

## Holy Appointments

A couple of dozen mitzvot ago, I don't think we would have been ready to discuss Yahshua's assessment of the church-age validity of the Law of Moses. But perhaps we're far enough along now to perceive what He meant. **"Don't misunderstand why I have come. I did not come to abolish the law of Moses or the writings of the prophets. No, I came to fulfill them...."** As long as we're of the mindset that the Law of Moses consists merely of rules and rituals, this statement makes no sense at all. How does one fulfill "Don't make idols" or "Honor your father and your mother?" You can *do* them, of course, but to fulfill them requires that the mitzvot have a collective sense of purpose, an overarching principle centered in the One doing the fulfillment. Besides, Yahshua didn't actually *perform* the letter of the whole Law. For example, He never owned a vineyard or field, so He never left any grapes or sheaves for the poor to collect. He never married (modern fiction notwithstanding), so biologically speaking, He never kept the law that said to "be fruitful and multiply." Not being of the tribe of Levi, He never performed any of the Temple rites mandated for the priests in the Law. In short, for Yahshua to have come to "fulfill" the Law of Moses, the Law must point to Him in its symbols and practices. And as we have seen, it does.

That is why He insisted that the Law was not being abrogated by His coming. **"I assure you, until heaven and earth disappear, even the smallest detail of God's law will remain until its purpose is achieved."** *Until* its purpose is achieved? This indicates that there will indeed come a time when the Law is put behind us, and He has even told us when that would be: when "heaven and earth disappear." This isn't a euphemism for "never," (like saying "when hell freezes over") but is, rather, a matter-of-fact statement of what Yahweh has said He will do after the close of the Millennial Kingdom—a new heaven and new earth will be created, in which there will be no Temple and *no Law*. **"So if you break the smallest commandment and teach others to do the same, you will be the least in the Kingdom of Heaven. But anyone who obeys God's laws and teaches them will be great in the Kingdom of Heaven...."** I for one take this very seriously. Most Christians have no idea what the commandments are. (And the Jews, who do, have no idea what they *mean*.) How can we avoid leading others astray if we don't know the Way ourselves? I undertook this study so that we all (starting with myself) might gain an appreciation and understanding of what's here for us.

So the Law is here for the duration. There's a problem, however—a fatal flaw—with even the most skillful observance of the outward letter of the Law: it's

impossible to perform it well enough to get you into the Kingdom: **“But I warn you—unless you obey God better than the teachers of religious law and the Pharisees do, you can’t enter the Kingdom of Heaven at all!”** (Matthew 5:17-20 NLT) Contrary to the popular stereotype, the Pharisees of Yahshua’s day weren’t considered evil by their contemporaries—wicked men bent on twisting the Law to their own advantage. They were seen as pious, sober, and totally committed to the scrupulous observance of the Law—religious overachievers. Because of their strict standards of behavior, becoming a Pharisee was not something one did on a whim. In fact, the standards were so high, there were never more than 6,000 Pharisees in Israel at any one time. But their dedication earned them the admiration and respect of the ordinary populace, and it brought them far more political clout than their numbers would suggest. They were meticulous to a fault about keeping the details of the Law. They knew it backward and forward, and as far as the casual observer could tell, they were actually succeeding in keeping it. Yahshua knew better, seeing the condition of their hearts. Something other—something greater—than a nearly perfect outward observance of the rules would be required of those who wished to enter the Kingdom of Heaven. The Law would have to be fulfilled in Yahshua Himself—in His life, His sacrificial death, His resurrection, His authority as King of Kings, and His very deity. Yahshua was not impressed with the scrupulousness of the Pharisees because He knew that for all their ostensible devotion, they had missed the entire point: that the Law was a picture of God’s Messiah.

Because He *was* the Messiah, Yahshua’s recorded handling of the Law can teach us a lot about what God actually wanted to convey. **“Jesus was walking through some grainfields on the Sabbath. His disciples were hungry, so they began breaking off heads of wheat and eating the grain.”** As you’ll recall, this was perfectly legal according to the plain reading of the Torah (see #41-50). **“Some Pharisees saw them do it and protested, “Your disciples shouldn’t be doing that! It’s against the law to work by harvesting grain on the Sabbath.”** Wrong. According to Deuteronomy 23:25, if you don’t use a sickle, you’re not “harvesting.” But Yahshua didn’t quibble over fine points of the Law with them. He (as usual) cut straight to the heart of the matter—that the Sabbath was made for man’s benefit, not the other way around, and that the ultimate benefit was to be the rest from our labors that only He could provide. **“But Jesus said to them, “Haven’t you ever read in the Scriptures what King David did when he and his companions were hungry? He went into the house of God, and they ate the special bread reserved for the priests alone. That was breaking the law, too. And haven’t you ever read in the law of Moses that the priests on duty in the Temple may work on the Sabbath? I tell you, there is one here who is even greater than the Temple! But you would not have condemned those who aren’t guilty if you knew the meaning of this Scripture: ‘I want you to be merciful; I don’t want your sacrifices.’ For I, the Son of Man, am**

**master even of the Sabbath...."** Clearly, there was more (and less) to the Sabbath Law than what the scribes and Pharisees had made of it.

The admonition about being merciful apparently went right over their heads, for next we read: **"Then he went over to the synagogue, where he noticed a man with a deformed hand. The Pharisees asked Jesus, 'Is it legal to work by healing on the Sabbath day?' (They were, of course, hoping he would say yes, so they could bring charges against him.) And he answered, 'If you had one sheep, and it fell into a well on the Sabbath, wouldn't you get to work and pull it out? Of course you would. And how much more valuable is a person than a sheep! Yes, it is right to do good on the Sabbath.'** Then he said to the man, **'Reach out your hand.'** The man reached out his hand, and it became normal, just like the other one. Then the Pharisees called a meeting and discussed plans for killing Jesus." (Matthew 12:1-13 NLT) I've never quite comprehended the Pharisees' reaction. Simply suggesting that a man reach out his hand is not "work." Did Yahshua heal the man, or did He not? Healing of this nature (i.e., miraculous, not medical) is obviously not within man's ability. It is the work of God—the same God who instituted the Sabbath. So the Pharisees had a terrible problem here. If they accused Yahshua of healing the man on the Sabbath, they would also be admitting that He was exercising the power of Yahweh. By His act of mercy, Yahshua had forced the Pharisees to make a choice: commit intellectual suicide by denying the miracle they had just witnessed with their own eyes, or accept the premise that He was operating in the power and authority of Yahweh. They chose poorly.

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The Apostle Paul had been trained as a Pharisee. He knew what it was to outwardly keep the Law (to all appearances) through sheer determination and force of will. He knew, in point of fact, that it was impossible. As he addresses the Colossian believers, he begins as one might expect a Pharisee to begin—talking about obedience. **"And now, just as you accepted Christ Jesus as your Lord, you must continue to live in obedience to him."** Spoken like a true Pharisee, but he's not done. **"Let your roots grow down into him and draw up nourishment from him, so you will grow in faith, strong and vigorous in the truth you were taught. Let your lives overflow with thanksgiving for all he has done...."** This "obedience" of which he speaks bears little resemblance to the rigid rule-keeping of his former life. Now it consists of "growing in faith" and "overflowing with thanksgiving," two very different concepts from standard Jewish religious thought.

The legalistic regimen that he used to follow with such rabid devotion is now described as "high-sounding nonsense," something to be avoided at all costs.

**“Don’t let anyone lead you astray with empty philosophy and high-sounding nonsense that come from human thinking and from the evil powers of this world, and not from Christ. For in Christ the fullness of God lives in a human body, and you are complete through your union with Christ. He is the Lord over every ruler and authority in the universe.”**

(Colossians 2:6-10 NLT) The Law, he’s saying, cannot make you complete. Only your “union with Christ” can do that, and then only because He is actually Immanuel, God with us.

**“So don’t let anyone condemn you for what you eat or drink, or for not celebrating certain holy days or new-moon ceremonies or Sabbaths. For these rules were only shadows of the real thing, Christ himself.”** As we have seen, Yahshua Himself said that He came to fulfill the Law. The Reality had finally come into view, making the shadow, if not irrelevant, a mere memorial of what God had already accomplished. **“Don’t let anyone condemn you by insisting on self-denial. And don’t let anyone say you must worship angels, even though they say they have had visions about this. These people claim to be so humble, but their sinful minds have made them proud. But they are not connected to Christ, the head of the body. For we are joined together in his body by his strong sinews, and we grow only as we get our nourishment and strength from God....”** In a nutshell, Paul is warning us about the deceit of religious observance. Monastic self-denial will get you nowhere, he says, and the worship of anything or anyone except Yahweh/Yahshua is destructive, no matter how sincere or pious the devotees seem to be. The Jews had a thing for angels. Catholics venerate their saints and Popes, and they go nuts over anything that looks like Mary. Protestants all too often see godlike qualities in their pastors and politicians. We’re all tarred with the same brush here. We need to disassociate ourselves from anything that is not “connected to Christ.”

Paul ties it all together: **“You have died with Christ, and he has set you free from the evil powers of this world....”** My dad passed away in 1994. Since that time he hasn’t filed a single tax return. The government doesn’t seem to care, however, because dead people aren’t required to do anything; they are “free” from the law. We believers have two natures—the fallen nature we were born with, and the new spiritual nature that was born within us when we aligned ourselves with Yahshua. Positionally, though, our old nature is dead. It died when Christ took our sins to the cross with Him. And if it’s dead, there’s no further reason for it to observe the Law, is there?

But what about our new nature, the one that’s alive? Is *that* required to keep the Law? Yes, it is. But the requirements of the Law have already been met—fulfilled in Yahshua. All of the tax returns (to return to my metaphor) have already been filed. There’s nothing left to do. Yahshua satisfied the requirements of the Law for us—all of them. **“So why do you keep on following rules of the world, such as, ‘Don’t handle, don’t eat, don’t touch.’ Such rules are mere human teaching about**

things that are gone as soon as we use them. These rules may seem wise because they require strong devotion, humility, and severe bodily discipline. But they have no effect when it comes to conquering a person's evil thoughts and desires." (Colossians 2:16-23 NLT) Paul had been a Pharisee. He knew all about devotion, humility, and discipline. These are all good things as far as they go, but when it comes to overcoming sin they're as useless as a knife at a gunfight. Likewise, the rules, while being beneficial in themselves, are useless as a means of reaching God. They are but a shadow. Yahshua is the Reality who casts that shadow. But speaking of shadows, let us now return to our discussion of the 613 mitzvot.

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### TIMES AND SEASONS

(107) *The new month shall be solemnly proclaimed as holy, and the months and years shall be calculated by the Supreme Court only. "Now Yahweh spoke to Moses and Aaron in the land of Egypt, saying, 'This month (Abib/Nisan) shall be your beginning of months; it shall be the first month of the year to you.'" (Exodus 12:1-2)* Oh, good grief. Here we go again. The rabbis have not only gotten the mitzvah wrong, they have in the process usurped the authority of Yahweh and placed it in their own hands. According to Judaism 101, the authority to declare months is inferred from the use of the words "to you." Sorry, guys, it's not. The passage supporting the mitzvah indicates that the first month of the year was to be the month of Passover, now called Nisan (in March or April on the Gregorian calendar. See my *Chronology* appendix to *Future History* for a full discussion of lunar and solar calendars). Each month began at the first sliver of the new moon—Passover would fall two weeks later in the first month, near the full moon phase.

Here's how Yahweh set it up: there would be twelve lunar months in the year, adjusted to the solar calendar by adding an intercalary month now and then (it worked out to seven times every nineteen years). Within the first seven of these months (beginning in the Spring with Abib, later called Nisan) there would be seven solemn convocations, or *miqrym*, holy appointments instituted by Yahweh, beginning with Passover. These seven "Feasts of Yahweh" would prove to be prophetic of Yahweh's plan for the redemption of mankind. The Jews, as keepers of the Messianic signs, were supposed to keep these divine appointments throughout their generations.

But what did they do? First their idolatry and apostasy got them exiled to Babylon. Then, while they were there, they rearranged the calendar,

putting their new year's day in the fall, where their Babylonian captors had it. They actually assigned another of Yahweh's seven *miqrym* as their "head of the year," or *Rosh Hashanah*. The day they picked is the Feast of Trumpets, which was set up by Yahweh to be number five in the series—prophetic of the rapture of the Church. (Ironically though, *Rosh Hashanah* will mark a new "year" for the forces of Babylon, for with the rapture of the Ekklesia and the removal of the Holy Spirit that indwells us, evil will at last be given free rein in the world.) As it stands, the Jewish civil calendar has goofed up the beautiful portrayal of redemption that it was designed to symbolize—all because the rabbis never learned to take instructions from Yahweh.

- (108) *Do not travel on Shabbat outside the limits of your place of residence.* "Now it happened that some of the people went out on the seventh day to gather [manna], but they found none. And Yahweh said to Moses, 'How long do you refuse to keep My commandments and My laws? See! For Yahweh has given you the Sabbath; therefore He gives you on the sixth day bread for two days. Let every man remain in his place; let no man go out of his place on the seventh day.' So the people rested on the seventh day." (Exodus 16:27-30) This is a clear case of taking a sentence out of context. Yahweh here was telling the Israelites (again) not to go out to gather manna on the Sabbath, because He had already provided what was needed the previous day. In short, they were being told to trust Him. The universal lesson was this: just as no manna would be provided on the seventh day, salvation for mankind would be offered only temporarily—the day would come when man could no longer go out to freely gather God's bounty. (And that day, if I'm not mistaken, is rapidly approaching.)

According to the Gospel record, however, the Pharisees didn't make a big deal out of where Yahshua happened to be on the Sabbath. They didn't suggest that He had broken the Sabbath by not staying home (wherever *that* was). Instead, they were upset that he didn't take a break from healing people on the Sabbath. "One Sabbath day Jesus was in the home of a leader of the Pharisees. The people were watching him closely, because there was a man there whose arms and legs were swollen. Jesus asked the Pharisees and experts in religious law, 'Well, is it permitted in the law to heal people on the Sabbath day, or not?'" I just love this. That's precisely the same question with which they had hoped to entrap Him back in Matthew 12. This time, Yahshua beat them to the punch, putting the question to them before they could demand an explanation of Him. "When they refused to answer, Jesus touched the sick man and healed him and sent him away. Then he turned to them and asked, 'Which of you doesn't work on the Sabbath? If your son or your cow falls into a pit, don't you proceed at once to get him out?' Again they had no answer."

(Luke 14:1-6 NLT) He had responded in the affirmative when asked this question, but they couldn't answer without incriminating themselves. If they said healing on the Sabbath was permissible, they would be contradicting their own traditions. But if they said it was not, they would be denying the power of God, for Yahshua frequently manifested that power by healing people on the Sabbath.

- (109) *Sanctify Shabbat*. **“Remember the Sabbath day, to keep it holy. Six days you shall labor and do all your work, but the seventh day is the Sabbath of Yahweh your God. In it you shall do no work: you, nor your son, nor your daughter, nor your male servant, nor your female servant, nor your cattle, nor your stranger who is within your gates. For in six days Yahweh made the heavens and the earth, the sea, and all that is in them, and rested the seventh day. Therefore Yahweh blessed the Sabbath day and hallowed it.”** (Exodus 20:8-11) This is the fourth Commandment of the Decalogue. Notice first that there *is* a proper time for work—the first six days of the week, or metaphorically/prophetically, the first six millennia of man. The seventh day, however, is holy or hallowed (*qadash*, meaning set apart, made clean, consecrated, withdrawn from profane or ordinary use). As Yahshua Himself said, **“I must work the works of Him who sent Me while it is yet day; the night is coming when no one can work.”** (John 9:4) Second, Sabbath (alternately spelled *Shabbat* or *Sabbat*) comes from a verb (*sabat*) meaning to take an intermission, rest, or repose. It is thus a mirror of Yahweh's symbolic “rest” on the seventh day of creation and a prophetic hint that our work—even if it's godly or creative behavior—has no place in God's plan of redemption. Third, note that there are no exceptions to the Sabbath Law: it applies to everybody, even the servants and beasts of burden: *nobody* works for a living on this appointed day of intermission, for if they do, they will be cut off from God's people (see Exodus 31:14). The Sabbath speaks eloquently of Yahweh's provision of our salvation. It's no stretch to apply Psalm 118:24 to the ultimate Sabbath: **“This is the day that Yahweh has made. We will rejoice and be glad in it.”**

After one of the many incidents recorded in the Gospels in which the Pharisees erroneously accused Yahshua of “working” on the Sabbath, He said, **“The Sabbath was made to benefit people, and not people to benefit the Sabbath. And I, the Son of Man, am master even of the Sabbath!”** (Mark 2:27-28 NLT) There is only one way to be “master” of a sign like the Sabbath: be the *fulfillment* of that sign. But like any sign, once the destination has been reached, the sign pointing toward it becomes more or less obsolete, good only as a reminder of where you've been and how far you've come. That's why Paul could write: **“One person esteems one day above another; another esteems every day alike. Let each be fully convinced in his own mind. He who**

**observes the day, observes it to the Lord; and he who does not observe the day, to the Lord he does not observe it.” (Romans 14:5-6 NLT)**

The topic of “observation of the Sabbath” is guaranteed to precipitate an argument. Specifically, are we to gather for corporate worship on Saturday (the seventh day of the week, the day set apart as the Sabbath) or on Sunday (the day of the resurrection of Christ, a celebration of our new life in Him)? The answer is an unequivocal *yes*—by all means, congregate for worship. But *when*? Well, the Scriptures don’t actually say. The Sabbath law, you’ll recall, said nothing about gathering for worship. All it said was “remember” the day (*zakar*: to mark, to mention in remembrance, to be mindful of), to set it apart from the others, and to rest from our ordinary labors. And we should be doing all of that. But gathering for worship and study? That’s a different matter. Or at least, it can be.

For example, Yahshua taught in the synagogues on the Sabbath (e.g. Luke 4:16) and the disciples were known to gather on the first day of the week, Sunday (e.g. Acts 20:7). The Day of Pentecost, the day on which the Spirit of God fell upon the Ekklesia for the first time, fell on a Sunday—and remember, the timing of the *miqra* was according to Yahweh’s design. But nowhere are we *commanded* to meet together on one day to the exclusion of all others. I think maybe it’s sort of like our instructions about when to pray, i.e. unceasingly. Meet with your brothers and sisters for the purpose of praising God and studying His Word whenever you can. In my own life that regularly translates into Sunday morning worship services, for starters, but I also usually get together with smaller groups on Saturday mornings, Sunday nights, and Wednesdays, and I teach Bible classes on Monday nights and Tuesdays as well. At least, that’s my current schedule as I write these words. Personally, I would be ecstatic if my fellowship would hold its primary worship service on the Sabbath day instead of on Sunday: there is far more scriptural precedent for it. However, the tradition is so deeply ingrained in our culture, hardly anyone even thinks about it anymore. For my part, I *do* think about it. But moving the “Sabbath” back where it belongs would take an act of God (or should I say, *will* take an act of God). Anyway, is Yahweh upset with me because I don’t *restrict* my worship to the Sabbath? I think not.

I now make a point of being purposefully cognizant of the significance of the Sabbath, specifically taking note of the day’s importance when it rolls around. Have I always done this? No, to my shame. My traditional Christian upbringing has been both a blessing and a handicap. But today as I study and learn, I’m making a conscious effort to avoid automatically equating American-style Christian traditions with what Yahweh actually

instructed. They aren't necessarily the same thing. If I had been raised as an observant Jew, I would doubtless have a whole different set of traditions to unlearn.

- (110) *Do not work on Shabbat.* **“In it [the Sabbath] you shall do no work: you, nor your son, nor your daughter, nor your male servant, nor your female servant, nor your cattle, nor your stranger who is within your gates.”** (Exodus 20:10) As we have seen, the very word Sabbath indicates a period of repose, of rest from our labors. Yahweh wanted the Israelites to trust Him, and He began with a simple demonstration: On six days each week, He would provide manna for them to eat. Ordinarily it would spoil overnight, but on the sixth day they were to gather enough for the Sabbath as well, and He would miraculously keep it fresh. Thus every Sabbath, those who trusted Yahweh witnessed a miracle of preservation (in addition to the *usual* miracle of provision). God's sustenance here is a metaphor for our salvation. Yahweh will provide sustenance/salvation on the seventh day of the week to those who trusted Him on the first six days.

In a passage parallel to the Matthew 12 verses we saw earlier, Yahshua helps us define what, precisely, is the “work” from which we are to rest on the Sabbath. Is it *any and all* activity (the rabbinical view), or is it only what we ordinarily do to provide for ourselves? **“Jesus went into the synagogue again and noticed a man with a deformed hand. Since it was the Sabbath, Jesus' enemies watched him closely. Would he heal the man's hand on the Sabbath? If he did, they planned to condemn him. Jesus said to the man, ‘Come and stand in front of everyone.’ Then he turned to his critics and asked, ‘Is it legal to do good deeds on the Sabbath, or is it a day for doing harm? Is this a day to save life or to destroy it?’ But they wouldn't answer him. He looked around at them angrily, because he was deeply disturbed by their hard hearts. Then he said to the man, ‘Reach out your hand.’ The man reached out his hand, and it became normal again! At once the Pharisees went away and met with the supporters of Herod to discuss plans for killing Jesus.”** (Mark 3:1-6 NLT) The principle is this: It is never bad to do good. Yes, we were commanded in the Torah to refrain from doing our regular jobs on the Sabbath—from doing those tasks with which we provide for our own needs. But that's not what Yahshua was doing here. Thus by definition, our “ordinary work” (that which is restricted on the Sabbath) is not the same thing as “doing good works.” The motive is the key: our jobs are done through a spirit of self-preservation. But any “good works” we do must be done through a spirit of trust in Yahweh; if they are not, they are nothing but “filthy rags.” We cannot work *for* our salvation. But we would be ungrateful if we did not work *because of* it.

- (111) *Rest on Shabbat.* “Six days you shall do your work, and on the seventh day you shall rest, that your ox and your donkey may rest, and the son of your female servant and the stranger may be refreshed.... In plowing time and in harvest you shall rest.” (Exodus 23:12; 34:21) This of course is merely the affirmative restatement of negative Mitzvah #110. The supporting passages, however, shed some added light on God’s mindset here. First, notice that Yahweh understands that the servants and beasts of burden won’t be able to enjoy their Sabbath rest if their “master” does not observe it. This places the burden of responsibility squarely on his shoulders: those in control are held to a higher standard of obedience, whether in a household, a business, or a whole nation, for their actions and beliefs affect the lives of those beneath them in the hierarchy, for good or ill. This is why Yahshua said the religious leaders of His day would “receive the greater condemnation.”

Second, the Sabbath rest was to be observed “in plowing time and in harvest,” that is, even when things were at their busiest and “rest” seemed to be a luxury one could do without. At issue here is our trust in Yahweh’s provision. In early Israel, this mistrust might have taken the form: *We’ve gotta get this crop in before the weather turns bad, or we’ll all starve to death this winter, so let’s work through the Sabbath to get the job done.* Today we might say: *This deadline the client has saddled us with is so tight, if we don’t skip church and work all weekend on it we’ll lose the contract and go out of business.* Oh really? Who took care of you yesterday? Who can be trusted to do so tomorrow? Who brought you the client, and gave you the skills you need to serve him? If you can’t trust Yahweh with your day-to-day material needs, how can you trust Him with your eternal soul?

Before we leave the subject of Sabbath Law, let’s take a look at one more telling incident during Yahshua’s ministry. **“One Sabbath day as Jesus was teaching in a synagogue, he saw a woman who had been crippled by an evil spirit. She had been bent double for eighteen years and was unable to stand up straight. When Jesus saw her, he called her over and said, ‘Woman, you are healed of your sickness!’ Then he touched her, and instantly she could stand straight. How she praised and thanked God!”** Her response was right and proper. What did the religious bigwigs have to say? **“But the leader in charge of the synagogue was indignant that Jesus had healed her on the Sabbath day. ‘There are six days of the week for working,’ he said to the crowd. ‘Come on those days to be healed, not on the Sabbath.’ Yeah, right, like *he* was planning on coming back and healing the lady himself the following Tuesday. “But the Lord replied, ‘You hypocrite! You work on the Sabbath day! Don’t you untie your ox or your donkey from their stalls on the Sabbath and lead them out for water? Wasn’t it necessary for me, even on the Sabbath day, to free this dear woman from the bondage in**

which Satan has held her for eighteen years?’ This shamed his enemies. And all the people rejoiced at the wonderful things he did.” (Luke 13:10-17 NLT) The final word on what should have been considered “work” to be avoided on the Sabbath was illustrated here. It boils down not to *what*, but to *why*. If a deed is done for the purpose of supporting yourself financially or materially, then you should refrain from doing it on the Sabbath. But if it is done out of a spirit of love, mercy, or just plain good manners—even if it’s only feeding the family pet—then it’s not really considered work under the Sabbath Law.

Remember, nothing has been abrogated. The Instructions of God are still there for our benefit, even if they are only shadows cast by the looming form of the Messiah. We cheat ourselves if we do not pay close attention to what they symbolize. The Sabbath is one of God’s most significant symbols, not only giving us the timeline for Yahweh’s plan of redemption (seven days equaling seven thousand years—see II Peter 3:8), but also telling us that salvation—eternal life—cannot be earned by our own efforts: it must be received as a gift, a provision of unmerited favor from Yahweh’s bountiful hand. All we can do is rest in the knowledge of His grace, and thank Him for loving us.

- (112) *Celebrate the festivals [Pesach, Shavu’ot, and Sukkot]. “Three times you shall keep a feast to Me in the year: You shall keep the Feast of Unleavened Bread (you shall eat unleavened bread seven days, as I commanded you, at the time appointed in the month of Abib, for in it you came out of Egypt; none shall appear before Me empty); and the Feast of Harvest, the firstfruits of your labors which you have sown in the field; and the Feast of Ingathering at the end of the year, when you have gathered in the fruit of your labors from the field. Three times in the year all your males shall appear before the Lord Yahweh.”* (Exodus 23:14-17)

Yahweh instituted seven annual *Miqrym*, holy appointments or convocations, commonly referred to as “feasts,” during the Jewish calendar. The reason we see only three of the seven listed here is that there are three *groups of miqrym*. The first three were mandated to occur on three successive days in the spring. These were followed seven weeks later by a single *miqra*, and the final three fell within a few weeks of each other in the fall. Thus by convention and observation, the Jews tend to lump the spring feasts together as one, calling them the Feast of Unleavened Bread or Passover, and the three fall feasts are similarly grouped under the umbrella name of the last one, *Sukkot*, or Tabernacles. Yahweh attached memorial significance to a couple of the feasts, but there are definite prophetic implications to every one of the seven. I covered the subject in detail in *Future History*, so I’ll just review the highlights here.

*Pesach*, or Passover, (scheduled by Yahweh on Nisan 14, in our March or April) is memorial of the night in which the death angel killed the firstborn of every family in Egypt whose dwelling was not protected by the blood of the sacrificial lamb. It is thus prophetic of the sacrifice of the Lamb of God, Yahshua of Nazareth, which occurred on Nisan 14 in 33 AD. Everyone whose “house” is not marked by the blood of *this* sacrifice is similarly doomed.

*Chag Matzah*, or the Feast of Unleavened Bread, (on the very next day, Nisan 15) is memorial of the Israelites’ hasty flight from Egypt in the wake of the death of the Egyptian firstborn—a move so sudden they didn’t even have time to let the bread in their kneading bowls rise. Leaven (yeast) is a picture of sin, of corruption. The Jews were instructed to remove all the leaven from their homes—a metaphor for the removal of sin from their lives. The *miqra* is prophetic of the day Yahshua spent in the tomb. His death was what removed the sin from our lives, if only we’ll trust Him to do so. This feast was the beginning of a weeklong festival—the seven days being symbolic of the fact that our sins have been removed *completely*.

*Yom HaBikkurim*, or the Day of Firstfruits, (on the following day, Nisan 16) was a celebration thanking Yahweh for the upcoming barley harvest. It was not actually observed in Israel until they entered the Promised Land—almost forty years after the Law was given (see Joshua 5:10-12). The day is prophetic of Yahshua’s resurrection from the dead on Nisan 16, 33 AD, in which He Himself was the “firstfruit” of many who would subsequently rise from their graves immortal and undefiled because of their faith in Him. This is the last of the “Spring Feasts,” though since the Feast of Unleavened Bread was a week-long affair, the national party went on for six days past Firstfruits.

*Shavuot*, or the Feast of Weeks, was scheduled on the day after the seventh Sabbath after the Feast of Unleavened Bread—making an interval of fifty days, hence the Greek name: Pentecost. It works out to Sivan 6 on the Jewish calendar. Traditionally it was supposedly the day Moses announced the covenant between Yahweh and Israel, but the evidence for this is rather thin. The prophetic aspect, however, is obvious: this was the very day, in 33 AD, on which the *Ruach Kodesh*, the Holy Spirit, came to indwell the believers of the risen Messiah. Even though there were no gentiles present that day, this indwelling continues to the present time—in both believing Jews *and* gentiles, a group known as the “called-out assembly (the *Ekklesia*), or simply the Church. Yahweh’s revelation of His redemptive plan has thus been extended beyond the bounds of Israel.

*Shavuot* was the second of the three national gatherings mentioned in the Exodus 23 passage—there called the Feast of Harvest.

The first four of these prophetic feasts have been fulfilled, then, in the sacrificial work of the Messiah and in the coming of His Spirit to indwell the believers. It is worth noting that every single one of them was fulfilled on the precise day of its Levitical mandate (the odds against that happening by chance are over 16 billion to one) and we therefore have strong reason to believe that the last three will be fulfilled in the same way. The three yet-to-be-fulfilled *miqra* convocations occur in the month of Tishri, in September or October—the seventh month on the Hebrew Levitical calendar. They are as follows:

*Yom Teruah* (i.e., the Day of Blowing or Shouting), a.k.a. the Feast of Trumpets, is slated for Tishri 1. It is sometimes called *Rosh Hashanah*—erroneously, since it isn't the day Yahweh designated as “head of the year.” *That* happens on the first day of Nisan, in the spring—a date that is not among the *miqrym*). It's also known as *Yom Hakeseh*, the “Day of Hiding,” for rabbinical tradition held that this was the day Satan went before God to accuse Israel—so the day had to be kept a secret. The day isn't really memorial of anything that happened during the exodus. (Some try to tie it to the entrance into the Promised Land, but that happened during the barley harvest, in the spring.) However, it is prophetic of the event commonly known as the rapture of the Church, the “catching up” of the saints, living and dead, described in I Thessalonians 4 and I Corinthians 15. *Shavuot* and *Yom Teruah* comprise bookends for the Church Age—after which Yahweh will again deal directly with Israel as a nation.

*Yom Kippur*, the Day of Atonement, comes on Tishri 10. This *miqra* isn't really a “feast” like the other six, but is rather a day of repentance, remorse, fasting (perhaps), and affliction of the soul. Again, it isn't actually memorial of anything specific in Israel's history, but the future fulfillment in light of the weight of Scripture is overwhelmingly plain: this will be the day Israel recognizes her Messiah for who He was—and is. It will coincide with the day Yahshua returns to earth to reign in glory (cf. Zechariah 12:10-11). On that day, the remnant of Israel will at last acknowledge her King. Better late than never.

*Sukkot*, or the Feast of Tabernacles, the anchor of the three fall feasts, is the last of the seven-*miqra* series, occurring five days later, on Tishri 15. Like the Feast of Unleavened Bread, it kicks off a weeklong party. It can properly be said to be memorial of the wilderness wanderings, and I can state with some assurance that it marks the birthday of Yahshua in 2 BC

(again, see *Future History's* chronology appendix) but there is a far more significant future role for this festival: it is prophetic of the Millennial reign of Yahshua the Messiah, specifically its first day, five days after His *Yom Kippur* return to earth. (He's going to be a little busy in the interim, what with the Battle of Armageddon and the incarceration of Satan to attend to.) The Israelites were instructed to build temporary structures—booths or huts—to live in during the festival. This is a poignant picture of the real point of the Feast of Tabernacles: that Yahweh Himself would “camp out” among men for a thousand years of perfect peace.

- (113) *Rejoice on the festivals.* **“You shall observe the Feast of Tabernacles seven days, when you have gathered from your threshing floor and from your winepress. And you shall rejoice in your feast, you and your son and your daughter, your male servant and your female servant and the Levite, the stranger and the fatherless and the widow, who are within your gates.”** (Deuteronomy 16:13-14) As we can see from the context, the command to rejoice is specifically applicable to the Feast of Tabernacles. Rejoicing is also an expressly mandated feature of the Feast of Weeks (predictive of the coming of the Holy Spirit) and the Feast of Trumpets (prophetic of the rapture), and implied in the celebration of the Feast of Firstfruits—the three other events that are obviously cause for celebration. The rabbis' blanket statement is inappropriate in the case of the other three *miqrym*, however, and it betrays a lack of understanding as to why Yahweh instituted them in the first place. Passover, the Feast of Unleavened Bread, and the Day of Atonement all speak of the negative aspects of our salvation—our certain death if our sins are not covered by the atoning blood of the Lamb of God, the elimination of sin from our lives through the death of the Messiah, and the essential affliction of our souls when faced with our unworthiness. These things are all necessary and good, but they are not in and of themselves cause for celebration. The fact that these three *miqrym* are needed at all is actually cause for mourning. Yahweh was precisely accurate in His instructions as to *when* we were to rejoice.
- (114) *Appear at the Sanctuary on the festivals.* **“Three times a year all your males shall appear before Yahweh your God in the place which He chooses: at the Feast of Unleavened Bread, at the Feast of Weeks, and at the Feast of Tabernacles.”** (Deuteronomy 16:16) As we saw in #112, the festivals of Yahweh were lumped into three groups, three *miqrym* in the spring, one in early summer, and three in the fall. All the men living within Israel were to congregate at a central location three times each year. The meeting place was wherever the Tabernacle happened to be at the time. It eventually settled permanently at God's chosen location, Jerusalem, with the building of the Temple. Thus every man in Israel would be gathered together for the

worship of Yahweh for at least five of the seven festivals, for one week in the spring, a couple of days in the summer, and a week or more in the fall. Only the men were required to go, but as a practical matter, whole families often made the journey (cf. Luke 2:41-44).

Why was everyone's presence required so often? Because Yahweh was making a point. The annual cycle of holy convocations was prophetic of God's plan of redemption for mankind. Every part of the plan is essential for our ultimate reconciliation with Him. Sacrificial death without removal of sins or subsequent resurrection in glory is an unfinished story. If a holy God were to "camp out" among a race of men who had chosen not to love Him, the result would be fatal for them. All seven *miqrym* are needed to communicate God's plan.

It's interesting that Maimonides specifies the Jews' appearances at the Sanctuary (though the Torah delineates only "the place God chooses," which would eventually settle at Jerusalem). The "Sanctuary," the remodeled second Temple, had been torn down by the Romans over a millennium before he wrote his *Mishneh Torah*. Like so many of these mitzvot, the lack of a Temple makes compliance with this one impossible. Jews today who claim to be "Torah observant" are kidding themselves. They must pick and choose which mitzvot they can and will observe and which are unfeasible. If keeping the letter of the Law were the path to salvation, no one alive today could be saved.

- (115) *Remove chametz on the Eve of Passover.* **"Seven days you shall eat unleavened bread. On the first day you shall remove leaven from your houses. For whoever eats leavened bread from the first day until the seventh day, that person shall be cut off from Israel."** (Exodus 12:15) *Chametz* is leaven, or yeast. Judaism 101 says that in addition to being memorial of the Jews' hasty departure from Egyptian bondage, the removal of *chametz* "is also a symbolic way of removing the 'puffiness' (arrogance, pride) from our souls." Close, but no cigar. Yeast is a picture of sin, of corruption, of rottenness. Its removal is thus symbolic the elimination of sin from our lives—something that could only be accomplished by the sacrificial death of the Messiah.

The rabbis misspoke when they connected the removal of leaven with "Passover." Yahweh is very precise: there is a separate *miqra* for the elimination of yeast: the seven-day-long Feast of Unleavened Bread—beginning on the day *after* Passover (which was symbolic of the Messianic sacrifice, the crucifixion). I may seem to be nitpicking here, but we obscure the prophetic significance of the *miqrym* if we don't keep them straight in our minds. Passover—the death of the Lamb of God—came

first. The elimination of our sin for eternity (symbolized by the seven-day duration of the Feast) can only follow.

- (116) *Rest on the first day of Passover.* **“On the first day there shall be a holy convocation, and on the seventh day there shall be a holy convocation for you. No manner of work shall be done on them; but that which everyone must eat—that only may be prepared by you. So you shall observe the Feast of Unleavened Bread, for on this same day I will have brought your armies out of the land of Egypt. Therefore you shall observe this day throughout your generations as an everlasting ordinance. In the first month, on the fourteenth day of the month at evening, you shall eat unleavened bread, until the twenty-first day of the month [of Nisan] at evening. For seven days no leaven shall be found in your houses, since whoever eats what is leavened, that same person shall be cut off from the congregation of Israel, whether he is a stranger or a native of the land. You shall eat nothing leavened; in all your dwellings you shall eat unleavened bread.”** (Exodus 12:16-20). The passage makes it clear that the Feast of Unleavened Bread, not Passover, is in view. The first and last days of the seven-day event were to be set aside as special Sabbaths—whether or not they actually fell on the seventh day of the week. (But proving that Yahweh knows precisely what He’s doing, the Feast actually did fall on a Sabbath in its fulfillment year, 33 A.D.) Here again, we see that the Sabbath rest is associated metaphorically with a state of sinless perfection for eternity. By sundown on the fourteenth of Nisan (Passover) the homes of the Israelites were to be free of leaven. This condition was to last until sundown on the twenty-first.
- (117) *Do not work on the first day of Passover.* **“On the fifteenth day of the same month is the Feast of Unleavened Bread to Yahweh; seven days you must eat unleavened bread. On the first day you shall have a holy convocation; you shall do no customary work on it.”** (Leviticus 23:6-7) This is the negative counterpart to affirmative Mitzvah #116. Again, the Feast of Unleavened Bread, not Passover proper, is being described. Note that the fifteenth day of the month began (by Yahweh’s reckoning) on the evening of the fourteenth; in other words, the next day began at sundown, not at midnight as we commonly reckon it. Thus the apparent starting date contradiction between the Exodus passage and this one in Leviticus isn’t really there.
- (118) *Rest on the seventh day of Passover.* **“...and on the seventh day there shall be a holy convocation for you. No manner of work shall be done on them; but that which everyone must eat—that only may be prepared by you.** (Exodus 12:16) The festival ended as it began, with a holy convocation, a special Sabbath rest. Normally, food preparation (being somebody’s “customary work”) was forbidden on the Sabbath. Here, Yahweh makes an exception to His own

rule, allowing the preparation of food on the special Sabbaths opening and closing the Feast of Unleavened Bread. He knew that there would be times when two Sabbaths (the normal seventh-day one and the special feast-day one) would fall back to back, and He didn't wish to impose an undue hardship on His people for the sake of a metaphor. As He would later say through His Messiah, "The Sabbath was made for man, not man for the Sabbath." Modern rabbis, clueless as always to Yahweh's provision and plan, simply tweak their calendar instead, adding or subtracting days as needed to keep the Sabbaths where they're convenient.

- (119) *Do not work on the seventh day of Passover.* **"The seventh day [of the Feast of Unleavened Bread] shall be a holy convocation; you shall do no customary work on it."** (Leviticus 23:8) We've caught Maimonides padding the list again so he could come up with the requisite number of affirmative and negative commandments. This is simply the converse of the previous mitzvah. We're going to see a lot of the same sort of annoying junior high school writing technique in the next few mitzvot. Bear in mind that every time the rabbis mention "Passover" in Mitzvot #115 through #126, the correct term is the "Feast of Unleavened Bread" or *Chag Matzah*.
- (120) *Eat matzah on the first night of Passover.* **"In the first month, on the fourteenth day of the month at evening, you shall eat unleavened bread, until the twenty-first day of the month at evening."** (Exodus 12:18) *Matzah* is, at its most essential, simply bread baked without yeast—unleavened bread. Bread was *the* staple food in the Israelite diet. Thus the heart of the commandment wasn't so much to "eat unleavened bread" as it was "don't eat any bread with yeast in it." Something that was ordinarily there within the bread (yeast) would be non-existent for the duration of the feast (not just the first night). Yahweh is saying that something that was ordinarily there within our lives (sin) would be non-existent for the duration of eternity. If we don't understand the metaphorical connection between leaven and sin, we will miss the entire point of this Feast, and perhaps conclude that this is just one more pointless ritual God has instituted to make life more difficult for us. Nothing could be further from the truth. In my experience, Yahweh never does or says *anything* on a meaningless whim.
- (121) *No chametz shall be in the Israelites' possession during Passover.* **"For seven days no leaven shall be found in your houses, since whoever eats what is leavened, that same person shall be cut off from the congregation of Israel, whether he is a stranger or a native of the land."** (Exodus 12:19) The complete removal of leaven/sin is the whole point of the Feast. The "congregation of Israel" is indicative of all believers of every age (cf. Galatians 3:6-9).

“Strangers” (i.e., goyim like me) and “natives of the land” (biological Jews) alike must be made free of sin if they wish to be numbered among the “congregation of Israel.” But we can’t achieve this status by our own efforts. That is why the Feast of Unleavened Bread follows Passover—the cleansing is a result of the sacrifice.

- (122) *Do not eat any food containing chametz on Passover. “You shall eat nothing leavened; in all your dwellings you shall eat [only] unleavened bread.”* (Exodus 12:20) There were two phases of the un-leavening of a Jewish home for the Feast: first all the yeast was to be removed from the home; second, nothing baked with leaven was to be eaten. Applying our established metaphor of leaven=sin, we perceive a subtle distinction between external and internal corruption. Not only is the evil influence of the world to be taken out of our environment, it will also be purged from within us: we will be sanctified and justified before Yahweh. The prophetic implications are spectacular. Remember, in these “rituals” we are acting out what God has already accomplished in the past or will achieve in the future. In this age, there is no way we can purge the world of sin any more than we can make our own lives sinless. But Yahweh’s plan achieves both of these objectives.
- (123) *Do not eat chametz on Passover. “And Moses said to the people: “Remember this day in which you went out of Egypt, out of the house of bondage; for by strength of hand Yahweh brought you out of this place. No leavened bread shall be eaten.”* (Exodus 13:3) This mitzvah seems to be identical to the one that precedes it. But the supporting passage sheds some added insight on the subject. Notice how Yahweh connects the absence of leaven with deliverance from bondage. The purging of sin from our lives is tantamount to our being freed from slavery to that sin: by memorializing one thing, the Jews were celebrating the other as well.
- (124) *Chametz shall not be seen in an Israelite’s home during Passover. “No leavened bread shall be seen among you, nor shall leaven be seen among you in all your quarters.”* (Exodus 13:7) The symbolic translation: “Sin shall not be evident in the life of a believer, nor shall it trouble him any longer.” I can’t help but think of a passage from Daniel describing the last seven years of this age. During this time, God promised to “finish the transgression, make an end of sins, make reconciliation for iniquity, and bring in everlasting righteousness.” (see Daniel 9:24) In other words, the *chametz* is on its way out.
- (125) *Discuss the departure from Egypt on the first night of Passover. “And you shall tell your son in that day, saying, ‘This is done because of what Yahweh did for me when I came up from Egypt.’ It shall be as a sign to you on your hand and as a*

memorial between your eyes, that Yahweh's law may be in your mouth; for with a strong hand Yahweh has brought you out of Egypt. You shall therefore keep this ordinance in its season from year to year." (Exodus 13:8-10) Allow me to quote something heartbreaking from Judaism 101: "Watch out for Christianized versions of the haggadah. The Christian 'last supper' is generally believed to have been a Pesach seder, so many Christians recreate the ritual of the seder, and the haggadahs that they use for this purpose tend to reinterpret the significance of the holiday and its symbols to fit into their Christian theology. For example, they say that the three matzahs represent the Trinity, with the broken one representing Jesus on the cross (in Judaism, the three matzahs represent the three Temples, two of which have been destroyed, and the third of which will be built when the moshiach comes). They speak of the paschal lamb as a prophecy of Jesus, rather than a remembrance of the lamb's blood on the doorposts in Egypt. If you want to learn what Pesach means to Jews, then these 'messianic' haggadahs aren't for you."

In context, Tracey Rich has just completed a detailed description of a *Pesach* seder, the annual rehearsal of the original Passover event. The Exodus passage above speaks of a "memorial," and today's Jews apparently have that down pat. The heartbreaking thing is that they completely missed the other half of it: "keeping this ordinance in its season from year to year" is also supposed to be a *sign* for them. Not just a memorial, but also a *sign*. And if it's a sign, what is it supposed to signify? Rich admits that his own symbol is all goofed up when he equates the *one* broken matzah with *two* Temples that have been destroyed. He is absolutely correct in perceiving that a third and final Temple will be built by Moshiah/Messiah (see *Future History*, Chapter 27 for an exhaustive study). But he can't explain this: if the Jews, who haven't changed their approach to the Torah in any material way for the better part of the last three millennia, are in the center of God's will, why did He allow their first two Temples to be destroyed? Why did he let them wander the earth like homeless vagabonds for nineteen hundred years? Could it be that, as Yahshua Himself implied, they were (and are) willingly ignorant of the signs that were given to them? I weep for a people who are so close to the truth and yet they refuse to see it: the Messiah came. They crucified Him. His death makes life possible for us. All of Yahweh's signs point directly and unequivocally to Yahshua of Nazareth.

- (126) *Do not eat chametz after mid-day on the fourteenth of Nisan. "You shall eat no leavened bread with it [the Passover Lamb]; seven days you shall eat unleavened bread with it, that is, the bread of affliction (for you came out of the land of Egypt in haste), that you may remember the day in which you came out of*

**the land of Egypt all the days of your life.”** (Deuteronomy 16:3) Yahweh doesn’t put this particular deadline on cleaning out the leaven from the Jewish households, but as a practical matter, this cut-off time works reasonably well. The schedule went like this: the Passover lamb was to be slain on the afternoon of the fourteenth day of Nisan (precisely the time of day when Yahshua was crucified), and then roasted (not boiled, because fire is symbolic of the judgment Yahshua endured on our behalf). This is why the fourteenth, Passover proper, is often called the Day of Preparation. The Passover meal, then, took place after sundown—technically now the fifteenth, the first day of the Feast of Unleavened Bread. (The Last Supper, therefore, was not technically a Passover seder, but a regular meal that took place within the timeframe of the Passover “day.” Neither the lamb nor *The Lamb* would be killed until the following afternoon.) The lamb was to be eaten with unleavened bread and bitter herbs (like horseradish) that were a reminder of the bitterness of slavery in Egypt—and symbolic of the sting of sin in the world. All the cooking had to be done by sundown, for the fifteenth of Nisan was a designated Sabbath. That meant that at the very latest, sundown on the fourteenth was the last possible opportunity to remove the *chametz* from the house, and it made sense to try to have the job done several hours earlier. But Yahweh didn’t expressly command it.

- (127) *Count forty-nine days from the time of the cutting of the Omer (first sheaves of the barley harvest). “You shall count for yourselves from the day after the Sabbath [i.e., the first day of the Feast of Unleavened Bread—the “day after” this would be the Feast of Firstfruits], from the day that you brought the sheaf of the wave offering; seven Sabbaths shall be completed. Count fifty days to the day after the seventh Sabbath; then you shall offer a new grain offering to Yahweh. You shall bring from your dwellings two wave loaves of two-tenths of an ephah. They shall be of fine flour; they shall be baked with leaven. They are the firstfruits to Yahweh.”* (Leviticus 23:15-17) Don’t let the dual designation of “firstfruits” throw you. This *miqra* (*Shavuot*) is based on the wheat harvest, whereas the “Feast of Firstfruits” (*Yom HaBikkurim*) speaks of the earlier barley harvest. After all the hullabaloo about getting rid of the leaven during the Feast of Unleavened Bread, we’re almost shocked to see a specific directive that the two loaves that were to be symbolically “waved” in offering before Yahweh here were to be baked *with leaven!* No explanation for this is given in the Torah, but it all becomes clear in the New Testament: *Shavuot*, or the Day of Pentecost, is prophetic of the coming of the *Ruach Kodesh*, the Holy Spirit, to dwell within the believers of the Messiah after His resurrection. The whole story is related in Acts 2: **“Now when the Day of Pentecost had fully come...they were all filled with the Holy**

**Spirit.”** The Law had been fulfilled in the sacrifice of the Messiah. Our sins (note: *not the law*, but our sins) had been nailed to the cross and taken to the tomb with Him. Thus leaven was no longer an issue: it’s not that we were no longer required to be holy—it’s that in God’s view, we already were.

- (128) *Rest on Shavuot.* **“You shall proclaim on the same day [The Feast of Weeks] that it is a holy convocation to you. You shall do no customary work on it. It shall be a statute forever in all your dwellings throughout your generations.”** (Leviticus 23:21) Five of the seven *miqrym* are designated as special Sabbaths, days upon which no customary work is to be done. This begs the question: what’s different about Passover and the Feast of Firstfruits—*miqrym* that are not designated as Sabbaths? As it turns out, these are the only two whose symbolic fulfillment was accomplished by Yahshua alone, without any participation on the part of His believers. Passover represents His death, and Firstfruits prophesies His presentation before Yahweh after His resurrection—events we can only thankfully acknowledge, but in which we had no part whatsoever to play. The other five all imply some contribution, some involvement, by the Faithful.

The Feast of Unleavened Bread symbolizes the removal of sin from our lives. The Feast of Weeks marks the indwelling of the Holy Spirit within us. The Feast of Trumpets heralds our “catching up” to be together with our Savior. The Day of Atonement speaks of the remorse and repentance of God’s people. And finally, the Feast of Tabernacles foreshadows the day when Immanuel will come once again to dwell among us. So whether in an active or passive role, we as believers are participants in each of these five *miqrym*.

Why then was each of them designated as a special Sabbath, a day of rest? Because Yahweh wanted to make it crystal clear that our work, our effort, has nothing to do with our redemption. We can’t work for it; we can only rest in it. Yes, there are many other days when work is necessary and appropriate, and we should not shirk our responsibility or despise our privilege to work for our Savior’s glory. But there’s absolutely nothing we can do to earn our reconciliation with God. That is a gift, provided for us long before we’re allowed to put on our hardhats and head for the jobsite.

In 33 AD, the year in which the first four *miqrym* were fulfilled, the Feast of Unleavened Bread fell on an actual Sabbath, i.e., Saturday. Because Shavuot came fifty days later (seven weeks and one day), the Day of Pentecost spoken of in Acts 2 fell on a *Sunday*. Was Yahweh telling us that the Spirit-indwelled *Ekklesia* would come to habitually gather not on the Sabbath day but on the first day of the week? I don’t know, but it

certainly worked out that way. If this little detail means what it seems to, Yahweh is mandating the observance of *two* successive days each week for our spiritual benefit—the Sabbath rest as a symbol of our helplessness to work our way into the Kingdom of God, and the first day of the week as a time when believers could all gather “with one accord in one place” (Acts 2:1) to celebrate our Spiritual rebirth in Yahshua the Messiah.

A more cynical view states that Sun-day worship was nothing more than a pagan institution foisted upon an increasingly gentile Ekklesia by semi-converted Mithras worshippers at the time of Constantine. It’s true that all things “Jewish” (like the Sabbath) were forcibly suppressed from this time forward, robbing the Church of several millennia’s worth of priceless foundational insight. It’s also true that Scripture never overtly condones replacing Sabbath gatherings with Sunday worship. I honestly don’t know which theory is correct. But if informing us that Sunday would eventually become the primary day of worship for fifty generations of Christians *isn’t* what Yahweh meant by scheduling *Shavuot* on the first day of the week—fifty days (not forty-nine) after *Chag Matzah*—then I’ll leave it to you to figure out what He *did* mean.

- (129) *Do not work on Shavuot.* **“You shall proclaim on the same day [The Feast of Weeks] that it is a holy convocation to you. You shall do no customary work on it. It shall be a statute forever in all your dwellings throughout your generations.”** (Leviticus 23:21) This of course is merely the converse of #128 above. The command is to refrain, on the day of this holy convocation, from doing the work you’d ordinarily do. In the previous mitzvah we explored the “why.” Perhaps we should take a moment to look at the “who.” In whose dwellings will it be a “statute forever,” and whose “generations” are in view? It’s crystal clear in context. Four times in Leviticus 23 we see this formula: **“Yahweh spoke to Moses, saying, ‘Speak to the children of Israel....’”** These festivals are to be observed by the children of Israel, the Jews. It is to Abraham’s progeny alone that Yahweh entrusted the signs of his redemption. When He told Abram, **“In you all the families of the earth shall be blessed,”** (Genesis 12:3) He was speaking of more than the coming of the Messiah. He was also referring to the signs heralding His great work—the seven *miqrym*, and at some level, the entire “Law of Moses.” The gentiles may study, contemplate, and rejoice, but it is up to the Jews to bear the signs of Yahweh’s deliverance. If only they would.
- (130) *Rest on Rosh Hashanah.* **“In the seventh month, on the first day of the month, you shall have a sabbath-rest, a memorial of blowing of trumpets, a holy convocation.”** (Leviticus 23:24) First, be aware that the Feast of Trumpets is *not* Rosh Hashanah—the head of the year. That’s a convention the

rabbis obsequiously borrowed from their Babylonian captors. Yahweh, however, had specifically designated the first day of Nisan—in the spring, two weeks before Passover—as the Hebrews’ “New Year’s Day.” The Feast of Trumpets is in Tishri, the seventh month; it is the first of the “fall feasts.” Second, notice that this is the first *miqra* in the series that has not yet been fulfilled. In a nutshell, the first four feasts were fulfilled in the death, burial, resurrection, and Spiritual indwelling of Yahshua the Messiah. The Feast of Trumpets would logically signal the next crucial phase in God’s plan of redemption, and we don’t have to look too far to find it. Paul writes: **“We shall not all sleep, but we shall all be changed—in a moment, in the twinkling of an eye, at the last trumpet. For the trumpet will sound, and the dead will be raised incorruptible, and we shall be changed.”** (I Corinthians 15:51-52) **“The Lord Himself will descend from heaven with a shout, with the voice of an archangel, and with the trumpet of God. And the dead in Christ will rise first. Then we who are alive and remain shall be caught up together with them in the clouds to meet the Lord in the air. And thus we shall always be with the Lord.”** (I Thessalonians 4:16-17)

The word translated “blowing” in the Leviticus passage quoted above is *teruah*, which means “alarm, blowing (as of trumpets), joy, a loud noise, rejoicing, shouting, a sounding.” (S) If we look at the words associated with this event Paul is describing (“last trumpet... sound... shout... voice... trumpet of God”), we are confronted with a perfect match. And what is Paul describing? The popular term for this event is derived from the words “caught up.” That’s *harpazo* in Greek, translated as *rapiemur* in Latin, from which we get our English word “rapture.” The rapture is Yahweh’s exit strategy for the believers of the post-resurrection age—the “Church” age. Just as He took Lot out of Sodom before He torched the place, He will take His people out of a corrupt and decaying world before He visits judgment upon it. Coming soon to a world near you.

- (131) *Do not work on Rosh Hashanah. “You shall do no customary work on [the Feast of Trumpets]; and you shall offer an offering made by fire to Yahweh.”* (Leviticus 23:25) Here’s the negative permutation of the affirmative mitzvah we saw in #130. The one unique thing about this *miqra* is the blowing of the ram’s horn “trumpet,” or *shofar*. Mr. Rich unwittingly points out the following absurdity concerning contemporary Jewish observation: “The *shofar* is not blown if the holiday falls on Shabbat.” I guess they think blowing the *shofar* is work. Gee, guys, can’t you see how dumb that is? *Every* Feast of Trumpets *by definition* falls on a Sabbath—if not the seventh day of the week, then a specially designated day of rest, as we see here in this mitzvah. The reason it’s a Sabbath is that we can’t do

anything to earn it—the rapture, like the redemption that must precede it, is a gift from God.

As long as we're here in verse 25, let's look at that last bit: **"You shall offer an offering made by fire to Yahweh."** Fire in Scripture is invariably a metaphor for judgment. Here fire is intimately associated with the Sabbath rest of the Feast. Could Yahweh be telling us that our exodus from this corrupt world will lead to its judgment (like Lot's departure from Sodom did)? Or is this just a coincidence? I'll let you be the judge on that one.

- (132) *Hear the sound of the shofar on Rosh Hashanah. "In the seventh month, on the first day of the month, you shall have a holy convocation. You shall do no customary work. For you it is a day of blowing the trumpets."* (Numbers 29:1) Since Yahweh didn't actually say *why* they were to blow the trumpets, the Jews came up with some fanciful myths of their own. First, it was a call to remembrance and repentance, for the day was the first of the ten "days of awe" that culminated in *Yom Kippur*, or the Day of Atonement, which we'll see in a moment. Second, it was to remind Israel of their covenant relationship with Yahweh. And third, this was supposed to be the one day of the year when Satan came before God to accuse Israel, so the Jews blew the *shofar* to confuse the devil. *It's not working, people.* This last tradition led to the day being known as *Yom Hakeseh*, or the "Hidden Day," for (the story went) if you never said *when* the Feast of Trumpets was coming, then Satan wouldn't know. (If only he were that stupid.) So they'd say, tongue in cheek, "No one knows but God." This goes a long way toward explaining Yahshua's enigmatic statement about not knowing the time of His return for His own people, recorded in Matthew 24:36. He was, in a backhanded way, informing us that He intended to gather His believers on some future Feast of Trumpets. He didn't say what year.
- (133) *Fast on Yom Kippur. "Also the tenth day of this seventh month shall be the Day of Atonement. It shall be a holy convocation for you; you shall afflict your souls, and offer an offering made by fire to Yahweh."* (Leviticus 23:27) Whereas most of the *miqrym* of Yahweh call for rejoicing and feasting, this one is different. It calls for affliction of the soul, introspection, mourning—a somber response to the realization of one's guilt. Why this is will become apparent shortly. I must note that fasting and "affliction" are not the same thing. This, sadly, is one more instance of rabbinical meddling designed to "get them off the hook" with God—performing the letter of their law while willfully ignoring the true intention of Yahweh. In point of fact, fasting is never specifically commanded on the Day of Atonement, although if true "affliction of soul" is taking place, fasting could well be a

manifestation of that attitude. But anybody, in any frame of mind, can fast for a day if they want to.

The key is the word “afflict.” ‘*Anah* is “a verb indicating to be afflicted, to be oppressed, to be humbled. It means to bow down, to humble oneself.” (B&C) Only twice in Scripture it is shown to be accompanied by fasting of any kind (Ezra 8:21, to punctuate a spirit of supplication as the Israelites began their return journey from Babylon to Jerusalem, and Daniel 10:3 (sort of), where Daniel mourned for three weeks, eating only bread and water as he awaited clarification concerning a troubling vision). Neither instance is connected in any way to the Day of Atonement.

But there is another ‘*anah* in Hebrew whose meaning is so different it has been assigned an entirely different reference number (though it’s spelled identically). This verb means “to answer, to respond, to reply, to testify.” It also means “to sing, to shout, to howl. It is used of singing joyously to the Lord and in praise of His Law, or in a riotous, uncontrolled way. It is used of a victory song or crying out in victory. It is used figuratively of a rested Israel singing again.” (B&C) I find it fascinating that both meanings of the word (or should I say, *all* of them) fit the scenario scripture paints of the definitive Day of Atonement, *Yom Kippur*.

And what is this significant future event to which *Yom Kippur* points? All of the previous five *miqrym* (as we have seen) are linked to fulfillments of key milestones in Yahweh’s plan of redemption, in chronological order. This one extends the pattern. After the Ekklesia has been raptured, Israel will find itself with no real friends left in the entire earth. At this point, Yahweh will begin a series of miraculous deliverance events designed to bring Israel as a nation back into the Land, and awaken them to an awareness of their true God. The climactic moment is prophesied by Zechariah: **“And I [Yahweh] will pour on the house of David and on the inhabitants of Jerusalem the Spirit of grace and supplication; then they will look on Me whom they pierced. Yes, they will mourn for Him as one mourns for his only son, and grieve for Him as one grieves for a firstborn. In that day there shall be a great mourning in Jerusalem, like the mourning at Hadad Rimmon in the plain of Megiddo. And the land shall mourn, every family by itself.... And in that day His feet will stand on the Mount of Olives, which faces Jerusalem on the east. And the Mount of Olives shall be split in two, from east to west, making a very large valley; Half of the mountain shall move toward the north, and half of it toward the south.”** (Zechariah 12:10-12, 14:4) Yes, it’s the appearance of Yahshua the King, returning in glory, that will cause those Jews who had witnessed their miraculous national deliverance to “afflict their souls.” What else could

they do, after their nation crucified their Messiah and rejected Him for the next two millennia? Somehow, saying “Oops, my bad,” doesn’t quite cover it. Will there be fasting? I wouldn’t doubt it. Who could keep anything down? But after the shock and remorse sink in, the reality of their deliverance will emerge in their response, their answer, their joyous testimony. And before the day is through, they’ll be singing and shouting in reply to their Messiah’s inevitable victory. The *‘anah* of their *nephesh* (souls) will be the order of the day.

- (134) *Do not eat or drink on Yom Kippur.* **“For any person who is not afflicted in soul on that same day shall be cut off from his people.”** (Leviticus 23:29) We’ve already established that Yahweh never actually said anything about fasting on *Yom Kippur*. But we need to pay close attention to the penalty for not being “*‘anah*.” If, on the day of the ultimate Day of Atonement, anyone looks upon the returning King and is not awed by His presence, afflicted and humbled, if he does not respond, answer and shout joyfully, then he shall surely be “cut off.” This is no idle threat, by the way. The prophetic timeline places this last *Yom Kippur* within a couple of days of the Battle of Armageddon—a battle (if you can call it that) in which no enemies of Christ will survive.
- (135) *Do not do work on Yom Kippur.* **“You shall do no manner of work; it shall be a statute forever throughout your generations in all your dwellings.”** (Leviticus 23:31) There’s a subtle difference here from the normal Sabbath: usually, it’s “Don’t do your customary work.” Now it’s “Do *no* manner of work.” Perhaps this is indicative of the situation in which Israel will find itself during the three and a half “years” of the “time of Jacob’s trouble,” a.k.a. the Great Tribulation—described to Daniel as a **“time and times and half a time...when the power of the holy people has been completely shattered.”** (Daniel 12:7) Yahweh will take Israel to a state of total dependence on Him. As late as the Magog War (Ezekiel 38-39) four or five years before this, the Jews will have some degree of participation in their own deliverance. (The details are delineated in *Future History*). But now, with Armageddon looming, there’s absolutely nothing they can do to help themselves—all they can do is sit back and gratefully watch Yahshua destroy the forces of evil in their own backyard.
- (136) *Rest on Yom Kippur.* **“It shall be to you a sabbath of solemn rest, and you shall afflict your souls; on the ninth day of the month at evening, from evening to evening, you shall celebrate your sabbath.”** (Leviticus 23:32) Here’s the converse of Mitzvah #135. Did you ever wonder why Yahweh begins the “day” at sundown? We see it described this way all the way back in the creation account, where we see the formula repeated: “The evening and the

morning were the *nth* day.” What separates nighttime from daytime? The defining factor is light. It was not by accident that Yahshua said, “I am the light of the world. He who follows Me shall not walk in darkness, but have the light of life.” (John 8:12) John explains the connection: “In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God. He was in the beginning with God. All things were made through Him, and without Him nothing was made that was made. In Him was life, and the life was the light of men. And the light shines in the darkness, and the darkness did not comprehend [i.e., overcome] it.” (John 1:1-5) Yahweh’s pattern is to move us from darkness into light, from chaos into order, from ignorance into knowledge, from slavery into freedom. And so as we see in His instruction to rest on the Day of Atonement, it is reiterated that the Sabbath is to take us from affliction into celebration. In eschatological terms, as the inhabitants of Jerusalem see their returning Messiah split the Mount of Olives in two, they will realize with horror what a grievous error they and their forbears made. That horror, however, will fade into relief and then into joy as the realization dawns upon them that even now, Yahweh is ready to forgive repentant hearts.

It should be reiterated that not every *miqra* Yahweh specified as a “day of rest” in the Torah can actually fall on a Sabbath—a Saturday—in its definitive fulfillment. The math doesn’t allow it. The Feast of Unleavened Bread fell on a Sabbath in 33 AD, which requires that the Feast of Weeks that same year would fall on a Sunday, even though it’s set aside as a “day of rest.” Nevertheless, I would consider it probable (though it’s not absolutely required) that the ultimate Feast of Trumpets (that upon which the rapture will occur) will fall on a Saturday, as it will in 2009, 2020, 2023 and 2026. Further, since the last two Fall Feasts (Atonement and Tabernacles, each of which is designated a special Sabbath day of rest) come on the tenth and fifteenth of Tishri, it is obvious that they can’t both fall on natural Sabbaths in any given year. That being said, I find it significant that the mandated Sabbath Feast of Tabernacles in 2033—the precise millennial milestone Yahweh’s pattern of sevens would indicate—falls on a natural Sabbath, October 8, 2033. Food for thought.

- (137) *Rest on the first day of Sukkot.* **‘The fifteenth day of this seventh month shall be the Feast of Tabernacles for seven days to Yahweh. On the first day there shall be a holy convocation. You shall do no customary work on it. For seven days you shall offer an offering made by fire to Yahweh.’** (Leviticus 23:34-36) Here the Sabbath rest is back to being described as not doing one’s “customary work,” that is, the type of work one normally does to earn his living—to provide for his own needs. The rabbis, of course, aren’t satisfied with this definition (and the grace of God that it symbolizes) and generally state that

*all* work must cease on this day. So verse 40 must give them migraines: **“And you shall take for yourselves on the first day the fruit of beautiful trees, branches of palm trees, the boughs of leafy trees, and willows of the brook; and you shall rejoice before Yahweh your God for seven days.”** That’s right: they’re *supposed* to “work” on the first day of *Sukkot*, putting their temporary shelters together.

Although the rabbis have zeroed in on the things they can observe ritualistically (i.e., without thinking about them too much), there is a reason Yahweh instituted this Feast of Booths, or Tabernacles. (“Tabernacle” is admittedly a word we don’t use much anymore outside of the technical description of the “tent of meeting” used during the wilderness wanderings. All the word means, however, is a booth, pavilion, or tent—a temporary structure of some kind.) As I’ve said before, Yahweh doesn’t do things on a pointless whim—He invariably has some benefit or illustrative lesson in mind. So we must ask ourselves: why would God ask the Jews to leave their comfortable homes and build these temporary huts to live in for a week every year? It’s a picture of one of the most astounding concepts in all of scripture—God Himself is planning to leave His glorious heavenly abode and camp out personally among men for a season—a thousand years of perfect peace. Like the weeklong *Sukkot* celebration, it’s described as one big party—a barbecue, if you will. In the ultimate permutation, the inhabitants of earth will enjoy a flawless world with King Yahshua on the throne for an entire Millennium.

As I pointed out in my Chronology appendix to *Future History* (“No Man Knows...”), the Feast of Tabernacles has almost certainly been fulfilled once already, in the first-century advent of the Messiah. Although the date is not recorded in the Gospels, the evidence points to Yahshua’s birth occurring at *Sukkot* in 2 B.C.—not on December 25, a date which has a far older history as a pagan winter solstice festival. That’s why John told us, **“The Word became flesh and dwelt [Greek *skenoo*: to tabernacle or encamp] among us, and we beheld His glory, the glory as of the only begotten of the Father, full of grace and truth.”** (John 1:14)

- (138) *Do not work on the first day of Sukkot.* **“On the first day there shall be a holy convocation. You shall do no customary work on it.** (Leviticus 23:35) It’s annoying, isn’t it—this habit of Maimonides to restate everything as both an affirmative and as a negative. I should remind the reader that this practice wasn’t quite so obvious in the original. There, the negative mitzvot were grouped together, and the affirmative rules were set aside by themselves. The order we’re using (that of Tracey Rich of Judaism 101) makes this childish propensity far more obvious—like a seventh grader

trying to stretch one page of research into a three page report. What's not so obvious is what Maimonides (and the rabbis before him) left out. There are thousands of rule-worthy statements in the Torah that could have been codified but for the fact that they point directly to Yahshua in His role as the Messiah. For example: (1) Select the perfect Passover lamb on the tenth day of Nisan and bring him into your household until he is slain on the fourteenth. (Exodus 12:1-6); (2) Don't break any of the bones of the Passover lamb. (Exodus 12:46); (3) All firstborn who are males are dedicated to Yahweh (Exodus 13:12); (4) The pure gold lamps lighting the holy place must burn continually, fed with the oil of pressed olives, and tended by the High Priest. (Leviticus 24:1-4) I could go on *ad infinitum*, but since neither these nor thousands of other possibilities were listed by Maimonides, they are beyond the purview of this study, nor will I take the time to explain how they tie into the revealed plan of man's redemption. My point is simply that what the rabbis left out is as revealing as what they put into their "613 Laws of Moses."

- (139) *Rest on the eighth day of Sukkot.* **"For seven days you shall offer an offering made by fire to Yahweh. On the eighth day you shall have a holy convocation, and you shall offer an offering made by fire to Yahweh. It is a sacred assembly, and you shall do no customary work on it."** (Leviticus 23:36) If the first day of the Feast of Tabernacles is prophetic of the beginning of the Millennial reign of Christ, then what in the world could the *eighth* day signify? Actually, it's not "in the world" any more at all, but "out of this world," if you'll excuse the lame play on words. The eighth day is predictive of what comes after the Millennium: eternity! Our life after the thousand-year reign of the King will be a completion of the process that was begun on the Feast of Trumpets. By this time, all believers of all ages will have received their immortal, spiritual bodies (see I Corinthians 15), and Yahweh will unveil a New Heaven and a New Earth (not to mention a New Jerusalem) in which we can enjoy His company forever. That's why it's called a "sacred assembly." There will be no one left who has not chosen to accept Yahweh's love. Once again, it's designated as a Sabbath rest. There's nothing we can do to earn this eternal state of blissful communion with our God—all we can do is relax and enjoy the gift.
- (140) *Do not work on the eighth day of Sukkot.* **"On the eighth day you shall have a holy convocation, and you shall offer an offering made by fire to Yahweh. It is a sacred assembly, and you shall do no customary work on it."** (Leviticus 23:36)  
*Oy vey.* Read #139 again.
- (141) *Take during Sukkot a palm branch and the other three plants.* **"You shall take for yourselves on the first day the fruit of beautiful trees, branches of palm**

trees, the boughs of leafy trees, and willows of the brook; and you shall rejoice before Yahweh your God for seven days. You shall keep it as a feast to Yahweh for seven days in the year. It shall be a statute forever in your generations. You shall celebrate it in the seventh month. You shall dwell in booths for seven days. All who are native Israelites shall dwell in booths, that your generations may know that I made the children of Israel dwell in booths when I brought them out of the land of Egypt: I am Yahweh your God.” (Leviticus 23:40-43) Good grief. Only the rabbis would try to make a mathematical formula out of this. *Let’s see: palm fronds and (count ’em) three other kinds of trees. Not two, not four...* They’ve missed the entire point, as usual. This is what God is really saying to them: *Come to my holy city. Camp out. Have a good time. Enjoy each other’s company, and Mine. Build a temporary shelter out of whatever’s available, ’cause that’s what Messiah’s going to do when He comes. Tree branches would be a good choice, since they’re going to lose their leaves in a month or two anyway—a reminder I’ve given you every autumn that the earth we live on is a temporary place. So have a big barbeque in honor of your God, Yahweh. Do it during a particular week every autumn (because it’s prophetic sign of when I’m coming), and if you’re a son of Israel living in the Land, never stop celebrating the holiday. Use it as an opportunity to teach your children about the wonderful deliverance I have brought to pass, not only during Moses’ day, but in every generation since then.*

- (142) *Dwell in booths seven days during Sukkot. “You shall dwell in booths for seven days. All who are native Israelites shall dwell in booths.” (Leviticus 23:42)* Seven is the number for completion, of perfection. Thus a seven-day festival is indicative of something that has eternal ramifications: Yahweh will dwell with man for eternity. Yes, only the first thousand years of it will be on this earth, but a change in environment doesn’t signal a change in relationship. Our old mortal bodies were built for this earth. Our new immortal bodies (like the one Yahshua had when he rose from the tomb) will be built to inhabit an entirely different kind of universe.

Once again, we are reminded that the Jews were to be the bearers of the signs. The only people who were to participate in the *miqra* of *Sukkot* were “native Israelites.” The rest of us can only thankfully support the sons of Abraham. Yes, they’ve goofed up Yahweh’s pictures—the truths His precepts are designed to prophesy—pretty badly. That’s not our concern; we goof up the stuff with which we’re entrusted as well. But the Jews are still God’s designated sign-bearers. That will never change.