

The Fall Festivals 5786

In the previous years, I have chosen one of the Fall Festivals and have discussed it; however, this year I would like to briefly mention all four of these Appointed Days of the L-rd and provide the reader with the main message for this holiday. The four fall festivals are Rosh HaShanah, Yom Kippur, Sukkot, and Sh'mini Azteret. Please note that the Biblical name for the first of these festivals is called the "memorial of blowing" or the "day of blowing", referring to the sounding of the Shofar (Ram's Horn). The second festival is actually found in the plural (see Leviticus 23:27), therefore it is Biblically called the "day of atonements". The third festival is also known in English as the feast of tabernacles and finally the fourth festival is called in English the eighth day assembly.

What is the primary message of each of these appointed days of the L-rd? This is what we will examine in this article. In regard to the "memorial of blowing" or the "day of blowing", it is most significant that in the synagogue we read from the binding of Isaac (Genesis Chapter 22). Abraham is instructed to take his son, his only son, to the land of Moriyah. The term Moriyah can be understood as meaning the L-rd is my teacher. Hence, G-d is teaching the reader something through this event. In the land of Moriyah is the Temple Mount and most understand the events mentioned in Genesis Chapter 22 as taking place at this location. In Genesis 22:14, one reads that Abraham called the name of this place יְהוָה יִרְאֶה. Although most translate this phrase as "*The L-rd will provide*", this is not accurate. The literal translation is, "*The L-rd will see*". The emphasis from Abraham's perspective is that the L-rd was watching him and knew everything that was happening. The G-d of the Scriptures is a blessed G-d and because He is watching, He will see what is lacking and indeed He will provide. Although the outcome is the same, the Biblical emphasis is on the L-rd seeing His people and meeting our needs. In the last part of verse 14, we read, אֲשֶׁר יֹאמַר הַיּוֹם, בְּהָרִי יִרְאֶה בְּהָרִי, which means, "*where it will be said, today, in the mountain of the L-rd, it will be seen*". The term mountain, in a prophetic context, relates to a government or a seat of authority. Therefore, it is only when G-d sees one acknowledging and submitted to His authority can one expect to receive His provision. In verse 16, one learns what it was that G-d was seeing, כִּי יַעַן אֲשֶׁר עָשִׂיתָ אֶת הַדָּבָר הַזֶּה וְלֹא חָשַׁכְתָּ אֶת בְּנִי, אֶת יְחִידְךָ. "*Because you have done this thing, and not withheld your son, your only son*". It was this sacrificial act of Abraham that brought about G-d working according to the Covenant which Abraham had entered into by faith. In the next verse, it is stated,

כִּי־בָרַךְ אֲבִרְכְּךָ וְהִרְבֵּה אֲרֻכָּה אֶת־זֶרְעֶךָ כְּכֹכְבֵי הַשָּׁמַיִם וְכָחֹל אֲשֶׁר עַל־שֵׁפֶת הַיָּם וַיִּרְשׁ זֶרְעֶךָ אֶת שְׁעַר אֵיבֹי

“For I will utterly bless you and utterly multiply your seed as the stars of the heavens and as the sand which is upon the seashore, and your seed will inherit the gate of its enemies.” Genesis 22:17

This verse emphasizes G-d's activity in Abraham's life and it is directly because of His activity that Abraham and those who have the faith of Abraham will experience victory. The idiom to inherit or possess the gate of its enemies relates to the concept of victory.

Therefore, when one hears the blowing of the Shofar, this person should remember Who G-d has provided, i.e., His Son, for us to experience eternal victory.

In moving to the second festival, the day of atonements, one should remember that atonement is inferior to redemption. The offerings which the Torah commanded could only provide atonement; that is, a covering up or concealing of sin. Redemption on the other hand, is far superior, as redemption actually removes sins eternally and therefore there is no longer a need for any punishment or judgment. This is why Messiah laid down His life on Passover, the festival of redemption, and not on the Day of Atonement.

The third festival is the Feast of Tabernacles and its primary teaching is to remind the people of G-d that G-d was faithful to the Children of Israel during those 40 years in the wilderness/desert (מדבר). Hence, knowing this, one should trust, rely, and depend upon G-d for all things at all times. This is indeed the message for the people of G-d today and always. There is one more festival which remains, Sh'mini Azteret or the Eighth Day Assembly. Most believers do not even know about this festival day, as very little is in fact written about it in the Bible. The number eight is a very important number in the Scriptures. Normally, when the number eight is thought of Biblically, what enters into one's mind is circumcision. What is the main Biblical truth concerning circumcision? The answer is that circumcision relates to the death of the flesh. It should be pointed out that this message was so prominent among early believers that first century houses of worship were constructed to have eight walls. Also, the resurrection occurring on the first day of the week was thought of as the eighth day, as a one full week (seven days) and the next day being the eighth day.

There is a salvation connection to the number eight as one reads in First Peter chapter 3, that eight people were saved during the flood that took place in the days of Noah. Those who are saved by faith will spend eternity in the Kingdom of G-d. The final reference to the Eighth Day Assembly that I would like to discuss is found in the book of Nehemiah and chapter 8. The emphasis of this passage is on the exiles who returned to the Land of Israel and observed the Feast of Tabernacles for seven full days. This section of Scripture placed a significance on the very great joy that the

people experienced from doing this Festival (See Nehemiah 8:17). Part of this great joy was also felt by reading each day from the book of the Law. It is very informing concerning the change that is made in verse 18. Whereby the word of G-d normally refers to the Torah as the Law of Moses, in this verse it is called the Law of G-d. This change is based on the maturity of the Children of Israel, who finally began to see the commandments of the Law as not from man, i.e., Moses; but rather from G-d. In verse 17, it is also most significant concerning the change in the name of Joshua Ben Nun. Instead of referring to him as how the Bible tends to do so, with the name Joshua, he is called in this section by the name Yeshua, as in the name of Jesus.

The chapter concludes with the words, וּבַיּוֹם הַשְּׁמִינִי עָצְרָת כְּמִשְׁפָּט, *“And on the eighth day the Assembly according to the judgment.”* The word judgment at the end of this verse refers to fulfilling the will of G-d and not relating to any type of punishment. In other words, the people did according to what G-d had judged as proper. Although it is clear that it is Joshua Ben Nun who is being mentioned, the change in name hints to the One who will bring about this change, which is Yeshua our Messiah. Only Yeshua can mature the people of G-d and establish the Kingdom and will do so within a context of great joy and gladness. Let us strive to experience this maturity and exceedingly great joy and gladness on this Eighth Day Assembly and cause others to see Yeshua dwelling in us and ruling our lives.