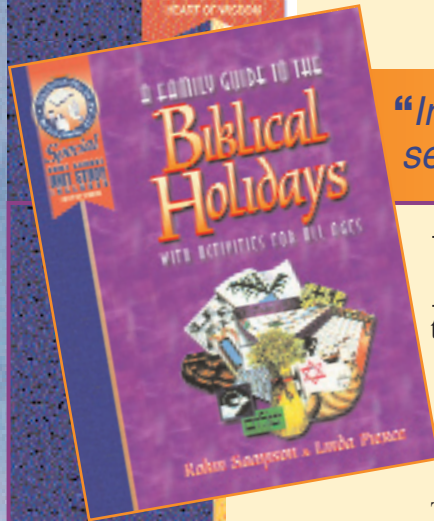




Biblical Holidays

"In 34 years of publishing Messianic Catalogs we have never seen such a creative contribution to the body of Messiah"



EASY-TO-UNDERSTAND CHAPTERS

1. Purpose of the Holiday
2. The Holiday in Bible Times
3. Jewish Customs of the Holiday
4. Messianic Significance
5. Suggestions for Celebration
6. Crafts, Recipes, Games, & Activities

Learn the teaching method God uses to teach His children. The ultimate hands-on Bible lessons! Teach your children the way God instructed the Hebrews to teach their children—with annual events depicting the story of His people and the coming of Jesus. See Jesus' death, burial, and resurrection, all foretold in the Spring holidays, and find out how to help recognize His second coming by learning about the Fall holidays!

This giant 587-page book gives an overview of nine holidays: Passover, Unleavened Bread, Firstfruits, Pentecost, Trumpets, Day of Atonement, Tabernacles, Hanukkah, and Purim. It also explains the historical, agricultural, spiritual and prophetic purposes of each holiday, showing how each points to Christ, and suggests a variety of creative ways to teach them to your children! Includes projects, crafts, recipes, games, and songs for celebrating each holiday. Also includes instructions for a weekly Bible study and instructions using the special homeschool section to incorporate the teaching of the Biblical holidays with academic subjects! Excellent, fascinating information about the true New Testament Church and our Hebrew roots also included! If you only buy one book this year—make it this one! **\$39.95**

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- Section II. Preliminary Activities**
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 - Unleavened Bread (Hag HaMatzah)
 - Early Firstfruits and Counting the Omer
 - Feasts of Weeks (Shavuot or Pentecost)
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What Others Are Saying About *A Family Guide to the Biblical Holidays*

I enthusiastically endorse this exceedingly creative project. This family guide is a Christian exploration of Biblical Holidays adaptable for all ages. This impressive work is visually attractive and scripturally anchored. Here is a delightful educational tool serious students will appreciate, for it will provide them with a detailed understanding of one of the foundational instructional pillars of the earliest Jewish church. Explore wonderful basic foundational truths that are found in the only Bible the earliest church knew. The glossary is a real asset. —**DR. MARVIN WILSON**, author of *Our Father Abraham: Jewish Roots of the Christian Faith* and Professor of Biblical and Theological Studies at Gordon College, Wenham, MA.

Our Families Favorite Holiday Book—EVER!, book is a fabulous find! It begins by telling a semi-humorous but perfectly true short story about how we were 'hood-winked' (my words, not the author's) by a ruler (this was Constantine) into discarding the Biblical holidays—they are NOT Jewish holidays, they are always referred in the Bible as "MY(God's)Festivals" - and taking on the pagan holidays of those around them. Then it goes on to show how we can and should be doing the Lord's festivals and why. What they are foreshadowing of. It covers all the festivals, including Hanukkah and Purim. It gives background info and then moves on into today's ways of celebrating and what each festival is representative of. This wonderful guide even goes into explaining the differences in interpretation on the Fall Holidays, which have not even been fulfilled yet by God, and how there are 3 views of order: pre-trib, post-trib, and mid-trib. You can adapt it to fit your families belief. For

homeschoolers, there is a section on each festival for you to do a unit study on, and great charts to assist in this. Crafts, games, and things to do are also included which can be copied and traced, etc. The back section has a question and answer session on the most commonly asked questions by people new to this. Both those trying to understand and those who want to know how to explain it to their family and friends. Everything is covered in easy to comprehend details and although it is large, it is quite easy to read and learn from. The only thing not in this comprehensive book of festivals are some of the wonderful prayers said worldwide during these festivals, but one can find those in many other places. That said—this is hands down our families most favorite holiday book (and we have purchased at least 12) of all time. I think the opening short story is one of the most clever things I've ever read to explain this phenomenon of the return to Biblical rules, bar none. I would highly recommend this book to anyone and everyone- and I do all the time! —**AMAZON REVIEW**

Many books about the Holy Days have crossed my desk, most with only an explanation of the New Testament view. I was delighted to see that *A Family Guide to The Biblical Holidays* includes the historical purpose and meaning of each holiday as well as the foreshadows of Christ. The authors have done an excellent job explaining each holiday to the fullest in an easy-to-understand text. These often overlooked teachings reveal significant insights to the predominantly Jewish early church. —**RON MOSLEY**, Founder of the Arkansas Institute of Holy Land Studies and author of *Yeshua: A Guide to the Real Jesus and the Original Church*

SAMPLES FROM CRAFT PAGES



MENORAH TORTIZZAS



PAPER DOLLS



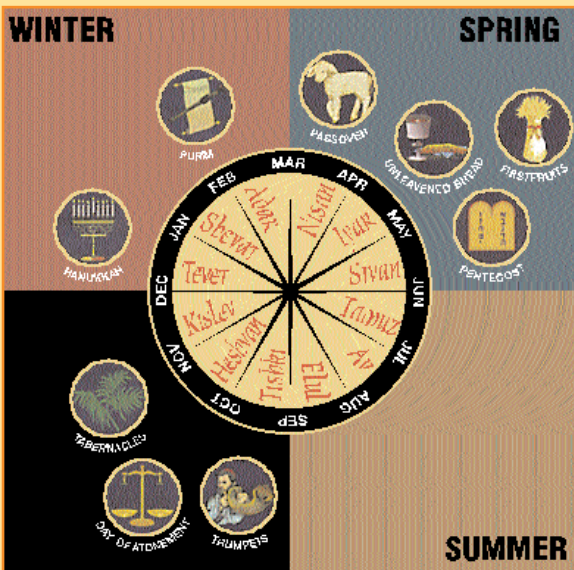
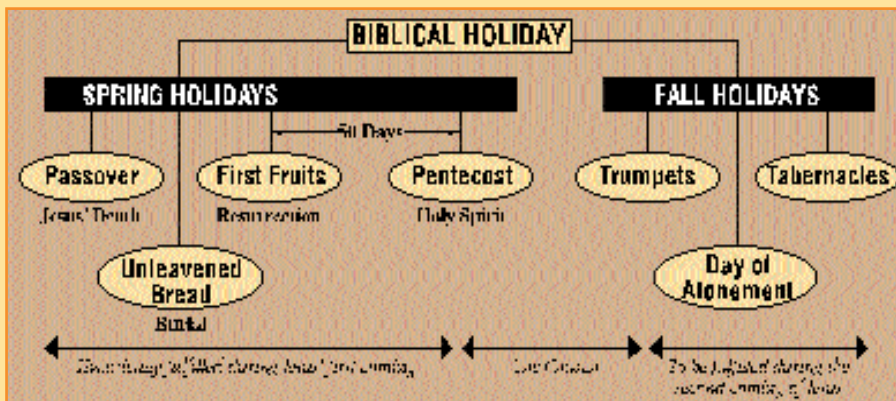
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CROWN

**MORE THAN
JUST CELEBRATION IDEAS
CHAPTERS ALSO INCLUDE STUDIES:**

1. Purpose of the Holiday
2. The Holiday in Bible Times
3. Jewish Customs of the Holiday
4. Messianic Significance



SUKKAH DOLL HOUSE

Customer Reviews

Through the years of our marriage my husband and I have deplored many of the characteristics of our "Christian" holidays which seem more and more devoid of truly Christian meaning. While researching ways to make our holidays more God-centered we were referred to a wonderful book. *A Family Guide to the Biblical Holidays*, by Robin Sampson and Linda Peirce, is a wonderful volume which details the Old Testament feasts and festivals and gives your family the tools to celebrate them. It is so thorough I was amazed! They propose that, by keeping the Biblical holidays, we will teach our children about "The historical events of the Bible, Prophetic events yet to come, God's plan of salvation and the life and ministry of our Savior, Jesus Christ." I found in reading through the book and implementing it that their claims are valid.—Jennifer Pepito, *The Old Schoolhouse™ Magazine*

This is the best book I have ever seen on the festivals. It is done from the perspective that you are not already knowledgeable about the festivals of God. It is also a very fast read and if you have children is also has crafts and foods to make. It is well worth every penny! I highly recommend this book. In June of '98 I left my Baptist roots and began the search God led me on to learn of his biblical holidays and wonderful plan for my life.—Lori

Just yesterday I was again blessed by your *Family Guide to the Biblical Holidays* book as I pulled it out (once again) to get some ideas for our upcoming Hannukah celebration. I recently purchased *What Your Child Needs to Know When*, the new edition, and am just now beginning to read through it. Thank you for the quality materials you have been publishing!! Thank you for being a willing servant to help make materials available that we can use to teach our children the FULL scriptures about the one true living Elohim, who is the same yesterday, today and forever!! HE orders the steps of a righteous man. HE promises us blessings when we choose the way of life, Torah living. Baruch HaShem! B'shem Yeshua HaMashiach.—Sandi Lawrence

Our family's favorite holiday book-**EVER!** This book is a fabulous find! It begins by telling a semi-humorous but perfectly true short story about how we were "hoodwinked" (my words, not the author's) by a ruler (this was Constantine) into discarding the biblical holidays--they are NOT Jewish holidays, they are always referred in the Bible as "MY (God's) Festivals"--and taking on the pagan holidays of those around them. Then it goes on to show how we can and should be doing the Lord's festivals and why-what they are foreshadowing of. It covers all the festivals, including Hanukkah and Purim. It gives background info and then moves on into today's ways of celebrating and what each festival is representative of. This wonderful guide even goes into explaining the differences in interpretation on the fall holidays, which have not even been fulfilled yet by God, and how there are 3 views of order: pre-trib, post-trib. and mid-trib. You can adapt it to fit your family's beliefs. For homeschoolers, there is a section on each festival for you to do a unit study on, and great charts to assist in this. Crafts, games, and things to do are also included which can be copied and traced, etc. The back section has a question and answer session on the most commonly asked questions by people new to this-both those trying to understand and those who want to know how to explain it to their family and friends. Everything is covered in easy to comprehend details and although it is large, it is quite easy to read and learn from. The only thing that is not in this comprehensive book of festivals are some of the wonderful prayers said worldwide during these festivals, but one can find those in many other places. That said-this is, hands down, our family's most favorite holiday book of all time (and we have purchased at least 12). I think the opening short story is one of the most clever things I've ever read to explain this phenomenon of the return to Biblical rules, bar none. I would highly recommend this book to anyone and everyone-and I do, all the time!—Texas

I was absolutely thrilled to receive a copy of *A Family Guide to the Biblical Holidays!* You have done so much work! Amazing. It looks super!—Maureen Duthie, Waiholā, Otago, New Zealand

At the last home school convention in Michigan, the *the Biblical Holidays* was one of our best-sellers, topped only by Our Father Abraham. Thanks for all the work you put into creating the The Biblical Holidays. May HaShem bless you and your family in all your endeavors! B'Shalom.—Kathy Burns

This is a fascinating book. It is an excellent resource for those wanting to learn about the biblical holidays and

Customer Reviews continued

their significance and reflection of Jesus! It has lots of info on how to observe them and even projects and games for kids. This book is a great investment and I highly recommend it. I, as a Baptist Christian, have had my eyes opened to a new understanding that I was missing out on before, because I didn't understand the Jewishness of the Bible, which makes a great difference in Bible study once learned about! —Anchorage, Alaska

For those having limited experience with Jewish beliefs this is a wonderful way to really get started. It's all been researched and easily laid out so there is limited prep time and you can move on the holidays quickly, and it's fun. I love being able to tie my family's beliefs back to where they began, and teaching my children that our beliefs began with God's chosen people and is as real and meaningful today as ever. If you want to bring the origins of Christianity into your home to study, this is the book. —Author: d Chastain, Georgia

I just wanted to write you a quick note to tell you what a blessing the *AFamily Guide to Biblical Holidays* is. God has commanded that these festivals and holy day be celebrated through all generations. Unfortunately, we Christians have neglected to follow those instructions. Even when we become aware that we should be doing these things, it is an arduous task to reference the procedures and customs. I have been interested in this area of research for several years and I am delighted that you have provided such an accurate, insightful and imaginative work to publication. I know it is God's will that we worship Him and celebrate what He has done, His way. Your work provides the information required to educate us. Thank you so very much again. —George Sadler

I personally want to thank you for your prolific writing on the subject of our Hebraic roots. We've also been using the Biblical Holidays book for 2 years now-probably purchased it shortly after its publication. Discovering and walking through the feasts is so fulfilling to a deep, deep need within me-I can't explain it, but am ever grateful for the work you've put into all of these various editions you've published that help us better understand our spiritual heritage. So, with a grateful heart, have a wonderful day with your loving family. We have 9 children and are so thankful for the privilege to teach them at home-you've helped make my/our job very satisfying. —Becky Jones

Finally! Just what you have been looking for! An extensive program designed to give your family a full year of biblically-based, hands-on experiences. This book explains all the feasts of the Lord in light of the Messiah Jesus/Yeshua. Each festival includes Purpose of the Holiday; How the Holiday was celebrated in Bible Times, Jewish Customs of the Holiday Today, and Messianic Significance of the Holiday in Light of Jesus/Yeshua. Lots of Bible Studies, Recipes, Arts/Crafts, Puzzles, History, Geography, Language Arts, Music, Health, Science, Math, Games, Field Trips, Agriculture, and Industry ideas. Everything you will need to tie your homeschool to the Bible each day! Highly recommended! —Author: Cheryle Holeman, HaY'Did (The Friend) Learning Center

This is the book that introduced me to the idea that Gentiles should, indeed, follow the biblical holy days. I first bought the bound book on Amazon and later bought the e-book so that I could have it on hand and print smaller sections. This book is excellent!

Within the description of each holiday are explanations of how it relates to Yeshua. Also included are some of the Jewish traditions related to that holiday. The author clearly states when some practices are extra-biblical, but I appreciate their being included.

Also, there is a section for homeschoolers on how to make a unit-study out of the information included in the book. There are recipes, coloring pages, word-searches, a pattern for a challah-bread cover, and so much more!

I am very grateful that I came across this book. It has led to further study on the biblical holidays and the roots of our faith. I would whole-heartedly recommend this book to homeschoolers, families interested in a concise explanation of biblical holidays, and everyone else!!!! :) —messianicmom

[Click here for Purchasing Options.](#) [Scroll down to see Free Preview Pages](#)

A Family Guide to the Biblical Holidays

Free Preview Pages. **Only Ebook is in Color.** Blue text indicates Internet link

These pages are for viewing only (not printable). For a printable Ebook see the [Biblical Holidays Ebook](#).



Important Notice

Many Christians know very little of the Old Testament, except for a few Bible stories, they tend to think of the Old Testament as having been 'done away with'. The Bible is *one* book telling *one* main story. The Old and New Testament tell us about the New Covenant that God's has for us. The Old Testament is relevant to an understanding of God and a deeper discipleship walk with the Lord. The New Testament without the "Old" restricts our full appreciation and understanding of the Word of God. Without the "old," the "new" loses much of its meaning, and it is often misinterpreted. Each of us should read God's Word carefully and become well equipped teachers of truth. Remember the believers in the early church did not have a New Testament, and they certainly grew in their walk with the Lord and they also celebrated God's Holy Days.

The Biblical Holidays are an excellent introductory tool for teaching Christians about their Hebraic roots. Studying the logical sequence of the holidays is a useful key which may unlock some of the mysteries of God's Word and open our understanding to God's wonderful plan for mankind. A study or observance (hands-on study) of these days do give you a deeper understanding the redemption process, the glorious plan of salvation, the life of Christ, the early church, God's miraculous timing, and much more general insight of God's Word. However, it is not a religious requirement for salvation. Keeping these Holidays will in no way earn one's salvation.

Salvation

Every person who is born is in the spiritual bondage of sin. The Bible tells us in Romans 3:23 *For all have sinned, and come short of the glory of God.* And in Romans 3:10 *There is none righteous, no, not one.* The punishment for sin is death. Romans 6:23 *says, For the wages of sin is death; but the gift of God is eternal life through Jesus Christ our Lord.*

To receive salvation from this bondage of sin, one must heed Christ's call. It is God's will that all receive this salvation. Salvation only comes from active faith in Christ, believing that God sent His son, to earth in human form to save us from the sin bondage by dying for us. Romans 5:8 *says, But God commandeth his love toward us, in that, while we were yet sinners, Christ died for us.*

Jesus sacrificed Himself for us by death on a tree. Three days later, He overcame sin and death through His miraculous resurrection. By faith given by God, we can turn from our wicked ways and turn to Christ to make Him Lord of our lives, His Holy Spirit will come to live in us and through His grace we receive the gift of eternal life. 1 Pet 3:18 *For Christ also hath once suffered for sins, the just for the unjust, that he might bring us to God, being put to death in the flesh, but quickened by the Spirit.*

Two things are necessary as conditions of salvation: 1.) Believing in the heart that God raised Christ from the dead. It is with the heart that man believeth; which implies more than an assent of the understanding, this belief results in an inward, sincere, and strong change of the will. Romans 6:6-7 *Knowing this, that our old man is crucified with him, that the body of sin might be destroyed, that henceforth we should not serve sin. For he that is dead is freed from sin.* 2.) Confessing the Lord Jesus—openly professing relation to him and dependence on him, as Lord and Savior Matt 10:32 [Jesus said,] *Whosoever therefore shall confess me before men, him will I confess also before my Father which is in heaven.*

Once we are part of God's family through salvation, God's desire is that we learn of Him through His Word, that we should find out how He would have us live, here on earth, in a manner pleasing to Him—His ways, His paths and His commands. But His salvation is a free gift we could never earn through any works.

*For by grace are ye saved through faith; and that not of yourselves: it is the gift of God:
Not of works, lest any man should boast.*

*For we are his workmanship, created in Christ Jesus unto good works,
which God hath before ordained that we should walk in them. Eph 2:8-10*

God's Holy Days Teach us How We are Saved Through Grace.



Preface

WE DECIDED TO CELEBRATE THE BIBLICAL HOLIDAYS

During Bible study, our family discovered something that we had heard very little about from church. We found out God had set apart special days to worship and honor Him. By learning about the practices of these special days, we could learn about and worship God. We spent some time studying the holidays from Scripture and decided it'd be fun to teach to our children. So our family started celebrating the Biblical Holidays. What a joy! These celebrations are wonderful! Not only was the celebration itself fun and informative, but even the preparation was full of lessons and prompted us into deeper Bible study. The children enjoyed these great “interactive” celebrations more than any man-made holidays (more than even gift-giving days). I was very excited about all we had learned and anxious to tell my Christian friends.

My enthusiasm was soon crushed. I was eagerly sharing with a friend how we celebrated a feast day and how much we had learned. I expected my friend to catch the enthusiasm. Instead I was met with a fierce frown and raised eyebrows. I was told the feast days have been done away with, are no longer necessary, and such nonsense was legalistic. “But, but, ...we didn't do anything wrong...it's just...it can't be wrong... we were just studying the Bible,” I stammered. My friend explained, “You cannot keep the holidays. It is legalistic.”

Celebrating the feasts was only a surface learning experience? Down deep, was I trying to earn my way to heaven? Whoa, I know salvation only comes through God's Son. This conversation led to many questions. What is legalism? Is the Old Testament relevant today? How can obeying Deuteronomy 6—teaching our children God's ways—be legalistic? How can righteousness be wrong? Time for another Bible study.

LEGALISM OR DESIRING TO PLEASE GOD?

Legalism is when a person does works stemming from prideful self-sufficiency that ignores trust and regards performing good deeds as doing God a favor. It is when one gets so involved in seeking to fulfill every minor detail



of God's law or man-made laws that the heart of God is missed. If someone is under a yoke of legalism he is probably trying to meet some fence laws--extra rules tacked on to God's ways-- prescribed by men (see Fence Laws page 38). The yoke of legalism is unbearable. This "earned righteousness mentality" is a nasty pride. The end result of legalism is a proud confidence in one's own righteousness and missing God's will.

A sample of legalism is in Acts 15:5. The Pharisees laid down the position that unless the Gentiles who turned Christians were circumcised after the manner of Moses, and thereby bound themselves to all the observances of the ceremonial law, they could not be saved. This is foolish, as if being circumcised could earn salvation. Jesus spoke firmly against legalism (see Matthew 23:2-4, Mark 7:5-13).

So what is the difference between trying to please God and legalism? A measuring stick that only measures the end result will identify anything pleasing to God as *legalism*. As with most things Jesus taught about, the difference between doing something to please God, and legalism, is found in the heart.

To have faith in Christ's saving grace one must have the knowledge that we are completely unrighteous without the atonement of Jesus, unworthy of receiving the gift of life Christ laid down for us. Responding to God in worship and obedience to His Word is evidence of our gratefulness for His gift to us.

- Legalism is focused on a system.
- Desiring to please God is focused on a relationship.
- Legalism is focused on what is required.
- Desiring to please God is focused on love from within.
- Legalism asks "How can I meet the requirements?"
- Desiring to please God asks, "What is the Lord telling me about His desires through His instruction?"
- Legalism is horrid, for if it were possible to earn a relationship with God, in and of ourselves, Christ's death was pointless.
- Desiring to please God is obeying His command—to love Him with all out hearts, minds, and souls. Loving God can *never* be legalistic!



A FRUIT TEST

Celebrating the holidays can become legalistic. So can going to church, wearing certain clothing, helping the poor, etc. Anything to earn righteousness or done for the outward appearances is legalism. Celebrating the feast days can become legalistic if your heart is not right. If you feel you *have to* do the holidays and you're in a frenzy trying to make everything just perfect, your house is a shambles, children crying, and everyone in a foul mood, you are defeating the point. Time to check your motives. The woman who decided to wear a head covering to show she was submissive—who wore it against her husband's wishes—was not right in her heart. Are you are being controlled by legalism—or a desire to please God? It is easy to find out if something is legalistic—examine the fruit produced. If it is from God the fruit will be patience, joy, peace, love, kindness, gentleness and self-control. The fruit of legalism is easily recognized—arguments, selfish ambition, unreasonable behavior, deceitfulness, and envy.

UNDER LAW OF GRACE?

The Jewish New Testament Commentary explains, the word *under*, in Greek *upo*, means “controlled by” or “in subjection to.” If one is under legalism he is controlled by legalism. Being “under grace” is a subjection which, because of the nature of grace itself, does not have the usual oppressive characteristics of subjection. God's people, the people who are in a trust relationship with him, are and always have been under grace and under *Torah* (a gracious subjection) but never under legalism (a harsh subjection).

We are not in bondage, we are free, free in Christ—free enough to enjoy a cycle of annual celebrations that reminds us that God has done a wonderful work of redemption for us through Christ. Celebrating the biblical holidays is a privileged set apart time of Bible study or family devotions. Do you *have* to have Bible study or family devotions? No, but will you learn more about God, His ways and His paths if you do?

We can celebrate the Biblical holidays if we do it to learn about God or to worship God. If we celebrate the holidays to earn righteousness there is no reason to observe them. By celebrating the biblical holidays I am no better than my friend who chooses not to observe these days. Both of our righteousness is as filthy rags. We are only saved by Christ.



What This Book Is About

This Book is devoted to helping you teach your family (or Bible study class) how the Lord's festival celebrations were a beautiful foreshadow of Jesus the Messiah! What a wonderful way to learn the Bible—by means of these powerful teachings using visual aids! We can celebrate the fulfillment of these holidays in Christ, pay tribute to what God felt was so important to remember, make long-lasting, warmhearted memories for our families, as well as learn glorious secrets hidden in God's word!

God's people are realizing how important it is to understand our Hebraic roots—our spiritual heritage. There is a revival in the land! Believers all over the world are returning to worshipping God in the same manner as in times of the original church of believers. We are seeing new praises by singing the Psalms, displaying banners, Hebrew dances, family-centered worship in homes, and worship by means of the Biblical holidays.

These holidays are a picture—more than any other subject in the Bible—to teach us historical, spiritual, and prophetic lessons! It is amazing that most Christians do not know about the “Holy Days” of the Bible, in spite of the fact that these days were celebrated by Jesus, by the apostles (long after His death and resurrection), and by the early New Testament Church—including the Gentile congregations.

There is so much about God we need to teach our children. Studying these holidays is such a special way to learn. It is the way God taught His people to remember His concern, love, mercy, and protective care for us. Studying these holidays will teach our children about:

1. historical events of the Bible.
2. prophetic events yet to come.
3. our Christian walk.
4. God's plan of salvation.
5. the life and ministry of Jesus Christ, our Lord and Savior.



How This Book is Organized

Introduction

**Section One:
GOD'S HOLIDAYS**

**Section Two:
PRELIMINARY ACTIVITIES
& CRAFTS**

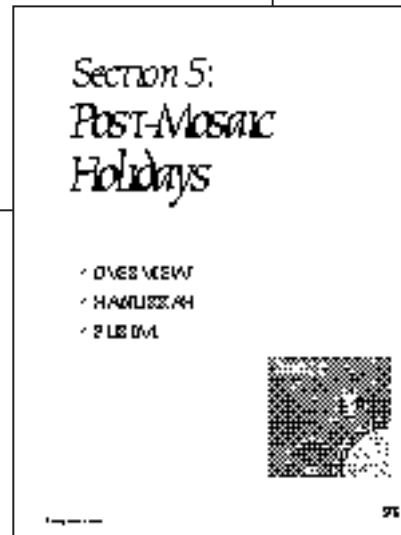
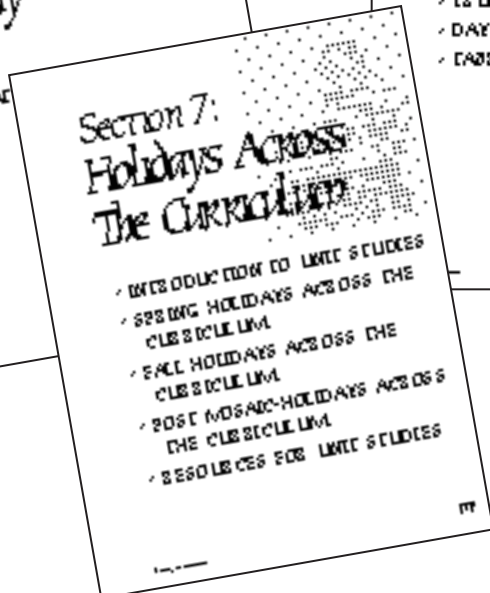
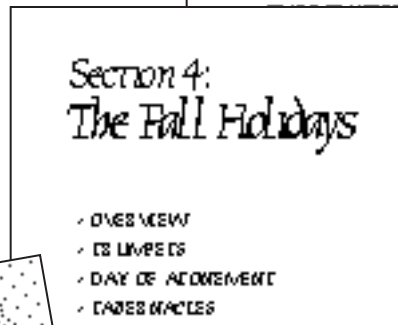
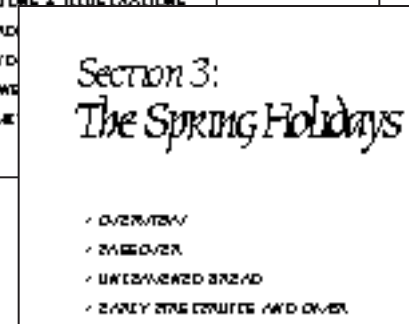
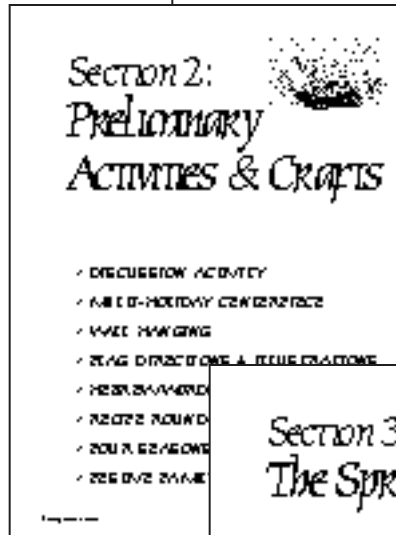
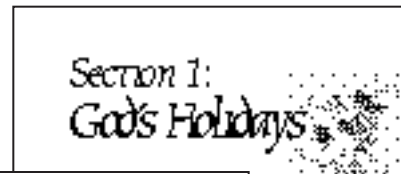
**Sections Three:
SPRING HOLIDAYS**

**Section Four:
FALL HOLIDAYS**

**Section Five:
POST-MOSAIC HOLIDAYS**

**Section Six:
THE SABBATH**

**Section Seven:
SPECIAL HOME SCHOOL SECTION**





How This Book is Organized-cont.

Each Chapter is divided as follows:

1. Purpose of the Holiday
2. The Holiday in Bible Times
3. Jewish Customs of the Holiday
4. Messianic Significance of the Holiday
5. Suggestions for Celebrating the Holiday
6. Crafts and Activities

The collage displays several pages from the book, illustrating the layout of each chapter. The pages include:

- Page 110:** "Purpose of the Holiday" section, featuring a decorative border and a small illustration of a person.
- Page 111:** "The Holiday in Bible Times" section, with a decorative border and a small illustration of a person.
- Page 112:** "Jewish Customs of the Holiday" section, with a decorative border and a small illustration of a person.
- Page 113:** "Messianic Significance of the Holiday" section, with a decorative border and a small illustration of a person.
- Page 114:** "Suggestions for Celebrating the Holiday" section, with a decorative border and a small illustration of a person.
- Page 115:** "Crafts and Activities" section, featuring a large illustration of a decorated doorway and a small illustration of a person.
- Page 116:** "Crafts and Activities" section, featuring a large illustration of a decorated doorway and a small illustration of a person.



How to Use This Book

This book is set up for parents and/or teachers to use as a study guide a few weeks before each holiday or as a thematic unit study for an entire year. Each section includes activities, crafts, recipes, and puzzles for you to choose from. You can use this book in several ways.

CELEBRATE THE HOLIDAYS

Make the holidays part of your family's tradition! Read through the Introduction section and Section One of this book first. The Preliminary Activities and Crafts section contain items including instructions for making a centerpiece, a recipe folder, a wall hanging, and other activities which can be used for each of the holidays. The holiday chapters start with the annual spring, fall, then post-mosaic holidays (winter) and finally, the weekly Sabbath holiday.

You need not wait for spring to start the holidays. You can start at any festival, but it would be helpful to read through the previous chapters, as the holidays do tell chronological events about Christ. The spring holidays tell of His first coming and the fall holidays describe His second coming.

This book includes a variety of suggestions, activities, and crafts for you to enjoy each holiday. Decide which activities will work well for your family and age group.

SMALL GROUP BIBLE STUDY

The renewed interest in the Hebraic roots of Christianity has caused an eager desire among churches as groups to study the holidays. This book can also be used to study fascinating topic at times other than the festival dates, as a small group Bible study.

Sample Eighteen Week Study

One example of a group study to get a quick overview of all the holidays would be to study one holiday for the duration of two two-hour classes (eighteen week study).

- Week 1 Overview
- Week 2 Purpose of Passover/Passover in Bible Times.
- Week 3 Jewish Customs of Passover Today/Messianic Significance of Passover.



- Week 4 Purpose of Unleavened Bread/Unleavened Bread in Bible Times.
- Week 5 Jewish Customs of Unleavened Bread Today/ Messianic Significance of Unleavened Bread.

Decide on the format for your study. For example, a two-hour format may include: ten minutes prayer and overview, forty-five minutes leader guidance through Bible verses and information in this book, twenty minutes break, thirty minutes discussion, ten minute wrap-up and a closing prayer.

CHILDREN'S CHURCH SCHOOL

Plan on celebrating the holiday with a children's one-hour class by choosing very simple activities. The teacher should read through the Introduction and Section One. Start planning at least two to three weeks before the time of the holiday. Lesson Plan pages are included in the Preliminary Activities and Crafts section (page 68) for your convenience. The following is an example of a one-hour Bible or co-op class held each week for three weeks some time before Passover (or a class held each day for three days before Passover):

First Lesson: Read what the Bible says about Passover and the purpose of Passover. Make the Lamb craft or Lamb Centerpiece.

Second Lesson: Read the sections "Passover in Bible Times" and "Messianic Significance of Passover." Explain a seder. Play one of the suggested games, puzzles, or worksheets. Decorate the classroom for next week's seder.

Third Lesson: Have a mini seder. You won't have time for a full meal; however, you can have: matzo, bitter herbs, green vegetables, and cups of grape juice and go through most of the Haggadah.

HOME SCHOOLERS

There are also several ways to use this book while home schooling. You can incorporate the holidays into your regular studies or even make the holidays the central focus of study for an entire year. See the instructions and Lesson Plan sheets in the "Holidays Across the Curriculum" on page 481.



Holiday Parable



Once upon a time there was a wonderful King that ruled a Kingdom. The King was always doing fine and wonderful things for His people. The people desired in their hearts to worship and glorify the King and His wonderful deeds. So the King planned appointed times each year: special times for celebrations to tell the stories of His deeds to the people's children and to glorify the King. The King wrote the instructions of how to observe the celebrations in a book called the Book of Wisdom. For many years the people enjoyed these celebrations. Each year they would learn more about their King and feel closer to Him. They realized the King's celebrations were not only to tell stories of the things the King had done for His people in the past, but also foreshadows of more fine things the King was planning to do for them in the future.

There was another kingdom that did not worship the King. They worshiped objects such as statues, animals, trees, and the sun. In this other kingdom, the people practiced several different annual parties that glorified the people and the objects instead of the King. Each party had a different theme. In some they dressed up like animals and other beings. In some they decorated their homes and gave gifts to each other.

Then a man from this other kingdom visited the King's kingdom and told the people the annual parties were much more fun than the King's celebrations. Some of the people wanted to continue celebrating the ceremonies that worshiped the King. Other people wanted to replace the special celebrations with the new celebrations. Through the years people started to combine both sets of celebrations. They would practice the annual parties, meant to worship objects such as statues, animals, trees, and the sun, but they would say that they were worshipping the King, not the object, so everyone would be happy. They changed the appointed times of the King's celebrations to new times that coincided with the annual parties. The people of both kingdoms were combining so many traditions that no one could tell that there were two kingdoms. The kingdoms blended into each other. This continued for many years until the most recent generations forgot the celebrations that the King planned that glorified the King and His wonderful deeds for the people.

One day a man was reading the Book of Wisdom. He came across a little known chapter that told about the King's appointed times each year: special times for celebrations to tell the stories of His deeds to the people's children and to glorify the King. He was *so excited!* He went to tell the people about the wonderful celebrations.



This made the people very angry. They felt that the man was condemning them for traditions that they had innocently done all their lives. They did not understand.

The man was sad, but he decided to keep the King's celebrations in his own family. The man's family learned much about the King. In fact, each year the man and his family grew closer and closer to the King because of the wonderful stories they learned about during the celebrations. The man and his family learned that the King had special secrets that revealed foreshadows of more fine things the King was planning to do for them. That man wanted so much to share these stories with others. Even though the man was continually rejected, he continued to tell about the King's celebrations. After a while, a few other families (who had always felt uncomfortable about the annual parties they kept) listened to the man. They read the chapter in the Book of Wisdom and also got excited. Soon many people returned to celebrating the King's appointed times, worshipping and telling stories about the King. This made the King very happy!





Why Study the Biblical Holidays

“To every thing there is a season, and a time to every purpose under the heaven.” (Eccl. 3:1).

How much would you know about the Pilgrims without the celebration of Thanksgiving? Think about it. Would you remember Plymouth Rock, the Indians, the Mayflower? God gave us instructions to learn about His Story (History) through fun celebrations!

Paul wrote to the Gentile believers in Colossians 2:16-17 that the holidays *“are a shadow of things to come.”* Each of the spring holidays is a picture of Christ’s first coming. Jesus was sacrificed for our sins on Passover, buried on Unleavened Bread, and arose on Firstfruits. The fall holidays are a picture of His second coming and the beginning of the Messianic reign.

BLUEPRINTS

The Festivals of God are blueprints for the plan of God. When you look at a set of blueprints for a house that is to be built, it is difficult to visualize what the house will look like when it is finished. It is hard to imagine all the details as a whole. But if you look at the blueprints for a house you are familiar with, perhaps the house you live in, then you can relate those plans to your own experience. You can fully visualize the whole of its completion, and the blueprints will help you see where the foundation is laid, where the pipes and cables run, and how the structure supports itself. It is the same with the Holidays of God. When we look at the spring festivals, we can look back at the first century and see how the prophetic elements of those festivals were fulfilled. We can see how the plan of God was carried out in perfection (Lancaster 1995).




Each of the biblical Jewish holidays teaches us about our wonderful relationship with God. His whole redemption story is portrayed for us in these festivals. Passover pictures salvation or deliverance from Egypt (flesh or sin). Unleavened Bread shows us that God saved us in order that we may be holy and set apart for Him by putting off the “old sin nature.” Firstfruits teaches us the purpose of salvation: fruitfulness in the Kingdom of God (John 15:1-5) and putting on the “new man,” the nature of God (Eph. 4:24). The Feast of Weeks instructs us further concerning the kind of fruit we must bear—spiritual fruit (Gal. 5:22-23) through the power of the Holy Spirit.



Quick Overview of the Biblical Holidays

SPRING HOLIDAYS

FALL HOLIDAYS

FESTIVAL	PURPOSE	MESSIANIC SIGNIFICANCE
Passover Pesach Nisan 14 	Remembering the deliverance from Egyptian bondage. An unblemished firstborn male lamb was sacrificed and its blood poured on the altar. A lamb was selected for each family, and four days before the lamb was to be slain it was brought into the home for a four-day examination period.	Jesus is the sacrificial lamb who died for our sins. On Nisan 15 at the exact time the lamb was to be slain, Jesus was slain. Jesus also had a four-day examination period before the religious leaders—and was found without blemish.
Unleavened Bread Nisan 15	Leaven symbolizes sin. Unleavened Bread speaks of sanctification. God told the Jews to cleanse all leaven from their homes and eat only unleavened bread, matzah, for seven days, symbolizing a holy walk with Him.	Jesus is the “Bread of Life” without sin. Born in Bethlehem. In Hebrew, Bethlehem means “house of bread.” Just as matzah is striped and pierced, so was the Messiah. This Feast falls on the day Jesus was buried.
Day of Firstfruits Nisan 17	The first of the barley harvest was brought as an offering to the priest in the Tabernacle/Temple. The priest would present the first of the harvest unto the Lord by waving them back and forth. This reminded the Hebrews that God gave them the land, and the harvest belonged to Him.	Jesus is the Firstfruits (1 Cor. 15:20-23). Jesus’ resurrection marked the beginning of the harvest of souls. John 12:23-24,32 shows Jesus was likened to a grain of wheat falling to the ground and dying to produce a great harvest. Jesus arose on Firstfruits.
Feast of Weeks Shavuot/Pentecost 50 Days after Firstfruits 	Fifty days after the Feast of Firstfruits, a remembrance of the giving of the Torah (law) to Moses on Sinai took place this day. Two loaves of leavened bread are presented to God. Also a reminder that the Jews were slaves to Egypt (Deut. 16:9-17). Three thousand were killed that day.	Fifty days after Jesus arose, a group of Messianic Jews received the Holy Spirit. Jesus said “Unless I go, the Holy Spirit will not come. But when I go (Firstfruits-His resurrection) I will send the Holy Spirit unto you.” God wrote the law (Torah) on the hearts of the believers. Three thousand souls were saved.
Feast of Trumpets Rosh Hashanah Tishri 1	The Jewish New Year begins the high Holy Days in the Jewish month of Tishri (corresponding to September or October.) A celebration of the spiritual birthday of the world or creation. Blowing of the trumpets and coronation of the King.	Possibly depicts the rapture of the church, a regathering of believers at the sound of the trumpet (1 Thess. 4:16-18; Rev. 19) and judgment of the wicked, or possibility is that this is the day of the second coming. Jesus will be King of earth.
Day of Atonement Yom Kippur Tishri 10	The holiest day in the Jewish year is spent in fasting, prayer, and confession. This was one gracious day a year given by God that each individual could receive forgiveness. The high priest entered the holy of holies to make atonement for the nation by sacrificing animals including two goats.	Christ our Messiah was displayed as our sacrifice. We can use this as a time of self-searching, repentance, and recommitment to God. The goats represent Jews and Gentiles. Possibly points to the day of the Messiah’s physically returning to earth. Or it is possible this is the Judgment Day.
Feast of Tabernacles Sukkoth Tishri 15 	God told the people they should live in booths for seven days so that the generations would know that His people lived in booths when He brought them out of Egypt. Each Sukkoth, the Jews build and dwell or eat in booths or temporary dwellings for seven days. A joyful celebration!	Christ is our tabernacle or dwelling place (John 14:14). May represent the 1000-year reign of Christ on earth. Many believe Jesus was born during this Feast because He was born in the late fall in a “booth.” Or this is possibly when we tabernacle (dwell) with God in heaven.



The Biblical holidays were instituted by God (all but Hanukkah and Purim instituted by God's people) as an integral part of the divine worship system of the church (Old and New Testament). They are not a matter of salvation or approval before God. They are, as He intended, a remembrance and memorial in honor of what God has done for His people. The holidays presented in this book have a deep abiding meaning for the Christian since their completeness is found in Jesus.

The Hebrew term for *feast* or *festival* is *mo'ed*: it means set time or appointed time. Studying the holidays will help you:

- better understand the Bible.
- rediscover the Jewish roots of Christianity.
- more fully comprehend God's plan of redemption.
- more deeply understand the revelation of Jesus.
- get greater insights into God's prophetic seasons.
- get clearer and more powerful teachings through visual aids.
- discover the Biblical Church calendar.
- learn hand's-on object lessons to communicate God's love and care to your children.
- make wonderful memories that your children will cherish.

The Bible is full of symbols. A symbol is a picture of a more complex "idea" or reality. It is true that a picture is worth a thousand words. Those who take the time to study the Holy Days and the "pictures" therein can fully understand the significance of Christ and God's original system of worship.

The whole basis of our teaching in Christian academics should be based on a knowledge of not only Old Testament, but a greater understanding of culture (Bean 1995). This in no way takes away from our basic belief in Jesus. It gives us a much deeper perspective of Christianity and the words of Jesus.

THE APOSTLES KEPT THE BIBLICAL HOLIDAYS

The Apostle Paul directed the church in Corinth, which was predominately Gentile, to keep the Feast of Passover (1 Cor. 5:7,8). Roughly thirty years after the death of Jesus (when most Christians believe the celebrations had ended), the Apostle Paul was still highly motivated with Christian zeal to return to Jerusalem and to celebrate The Day of Feast of Weeks (Pentecost). Obviously, Paul valued celebrating the biblical holidays.



Paul encourages the church of Corinth to keep Passover with a right spirit—with a focus on the New Covenant.

Purge out therefore the old leaven, that ye may be a new lump, as ye are unleavened. For even Christ our Passover is sacrificed: Therefore let us keep the feasts, not with old leaven, neither with leaven of malice and wickedness; but with the unleavened bread of sincerity and truth (I Cor. 5:7-8).

FENCE RULES

The early New Testament church tried to de-Judaize the church because of a fear of legalism. The church was right to get rid of what Jesus condemned—the “*fence rules*” the rabbis added to God’s word. Jewish religious leaders added greatly to the details of the holiday requirements and to other laws. They sought to insure proper and careful observance by making certain that people did not even come close to violating any requirement. This substitution of human law for divine law (Matt. 15:9), made God’s instruction a burden rather than a rest and delight (Luke 11:46).

The Pharisees were very devoted to God’s Torah and prided themselves in denying everything impure and ungodly. They lived in total physical separation from the rest of the world. Their whole lives were spent in protecting and propagating the laws of God. But they did not stop there. In their zeal for God’s law, they started adding to it. For example, God says not to work on the Sabbath, the Rabbis added to the command forty types of labor that were to be forbidden, such as untying a knot, lighting a fire, sewing, etc. These extra laws were called *seyag* which literally means **fence**. They would build fence laws around the scriptures. This stemmed from insecurity and not having a relationship with the living God. After a time, these laws became confused with the Bible itself. They also contradicted themselves continuously (Leaver, 1996).

Matt. 15:7-9, Ye hypocrites, well did Esaias prophesy of you, saying, This people draweth nigh unto me with their mouth, and honoureth me with their lips; but their heart is far from me. But in vain they do worship me, teaching for doctrines the commandments of men.

Jesus had no problem with them obeying the scriptures. In fact, he encouraged people to do what the Pharisees said to do if it was scriptural, Matthew 5:20, *For I say unto you, That except your righteousness shall exceed the righteousness of the scribes and Pharisees, ye shall in no case enter into the kingdom of heaven.* What the Lord objected to was the *seyag*—the fence laws! The adding to the Word of God.



What Happened to the Biblical Holidays?

The holidays contain more divine information of spiritual and prophetic value than any subject of scripture. Why aren't we taught these marvelous lessons in church? The answer is found during the first through the fourth centuries.

FIRST CENTURY CHURCH

In the first century there were literally hundreds of thousands of believing Jews (Acts 2:41, 47, 4:4, 6:7, 9:31, 21:20). Scripture tells us the apostles and the early church continued to celebrate the holidays with the new realization of the symbolism of Christ. Very few Gentiles converted before Peter and Paul were sent out. When God miraculously showed the believing Jews that Jesus was the Messiah for both Jew and Gentile alike, then Gentiles from every nation began to pour into this Jewish faith. The followers of Christ, whether Jewish or Gentile, were seen as one family. Both considered themselves part of Israel. The Gentiles saw themselves as grafted *into* Israel (Romans 11), not replacing Israel. The word *Christian* was not used until A.D. 42 in Antioch (Acts 11:26). Later it was adopted to set apart Jews believing in Jesus and unbelieving Jews. Ultimately it became an identity for the entire Church.

Paul makes it clear that Gentiles who trust in Jesus become children of God, are equal partners with believing Jews in the Body of the Messiah, and are declared righteous by God without their having to adopt any further Jewish distinctives (Rom. 3:22–23, 29–30; 4:9–12; 10:12; 11:32; 1 Cor. 12:13; Eph. 2:11–22; 3:6; Col. 3:11) (Stern, 1992).

SECOND CENTURY CHURCH

By the second century the Gentiles had taken control of the church, and there started the process of removing Jewish influences referred to as de-Judaizing. There was a growing spirit of resentment of the non-believing Jews and all Jewish customs. The first seeds of anti-Semitism were sown. As the church grew, it became increasingly Hellenized (Greek) and Latinized (Roman). The Gentile-dominated Church celebrated the Lord's resurrection, but to distance Christianity from Judaism they changed the resurrection date from the Jewish calendar from the third day of *Passover*, to Sunday—this is how Easter became separated from Passover.



TWO PEOPLES, ONE CHURCH

Galatians 3:28 says, *There is neither Jew nor Greek, there is neither bond nor free, there is neither male nor female: for ye are all one in Christ Jesus.* This isolated verse has been misinterpreted to say a Jew must give up his heritage. It really explains that Jewish and Gentile believers must treat each other as equals before God, of equal worth as human beings. Notice how Paul ends the chapter. *And if ye be Christ's, then are ye Abraham's seed, and heirs according to the promise* (v. 29).

[The sentence in the verse above] contains three parallel pairs: Jew ... Gentile, slave ... freeman, male ... female. Obviously there are still observable physical, psychological and social distinctions between male and female and between slave and freeman (even today there remains in the world tens of millions of slaves), even though in union with the Messiah Yeshua they are all one, so far as their acceptability before God is concerned. The same is true of Jews and Gentiles: the distinction remains; the verse does not obliterate it (Stern 1992).

The Bible does teach differences between Jews and Gentiles and between other groups. There are different commands for men and women, husbands and wives, parents and children, slaves and masters, leaders and followers, widows and other women as well as special requirements for offices such as pastors, elders, deacons, and evangelists (1 Cor. 11:2–16, 14:34–36; Eph. 5:22–6:9; Col. 3:18–4:1; Titus 3:1–13, 5:3–16; 1 Peter 3:1–7).

Much of the Church continues to insist on this view that once a Jew is saved he is no longer a Jew. Christians can be a better witness to a Jew once they understand how a religious, non-believing Jew thinks. For example, an invitation to Sunday church or to a ham dinner for Christmas would not be the best way to win Jewish converts.

THROWING OUT THE BABY

Unfortunately, while trying to separate from the non-believing Jews the Church threw out the baby (Biblical holidays) with the bath water (un-Biblical customs)! There was no reason to stop the Holidays. These days did not bring bondage—they brought people closer to God. Jesus and Paul both celebrated the holidays. The holidays should be analyzed according to the Bible — not whether or not they are Jewish.



Christmas was outlawed in England in 1644 by an act of Parliament, for it was a lingering pagan element of the papal calendar, and they considered it disobedient to God's Word (Deut. 12:30, 31; 1 John 5:18-21; 2 Cor. 6-14-7:1). By 1659, Massachusetts had passed a law fining anybody who celebrated Christmas. Under the influence of puritanical thought, America suppressed the celebration of Christmas well into the nineteenth century.

By doing away with *all* the calendar days, the Puritans also threw out the baby (the Biblical holidays) with the bath water (pagan festivals such as Halloween, which is the ancient Samhain Festival of Death).

TODAY, GOD IS DOING A MARVELOUS THING

Richard Booker said it so well in *Celebrating the Lord's Holidays in the Church*:

But in these last days, God is doing a marvelous thing. He is breaking down the walls of... misunderstanding that have divided the Jew and Gentile *believers*. [Just as He is tearing down the walls between black and white and other discriminations.] He is sovereignty pouring out His Spirit on thousands of Jews to prepare them for the coming of the Messiah. At the same time, God is stirring in the hearts of Christians a holy love for the Jewish people and awakening them to the Jewish roots of their Christian faith. Many Christians are realizing that the origin of our faith is Jerusalem, not Athens, Rome, Geneva, Wittenberg, Aldersgate, Azusa Street, Springfield, Nashville, Tulsa, etc. As a result, Christian Churches around the world are reaching out to the Jewish people in their communities, singing songs from the Old Testament, rediscovering their Jewish roots and celebrating the Jewish Holidays as fulfilled in Jesus. It is clearly God's appointed time to reconcile Jew and Gentile, binding us together by His Spirit in the Messiah (Booker 1987).

THE BIBLE IS ONE BOOK

The Bible is not a composite of two books nor sixty-six books with conflicting concepts and teaching. It is, rather, one book recording the acts of God under two primary covenants (Old and New Testaments). Doctrinally there is no



conflict between the two. They are altogether compatible and in mutual agreement. We believe literally that “All Scripture is given by inspiration of God, and is profitable for doctrine, for reproof, for correction, for instruction in righteousness: that the man of God may be perfect, thoroughly furnished unto all good works” (2 Tim. 3:16-17) (Somerville).

The themes in the Old and New Testaments are the same: God’s holiness, righteousness and mercy; and man’s alienation and estrangement from God through disobedience. It might surprise you to know that the Jewish people do not rely on works for salvation—they know the only way to salvation is through the Messiah. The basic significance of the New Testament is uniquely a Jewish one: the fulfillment of the messianic hope. The New Testament writers, with perhaps the exception of Luke, are all Jews. The early Apostles and followers of Jesus are also Jewish. There is nothing in the New Testament that is non-Jewish or anti-Jewish. Quite the contrary, Jesus’ entire message taught that:

Only the merciful were to receive mercy, only the forgiving could expect forgiveness and that *love* would be the sign of His true disciples.

LET NO MAN JUDGE YOU

Let no man therefore judge you in meat, or in drink, or in respect of an holyday, or of the new moon, or of the sabbath days: Which are a shadow of things to come; but the body is of Christ
Col. 2:16-17.

This passage refers to God’s Holy Days as “shadows.” When Jesus came the first time He fulfilled the first three holidays. This does not mean the days are now irrelevant, unnecessary, and should not be kept. Wedding anniversaries are not irrelevant, unnecessary. They are set times to remember a special day. We don’t mistake the anniversary as the reality of marriage. The anniversary is a symbol of the marriage. It can be a special time set aside to focus on the meaning of the marriage and maybe to speak of memories over the years. The anniversary is not a substitute for the marriage.

The Holidays days are set apart special times to remember, to look ahead, and to look at our spiritual walk. The Holy Days and their observance, incorporating all five of our senses, give us a better understanding of God. Just as



God asked His people to remember the Exodus by observing Passover. Jesus, on the night He was betrayed (during Passover), asked us to remember Passover. 1 Corinthians 11:23-26 *For I received from the Lord...that He took bread and blessed it and said 'take and eat, this is my body which is broken for you. Do this in remembrance of me.'* Also the cup after supper saying *'this cup is the new covenant in My blood. This do, as often as you drink it, in remembrance of me. For as often as you eat this bread and drink this cup, you proclaim the Lord's death till He comes.'* The taking of the bread (His body) and drinking of the wine (His blood) is a special set apart time to remember just like an anniversary.

But what about this verse? *Ye observe days, and months, and times, and years. I am afraid of you, lest I have bestowed upon you labour in vain*" (Gal. 4:10-11).

Here is a classic example of faulty interpretation of scripture. This reference has nothing to do with Biblical memorial days. Paul's statement to the Galatians is concerning their returning to former pagan or heathen practices. Clearly he is not speaking of Biblical celebrations, which is borne out in the very structure of the letter itself. Notice that this was something they were reinstating which they had been practicing when they worshiped false gods (see verse nine). The Galatians had never celebrated Biblical (Jewish) holy days, because they were Gentiles (Somerville 1995).

BIBLICAL WORSHIP

There is a revival in the land! Many are turning away from man-conceived concepts of worship to Biblical patterns. The motive for celebrating the holidays should be as God originally intended; a memorial, a remembrance and honor for what He has done. We don't need to be concerned with ancient ritualism customs, but we should focus on the basic principle of the holidays' prophetic and spiritual meanings as is revealed under the New Covenant (Rom. 7:6).

Anyone can celebrate the holidays if they do it for the right reasons. *But it is good to be zealously affected always in a good thing, and not only when I am present with you* (Gal. 4:18).

The following pages are samples from the book "A Family Guide to the Biblical Holidays." Only a portion of the First Fruits chapter is included.

Early FIRSTFRUITS & Omer



Yom Habikkurim





Purpose of Early FIRSTFRUITS & OMER

There are actually two Firstfruits. The Firstfruits celebration that occurs the day following the Sabbath after Passover is considered *Early Firstfruits*. Fifty days later the *Latter Firstfruits* occurs, called the *Feast of Weeks* (Pentecost). The fifty days in between are called *The Counting of the Omer*. Occasionally you'll see both the early and the latter firstfruits listed as one feast. This chapter is a combination of *Early Firstfruits* and *Counting the Omer*. *Latter Firstfruits* (Feast of Weeks) is addressed in the next chapter.

During Early Firstfruits, the firstfruits waved before the Lord were in the natural state—an omer of barley (and wheat, grapes, olives, etc.). During Latter Firstfruits (in the next chapter) the firstfruits waved before the Lord were in the prepared state—two loaves of bread (and wine, oil, etc.).

The day of Firstfruits is also called Yom HaBikkurim or Sfirat Haomer. The word *firstfruits* means “a promise to come.” The very first of the harvest is waved before God to acknowledge the land He gave the Israelites. Early Firstfruits is celebrated on a very special day. On this day the Bible records miracles occurring over and over (the day that God seems to be drawing our attention to). No other day (except Passover) is mentioned as many times in the Bible.

The day of Firstfruits never received the status of high holy day just because the Priest had to offer the wave-sheaf. It remained an ordinary working day on which the high priest would wave the sheaf before the Lord. Therefore, some do not consider Early Firstfruits an actual feast day.

COUNTING THE OMER

God commanded His people to count from the day after the Sabbath until the day that the Torah was given. This counting demonstrated how great the desire is for the day that commemorates the most special occasion.

The offering of new barley was brought to the Temple on the second day of Passover. The omer measure is one tenth of an ephah (i.e., 2.2 liters), and therefore a relatively modest offering (see Lev. 23:9), but until the omer had been brought to the priest in the Temple, none of the new produce could be eaten.





FIRSTFRUITS & Omer in Bible Times

The Israelites were to bring a special thanks offering to the Temple. In Jewish literature the festival is frequently referred to as *Atseret*, translated as “a solemn assembly.”

In Temple times, the order of Firstfruits and Counting the Omer was as follows:

- 1.) It was to be done the morrow after the Sabbath.
- 2.) They were to reap the harvest and “then ye shall bring a sheaf of the firstfruits of your harvest unto the priest.”
- 3.) The priest would wave the sheaf before God.
- 4.) There followed the counting of seven weeks from the day it was brought.
- 5.) The law enjoined that no fruit was to be gathered from newly-planted fruit trees for the first three years, and that the firstfruits of the fourth year were to be consecrated to the Lord (Lev. 19:23-25).

Early Firstfruits was the first harvest of the spring, making it an excellent time to give the grain offering to the Lord. By this time of the year, in Israel, many fruits have ripened and are ready to eat. The owner of such fruit brought the first-picked fruit to the Temple as a special sacrifice. The sheaf (traditionally understood to be of barley, which is usually harvested by Passover) is to be “waved before the Lord,” with accompanying sacrifices, and only after this ceremony may the grain of the new year be consumed.

The farmers in Israel were required to mark the fruits and grains designated that were most progressed in their growth. After marking them, sometimes with a red yarn, the farmer would declare them to be firstfruits. The marked samplings were taken to the Temple in Jerusalem as an offering to God. Rabbinic legislation set a minimum of one-sixtieth of the harvest of each species brought.

The Counting of the Omer was a time of great anticipation. This counting is comparable to that of a slave or prisoner, who counts the days to his freedom with great excitement. When one counts to a particular event or time, it demonstrates how deeply he wants to reach that point.

Jewish literature maintains that when the Israelites were told of their forthcoming liberation from Egypt, they were also informed that fifty days thereafter they would receive the Torah. The Israelites were so excited that they began counting the days till then.





Jewish Customs of FIRSTFRUITS & Omer Today

Modern observance of Early Firstfruits excludes the elements of the ceremony which are dependent on the existence of the Jerusalem Temple.

The rabbis feel that the practice of counting seven weeks should still be performed even in generations which cannot wave the sheaf. Therefore, traditional Jews still continue to count the omer as their ancestors offered up the omer in the Temple area.

Today, most Jews start counting from the second day of Passover, the day after Unleavened Bread. (Jesus was slain on the fourteenth of Nisan and arose the seventeenth.) This would be the day after the weekly Sabbath during the week of Passover.

The procedure for counting is as follows:

While standing each evening, the following blessing is recited:

“Blessed are You, Lord our God, Ruler of the universe who has sanctified us with His commandments, commanding us to count the omer.”

This is followed by a count for the day. The counting was always started at day one and continued until day fifty as follows:

Today is the first day of the Omer.
Today is the second day of the Omer.
Today is the third day of the Omer.
Today is the fourth day of the Omer.
Today is the fifth day of the Omer.
Today is the sixth day of the Omer.
Today is the seventh day. That is one week of the Omer.
etc.

Some recite Psalm 67 because it consists of seven verses and forty-nine words (in Hebrew).

This forty-nine-day period is considered semi-mourning because of several tragedies associated with this time of the year. Therefore, orthodox Jews do not shave, cut their hair, or perform weddings during this period.



Messianic Significance of Firstfruits & Omer

As strange as it may seem, the Israelites who performed this ritual year after year were never told what the wave sheaf symbolized. The wave sheaf is clearly symbolic of Christ, the Firstfruits. He is the Firstfruits of the harvest, the coming harvest of the souls of those who have fallen asleep in Christ on that wonderful resurrection day of the Lord.

Firstfruits speaks of resurrection. When the Pharisees asked Jesus for a sign (a miracle or wonder), Jesus rebuked them and then said the only sign would be three days and three nights in the center of the earth as Jonah was in the belly of the whale. Jesus died on Passover. Death could not hold our Messiah. On the third day He arose triumphantly from the grave!

Then certain of the scribes and of the Pharisees answered, saying, Master, we would see a sign from thee. But he answered and said unto them, An evil and adulterous generation seeketh after a sign; and there shall no sign be given to it, but the sign of the prophet Jonas: For as Jonas was three days and three nights in the whale's belly; so shall the Son of man be three days and three nights in the heart of the earth (Matthew 12: 38-41).

This sheaf of Firstfruits was typical of our Lord Jesus, who has risen from the dead as the *firstfruits of those that slept* (1 Cor. 15:20). That *branch of the Lord* (Isa. 4:2) was then presented to Him, in virtue of the sacrifice of Himself, the Lamb of God, and it was accepted for us. It is very observable that our Lord Jesus rose from the dead on the very day the Firstfruits were offered, to show that He was the substance of this shadow. We are taught by this law to *honour the Lord with our substance, and with the firstfruits of all our increase* (Prov. 3:9). They were not to eat of their new corn until God's part was offered to Him out of it (v. 14), for we must always begin with God, begin our lives with Him, begin every day with Him, begin every meal with Him, begin every affair and business with Him; *seek first the kingdom of God* (Henry 1991).

Paul wrote *"But now is Christ risen from the dead, and become the firstfruits of them that slept"* (1 Cor. 15:20). Our Messiah's resurrection is the firstfruits, or promise, of the believer's resurrection.

Verily, verily, I say unto you, Except a corn of wheat fall into the ground and die, it abideth alone: but if it die, it bringeth forth much fruit (John 12:24).





The Hebrew root of *bikkurim* (firstfruits) is the same as that of *bekhor* (firstborn). The firstfruits are dedicated to God because the first of everything, including the firstborn of man and beast, belong to God. Jesus was the firstborn. *And knew her not till she had brought forth her firstborn son: and he called his name JESUS [Y'shua]* (Matt. 1:25). *For whom he did foreknow, he also did predestinate to be conformed to the image of his Son, that he might be the firstborn among many brethren* (Romans 8:29).

The Bible tells us that God, the great husbandman, eagerly awaits the precious fruit of the earth and has long patience in waiting for it (James 5:7). Unfortunately, while God is focusing on fruit, we are often focusing on other things. Sometimes we even focus on gifts which God has given, instead of the fruit we are to produce as a result of God's gifts in our lives (Wagner 1995).

THE MORROW AFTER THE SABBATH

There are two different views¹ about when Early Firstfruits occurs. This difference comes from different interpretations of Leviticus 23:11. *And he shall wave the sheaf before the LORD, to be accepted for you: "on the morrow after the sabbath the priest shall wave it."*

There are two kinds of sabbaths in the Bible. The seventh day of the week is the weekly Sabbath and the annual Holy Days are also considered Sabbaths. So the "morrow after the sabbath" would either mean 1.) the day after the weekly Sabbath after Passover or 2.) the day after the second day of Passover, which is a Holy Day. If you plan on celebrating the holidays you'll need to understand the two views, because which view you hold to will affect the date of Early Firstfruits, Counting the Omer and Latter Firstfruits (because it is fifty days from Early Firstfruits).

The Messianic and Sadducean method places the Early Firstfruits festival and the day of the start of the counting of the Omer as the day after the seventh-day (Saturday) Sabbath during Passover. The Rabbinic method places Firstfruits as the second day of Passover (i.e., the day after the sabbath of Passover instead of *during*).

Y'shua is the Firstfruits of those who rise from the dead. *But now is Christ risen from the dead, and become the firstfruits of them that slept. For since by man came death, by man came also the resurrection of the dead* (1 Cor. 15:20-21).



PUTTING ON THE NEW MAN

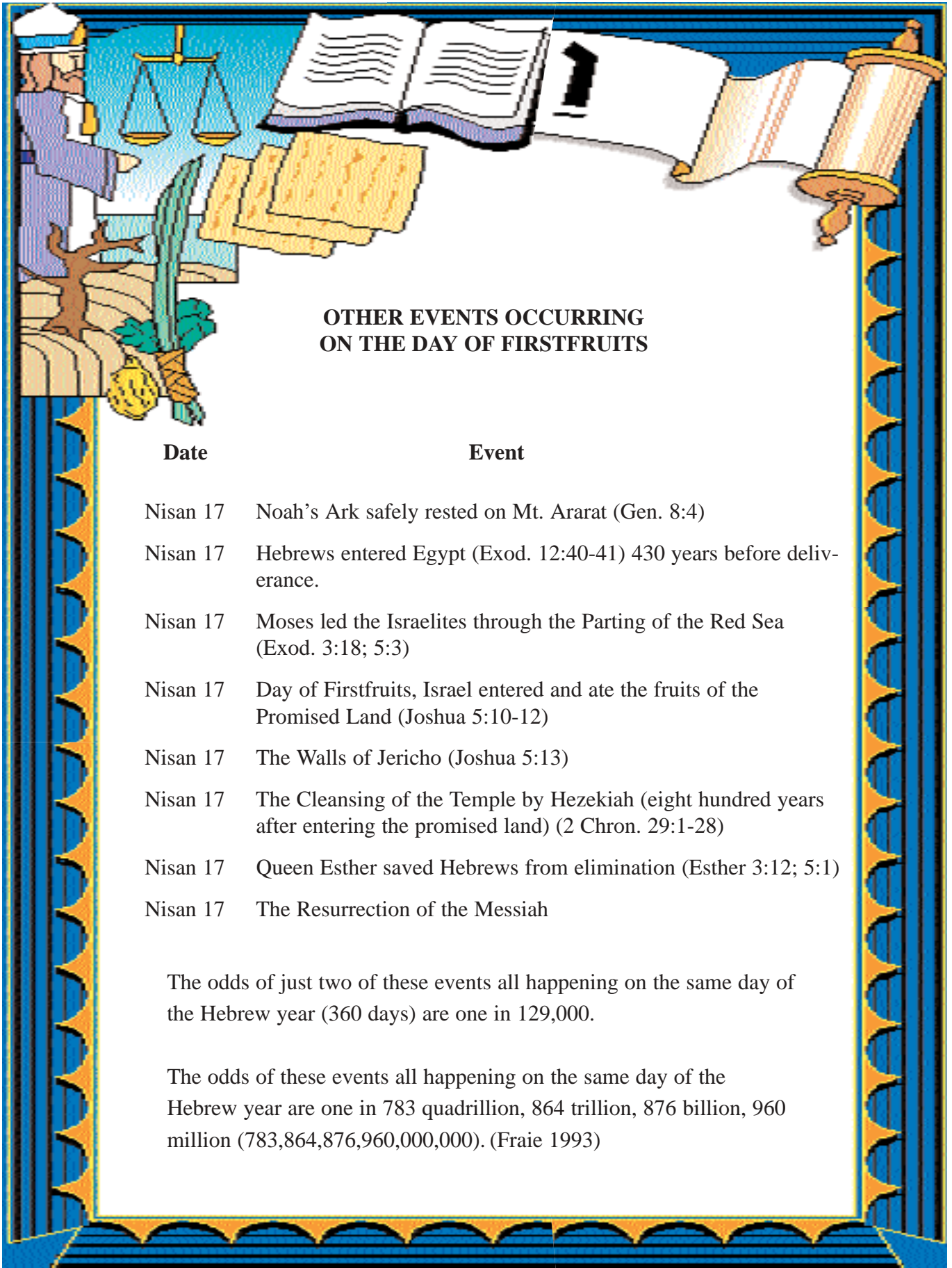
Firstfruits is also a visual lesson instructing us how God wants us to change through Christ (as Unleavened Bread). When one accepts Jesus as the Passover Lamb who died for our sins, our position before God changes to sinless (without yeast) because Jesus took on our sins. We are righteous through Jesus. Unleavened Bread teaches us to put off the old man and Firstfruits teaches us to put on the new man. *And that ye put on the new man, which after God is created in righteousness and true holiness* (Eph. 4:24). We put on the new man by allowing the Holy Spirit to live a life of Christ through us. As Paul said in Galatians 2:20, *“I am crucified with Christ: nevertheless I live; yet not I, but Christ liveth in me: and the life which I now live in the flesh I live by the faith of the Son of God, who loved me, and gave himself for me.”*

Be ye therefore followers of God, as dear children; And walk in love, as Christ also hath loved us, and hath given himself for us an offering and a sacrifice to God for a sweetsmelling savour (Eph. 5:1-2).

AWAITING THE COMFORTER

Do you think the disciples were expecting the Holy Spirit fifty days after the resurrection—at Feast of Weeks (Pentecost)? Due to the significance of the Jewish holidays, I believe at least some of the disciples guessed the Holy Spirit would come at the end of the fifty days. Jesus had told them the Comforter was coming. *Nevertheless I tell you the truth; It is expedient for you that I go away: for if I go not away, the Comforter will not come unto you; but if I depart, I will send him unto you* (John 16:7). They knew the Holy Spirit was coming and they were in the process of counting the fifty days until the Feast of Weeks. Jesus told His disciples *“...ye shall be baptized with the Holy Ghost not many days hence.”* (Acts 1:5) They must have at least wondered if maybe it was going to happen on the fiftieth day? On Pentecost they were gathered together: *And when the day of Pentecost was fully come, they were all with one accord in one place* (Acts 2:1).

We can only guess at the anticipation they had awaiting the promised comforter. Some Christians today have the same anticipation for Christ’s second coming. Think about the anticipation. Do you know what is it like to wait for a guest who has not told you exactly when he or she will arrive? It is diffi-



**OTHER EVENTS OCCURRING
ON THE DAY OF FIRSTFRUITS**

Date	Event
Nisan 17	Noah's Ark safely rested on Mt. Ararat (Gen. 8:4)
Nisan 17	Hebrews entered Egypt (Exod. 12:40-41) 430 years before deliverance.
Nisan 17	Moses led the Israelites through the Parting of the Red Sea (Exod. 3:18; 5:3)
Nisan 17	Day of Firstfruits, Israel entered and ate the fruits of the Promised Land (Joshua 5:10-12)
Nisan 17	The Walls of Jericho (Joshua 5:13)
Nisan 17	The Cleansing of the Temple by Hezekiah (eight hundred years after entering the promised land) (2 Chron. 29:1-28)
Nisan 17	Queen Esther saved Hebrews from elimination (Esther 3:12; 5:1)
Nisan 17	The Resurrection of the Messiah

The odds of just two of these events all happening on the same day of the Hebrew year (360 days) are one in 129,000.

The odds of these events all happening on the same day of the Hebrew year are one in 783 quadrillion, 864 trillion, 876 billion, 960 million (783,864,876,960,000,000). (Fraie 1993)



THE WEEK OF AND BEFORE THE CRUCIFIXION

	DAY	6:00 P.M. - 6:00 P.M.	Events of Jesus	Matthew	Mark	Luke	John
Sixth Day Before Passover	Nisan 9	Thursday/ Friday	Approaches Jerusalem from Jericho. Spends Thursday night at Zacchaeus's home. Sends two disciples ahead for animals. Entry to Bethpage. Cleanses the Temple.	21:1-17	---	19:1-28	12:1
Weekly Sabbath before Passover	Nisan 10	Friday/ Saturday	Sabbath at Bethany. First of three suppers, two anointings.	---	---	---	12:2-11
Fourth Day Before Passover	Nisan 11	Saturday/ Sunday	Triumphal entrance into Jerusalem. Weeps over city. Enters Temple. Returns to Bethany.	---	1:8-10 11:1-7, 11	9:29-35 19:36-40 41 44	12:12-19
Third Day Before Passover	Nisan 12	Sunday/ Monday	Returns to Jerusalem. Curses the fig tree. At Temple for further cleansing and teaching.	21:18-22	11:12-19	19:45-48	12:20-50
Second Day Before Passover	Nisan 13	Monday/ Tuesday	Returns to Jerusalem. Parables and questions. First great prophecy in the Temple. Second great prophecy on Mt. of Olives. Returns to Bethany. Second supper with Simon. Second Anointing.	21:23-28 23:39 24:1-51 25:1-46	11:20-33 12:1-44 13:1-37 14:1-9	20:1-9 21:38	---
Passover Day of Crucifixion	Nisan 14	Tuesday/ Wednesday	Preparation of last supper. Passover supper. Gethsemane, led away to be crucified. Crucified at 9:00 A.M., died at 3:00 P.M., buried at 6:00 P.M.	26 27	14 15	22 23	13 19
Sabbath of Unleavened Bread	Nisan 15	Wednesday/ Thursday	First night, first day in the tomb.	---	---	---	---
Second Day of Unleavened Bread	Nisan 16	Thursday/ Friday	Second night, second day in the tomb.	---	---	---	---
Weekly Sabbath Firstfruits	Nisan 17	Friday/ Saturday	Third night, third day in the tomb. Arose at the end of the Sabbath at sunset.	28:1-10	16:1-18	24:1-49	20:1-23

From the Companion Bible, King James Version, 1990, Kregel Publications, ISBN 08254-2288-4. The Authorized Version of 1611 with structures and critical, explanatory and suggested notes with 198 appendixes.



SUGGESTIONS FOR CELEBRATING FIRSTFRUITS

Read the section titled “Messianic Significance of Firstfruits.”

Read the resurrection story below or a storybook.

When the even was come, there came a rich man of Arimathaea, named Joseph, who also himself was Jesus' disciple: He went to Pilate, and begged the body of Jesus. Then Pilate commanded the body to be delivered. And when Joseph had taken the body, he wrapped it in a clean linen cloth, And laid it in his own new tomb, which he had hewn out in the rock: and he rolled a great stone to the door of the sepulchre, and departed. And there was Mary Magdalene, and the other Mary, sitting over against the sepulchre. Now the next day, that followed the day of the preparation, the chief priests and Pharisees came together unto Pilate, Saying, Sir, we remember that that deceiver said, while he was yet alive, After three days I will rise again. Command therefore that the sepulchre be made sure until the third day, lest his disciples come by night, and steal him away, and say unto the people, He is risen from the dead: so the last error shall be worse than the first. Pilate said unto them, Ye have a watch: go your way, make it as sure as ye can. So they went, and made the sepulchre sure, sealing the stone, and setting a watch. In the end of the sabbath, as it began to dawn toward the first day of the week, came Mary Magdalene and the other Mary to see the sepulchre. And, behold, there was a great earthquake: for the angel of the Lord descended from heaven, and came and rolled back the stone from the door, and sat upon it. His countenance was like lightning, and his raiment white as snow: And for fear of him the keepers did shake, and became as dead men. And the angel answered and said unto the women, Fear not ye: for I know that ye seek Jesus, which was crucified. He is not here: for he is risen, as he said. Come, see the place where the Lord lay. And go quickly, and tell his disciples that he is risen from the dead; and, behold, he goeth before you into Galilee; there shall ye see him: lo, I have told you. And they departed quickly from the sepulchre with fear and great joy; and did run to bring his disciples word. And as they went to tell his disciples, behold, Jesus met them, saying, All hail. And they came and held him by the feet, and worshiped him. Then said Jesus unto them, Be not afraid: go tell my brethren that they go into Galilee, and there shall they see me. Now when they were going, behold, some of the watch came into the city, and shewed unto the chief priests all the things that were done. And when they were assembled with the elders, and had taken counsel, they gave large money unto the soldiers, Saying, Say ye, His disciples came by night, and stole him away while we slept. And if





On the Six O'Clock News

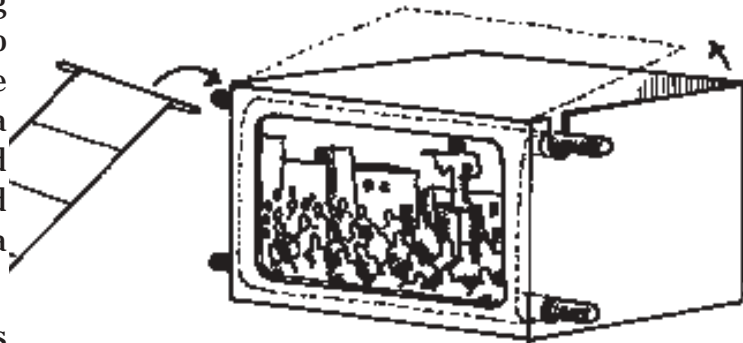
To be ready for your production on Latter Firstfruits, you may need to begin this activity during Omer time. Using this idea from *Together at Home* by Dean and Grace Merrill, pretend you are the newscaster and write a script similar to a newspaper story. A hint for condensing your news story is to include only the most important and factual information you have. Set a sixty-second time limit and try to have the gifted talker in your family try to hit it.

If you want to have all the time you want, pretend you have a mini-documentary and talk slower. Be creative and add sound effects! (See “Family Drama” in Passover section.) Interview more disciples and visitors, maybe even a Gentile.

If you have or can borrow a video camera—use it! If not, use your regular camera and place the photos in a scrapbook you could make about the holidays.

TV CONSTRUCTION

Use a discarded window shade or a disposable white plastic tablecloth. Find a sturdy box and cut a hole for the picture tube area in front. The box should be a size where half of a broomstick handle will stick out some on each side. It could also be smaller, as a portable TV. You can buy a dowel stick if no broom or mop handle is available. Cut your shade or tablecloth to fit inside the box and fill your “viewing screen.” Mark lines to show where picture “frames” end. Either a shade or a tablecloth would have to be cut apart and joined with tape to make a continuous long strip.



Create as many scenes as you want to go along with the newscast. Remember you will need more if you're making a documentary. As a suggestion, try to have one scene for every 5 to 10 seconds of news, or every 20 to 30 seconds of documentary.

Markers or acrylic paints work best. Use masking tape to anchor top end of your picture roll to a handle. Insert handle in bottom holes, then tape. You can remove tape from handle to change rolls.

NOTE

Some families may like these media ideas so well they could adapt them for other holidays. They would work well for Passover or Purim where the feast itself is based on a specific historic event. Home schoolers may want to use this idea to show a historical event.



FIRSTFRUITS Recipes

HONEY-BARLEY MUFFINS

- 1 cup barley flour
- 3/4 cup unbleached all-purpose flour
- 1/4 cup wheat germ or bran
- 1 T baking powder
- 1/2 tsp. salt
- 2 egg whites or 1 whole egg
- 1/4 cup oil
- 1/2 cup milk
- 1/2 cup honey

Mix all dry ingredients together and all wet ingredients together. Now put the two together and stir just until mixed. Pour into cupcake papers in muffin tin or grease the muffin tin. Bake in preheated 375° oven for 20 minutes.

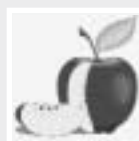
NOTE: For extra special touch, put a teaspoon of all-fruit jam or apple jelly in the center of each muffin before baking.

During Unleavened Bread:

Omit baking powder, increase to 3 egg whites, beat them until stiff and fold gently into batter last. Fill cups (11) nearly full. They won't rise much. Bake at 350° for about 25 minutes.

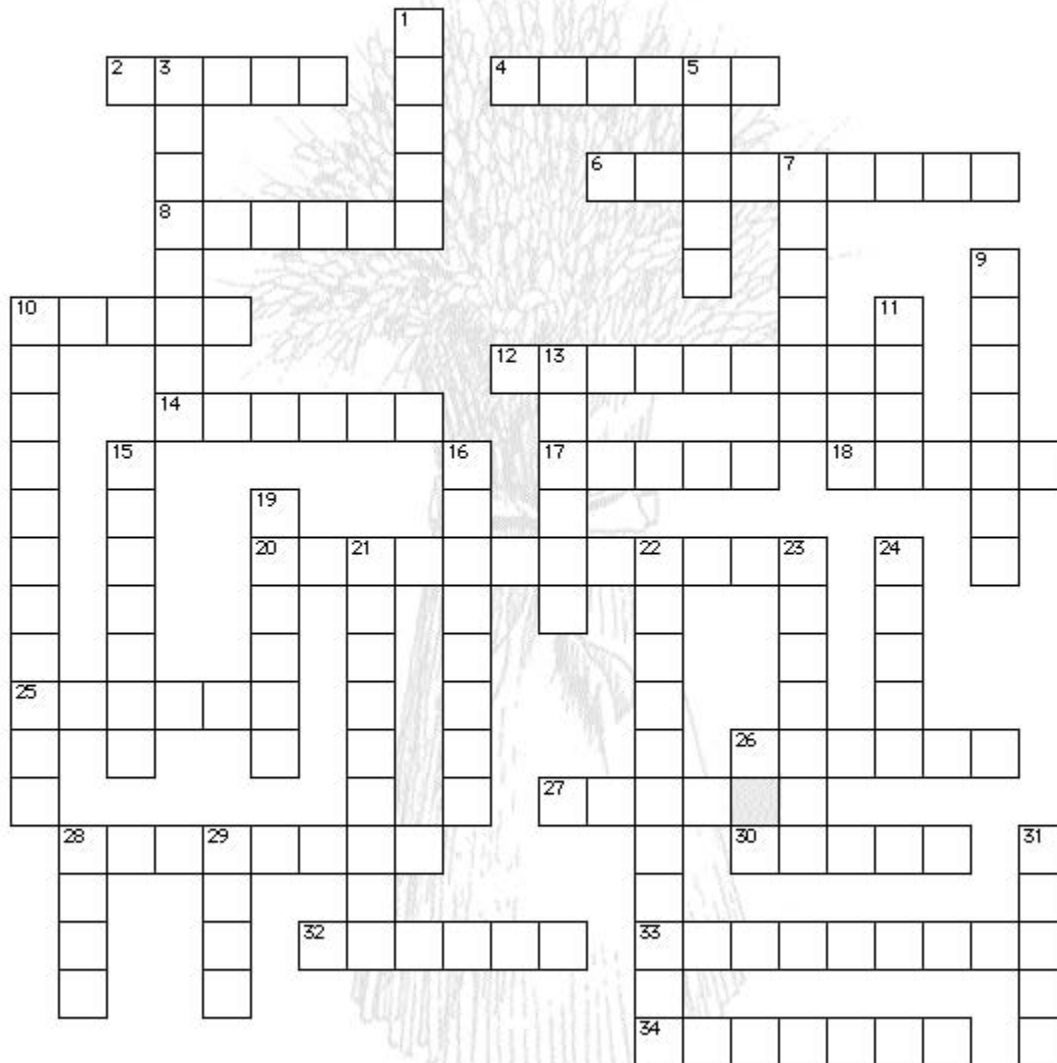
BARLEY VEGETABLE STEW

- 1/2 cup hulled barley (if you use pearled barley, see Note below)
- 4 cups water (or 2 to 2 1/2 cups if using prepared, pearled barley)
- 1/2 cup pizza/pasta sauce
- 1/4 cup onion, chopped, or 1 T dry flakes)
- 1/4 to 1/2 T garlic powder
- 2 T chicken-flavored powder or 2 bouillon cubes
- 1/2 T salt or to taste
- 2 carrots, diced
- 1 potato, diced
- 1 cup green beans or peas
- 1/2 cup to 1 cup bonded chicken pieces, optional





Crossword Puzzle



Across

- 2. First five
- 4. Grain used for cereals
- 6. Oldest heir
- 8. Large departure
- 10. Jonathan's best friend
- 12. The city
- 14. Clusters of edible berries
- 17. A tenth part
- 18. Edible plant product
- 20. Back to life
- 25. Important food, source of oil
- 26. An old language
- 27. Highness
- 28. To name or list one by one

- 30. A sacred song
- 32. Celebrations
- 33. Book of many edicts
- 34. Holy day

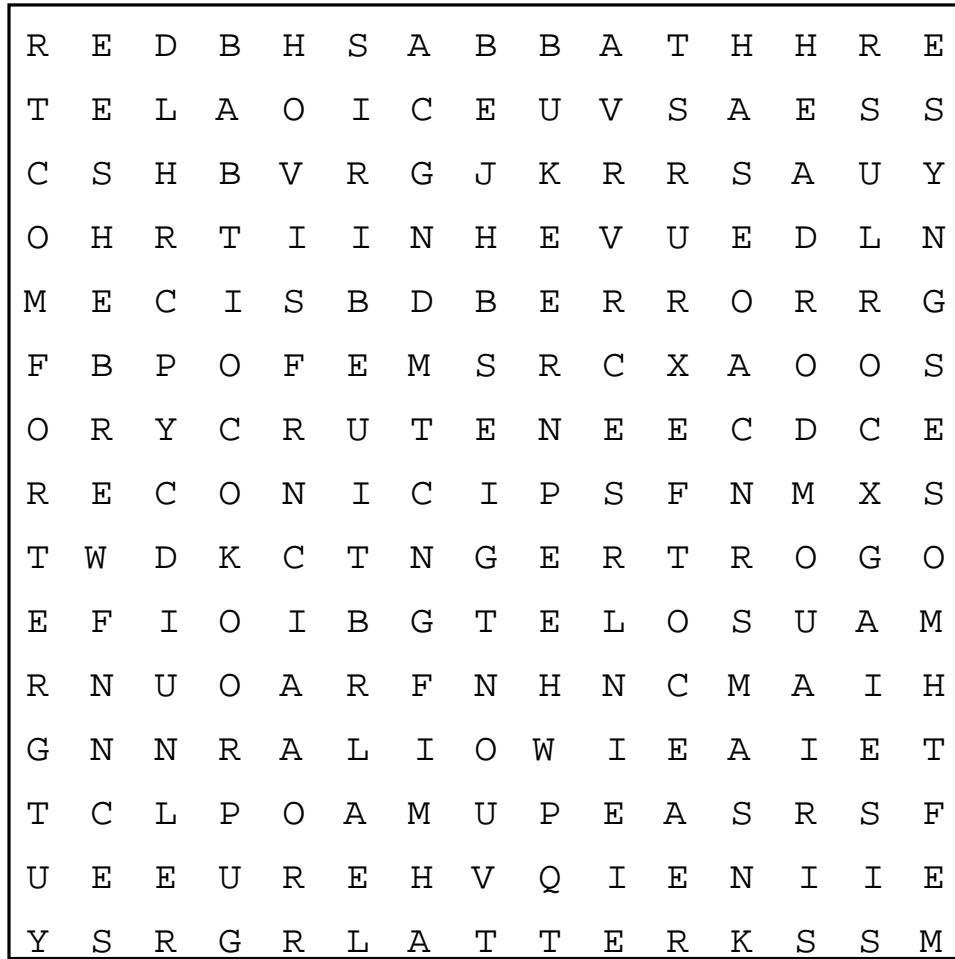
Down

- 1. More than one week
- 3. Contribution
- 5. Not late
- 7. Solomon built one
- 9. A declaration of commitment
- 10. Book in the Bible
- 11. You can count up to fifty of them
- 13. Queen
- 15. The origin

- 16. Unexplainable events
- 19. Responsible for Temple
- 21. Essence
- 22. Sanctuaries
- 23. Biblical book full of enumerations
- 24. A fine, powdery meal from a grain
- 28 Tall annual cereal grass bearing kernels
- 29 One of only eight survivors
- 31 Miriam's brother



Word Search



- | | | |
|-------------|-----------|--------------|
| BARLEY | GENESIS | OLIVES |
| BIBLE | GOD | OMER |
| BORN | GRAIN | PRIEST |
| COMFORTER | GRAPES | PROMISE |
| CORINTHIANS | HARVEST | PSALM |
| CORN | HEBREW | RESURRECTION |
| COUNT | HIGH | SABBATH |
| DAVID | INCREASE | SHEAF |
| DEUTERONOMY | JERUSALEM | SPRING |
| EARLY | KING | SUBSTANCE |
| ESTHER | LATTER | TABERNACLES |
| EXODUS | LEVITICUS | TEMPLE |
| FEASTS | MIRACLE | TITHE |
| FIRST | MOSES | TORAH |
| FIRSTBORN | NOAH | WEEK |
| FLOUR | NUMBERS | WEEKS |
| FRUIT | OFFERING | |