

*Shiur L'Yom Revi'i*¹

[Wednesday's Study]

READINGS: **Torah Emor:** Leviticus 23:1-22
 Haftarah: Ezekiel 44:20-23
 B'rit Chadasha: I Peter 2:7-8

The Holy One's Appointed Times
[Leviticus 23:2]

Today's Meditation is Psalm 65:1-4;

This Week's Amidah Prayer Focus is Petition No. 6, *B'racha* [the Prayer for Blessing]

Vayedaber Adonai el-Moshe l'emor – Then the Holy One spoke to Moshe, saying ...
Daber el-B'nei Yisra'el v'amarta aleihem - speak to B'nei Yisrael, to enlighten them ...
mo'adei Adonai – the Holy One's appointed times! Leviticus 23:1-2a.

Having neither understanding of eternity nor knowledge of the true purpose of the grains of sand the Holy One has poured in their respective hourglasses, the people of the raging nations live primarily for and in what they call '*the moment*'. All they care about is feeding their insatiable appetites; gratifying their corrupt flesh's base desires; debating illusions of pseudo-intellect such as political policy, economic theory, ideology, philosophy, morality, 'science', and religion; and indulging the silly fantasy that they are somehow superior to, and thus entitled to despise, others of their own species by reason of differences in race, gender, ethnicity, culture, nationality, modernity, and/or generation. Addicted to the rushes of adrenalin that these 'in the moment' pursuits provide, pagans naturally fear time – and the gentle ebbing and flowing types of change it inevitably brings. They consider time a thief, aging an outrage, and dying an abomination. They take 'selfie' after 'selfie', and shoot 'reel' after 'reel' in a desperate attempt to create an image of what they consider their 'best self' that they want to last forever.

The Holy One's people are to be different. We are here to serve as a strategic counterbalance and to offer a radical 'more excellent way' option. The Holy One wants us to approach time as a precious and benevolent friend instead of as a feared and hated foe. That is why the calendar the Holy One has given us to live by bears very little resemblance to the one observed by the world. The calendar the Holy One has ordained for us to follow takes into account and harmonizes five repeating factors. It harmonizes the *moon cycle* [from new moon to new moon] with the *solar cycle* [beginning and ending 'days' with sunsets and calculating years from the position of the sun *vis-à-vis* Jerusalem]. It harmonizes the *agricultural cycle of Eretz Yisrael*

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[seasons of seedtime and harvest; summer and winter] with both the annual and 7-year *Torah cycles* [*B'reshit* to *Ve Zot Ha-Beracha*, and 1st to 7th aliyot]. It also harmonizes all of these things with the cycle of *B'nei Yisrael's* national remembrances – *i.e.* the recurring sabbaths and moedim as well as the anniversaries of the prototypes of prophetic history, from the tearing down of the abomination of desolation erected by Antiochus Epiphanes in the days of the Maccabees to the foiling of Haman's plot of annihilation in the days of Esther, to the climactic three-weeks in which Jerusalem was besieged and overrun, first by the Babylonians then by the Romans.

Are You a Sanctifier of Time?

The Holy One has previously taught us that wisdom and holiness both start with *yare' Adonai* – the reverencing, worshipping, and conversing with the Holy One at all times. This leads to step two of the holiness journey, which is *sh'ma*-ing His Voice. This results in step three of the journey, which is *sh'mar*-ing the Covenant. This leads to step four, which is *asah*-ing all the *mitzvot*, *mishpatim*, and *chukim of Torah in practical ways in order that all people can see what life on earth is supposed to look like in fullness*. This leads to step five, which is *becoming holy* as He is holy – which involves learning to *love our neighbor, show true respect to and care for the poor, the blind, the deaf, the widow, the fatherless, the foreigner and even our enemy*. This leads to step six, which is *sanctifying every second, minute, hour, day, week, moon cycle, and year that He gives us the breath of life through strategically sequenced downloads of inspirational kedusha*. Through participating in a series of special events on this calendar that He has infused with revelation, the Creator offers us the opportunity of co-laboring with Him to reveal all the essential elements of His Glorious Plan for the Redemption for Mankind as a species and for the Restoration of Creation to Edenic state in a dramatic way - through acting out a stunning ten-act passion play every year.

Introducing the Kingdom of Heaven's Prophetic Passion Play

The next focus of the *Kedusha Discourse* is the Ancient of Days' special *calendar of redemptive themes and events*. I call this section of the discourse *the Great Calendar of Redemptive Events Download*. This particular revelation spring begins with us the Holy One saying:

Aleihem mo'adei Adonai

These are the Divine Appointments of the Holy One.

asher-tikrei'u otam mikra'ei kodesh

on which you are to hold prophetic rehearsals/commemorations

eleh hem mo'adei

These are Divine Appointments.

[Leviticus 23:2, author's translation]

Every play has a series of *acts*, which must be presented in chronological order to

make sense. Every Kingdom has *agenda items*, which must be addressed in turn. Every construction project has a *sequencing schedule*. Every Covenant has a *calendar*.

I have translated the mileposts on the Holy One's Calendar of Redemptive Themes and Events as *Divine appointments*. Some translations call them 'feasts' or 'festivals' instead. Which is correct? I have translated the things we are called to do at these calendared events as *Prophetic Rehearsals/Commemorations*. Some English translations call them 'holy convocations' or 'sacred assemblies' instead. The Hebrew sages describe them as 'callings of holiness'². Which is closer to what the Bridegroom-King was really calls forth in His original download in the language of the ancient Hebrew people?

We will explore such 'which is correct' issues in some detail a little later in these studies. Right now, however, let us just pause for a moment or two and try to get our minds around the fact that our Covenant Partner in Heaven operates under – and runs the Heavens and the Earth He created according to - a *calendar program*? Can we get a handle on the reality that our King is not being blindsided by and reacting to the events that occur in our lives, on the earth and/or in the Heavens above – but is out ahead of it all, and is orchestrating how it all goes down and how it all turns out, according to an intricately choreographed sequencing plan that has been around since Creation Week – if not before? And can we begin to grasp that our Beloved wants us, His Covenant Partners, not just to know about the calendar according to which He administrates His Kingdom and the Universe - but to *live by that calendar* instead of blindly following whatever system of measuring and marking time the fallen men of our nation and generation have sought to impose upon us?

It is A Matter of Divinely Inspired 'Time' Management

The Holy One does not need a calendar for the Courts of Heaven, of course, because what humans know as 'time' does not exist there. The Holy One also does not need a calendar to remind Him what day or season it is here on earth. The Holy One does not need a calendar to remind Him what the next phase of His Redemptive Plan consists of or when the next dramatic, history-altering Divine Intervention needs to occur. But the Holy One knows that on earth – and thus in the lives and generations of the men He created in His own image and loves so dearly - time is presently a 'thing'. On earth, for human beings, much of life seems to be about days and nights, times and seasons, months and years. That is, of

² The sages see each *mo'ed/miqra* of Leviticus 23 as a unique landmark in time at which those who participate as Torah enjoins become awakened to, inspired by, and empowered to put on the particular aspect of holiness that the Creator has embedded within the *moed*.

course, the way the Holy One designed and established it. **Genesis 1:14; Genesis 8:22.** And *oy*, does the One our Soul loves have some special events planned for this planet and its inhabitants! Before the foundation of the world, His Brilliant mind laid out a Grand Redemptive Plan consisting of pre-ordained stages and seasons of dramatic Visitation, Inspiration, Intervention, Course Correction, and Transformation. Long before the Fall, the One Whom Adam knew as *YHVH* had already strategized, mapped out, and assigned to a schedule a series of events through which He would bring restoration, reconciliation, and renewal to the earth and any of its inhabitants who would be willing to participate.

So, our Bridegroom-King is now ready to give anyone who will *sh'ma* the strategic advantage of a calendar that looks at years, at seasons, at the phases of the moon, and at the hours that fall between the evenings, through the lens of His Grand Redemptive Plan rather than through the lens of man's fear, folly, and frustration. The Holy One wants us to know that the calendar under which He administers the Kingdom of Heaven programs ten special acts/events of redemptive import into each year. Those ten special acts/events are:

1. *The Recurring Series of Seventh Day Sabbaths*
2. *Pesach* [Retelling/Passing on to the next generation the Awe- Inspiring Redemption Story]
3. *Chag HaMatzah* [The 7-day Season of Unleavening, Disentangling, and Detoxifying]
4. *Yom HaBikkurim* [The Day of Presenting the Firstfruits of the Re-leavening Season]
5. *Sefirat Ha-Omer* [The 7-week Season of Re-leavening/ Receiving Manna]
6. *Chag Shavuot* [The Celebration of Weeks; Greco-Latin rendering 'Pentecost']
7. *Yom T'ruah* [The Day we seek/receive a fresh burst of Divine Breath and incline our Ear to hear the 'joyful sound' of Shofar]
8. *Yom Kippur* [The Day of Atonement/Closing Out Books on the Prior Creation Year]
9. *Chag Ha-Sukkot* [The Joyful Season of Dwelling in Tents in order to Reconnect with our ancestors legacy]
10. *Sh'mini Atzeret* [The Crescendo/Finale' – a Rehearsal of the 'Day of the Holy One']

These *mo'edim* are intended by the Holy One to be much more than excuses to take a day off work. Each one is designed by the Holy One to serve as an *inspirational/empowering tool*. Each is a pre-ordained season of Divine visitation, based on a particular redemptive theme. Through these *mo'edim* the Holy One enlists us as His Kingdom Minstrels and Storytellers, to retell to our children and unveil to the world the sequential stages and phases of His Grand Plan of Redemption. Telescoped together this series of 'download days' that our King has programmed strategically into the year constitute the greatest of all "passion" plays. These '*mo'edim of the Holy One*' are designed to periodically turn our

homes, our faith communities, the highways and byways of pilgrimage, and our holy city of Jerusalem into *grand theaters of redemption* – open for view to us and our neighbors, to our prodigals and our children, to our friends, and even to our enemies.

It is our inestimable honor to be invited to participate in these *mo'edim*. It is our delight to meet with Him, commune with Him, and celebrate with Him the grand themes of redemption. But make no mistake, for anyone who accepts the calling to be an Ambassador of our Bridegroom-King and His Kingdom to the peoples and nations of the earth, participating in His glorious prophetic passion play of *mo'edim* is also an essential element of our reasonable service.

Feasts? Festivals? Or Something More?

Our English translations of Scripture usually refer to the special days our Bridegroom-King has set aside as “feasts” or ‘festivals’. Unfortunately those English words conjure up images of the many annual pagan celebrations of debauchery and observances of natural order like the ancient pagans of Babylon, Egypt and Kena’an – not to mention Greece, Rome, Spain, Italy and jolly old England - were culturally expected if not legally required to observe. In the time of Yeshua, for instance, all citizens and tributaries of Rome were expected to participate in a numbing series of pagan feasts and fertility festivals. Examples included *Agonalia*³, *Parentalia*⁴, *Lupercalia*⁵, *Equirria*, *Matronalia*, *Veneralia*, *Neptunalia*, *Bacchanalia*, and *Saturnalia*⁶. There were, of course, many others – as the Romans looked for any excuse to get sentimental, romantic, sensual, stuffed with food, and full of wine. The common thread between all these pagan feasts was that every one of them was dreamt up by the mind of man. They were all about sentiment and flesh. They all encouraged – indeed required - men to consort with spirits of uncleanness. They were always about indulging sensual and physical appetites. Men chose the dates of such ‘festivals’. Men came up with something to commemorate and/or some imaginary deity to venerate. And men – ever excited about the possibility of a party and a sensual show - established a series of traditions to accompany the party. The world has always had more than enough of such ‘feasts’ and ‘festivals’. It still does. They serve only to distract,

³ *Agonalia* is the festival of *Janus*, the Roman god of gates and doorways. This pagan festival was held in January to celebrate what to the Romans was the gateway into a new year.

⁴ *Parentalia* is the Roman festival remembering and honoring deceased parents and patriarchs. It was held in February of each year.

⁵ *Lupercalia* is the pagan festival to appease *Lupercus*, the wolf, and *Faunus*, the fertility god. This was held in mid-February.

⁶ *Saturnalia* is an ancient pagan festival held each December in honor of *Saturnus* [known by English speakers as ‘Saturn’], the ‘god of seeds and sowing’. The Greek name for this god was *Cronos*. The Roman statue of this god was hollow and filled with olive oil, as a symbol of his agricultural functions. His feet were bound with woolen strips that were unbound only during the *Saturnalia* festivities.

deceive, and corrupt the people of the Bridegroom King.

The special occasions set aside by our Bridegroom-King for us to meet with Him are *nothing like* – and should not even be compared to – to the feasts and festivals of pagans. The special occasions of the Holy One are not dreamt up by man; they are established by man’s Creator. The special occasions of the Holy One are not about men indulging their sensual fantasies and physical appetites; they are about reconnecting the Divine Sparks within them with the Eternal Source of those Sparks. The loose scripts that the Holy One has written in Scripture for the special occasions of the Holy One are not traditions of man to accompany ‘feasts’, or ‘festivals’ or make our party time more exciting; they are Divinely illumined pathways of a spiritual pilgrimage designed to take us from self-obsessed and flesh-oppressed to freedom, transcendence, destiny, and beyond.

The *mo’edim* are to the equivalent to the spiritual realm of life what lunar and solar eclipses are to the physical realm of life. They are *sanctified intervals in time when the physical world is overshadowed by the spiritual world*. Each *mo’ed* is a brainchild of no one but the Holy One. And the recognition and observation of these very special days by men of Covenant constitutes an essential part of the Holy One's Redemptive Plan for the world.

Solemn Assemblies? Holy Convocations? Or Something More?

As most English translations of the Bible render the Hebrew word *mo’ed* as “feast” or “festival”, so most English translations of the Torah translate the word *miqra* as “solemn assembly” or ‘holy convocation’. I implore you to reconsider those translations. Those phrases have connotations in contemporary society – drawn from pagan culture and practices – which are foreign to what the Holy One calls forth from us, which distract us from our purpose and destiny, and which cripple us in fulfilling our mission.

Contrary to what our English translations of Scripture say, the Holy One’s calendar does not contain anything that could rightly be thought of as ‘*solemn assemblies*’ or ‘*convocations*’. Those concepts are of pagan origin and import⁷. All of these focus on *man’s* activities. *Men* feast. *Men* assemble. *Men* convocate, and *men* act solemnly. Since these things are *man-centered* - *i.e.* belonging to the realm of the *chol* rather than to the realm of the *kadosh* - they invariably lead to *religious performances*, and to *programs* and *entertainment* designed to please and cater to

⁷ These terms – and the related term *congregate/congregation* – all tend to focus on what *man* does. They focus on *men* gathering, on *men* meeting together once they have gathered, on *men* particularly, professional clergymen, doing ‘spiritual stuff’ in each other’s presence, and for each other’s information at best and entertainment at worst. These are *chol* activities – not unlike the Tower of Babel, the ‘golden calf’, and the shrines built by Jeroboam on the high places of Israel, particularly at Dan and *Beit-El*.

the fleshly desires and appetites of *men*. All these constitute distractions from our task of *kiddush HaShem* – *i.e.* the glorification of the name of our Covenant Partner.

What the Holy One’s calendar does contain is *miqraot*. *Miqraot* is the plural form of the Hebrew noun *miqra*⁸. The verb root of the *miqra* is *qara*, which is to *read aloud*, or to *vocalize a scripted message*. Adding the action-indicating mem prefix to this word makes the Hebrew word *miqra*, which literally means *verbal reading, recital, or rehearsal, of a pre-determined script*. What the *miqraot* the Holy One has established for us to observe are therefore are not ‘holy convocations’ or ‘solemn assemblies’, but *Divinely called and scripted rehearsals of the Holy One’s past and future acts of deliverance and empowerment*.

As discussed above, the Holy One’s calendar is designed to function as *a perpetually running ‘passion play’ in which we are not celebrants but merely actors*. If you have ever acted in a play you know that before “opening night”, the director schedules a series of rehearsal meetings. At the first such meeting all that occurs is that the actors read the script out loud in a scheduled sequence. As “opening night” approaches however the rehearsals become more and more involved, gradually incorporating costumes, props, choreographed movements, music and whatever else it takes for the actors to “get into character”.

Putting the Concepts of Mo’edei and Miqra’ei Together

Combining these two Hebraic concepts we see that each scheduled meeting about which we will read in Leviticus 23 will be *a pre-arranged Divine Appointment when we are to meet and commune very personally and intimately with Him, and that the context and substance of our Divine Appointment will be the reading of a pre-arranged script, rehearsing out loud with families and friends a Script He has written just for the Day*. We have thus seen that each of the meetings with the Holy One called for by Him is a *rehearsal*. The question may be asked however as to whether these meetings with the Divine Bridegroom are intended to be rehearsals of *something that has already occurred* (like a play based upon a historic event) or rehearsals of something that is *going to occur in the future* (like a wedding rehearsal, for instance)?

The answer I believe is BOTH. Remember, “time” did not exist before Creation. Time will not exist after the Holy One brings Creation to its planned final state.

⁸ *Miqra* is Strong’s Hebrew word #4744, *mem, kuf, resh, alef*, pronounced *meek-raw*. The verb root of *miqra* is *qarah* [kuf, resh, alef], Strong’s Hebrew word #7121, meaning to speak something pre-written or decreed. *E.g.* the first usage of the verb in Torah, Genesis 1:5, where the Holy One “called” [*qarah*] the Light “*Day*” and called [*qarah*] the darkness “*night*”. The Holy One knew and planned and wrote in advance these things, and merely pronounced, or recited them, instilling them with the meaning He pre-intended. See also Genesis 1:8, 1:10, 2:19, 2:23, and 3:8.

Time is a function and dimension of the human being's life *on earth*. The Holy One does not look at time the way we do, asking "is this, or is that, past, present, or future"? The Holy One is the One Who was, and Who is, and Who is to come. The Holy One is *eternal*, never changes, and *never changes His appointments, rehearsals, or script*. Nothing "new" happens, from the Holy One's perspective. Everything that happens has happened before - and will happen again.

Each *Mo'ed* constitutes a scripted rehearsal of a redemptive event/occurrence conceived in the Mind of the Holy One as part of His Plan for the Redemption of Mankind and Creation. When we observe the *mo'edim* we merely make contact with, and flow in, the Holy One's eternal plan. We don't have to understand it. We certainly cannot improve upon it. We just *flow with it*, exercise our covenant privilege to *participate in it*, and *yield to what He is doing* in connection with it.

I know this concept is a bit hard for our finite minds to grasp. I will not dwell on it any further here. I will merely conclude this part of the discussion by saying that in light of the Holy One's eternity each *mo'ed* is both a commemoration of something [or series of things] that *has/have occurred in the past*, a declaration of something that is *occurring even as it is being rehearsed*, AND a prophetic rehearsal of something [or some series of things] that is *going to happen in what we think of as the future*.⁹

What the Holy One is prophetically pronouncing over and creatively calling forth from His Redeemed Community in Leviticus 23 is more than a series of parties, family reunions, shopping/recreation opportunities, or religious meetings. The world has plenty of those things. They are all 100% *chol* – *i.e.* at essence *man-conceived and man-centered*. We are called to something higher – something *kadosh*. We are called to something which is of both Divine Origin and Divine-focus – something that *sets us apart from all other peoples of the earth*. Hence in the prophetic utterances we read today what the Holy One is doing is nothing short of a *radical restructuring of our calendar*. He is re-arranging and repairing the way men in Covenant with Him relate to time. He is not saying "add some holidays to your calendar". He is instead saying [author's paraphrase]:

1] *By My empowerment you will no longer live by the calendar of the nations of the world.*

⁹ That is why the Bible can say that Yeshua is the "*Lamb slain before the foundation of the World*" - an event which preceded all Creation. It is also why the Bible can say that we were "crucified with Messiah", when we were not even yet born when the spikes were driven into His Hands and feet. Time, like the physical world in which we have been given to live, is merely a stage. The *reality* that matters most is not what occurs on time's stage, but what occurs outside time, *in the mind of the Holy One*, and in us to the extent we are "in" Messiah, and therefore *outside the boundaries of time*.

2] *Instead you will approach and learn to view time from My perspective, instead of from the perspective of un-redeemed man.*

3] *As you live by and structure your lives around the Divine prophetic calendar of Heaven you will begin to sanctify the realm of time, sowing My Holiness into the realm of time the way a farmer sows seed into his field;*

4] *You will thereby model for the rest of the nations and peoples of the world what it means to relate properly to the medium of Creation called “time”;*

5] *In due time you will be My Reapers, reaping on My behalf a series of harvests from nations and the peoples of the world.¹⁰*

That’s pretty awesome, is it not? So perhaps we should look at the “feasts” a little more closely.

The Ultimate Passion Play

Each of the *mo’edim* of our Divine Bridegroom constitutes an act in the greatest passion play the world has ever known. The Holy One Himself is the scriptwriter, producer and director. His Torah is our script. We are just actors. When we come together – or as we sit in our homes or in outdoor booths - we rehearse in full view of the world prophetic moments when Heaven and Earth have touched - or will one day touch. Through our participation in these special occasions not only are we to reconnect the Divine Sparks He has deposited in us with their Source, but we are testify to the entire world of His Amazing Plans and Strategies of Redemption.

Our King’s Plan of Redemption for Creation is grand and multi-faceted in scope. It has several essential elements. Each *mo’ed* He has established is carefully designed by Him to put a spotlight on and bring to the attention of the world one essential element of that Great Plan. Each *mo’ed* is an act in the great passion play. The Holy One calls on His People to rehearse, and act out, the Divine Drama of His 10-Act play. He gives us the Script. At first, all we can do is *read it in sequence*. But He meets with us at each scheduled rehearsal - and serves as our Divine-Director and Teacher. Over a lifetime, Divine encounter by Divine

^NNotice that the entire cycle of “feasts” is tied to harvest-time in *Eretz Yisrael*. From *Pesach* (at the time of the Barley Harvest), to *Shavuot* (at the time of the wheat harvest), to the Fall “Feasts” at the time of the harvest of grapes and other fruits, we see that the Holy One is preparing His people – whether they are farmers or vintners or not – to think in terms of harvest, and to understand the timing and stages of harvest as the Holy One has arranged them and will bring them about – in both the natural and the Spiritual realms.

encounter, empowerment by empowerment, we become more and more adept at our lines and more comfortable with the choreography. As we participate we *declare His Eternal Plan for Mankind* and *hold out to the world the Light it needs to dispel the darkness in which it is enveloped*.

By establishing for us a series of recurring commemorations the Holy One places us in the midst of a visible platform or stage upon which we are empowered and instructed to act out, week by week, year by year, for our children and for the world to see, the events and themes of His *redemption* and *sanctification*. These commemorations are given to us to enable us to infuse the elemental aspect of human existence on earth - time - with holiness, through participating with the Holy One in a Divinely scripted prophetic passion play drama.

The First Thing Each Mo'ed Constitutes Is a Scheduled Appointment With the Holy One

The Hebrew words transliterated *mo'edei* and *mo'edai* in verses 1-2 of our aliyah literally mean “*appointments*” or “*appointed times*”. See e.g. the use of this word family in Genesis 17:21 – when the Holy One advised Avraham that he would return and cause Sarah to give birth to Avraham’s child of promise, Yitzchak, at the “set time” [the time of divine pre-arranged appointment] that year. With the Holy One, you see, everything is manifested at a “set time”. The *mo'edei* and *mo'edai* merely constitute the Holy One’s sharing of His Divine Schedule of set times with us.

The most essential element of each *mo'ed* on the Kingdom's Calendar is a *p'nei al-p'nei* – i.e. face to Face - encounter with our Covenant Partner and Bridegroom-King. The *mo'edim* require us to go to our Beloved King's Courts, humbly enter with a carefully selected love-gift, and spend time in His Presence, both speaking with Him and listening to Him.

These *mo'edim* are therefore not in any wise like the holidays of the world system. The world's 'holidays' are just parties - raucous affairs at which men focus on their flesh, overeating, drinking more than normal, overindulging in worldly pleasures, and overdosing on everything sensual and sentimental. The *mo'edim*, on the other hand, are ***'Lo Eyeicha, Adam'*** days. They are ***'Lech Lecha, Avram'*** days. They are ***'To Your Descendants I Will Give This Land'*** days. They are Melchi-Tzedekian Bread and Wine tasting days. They are Flaming Torch of Covenant Passing Through the Pieces days. They are ***Walk Before Me and Be Blameless*** days. They are ***Do Not Pass Your Servant By*** days. And they are ***On the Mountain of the Holy One He Will Be Seen*** days. They are ***Two Nations are In Your Womb*** days. They are ***Do Not Go Down To Egypt*** days. They are Ya'akov's ladder days, and ***I Will Not Let You Go Until You Bless Me*** days, and ***I Will Make of You a Great***

Nation There days. They are *burning thorn bush* days. They are ***Say to Pharaoh ‘Shelach Ami’*** days. They are ***Stand and See Yeshuat Adonai*** days. They are ***I Will Make All My Goodness Pass Before You*** days. They are *Glory of YHVH Filling the Temple* Days. They are ***I am the Holy One, Who Brought You Out of Egypt*** days. They are ***Be Holy as I am Holy*** days.

Each *mo’ed* on the Kingdom Calendar loses its meaning for us – and loses the power of its message to the world – the moment we start to make its observance about throwing a party or bash, or about rest and leisure, or about following a tradition, or even about indulging nostalgia for ancient Hebrew culture. The *mo’edim* are not about the flesh; they are about *the Calling*.

Staying ‘On Schedule’ With the Bridegroom-King’s Times and Seasons

Think of it like this. Much like people might make appointments in advance to see doctors, lawyers, accountants, and business contacts, or set dates in advance for important events (weddings, parties, etc.), the Holy One has undertaken to schedule special *appointments* – pre-arranged meetings, with His People. The purpose of each such meeting is a little different, but all are on the same theme of the DEEP, ABIDING, FRUITFUL RELATIONSHIP He desires to have with His Creation in general and mankind in particular.

The family of Hebrew nouns from which *mo’edei* and *mo’edai* are derived all come from the ancient verb root *ya’ad*¹¹. The literal meaning/translation of this word is to *meet with* someone *and commune/converse* with that someone *very personally and intimately*. The *yod* [which makes the “y” sound] is a Hebraic pictograph symbolizing the Divine Hand, reaching down from Heaven, toward man. The *ayin* [in this case, the “ah” sound], is a Hebraic pictograph representing the soul of man. The *dalet* [the “d” sound] is a Hebraic pictograph of a door, passageway, or portal into another realm or dimension.¹² The hieroglyphic picture of this combination of Hebrew consonants is of the Holy One initiating an encounter, in which He takes/carries the soul of man through a portal, outside the realm of time, to the threshold of Heaven. For illustrative usages of this verb root see Exodus 25:22, where the Holy One tells Moshe:

I will ya’ad [meet with] ***you, and I will speak to you from above the mercy seat, from between the two Keruvim which are on the ark of the testimony***

Another illustrative usage of the verb root *ya’ad* is Exodus 29:3, where the Holy

¹¹ *Ya’ad* is *yod, ayin, dalet*. It is pronounced *yaw’-awd*.

¹² The first usage of this word in Torah is in the context of BETROTHAL. See Exodus 21:8-9. It can be seen, therefore, that the meetings/appointments in question are *an integral part of the betrothal and marriage relationship that the Holy One has established with His People*.

One announces:

There [i.e. at the altar in the outer court of the Mish'kan]
I will ya'ad [meet with] *the children of Yisra'el;*
and the place shall be sanctified by my glory.

Hence, we see that a *mo'ed* is not merely a “feast” or a “festival”, but a *scheduled appointment when we are to meet with our Divine Bridegroom* - and be transformed by the encounter. The emphasis is not on what *we* do [like a ‘feast’ or ‘festival’], but on what the Holy One *has done, outside the realm of time*. Each *mo'ed* part of us exits, and part of us remains within, the realm of time. During the *mo'edei*, we are only partially subject to time’s demands and constraints. Our souls ascend, and meet with, and become one with the Holy One – outside the constraints of time, space, and the physical world. And yet, our bodies [for now at least] remain firmly anchored in the realm of time.

Think of each *mo'ed* as something like the *Transfiguration* of Moshe and Messiah Yeshua¹³. While our physical appearance may not visibly ‘shine’ as did Moshe’s face or Messiah Yeshua’s body as a result of our Divine Encounter, we are nevertheless transfigured. We are to be changed dramatically, going from ‘glory to glory’. Spots and blemishes are to be removed from our souls. Our minds are to be renewed. We are to be readied for another, higher level of holiness in the next cycle of time we will encounter at the conclusion of the *mo'ed*. With that in mind let’s explore the *mo'edim/miqraot* described in Leviticus 23 one by one. First let us explore the first and most elemental *mo'ed/miqra* – the one that started it all and will end it all – the 7th day Shabbat.

The Seventh Day Shabbat [Sabbath]

The first *mo'ed/miqra* which the Holy One establishes for us – the cornerstone of our Divine Bridegroom’s calendar, upon which every other *mo'ed/miqra* is based, and to which every *mo'ed/miqra* is related - is ***Ha-Shabbat*** [the Sabbath] – the special period of time extending from the conclusion of every sixth day [sundown each Friday] through the conclusion of every seventh day [sundown each Saturday]. The Holy One tells us in verse 4 of Leviticus 23:

Sheshet yamim te'aseh melachah
Six days you are to do your creative work,

¹ Both these transfigurations could well have occurred on *Yom Kippur*. While Scripture does not specifically say so in either case, the tradition of the sages is that Moshe received the second set of the tablets of Torah [causing his face to begin to shine] on *Yom Kippur*, the 10th of Tishri, *the Day of Atonement*. And in light of the fact that when Yeshua’s countenance began to shine the first thing Kefa mentioned was building *sukkot* [shelters/tabernacles] it is likely that the transfiguration of Yeshua took place on 10 Tishri as well – for that day at sundown is when the building of *sukkot* for the celebration of the Festival of Ingathering [***Chag Sukkot***], which begins on 4 days later on 14 Tishri, is traditionally commenced.

uvayom ha-shvi'i Shabat Shabaton miqra-kodesh

The seventh day is a Sabbath of Sabbaths, a day rehearsing/commemorating a holy event,

kol-melachah lo ta'asu

From all acts of creative works you are to rest

Shabat hi l'Adonai b'chol mosh'votchem

Wherever you may live, it is the Holy One's Sabbath.

Now, consider for a moment the calendar of man. It is built upon *astronomical phenomenon*. It is made up of astrological phenomenon like *days* and *months* and *years*. What is a “day”? A “day” is the period of time it takes for the earth to rotate 360 degrees on its axis. What is a month? A “month” is the period of time it takes for the moon to complete its cycle, from new, to quarter, to half, to full, to quarter, and back to new. What is a year? A “year” is the period of time it takes for the earth to complete its orbit of the sun.

Notice the pattern? The world calculates time based upon *astronomical cycles observable by man's natural eye*. But wait! Something else has crept into the calendar of man – something we know of as the “*week*”. From where, do you think, this measurement of time came? What exactly is a “week”, anyway, pray tell? What observable astronomical phenomenon does a seven-day “week” measure or define? Have you ever thought about it? Ah Dear Reader, you stand at the brink of understanding the secret of the Holy One's calendar. It is not at its essence based upon any observable astrological phenomena. Before dealing with any “yearly” or “monthly” event, the Holy One establishes something radical as the foundation stone of the calendar by which we are to live. You see, a “week” commemorates nothing astronomical at all. A “week” commemorates only one thing - the seven days of Creation as described in Torah. The “week” is something the calendar of man unknowingly picked up from Torah through interactions with the Hebrews. The *week* exists only for – and by reason of – one thing - the Creator's *Shabbat!*

A 'Holiday'? Or Something Much More?

The first instruction the Holy One gives relating to how we are to structure our lives in relation to what we know of as ‘time’ is that we are to work six days¹⁴, and commemorate the Holy One's prophetic blessing over the seventh day of Creation on the anniversary thereof. This is, of course, highly offensive to the world. How dare we – or anyone – some in the world will always say, interrupt commerce, profit taking, religion, and entertainment once every seven days just to delight in our Creator and to let Him delight in us? It is *not natural*, they say. And they are

¹⁴I have previously discussed the Divine Order of speech – first a positive instruction, then a negative instruction, and finally an explanation of the reason for one or both. The instruction “**six days you are to work**” is the *positive instruction*. The Holy One fully intends for us to be productive and creative on 6 of the 7 days. He does not intend for us to take two “sabbaths” back-to-back.

right. It is not “natural”. It is solely spiritual.

Consider that Shabbat is intended by the Creator to be much, much more for man than a “day of rest”. If it were only a “day of rest” it could be taken any time – on any day. [Many now take what they call a day of “rest” on Sunday (the *first* day) for instance]. But our Divine Bridegroom makes it very clear *when* we whose troth has been pledged to Him are to take our “rest”. It is to be the *seventh day*. Why? Why is one day better to “rest” than the other six? Because it is not as much about rest in body as it is about rest in *Him*. The ‘rest’ we are programmed to experience on Shabbat is so much deeper than a little time off work for recreation or shopping or mowing the yard. We are to DELIGHT in His Shabbat – the way He does. We are to join our hearts with Him. We are to bask in His Presence. We are to stop all our striving and LISTEN for and to His Voice. We are to let Him tell us stories – about what HE wants to talk about. We are to let Him teach us His Torah. We are to be children of the Kingdom, gathered around His Throne. We are to become courtiers, attending, perusing, and delighting in the halls, chambers and furnishings of the Heavenly *Mish’kan*. We are to soak up the Light of His Countenance. We are to receive Beauty for our Ashes, and the Oil of Gladness for our garment of despair. And in the process, we are to find rest not only for our bodies, but for our souls.

Moreover, think for a moment about what the Holy One tells us we are to commemorate – and rehearse – on that day. In other words, what exactly happened on the seventh day – and will happen on some future seventh day - that makes that day special? We have to go back to Genesis to find out. There we read: *V’yevarech Elohim et-yom ha-shvi’i* [And God blessed the seventh day ...] Genesis 2:3. Is not whatever the Holy One has blessed *forever*? Of course it is! The seventh day was blessed at Creation, and it is still blessed today. It will continue to be blessed tomorrow and the next day and for all eternity. Our Divine Bridegroom’s Word – and His Blessing - endure forever. The seventh day therefore bears the Holy One’s blessing. But what does that mean, you ask? Hebraically, to ‘*ble*s’¹⁵ means *to release the object of the blessing from restrictions and limitations*. Shabbat is blessed. It is thus not an ordinary 24-hour period. It is a 24-hour period of *unlimited, unrestricted spiritual possibility*. On the seventh day of Creation the Holy One released over the specific island in time we calculate as sundown on Friday till sundown on Saturday, something wonderful, refreshing, and uplifting – something transcendent, and which has unlimited spiritual capacity and potential¹⁶.

By ‘blessing’ the 7th day the Holy One made it an *island in time where Heaven*

¹⁵ The Hebrew verb our English Bibles translate as ‘bles’ is *barach* - *beit, resh, chet*.

¹⁶ The sages of Israel speak of the world to come [the new heavens and the new earth] as *yom sh’kalo Shabbat* – a *time that is all Shabbat*. This is the ultimate state of release from restrictions and limitations.

touches earth in a unique manner. It is a period of seconds, minutes, and hours over which the supernatural, creative, prophetic blessing of the Holy One hovers, waiting for a person on which to light. It is an “*enchanted garden*”. It is a chance for human beings to step through the mundane into the holy, through the temporal into the eternal. During the blessed seconds, minutes, and hours of the *Shabbat*, therefore, each breath we take, each thought we think, each morsel of food we ingest, each conversation in which we engage with our family members and friends, each swallow of water or wine, each prayer we may pray, is – or can be – BLESSED – mixed, as it is of the sweet residue of the blessing the Holy One spoke lovingly over His Creation.

Wow! No wonder resting on Shabbat is qualitatively different from – and more refreshing and restorative than - resting on any other day.

The Essential, Eternal Holiness of the 7th Day

The fact that the Holy One’s blessing rests upon the seventh day is only half the story. After telling us that the Holy One “*blessed the seventh day*” Genesis 2:3 continues by saying: ... *V’yekadesh oto ...* [... *and He made it holy ...*] The seventh day is simply not like other days. It has been infused by the Holy One with an essential, over-riding aura of holiness. You can acknowledge it or you can reject it, enjoy it or ignore it, but *you cannot change it*. You can choose to work, or barbeque, or go bowling, or play Nintendo, work on your car, or tend your garden if you wish – but you are, thereby, letting something holy and blessed pass you right by, and saying “no, Thanks!” The Holy One says, STOP! Let ME plan one day a week. Make no plans. Let the distractions of your daily lives, and the drive to “do something”, go. Take a deep breath. In so doing, you will breathe into your soul both My *Blessing* and My *Holiness*.

A Note on the Holy One’s ‘Script’ for the Shabbat

The so-called ‘fourth commandment’ delivered to all of the Redeemed Community at Sinai instructs us to ***Zachor et-yom ha Shabbat l’kadsho*** [*Remember the Sabbath to keep it holy.*] Exodus 20:8. We do not have to – and for that matter cannot - make the Sabbath holy. Thank Heaven! The Holy One made every seventh day holy long ago – before we were ever born. All we are called upon to do is *commemorate* [Hebrew, *zachar*, usually mistranslated as ‘remember’] it in such a way as to *keep it holy*. This means we do not let its holiness or blessing pass us by, but *participate in it* – we, our sons, our daughters, our servants, our maids, our burden-bearing animals, and even the ‘foreigner’ in our midst.

How are we to participate in it? We are not told to do anything specific on it except to *commemorate* it and to ‘*keep it holy*’. So *how* are we to participate? Torah gives

us a lot of latitude. We are merely told:

- not to do any *regular work* [in Hebrew, *melachah*] on it¹⁷.
- not to ‘gather manna’¹⁸ on it
- not to kindle a fire on it throughout our habitations¹⁹,
- not to *go out of our place, but to abide every man in his place* on it²⁰,
- not to gather wood [for building materials] on it²¹,
- to remember on it that we were servants in the land of Egypt, and that the

Holy One brought us out from bondage through a mighty hand and an outstretched arm²²

While the *mish'kan* was functioning, the kohanim as ‘friends of the Bride’ were told:

- to make *korban olah* [total surrender of our lives to the Holy One]²³ on it,
and
- to place the ‘bread of the Presence’ in the holy place on the ‘table of showbread’ on it.

While a whole body of other restrictions and practices have been imposed upon it by man in the name of ‘Sabbath-keeping’ *halakah*, Torah itself does not say a whole lot else about it other than what I have stated above. That is because the Shabbat is not a day like others, on which man is supposed to be all caught up in ‘doing’ things. *Shabbat* is not about activities. It is instead a *river of spiritual life* flowing by us. The Holy One calls us to surrender to it – to take the ‘*Nestea Plunge*’ into this River and let it carry us along wherever it takes us. We are not well served at all to ignore it and just ‘go about our business’ as if it were an ordinary day. We are not well served either to either try to dam it up so it stops flowing or try to change its course so it is less inconvenient or fits better into our theology. And we are definitely not well served at all to stand on its bank as spectators and point out pitiful, bony fingers at those who we think in our fallible human brains do – or do not – ‘do it right’.

What about holding religious services on Shabbat? There is no specific direction that we do this in Torah. Nor is there a specific prohibition against it in Torah. If there is a religious service held, therefore, that service must be structured and conducted so as to complement and enhance, never compromise, the holiness and

¹⁷ Exodus 20:10; 31:14-15, 35:2; see also Deut. 5:14.

¹⁸ Exodus 16:26.

¹⁹ Exodus 35:3.

²⁰ Exodus 16:29.

²¹ Numbers 15:32.

²² Deuteronomy 5:15.

²³ Numbers 28:10

blessing of the day. It must be primarily about inspiration, not education. It must be primary about covenant-faithfulness, not congregational promotion. It must be focused primarily on our hunger for intimacy with the Holy One, not on our desire for fellowship with our fellow man. We must take care not to focus on the Shabbat gathering, or a Shabbat liturgy, or even a Shabbat drash or midrash, and miss the whole point of the Shabbat. While Yeshua's *custom* was to attend synagogue gatherings on Shabbat, please note that every time He did so He totally disrupted the order of service and wound up cutting the meeting short. Sometimes He did this by casting out an unclean spirit; other times He did it by healing somebody or by saying something He knew full well that would offend those in charge to the point they would stop whatever they were doing and give Him their full – if not loving – attention.

If I should be blessed to live 80 years I will at the end of my life have had an opportunity to experience 4,160 seventh day Shabbats. The Shabbat is 'Our Day With the King'. It is His uninterrupted time with His Sons and Daughters. It is His supercharged 'Wisdom and Mercy Download Day'. Our calling – and our privilege - is to cherish every Shabbat like a connoisseur of fine wine cherishes a glass of premium Bordeaux. Personally, I look forward each week to the traditional *Erev Shabbat* home ceremony – lighting candles before sundown, making *kiddush*, saying traditional blessings over the *challot*, covering my wife with my *tallit* and reciting the *Eishet HaChayil* [woman of virtue reading from Proverbs 31] over her. I cherish the opportunity Shabbat affords me each week to lay my hands upon and bless the children the Holy One has placed in my charge, and discuss the Torah portion of the week with any friends who drop by. I delight in taking a fresh look at Creation and Redemption, and seeing all the physical, tangible, and material things and circumstances in my life and in the world through refreshed, renewed eyes – without the pressure of the day-to-day work responsibilities and deadlines hanging over my head. I am refreshed and inspired even further when I gather with my friends to synergize and synchronize over the prophetic implications and amazing revelations of the week's Torah portion. But I do not pretend to believe that these things are mandated by Torah as 'the way' to *zachor* the Shabbat. Nor do I presume for a moment that I – or any other human being alive today – has apprehended even a small measure of the fullness of what it truly means to *zachor* the Shabbat. May He lead us all, step-by-step into that fullness – and may He do it *soon*.

Introducing the First Annually Recurring Moed: Pesach [Passover]

The First annually recurring act of the Grand Passion Play scripted for us by our Bridegroom King to tell the world of His Redemptive Plan is the Divine Drama of *Passover*. The Holy One instructs us:

On the fourteenth day of the first month at twilight is the Holy One's Pesach [Passover].
[Leviticus 23:5]

What is so special about *Passover*? Why does the Holy One our God want us to celebrate it over and over again, each and every year of our lives? Why, in every generation, forever, are we told emphatically by our Bridegroom-King to gather our families and friends around us on the evening of the 14th day of Aviv/Nisan, eat bitter herbs and unleavened bread, and relive an ancient story of glorious redemption? Ah, Beloved ones, it is quite a story! The Great Mo'ed of Passover is one action-packed evening. It occurs each year on the night of the Full Moon of the first Biblical month. It is the day when, in remembrance of the First Exodus, we all become freshly freed slaves again. For one night we are *wide-eyed pilgrims* all. We do not gather on this special evening simply to listen to the Passover story; we gather to *re-live it!* We take our spouses, children, and friends by the hand, cross the sands of time, and travel across the earth and the ages to the land of ancient Egypt. We personally experience, through this Divine Appointment, what it is like to be enslaved, oppressed, and threatened with extinction. Together we see and marvel at the miracle of great deliverance the Holy One has wrought for us, and together we taste as if for the first time the sweet flavor of the bread of freedom.

The plan of the Holy One is that through the observance of this Divine Appointment the hunger for, delight in, and trust in His Delivering Power is programmed into every human being. In each generation, in each individual household, His plan is that we relive and identify personally with the greatest redemption story ever told. He wants us to carry the power of Passover into every conversation, every interaction, every situation, every circumstance, every day, every week, every season, and every year of our lives. As we wrestle with life, with secular societies, with pagan mindsets, and with the darker side of our own souls, we are constantly about the business of being delivered from the tyrant by our God, and of starting over with nothing of value but our covenant relationship with Him. We are thus constantly being led by the Holy One through the stages of the eternal journey from bondage to freedom.

The Holy One is the Playwright; We are the Players

Because the 'script' of instructions for commemorating the Passover was given in the Book of Exodus, the Holy One does not repeat those instructions in *Sefer Vayikra*. In today's legal language however we would say that those instructions are 'incorporated by reference as if reproduced verbatim'. Essential elements of those instructions are:

1. Putting away the leaven from the house on the day of preparation;
2. beginning a 7-day fast of leaven and products made therefrom;
3. eating matzah [unleavened bread] with bitter herbs, and

4. retelling the story of the journey from bondage to freedom to our children and our children's children.

On this day the Holy One calls us to join millions across the world in the celebration of the amazing Journey He has arranged for us to transition from Bondage to Freedom. This is the day when fathers laugh and weep at the same time as they bask in the opportunity to tell the ancient story to their sons one more - perhaps one last - time. This is thus the day of which it is written: *Then you are to say to your son: 'We were slaves of Pharaoh in Egypt, and the Holy One brought us out of Egypt with a mighty hand; and the Holy One showed signs and wonders before our eyes, great and severe, against Egypt, Pharaoh, and all his household. Then He brought us out from there, that He might bring us into/give us the land of which He swore to our fathers. And the Holy One enjoined us to observe all these statutes, to fear the Holy One our God, for our good always, that He might preserve us alive, as it is this day.'*

The house. Is it ready for Passover? Are our children? Are we?

The Holy One instructs us on the day before the Passover to *remove leaven [Hebrew se'or] from our houses*. This is not *just 'sin'*. This is not *just 'pride'*. This is every foreign and *chol* or *tamei* influence – *i.e.* everything other than that which the Holy One's Words have declared to be part of our lives.

In the physical realm the props we use to tell this story to the members of our households and the outside world each year are *bread and dough-products that have risen or which have been exposed to yeast or other forms of natural leaven*. But Passover involves and calls for far more than a mere dietary change. Dinner rolls and cakes are not the real problem we are called to deal with. This is our designated time of the year to examine our lives to see what foreign ingredients we have added to them – what elements of our worldview, opinions, habits of thought, patterns of conduct, and relationships are colored by something other than His Words and His Ways. As we discover those foreign ingredients – or failing that, as He exposes them for what they are – this is our appointed time to eliminate all those ingredients and begin again to live only according to His Plan and Instructions.

On Passover we are to commit again to accept and maintain only unleavened thoughts, unleavened attitudes, unleavened opinions, unleavened expectations regarding ourselves, unleavened expectations regarding others, unleavened conversations, unleavened prayers, unleavened wisdom, unleavened counsel, unleavened facial expressions and body language, unleavened interactions, and

unleavened acts of kindness²⁴. The hunger for these is the reason we eat unleavened bread. Seven days just does not seem nearly long enough. There is so much leaven coming forth from each of us. Selfish attitudes, self-righteous opinions. Critical words. Sarcasm, vanity, self-promotion, accusation, slander, belittling, soapbox theologizing - oh my! If we want to be real we will acknowledge that is going to take several more days - and a lot more coals from Your altar on our lips, our eyes, our ears, our mouths, and our hearts for us to think like He designed us to think, speak like He designed us to speak, and be a blessing to Creation the way he designed us to. But we have to start somewhere. And Passover is our appointed time to start.

Bitter Herbs?

In Exodus 12:8 the Holy One said of the Passover: "... with *marorim* [*i.e.* bitter herbs] they shall eat it." What really constitute *marorim*? Does the Holy One mean only horseradish, which has become traditional? Or could chicory, coriander, dandelion, sow-thistle, wild lettuce, hawkweed, horehound, kale, sorrel, or watercress be considered *marorim*? How about wormwood? The real question each of us needs to answer is *what makes YOU bitter - either about the state of bondage in which you presently find yourself OR about what you fear you would have to give up in order to actually break free of that state of bondage?* The answer to this question depends upon what it is that you will miss - and not miss - when the Bridegroom calls you forth from your personal Pharaoh, your private taskmaster, and your emotional/intellectual/spiritual Egypt.

Passover is the gift of the Creator to catalyze a dramatic transformation of our souls. Through our participation in the Passover protocol each year He empowers us to transform from a self-obsessed larva in a safe but restricting cocoon to a graceful and free-flying butterfly at peace with Creation and actively engaged in a Divine mission to pollinate the world with the life force of the Kingdom of Heaven.

Passover is not just a night of vigil and remembrance; what it is about is the publication of a Divine Call to awaken every human soul - and every heart and household which will respond - to a purpose, destiny, and mission far greater than anything the mind or bodily appetites of man can even imagine, must less fathom. Passover is about redefining and elevating who we are and reconnecting with why we are here. It is about embracing and learning to cooperate with the Grand Divine Strategy to set us free from everything negative we have in ignorance or self-

²⁴ Have you considered, for instance, what 'Unleavened Love' looks like? Think about how your approach to the Holy One, yourself, your spouse, your children, your parents, your siblings, your friends, and your co-workers, as well as to strangers and enemies, would change if you 'unleavened' your love. The first priority of the unleavening season, you see, should be the unleavening of love.

obsession thought, said, or done vis-à-vis our Creator, other people and nations, and Creation itself. Passover is the epic story of transcendence, set in real life, in real time. It is the story of the ultimate deliverance, inspiring all generations of mankind to consider embarking afresh upon the greatest of all journeys - the journey from the death trap of bondage to the perverse will and self-obsessed ways of thinking of fallen man to the joy and delight of communing and co-laboring with the Creator of the Universe.

Sitting down at the Passover table with the Great Cloud of Witnesses of a thousand generations, past, present and future, is a response of faith to a Divine Invitation to the ultimate pilgrimage. This is not just another holiday to be celebrated - it is a life-changing, priority-reshaping odyssey to be relived and experienced this time each year of our lives, lest we forget that we were made for so much more than making other men's bricks. Some are bound by chains; others by uncontrolled emotions. Some are in bondage to soldiers; others to cynicism. And then comes Passover. Some people are happy to stay exactly as they are, where they are, talking about what everyone around them is talking about, thinking and behaving as they have been programmed by their culture, their peer group, or the form of secularism or religion most familiar to them to think and behave; others cry out for destiny, purpose and a reason to press forward, become all they were created to be, and do all they were created to do.

Passover is brilliantly designed by our Creator to empower the latter group in their quest. A shofar is blowing. Lambs are bleating. Jerusalem - the City of the Great King - is calling! The Celebration of our Journey to Freedom - with People of the Covenant from all ages, nations and walks of life - is beckoning. The Great Banquet of the Kingdom of Heaven draws near. The invitations have been issued. The room has been prepared. The meal is to die for. The Guest of Honor earnestly desires to spend this special appointed time with you.

Everyone grab as much *matzah* as you can carry. Someone grab a pestle, mortar, and a nice collection of bitter herbs, and let's be off. *L'Chayim to all who have set their hearts upon pilgrimage!* See you along the ancient paths!

Questions For Today's Study

1. The “festivals” of the Holy One, as we have been taught to call them, are rehearsals of the most stunning redemptive and sanctifying acts of our God, past, present and future, through which the Holy One intended for His Redeemed People to tell the world about the wonders of His redemption, His sanctification, and His covenant faithfulness. These *Mo'edim* are the subject of today's aliyah. These pre-set appointments for the Holy One's People to meet with their God are

discussed not only in *Vayikra* [Leviticus], but in each of the books of Torah except *B'reshit* [Genesis].

[A] In what chapter of Exodus are the instructions for the *mo'edim* set forth?

[B] In what chapter of *B'midbar* [Numbers] are the instructions for the *mo'edim* discussed?

[C] In what chapter in Deuteronomy is participation in and observance of the *mo'edim* commanded?

[D] How is the focus in the 23rd chapter of *Vayikra* [Leviticus] different from the focus of the other discussions of and instructions concerning the *mo'edim*?

2. List each of the “appointments with the Holy One” which *Vayikra* [Leviticus] 23:1-22 says to observe. Make three columns, one with the Hebrew name of the “appointment”, the second with the name of that “appointment” as it is commonly spoken in English, and the third with the historical (and/or prophetic) Spiritual event that festival commemorates. [Hint: the Hebrew names, in order, of the *mo'edim* we study today are the “*Shabbat*”, *Pesach*, *Matzah*, *Sefirat HaOmer*, *Yom HaBikkurim*, and *Shavuot*.]

3. The next “prophetic rehearsal” on the Holy One’s calendar, the one until which we are presently counting the days by “counting the *omer*” (a measure of grain) each day, is *Shavuot* [known to readers of English Bibles as the day of *Pentecost*].

[A] List the things that the Holy One says are to be done at that “prophetic rehearsal”.

[B] How is the grain offering to be different from the grain offering made the first day after the Sabbath after *Pesach* [Passover]?

[C] What do the various offerings spelled out in Leviticus 23:15-23 symbolize/represent for us, now that there is no physical *Mish'kan* [Tabernacle] in which to present grain and animal *korbanot* (animals which serve as surrogates for men and women who wish to approach the Holy One for a specific reason)?

[D] What past events do we celebrate and publicize to the world through participation in this “prophetic rehearsal” or “divine appointment”?

[E] What future event do we celebrate and publicize to the world through participation in this “prophetic rehearsal” or “divine appointment”?

4. In today’s Haftarah reading the prophet *Yechezkiel* [Ezekiel] continues discussing priests after the order of Tzadok – the ones who will minister in the “inner sanctuary” in the end-days.

*Neither are they to shave their heads, nor allow their locks to grow long;
they are only cut off the hair of their heads.*

Neither are any of the Kohanim to drink wine when they enter into the inner court.

*Neither are they to take for their wives a widow, nor her who is put away;
but they are to take virgins of the seed of the house of Yisra'el,
or a widow who is the widow of a Kohen.*

*They are to teach my people the difference between the k'dosh and the chahal,
and cause them to discern between things tamei and things tahor.*

[Ezekiel 44:20-23]

[A] What four things does today's Haftarah aliyah say these priests are not to do?

[B] What four things does today's Haftarah aliyah say these priests are to do?

5. In the B'rit Chadasha reading for today *Kefa* [Peter] distinguishes between two groups of people. The distinguishing factor between the groups is how each responds to the placement of the "cornerstone" laid in Tziyon by the Holy One. Assume the word "cornerstone" as used in this passage means a stone marking the boundary line or demarcation point between two different kingdoms - the kingdom of Light and the kingdom of Darkness.

*For you therefore who sh'ma is the honor, but for such lo sh'ma,
"The stone which the builders rejected has become the chief cornerstone,"
and, "A stone of stumbling, and a rock of offense."
For they stumble at the word, lo sh'ma-ing, whereunto also they were appointed.*

[I Peter 2:7-8]

[A] What does it mean to "trust" in the cornerstone (or boundary marker)?

[B] What kind of conduct would you expect from someone who does not "trust" in the cornerstone?

[C] Where would a person fall if he or she "tripped" or "stumbled" over the cornerstone?

[D] If a builder rejects the cornerstone, where is he likely to build whatever he is building?

[E] Do you think the "cornerstone" referred to by Yeshayahu and the Psalmist (both of which Kefa quotes) was the Torah, or the teaching of Mashiach? Is there any difference in those two? If so, what is that difference?

May you find your place in the mo'edim and miqraot of the Holy One!

The Rabbi's son

Meditation for Today's Study

Psalm 65:1-2

*Praise waits for you, O Holy One, in Tziyon.
To you shall vows be performed.
You who hear prayer - to You all men come.*