

The Seven Appointed Times of the Lord: A Divine Wedding Picture

The order of Israel's months changed following the original Exodus from Egypt. Exodus 12:2 states, "This month [Nisan] shall be the beginning of months for you; it is to be the first month of the year to you." From this time on the 1st month (which was previously the 7th month) would forever stand as the paradigm of God's redemptive power and purpose. This purpose would require the order of the Festivals to be so arranged as to tell *the story of God's unfailing love* for 'all' Israel, both the native born and those who attach to her through faith in her Messiah.

1. Pesach (Passover)
2. Unleavened Bread
3. Shavuot (Pentecost)
4. Yom Teruah (Day of the [trumpet] Blast)
5. Yom Kippur (Day of Atonement)
6. Sukkot (7 days) (Feast of Booths)
7. The GREAT DAY (Rejoicing in the Torah, both the living and the written) (the 8th day attached to Sukkot)

Passover (Pesach)/Unleavened Bread: Redeeming the Bride

In the Ancient world the first issue that would need to be addressed when it came to marriage was the "redemption of the bride"—paying the bride price to the bride's father as the first step in the betrothal process. This also meant the selection—a choosing—had taken place. The groom-to-be, along with the father, had cast their eyes upon the maiden as the fairest prospect for a bride. But the bride would not come without a price. Paying such a bride price speaks of redemption, the heart and soul of the Appointed Time of God called Passover. The drama of the events that recall the Exodus and redemption of Israel in history stand forever of a reminder of the Exodus all Israel experiences through the sacrifice of Messiah to redeem His bride.

Shavuot: The Ketubbah (Wedding Contract)

Shavuot or the Feast of Pentecost is directly connected to Passover by the counting of the Omer. This means the bride-price symbolized by the Passover is directly tied to the events of Shavuot. The fact that tradition connects this event with the giving of the Torah to Israel's "mixed multitude" standing at the foot of Mt. Sinai is significant. Both the Torah and the Holy Spirit given on this *moed* (Appointed Time) are pictures of the wedding contract and 'pledge' given to the bride until the wedding is consummated at a later date. The Spirit was poured out at the Feast of Shavuot in Acts 2 in anticipation of the harvest of the nations who would worship Israel's God. Yet the Spirit is also viewed as a marriage contract or bride price when Paul uses the term *arrabon* or "pledge" in reference to the Spirit in 2 Cor 1:22; 5:5; and Eph 1:14. This word, which is actually the Aramaic term, transliterated in the Greek, is used to describe the bride price. Thus, the giving of the Torah as a *ketubbah* (wedding contract) and the giving of the Spirit as the *arrabon* continue the picture of the Divine betrothal of Israel.

Yom Teruah: Call to Faithfulness and Return

This feast is significant in that it is a call to repentance and return. The betrothal of Israel to her Messiah is interrupted by the maiden's unfaithfulness; however, because of the New Covenant, believers have the Torah written on our hearts, but we are reminded through this holiday to 'return in faithfulness' or 'stay faithful' to our betrothed until he returns for us. This holiday looks forward to the time we are to anticipate our betrothed's arrival for us at which time we will be fully transformed (or cleansed) and fully redeemed (i.e. put on immortality or our eternal garments so to speak at Christ's return), so that we may remain with God forever. This Appointed Time also has inherent in it the themes related to the betrothal process in which the bride had to always be ready, never knowing what time or hour her betrothed would return to collect her. This day, which marks the time of the coronation of our King Messiah yet future, emphasizes God's rightful ownership of His bride, His right to possess His betrothed, and in calling her back to Him, He re-establishes His rightful place in her life.

Yom Kippur: Cleansing of the Wayward Bride

Only 10 days following Yom Teruah is Yom Kippurim. It is actually plural in the Bible, or the Day of Atonements. This day recognizes that when the bride returns in faithfulness to her husband, she returns tattered and torn. Her garments are not white, but soiled with the filth and unfaithfulness of her sins. However, having done *teshuvah* (repentance) the blood of her Messiah is able to wash her garments white as snow, without spot or wrinkle (Eph 5:27). Yom Kippur is also significant in that it is the beginning of every Jubilee year (which occurs every 7 years). Thus, Yom Kippur has a special attachment to the *Yovel* or Jubilee year in which everything returns to its rightful owner, including the Land. It is fitting then, that the bride should return and be fully cleansed at Yom Teruah and Yom Kippur, for her rightful owner is none other than the Lord Himself.

Sukkot: Consummation and Dwelling Together

The Appointed Time of Sukkot hastens immediately on the heels of Yom Kippur. The sorrow of the maiden for her unfaithfulness during her betrothal period is swept away by the forgiveness and cleansing afforded by the return of Her betrothed at Yom Teruah/Yom Kippur. The rejoicing of the Wedding Feast, which Yeshua Himself proclaimed would occur following His return, begins. The Sukkah we build during this time symbolizes dwelling together. Here, the groom takes His bride into His own dwelling, a dwelling He has made for her, and the marriage is consummated. Nothing but joy can prevail: the bride and groom have joy unspeakable, for finally—at last, that which is promised is realized. It is common to take one's meals in the Sukkah, and fits the model of the "marriage supper of the Lamb."

The Great Day, 8th Day attached to Sukkot

This additional 8th day Sabbath attached to Sukkot (a 7 day festival) is seen as connected to Sukkot but is in reality a Festival unto itself. The seven days of Sukkot represents the "week" of the world's history, with the seventh day the "millennial rest." The eighth day must therefore

represent eternity, connected to the millennial reign of Messiah, but distinct from it. The picture is obvious: God and His bride will remain forever, moving from His millennial reign directly into eternity: “and so shall we ever be with the Lord.”

The Big Picture as seen through our observance of God’s Appointed Times:

When we understand the nature and physical picture that our observance of the festivals of the Lord are to represent, one can easily see how our observance forms a very tangible expression of the very heart of God “to dwell among His people,” and to engage in that intimate relationship pictured between a husband and wife. This is the ‘big picture’ of redemption—of God’s desire for His people.

The final word on this is simple: our marriage to our Savior should reflect this cycle of redemption, a cycle so profound and infinite that God developed the entire scheme of the ages around it. Surely when Paul labels this marriage a ‘great mystery’ (Eph 5:32) he spoke well.