

Review: Kevin Howard and Marvin Rosenthal, *The Feasts of the Lord*, Thomas Nelson Inc., Nashville, TN, 1997

Pages: 224

A Good Compendium

The authors have laid out well the seven Biblical feasts of Leviticus 23, Hanukkah and Purim, the Sabbatical and Jubilee Years, and some minor Jewish holidays.

A good balance has been struck between key details and less relevant information of Jewish mysticism. Useful opening chapter summaries of the fall and spring feasts, and subjects such as the Jewish week are handy.

The artwork and presentation is quite beautiful, and the temple map, calendars, and Passover table are excellent for cementing an overview.

The “Shekinah” is mentioned five times without definition to the reader. While it may simply be a derivative of the root verb “sh[a]k[a]n”, there exists a dangerous occult belief it is the “female side of God”, or the goddess.

Unfortunately the occult New King James bible is quoted throughout which takes away the scriptural power.

I) Overview of the Spring Feasts (pp. 13-23)

The eternal God only had seven holidays, relating to Israel’s spring and fall agricultural seasons, and based on the Jewish lunar calendar of 354-day years (there is a thirteenth month seven times over nineteen years).

Feasts commence at Calvary (Passover on the 15th of Nisan [March/April]), and climax at Tabernacles.

Three spring feasts are observed in the seventh month of Tishri (September/October), there was to be no farming each seventh year, as well as the fiftieth Jubilee Year.

Egypt had no walls at its borders as it is surrounded by the inhospitable desert.

Over time, Passover and Unleavened Bread merged with Jewish tradition.

Jewish Orthodox women have been known to sprinkle bread crumbs in difficult-to-reach places, only to sweep them up again.

Firstfruits occurs on the 16th of Nisan as the barley crop begins to ripen. The first sheaf is cut and presented to the Lord.

Passover signifies Messiah's sacrificial death, Unleavened Bread His body would not decay, and Firstfruits the resurrection.

Shavuot counts seven weeks from Firstfruits. The disciples only had to wait ten days after Jesus' ascension for the Holy Spirit.

“If you find a perfect church don't join it or you will spoil it.”

II) Overview of the Fall Feasts (pp. 24-33)

Trumpets, or Rosh Hashanah (“Head of the Year”) became known as Jewish New Year from the second century AD. It occurs on the first of Tishri.

Israel used both long, flared silver trumpets, and the shofar of ram's horn.

The ten “days of awe” take place between Trumpets and Yom Kippur.

Tradition states three books are opened in heaven on Trumpets: for the righteous, the unrighteous, and the in-between. The

unrighteous will not last the year but the in-between have an opportunity to repent until Yom Kippur.

Tabernacles commences on the 15th of Tishri and is the final feast.

In Israel, rain stops in March and if no “early” rains arrive in October and November there will be no spring crop and famine.

II) Jewish Time (pp. 32-44)

On the Sabbath firewood could not be collected, nor fires kindled (including switching on an electric light). In Israeli hotels, a special Sabbath elevator is pre-programmed to stop at every floor at regular intervals on the day

A “Sabbath Gentile” is often employed to do forbidden tasks in the synagogue.

The day is ushered in by the woman of the house covering her eyes, lighting two Sabbath candles, then reciting the blessing. A *Kiddush* (Prayer of Sanctification) is said over the cup of wine. A *Havdalah* (“Separation”) ceremony is held after sunset and a cup of wine is filled to overflowing.

Later rabbinic tradition defined a Sabbath day’s journey as no more than 2,000 cubits.

Hodesh means both “month” and “moon”.

The New Moon was verified first by the priests, and later the Sanhedrin after sighting by two witnesses; the council would shout “it is sanctified” and the message telegraphed to all the Jews in Babylonia, via an elaborate fire-signal network across the Arabian Desert.

Confirmation may have waited till the second day if the weather had been cloudy

The first day of every month is *Rosh Hodesh* (“Head of the Month”).

Between the thirteenth and fourteenth of each month a “Blessing of the Moon” (*Birkhat HaLevanah*) is said by Orthodox Jews.

David will be resurrected during the Millennial Reign as prince over Israel according to Ez 37.24-25.

The solar year is eleven minutes shorter than 365 $\frac{1}{4}$ days. The variance to the lunar year would mean Passover would soon be celebrated out of season. A leap year occurs every 3rd, 8th, 11th, 14th, 17th, and 19th years; one day is added to Adar, and there is a 13th month (*Adar Shen*).

Until AD 359, the Sanhedrin presided in Jerusalem and in AD 360 Hillel II published the Hebrew calendar calculations.

The two Jewish new years arise as Israel was originally an agricultural society, so a year would begin with the harvest (i.e. at Trumpets).

The biblical year consisted of 360 days across twelve months.

After the Babylonian captivity, Babylonian names were adopted for the months:

-Nisan (14th Passover, 15th-21st Unleavened Bread, 16th Firstfruits)

-Iyar

-Sivan (6th Shavuot)

-**Tammuz**

-Av (9th Tisha B' Av)

-Elul

-Tishri (1st Rosh Hashanah, 10th Yom Kippur, 15th-21st Sukkot)

-Heshvan

-Kislev (25th Hanukkah; Tevet 2nd/3rd)

-Tevet

-Shevat

-Adar (14th Purim)

The creation of the world was thought to be Fall, 3761 BC.

Moed is a “solemn appointment”.

IV) Application (pp. 44-47)

Tefillin are phylacteries.

Mitvot are commandments.

V) Passover (pp. 48-62)

The Passover Lamb had to be taken from the flock on the tenth and inspected for four days.

Before the captivity, Nisan was called Abib.

The three symbolic foods are the lamb, matzah, and bitter herbs.

Passover is the world’s oldest continuing feast, being celebrated for 3,500 years.

A concession was available to those defiled by a dead body, or away on a long journey; they could celebrate Passover on the 14th of the next month (Iyar).

The Passover table has:

- Pillow: reclined eating.
- Salt water: bitterness of slavery and the Red Sea parting.
- Haggadah: a booklet used for the “telling”.
- Kippa (also Yarmulke): non-Biblical small head covering.
- Charoset: mixed apple, nuts, and wine to represent Pharaoh’s bricks.
- Seder tray.
- Candles.
- Matsarot: three pieces.
- Wine (red).
- Elijah’s Cup.
- Karpas: Parsley.
- Maror.
- Shankbone.
- Roasted egg.

-Hazeret: horseradish.

The Seder can last till midnight.

The order is:

-First Cup (sanctification).

-Washing hands.

-Karpas eaten with salt water.

-Middle matsah removed, half broken off and hidden for the children (the afikomen).

-Four Questions: Why eat bitter herbs? Why unleavened bread? Why dip twice? Why eat reclining?

-Second cup (sorrow).

-Matsah dipping.

-Dinner: not lamb anymore as there is no more temple.

-Afikomen hunt.

-Third Cup (redemption).

-Fourth Cup (praise).

-Closing hymn: usually Ps 115-118.

Rabbinic tradition has no explanation why the middle matsah is broken. Afikomen is the second aorist of *ikneomai* ("I came").

VI) The Feast of Unleavened Bread (pp. 64-73)

Bedikat Hametz is the "Search for Leaven" ceremony.

Although swelling to multiple times its size, leaven maintains its weight.

VII) The Feast of Firstfruits (pp. 74-87)

Considerable debate existed between the Sadducees and Pharisees over which Sabbath was meant as the reference. The Pharisees, who thought the first day of Unleavened Bread (15th Nisan), prevailed. This is backed up in Josephus.

The forty-nine day waiting period is called *Sefirat Ha-Omer* ("Counting of the Omer [sheaf]").

A Talmidic minor holiday *Lag B'Omer* is often celebrated on the 33rd day during this time (a combination of *lamed* and *gimmel* or 30+3 [33]). The greatest adherents are the ultraorthodox Satmar Jews. Supposedly, on this day a plague amongst the students of rabbi Akiba ended on this day. Jewish three-year old children receive their first haircut on this day at Akiba's grave.

Each firstborn was to be given to the priest at one month for life-service, however a *Pidyon Haben* ("Redemption of the Son") of five shekels could be paid instead. This option was not available to the Levites however.

VIII) Shavuot-The Feast of Weeks (pp. 88-101)

Name derived from *Yom Habikkurim* in Nm 28.26.

Hag Hakatsir ("the Feast of Harvest").

The Talmud and Josephus also referred to it as *Atseret* ("Conclusion").

It falls on the 6th of Sivan.

Sefirah means counting.

In AD 66 the Jews achieved a three-year independence.

He Arch of Titus in Rome commemorates Titus' AD 70 victory.

In AD 117, Hadrian outlawed circumcision, Sabbath observance, and synagogue prayers. In 130, he built a pagan shrine to Jupiter on the Temple Mount.

Under Simon Bar Kochba, Jerusalem was liberated in AD 132, and rabbi Akiba declared him the Messiah. In AD 133 however, a 35,000 Roman soldier counter-attack was launched, and in AD 135 was victorious. Bar Kochba was killed in the stronghold of Betar. Fifty fortresses, 985 villages destroyed, and 580,000 Jews killed.

The Romans rebuilt the city as Aelius Capitolina. “Aelia” was Hadrian’s middle name), and “Capitolina” signified worship of the Roman gods of Capitoline Hill (Jupiter, Minerva, and Juno).

In AD 140 the Sanhedrin convened in a village Usha [near modern-day Haifa]. Shavuot was divorced from its agricultural roots and became *Zeman Mattan Toratenu* (“the Time of the Giving of Our Law”).

It is customary for observant Jews to stay up all night.

The *Amidah* (“standing” prayer) with its nineteen blessings dates back 2,000 years.

Shakharit is the morning Temple service, during which the shofar is always blown.

Mikvehs are baptismal pools.

IX) Rosh Hashanah-The Feast of Trumpets (pp. 102-117)

This is Israel’s fifth holiest day.

Zikhron Teruah (“Memorial of Blowing”).

Yom Teruah (“Day of Blowing”)

Hatsotserah is a straight metal trumpet.

The *tekiah* was a long, unwavering blast, the *shevarim* three short, broken blasts, and the *teruah* nine staccato blasts. The blowing pattern became *tekiah, shevarim, teruah, tekiah*.

In June 1967, Chief Rabbi Schlomo Goren sounded the shofar on the Temple Mount after 1,900 years.

Tashlikh (“cast-off”) symbolises self-purification.

Rosh Hashanah was also referred to as *Yom Ha-Din* (“Judgment Day”).

The shofar blasts were believed to be confusing to Satan.

X) Yom Kippur-The Day of Atonement (pp. 118-133)

Israel's most holy day.

Kaphar means "cover".

Increased sacrifices were required this day (a bull, ram, and seven lambs for the people, and a ram for the priesthood).

To mitigate risk of becoming unclean (e.g. touching a dead body), the high priest left a week early for the temple. A substitute backup was also appointed; the captain of the temple.

The priest's garment was hemmed with tiny golden bells so the people could hear his activities. He also wore the golden breastplate with the twelve precious gemstones.

He would be escorted to the east side of the altar by two other priests [the priesthood served one-week period on a twenty-four week roster. Two goats would be waiting, and the priest would shake a golden vessel containing two lots, one inscribed YHVH, the other AZAZEL.

One Jewish tradition has Azazel as the name of a fallen angel, another that it comes from the word *azel* ("escape").

The Azazel goat would be led through the east gate and ten miles into the wilderness. During the Second Temple, to avoid the risk of it wandering back into civilisation it would be killed by pushing it off a rocky crag backwards.

Rabbi Yohanan ben Zakkai changed the day, based on Hs 6.6, to enable blood-free atonement via *mitsvot* ("good works"). A *kaparot* is an ultraorthodox modern-day sacrifice where a chicken is killed, by a specialist (a *schochet*).

The first of the five services that begins at sundown is the *Kol Nidre*.

Daniel' sixty-nine weeks began in Artaxerxes reign 5thC BC, and ended circa AD 30.

In Jewish theology the antichrist is called Armilus.

The Ark was only seen on this day, but since 586BC has been lost; some say it is in Ethiopia, others a Jordanian cave, others under the Temple Mount somewhere.

XI) Sukkot-The Feast of Tabernacles (pp. 133-149)

This is the most joyful feast.

Tabernacles comes from the Latin *tabernaculum* (“booth” or “hut”).

It is also known as Ingathering.

It falls on the 15th of Tishri; the first and the day after the end (*Shemini Atzeret*) are Sabbaths. This would be during a full moon.

Each morning, the high priest would collect water in a golden vessel from the Pool of Siloam for a water libation back at the temple. The southern gate was called the Water Gate because of this ceremony.

95 BC, Alexander Jannaeus merged the office of priest and king and poured libation onto the ground; this caused a rebellion where 6,000 were killed.

Hosanna means “save now”.

The light ceremony was called *Simchat Bet Hasho'yva*.

Four towering menorahs were setup in the Court of the Women, with wicks made of old priests' garments.

Today, *sukkot* are erected in yards and patios. They have three walls.

The Four Species are the *lulav* (date palm branch), *hadas* (myrtle), *arava* (willow), and Etrog (citrus branch).

Congregants circle the synagogue while singing Ps 118; a Torah scroll is on a central raised platform. All receive an *aliyah* (opportunity to read scriptures from the pulpit).

In the Middle Ages, a new holiday *Simchat Torah* (“the Rejoicing of the Law”) was created, on the 9th day.

Israel has three main water sources: rock-hewn tanks, massive cisterns of mega litre capacity (e.g. at Masada), and wells.

XII) Tisha B’Av-The Fast of the Fifth Month (pp. 150-157)

This was the day the temple was destroyed on 586BC and AD 70.

In 608BC Jehoikim was king. He cut and burned Baruch’s scroll. His son Jehoiachn reigned for three months in 597BC before Nebuchadnezzar placed his uncle Zedekiah on the throne.

Zedekiah rebelled and was crushed on the 9th of Tammuz.

In AD 1290 all Jews were expelled from England, and from Spain in 1492; both days also being the ninth.

Grieving time begins in Tammuz, and the day is a major fast.

In 1995, Israel’s courts approved worship on Temple Mount for this day only, however it has never been carried out.

XIII) Hanukkah-The Feast of Dedication (pp. 158-175)

Hanukkah means dedication.

The Apocrypha was written 200 BC to AD 100.

In 336BC Darius III was crowned king of Media-Persia, and Alexander king of Macedonia. In 332BC, Alexander had defeated Darius at Issus. After his death, Seleucus ruled Syria,

Ptolemy Egypt, Lysimachus Thrace, and Cassander Macedonia and Greece.

Israel became caught between the Seleucids and Ptolemaic forces.

In 171BC, Antiochus Theos Epiphanes (...”the visible god”) became king of the Seleucids and set about Hellenising his empire. The Orthodox Israeli faction resisted, but the Hellenist conspired.

Orthodox Yohanan’s brother Joshua, changed his name to Jason and had him assassinated. He then bribed Antiochus to make him high priest.

On 25th of Kislev [Zeus’ birthday], 168 BC, Antiochus erected a Zeus idol in the courtyard bearing his own image. He then offered a pig on the altar and poured its blood in the Holy of Holies and on the scrolls before cutting and burning them. Finally, the temple was converted to Zeus-worship.

In Modin, seventeen miles NW of Jerusalem an aged priest Mattathias of five sons rebelled. After death, his son Judah was nominated to lead the rebellion, labelled *Maccabee*, from the Hebrew *makkevel* (“hammer”). After victories at Beth-horon and Emmaus they drove out the Syrians.

The altar was rebuilt 25th of Kislev 165BC, exactly three years later. Tradition states there was only one day’s supply of olive oil yet it lasted for eight.

The Sadducees were Maccabean descendants.

The *hanukiyah* has nine candles; the bigger *shamash* (servant) is used to light the other eight (from left to right).

On Hanukkah eve, marathon runners are sent to Midon.

A children’s game with a four-sided dice called *dreidel* (Hebrew *sivivon*) is played; each letter forms an acrostic for “A Great Miracle Happened [T]here” (*Nes Gadol Hayah Sham*). Players

place a coin, nut, or chocolate coin in the pot; on a *nun* nothing happens, a *gimel* wins the pot, a *hay* wins a half pot, and for a *shin* a coin must be added to the pot.

Ashkenazic tradition developed in Eastern and Central Europe, *Sephardic* in Spain, North Africa, and the Middle East.

One *Ashkenazic* tradition is singing the *Moaz Tzur* (“Mighty Rock”).

Foods fried in olive oil are customary during this period.

The eight-day duration is said to come from the eight days taken to rebuild the altar.

Zeus was the sun god and his wife Rhea the goddess-mother; both forming the Greek Mother/Child cult version.

XIV) Purim-The Feast of Lots (pp. 176-191)

Purim means “lots”.

It is on the 14th of *Adar* (usually in March), either the twelfth or thirteenth month.

Mordecai (from “Marduk”) is thought to be the author.

The majority of Persian Jewry had remained in exile.

Esther’s name is a derivative of Ishtar.

Haman was a descendant of Agag, while Mordecai was related to Saul [via Shimei and Kish], so they inherited the ancient feud between the Amalekites and the Israelites.

A later tradition, the “Fast of Esther” came into being on the 13th of *Adar*.

A *megillah* is a “scroll”.

Groggers are hand-held noise makers for drowning out the sound of the name Haman.

During the Middle Ages an effigy of Haman was hanged and burned, however anti-Semites charged them with burning Jesus so this ceased.

Mishloah manot is “sending presents to one another and gifts to the poor.”

Hamantsashen are triangular pastries filled with poppy seed.

Kreplach are noodle-like pieces of dough stuffed with chopped meat.

The Talmud teaches one should get so worked up during Purim that they do not know the difference between “cursed be Haman” and “blessed be Mordecai” (*Ad de lo yada*-until not able to distinguish).

The *Adloyada* parade is held annually in Tel Aviv.

The path of anti-Semitism is well-worn and always leads to destruction.

XV) The Jubilee Year (pp. 192-)

During the Sabbatical Year:

- Cultivation activities were forbidden.
- Crops were accessible to the whole community.
- Produce could only be eaten in season.
- All debt payments ceased [the principal remained].
- The Law was to be read during Tabernacles.

Jubilee Year is *Yovel* in Hebrew.

There were three additional requirements for the year:

- (i) Shofar blown on Yom Kippur.
- (ii) All hired workers set free.
- (iii) All land returned to original owner.

There is zero evidence of any kind Israel ever observed the Jubilee Year. The rabbis believed after the Assyrian exile of the ten northern tribes in 722BC performing the Jubilee was impossible.