

Celebrating the Fall Feasts

by Margaret McKee Huey

Since becoming Messianic in 1995, our family has been in a state of transition concerning the Fall holiday celebrations. As Christians, we were not raised to celebrate and observe Yom Teruah or Rosh HaShanah, Yom Kippur, or Sukkot. I grew up thinking that these days were only for my Jewish friends who went to temple, instead of being Biblical holidays for all of us. Yet, the Scriptures are very clear that these days are for all Believers in the Jewish Messiah, and that they are to be observed perpetually throughout all of our generations. Hopefully, we do not have non-Biblical substitutes to stop practicing during the Fall, as are the cases with Christmas and Easter in the Winter and Spring. (Even as Christians, most of us stopped letting our children participate in the Satanic practice of Halloween long ago!)[1] However, we do have to face the facts that our ancestors were not grounded in the ways of the Torah and that they simply did not know any better that these holidays were for them also! But for those of us who have been awakened and have embraced a Messianic walk with the Messiah, we can no longer have this excuse. It is a delight to our family to participate in the Fall holidays, especially as they point to Yeshua's Second Coming!

Personal Family Testimony

For our family, the walk of faith that has lead us to become Messianic has caused us to actively change three areas in our faith observance that are different from our Church upbringing. First, we now observe Shabbat rest, instead of going to Sunday Church. Second, we now eat Biblically kosher, instead of anything that our pallet desires. And third, we now observe the Biblical appointed times that are listed in Leviticus 23, instead of the Church holidays that were passed down from the Catholic Church to the Protestant ones. Has this transition been an easy one? No, family traditions are hard to change. Yet, I am happy to say that within our own small family, we have been able to adopt the Biblical practices and drop the un-Biblical ones "fairly" easily. We earnestly desire to be as Biblical as possible and to continue down that path that the Reformers did before us. Not all of them, unfortunately, got the full revelation on the Torah, holidays, Shabbat, and food, etc. We desire as a family to walk and to do and to be like our Messiah Yeshua in all things, as much as possible.

I can say that in the continual transformation that our family has been through to become as Biblical as possible, we have been able to embrace the Fall observances, instead of thinking that they are only for our Jewish friends. Our family has come to the conclusion that to observe the Fall feasts is to do another thing that Yeshua did. That alone is enough to observe these holidays! Yeshua fulfilled the Spring feasts with His First Coming. The Last Supper was the Passover meal in which He spoke to His Disciples concerning His atoning death that was shortly to come. He was crucified as our Passover Lamb at the very time when the priests were killing the Passover lambs in Jerusalem. Yeshua was raised from the dead after three days and three nights (the sign of Jonah) in the tomb. His tomb was found empty early in the morning after Shabbat. He was the first fruit offering unto the Father. On Shavuot, the Holy Spirit was given to the Believers. Now, with the Fall feasts, we look ahead to that season when Yeshua will fulfill them in the future with His Second Coming! We look to that day in the future when Yeshua will come for the Believers when the trumpet is blown on Yom Teruah. During the ten Days of Awe, we prepare for Yom Kippur, which will be the day when Yeshua will judge the world on the Day of the Lord. During a future Sukkot or Tabernacles, Yeshua will set up the Millennial Kingdom and we will tabernacle with Him for a thousand years. So, the Fall feasts are indeed a delight for any Messianic family to embrace!

Family Observance

The wonderful thing about the Biblical holidays it that our Heavenly Father wants us to remember the great events of the Ancient Israelites by celebrating them! The Sukkot season has so many

wonderful truths that we can celebrate. When Yeshua observed it during His life, He did so in Jerusalem, with the final fulfillment having Him return to set up the Millennial Kingdom. We can delight in rejoining with our Jewish brothers by celebrating the Fall feasts with them. This season represents a time of hope, reflection, repentance, cleansing and forgiveness.

“Again the Lord spoke to Moses, saying, ‘Speak to the sons of Israel, saying, “In the seventh month on the first of the month you shall have a rest, a reminder by blowing of trumpets, a holy convocation. You shall not do any laborious work, but you shall present an offering by fire to the Lord”’ (Leviticus 23:23-25).

On Yom Teruah or Rosh HaShanah, we set this day aside to have a very special meal for our family that is full of promise for the new year to come—a year in which we have again been forgiven by the Lord for our transgressions. We traditionally eat apples dipped in honey and other different fruit dishes that represent the promise of sweetness in the year to come. Song of Songs 2:3 compares the people of Israel to the lovely apple tree. Also, the Land of Israel is said to be a land “flowing with milk and honey” in Exodus 3:8. We either say the prayers for Yom Teruah at our home, or we assemble with our congregation and celebrate the day with others.

“The Lord spoke to Moses, saying, ‘On exactly the tenth day of this seventh month is the day of atonement, it shall be a holy convocation for you, and you shall humble your souls and present an offering by fire to the Lord. You shall not do any work on this same day, for it is a day of atonement, to make atonement on your behalf before the Lord your God”’ (Leviticus 23:26-28).

Yom Kippur is not a feast day; it is a fast. However, before the fast of Yom Kippur begins, we have a light meal for Erev Yom Kippur. It is a time to set the table all in white and use one’s best china. This meal helps to set the mood for the very holy Day of Atonement before the fast begins. We set the day of Yom Kippur aside as a high Shabbat. We either use the prayers for this high holy day in our home as a family, or we observe the day with our congregation. After Yom Kippur is over at sundown, we break the fast. It is equally important to have a light meal as soon as the fast is complete. This meal is much more lighthearted as we walk with renewed assurance that our prayers have been answered and our sins have been forgiven.

“Again the Lord spoke to Moses, saying, ‘Speak to the sons of Israel, saying, “On the fifteenth of this seventh month is the Feast of Booths for seven days to the Lord. On the first day is a holy convocation; you shall do no laborious work of any kind. For seven days you shall present an offering by fire to the Lord. On the eighth day you shall have a holy convocation and present an offering by fire to the Lord; it is an assembly. You shall do no laborious work”’ (Leviticus 23:33-36).

Sukkot comes five days after Yom Kippur. It is a time when we celebrate a joyous reunion of God’s people as we remember when the people of Israel lived in sukkahs (booths) during the Exodus. Our family builds a sukkah outside in our back yard that has three sides to it. We spend time in it and eat our meals in it during the next seven days. Sometimes, we put up a tent in which to sleep outside. All in all, it is a week in which we camp out just as the Israelites did! At times, we have been able to spend Sukkot together with other families as we all camped out and ate together. A general feeling of family and fellowship should permeate each day of Sukkot. The love of Yeshua should be strongly felt in each home with the promise of His coming. Our family can truly say that it is not missing out on anything during the Holiday season!

“For seven days you shall present an offering by fire to the Lord. On the eighth day you shall have a holy convocation and present an offering by fire to the Lord; it is an assembly. You shall do no laborious work. These are the appointed times of the Lord which you shall proclaim as holy convocations, to present offerings by fire to the Lord—burnt offerings and grain offerings, sacrifices and drink offerings, each day’s matter on its own day” (Leviticus 23:36-37).

In Israel, the day after Sukkot is Shemini Atzeret, the Eighth Day, and it is often celebrated in conjunction with Simchat Torah, the Joy of the Torah. Outside Israel, we celebrate them in two

days. Shemini Atzeret is considered a quiet day after Sukkot is over in which our family contemplates all that has transpired during the past fifteen days of the Fall feasts. Then on Simchat Torah, we are ready to celebrate again as we lift up the Torah, the joy that it gives us, and that the new torah cycle of study is about to begin again with the start of studying Genesis 1:1. Our family has a meal of celebration that is very festive and fun.

Loving Each Other

How do we deal with our extended family and friends who still do not understand why we are celebrating the Fall feasts with our Jewish friends? Our family believes that the restoration of the Fall holidays is a blessing to us! We, who are to walk as Messiah Yeshua walked, must reach out to others in love at this time when the Father is restoring His appointed times to His people. Yeshua told us that people would know that we are His disciples by the love that we have for one another. So, let us love our family and friends in such a way concerning these feasts that they will be drawn to us, and not repelled. For, dear friends, it is through our unconditional love for them that one day they will want to know what we know about walking like the Messiah. One day they will want to know why we have become thoroughly Messianic. Let us reach out in love and show them the better way. Let us rejoice in the true understanding that Yeshua not only actively participated in the Fall feasts of the Lord, but that He will come again to take us unto Himself at the Second Coming during this holiday time!

Unless otherwise noted, Scripture quotations are from the New American Standard, Updated Edition (NASU), Ó 1995, published by The Lockman Foundation.

NOTES

[1] Consult the article “A Messianic Perspective of Halloween” by J.K. McKee.
