

What To Do Now!  
Leviticus 23:23-43

Richard Tow 09.06.15

Next Sunday is September 13<sup>th</sup>. That is a significant day on the Jewish calendar: Elul 29. Elul 29 marks the end of their civil year and the beginning of the New Year.

A couple of weeks ago we talked about why Elul 29 is particularly important in 2015. As a quick review go back with me to Leviticus 25:1-7

*“The LORD said to Moses on Mount Sinai, 2 ‘Speak to the Israelites and say to them: ‘When you enter the land I am going to give you, the land itself must observe a sabbath to the LORD. 3 For six years sow your fields, and for six years prune your vineyards and gather their crops. 4 But in the seventh year the land is to have a sabbath of rest, a sabbath to the LORD. Do not sow your fields or prune your vineyards. 5 Do not reap what grows of itself or harvest the grapes of your untended vines. The land is to have a year of rest. 6 Whatever the land yields during the sabbath year will be food for you--for yourself, your manservant and maidservant, and the hired worker and temporary resident who live among you, 7 as well as for your livestock and the wild animals in your land. Whatever the land produces may be eaten.’”<sup>1</sup>*

Here in His covenant with Israel, God established the Shemitah: the Sabbath year. Just as He established the seventh day as a special day of rest for each week, He also established the seventh year as a special year of rest as well. In that message we saw that Israel’s failure to honor the Shemitah was a significant factor in God’s judgment on the nation and in their captivity. I will not go back over all that; the message is available on our website under the title “Is America in for a Shaking?”

Simply understand that next Sunday is a major event concluding the Shemitah and launching an even more significant occasion: the beginning of the Year of Jubilee.<sup>2</sup> Nobody can be 100% sure which year is the Year of Jubilee (I won’t take time to discuss why that is the case); but there is very good reason to identify this month as the beginning of the Year of Jubilee.<sup>3</sup> Follow with me as we read Lev 25:8-13

*“Count off seven sabbaths of years--seven times seven years--so that the seven sabbaths of years seventh month; on the Day of Atonement sound the trumpet throughout your land. 10 Consecrate the fiftieth year and proclaim liberty throughout the land to all its inhabitants. It shall be a jubilee for you; each amount to a period of forty-nine years. 9 Then have the*

<sup>1</sup> All Scripture quotes are from New International Version unless indicated otherwise.

<sup>2</sup> The Year of Jubilee is proclaimed on the Day of Atonement, ten days after Rosh Hashanah, according to Lev. 25:8.

<sup>3</sup> Rabbis disagree on when the Jubilee occurs; but Rabbi Jonathan Cahn has made a strong argument (but not conclusive) for the next Jubilee beginning on Sept. 2015 and ending Sept. 2016 in his book *The Mystery of the Shemitah* (pp. 264-272). There are 49 years between Jubilees because the year of Jubilee counts as the first year of the new Shemitah. The Jubilee year always follows a Shemitah according to scriptural reckoning (Lev. 25:8-9). The previous Jubilee would be Sept. 1966 to Sept. 1967. In 1967 for the first time since 70 AD, Jerusalem was reunited with Israel. The Year of Jubilee prior to that was Sept. 1917 to Sept. 1918 when the Balfour Declaration opened the land Palestine for restoration to the Jews. The Balfour Declaration is dated Nov. 17, 1917 (see <http://www.history.com/this-day-in-history/the-balfour-declaration>). A condensed form of Rabbi Cahn’s rationale (based on the significant events in the 1917/1918 and the 1966/1967 timeframes) is available at <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=YL89QnywYrQ> accessed 9/5/15.

*trumpet sounded everywhere on the tenth day of the one of you is to return to his family property and each to his own clan. 11 The fiftieth year shall be a jubilee for you; do not sow and do not reap what grows of itself or harvest the untended vines. 12 For it is a jubilee and is to be holy for you; eat only what is taken directly from the fields. 13 "In this Year of Jubilee everyone is to return to his own property."*

So on September 13<sup>th</sup> the Shemithah will conclude and ten days later on the Day of Atonement the Year of Jubilee probably begins. That is significant stuff going on right now!

In this message we will talk about how we should respond to all that; but I want to give you a little more information first. In your notes is a calendar of events in September.<sup>4</sup>

Date 2015		Jewish Holiday	
Begins Sunset <b>Sept. 13</b> Ends Nightfall Sept. 15	Elul 29	<b>Rosh Hashanah</b> Feast of Trumpets New Year Begins	
<b>Ten Days of Penitence (Sept. 13-23)</b>			
Begins Sunset <b>Sept. 22</b> Ends Nightfall Sept. 23	Tishri 9 -10	<b>Yom Kippur</b> Day of Atonement	
Begins Sunset <b>Sept. 27</b> Ends Nightfall Oct. 4	Tishri 14-21	<b>Sukkot</b> Feast of Ingathering Feast of Tabernacles	
<b>CURRENT EVENTS</b>			
<b>Sept. 16-17</b>			Federal Reserve Rate Decision
<b>Sept. 17</b>			Deadline for Vote on Iran Nuclear Agreement
<b>Sept. 23</b>			Pope meets with President Obama
<b>Sept. 28</b>			Blood Moon

<sup>4</sup> Jewish Holiday resources include: "Jewish Holidays and Festivals in 2015," [http://www.chabad.org/holidays/default\\_cdo/year/2015/jewish/2015-holidays.htm](http://www.chabad.org/holidays/default_cdo/year/2015/jewish/2015-holidays.htm); "Official Schedule for Pope Francis' Visit to U.S.," <http://www.popefrancisvisit.com/official-final-schedule-of-pope-francis-u-s-visit-2015/>; "Washington Prepares for Pivotal September Vote in Congress on Iran Nuclear Deal," <http://www.jpost.com/Middle-East/Iran/Washington-prepares-for-pivotal-September-vote-in-Congress-on-Iran-nuclear-deal-413857>. All accessed 9/4/15.

At sunset next Sunday, the shofar will sound and the Feast of Trumpets begins. If you recall we talked about the blowing of that shofar being a release of debt for Israelites. It is also an announcement of the New Year. Numbers 29:1 refers to this as the Day of Shofar or Blowing. The Hebrew word is *teruah*. "*On the first day of the seventh month (Tishri) hold a sacred assembly and do no regular work. It is a day for you to sound the trumpets. 2 As an aroma pleasing to the LORD, prepare a burnt offering of one young bull, one ram and seven male lambs a year old, all without defect....*" Rosh Hashanah is considered a Day of Judgment.<sup>5</sup> There is heightened awareness of individual accountability to God for sin.

It begins the Ten Days of Penitence (Awe). From the evening of September 13<sup>th</sup> to the end of Yom Kippur is to be a time of self-examination, confession, and repentance before God. The Jewish greeting during this time is "May the final verdict be favorable." According to their tradition God sits on a throne of Judgment during this time and passes a favorable or unfavorable judgment on each person. So it is a time to humble oneself recognize God's awesome authority over our lives. Isa 33:22 is commonly read in Jewish services.<sup>6</sup> "*(For the LORD is our Judge, The LORD is our Lawgiver, The LORD is our King; He will save us)*" (NKJV).

Hos 14 is also a passage that is used during this time.<sup>7</sup> Here are the first three verses of that passage:

*"O Israel, return to the LORD your God, For you have stumbled because of your iniquity; 2 Take words with you, And return to the LORD. Say to Him, 'Take away all iniquity; Receive us graciously, For we will offer the sacrifices of our lips. 3 Assyria shall not save us, We will not ride on horses, Nor will we say anymore to the work of our hands, 'You are our gods.' For in You the fatherless finds mercy."* (NKJV).

Here are some key behaviors during those ten days.

1. Fasting.  
Fast of Gedaliah on 3<sup>rd</sup> day of Tishri
2. Confession
3. Reconciliation (Asking & Granting Forgiveness to one another)
4. Payment of Debts
5. Prayer and Serious Thought<sup>8</sup>

Yom Kippur is the Holiest Day of the Year. That begins at sunset on September 22<sup>nd</sup>.

Lev 23:26-28 "*The LORD said to Moses, 27 'The tenth day of this seventh month is the Day of Atonement. Hold a sacred assembly and deny yourselves (KJV says afflict your souls—fasting is primary idea), and present an offering made to the LORD by fire. 28 Do no work on that day, because it is the Day of Atonement, when atonement is made for you before the LORD your God.'*" Instruction for the Day of Atonement is found in Leviticus 16. It was the one and only time the High Priest could come before the mercy seat and make atonement for himself and the people. It all pointed to the sacrifice Messiah would make at Calvary.

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<sup>5</sup> Naphtalie Winterm compiler, *The High Holy Days* (New York: Leon Amiel Publisher, 1973) p. 9, 34.

<sup>6</sup> Ben M. Edidin, pp. 49, 55-56, 62..

<sup>7</sup> Edidin, p. 57.

<sup>8</sup> Abraham P. Bloch, *The Biblical and Historical Background of Jewish Customs and Ceremonies* (New York: Ktav Publishing House, 1980) pp. 156-160. Of course, other activities not addressed in this message were also included.

We don't have time to go into detail about Yom Kippur.

What I want you to see this morning is that September 13-23 is a time of confession and repentance on the Jewish calendar.

Sukkot begins on the evening of September 27<sup>th</sup> and lasts seven days. Sukkot is the Hebrew word for "booths." It is sometimes called the Feast of Booths or more commonly the Feast of Tabernacles. During this feast, the Jews build little make-shift tents or booths and live in them for seven days. They do this in remembrance of their time in the Wilderness when they had no permanent dwelling place. It is a reminder of God's care and protection (especially from the desert sun). He supernaturally took care of them those 40 years providing manna from heaven and water from the rock. Sukkot is also called the Feast of Ingathering because it is a celebration of the fall harvest.<sup>9</sup> Lev 23:33-36 *"The LORD said to Moses, 34 "Say to the Israelites: 'On the fifteenth day of the seventh month the LORD's Feast of Tabernacles begins, and it lasts for seven days. 35 The first day is a sacred assembly; do no regular work. 36 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....Lev 23:39-43"*So beginning with the fifteenth day of the seventh month, after you have gathered the crops of the land, celebrate the festival to the LORD for seven days; the first day is a day of rest, and the eighth day also is a day of rest. 40 On the first day you are to take choice fruit from the trees, and palm fronds, leafy branches and poplars, and rejoice before the LORD your God for seven days. 41 Celebrate this as a festival to the LORD for seven days each year. This is to be a lasting ordinance for the generations to come; celebrate it in the seventh month. 42 Live in booths for seven days: All native-born Israelites are to live in booths 43 so your descendants will know that I had the Israelites live in booths when I brought them out of Egypt. I am the LORD your God."

In John 7-8 Jesus is at the Temple in Jerusalem celebrating this feast. As the Feast of Ingathering or Harvest there was an emphasis on looking to God to supply the rain needed for their crops. It was the practice of the priests to draw water from the pool of Siloam and pour it around the altar seven times. It was during the pomp of the final rite that Jesus stood up and shouted *"If anyone is thirsty, let him come to me and drink. 38 Whoever believes in me, as the Scripture has said, streams of living water will flow from within him."* That was His promise to give the Holy Spirit to believers.<sup>10</sup>

Those are the Jewish feasts that occur during this month.

So how does that relate to you and me today?

First we are not under the law. In fact, Paul corrected the Church at Galatia for putting themselves under the laws and rituals of the Old Covenant. Gal 4:9-11 *"But now that you know God-or rather are known by God-how is it that you are turning back to those weak and miserable principles? Do you wish to be enslaved by them all over again? 10 You are observing special days and months and seasons and years! 11 I fear for you, that somehow I have wasted my efforts on you."* At the Council in Jerusalem the Apostles made it very clear that Gentile Christians were not required to keep the Mosaic Law. In Acts 15:19-20 the Apostle James spoke the final verdict. *"It is my judgment, therefore, that we should not make it difficult for the Gentiles who are turning to God. 20 Instead we should write to them, telling them to abstain from food polluted by idols, from sexual immorality, from the meat of*

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<sup>9</sup> Bloch, pp. 181-182, 189-190.

<sup>10</sup> Gale A. Yee, *Jewish Feasts and The Gospel of John* (Wilmington, Delaware: Michael Glazier, 1989) pp. 70-71, 75, 77-80.

*strangled animals and from blood.*” Of course, the book of Hebrews and Romans makes this point as well.

(Having said that) there are three observations that need to be made.

First, these feasts express truths about the kingdom of God that are enduring for all generations.<sup>11</sup> Is it or is it not true that people need to humble themselves before God, seek His forgiveness for their sins, forgive one another, and throw themselves on the mercy of God. The Ten Days of Penitence is an expression of all that. There should be times when we celebrate God’s protection and provision. There should be celebrations of God’s goodness in our lives.

Second, we are at liberty to observe a day unto the Lord. We are not at liberty to judge others if they choose differently. Rom 14:5-7 *“One man considers one day more sacred than another; another man considers every day alike. Each one should be fully convinced in his own mind. 6 He who regards one day as special, does so to the Lord. He who eats meat, eats to the Lord, for he gives thanks to God; and he who abstains, does so to the Lord and gives thanks to God.”* So we don’t talk about these feasts as some kind of legal requirement; but we see it as an opportunity to make a day special to the Lord.

Third, specific dates of these feasts do have significance. We know that because God fulfilled the spiritual reality of the Passover feast on the exact date of the Passover.<sup>12</sup> The same is true of the Feast of Pentecost fifty days later. Acts 2 opens with these words. *“When the Day of Pentecost had fully come, (on the exact date of the feast) they were all with one accord in one place. 2 And suddenly there came a sound from heaven, as of a rushing mighty wind, and it filled the whole house where they were sitting. 3 Then there appeared to them divided tongues, as of fire, and one sat upon each of them. 4 And they were all filled with the Holy Spirit and began to speak with other tongues, as the Spirit gave them utterance”* (NKJV).

It was no coincidence that in Ezra 3 the altar in Jerusalem was restored at exactly this time. Ezra 3:1-6

*“When the seventh month came and the Israelites had settled in their towns, the people assembled as one man in Jerusalem. 2 Then Jeshua son of Jozadak and his fellow priests and Zerubbabel son of She-al-tiel and his associates began to build the altar of the God of Israel to sacrifice burnt offerings on it, in accordance with what is written in the Law of Moses the man of God. 3 Despite their fear of the peoples around them, they built the altar on its foundation and sacrificed burnt offerings on it to the LORD, both the morning and evening sacrifices. 4 Then in accordance with what is written, they celebrated the Feast of Tabernacles with the required number of burnt offerings prescribed for each day. 5 After that, they presented the regular burnt offerings, the New Moon sacrifices and the sacrifices for all the appointed sacred feasts of the LORD, as well as those brought as freewill offerings to the LORD. 6 On the first day of the seventh month they began to offer burnt offerings to the LORD, though the foundation of the LORD's temple had not yet been laid.”*

So we would be wise to not discount the dates of these.

According to those dates we are in an important season in God’s program!

Why have I shared all this today?

The calendar on your notes screams one thing to me. Wake up and pay attention. I look at the current events posted at the bottom of that calendar and think: Even if these feasts were not coming up, those events would sound an alarm. One purpose of blowing the shofar was to

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<sup>11</sup> Included in the biblical instruction to Israel for these feasts is the phrase, *“...it shall be a statute forever throughout your generations....”* (Ex. 30:10, Lev. 23:21, 31, 41).

<sup>12</sup> John 19:14-16.

sound the alarm.<sup>13</sup> It was to alert people that something is about to happen. But the Jewish calendar takes this to a higher level for me. The Feast of Trumpets, Ten Days of Penitence, The Day of Atonement, and the Feast of Tabernacles all at the end of the Shemitah and possibly at the beginning of the Year of Jubilee.

How much more significant could the next few weeks possibly be?

People look at all the financial instability and all the political and domestic turmoil and ask the question: **what should I do now?**<sup>14</sup> **These feasts help me with the answer to that.** I don't think the answer is to move to Australia. I don't think the answer is to buy silver, although the Lord might lead someone to do that. I think the obvious answer is to humble ourselves before the Lord, fast and pray, and throw ourselves on His mercy and goodness. That's exactly what I'm planning to do with great intentionality over the next few weeks. Beginning next Sunday evening, I am proclaiming a fast until the end of Yom Kippur. There was a time when I would have been able to completely abstain from food for all those days. Unless God works a miracle, I cannot physically do that. But I can do something. All I ask you to do is seek the Lord and do what He tells you to do. Some may be able to fast one meal a day. Some may fast sweets. Others may fast media. It is a time to forgo pleasure and seek the Lord without those distractions. It should be a time of increased prayer and meditation. It should include extra time in the Word. Are we going to follow all the instruction of the Talmud? No, we're simply going to cooperate with the spirit of these feasts. So you have a week to decide how you will respond.

In fact, let's bow our heads and ask God to speak to each one of us about that.

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<sup>13</sup> Bloch, pp. 146-147. See Joel 2:1.

<sup>14</sup> 1 Chron. 12:32 refers to the "*men of Issachar, who understood the times and knew what Israel should do.*" Understanding the times is the foundation for knowing what to do.

What To Do Now!  
 OUTLINE  
 Richard Tow 09.06.15

Intro

- A. Sept. 13<sup>th</sup> (Elul 29) Ends Shemitah; Begins New Year  
 (Lev. 25:1-7)
- B. Year of Jubilee  
 (Lev. 25:8-13)

I. What Is Going on This Month?

Date 2015		Jewish Holiday	
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			with President Obama
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- A. Feast of Trumpets (Rosh Hashanah)  
(Numbers 29:1-2)
- B. Ten Days of Penitence  
(Some Key Behaviors):
  - (1) Fasting (Humbling Oneself Before God)
  - (2) Confession (Repentance of Sin)
  - (3) Reconciliation (Asking & Granting Forgiveness to One Another)
  - (4) Payment of Debts (And Forgiveness of Debts)
- C. Day of Atonement (Yom Kippur)  
(Lev. 23:26-28)
- D. Feast of Tabernacles (Sukkot)  
(Lev. 23:33-36, 39-43)

## II. How Does This Relate To You and Me Today?

- A. We are not under the Law  
(Gal. 4:9-11; Acts 15:19-20)
- B. Three Observations:
  - (1) Feasts Express Eternal Truths  
(*"It shall be a statute forever in your generations."* Lev. 23:14, 31)
  - (2) We're at Liberty to Observe a Day unto the Lord  
(Rom. 14:5-7)
  - (3) Specific Feast Dates Have Important Significance  
Passover and Pentecost Fulfilled On Exact Date
- C. The September Calendar Screams: Wake up and Pay Attention
  - (1) Current Events Have Far Reaching Consequence
  - (2) Biblical Holidays Indicate Major Points in God's Program
- D. Proclamation of a Fast beginning next Sunday and at End of Yom Kippur  
How will you respond?

## QUESTIONS

1. Do you think the Jewish Holidays in September have significance for the Christian?  
In what way?
2. What do you plan to do about the fast Pastor has called?
3. How are you positioning yourself for the times in which we live?

4. What is the most important thing you got out of the message today?