His Name.” The Levite Priests who became the *sole* authorized officiators of sacrificial ritual replaced the status of the firstborn son as the spiritual leader of each family.

The next difference between the original Passover and those subsequent ones are that Deuteronomy makes it clear that the sacrifice can be something from the flock *or* the herd. This means lambs, goats, and possibly even cattle. Exodus, when it was discussing this command, said the animal must be from the flock (meaning a sheep or goat). The Rabbis have had a difficult time with this and generally have simply decided that it would be best to follow the original instruction, which was to use a lamb. Some of the reasons stated for these differing instructions are that a sheep or a goat would be suitable for the amount of meat needed for a typical family of around 10 or so people. But, once Israel settled in the Land of Canaan, it would be possible for a number of families to share one larger animal like a cow. The general evidence is that because Egyptians preferred cattle to sheep, and since Hebrews (as far as we know) raised sheep and goats and not cattle at that time, it would have been necessary for a Hebrew to buy a cow from an Egyptian—something that really wouldn't have been appropriate for what was about to occur on that first Passover night.

Be that as it may, the use of the lamb as the sacrificial animal became the generally accepted practice and the use of cattle was limited to other required sacrifices that usually occurred at the Tabernacle and Temple during the same time. Verses 5 through 7 spell out the need for bringing the lamb to the central sanctuary for slaughter under all circumstances. But it also establishes the time of day on the 14th of Aviv/Nisan that the slaughtering is to occur; it's in the evening, at sundown. Now, it's important that you understand what this means because it will have an awful lot to do with our understanding of exactly what happened at Jesus' death and resurrection.

In the evening, at sundown, *means* towards the end of the day *but* before darkness sets in. The reason for this is quite simple; first, this is how it was done in Egypt. Second the Hebrew 24 hour day is counted differently than it is in the western culture. In western culture a clock measures a day; we don't go by the position of the sun in the sky or whether it's darker or lighter outside. Long ago, we arbitrarily established a time called midnight (12 o'clock) as the end of one day and the beginning of a new day. But, that's *not* a biblical day, and it's *not* when days ended and began in Israelite culture. The Hebrew (and, obviously the biblical) day ended at sundown, which of course is the moment at which a new day also began. Generally speaking it came to be defined as that instant when the sun set over the horizon *and* a certain group of 3 stars

became visible in the evening sky because the sunlight had diminished enough for them to be seen. So, our problem is always to reconcile the western day with the Hebrew day when we read about *when* certain things happened during the day in the Bible.

So the point of this passage in Deuteronomy is that the Pesach lambs must be slaughtered towards the end of the day on Aviv 14th, *at* the Tabernacle, *but* before it becomes dark enough that the new day begins. Obviously if they waited too long to slaughter the lambs the day would change over from the 14th to the 15th and the law would be broken. So . . . when Israel settled in Canaan and began regularly observing Passover, thousands of people would show up at the Tabernacle/Temple and wait until the end of the day for their lambs to be slaughtered with the help of a Priest. In time the logistics of slaughtering all those thousands of lambs in such a short time span at the end of the day became nearly impossible, so a shift in the definition of the meaning of the word “sun set” was instituted. Since the Hebrews marked mid day by the sun reaching its highest point in the sky that we call noon, then from that point forward the sun is beginning to set as it starts to head downward. In Jesus’ day, it was about 3 hours after the sun’s zenith (what we would call 3 pm) that the slaughtering of the lambs commenced on Aviv 14. Generally speaking it ended about 6 pm because since it was springtime the day would change to the new day somewhere between 6:30 and 7:00 pm by the way we would measure it on a clock. We’ll get back to this in a moment.

One other important difference in the celebrations between the very first one in Egypt and all later ones is that the first one had nothing to do with agriculture; it was *all* about the Exodus from Egypt. Later the element of agriculture would be added.

Let’s talk about that for just a moment because when we get to discuss *Shavuot*, I’ll fill in some additional information that will help bring some pieces together. The agricultural element was added to the Passover by the ordination of a feast called *Firstfruits* that occurred the second day after Passover. The usual explanation for this is that the first of the Barley harvest (the first type of grain to ripen in the fields) was brought in on Firstfruits and then several weeks later there was another harvest but this time it was the wheat (that ripened later than Barley) that was harvested. Technically Firstfruits wasn’t indicative of the beginning of the Barley harvest. The procedure was that a sheaf of *unripened* Barley was brought in to be waved by the Priest at a Tabernacle ceremony. Some days later when the Barley actually ripened, harvesting would begin. The exact day that the actual harvesting began varied from year to year; any farmer knows that you can’t set a day of harvest by the calendar, you have to wait until you see that the grain or fruit or grapes or whatever has actually achieved the exact point of ripening that’s the best time and that will vary from year to year. So the Firstfruits Feast Day was really more of a pre-harvest festival; it was a day to *anticipate* the coming the harvest. It wasn’t a time when the harvest was occurring and so the first of the actual usable harvest was presented to the Lord. In fact, the Rabbis explain that by bringing the not-yet-ripened sheaf of Barley before the Lord, they were calling out to Him to give them a good harvest. At this point they didn’t know yet what the result of the harvest would be.



While I’ve listed some differences in how the Passover feast was observed from the original to later times, for the most part the ritual has remained the same (at least for so long as the Temple stood). For instance the lamb is to be roasted over a fire and no part of it is to be left

raw and none of its bones are to be broken. But perhaps the most symbolic of the protocol that was never altered is that only unleavened bread is to be eaten alongside the eating of the lamb and for the entire period of the combined feast days.



This gives us a good segue into a discussion of the Feast that begins the day following Passover, which is called The Feast of Unleavened Bread. Notice how in Deuteronomy 16:8 we simply pass from Pesach to Matza (without it being highlighted); what I mean is that we move from the Feast of Passover right into the Feast of Unleavened Bread without a break in the passages. And there it speaks of continuing to eat unleavened bread during the whole time of the feast, the end of which is marked with a communal gathering. This communal gathering doesn't take place at the Tabernacle; it takes place back in whatever village or town each family came from.

Let me back up and summarize just a bit to get us re-leveled. This chapter of Deuteronomy is talking about the 3 God-ordained Pilgrimage festivals: The Feast of Matza, the Feast of Weeks (Shavuot), and the Feast of Tabernacles (Sukkot). The first is a springtime feast, the second is a summer feast, and the last is a fall feast.

However, so far I've only been talking to you about the springtime feast of Matza. The confusing part of this is that the springtime feast of Unleavened Bread *itself* consists of 3 feasts: Passover, Unleavened Bread, and Firstfruits. So don't mix up the bundle of 3 springtime feasts that occur in rapid succession with the 3 rather spread-out pilgrimage feasts that are the main thrust of this chapter. So far we're only discussing the first of the 3, the springtime Pilgrimage Feast.

Of this bundle of 3 springtime feasts it's the Feast of Matza that's technically the Pilgrimage Feast; Passover isn't technically a pilgrimage feast nor is Firstfruits. *However* . . . since they're required to journey to be at the Tabernacle for the Pilgrimage Feast of Matza, it makes sense that the Passover Lamb is to be slaughtered there (the day before Matza).

Now let me add one more important element that explains why even though Passover isn't a Pilgrimage feast that it was *still* a requirement that the Passover lamb *had* to be slaughtered at the central sanctuary. God declared in Leviticus that the first day of the Feast of Matza and the last day of the Feast of Matza were Sabbath days. Since the first day of Matza was declared a Sabbath day, the law didn't allow the Hebrew pilgrim to travel on that day. So . . . the Israelites had to do they're traveling to the Tabernacle several days earlier than the first day of Matza, which was Aviv 15th. That means they were *automatically* at the Tabernacle or Temple on Aviv 14th (Passover) or some days earlier (to avoid traveling on the Sabbath day of Aviv 15) it made it necessary for the lambs to be slaughtered at the Tabernacle anyway.

I told you this was complicated. But hang in there with me because if you ever hope to understand what went on with Jesus Christ, the Last Supper, His death and resurrection, you need to understand what we're discussing.

So let's talk about this issue of the Sabbath. Generally speaking there were two *kings* of Sabbaths: the weekly 7th day Sabbath, and then the various Sabbaths that were assigned to the Biblical Feasts. These weren't just different kinds of Sabbaths but also what was prohibited and what was permitted on each kind varied. The 7th day Sabbath was an entirely different ritual than these additional Sabbath days that were attached to the feasts, *and* they were created for different purposes. The word Sabbath doesn't so much mean to rest as it means to "cease." It means to stop doing the work you normally do to make your livelihood or accomplishing your household chores. It means to stop your creative efforts. It doesn't mean that you have to lie on a couch all

day; it doesn't mean you can't play with your children or grandchildren. The 7th day Sabbath that occurs every week had the most stringent of all the Sabbath requirements that even included *not* preparing any meals because that's how it was done out in the Wilderness when God fed Israel with the Manna. Think back and remember that on the 6th day of the week, the day before the Sabbath, Israel was to gather double the amount of Manna and to cook it, fry it, broil it, microwave it, however they chose so that they would eat that extra portion (without any further preparation) on the 7th day Sabbath.

These additional Sabbaths that were attached to the various feasts had different requirements; sometimes the requirements were more rigid than others. The requirements for the extra Sabbaths as attached to the springtime feasts were that on these particular Sabbaths food preparation *could* be performed. Gathering up animals that they might bring on the journey, and other preparations for travel, in order to arrive in time to sacrifice *could* continue. Some of these festival Sabbaths didn't even begin and end at the normal start and stop times for a 24 hour day; some might begin the moment the day changed to the Festival Sabbath day, but end by noon or little after, part-way through the day. Other times that particular Festival Sabbath might not even *start* until noon or there about.

Just realize that I'm *not* talking about the 7th day Sabbath, which schedule and ritual was fixed, firm, and didn't change. These Festival Sabbath days are additional days where the work schedule was modified and preparation for the coming Biblical Feast they were attached to were authorized by the Lord to continue to varying degrees. It's important that we recognize when the Scriptures are referring to the special Feast Sabbaths as opposed to the standard 7th day Sabbath.

Now, since Passover, which is a one day event, and then the Feast of Matza, which is a 7-day event, being one right after the other, we have an overall springtime feast period of 8 days. This means that during this festival period *at least one* 7th-day Sabbath was bound to occur, and depending on the year, *two* 7th-day Sabbaths might come around. So, the festival Sabbath days (Sabbaths established usually for the purpose of preparation) would be in addition to the one or two 7th day Sabbaths.

Let's wrap this up by applying this to Yeshua's last Passover celebration.

In the Gospels we find that Yeshua was killed, put into the rocky tomb, and arose during the springtime feast days. We're directly told that He died on *Passover* day, and arose on the 1st day of the week. We also know that there was at least *one* Sabbath in between those times—the kind of Sabbath that's the regular 7th day Sabbath. Christian, and to my knowledge Messianic Jewish tradition, is that Passover that year was on Friday, the 6th day of the week. So we have an established tradition that we call Good Friday and said that this was the day Christ was crucified.

There's a small problem with that schedule; it's that the story of Jonah being in the belly of the fish for 3 days and 3 nights was supposed to be a shadow of the time from Jesus' death until His resurrection. Christian and Jewish scholars and teachers—myself included—have attempted all kinds of ways to figure out how we can turn Friday night and Saturday night in the tomb into 3 nights instead of only 2 so that this prophecy is properly fulfilled. But no matter how we attempt to get around this problem, if as is usual, we have Jesus crucified on Friday afternoon, going into the grave before Friday night, and arising about sunrise on Sunday morning, we just can't get past the obvious Friday night, Saturday night, and then Sunday morning problem; we simply can't cram 3 nights into this scenario—although there's been some pretty creative attempts at it.

This is where our understanding of how the feast days worked—and this is according to Scripture, not conjecture—and how the various kinds of Sabbaths worked that helps us out. But

there's one more important piece of information that's been glossed over that's perhaps the key to the whole thing; it's that during Jesus' era there were differing traditions among the Jews on when and how to do Passover. In fact, there were exactly 3 different traditions all in operation at the same time; there was the Judean tradition, meaning the one that was observed by those who lived in and around Jerusalem in the kingdom of Judah (Judea in the Greek). Then there was the Samaritan tradition for those who lived in Samaria, the central portion of the Holy Lands; and finally there was the Galilean tradition for those who lived in the Galilee, the northernmost area of the Holy Lands. The Samaritan Tradition revolved around their belief that Mt. Gerizim was the place where the Temple to God belonged, so the Samaritans broke loyalty with the Judeans and built their own Temple and established their own separate Priesthood. This involved doing things just a little different than what was the established protocol at the Jerusalem Temple that we're far more familiar with.

The Galilean traditions were almost identical to the Judean traditions. The Galileans recognized the authority of the Jerusalem-based priesthood, and recognized Herod's Temple in Jerusalem as the proper place of sacrifice. But . . . the Galileans had a problem. They were quite far from Jerusalem so traveling there was much more difficult, and took a much longer period of time, than those Hebrews who lived in Judah. They had to begin preparations for the Pilgrimage Feasts (especially) earlier than their Judean brothers. So they tinkered a bit with the schedule including when the festival Sabbaths began and ended.

Think about this . . . let's say I have to be in Ann Arbor on Sunday, August 3rd . . . but I live in Ypsilanti. No big deal, they're right next to each other and I could drive there Sunday morning. No biggy, right? Well, let's say I live in Atlanta, GA . . . well, that's a different story. In order to get to Ann Arbor by August 3rd, I would have to leave on July 31st or August 1st, right? That would require me to schedule a vacation where I work, or if I own my own business, I have to make arrangements to cover my absence. Well, that's the problem the Galileans had.

Let me cut to the chase: Jesus and his disciples were Galileans. They observed the Galilean festival traditions of course; it would have been unthinkable otherwise. The Judeans were somewhat understanding about the distances that had to be traveled by the Galileans and allowed for their slightly different traditions to accommodate this difficulty; but they didn't care for a couple of other additions that *both* the Galileans and the Samaritans made to the Passover rituals that had little to do with travel distances and times: they added in an extra ritual celebration that the Judeans didn't recognize. The celebration was called *seudah maphsehket* and it happened as the day was changing from Aviv 13 to Aviv 14. Remember, now, Passover was on Aviv 14. Also remember that the day changes at about 7 pm.

In this celebration, the Galileans and the Samaritans put an emphasis on the firstborn aspect of the Exodus, calling to mind that it was the firstborn Israelites who were protected from death and the firstborn Egyptians who were killed. So the Galileans declared that Aviv 14, the day of Passover, was to be a day of fasting for firstborn sons of each family in honor of the Lord saving their lives. However, they also added in a ritual meal that occurred at the beginning of Passover (Aviv 14th) called *seudah maphsehket*. Since the Hebrew day changes at sundown, the first meal of a new day for any Israelite would be dinner—their nighttime meal, right? For a Westerner, our first meal of the day is Breakfast, because it occurs at around sunrise, which is the beginning of our day. So the firstborn sons of the Galileans (and the Samaritans) would have a meal to begin the day of Passover (a dinner meal), and then fast for the next 24 hours until it was time for the official Passover Seder (meal).

Let me repeat so we're all together: what I'm telling you isn't conjecture or some new modern interpretation. This is to be found in the ancient Hebrew Mishnah fully recognized by religious Jews. By the way, this added celebration of having a dinner meal to *start* out the day of Passover that's called *seudah maphsehket* literally translates to . . . (wait) . . . (I'll give it to you) . . . *the last supper!* This would be the last supper for a firstborn until he celebrated the Passover meal along with all other Hebrews. I hope some mental light bulbs are starting to go off.

It's long been recognized that in antiquity there were two Passover Seders; one the night before Passover and other the night of Passover. It's the one that occurs on the night of Passover that Jews today celebrate, and that Christians are pretty much aware of. *However*, since the details have been buried deep in the bowels of Jewish historical documents, the realities of this dual seder, and how the two meals differed, and who participated in them, and why, and what was served, has been overlooked.

Before we go much farther, though, there are a couple of reasons that we're carefully going over the laws concerning these Biblical feasts; first, because the way that some Jews and Christians celebrate those holy days today, isn't necessarily Scripturally sound and second is because this was the series of festivals during which Yeshua HaMashiach celebrated a final meal with His disciples, was betrayed and arrested, tried and executed, and was buried and arose from the dead. This was the climax of what Yeshua had come for in the first place, and it will remain the most important part of His earthly ministry until He comes again for the next stage in God's redemption process.

Like I said, I want you to think about what we went over in discussing Passover, at least partially because it might challenge what you thought you knew concerning those holy days. Now, what we're going to discuss is very technical so stay alert.

I want to say right up front that while I can't be 100% certain on the timeline, it fits both the Scriptural *and* the Traditional understanding for Jesus' era. So while I'm fully prepared to defend it, understand that I'm not saying that it's impossible that another scenario might be available. However (unless we completely throw out the "3 nights in the tomb" statements) what isn't possible is that Yeshua was crucified on the 6th day of the week (Friday in modern terminology). No matter how you slice it, Friday nighttime plus Saturday nighttime, with the absolute Biblical assurance we have of a 1st day of the week discovery of the missing body (Sunday morning) doesn't add up to 3 nights.

There's *one* other scenario that's a slight possibility and it's that everything I lay out to you here simply backs up one day; but I don't accept that because that only occurs if the protocols of Passover week were done according to the traditions espoused by the Pharisees. If things were done in accordance with the traditions of the Pharisees of that era, then my timeline would indeed have to back up one day. But that's very unlikely—and I say as near to impossible as you can get—because the Sadducees ran the High Priesthood in Jesus' day and they followed the Leviticus 23 injunction that Firstfruits was to take place on the first day after the 7th Day Sabbath. I'll show you later why this is important.

This can get pretty confusing, so to make sure we're together on this, let's review before we start with some new material.

There's a series of 3 springtime Biblical Feasts that begin on the 1st month of the Jewish Religious calendar year, the month of Aviv. Aviv is the original Hebrew name for this month that, after the Babylonian exile, also started to be called by its Babylonian name Nisan. While it is said that the Biblical Feasts revolve around an agricultural motif, the reality is that neither

Passover nor Unleavened Bread is about farming or food production. Passover is a commemoration of the day that the Lord struck Egypt by killing all firstborns (meaning firstborn males) in order to force Pharaoh to release Israel from his grip. Yehoveh ordered that anyone who wished to trust in Him can avoid this death by sacrificing a yearling lamb and then brushing its blood on the doorposts of their homes. While I pointed out several elements of this process that we don't typically take into consideration, the one that I'd like you to keep in mind is that the *only* people that were ever at risk of death were the firstborns.

Unleavened Bread is the second of the group of 3 festivals and it commemorates the day that Israel actually began its march out of Egypt. While Passover is a 1-day event, Matza is a 7-day event that begins the day immediately following Passover—8 days. Because this event happened suddenly and Israel had to leave immediately, and there was no time for the Hebrews to prepare their staple food, bread, in the normal way (by adding yeast, letting it rise, and then baking it) the Jews were required to prepare a kind of bread that didn't use yeast—leavening. This bread, Matza, wasn't even baked; it was prepared by being placed on a griddle to cook in the open air like we cook pancakes.

The final festival of the group of 3 is called Bikkurim, or Firstfruits. This occurs the day immediately following the first day of Matza. So we have each festival occur in turn over the 14th, 15th, and 16th of Aviv. The final day of the festival is the 21st of Aviv. We'll talk more about Firstfruits in a moment.

Now the first part of chapter 16 of Deuteronomy is really meant to discuss the 3 pilgrimage festivals; that is, the 3 out of the 7 Biblical feasts where it's required that all Hebrew males journey to the Tabernacle (later the Temple) and make a sacrifice. So this group of 3 springtime festivals I've been teaching you about aren't the same thing as the 3 Pilgrimage festivals. However, *one* of the 3 springtime festivals *is* a pilgrimage festival: the Feast of Unleavened Bread. And because of the way the 3 springtime festivals happen (one right after the other) the result was that the pilgrims would be at the central sanctuary for all 3 of the springtime feasts.

Just so we understand: we have Passover on the 14th of Aviv, the next day is the 1st day of Matza (which means it's a festival Sabbath), then the next day after that is Firstfruits. Let me stop and point out something very important right here: while the modern Hebrew calendar will indeed always show Aviv 16th as Firstfruits, that's not the Biblical practice and it wasn't the Tradition that was practiced while the Temple still stood. In reality, while the Torah *does* specify Aviv 14 as Pesach and Aviv 15 as the 1st day of Matza, the Torah doesn't specify Aviv 16 as Firstfruits. It only says this about the date of Firstfruits in Leviticus 23:11: Leviticus "Say to the people of Israel, When you come into the land which I give you and reap its harvest, you shall bring the sheaf of the first fruits of your harvest to the priest; and he shall wave the sheaf before the LORD, that you may find acceptance; on the morrow after the sabbath the priest shall wave it" —Leviticus 23:10-11

So according to the Torah, Passover was on Aviv 14—always; Matza was on Aviv 15—always; and then, however, there was a lull until the 7th day Sabbath came and on the following day Firstfruits was celebrated. *This* was the way the Sadducees practiced it; and since this ceremony *had* to occur at the Temple, and performed by the priests, what the Pharisees or the Galileans or anyone else thought about when and how to perform this ritual didn't matter because the Sadducees controlled the priesthood and everything that went on at the Temple.

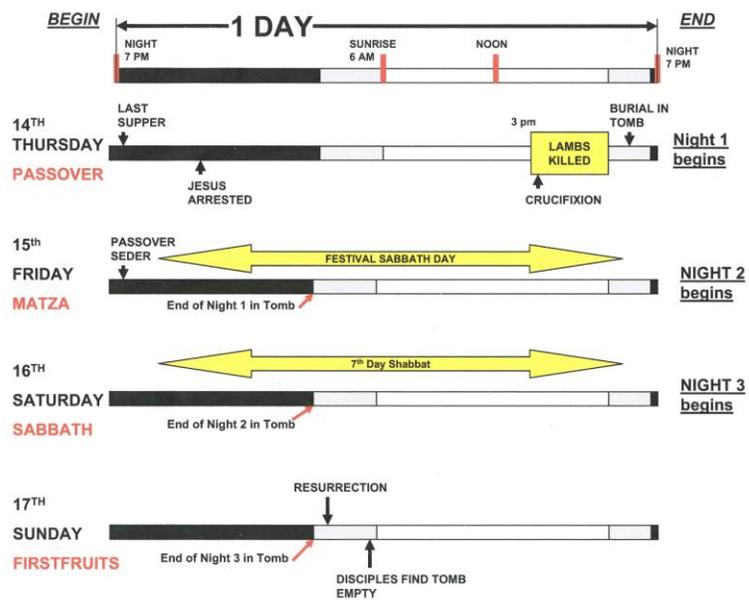
Also remember that there were 2 basic kinds of Sabbaths; there were 7th day Sabbaths (the weekly Sabbath), and then there were the added festival Sabbaths. They weren't the same thing, and they operated differently.

So let's look at the momentous events that surrounded Christ's death and how it would have played out on a timeline. Look at this chart I've prepared for you. At the top is an illustration of how a Hebrew 24-hour day is defined. Notice that a Biblical day begins and ends at sunset. Our modern day that uses mechanical clocks to measure time, and makes 12 midnight when one day ends and the new begins.

I've chosen the time of 7:00 PM as the moment of darkness when the old day ends and the new begins because in the springtime, in Israel, that's about the time of sunset. Now times change with the seasons—we've all seen that. Years ago I was an announcer for WYYY, 1470 AM in Kalamazoo. That station was a "daytime" station, but with pre-sunrise authorization, so we always signed on at 6:00 AM, but during the summer, we stayed on until 9:00 PM, but in the winter, signed-off at roughly 7:00 PM. If you look at the chart, notice the dark bar indicating that it's nighttime, then gray as we have twilight, and then white which is the daylight hours, then gray for twilight as evening approaches and then darkness again. It's very difficult for us moderns to wrap our minds around this because in essence the first meal of the new day for a Hebrew was the evening, or nighttime meal, dinner. So for a Hebrew the first meal of the new day was dinner, breakfast was the middle meal, and what we'd call lunch was the last meal of the current day.

Here's what I believe to be the correct timeline for Jesus' last supper, arrest, crucifixion, burial and resurrection; let's go over it.

On Aviv 13, it's the day before Passover, which in the year Jesus died would have been a Wednesday. It was on Wednesday the 13th that the disciples had the special meal prepared that we call *The Last Supper*. As I said before, we find in the Mishna tractate Pesahim that the Galileans adopted a tradition that in Hebrew is called, *seudah maphsehket*; this translates to "last supper." Allow me to remind you that in Yeshua's days the politics were such that the Holy Lands had been divided (by Rome) into several districts. The ones we're all most familiar with are Judea (Judah) to the south where Jerusalem was located, Galilee up north, and Samaria that lay between the other two. Also, Judaism had fractured and the Judean Jews, Galilean Jews, and Samaritan Jews had each developed some different traditions on a number of religious issues including just how the feasts were to be observed. The Galilean Jews (Jesus and His disciples were Galileans) had established an additional celebration called *seudah maphsehket* (last supper) that the Judean Jews didn't recognize. This last supper was about remembering that it indeed wasn't *all* Hebrews who were in danger from death at God's hand in Egypt, but *only* the firstborn



sons. So a special nighttime meal was adopted where this meal would be eaten and there would be a 24 hour fast that followed—thus the name “last supper”—which was never to imply that it was Jesus’ last supper. The next meal to be eaten was the Passover meal.

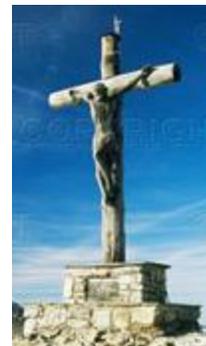
Now there have been a number of essays and books explaining that there were two Passover Seders: one on Passover eve, Aviv 13th, (the day before Passover) and the official Passover night meal on Aviv 14. But this isn’t very good scholarship and it misses the mark rather significantly. These so-called 2 Passover Seders were in fact the combination of the last supper (celebrated *only* by Galilean Jews and it appears that it was probably also celebrated by the Samaritan Jews), and then the next night the actual Passover meal. But this same poor scholarship also rather obscures what went on with Jesus and His disciples on those fateful few days.

So on Aviv 13, Wednesday, the *seudah maphsehket* was prepared; *however*, it wasn’t eaten on Aviv 13. *It* was after sundown, at the end of the day of Aviv 13, that the meal was eaten. What I mean is that it was eaten as the first meal of the day of Thursday Aviv 14th (remember, the beginning of a new day is just after sundown). This special meal honoring the firstborn (called last supper) was eaten on Passover, but as the beginning meal of the day. Are you with me so far? OK, now follow me closely.

The meal called “last supper” is eaten in the first hour of Passover. It’s here that Yeshua says to commemorate this day by drinking wine that symbolizes His blood that establishes the New Covenant, and by eating unleavened bread that symbolizes His body where we become united. Notice: this wasn’t the traditional Passover Seder; that was yet to come because that meal isn’t eaten until the *end* of Passover day.

So at the start of the day of Aviv 14, Thursday (which is nighttime), Passover day, the Galilean “last supper” commemorating firstborns is eaten. The next event is that Judas betrays Jesus and shortly after midnight Our Lord is arrested. It’s still Passover day. In the wee hours before daylight, He’s tried and convicted of blasphemy. It’s still Passover Day. After his sentence is confirmed by Pontius Pilate Jesus is scourged and nailed to a Roman cross by Roman soldiers. It’s still Passover Day, Thursday, Aviv 14.

At about the moment Jesus expires (3:00 PM in the afternoon on Passover Day) the slaughter of the Passover Lambs begins in the Temple grounds. Somewhere around ¼ million sheep will be killed and their blood collected between the hours of 3:00 pm and 6:00 pm, stopping as the sun drops to the horizon. It’s still Passover Day.



While this is occurring the women are hurrying to get the Roman soldiers to remove Jesus’ corpse from the cross; it’s a requirement that they *must* get Him buried immediately because otherwise He would just lay exposed for at least 2 days. Why? I’ll show you in a minute. They achieve their goal and Yeshua is entombed before the sun sets. It’s still Passover Day.

The butchered lambs are placed in the thousands of collective ovens located all around Jerusalem so the hundreds of thousands of visiting pilgrims can cook their Passover Lambs. It’s still Passover Day. Shortly after the 3 stars become visible (when it’s dark enough to appear in the night sky), Passover Day ends and the first day of Matza begins. It’s now Aviv 15, Friday, the first day of Unleavened Bread (leaven symbolizing sin).

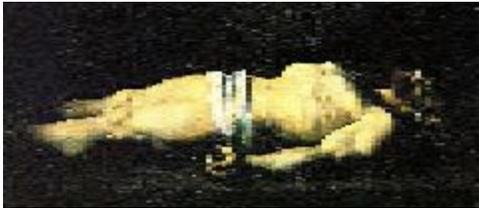
What, you say, where did the Passover meal go? Aren’t they supposed to eat it on Passover day? NO! Much to many peoples’ surprise, the Biblical injunction is that the Passover meal is to be eaten *after* dark. This means the day has changed. This means Aviv 14 has changed

to Aviv 15—the first day of the Feast of Unleavened Bread. That’s right: the Passover meal isn’t eaten on Passover Day; it’s the first meal of the new day on Matza. Why? Because that’s exactly as it was in Egypt. They were still eating the Passover meal at around midnight on Aviv 15 when Yehoveh killed all the unprotected firstborns throughout Egypt.

Earlier I explained that it was Jerome in the 5th century AD who translated the Hebrew words *Zevah Pesach* and made it Pass-over. So we get this mental picture (along with millions of sermons to back it up) that on Pesach the Lord “passed over” the Hebrew firstborns killing only the Egyptian firstborns. Wrong. The problem is that *Zevah Pesach* doesn’t mean “pass over”—it means “protective sacrifice.”

Look: what occurred on Aviv 14 in Egypt was that the Pesach Lamb was slaughtered and its blood brushed onto the doorways of homes. It was the day the “protective sacrifice” of the lamb, as ordered by God, took place. But, it wasn’t until after dark—when the day changed to Aviv 15—that late at night (around midnight), the Lord passed through Egypt killing all unprotected firstborns. So Pesach, which is *only* the protective sacrifice of the lambs, happened on Aviv 14, but the Lord didn’t pass over the protected Hebrew firstborn until the first hours of the next day, Aviv 15. Then when night turned into daytime (still the same day) the Hebrews left Egypt and that’s the day celebrated as the first day of the Feast of Unleavened Bread.

Now what did we learn earlier that was special and different about the first day of Matza? It was a festival Sabbath day! Friday Aviv 15th was a Sabbath day, a festival Sabbath day. It had

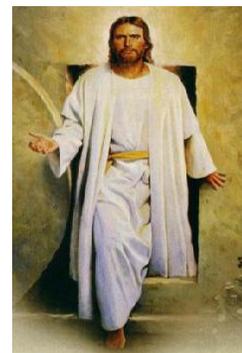


some of the same requirements as the 7th Day Sabbath in that handling a dead human corpse was prohibited on *any* kind of Sabbath. That’s why the Gospels tells us that there was a frenzy to get Jesus buried before dark, when the day changed from Pesach (a regular day) to the 1st day of Matza, which was a festival Sabbath day—because they couldn’t handle a dead body.

Aviv 15th was an uneventful day; it was Friday, the festival Sabbath to begin Matza. The day ends at sundown and now it’s now Saturday, Aviv 16th; this is the regular weekly 7th day Sabbath. I already mentioned that while for the past several centuries Firstfruits has been celebrated on Aviv 16 (as a permanent tradition), in fact it was only the Rabbis (who were Pharisees) who long ago ordered it done this way, as opposed to the way it was done in Jesus’ day. And, this change occurred *after* the Temple was destroyed in 70 A.D. when the priesthood became defunct. Remember, the Sadducees were the High Priests, and so with the end of the Temple and the priesthood—the Sadducees—lost much of their control over issue of the rituals and traditions. Now, the Pharisees got their way and they decided that rather than Firstfruits moving around on the calendar, it would *always* be Aviv 16th that Firstfruits would be celebrated on.

I want you to catch the significance of this . . . Jesus, the True High Priest, was sacrificed and resurrected, so the office of a Priest—let alone a High Priest—had ended. How was this accomplished? By allowing the enemies of Israel to destroy the Temple. The Temple was gone, there was no longer a need for the High Priest on earth, because Jesus was The High Priest!

But let me say again: in Jesus’ day, Firstfruits was the day *after* the 7th day Sabbath no matter what the calendar date. So in Jesus’ era, Firstfruits was always the first day of the week (Sunday in our modern



terminology).

Notice that by this timeline Yeshua has been in the tomb for 3 days and 3 nights just as the prophecy of Jonah in the belly of the great fish explained. I hope that you can see this isn't at all straightforward and that if a scholar isn't a student of the Torah and to a degree Jewish Tradition, there's no way he can understand how the passion week of Jesus' death played out. After all, the New Testament that was written by Jews who assumed that anyone reading these documents would be familiar with the Jewish customs and their nuances and the political circumstances of that day, so they didn't see any need to explain all this.

So now, let's move to Shavuot, the Feast of Weeks.

Open your Bibles and let's re-read a bit of Deuteronomy 16.

“You are to count seven weeks; you are to begin counting seven weeks from the time you first put your sickle to the standing grain. You are to observe the festival of Shavu'ot (weeks) for ADONAI your God with a voluntary offering, which you are to give in accordance with the degree to which ADONAI your God has prospered you. You are to rejoice in the presence of ADONAI your God—you, your sons and daughters, your male and female slaves, the L'vi'im living in your towns, and the foreigners, orphans and widows living among you—in the place where ADONAI your God will choose to have his name live. Remember that you were a slave in Egypt; then you will keep and obey these laws —
Deuteronomy 16:9-12

The festival of Shavuot comes 7 weeks (hence the name *Feast of Weeks*) from the day of the ceremonial first cutting of the harvest that comes sometime during the overall springtime festival of Passover/Matza/Firstfruits.

The original instruction doesn't give a specific day; there's some wiggle room because it isn't known year to year when the first day of the Barley harvest will actually begin. So technically, and Scripturally, the 50 day period can move around by about 1 week. As I said, even though Aviv 16th is called Firstfruits, and that the first sheaf of Barley is waved, *Firstfruits* doesn't mark the beginning of the harvest; a sheaf of *green* (unripened) Barley is cut and presented to be waved by the priests at the Temple. Firstfruits (Bikkurim) is a *pre*-harvest ceremony that's asking the Lord to make the harvest a good one—Jesus was resurrected on Bikkurim, as a *pre*-harvest of His Father's Kingdom.

Now, because we've learned that Firstfruits moves around on the calendar from year to year, so does *Shavuot* since it's dependent on when Firstfruits comes. Technically they count 50 days from the day after the 7th day Shabbat that occurs the day before Firstfruits and that tells us when Shavuot occurs. After the Temple was destroyed and the Rabbis took over control of Judaism, they decided that it was better to have fixed days on a calendar to celebrate Firstfruits and then Shavuot, and that's how it is to this day.

Another Biblical reality is that Shavuot is a pilgrimage festival. It's the second of the three annual feasts that requires all Hebrew males to journey to the central sanctuary (starting with David that was located in Jerusalem) to make a sacrifice. Since Hebrews soon became scattered not only over thousands of square miles of the Holy Land, and later over millions of square miles of Asia and then the Roman Empire, a moving target for the day of Shavuot was nearly impossible to implement. So it was necessary that a firm day be decided on as that 50th

day from the first sheaf of Barley being waved. So the countdown to Shavuot began each year on the day of *Bikkurim*, Firstfruits; this obviously wasn't Scripture, it was Rabbinical Tradition.

Christians know Shavuot better as *Pentecost*; Pentecost is simply the Greek word for Shavuot. Pentecost was the day that the Holy Spirit of the Lord came to live within those who trusted Yeshua as Savior. It was the day that all those Jews started speaking in tongues. I've said this many times but as a teacher I guess I get a pass for repeating myself: Pentecost wasn't a day that was created by Christians to commemorate the coming of the Holy Spirit. Pentecost was already a 1300 year old holy day by Jesus' time, and we're reading about it here in Deuteronomy 16:9–12. What happened is that Pentecost (Shavuot) was a prophetic foreshadow of the coming of the Holy Spirit. And, naturally, as all prophecy is 100% accurate and flawless, that's exactly what happened—the Holy Spirit came on the summertime Feast Day of Shavuot.

While the descending of the Holy Spirit is the Christian reason for the day, the Jewish people see it as something else. In fact for the Jew it has a dual purpose; first is that from an agricultural standpoint, the nearly 2 month period from the time of Firstfruits until the time of Shavuot covers the grain harvesting period of *both* the Barley and the Wheat harvests. So while Firstfruits signal the harvesting of the Barley will begin within a few hours or days, Shavuot signals the end of harvesting the wheat. What I mean is that the Barley harvest begins around the time of Firstfruits and then ends around a month later. At the proper moment during the second-half of that 7-week period the wheat harvesting begins, and then at Shavuot (the end of the 7 week period) the wheat harvesting ends.

The second meaning of Shavuot for Hebrews is that it is celebrated as that time that Moses received the Law on Mount Sinai. The Scriptures show us that it was around 50 days after Israel fled Egypt that Moses received the Law from God . . . *however*, the Scriptures don't actually verify that exact amount of time (it's simply Tradition).

Something tells me that Tradition is accurate, though, because we can notice the amazing connection between Moses receiving the Law of God written on stone tablets and the coming of the Holy Spirit. It's prophetic from Jeremiah that a day will come that God will write His Laws on the hearts of those who love Him. The New Testament confirms that it was on the day that the Holy Spirit came—Pentecost, Shavuot—that God wrote His Laws on our hearts. God's *first* set-apart people received the Law on Shavuot, through Moses, just as God's *second* set-apart people received the Law on Shavuot, through Yeshua.

By the way, as long as I'm repeating myself let me say that God told Moses when He gave them the Law at Sinai that the *people* were to write the Law on their own hearts; this to be done by means of thinking—pondering-- meditating on these laws night and day. Then in Jeremiah the Lord says prophetically that when He renews the giving of the Law this time *He's* going to write those Laws of the hearts of His people. In *both* cases the Law was to be written on the human heart; it's just that in the first case the individual was to do it himself, and in the second God would do it supernaturally.

What else is revealing about Shavuot (Pentecost) is it's uniquely inclusive nature; Israel is told to include males, females, slave, free, Levites, orphans, widows, even strangers (*ger*). *Ger* are *non-Hebrews* (gentiles) that have decided to bond themselves to Israel *but* they're not circumcised. What I'm getting at is that those who may be included in the meaning of Shavuot don't have to become official Hebrews by means of the *b'rit milah*, the circumcision ceremony.

Isn't that an interesting parallel to the New Testament situation that those who wish to call Yeshua their Lord can be Hebrews or non-Hebrews, but they *must* bond themselves to Israel (as Paul says, "be grafted in"); yet that bonding doesn't mean that a *ger* needs a circumcision

ceremony to make them, us, official Hebrews. We can remain gentiles and yet still be part of Israel just as the scenario is in the Torah.

Why are you still sitting down in your chair? You should be running around and shouting with excitement!

Let's move on now to Moses' exposition on the regulations concerning the Feast of Tabernacles, Sukkot. To that end let's re-read a few more verses of Deuteronomy 16.

“You are to keep the festival of Sukkot for seven days after you have gathered the produce of your threshing—floor and winepress. Rejoice at your festival—you, your sons and daughters, your male and female slaves, the L'vi'im, and the foreigners, orphans and widows living among you. Seven days you are to keep the festival for ADONAI your God in the place ADONAI your God will choose, because ADONAI your God will bless you in all your crops and in all your work, so you are to be full of joy!

“Three times a year all your men are to appear in the presence of ADONAI your God in the place which he will choose—at the festival of matzah, at the festival of Shavu'ot and at the festival of Sukkot. They are not to show up before ADONAI emptyhanded, but every man is to give what he can, in accordance with the blessing ADONAI your God has given you —Deuteronomy 16:13-17

Each of the festivals is known by a handful of common names; the festival of Sukkot is no different. Sukkot (Hebrew) is also called the Feast of Booths, The Feast of the Ingathering, and the Feast of Tabernacles. Each of the festivals also reflects a certain tone, ranging from somberness and sobriety all the way to unbounded joy.

As an example: the *Feast of Firstfruits* reflects a certain anxiety and anticipation; a bit of uncertainty in what the outcome of the current year's harvest might be. So the focus of Firstfruits is to wave a sheaf of green (not yet ripe) grain before God asking Him to bring a good harvest. The *Feast of Weeks*, Shavuot, reflects a tone of rest and relief. The Barley and Wheat harvests are over and the results (hopefully good) are known. The feverish pace of the fieldwork to bring in the harvest before it spoils in the field relaxes for a time.

Sukkot, though, is unmitigated joy! In fact yet another name for this festival is “*the time of our rejoicing*.” Let's see why . . .

This Fall season festival is the third and final of the three pilgrimage festivals; we've had the *Feast of Matza* in the Spring, the *Feast of Shavuot* in the Summer, and now the *Feast of Tabernacles* in the Fall where all the Hebrew males must make a journey to the central sanctuary for praise and worship of Yehoveh that necessarily involves sacrifice. Just as the Feast of Matza begins on a regular and steady calendar date, so does Sukkot. Just as the Feast of Matza is a 7-day feast, so is Sukkot. And just as the first and last days of the Feast of Matza are declared as festival Sabbaths (not 7th-day Sabbaths) so are the first and last days of the Feast of Sukkot.

The Feast of Tabernacles begins each year on Tishri 15. Tishri is the 7th month of the Hebrew religious calendar year. But Tishri is *also* the first month of the Hebrew civil calendar year. So, the first day of Tishri is Jewish New Year.



This agricultural based holy day celebrates the end of the threshing of the grains. It marks the time when the separation of the wheat from the chaff is coming to a close. It also marks the time when the vineyard harvest is complete and the winemaking is ending and the new wine is ready.

And, like Shavuot, those invited to participate and benefit from the Feast of Tabernacles include Hebrews and non-Hebrews from all classes of folks who have attached themselves to Israel's relationship with Yehoveh.

I hope you're catching the significance of that . . . let me close out this section of Deuteronomy 16 on the 3 Pilgrimage festivals by quickly showing you the parallel between the festivals mentioned and the prophetic ministries of Jesus that they represented.

Passover represented Yeshua's substitutionary death, and His blood that protects everyone who has faith in what He has done from eternal death at the hand of the Father. *He shed His blood on Passover day.*

The *Feast of Unleavened Bread* represents that time when Christ went into the tomb, without sin (without leavening) and His body didn't decay. It was the day that His sacrificial death and burial brought the release of all His followers from the power of evil and sin. *Christ was put into the tomb to begin the first day of Matza.*

Firstfruits represents that day when the first of what would be harvested in the near future was lifted up and waved before the Father. (Oh, get let this excite you . . .) It's that day when with anxiety and anticipation Christ, as that green sheaf of Barley who was cut from the field, was the hope and forerunner of a bountiful harvest of Believers. Yet, He wasn't the first of the actual harvest; the harvest was yet to come. *Christ arose on the Feast of Firstfruits.*

I don't know about you, but this should give us all the chills. The entire sequence of his death, burial and resurrection occurred precisely and exactly on the appropriate Biblical Feast days. But that's not all! 50 days later on Pentecost, the Feast of Shavuot, the Lord sent His Holy Spirit to dwell within men. The Lord harvested His Believers. They were his, they were put away for safekeeping, where no one and nothing could ever forcefully take them, us, away from Him. *But, there's more harvesting to come!*

The High Holy Days of the *Feast of Trumpets* and *Yom Kippur* (which I discussed in a previous study) represent Yeshua HaMashiach coming for the second time—this time in great power and glory, bringing the world to it's knees, cutting down the evil and laying low the rebels.

The Feast of Tabernacles, or more appropriately as it's also known, *the Feast of Ingathering*, is the entry into the 1000 Reign of Christ—the Millennium. I won't go into all the details right now, but I will point out the amazing parallels between the focal point and grand finale of the Feast of Sukkot: the Water Libation ceremony at the Altar of Burnt Offering. The earthly purpose for this event was to ask God to bring rain to the land to water the crops. In the final moments of the final Biblical Feast of each year, the closing event is that seven trumpets are blown 3 times for a total of 21 blasts of the trumpet, as a Golden Pitcher of water from the spring of Siloam is brought by the High Priest through the WaterGate of the Temple Mount. Then the water is poured out from that Golden Pitcher while the people of Jerusalem say in unison, "God save us now!" These 21 trumpet blasts represent the 3 series of 7 final judgments that will be rained down on the world in man's final hours. After these 21 judgments, it's finished. The history of man as we know it . . . is over. Yeshua HaMashiach is now in total control of a world without even one single rebel; not one single person is alive who doesn't know the Lord and bow down to Him. And that's the way it will remain for 1000 years.

But there's more: the commemoration of this day will continue forever. Because we're told in Zechariah that every year for time unmeasured, the Feast of Sukkot will happen, including the culminating event: the water libation ceremony. "Then every one that survives of all the nations that have come against Jerusalem shall go up year after year to worship the King, the LORD of hosts, and to keep the feast of booths. And if any of the families of the earth do not go up to Jerusalem to worship the King, the LORD of hosts, there will be no rain upon them — Zechariah 14:16-17

Now I admit that we've been looking very carefully at some obscure but clearly critical aspects of the Feasts of the Lord, especially the ones that involved the requirement of pilgrimage to the Tabernacle/Temple.

But we've also studied about the time that Jesus spent in the hewn rock tomb, and the timeline of when He died and was resurrected; and we dissected that with some details. As expected, I received quite a few questions about this, and (interestingly) most of them centered around concerns of why it is that some of our most well-known and beloved Pastors and Bible teachers seem to so easily just talk around the issue of the firmly entrenched Church position that Yeshua died on Friday, and arose on Sunday; obviously resulting in His spending only 2 nights in the tomb—yet I maintain that Scriptures plainly prophesy this event by saying that He'll spend 3 days and 3 nights in the tomb.

I'm not going to try to defend or accuse those who insist on sticking to the Good Friday scenario. What I'd rather do is simply point out what the Scriptures actually say, and what historical documents from that same era say, and show you how they completely agree. One good question that did seem to come up though was, "where does it literally say that Jesus was 3 days and 3 nights in the tomb?"

Well, let's address that head-on and then finish up chapter 16.

First, the prophecy was established when the prophet Jonah was to be sent to Nineveh, but he balked because he didn't think the people worthy of God's word. The result was that Jonah was temporarily swallowed by a giant fish. "And the LORD appointed a great fish to swallow up Jonah; and Jonah was in the belly of the fish three days and three nights —Jonah 1:17

It doesn't matter what translation you choose, the 3 days and 3 nights is established and it fully agrees with the original Hebrew and the Rabbinical commentary on the matter.

Second . . . where does the Bible say that this event concerning Jonah was *actually* prophetic of Jesus' time in the grave? Or is this an assumption made that could be reasonably challenged?

Well: "Then some of the scribes and Pharisees said to him, 'Teacher, we wish to see a sign from you.' But he (Yeshua) answered them, 'An evil and adulterous generation seeks for a sign; but no sign shall be given to it except the sign of the prophet Jonah. For as Jonah was three days and three nights in the belly of the whale, so will the Son of man be three days and three nights in the heart of the earth' —Matthew 12:38-40

3 days and 3 nights . . . not 2, are required to fulfill not some vague prophecy, but Jesus' exact words of what was about to happen. The Good Friday scenario is wrong. He didn't die on a Friday during the daytime, spend Friday nighttime in the tomb, Saturday daytime and then Saturday nighttime, and then arise Sunday morning. I don't care how you measure it, try as anyone might (and there have been the silliest attempts to do so) Friday night and Saturday night

are two nights and Yeshua says He'd be in the "heart of the earth" for three nights. It's this mentality of *first* establishing a doctrine in order to fulfill some kind of agenda, and then twisting and turning the Scriptures to try and fit it, that has often left the Church confused and afraid at times to actually explore the Bible for fear of what we might find out. Let me assure those of you who are new to Torah: what you'll find is that everything you ever counted on in Christ is fully established and validated in the Torah. The result of studying Torah is that doubts will diminish and faith will increase. The Word of God—*all* of it—is accurate and reliable and can be understood by us all if we'll just take the time to learn it.