

## THE MAJOR BIBLICAL/JEWISH HOLIDAYS & THEIR SIGNIFICANCE FOR TODAY

Below is an overview of the ten major Biblical Holydays: the Sabbath, the seven feasts presented in Leviticus 23, Hanukkah and Purim. For more, read *God's Appointed Times* by Rabbi Barney Kasdan (available at [www.MessianicJewish.net](http://www.MessianicJewish.net))

**BIBLICAL/JEWISH LUNAR CALENDAR** The Jewish calendar is based on the cycles of the moon, each of the twelve months starting on the new moon. God commanded the Israelites to celebrate the New Moon, the beginning of each month (*Rosh Chodesh*), just as he told them to celebrate the Sabbath and the biblical Feasts. We have followed the Jewish calendar tradition handed down over the centuries.

### TORAH PORTION OF THE WEEK (PARASHAT HA-SHAVUA)

The Jewish people have followed a Bible reading program since the time of Nehemiah and Ezra. On each Sabbath and during each of the Biblical holidays, the worldwide Jewish community reads the same portion from the Torah (the Five Books of Moses) and also the same portions from the Prophets and the Writings (the other books of the *Tanakh*, the "Old" Testament). We have also included relevant New Testament readings. There are two major ethnic groups of Jews in the world: Ashkenazi Jews (from Russia, Poland, Germany, etc.) and Sephardic Jews (from Spain, Portugal, France, Northern Africa, Israel, etc.). Where there is a variation in readings we have indicated so with an (S) or (A). We have also included the candle lighting times for both the beginning of the Sabbath and the conclusion, called *Havdalah*, in Jerusalem time. For your local candle lighting times, see [www.hebcal.com](http://www.hebcal.com).

**SABBATH (SHABBAT)** Date in Hebrew calendar: 7th day of every week Scripture references: Genesis 2:3, Exodus 31:15-17, Messianic Jews (Hebrews) 4:9-10

Shabbat lasts from sundown Friday evening until shortly after sundown, on Saturday. All days are counted in relationship to Shabbat (Sunday being the first day and Shabbat being the seventh day), giving further evidence of the centrality of this day to the Jewish people. For more, read *The Sabbath: Entering God's Rest and Havdalah: The Celebration that Concludes the Sabbath* (both available on our website).

BIBLICAL Date/Scripture	BIBLICAL BACKGROUND	TRADITIONAL JEWISH OBSERVANCE	NEW TESTAMENT CONNECTION	PERSONAL APPLICATION
<b>PASSOVER</b> <i>Pesach</i> 14th of <i>Nisan</i> evening (March-April) Ex. 12:1-14; Lev. 23:5; Num. 28:16; Deut. 16:1; Luke 22:1; Heb. 11:28	Celebrates God's protection over the Israelites during the tenth plague in Egypt—the killing of the firstborn. Each Israelite family was to apply the blood of a perfect, unblemished lamb to the doorposts of their home so the angel of death would pass over them, sparing them from this plague.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Leaven removed from home before the first night of Passover.</li> <li>Family Seder meal: special foods help tell the story of deliverance from slavery.</li> <li>Three pieces of unleavened bread, <i>matzah</i>, placed in a special bag, the center piece broken and hidden; the <i>afikomen</i> ("that which is coming") is to be found later and used to complete the meal.</li> <li>Four cups of wine shared, each with a unique message.</li> </ul>	Yeshua (Jesus) celebrated Passover with his <i>talmidim</i> (disciples) on his last night—the Last Supper—a Passover <i>seder</i> dinner, the context for communion or the Lord's Supper (Luke 22:17-20).  <i>For our Pesach lamb, the Messiah, has been sacrificed.</i> (1 Corinthians 5:7)	Each person needs to apply the blood of this Lamb to the doorposts of his heart, to be delivered from the bondage of sin and spiritual death.  <i>For this is my blood, which ratifies the New Covenant, my blood shed on behalf of many, so that they may have their sins forgiven.</i> (Matthew 26:28) (For more, read <i>The Messianic Passover Haggadah</i> available on our website.)
<b>UNLEAVENED BREAD</b> <i>Matzot</i> 15th-21st of <i>Nisan</i> (March-April) Ex. 12:15-20, 39; Lv. 23:6-8; Nm. 28:17-25; Dt. 16:3; Luke 22:7; Acts 20:6; 1 Co. 5:7-8	A reminder of the unleavened bread Israelites took with them when freed from bondage in Egypt. They had to flee so quickly there was no time to let their bread rise.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Only unleavened bread eaten this week</li> <li>Many recipes for cooking with unleavened bread</li> </ul>	Yeshua broke unleavened bread with his disciples at his last <i>seder</i> meal, saying it was his body and that when they broke it, they should remember him. Unleavened bread is striped, pierced and broken, a physical reminder of Yeshua's death.  <i>He was wounded because of our crimes, crushed because of our sins...and by his bruises we are healed.</i> (Isaiah 53:5)	Leaven is often seen as a symbol of sin in the Scriptures, so its removal from the home is symbolic of purification from sin, what Yeshua accomplished.  Paul urges believers to <i>Get rid of the old hametz (leaven)...because in reality you are unleavened. For our Pesach lamb, the Messiah, has been sacrificed.</i> (1 Cor 5:7)
<b>FIRST FRUITS</b> <i>Yom HaBikkurim</i> <i>Sifrat HaOmer</i> 16th of <i>Nisan</i> (March-April) Lev. 23:9-14; Luke 24:13-35; 1 Cor. 15:20-23	Firstfruits celebrated the spring barley harvest, which began in the month of <i>Nisan</i> . The LORD required the Israelites to bring the first sheaf of the harvest—the first fruits—to his Temple as a wave offering.	The Counting of the Omer (Sheaves) begins on the day the sheaf was waved in the Temple and ended fifty days later on Shavuot (Pentecost). Customary to say each night after sundown, when the new day begins, "Today, is day ____ of the Counting of the Omer" to connect the early Firstfruits with the latter Firstfruits on Pentecost, the Feast of Weeks. Often devotional thoughts are shared. (For more, read <i>The Counting of the Omer</i> available on our website.)	<i>But the fact is that the Messiah has been raised from the dead, the first fruits of those who have died</i> (1 Corinthians 15:20).	Yeshua was resurrected from the dead on the Feast of Firstfruits, a sign of his Messiahship and of the future resurrection of all people.  <i>Praised be God, Father of our Lord Yeshua the Messiah, who, in keeping with his great mercy, has caused us, through the resurrection of Yeshua the Messiah from the dead, to be born again to a living hope.</i> (1 Peter 1:3)
<b>PENTECOST</b> <b>FEAST OF WEEKS</b> <i>Shavuot</i> 6th-7th of <i>Sivan</i> (May- June) Lev. 23:16; Ex. 23:15-19; Acts 2	Took place exactly seven weeks and one day, fifty days, after the first Firstfruits. Shavuot was a wheat festival, when the Israelites were to present an offering of new grain in the Temple. This feast is known as the second Firstfruits (Numbers 28:26).  Moses received the Torah on Mount Sinai, exactly fifty days after First Fruits.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>The Torah is read throughout the entire night.</li> <li>The Book of Ruth is read because of its reference to harvest time.</li> <li>Rabbis attribute Messianic significance to this holyday and to the book of Ruth, David's great-grandmother.</li> <li>A festive dairy meal is eaten.</li> <li>Flowers decorate the home and synagogue.</li> </ul>	In early New Testament times, on the Day of <i>Shavuot</i> /Pentecost, the Spirit of God filled the first <i>talmidim</i> and they miraculously spoke in other languages. 3000 people became believers in Yeshua that day (Acts 2). This took place fifty days after the resurrection of Yeshua.	The second Firstfruits of believers guarantees a revival in the end times spiritual harvest of Messiah. Passover speaks of redemption and <i>Shavuot</i> speaks of revival. Thus the Torah would be written, not only on tablets of stone but on hearts, as well.
<b>FEAST OF TRUMPETS</b> <i>Yom T'ruah</i> <i>Rosh Hashanah</i> 1st of <i>Tishrei</i> September- October Lev. 23:23-25; Num. 29:1	A sabbath, observed with <i>shofar</i> (trumpet) blasts on a ram's horn, a call to repentance, alarm and convocation. Rosh Hashanah (New Year's Day) commemorates the Creation and marks the beginning of the Days of Awe, a 10-day period of introspection and repentance, culminating with Yom Kippur.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Somber, yet hopeful, mood due to God's forgiveness and hope for a better year.</li> <li>Special dinner and synagogue services held.</li> <li>Individual immersion often begin the new year.</li> <li><i>Tashlich</i>—casting crumbs into a body of water, based on Micah 7:19, <i>You will throw their sins into the depths of the sea.</i></li> <li>Eating apples dipped in honey for a sweet year.</li> </ul>	Even though there is no special mention of this holiday among New Testament believers, it is fitting to repent, seek forgiveness, and make restitution during this time of year, especially as we await the last trump and the coming of the King of Kings.  Three different <i>shofar</i> blasts are blown, each having its own melody and meaning.	While this day is not specifically mentioned in the New Testament, at least two important prophetic events are described there as beginning with trumpet blasts, both regarding the last days (see Matthew 24:31 and 1 Thessalonians 4:16–18) that provide hope to a follower of Yeshua.
<b>DAY OF ATONEMENT</b> <b>YOM KIPPUR</b> 10th of <i>Tishrei</i> (September-October) Lev. 16, 23:26-32; Num. 29:7-11; Heb. 9:11-28, 10:1-22	The most solemn day in the Biblical calendar. High Priest entered Holy of Holies in the Temple and offered a perfect goat for his own sins and for all the people, sprinkling blood on the Ark of the Covenant. An identical perfect scapegoat, <i>Azazel</i> , was then led outside the walls of the city, symbolically taking the sins of the people with it. The Aaronic blessing was pronounced on the people (Numbers 6:22-26), the only time during the year that anyone invoked the <i>Tetragrammaton</i> (Y-H-V-H), the usually unutterable holy name of God.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Humbling of the soul</li> <li>Personal relationships are evaluated; forgiveness and restitution are offered; reconciliation is attempted.</li> <li>Fasting for the entire day</li> <li>Book of Jonah is read</li> <li>Celebration "break-fast" meal at the end of the day</li> </ul>	The blood of bulls and goats could not provide true and permanent forgiveness of sins (Hebrews 10:4), so God's Messiah came to provide the ultimate sacrifice: himself (Hebrews 9:12). He was sentenced to death by the Roman authorities and even the High Priest of Israel said, prophetically, that <i>it was expedient that one man should die for the people</i> (John 11:50). Like the scapegoat on Yom Kippur, Yeshua was led outside the walls to bear the sins of Israel and of every person who trusts his atoning death.	Just as the scapegoat was led outside the camp into the wilderness to take Israel's sins away and an identical goat was sacrificed to atone for her sins, thus relieving the guilt of the people, Messiah's death provides atonement for all who trust in his sacrifice.  <i>God demonstrates his own love for us in that the Messiah died on our behalf while we were still sinners.</i> (Romans 5:8)
<b>TABERNACLES</b> <b>SUKKOT</b> 15th-21st of <i>Tishrei</i> (September-October) Lev. 23:33-43; Num. 29:12-34; Deut. 16:13-15; Zech. 14:16-19; John 7:2-5, 37-39	The only feast in which the Israelites were instructed by God to rejoice (Deuteronomy 16:14), celebrating the final harvest of the year and God's great provision for his people. Israelites required to leave the comfort of their homes and live in booths—three-sided temporary structures with leafy roofs—through which the stars could be seen. In this way they would remember how their ancestors had lived in booths when they were freed from slavery when they came out of Egypt.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>A <i>Sukkah</i> (booth) is constructed by families</li> <li><i>Lulav</i> (4 species) and <i>Eitrog</i> (citron) ceremony symbolizes:               <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li><i>Eitrog</i>: tastes sweet with fragrant aroma—represents person who has Torah knowledge and good deeds.</li> <li>Date palm: tastes sweet but no fragrance—represents person with knowledge but no deeds</li> <li>Myrtle: no taste but fragrant—represents person with deeds but no knowledge</li> <li>Willow: neither taste nor smell—represents person with no knowledge and no deeds.</li> </ul> </li> </ul>	In New Testament times, <i>Sukkot</i> was a major celebration, often referred to simply as <i>the Feast</i> . It incorporated great ceremonies of water and light. Yeshua made his timeless proclamation in the Temple during <i>Sukkot</i> :  <i>Now on the last day of the festival, Hoshana Rabbah, Yeshua stood and cried out, If anyone is thirsty, let him keep coming to me and drinking. Whoever puts his trust in me, as the Scripture says, rivers of living water will flow from his inmost being!</i> (John 7:37-38).	In the future all nations will come up to Jerusalem for the Feast of Tabernacles. Any nation that does not will incur God's punishment (Zechariah 14:16-19). The fulfillment of this feast will come after the return of the Messiah, when God will once again dwell, or tabernacle, with his people.  <i>And I heard a loud voice from the throne saying, "Look! God's dwelling place is now among the people, and he will dwell with them. They will be his people, and God himself will be with them and be their God."</i> (Rev 21:3)
<b>LOTS</b> <b>PURIM</b> 14th and 15th of <i>Adar</i> (February-March) Esther 9:20-22	357 B.C.E. Jews were dispersed throughout Persia when Haman, the vizier to King Ahasuerus, plotted to kill all of them because Esther's uncle, Mordecai, refused to bow to Haman. Miraculously, the Jews are spared due to Esther's actions. Although God is not directly mentioned, his presence is seen "behind the scenes." (See book of Esther.)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Festive celebration with special foods, decorations and costumes</li> <li>Gifts sent to one another and the poor</li> <li>Noisemakers blot out the name Haman, fulfilling what God said about his ancestor, <i>I will completely blot out any memory of 'Amalek from under heaven</i> (Ex. 17:14).</li> </ul>	Purim is not specifically recorded in the New Testament but 2 Timothy 3:16-17 says that <i>All Scripture is God-breathed and is valuable for teaching the truth, convicting of sin, correcting faults and training in right living.</i> Esther shows us that God is with us, even if we may not see him.	Esther was called into action by Mordecai's challenge: <i>Who knows whether you didn't come into your royal position [as Queen of Persia] precisely for such a time as this?</i> Esther 4:14). Protecting God's chosen people is a purpose for all true followers of Yeshua.
<b>DEDICATION</b> <b>HANUKKAH</b> 25th of <i>Kislev</i> -2nd of <i>Tevet</i> (Nov.-Dec) Dan. 11:20-45; Jn 10:22-25	168 B.C.E.: Antiochus ruled over Judea and in an effort to force Jews to assimilate, he desecrated the Temple. The priest Mattathias and his sons led a revolt and drove the Syrians out of Jerusalem, capturing and <i>rededicating</i> the Temple. These events were foreshadowed in Daniel 8.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>8-day celebration commemorating one day's amount of oil lasting long enough to rededicate the Temple.</li> <li>A 9-branch Hanukkah is used; one candle for each day, plus a <i>shammash</i> (servant) candle.</li> <li>Festive foods eaten/<i>Dreydel</i> game played/gifts given</li> </ul>	Yeshua celebrated Hanukkah at the Temple where he revealed that he was Messiah (John 10:22-25) and was <i>dedicated</i> to the task of serving his Father.	<i>You are light for the world. A town built on a hill cannot be hidden.... In the same way, let your light shine before people, so that they may see the good things you do and praise your Father in heaven.</i> (Matt. 5:14,16)

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