



Chosen by God

The Jewish Roots of Christianity

Jewish calendar

Sacred rhythms...

We hear much from modern day Israel about how sacred the Jew holds certain spaces, like the Temple Mount, or Jerusalem itself. But possibly even more sacred than space for the Jewish people is time. Every aspect of the accounting of time has a scriptural basis for the Jew. The day begins at sundown because that is how the first day was measured in Genesis 1. The ordering of a Jew's hours, days, months, and years all have spiritual meaning and scriptural basis. Time was created by God. Time is sacred.

With the creation of time, God brought order out of chaos. In our western way of thinking, the opposite of created order is nothingness, but to the ancient Near East, the undifferentiated void described in Genesis 1:1 was an unsavory confusion, worse than nothing. The highest praise was due anything able to subdue chaos. Time, as measured in days and weeks and seasons, was seen by God's people as a cyclical, prophetic, repeating and ascending celebration and fulfillment of all things spiritual. It is the framework that an infinitely timeless God met in relationship with His people, and pictured for them things to come.

So the Jewish life is lived in this sacred rhythm of work, rest, and celebration. As John J. Parsons expresses it, there is the idea of "timeless patterns within time." Every aspect of the day, week, month, year and season has meaning and direction, spiraling toward the Day in which we will be with God to enjoy His Presence forever. (Parsons 7)

The Sabbath is the most important event on the Jewish calendar. It was initiated by God when He rested on the seventh day after six days of creating. In Exodus, God commanded His people to remember the Sabbath and keep it holy. It is a central aspect to the rhythm of the Hebrew week.

The next most significant aspect of the Jewish year is the Feasts of the Lord of which there are seven. These fall into three major feast seasons, each requiring a trip to the temple for all Hebrew men, who took their family with them whenever possible.

As Dr. Richard Booker points out, "Jesus not only celebrated these festivals Himself, but every major redemptive event in His life also happened on a feast day. There is a tremendous amount of prophetic significance hidden/revealed in the Hebrew calendar. Through the calendar, we can actually see God's redemptive plan unfold.

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TIME

The Torah does not technically start “in the beginning God created...” but rather “in the beginning of God’s creating ...” (Friedman 5-6) It was at the beginning of God’s creative process, before time yet existed, that He spoke light into being (Gen. 1:3). Then, He separated that light into dark and light, and the day that we now know came to be. Time had been created, and there was the first day.

According to Gen. 1:5, what is the ordering of that day? _____

After the creation of the distinctions of time came distinctions of space. Then the space below, both the dry land, and presumably in the bodies of water as well, vegetation was created. Then there was another evening, and morning, and a new day.

What was created the next day, in Genesis 1:14-17? _____

What is the purpose stated for this created element? _____

Why is this important for what is created next? _____

A Jewish Month - Chodesh

Perhaps the most obvious difference of the Jewish calendar is that it is based on the cycles of the moon, unlike our own solar based (movement of the earth around the sun) calendar. A Hebrew month begins with a new moon, an event that was celebrated. Before exile, Rosh Chodesh, or “head of the month,” as this day is called, was a major holiday with sacrifices and feasts.

Muslims also use a lunar calendar, but do not include a leap year to adjust to the seasons. Therefore Islamic holidays fall at a different time each year.

(Robinson 77). Each of the twelve months in the Jewish calendar is 29 or 30 days long, so a year is only 354 days. In order to keep a bit more in sync with the appropriate seasons and harvest times in which a festival is celebrated, an

extra month, Adar II, is added every 2-3 years. These leap years occur 7 times in 19 years.

According to 2 Chron. 2:4, what did observance of the new moon have in common with the Sabbath and the festivals?

What was done on the new moon in Ps. 81:3-6? _____

What reference is made to the new moon in Col. 2:16? _____

A Jewish Year - Shanah

The first month of the Jewish year is Nisan when Passover is celebrated, as determined by Exodus 12:2. This was a new beginning for God’s people, and is the basis for every new year.

However Rosh Hashanah, or head of the year, falls directly opposite on the calendar, in the month of Tishri, the beginning of the civil year. The number of the Jewish year therefore changes in Tishri, which is the 7th month, instead of in the first month of the year as our calendar does.

Originally, the calendar was very tied with the agricultural seasons as reflected in the festivals. There are three main festival “seasons” into which the seven main festivals fall.

Jewish years are numbered according to the supposed years since creation. To calculate the Jewish year from our own Gregorian calendar, subtract 1,240, then add 5,000.

$$2012-1240 = 772+5,000 = 5772$$

Shaah zemanit - a Jewish hour

The length of a Jewish hour is no simple matter. It is determined by taking the total time of daylight in a particular day and dividing it by 12. Since the hours of daylight vary according to the seasons, the length of the proportional hour also varies.

A Jewish Week - Shavua

The Jewish week begins on Sunday, and ends on Shabbat (the Sabbath), the most important day of the week. In fact, Sabbath is considered the most important of all Jewish holidays. The rest of the week revolves around this central event.

Each week is assigned its own section of the Torah (parashah) which is read during the synagogue service.

Yom - a Jewish Day

Based on the description of the first day in Genesis 1:5, the Jewish day, or yom, begins at sundown of what we consider the previous day. The rabbis have defined this time to begin when three stars become visible in the sky.

The Jewish day is measured according to the rise and set of the sun rather than by a clock, so the length of the day varies according to the season.

Under Roman rule, at the time of Jesus, the night was divided into four watches:

First watch - sundown to 9pm

Second watch - 9pm to midnight

Third watch - midnight to 3 am

Fourth watch - 3 am to sunrise

The twelve hours of the day were similarly divided, and referred to as the 1st hour, or sixth hour, etc. starting with sunrise at 6 am.



MOEDIM - "Appointed times"

What instruction were the Israelites given regarding the appointed times, or festivals in Deuteronomy 16:14-15?

We often refer to festivals such as Passover, or Yom Kippur, as the "Jewish Feasts" what are they actually called in Lev. 23:2? _____

There are three festival seasons in the Jewish year.

PASSOVER

The most important of the feasts is **Passover** and the following Unleavened Bread, and Firstfruits. When does Ex. 12:1,2, Lev. 23:4-8, and Ezek. 45:21 say it should be celebrated? _____

The month Nisan was originally called Abib, but the name was changed during the Babylonian captivity.
(Booker 29)

If a Jewish holiday would happen to fall on the Sabbath (beginning on Friday evening) it is moved to the previous Thursday evening.

Passover begins with a ceremonial dinner commemorating when God "passed over" the homes of the Israelites and killed the Egyptian firstborn sons. It continues for seven days, eating only unleavened bread to remember the hurried flight out of Egypt. This is one of the three feasts that all ceremonially clean Hebrew men (usually with their families) are required to attend with a visit to the temple when it was still standing.

Firstfruits is celebrated on the 21st of Nisan in conjunction with the Feast of Unleavened bread and at the beginning of barley harvest. It was a reminder to the people of how God provides for them. The first crops harvested were to be offered to God. The Israelites couldn't eat any of the harvest until the offering had been made.

PENTECOST - Shavuot

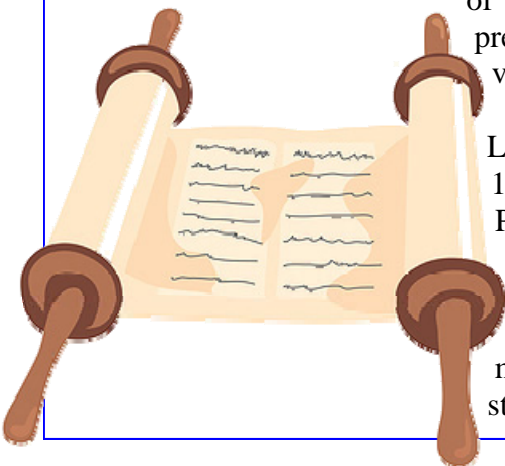
50 days after Passover, in the month of Sivan, comes **Pentecost**, a one day feast celebration of the harvest.

According to Lev. 23:15-22, what offerings were made at this feast? _____

Some other names for Pentecost include: Feast of Weeks, Feast of Harvest, and the Day of Firstfruits. I find it somewhat similar to our notion of Thanksgiving. It was a time to express dependence on God for the harvest, and their daily bread.

Later rabbinic interpretation of Exodus 19 places the giving of the Torah at Mt. Sinai on this day as well. So Pentecost has become a celebration of God's Word as well, especially the Law written on the tablets of stone.

There are no major feasts during the fruit harvest months of Tammuz, Av, and Elul, though the daily, weekly, and monthly rituals are still in place.



FEAST OF TABERNACLES

The Feast of Tabernacles is celebrated in the month of Tishrei, and includes Feast of Trumpets, the Day of Atonement (Yom Kippur), and the Feast of Tabernacles (Sukkot). Because it falls at the end of harvest, it is also called the Feast of Ingathering. In a way the fall feasts mirror the spring holidays.



The Feast of Trumpets marked the end of the agricultural year and the beginning of the civil New Year for the Jews. It is celebrated on the seventh month the 1st of Tishri (Sept./Oct.). It was a day set aside to express joy and thanksgiving to God. As Rabbi David Aaron puts it, Rosh Hashanah (the Head of the Year) is a time to “polish our tarnished souls to reveal our true radiance and experience the joy of being who we really are”.

According to Lev. 23:23-25, what three things occurred on this day?

1. _____
2. _____
3. _____



Ten days later was the Day of Atonement when the priest made offerings for the people for the entire year. This Festival season also includes the Feast of Tabernacles or Sukkot. During this festival, the people lived outside in rough shelters, or booths, to commemorate the years of travel from Sinai to the Promised Land and remind them of their trust in God's protection and guidance.

Hannukah

Hannukah is probably the Jewish holiday that we are most familiar with, but it is not considered a Feast of the Lord. It celebrates a Jewish victory in the revolt by the Maccabees who refused to defile themselves and worship idols as ordered by the Syrian Greeks who were ruling Israel at the time. When they regained control of the temple, it had been desecrated by the sacrificing of pigs to pagan gods. To cleanse the temple, it was determined to burn ritual oil in the temple's menorah for eight days, but only one day worth of oil remained. The lamp was lit anyway, and it was said to have miraculously burned for all eight days and the temple purified. Hannukah celebrates this event which occurred over a century before Christ, during that “quiet” period between the Testaments.

Because of its proximity to Christmas on the calendar, its celebration has become somewhat of a Jewish alternative Christmas celebration with some of the Christmas traditions being adopted into its observance.



PURIM Esther 9:18-32

One of the most joyous of Jewish feasts is Purim, celebrated in the last month of the year, Adar (usually our March). The 13th of Adar was the date chosen by Haman by lot or “pur” for the extermination of the Jews, so their survival is celebrated on the 14th. The holiday is preceded by three days of fasting to remember the fast that Esther called for in anticipation of her meeting with the king. On the day of Purim there is feasting and a reading of the book of Esther, accompanied by booing and hissing whenever Haman's name is read. Gifts are given and food is delivered to the poor.



Though commonly observed, and with Scriptural basis, this is not one of the seven main feasts.

SABBATH REST, YEAR OF JUBILEE Lev. 25

Each seventh year was to be a shmitah, or **Sabbath Year** for the land, with many practical benefits, as well as a sign that the land is not owned by Israel, but is a gift from God. During this year, the land was to remain fallow, but any crop that came up could be gathered by anyone, including the slave or the alien among them. A person, who had sold their services, was freed and given the resources he needed for a fresh start.

Each 50th year (7x7+1) was the Yovel, or **Jubilee Year** in which all slaves were to be set free and property returned to its original owner. This meant land was returned to its ancestral owner and slaves would be released and allowed to return to their families. What was sold, then, was the use of the land, not its ownership.

“The land must not be sold permanently, because the land is mine and you are but aliens and my tenants.” 25:23

What are some ways this system (if it had been observed) would have helped to maintain a social equality among the Israelite nation? _____

Would any part of it be a useful practice for us today? _____

Do you support the Israelite claim on the Promised Land today? _____

Why, or why not? _____

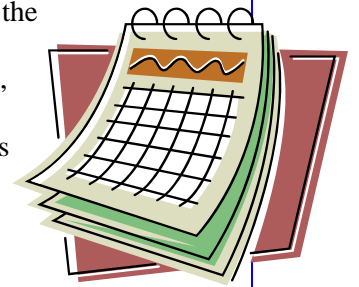
What is the significance of the Jubilee being proclaimed on the Day of Atonement (25:9)? _____

SABBATH - Shabbat

Each seventh day of every week, the **Sabbath Day**, is to be a day of rest and worship. At the end of creation, it is noted that on the seventh day, God “rested” or delighted in and enjoyed all that He had made. But it was not until Exodus 20:8-11, that observing the Sabbath is recorded as an expectation for mankind. Which of the ten commandments regards the Sabbath? _____

What did God say about its observance? _____

The Jews have taken “setting apart” the Sabbath very seriously. It is a day above all other days, even more important than Passover, or any of the other festival days. It is a day of celebration and rest. The idea of a day off is not so foreign to us now, but it was a novel idea for a people fresh out of slavery. In the ancient world, where if you don’t work you don’t eat, a day off would have been a strange notion for anyone other than the very richest. To cease work for one day out of every seven, would have set the Jewish nation apart from those around them, as well as being a very tangible step of faith in God’s provision. To the nation of Israel, it is what consecrated them as God’s people.



In Exodus 31:12-16, what was to be done to anyone who failed to observe the Sabbath? _____

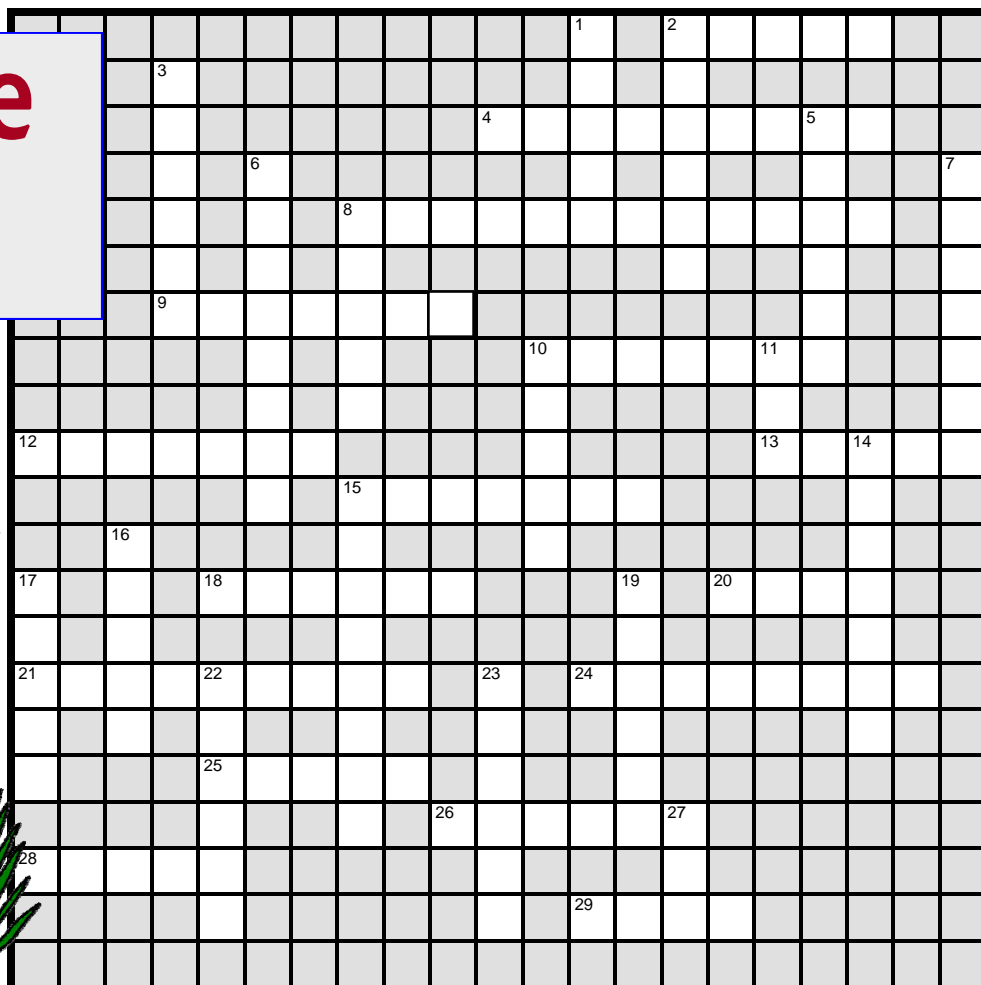
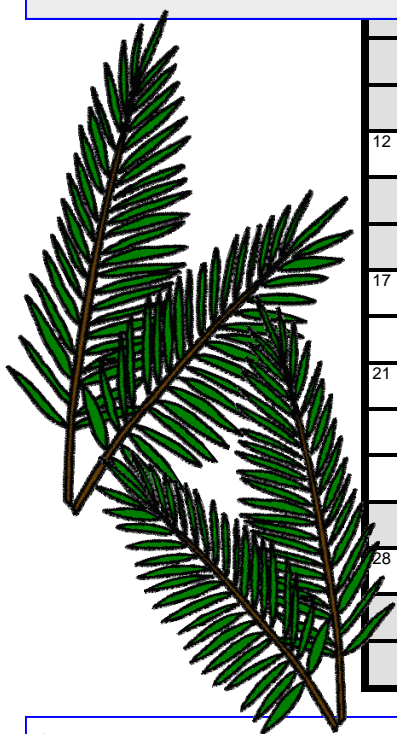
How long was this observance to be practiced? _____

The only other days this was said of were Yom Kippur (the Day of Atonement), Passover, Shavout (Pentecost), and Sukkot (the feast of Tabernacles). These are the events that defined God’s Relationship with His people. (Kosofsky 55)

What happened to the man collecting wood on the Sabbath in Numbers 15:32-36? _____

What example did God give of preparing for the Sabbath in Exodus 16:23? _____

Puzzle Page



Across

- 2 begins with a new moon (5)
- 4 also called Shavuot (9)
- 8 this type of hour varies in length (12)
- 9 month in which Rosh Hashanah falls (7)
- 10 most important event on the Jewish calendar (7)
- 12 the year in which slaves were set free, and property was returned (7)
- 13 first month of the Jewish year (5)
- 15 a Jewish month (7)
- 18 what the land was to remain in a Sabbath Year (6)
- 20 original name for the month of Nisan (4)
- 21 Yom Kippur is also called the Day of _____
- 24 a Jewish holiday that is celebrated by lighting a menorah (8)
- 25 thought to have been given on Shavout (5)
- 26 evening that Sabbath begins on (6)
- 28 number of visible stars in the sky that determined sundown (5)
- 29 considered sacred (4)

Down

- 1 basis of the Jewish calendar (5)

- 2 appointed times (6)
- 3 Feast of Tabernacles, or Booths (6)
- 5 a Jewish year (6)
- 6 major feast celebrated in March or April (8)
- 7 Jewish day begins with this (7)
- 8 a Jewish holiday preceded by three days of fasting (5)
- 10 number of Feasts of the Lord (5)
- 11 number of days between the Feast of Trumpets, and the Day of Atonement (3)
- 14 seventh day of the week (7)
- 15 prophetic significance is found in the Hebrew _____ (8)
- 16 God brought order out of this (5)
- 17 Old Testament penalty for breaking the Sabbath laws (5)
- 19 a Jewish week (6)
- 22 book of the Bible read during the Purim celebration (6)
- 23 the commandment regarding the Sabbath (6)
- 27 a Jewish day (3)

WORLD HISTORY

According to the Jewish sages, the entire history of the world can be divided into seven 1,000 year “days,” (from Psalm 90:4, and repeated in 2 Peter 3:8) which correspond to the seven days of creation. From Isaiah 46:10, it is concluded that the events of creation are actually a prophecy of mankind’s history. It is interpreted that the world will only exist for 6,000 years, the final 1,000 years being (olam haba), or the world to come. This will be a time of worldwide rest and peace like a giant scale Sabbath. (see Gen. 2:2-3)

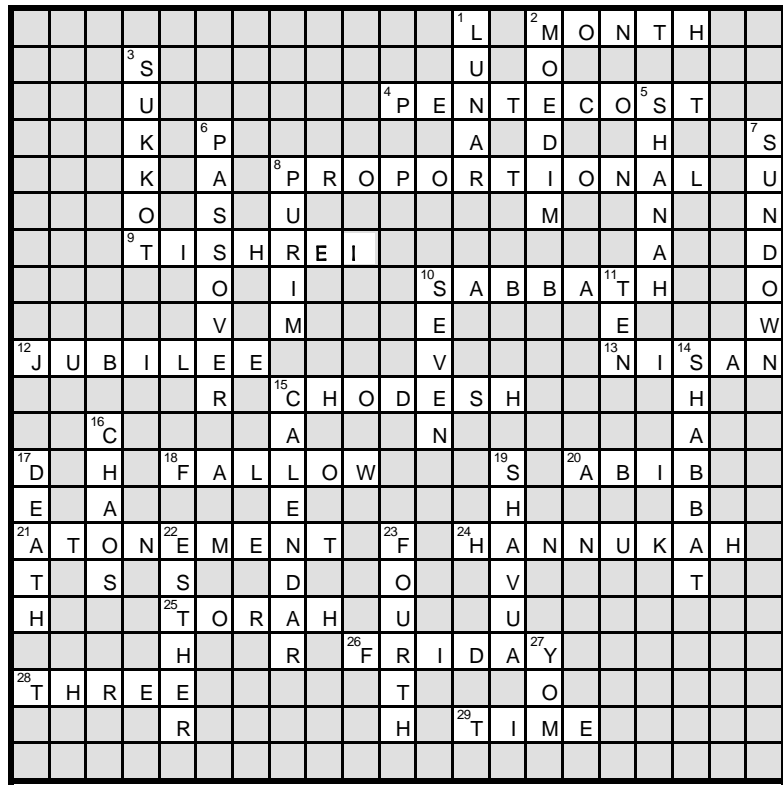
The 6,000 years was divided into three periods of time (corresponding to the three festival seasons, I wonder?)

The first two thousand years were “desolation”, the next two thousand was marked by Moses and the giving of the Torah, which flourished over the next two thousand years. I find it interesting that even the Jewish people expected the Messiah to initiate the next, and final two thousand year period.

How might this explain New Testament references to “the last days” as in Acts 2:14-17, and Heb. 1:1-2? _____

This would also explain the flood of those claiming to be the Messiah around the time of the real Messiah!

PUZZLE ANSWERS:



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