



A STUDY RESOURCE
from Gary Ray

THE HEBREW FESTIVALS AND PROPHECY

The Hebrew language has a poetic element—it is rich in imagery and word pictures. For example, many of the names for God in the Old Testament are linked to stories and special events. *Jehovah Jireh* (God is the provider) is one such example. That title is linked to the story of God providing a substitute sacrifice for Abraham as he was about to sacrifice his son, Isaac. The word, *provider* is typically a verb—it is something someone does. However, in the Hebrew cultural context, it is a blend of a verb and a proper noun—it is something God does, and it is who He is. My point here is that in Hebrew culture, certain words, numbers, and even celebrations have deep spiritual meaning. This section of the booklet profiles how the primary Hebrew festivals (annual celebrations) have deep, even prophetic meaning.

Signs in the heavens:

- God told the ancients that the sun and moon could be used for light and warmth, for direction, and to set boundaries for times and seasons. Genesis 1:14 speaks to this: “*And God said, ‘Let there be lights in the ...sky to separate the day from the night, and let them serve as signs to mark sacred times, and days and years...*”
- In time humanity would learn about the earth’s tilt and seasons, the speed of the earth’s rotation, the path of the earth’s orbit, the vernal equinox, lunar gravitational impact on tides, and how all these things are linked to the sun and moon—the ‘*lights in the...sky.*’
- Not only were the sun and moon linked to the division of days, months, and years, but also to ‘*sacred times.*’ In the days of Moses, festivals were established and linked to the lunar cycle. These festivals were not simple community gatherings or meals—they were ‘*sacred*’ religious celebrations of great importance.

The origin and meaning of the festivals:

- As mentioned above, the festivals were established by God in the days of Moses. About one year after the Hebrews left Egypt, God gave instructions regarding the need to observe seven annual festivals (four in the spring and three in the fall). In Leviticus, we read:

“The LORD said to Moses, ‘Speak to the Israelites and say to them: ‘These are my appointed festivals, the appointed festivals of the LORD, which you are to proclaim as sacred assemblies.’” Leviticus 23:1-2

- In the writings of Moses we see that the festivals were linked to new moons and religious celebrations. They were to be reminders of the great things God had done and also foreshadowed great things that God would do in the future. For example, in Leviticus 23:4-5 we read:

“These are the LORD’s appointed festivals, the sacred assemblies you are to proclaim at their appointed times: The LORD’s Passover begins at twilight on the fourteenth day of the first month.” Leviticus 23:4-5

Here we see that the festival of Passover was given as a way to commemorate how in the time of the great plague of death, those who had the blood of an unblemished lamb over the door to their home were saved. Passover then, commemorated how lamb’s blood and God’s grace provided salvation for Moses and the Hebrew people; but this festival also (prophetically) foreshadowed the great work and sacrifice of Jesus, whom John called the *Lamb of God*—and how his blood provides the hope of salvation for all who believe.

The word “**Feast**” does not mean food The Hebrew word is “Moed” and means an appointment (mow’ed = an appointment or fixed time). These festivals were called Holy “Convocations,” which in Hebrew is “*Miqura*” which means, an “assembly” but also implies a “*dress rehearsal*.” That is, these festivals were given by God as a type of *dress rehearsal*, or time to prepare (prophetically) for a great working of God in the future.

The festivals—prophetic fulfillment: The seven primary Hebrew festivals are noted below. The first four festivals are spring festivals.

- 1) **Passover** ([Lev. 23:5](#)) pointed to the Messiah as our Passover lamb ([1 Cor. 5:7](#)) whose blood would be shed for our sins. Jesus was crucified on the day of preparation for the Passover at the same hour that the lambs were being slaughtered for the Passover meal that evening ([John 19:14](#)). Jesus’ death on the cross was the prophetic fulfillment of the Old Testament Passover festival.
- 2) **Unleavened Bread** ([Lev. 23:6](#)) pointed to the Messiah's sinless life (as leaven is a symbol for sin), making Him the perfect sacrifice for our sins. Jesus' body was in the grave during

the first days of the Passover feast. He was hidden (in the tomb) like a special piece of unleavened bread is hidden during the Passover celebration. During the Passover meal, the center piece of unleavened bread is hidden and later returned to the table as participants celebrate. Jesus, the center-piece of the Trinity, returned (rose again) on the third day in fulfillment of the Scripture.

- 3) **First Fruits** ([Lev. 23:10](#)) pointed to the Messiah's resurrection as the first fruits of the righteous. Jesus was resurrected on this very day, which is one of the reasons that Paul refers to him in [1 Cor. 15:20](#) as the "first fruits from the dead."
- 4) **Weeks or Pentecost** ([Lev.23:16](#)) occurred fifty days after the beginning of the Feast of Unleavened Bread and was celebrated as a time of new beginning and spring harvest. Fifty days after the cross, the gift of the Holy Spirit was given ([Acts 2](#)). This event marked the beginning of the Church Age—a time of reaping a great spiritual harvest. The book of Acts notes that on this day, the disciples began to speak in tongues and 3,000 Jews responded to Peter's sermon and became followers of Christ.

<p style="text-align: center;">These first four [spring] festivals were fulfilled in Jesus' first coming, 2000 years ago.</p>
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- 5) **Trumpets** ([Leviticus 23:24](#)). This is the first of the fall feasts. It begins with the new moon and the blowing of a loud trumpet. Many see the parallel between this Old Testament celebration and trumpet sound, and the joyous celebration and trumpet sound associated with the return of Jesus Christ ([1 Thess. 4:13-18](#); [1 Cor.15:52](#)). The Old Testament festival announced the "Days Of Awe" and ends with the Day of Atonement and the beginning of a new year. Many see parallels between this Festival and the Rapture, the days/years of Tribulation, and the new beginning ('all things new') which will follow the Tribulation period (the Millennial Reign of Christ).
- 6) **Day of Atonement** ([Leviticus 23:27](#)). This festival followed the 'Days of Awe' marked the final opportunity to be forgiven prior to the beginning of the new year. Many believe this Old Testament festival prophetically points to the day of the Second Coming of Jesus when He will return to earth. That will be the Day of Atonement for the Jewish remnant when they "look upon Him whom they have pierced," and receive Him as their Messiah ([Zechariah 12:10](#); [Romans 11:1-6, 25-36](#)).
- 7) **Tabernacles or Booths** ([Lev. 23:34](#)). This Old Testament festival commemorated how God journeyed with them in the days of Moses. Many scholars believe that this feast day points to the Lord's promise that He will once again "tabernacle" with His people (i.e., the

Millennial reign of Christ) when He returns to reign over all the world ([Micah 4:1-7](#)).

Why it is thought the return of Christ may be associated with a fall festival?

- As the festivals seem to foreshadow the future working of the Messiah, and as the spring festivals **were fulfilled in the Messiah's first coming**, it is thought by many that the second coming of the Messiah will be linked to the fulfillment of the fall festivals
- The fall festivals embody the tone of judgment and newness (which complements the tone of eschatological prophecies).
- The fall festivals are associated with trumpets, wonders in the heavens, judgment, and the phrases, *a thief in the night* and *no one knows the day or the hour* (all of which have links to the second coming of the Messiah).
- The *thief in the night* phrase is associated with the Temple Priest who, as a *thief in the night*, would sometimes check on those ordered to stand watch at night to sight and announce (with a trumpet blast) the new moon. The arrival of the new moon in the fall had a 48-hour window. The ancients did not know on which day the new moon would arrive, so temple officials would stand watch and wait—sometimes for a long periods of time. Temple officials who fell asleep at their post, and were caught by the High Priest who came to check on them slyly as a *thief in the night* would be severely reprimanded. Sighting of the new moon would be signaled by a trumpet blast and would mark the beginning of the fall festival of Trumpets.
- o The *no one knows the day or the hour* phrase is associated with the ancient custom of the bride's father setting the wedding date and time. 2000 years ago, if, a few months before the wedding, a bride was asked what day and time the event would occur—the bride would respond, 'Only the father knows—no one knows the day or the hour.' This phrase became linked to the return of Christ and the fall festival of Trumpets because Jesus presents himself as the groom who will one day come for his bride (the church) at a time that no one knows. This parallels the festival of Trumpets because the ancients did not know exactly when this festival would begin as it began with a new moon in the fall (hence the need to have Temple officials stand watch and wait for the new moon's appearance).

“Though you search for your enemies, you will not find them. Those who wage war against you will be as nothing...For I am the Lord...who takes hold of your right hand and says to you, Do not fear; I will help you. Do not be afraid, O worm Jacob, O little Israel, for I myself will help you," declares the Lord, your Redeemer, the Holy One of Israel.” (Isaiah 41:12-14)

Why some looked at the fall of 2015 as being significant

- As noted in the previous section, there seems to be an association between the fall festivals and the return of Jesus Christ. Some taught that the fall of 2015 would usher in a special moving of God because:
 - Fall 2015 marked the Year of Jubilee (Jesus' ministry began in the Year of Jubilee).
 - Fall 2015 marked the beginning of the Shemitah cycle—a 7-year cycle associated with blessing for the faithful and judgment for those who have forsaken the Lord. The last day of this Shemitah cycle is Elul 29 (September 13th), the day of a solar eclipse.
 - The Fall 2015 Festival of Trumpets marked the end of 49 Hebrew Years (7 cycles of Hebrew 360-day years) from June 7, 1967, the day Israel gained control of Jerusalem to 2015's Festival of Trumpets.
 - Fall 2015 marked the end of a Lunar Tetrad (four Blood Moons).
 - These Lunar Tetrads were preceded by the rarest form of solar eclipse (a Total and Annular eclipse—Class 3. The next one will take place in 2172).
 - There were seven similarly-timed Lunar Tetrads since the birth of Christ. Most were associated with significant Hebrew-related events.
- In 1733, Sir Isaac Newton, using the writings of Daniel and the Hebrew tradition of the *Cycle of Jubilees*, wrote that the tribulation would begin in the fall of 2015.
- In the early 13th century, Rabbi Judah Ben Samuel predicted the number of years the Ottoman empire would control Jerusalem, the period between the Ottoman loss of control of Jerusalem and it falling again under Hebrew control, and the coming of the Messiah (which he predicted would begin in the fall of 2015).
- 12th century Bishop Malachy is said to have been given a vision that there would be 112 more Popes before the end of time (Pope Francis is the 112th Pope). Malachy prophesied that the last Pope's reign would be marked by judgment and evil.
- About 100 years ago, 3 young girls (at Fatima, Portugal) said they received a number of visions, which spoke of apostasy and God's judgment during the reign of the last Pope.
- ***It is wise to be vigilant. Believers must beware of those who set dates regarding the day of the return of Christ. All prophecies will be fulfilled, but in God's way and in His time.***

Why did some look to the fall of 2017 as being a significant time of God's moving?

- Some suggested a particular celestial formation that appeared in September 2017 was linked to an alignment referenced in Revelation 12. The rather unique formation had not been witnessed since the birth of Christ, but reappeared during the Feast of Trumpets in 2017. The Revelation 12 text is noted below

- **The text:**

“And a great sign appeared in heaven: a woman clothed with the sun, with the moon under her feet, and on her head a crown of twelve stars. ² She was pregnant and was crying out in birth pains and the agony of giving birth. ³ And another sign appeared in heaven: behold, a great red dragon, with seven heads and ten horns, and on his heads seven diadems. ⁴ His tail swept down a third of the stars of heaven and cast them to the earth. And the dragon stood before the woman who was about to give birth so that when she bore her child he might devour it. ⁵ She gave birth to a male child, one who is to rule all the nations with a rod of iron, but her child was caught up to God and to his throne, ⁶ and the woman fled into the wilderness...where she has a place prepared by God, in which she is to be nourished for 1,260 days.

The celestial alignment

- **It tells a story:** *The protagonist is a sun-clothed woman (God's people). The antagonist is a dragon (the devil). The hero is the woman's child (representing Israel and/or the Messiah). Other players move on and off the stage, all showing that throughout the ages the devil has been in combat against Christ and his people and that ultimately, God's plan will prevail.*
- **The celestial formation:** “And a **great sign** appeared in heaven: **a woman** (the constellation Virgo) **clothed with the sun** (the location of the sun is on the shoulder of the woman in the constellation Virgo), **with the moon under her feet** (the location of the moon is at the feet of the woman in the constellation Virgo), and on **her head a crown of twelve stars** (9 stars from the constellation Leo and three planets (Jupiter, Mars and Venus).” (Revelation 12:1)

- **The setting (understanding the text by looking back in time):**
 - The woman had a child (Jesus)
 - Satan, the dragon, sought to destroy the child (perhaps a reference to Herod's order to kill infant boys in Bethlehem)
 - The woman flees to safety (perhaps a reference to Joseph, Mary, and Jesus' flight to safety in Egypt).
 - **The war in heaven is perhaps a reference to the circumstances surrounding the fall of Satan:** "Now war arose in heaven, Michael and his angels fighting against the dragon. And the dragon and his angels fought back..." (Rev. 12:7)

- **The setting (understanding the text looking FORWARD in time):**
 - The child is the church
 - Satan, the dragon, seeks to destroy the child (his effort intensifies during the Tribulation period)
 - The woman flees to safety and is kept safe for 1260 days (perhaps a reference to God's protection on His remnant during the last half of the Tribulation period (1260 days))