

The Moedim - A More Detailed Look

Why were the Moedim given?

- To learn more of God, His creation and His plan, including keys to understanding role of Messiah and the end times when He establishes the Kingdom of God. The Moedim are all part of his “revelation” to us, as originally found in the Tenakh, and further developed in the New Testament.

What is the Tenakh?

(Pronounced, “ten-AHK”)

What Christians call the “Old Testament” is called the Tenakh in Judaism. The consonants in the word Tenakh are an acronym for:

T=Torah (Revelation/Instruction given directly by God to Moses)

N=Nevim (Prophets)

K=Ketuvim (Writings)

All Scripture is inspired of God, but there is a correct way to “divide the Word” (as Paul called it in 2 Timothy 2:15):

- As the Torah came first and is directly from the “mouth of God,” it has authority over all subsequent Scriptures. Anything that came after the Torah, must not contradict it.
- The Tenakh has the same authority over the “New Testament” (i.e., Paul praised the Bereans (Syrian Jews) in Acts 17:11 for verifying his teachings against the Tenakh, showing its authority in determining truth. This is also taught in 2 Timothy 3:15-18, as the Scriptures Timothy grew up with, that Paul is referring to, was the Tenakh.)

Spring Feasts

Passover

Time of Deliverance - Pesakh (Passover) is a time of deliverance, through the defeat of the evil realm. The Exodus from Egypt (i.e., the evil realm), also represents deliverance from exile (and its association with the evil realm), and the beginning of a reunion with God.

The Defeat of Death - Pesakh is also associated with defeating death, as those Hebrews in Egypt who marked their door posts with the blood of the Passover lamb, were “passed over” by the angel of death.

Paul wrote about this defeat of death, quoting from Isaiah 25:8 and Hosea 13:14:

1 Corinthians 15:54-55: So when this corruptible has put on incorruption, and this mortal has put on immortality, then shall be brought to pass the saying that is written: "Death is swallowed up in victory." "O Death, where is your sting? O Hades, where is your victory?"

The victory over evil and death, via the death of Yeshua, was the beginning of a process that will find its completion when He returns. Evil continues to exist today (as does Satan himself), as both will in the Millennial Kingdom (i.e., Revelation 20:7). Death is not done away with until the establishment of the

“New heaven and earth.” (Revelation 21:4). Though we see additional aspects of the New Covenant coming in during the Millennial Kingdom, it reaches its complete fulfillment only after this thousand-year period.

New Testament

- John the Baptist announced Yeshua as the “Lamb of God.” (John 1:29)
- The book of Revelation shows Yeshua as the Lamb (Revelation 5:6; 7:10; 14:4; 21:22; 22:1-3)
- Yeshua partook of a Passover Seder (a recounting of the Exodus story) with his disciples, just prior to his death (Matthew chapter 26; Mark chapter 14)
- We are told the Lamb of God was slain “from the Foundation (beginning) of the world.” (Hebrews 9:26; Revelation 13:8)

Unleavened Bread

Sanctification - Matzah (Unleavened Bread) is focused on the purging of sin, with “leaven” representing sin. This speaks to the process of “sanctification,” or “being conformed to the image of God.”

Paul referred to purging sin from our lives in the context of properly keeping the Feast of Unleavened Bread and removing sin from our lives:

1 Corinthians 5:6-8: Your glorying is not good. Do you not know that a little leaven leavens the whole lump? ⁷Therefore purge out the old leaven, that you may be a new lump, since you truly are unleavened. For indeed Messiah, our Passover, was sacrificed for us. Therefore let us keep the feast, not with old leaven, nor with the leaven of malice and wickedness, but with the unleavened bread of sincerity and truth.

These feasts of Unleavened Bread and Passover were linked together. Unleavened Bread is considered a continuation of Passover:

- **Deuteronomy 16:16:** Three times in a year shall all thy males appear before the LORD thy God in the place which he shall choose; in the feast of unleavened bread, and in the feast of weeks, and in the feast of tabernacles: and they shall not appear before the LORD empty.
- **John 2:13:** Now the Passover of the Jews was at hand, and Yeshua went up to Jerusalem.
- **John 11:55:** And the Passover of the Jews was near, and many went from the country up to Jerusalem before the Passover, to purify themselves.
- **Luke 22:1:** Now the Feast of Unleavened Bread drew near, which is called Passover.

The weekly scripture readings for this week reflect the themes of these feasts accordingly:

- Joshua (verses from chapters 3, 5 and 6), has themes of circumcision and deliverance
- II Kings (verses from chapter 23), has the story of the finding of the Torah (Law), after it had been ‘lost’
- Isaiah (from chapters 10-12), mentions the Shoot of Jesse (Messiah) coming

First Fruits

Acceptable Offering - If God accepted the offering of First Fruits, it would be revealed by a good harvest and Shavuot.

Yeshua the “Firstfruits.” - God’s acceptance of Yeshua’s work as the suffering, righteous servant, was shown by His resurrection, as is stated in a variant reading from the Qumran Scroll (Dead Sea Scrolls) text of Isaiah 53:11:

Isaiah 53:11: Out of the suffering of his soul *he will see light* and find satisfaction. And through his knowledge his servant, the righteous one, will make many righteous, and he will bear their iniquities.

Here the reference to light is an allusion to resurrection. It is this suffering and subsequent resurrection that of the righteous servant that will “make many righteous”.

If God accepted the offering of the Day of Firstfruits as holy and acceptable, then the rest of the harvest would be as well. This would be apparent at the Feast of Weeks (Shavuot) and this celebration would be blessed as well. Yeshua’s acceptable work is spoken of by Paul in the following:

1 Corinthians 15: 20-23: But now Messiah is risen from the dead, and has become the *firstfruits* of those who have fallen asleep. For since by man came death, by Man also came the resurrection

of the dead. For as in Adam all die, even so in Messiah all shall be made alive. But each one in his own order: Messiah the *firstfruits*, afterward those who are Messiah's at His coming.

Yeshua the Broken Offering - There is an interesting practice in the Passover Seder, regarding the broken Matzah, (called the Afikomen) that connects "Passover week" with Shavuot, some 50 days later. The Afikomen has special significance: it is broken, hidden and must be redeemed in the course of the Seder. The one who finds the Afikomen receives a promise of a reward, to be given at Shavuot. At the last Seder Yeshua and his disciples held, Yeshua promises that for their trust in Him, He would send the Holy Spirit (in Hebrew "ruach ha'kodesh"). Following the pattern stated above, Yeshua's promise was fulfilled at Shavuot, or Pentecost. (Acts 2)

Shavuot

The Giving of God's Instruction - God had Moses tell Pharaoh: "Let my people go so that they may serve me" (Exodus 8:1, 20). Even while in the land of Egypt, through the events of the exodus, the Lord was instructing Israel on HOW to serve Him. Afterwards when he redeemed them from hand of Pharaoh and led them to Mt. Sinai, the Lord revealed even more clearly His instruction (remember Torah, or Law means "instruction")

Confusion to Clarity - The children of Israel had been in darkness of Egyptian idolatry and thus needed clear revelation of the character and nature of God. Thus, there was a connection between their "redemption" and the "Torah," the two together were what gave them "freedom." (Hence "James" calling it the "Perfect Torah of Liberty" in James 1:25.)

Hope in the Darkness - The weekly scripture readings for this week are from Ezekiel 1 and Habakkuk, both with the theme of hope while in exile. This is important as the spring feasts are not the end of the story, but the beginning. There is a period of exile between the "spring" and "fall" - with the "final act" of our salvation being associated with the fall feasts.

The Fulfillment of a Promise - In Acts chapter 2 we have the account of Jews gathered at the Temple for Shavuot, when the Holy Spirit descended upon them. (i.e., The sign that the Firstfruits were accepted by God, and the "reward" from Passover.)

The idea of "separating tongues of fire" (Acts 2:3), and people "hearing in their own language" (Acts 2:8) goes back to Mount Sinai, as shown in Hebrew literature:

Talmud, Shabbat 88b - The school of Rabbi Ishmael taught: (Behold My word is like fire, declares the Lord,) and like a hammer that breaks the rock into pieces (Jer. 23:29) just as a hammer is divided into many sparks, so every single word that went forth from the Holy One, blessed be He, split up into seventy languages.

Targum Pseudo-Jonathan on Exodus 20:18 - "The word that went out from the mouth of the Holy One, may His Name be blessed, was like shooting stars and lightnings and like flames and torches of fire."

Soncino Zohar, Exodus, 81b - In this latter passage (Ex. xx, 18) also we find "fire torches" mentioned instead of the "lightnings" of the former. Both, however, mean one and the same thing; when the lightnings are quite formed and ready to appear they are called "fire-torches" (lapidim). The "voice of the trumpet" mentioned in the same verse is, according to R. Judah, that voice which is itself called "trumpet" in reference to the Day of Atonement (Lev. xxv, 9). According to R. Simeon, the "voice of the trumpet" is the "word which proceedeth out of the mouth of the Lord" (Deut. VIII, 3), by which "man lives". It is greater and stronger than all lower voices

Counting of the Omer

The seven weeks between First Fruits and Shavuot are a time of perfection and testing, known as the ***counting of the Omer***. These days correspond to the cycle of years culminating in the ***Jubilee or Yovel year***. It was during the seven weeks following the Exodus that Israel prepared themselves for receiving the Torah and Mount Sinai. Thus, the period of the Omer is one of spiritual preparation.

These 50 days of the Omer related to something called the ***"Fifty Gates of Understanding"***. On each day (each gate) one studies certain aspects of God in order to be conformed to His image. This concept is associated with the book of Job, where God posed fifty queries into the nature of Creation to Job, upon which Job finds repentance, which is associated with Understanding.

Concluding Thoughts

The "spring" feasts are a key part of God's revelation, that are a picture of Yeshua's first coming and His dealing with sin.

Yeshua died on Passover and dealt a blow to the evil realm and to sin, as is associated with Unleavened Bread. He was resurrected on Firstfruits. The Ruach HaKodesh (Holy Spirit) came to His disciples on Shavuot as a sign of work being acceptable to God.

The spring Feasts are not the "final act" of God's plan however. This will come in association with the fall feast days, which are concerned with the issue of salvation.

As the book of Hebrews tells us:

Hebrews 9:28: so Messiah was offered once to bear the sins of many. To those who eagerly wait for Him He will appear a second time, apart from sin, for salvation.

Fall Feasts

The Feast of Trumpets and the Day of Atonement are linked together. By the time of Ezra the Feast of Trumpets had become a two-day feast. Thus, the number of days from the end of the Feast of Trumpets to the Day of Atonement is seven days. This period of time is known collectively as the Days of Awe (Hebrew: Yomim haNora-im) or *Aseret Yemai Teshuvah*, the "Ten Days of Repentance."

Heavenly Books - At Feast of Trumpets, or Rosh Hashanah, it is taught that God opens three books; the Book of Life, The Book of Death, and the Book of Judgement. (These books are alluded to in Exodus 32:32-33, Psalm 69:28, Daniel 7:9-10, 12:1, Malachi 3:16, Revelation 20:12, 15) During the seven day period between Rosh Hashanah and the Day of Atonement, or Yom Kippur, these books remain open and are closed only at the last shofar blast on Yom Kippur.

Rosh Hashana

The term "Rosh haShana" is not found in Scripture, but was given later to this feast. Rosh haShana (literally, "Head of the Year"), is the Hebrew "New Year" according to the civil calendar and is a day of blowing shofars.

Rosh haShana is different than the other Feasts, as it is not tied to a specific event in Jewish history. Rather, it is the "anniversary" of the creation of Adam and Eve, and the beginning of their realization of mankind's role in God's world. It is called *Yom Harat Olam*- the Birthday of the World.

The idea of Rosh haShana being the beginning of a period of judgment (leading to Yom Kippur) is linked to the book of Joel:

Joel 2:1: Blow the trumpet in Zion; sound the alarm on my holy hill. Let all who live in the land tremble, for the day of the LORD is coming. (This is an allusion to Rosh Hashanah)

Joel 2:15-16: Blow the trumpet in Zion, declare a holy fast, call a sacred assembly. Gather the people, consecrate the assembly; bring together the elders, gather the children, those (this is an allusion to Yom Kippur)

The Meaning of the Shofar - Rosh haShana is also called Yom Teruah, which has to do with the blowing of the Shofar. The Shofar was used for different reasons, including a call to alarm. Regarding Rosh Hashanah it has to do with both calling the people to repentance, and also "awakening mercy above," during the coming days of judgement. As with prayer, the shofar blast "causes things to happen in the heavenlies." It is therefore to be taken quite seriously, especially by the person blowing the horn, who can bring blessing or condemnation on those he represents.

This is alluded to in the Hebrew writings from the Zohar:

Soncino Zohar, Leviticus, 18a-b - *On this day (Rosh haShana) the congregation must look out for a man without blame who knows the ways of the King and how to honour Him, that he may pray for them and transmit the sound of the shofar to all worlds with concentration of thought, with wisdom, and with devotion, that through him chastisement may be removed from the world. Alas for those whose minister is not fitting, for through him their sins will be called to mind. ... But if he is truly virtuous, then the people are justified through him, and punishment is removed from them through him.' Said R. Eleazar: 'For this reason the priest and Levite were examined as to their character, and if they were not found satisfactory they were not allowed to minister. And so, too, with the members of the Sanhedrin before they were allowed to judge.'*

God is said to be "near" during these ten days, a concept drawn from this verse:

Isaiah 55:6: *Seek ye the LORD while he may be found, call ye upon him while he is near*

The Significance of the Shofar - The Shofar is also said to connect the Akeidah, the passage of scripture dealing with the binding of Isaac (Genesis 22:1-19), to Mount Sinai.

The shofar blown at Mount Sinai is an allusion to the horn of the ram caught in the thicket, and offered by Abraham in place of Isaac. A shofar blast will also herald the coming of Messiah.

The shofar is blown one hundred times during the Rosh haShana service. The blowing of the Shofar symbolizes the prevalence of Mercy (chessed) over Judgment (gevurah). These 100 blasts are divided into four groups:

- Tekiah, a single unbroken note
- Shevarim, three short individual blasts rising in tone
- Teruah, nine short staccato notes

Following these three groups, there comes: Tekiah Gedolah - "big tekiah" - is sounded. This is one long sustained blast.

The book of Revelation, depicting the return of Yeshua as Messiah, reflects the theme of Trumpets in the second set of judgments that come upon the earth. (The first set being seals, associated with the Lamb and Passover, and the last set associated with bowls, indicative of Yom Kippur.)

Teshuvah (Repentance)

The Hebrew term for repentance is Teshuvah, which means "return." Thus repentance is more than just feeling sorry for ones sins and hoping to do better. In Judaism it is viewed as making the effort, through faith and the enabling the Lord, to "return to God," or more precisely, return to the image of God that we were created in, and in whom Yeshua is our example:

1 Corinthians 15:49: And as we have borne the image of the man of dust, we shall also bear the image of the heavenly Man.

2 Corinthians 3:18: But we all, with unveiled face, beholding as in a mirror the glory of the Lord, are being transformed into the same image from glory to glory, just as by the Spirit of the Lord.

2 Corinthians 4:4: whose minds the god of this age has blinded, who do not believe, lest the light of the gospel of the glory of Messiah, who is the image of God, should shine on them.

Colossians 1:15: He is the image of the invisible God, the firstborn over all creation.

Colossians 3:10: and have put on the new man who is renewed in knowledge according to the image of Him who created him

By becoming more like God, we enable ourselves to have more of His light shine into the darkness of this world. As Teshuvah can thus be seen as our chief purpose in life, we might expect God to make it important for us to do. This is found true in Yeshua's words, when he was asked what the "greatest commandment" was:

Matthew 22:36-38: Master, which is the great commandment in the law? Yeshua said unto him, Thou shalt love the Lord thy God with all thy heart, and with all thy soul, and with all thy mind. This is the first and great commandment.

Yeshua quotes from Deuteronomy 6:5 where God explains how to love Him and thus how to "return" to Him. Yeshua's answer is a call to Teshuvah, as there are three aspects to this, based on this commandment and the makeup of man:

- Prayer and Devotion, based on our Emotions (love the Lord with all your heart)
- Study and Meditation, based on our soul and mind (love the Lord with all your mind)
- Following the Lord's commands and doing good deeds based on our physical ability (love the Lord with all your strength)

YOM KIPPUR

Yom Kippur marks the end of the Days of Awe and the time of final judgement. For some this is salvation, for others damnation. As mentioned earlier, Yeshua's first appearance (linked to the spring feasts) was associated with sin, and His return (linked to the fall feasts) is for salvation:

Hebrews 9:28: so Messiah was offered once to bear the sins of many. To those who eagerly wait for Him He will appear a second time, apart from sin, for salvation.

The Kingdom of God - Throughout Hebraic writings, Yom Kippur is linked to the coming of the Kingdom of God. An interesting Yom Kippur custom is associated with the Shema, the most widely accepted "statement of faith" in Judaism, which is recited as such:

***Hear O Israel, the Lord is our God, the Lord is one.
Blessed be His glorious name whose kingdom is forever and ever.***

Throughout the year, the second line of the Shema is spoken in a whisper, as God's kingdom not yet established. At Yom Kippur however, this response is said aloud, indicative of this representing the time when these events will occur.

The Last Trump - The Holiday of Yom Kippur concludes with a final shofar blast. This "last trumpet" is referred to in the "New Testament," and is associated with the ingathering of the elect of Israel from the "four corners of the earth." This is the time of the great wedding which includes His elect.

Yom Kippur was the Holiest Day of the year, the only time when the High Priest could enter the Holy of Holies. This is compared to Moses at Mount Sinai, as he acted in this role, being the only one who could approach God.

Yom Kippur Imagery and Revelation - The time of judgement found in the book of Revelation contains allusions to Yom Kippur, with the white garments of the High Priest, the golden censer, incense, altar, smoke-filled sanctuary and view of the Ark of the Covenant. These are also indicative of Mount Sinai, with its noises, thunderings and lightnings:

Revelation 6:11: Then they were each given a white robe and told to rest a little longer, until the number of their fellow servants and their brethren should be complete, who were to be killed as they themselves had been.

Revelation 8:3-5: Then another angel, having a golden censer, came and stood at the altar. He was given much incense, that he should offer it with the prayers of all the saints upon the golden altar which was before the throne. And the smoke of the incense, with the prayers of the saints, ascended before God from the angel's hand. Then the angel took the censer, filled it with fire from the altar, and threw it to the earth. And there were noises, thunderings, lightnings, and an earthquake.

Revelation 11:19: Then the temple of God was opened in heaven, and the ark of His covenant was seen in His temple. And there were lightnings, noises, thunderings, an earthquake, and great hail.

Revelation 15:5-8: After these things I looked, and behold, the temple of the tabernacle of the testimony in heaven was opened. And out of the temple came the seven angels having the seven plagues, clothed in pure bright linen, and having their chests girded with golden bands. Then one of the four living creatures gave to the seven angels seven golden bowls full of the wrath of God who lives forever and ever. The temple was filled with smoke from the glory of God and from His power, and no one was able to enter the temple till the seven plagues of the seven angels were completed.

Revelation 16:17: The seventh angel poured his bowl into the air, and a loud voice came out of the temple, from the throne, saying, "It is done!"

SUKKOT

The Joy of Tabernacles - Sukkot is the most joyous of all the Lord's festivals and the one that all the nations will be required to go up to Jerusalem to celebrate during the time of Ezekiel's Temple (Zechariah 14:16-21). Men and women, Jew and gentile, slave and free were all to take part in this event. Sukkot is closely associated with both the Messianic Kingdom and the World to Come.

Sukkot is also called the Feast of Living Waters, based on this verse from Zechariah (which is in the context of verses 16-21):

Zechariah 14:8: And in that day it shall be That living waters shall flow from Jerusalem, Half of them toward the eastern sea And half of them toward the western sea; In both summer and winter it shall occur.

There are Sukkot-related messianic reference found in the New Testament. In Matthew 17, we are told of Peter offering to build booths (Hebrew: "sukkot"), when he sees Yeshua standing amidst Moses and Elijah. In the gospels, we see the people laying out palm branches (Hebrew: "lulav"), before Yeshua on his entry into Jerusalem.

The book of Revelation includes allusions to Sukkot.

Revelation 7:9: After this I looked, and behold, a great multitude which no man could number, from every nation, from all tribes and peoples and tongues, standing before the throne and before the Lamb, clothed in white robes, with palm branches in their hands.

Revelation 7:17: For the Lamb in the midst of the throne will be their shepherd, and he will guide them to springs of living water; and God will wipe away every tear from their eyes."

Sukkot is to be celebrated for seven days. However, in Leviticus 23:36 it is written of Sukkot:

"For seven days present offerings made to the LORD by fire, and on the eighth day hold a sacred assembly and present an offering made to the LORD by fire. It is the closing assembly; do no regular work."

A Picture of Eternity - In the midst of describing a seven-day festival, God mentions an "eight day." This "extra" day is called ***Shemini Atzeret*** ("the eighth conclusion"). It is celebrated on the eighth day of the feast of Tabernacles, on the day of Tishrei 22. It is considered the eighth day of the celebration of Succot and represents ***Olam Haba***, (World to Come) the time that comes after the Millennium. The eighth day is therefore, a picture of eternity -- and rejoicing in eternity.

Sukkot (the feast of booths/tabernacles) is the last of the "fall feasts" and takes place over seven days in Israel and eight days outside the land. At the end of the feast, the holiday of ***Simhat Torah*** ("Joy of Torah") takes place, where the last portion of the year's Torah cycle is read, along with the first portion of the subsequent year's cycle.

Sukkot is closely linked with gentile salvation as seen in the sacrifice of 70 bulls mentioned in the book of Numbers. Zechariah 14 states that in the Millennium, gentiles from all the nations will come to Jerusalem for Sukkot, and that those who do not will be punished. Hints of gentile salvation are found throughout the Tenakh, including; Genesis 12:3, 18:14, 22:18, 26:4; Isaiah 11:10, 19:6, 45:23, ch. 48, 54:1-3, 60:1-3 ch. 66; Deuteronomy 30; Jeremiah 31; Hosea 1:1-10; Zechariah 8:23, 14:9-19; Amos 9:11; Malachi 1:11, and Psalms 72 and 87.

Sukkot is similar to Shavuot in the spring, in that it is separated from the earlier feasts in its season, and is linked to a unity between God and man. Whereas Shavuot shows the promise and beginning of this, Sukkot is its final fulfillment.

SHEMITA, YOVEL YEAR (JUBILEE)

The "Shemita" year occurred every seventh year (Sabbatical year) during which the land was to remain fallow. After every seventh Shemita the fiftieth year was to be sanctified as a Yovel year (Jubilee), a very holy year. On the 10th of Tishrei (Yom Kippur) of the Jubilee year, God commanded a horn to be blown:

Leviticus 25:8-10 - *And thou shalt number seven sabbaths of years unto thee, seven times seven years; and the space of the seven sabbaths of years shall be unto thee forty and nine years. Then shalt thou cause the trumpet of the jubilee to sound on the tenth day of the seventh month, in the day of atonement shall ye make the trumpet sound throughout all your land. And ye shall hallow the fiftieth year, and proclaim liberty throughout all the land unto all the inhabitants thereof: it shall be a jubilee unto you; and ye shall return every man unto his possession, and ye shall return every man unto his family¹*

Israel failed to fulfill the Shemita and Yovel year requirement from the very beginning:

Jeremiah 34:13-17 - *Thus saith the LORD, the God of Israel; I made a covenant with your fathers in the day that I brought them forth out of the land of Egypt, out of the house of bondmen, saying, At the end of seven years let ye go every man his brother an Hebrew, which hath been sold unto thee; and when he hath served thee six years, thou shalt let him go free from thee: but your fathers hearkened not unto me, neither inclined their ear. And ye were now turned, and had done right in my sight, in proclaiming liberty every man to his neighbour; and ye had made a covenant before me in the house which is called by my name: But ye turned and polluted my name, and caused every man his servant, and every man his handmaid, whom he had set at liberty at their pleasure, to return, and brought them into subjection, to be unto you for servants and for handmaids. Therefore thus saith the LORD; Ye have not hearkened unto me, in proclaiming liberty, every one to his brother, and every man to his neighbour: behold, I proclaim a liberty for you, saith the LORD, to the sword, to the pestilence, and to the famine; and I will make you to be removed into all the kingdoms of the earth.*

God warned what He would do in response to disobedience:

Leviticus 26:23 - *I will disperse you among the nations, and will draw out a sword after you; your land will be desolate and your cities destroyed. Then the land will enjoy her rests, as long as it remains desolate.*

The 70 years of Babylonian captivity were punishment for the 70 sabbatical years Israel missed from the time they entered the land to the destruction of the first Temple (490 years). During the captivity God causes the land to receive its appropriate rest, remaining desolate for seventy years.

Not fulfilling Shemita and Jubilee is a symptom of Israel's diseased spiritual status. The "sign of the Covenant" (the Torah) became a curse. This is a reason Messiah had to come and renew the Covenant, only on better terms, reverting of the Torah back to its original intention -- a blessing:

Hebrews 8:6-8 - *But now hath he obtained a more excellent ministry, by how much also he is the mediator of a better covenant, which was established upon better promises. For if that first covenant had been faultless, then should no place have been sought for the second. For finding fault with them, he saith, Behold, the days come, saith the Lord, when I will make a new covenant with the house of Israel and with the house of Judah.*

The Shemita and Jubilee years were significant for different reasons. Shemita was what God used to "keep time," whereas Jubilees is more directly associated with the end of a time period and the Olam Haba (world to come).

The Shemita can be seen as a time tracking mechanism in Daniel's famous prophecy about the Messiah:

Daniel 9:20-27 - And whiles I was speaking, and praying, and confessing my sin and the sin of my people Israel, and presenting my supplication before the LORD my God for the holy mountain of my God; Yea, whiles I was speaking in prayer, even the man Gabriel, whom I had seen in the vision at the beginning, being caused to fly swiftly, touched me about the time of the evening oblation. And he informed me, and talked with me, and said, O Daniel, I am now come forth to give thee skill and understanding. At the beginning of thy supplications the commandment came forth, and I am come to shew thee; for thou art greatly beloved: therefore understand the matter, and consider the vision. Seventy weeks are determined upon thy people and upon thy holy city, to finish the transgression, and to make an end of sins, and to make reconciliation for iniquity, and to bring in everlasting righteousness, and to seal up the vision and prophecy, and to anoint the most Holy. Know therefore and understand, that from the going forth of the commandment to restore and to build Jerusalem unto the Messiah the Prince shall be seven weeks, and threescore and two weeks: the street shall be built again, and the wall, even in troublous times. And after threescore and two weeks shall Messiah be cut off, but not for himself: and the people of the prince that shall come shall destroy the city and the sanctuary; and the end thereof shall be with a flood, and unto the end of the war desolations are determined. And he shall confirm the covenant with many for one week: and in the midst of the week he shall cause the sacrifice and the oblation to cease, and for the overspreading of abominations he shall make it desolate, even until the consummation, and that determined shall be poured upon the desolate.

In the above prophecy, Daniel calculates the time of Messiah's arrival in terms of "weeks." Both the language and the context indicate that these "weeks" are actually groups of seven years and not days, which is the Shemita cycle. Messiah would come at some point during or after the 69th Shemita cycle. The 70th (and "final") Shemita cycle, associated with the end time events in Revelation, Matthew 24, and other Scriptures, hangs mysteriously in the future.

Daniel realizes that seventy years had passed since Israel had gone into exile, and yet they had not been allowed to return (Daniel 9:1-2) Daniel makes a "request by prayer and supplications, with fasting, sackcloth, and ashes" to determine why. His answer is given in the above. Israel had not repented of their sins, and as promised by the Torah (the Law) their punishment would be multiplied seven times (Leviticus 26). Whereas the original decree had been 70 years, because of their unrepentant hearts, it would now become seventy times seven.

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E-mail: info@yashanet.com