

The Fall Festivals – Season of Hope and Glory

The promises of tomorrow's world offer a very dramatic contrast with the reality of today's. While today's world is rent with pain and sorrow, tomorrow's world is characterized by hope and glory. As we approach the fall festivals, our focus is lifted from what the Bible terms, "this present evil world" (Galatians 1:4) to the world that is to come. How real is that world to us? How clearly do we understand the fulfilled hope and the glory that lie just around the bend, in tomorrow's world?

Almost two millennia ago Amanuwal Ha'Mashyach took three of his disciples with Him up into a high mountain. Shortly after arriving at the top, the disciples noticed something strange. Amanuwal of Nazareth, the friend and teacher with whom they had already spent countless hours, began to emit a strange glow. In the moments that followed, His skin and clothing shone with an increasingly powerful white light until finally His face shone like the very sun itself. During this time two other men appeared by His side, also emitting a brilliant glow. As the disciples stood watching, absolutely overwhelmed by the awesome sight they were beholding, Amanuwal and the other two men began to converse. It became apparent to the disciples that these two men were none other than Moses and Eliyah (cf. Matthew 17:1-8)!

Amanuwal had told His disciples about a week earlier that there were some of them who, during their lifetime, would see the coming Kingdom of Yahuwah (Matthew 16:28; 17:1). What they didn't realize when He spoke those words was how that promise would be fulfilled. Three of the twelve were selected by Mashyach to be transported through time as it were, IN VISION, to experience a brief glimpse of the glorious Kingdom to come. While they were standing there watching Amanuwal visit with Moses and Eliyah, suddenly a powerful voice boomed from Heaven, "This is My beloved Son, in whom I am well pleased. Here He is!" (Matthew 17:5). Shortly afterward the vision faded and the disciples found themselves back in the mundane world of their own day. Amanuwal told them to tell no one of the vision that they had seen until after His resurrection.

Decades later, in the closing months of his life, the Apostle Peter thought back on that glorious event. He had written to the young assembly about the problems, persecution, and suffering that would have to be faced and endured, but he kept coming back to the theme of hope. Every problem and every difficulty fades and pales when compared to the glorious hope that lies ahead. Peter spoke of hope and glory. Those few brief moments when he saw the future were indelibly burned into his mind (cf. 2 Peter 1:16-19).

What about us? How clear is the reality of our hope and how vivid is our concept of the glory that we anticipate? The answer to those questions will to a large extent determine the way in which we face the trials and adversities in the immediate months and years ahead. Because apart from the normal problems of life that we face day by day, there is coming a time of judgment that will plunge the world into the most colossal time of trouble ever seen. How will we be able to go through the times ahead?

Each of the three festival seasons Yahuwah gave to His people emphasizes one of the three phases of salvation. The early spring season of Passover and Unleavened Bread puts a focus on how we can be moved from a state of guilt and condemnation to one of innocence. This is the justification phase of

salvation. Pentecost, the second festival season, puts a focus on our being sanctified, made a kadesh people through the indwelling of the Ruwach Ha'Kadesh of Yahuwah. The fall festivals, the third season in Yahuwah's Kadesh Day plan, anticipate the culmination of our salvation – the time when we will be born into the Kingdom of Yahuwah as glorified Sons of Yahuwah. Let's look more closely at the meaning conveyed by this festival season in which we now find ourselves.

Trumpets – a Rendezvous with Judgment

Many centuries ago, before the days of electric sirens or 911, there was an emergency alarm system in ancient Israel. It was the shrill blast of the shofar, or ram's horn that would carry over the fields, alerting one and all to the approach of danger. When Yahuwah gave His festivals to the assembly in the wilderness, He stipulated that the shofar was to be blown every on Shabbat (weekly and annual) and New Moon. And there was one feast that should be observed as "a memorial of blowing of trumpets" (Leviticus 23:24).

It remained for the New Testament to amplify the meaning of this blowing of trumpets in a way never made entirely clear in the Old. From Revelation 8 we learn that there are seven heavenly trumpets to be sounded at the end of this age. They are blasts of alarm that warn of the step-by-step phases of Yahuwah's impending judgment. The final seventh trumpet blast signals the inauguration of the Kingdom of Yahuwah on this earth and the time of the first resurrection, the resurrection of the saints to glory (1 Corinthians 15:52).

In Revelation 6 the Apostle John records a vision in which he saw a series of events that will set the stage for the return of Amanuwal and the establishment of the Kingdom of Yahuwah. Earlier he had seen a scroll containing Yahuwah's revelation for the end time, which was sealed with seven seals. The only one who was authorized to open the seals was Amanuwal Ha'Mashyach, the Lion of Yahuwah (Revelation 5:5). He opened the seals one by one and John saw vision after vision.

As John later recorded this experience, his mind must have gone back to a time over sixty years earlier when Amanuwal of Nazareth had sat down in a secluded spot on the Mount of Olives. John and the other disciples had gathered round Him with burning questions on their minds. "Tell us," they had asked, "what will be the sign of your coming and of the end of the age?" (cf. Matthew 24:1-3). In response to the questions of His disciples, Amanuwal began to summarize the events that would characterize the times leading up to His return and the establishment of the Kingdom of which He so frequently spoke. Now, decades later, John saw in vivid pictures the events he had heard Amanuwal describe on the Mount of Olives. False prophets, wars, famines, and pestilence – each pictured by a rider on one of four successive horses – were followed by visions that revealed future tribulation and martyrdom, and then great terrifying heavenly signs.

Following the heavenly signs of the sixth seal and prior to the trumpet plagues of the seventh seal, one other event occurs. This is the sealing of the 144,000 recorded in Revelation 7. Clearly this is a yet future event whose purpose is to insure that Yahuwah's servants are protected from the wrath of Yahuwah (v.3). This wrath will be poured out upon a disobedient and rebellious world. It will be

signaled in its progressive phases by the seven angelic trumpets that are to be blown. These seven seals collectively constitute the seventh seal.

The future time of Yahuwah's judgment upon His creation is pictured by the Kadesh Day that is a memorial of the blowing of trumpets. It points us to the future time when the Aluhym of Heaven will step into history and hold human beings accountable. The psalmist exhorts us in the interim not to be fretful and anxious because of evil doers, but we should realize that the wicked will be cut off while the righteous will flourish forever (Psalm 37). This isn't a description of today's world where it often seems that those who are corrupt are "getting by with it." Rather, it points us to the future, to the time pictured by the ancient festival that memorializes the blowing of trumpets. There is a day of reckoning and accountability that is coming. Whatever we might see around us in the present world must never cause us to lose sight of that vital fact. It puts everything else into perspective.

The culmination of the Day of Yahuwah, during which the seven heavenly trumpets are blown, is the blast of the seventh and final trump. This begins the climax of Yahuwah's plan. It marks the time when human beings, made of matter but formed in the image of the Great Aluhym, are changed from flesh to spirit. It is the time when they will break forth into the same radiant, shining glory with which three of the disciples saw Amanuwal, Moses, and Eliyah shine forth in the vision on the mount.

The Great Aluhym, who has called us to share in His virtue and His glory (2 Peter 1:3), reminds us of this every fall. The Feast of Trumpets, which begins the sequence of the four fall festivals, points us toward the events that will forever change the future of our world. There are three Kadesh Days in the year, which precede Trumpets and three that follow. The Feast of Trumpets, picturing events that lead up to and include the return of Amanuwal Ha'Mashyach, represents the pivot point of all of history!

The Day of Atonement

Nine days after the Feast of Trumpets comes the Day of Atonement. Differing from all of the other festivals catalogued in Leviticus 23, this Kadesh Day is a fast day. In ancient Israel, it was characterized by solemn ceremonies involving two goats. It was the one day of the year on which the High Priest was permitted to enter the inner sanctuary, the Kadesh of all that is Kadesh. Also, it was the day upon which, every fiftieth year, the trumpet that proclaimed the Jubilee was sounded. How do all of these ceremonies carried out by the Levitical priesthood tie in with Yahuwah's plan and events of the end time?

Leviticus 16 informs us that lots were cast over two goats brought before the High Priest. One was chosen for the Eternal and other was for Azazel. The Hebrew term, azazel, is rendered "scapegoat" in the King James and in a number of other English versions. The term scapegoat is simply an older English form, which means "the goat that escaped." In modern usage, scapegoat came to mean, "one made to bear the blame for others." Yet Satan the devil, symbolized by the goat that escaped, is deserving of his judgment and will be blamed.

The goat chosen for the Eternal was sacrificed and its blood taken into the Kadesh of all that is Kadesh and sprinkled before the Mercy Seat. The High Priest laid his hands on the head of the other goat, "the

goat that escaped," confessed over it all the sins of Israel, and then sent it away by the hands of a capable man into the wilderness.

The significance of this ceremony is made clear when we read Revelation 20. After the return of Amanuwal at the seventh trump, there is one crucial event that must occur before the rest of the plan unfolds. That event is described in the opening verses of Revelation 20, where we learn that a mighty angel will be dispatched to take Satan the Devil and bind him in the great abyss for a thousand years. No longer allowed to deceive the nations, Satan will be restrained from interfering as Yahuwah works with the minds of human beings.

In Genesis 3 we learn that our first parents listened to Satan and disobeyed their Creator. The result was that they were expelled from Yahuwah's presence and were faced with a world filled with sorrow and requiring much hard effort in order to simply survive. While Amanuwal's sacrifice paid the penalty for the sins of all of mankind, symbolized the blood sprinkled before the mercy Seat, Yahuwah's justice demands that the originator of sin will ultimately have to take responsibility for his actions. Satan must be dealt with before the Millennium can begin.

Significantly, the Day of Atonement rather than the Feast of Trumpets was the starting point for the Jubilee (Leviticus 25:9-10). Why? The Jubilee was a pattern that Yahuwah established for ancient Israel to give the nation a fresh start. It was a time when the land was given rest and reverted back to its original owners. It was a time when slaves were freed and families were given a chance to start over, no longer encumbered by the debts and poor economic decisions of a previous generation.

After Amanuwal's return, we're told that the great trumpet will sound fourth and the enslaved Israelites languishing in the concentration camps of the future will be set free (Isaiah 27:13). They will be brought back to the land of Israel and given the opportunity for a fresh start. Amanuwal's return will set in motion the fulfillment of what the Jubilee pictured. However, there can only be real freedom when the enslaver of mankind is put away.

As we fast and seek to draw near to Yahuwah on the Day of Atonement, we are demonstrating to Yahuwah what is really important to us. We are consciously rejecting the lust of the flesh, the lust of the eyes, and the pride of life (1 John 2:16) to which our first parents yielded at Satan's urging. After all, Genesis 3:6 shows that Eve recognized the fruit of the Tree of Knowledge of Good and Evil as good for food (lust of the flesh), pleasant to the eyes (lust of the eyes), and something to be desired to make one wise (pride of life). By our fasting we are reversing in our own lives the process that began with our first parents in the Garden.

The Feast of Tabernacles

The highlight of the year for most assembly families has long been the Feast of Tabernacles. It reminds us of that part of Yahuwah's plan when the Kingdom of Yahuwah will hold sway over all of the earth, and the earth will be as filled with the knowledge of Yahuwah as the sea is filled with water (Isaiah 11:9).

From Revelation 20 we learn that after Satan has been shut away so that he can no longer influence and deceive the nations, there will begin the 1,000 year reign of Amanuwal and the saints. Many prophecies in the Old Testament anticipate that glorious time when the saints of the Most High will possess the Kingdom (Daniel 7:22), a time when a King shall reign in righteousness and Princes will rule under Him executing right judgment (Isaiah 32:1). It will be a time of physical healing for sick and hurting people (Isaiah 35:5-6) as well as a time of rejuvenation for the environment itself (vv. 1-2, 7).

Immediately prior to Amanuwal's return, global catastrophes will overwhelm the entire planet. Water all over the earth, for instance, will become like congealed blood and all fish and sea life will die (Revelation 13:3-4). The earth will be a planet in its very death throes. At the crucial moment, however, the living Mashyach will return in power and glory. Immediately after that return, a stream of living water will break forth from under the ground and begin flowing into the Mediterranean as well as the [formerly] Dead Sea. Water all over the world will become miraculously pure as a result of this flow and dead sea creatures will have life miraculously restored (Ezekiel 47:1, 8-9). This healing water is in itself symbolic of the out flowing of the Ruwach of Yahuwah which will bring life and healing to a desperate world. This astounding event will set the stage for the entire Millennium.

The Feast of Tabernacles pictures this glorious time when Amanuwal and His saints will administer Yahuwah's government over the whole earth. Spreading out from Jerusalem to the most remote spots of the globe will come the knowledge of Yahuwah and the ensuring peace and prosperity, which will flow from Yahuwah's blessing. At this future time the veil that shrouds the understanding of people the world over will finally be removed (Isaiah 25:7). As we celebrate this time of rejoicing and abundance, we should always be reminded of that time when Yahuwah will make a "feast of fat things" to the whole world (v6).

The Last Great Day

The final Kadesh Day of the fall festival season was the one least understood by the Yahuwdim. It was simply called the "eighth day" or later the "great day of the feast". Clearly, from the instructions given to ancient Israel, this final eighth day, coming right on the heels of the seven day Feasts of Tabernacles, is a separate festival with a separate meaning. From the instructions given regarding the Levitical sacrifices in Numbers 29, we can see that this day is distinct from the preceding festival. It is linked with the Feast of Tabernacles, yet distinct. This is much in the same way that Passover is connected with, yet separate and distinct from, the seven day Unleavened Bread Festival that immediately follows it.

Revelation 20, which most clearly explains the significance of the fall festivals, helps us to understand the meaning of this day as well. We learn that after the 1,000 year reign concludes, Satan is turned loose for a short time. He and those who have elected to follow him and rebel against Yahuwah are dealt with and then a remarkable event occurs. All of the dead, small and great, are raised from their graves and restored to physical life. The books of the Bible are opened up to their understanding for the first time and they are then judged based on what they do with that new knowledge. Isaiah 65:20 hints that this period of judgment will be carried out over a time of one hundred years. At the end of the

period of judgment, those who have embraced Yahuwah's salvation will enter the Kingdom of Yahuwah while those who have rejected it will be burned up forever.

Yahuwah's great plan so far supersedes any ideas and dreams of human beings that there is no comparison. This fall festival season focuses our attention on the climax of Yahuwah's plan for dealing with mankind. As we look around us at the pain, sorrow and desperation that grip so many in this present world, let's be recharged by setting our eyes on the hope and glory this season anticipates. Amanuwal Ha'Mashyach came bringing the Good News of the Kingdom of Yahuwah. We are part of the body that Yahuwah has reared up to take that same message to a hurting and dying world.

As we see the end time events of which Amanuwal and the prophets of old spoke, let's lift up our heads knowing that our salvation draws near (Luke 21:28). The season of hope and glory is drawing near! The fulfillment of the fall festivals and all that they mean is just around the corner.