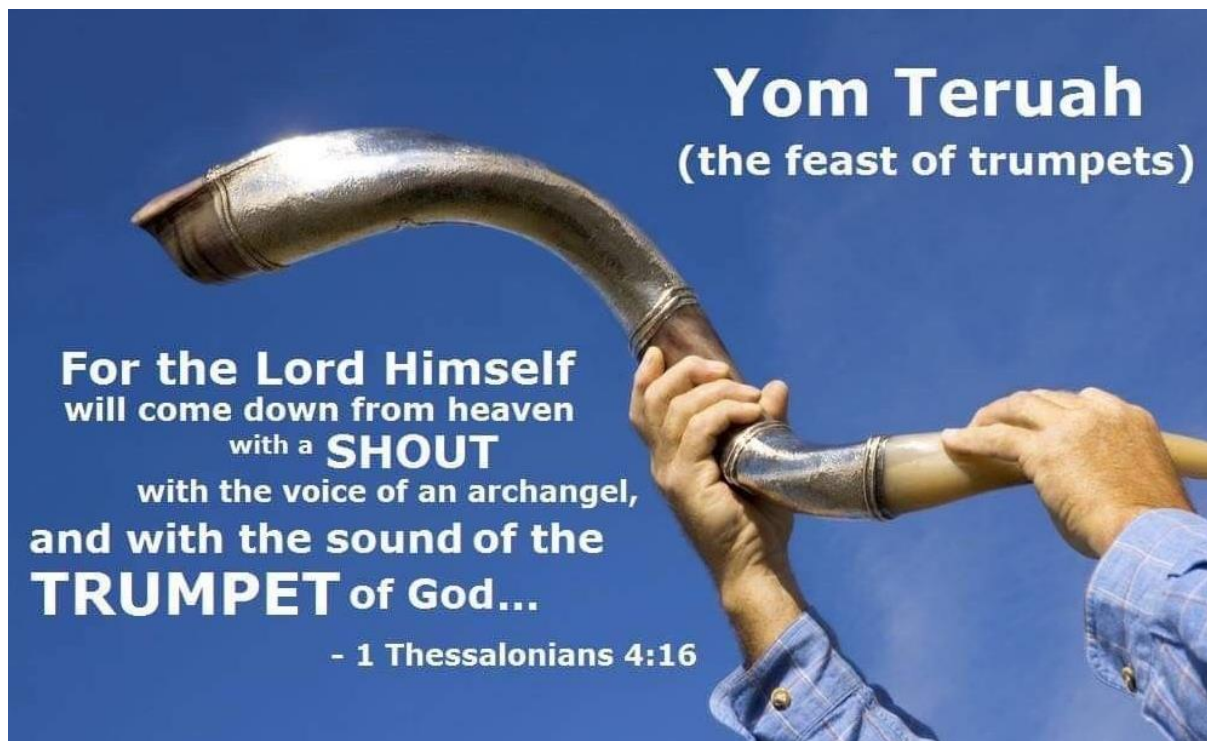


The Feast of Tabernacles

6th February 25

This chapter in fact covers three feasts, which are presented by Moses to the new generation of Israelites as part of the structure of the regular service and worship they were all to take part in as a nation:

- Blowing of Trumpets,
- Day of Atonement and
- Feast of Tabernacles



Feast of trumpets

Verses 1- 6

This took place on the first day of the seventh month, known to Jews as Rosh HaShana, or Head of the Year, as it begins the Jewish Civil year. The religious side of things may have been quietly forgotten – but the day was about the blowing of trumpets, and the alarm was sounded, and all people were gathered together in expectation. The new year today is celebrated with raucous revelry, leaping about, and generally looking stupid. It is summed up with what the new year is about for most people – fireworks. Huge sums of money which could

be given to the poor are spent on massive displays of fireworks which light up the sky to ooohs and arrrrs but the whole thing is over in ten minutes, and everyone goes home. That is the sum of the life of men without God. Huge amount of energy, and show, but then all that is left is a bit of blackened damp cardboard in the morning.

The nation of Israel were taught to mark such occasions some what differently. It is true that to herald the new year there was a lot of noise – from trumpets, but this was designed to remind people and draw their attention and mark the start of something special. They were used to trumpets blowing. At the beginning of every feast, of every gathering of the congregation, and every time they moved camp two silver trumpets were used to shrilling sound the alarm. The Hebrew word for these long silver trumpets was *chatsoreth*. This comes from a Hebrew root meaning to surround, or to separate.

However, on this occasion, it was not just the silver trumpets that were used. The sound was greatly bolstered by *shofars* trumpets made from the horns of goats. The Hebrew root for shofar is to incise or cut. The sound from the shofar cut through all other background noises. It would then have been a powerful message to the nation, as they knew they would *separate* themselves from everyday pursuits, and allow the Gospel message to *cut through* the mundane routine of life.

The day would be treated as a sabbath, and would have commenced with the daily burnt offering of one lamb in the morning, and ended with one lamb in the morning, as well as the sabbath offering of two lambs, and the monthly burnt offering of two young bullocks, one ram and seven lambs, and one kid of the goats for a sin offering.

But as well as this, to mark the new year, exactly the same would be required to also be offered, the offering would have been doubled.

A New Day, New Sabbath, New Month and New Year was all marked on this day. Nothing was to be forgotten. It would have reminded the nation of the swift passing of their lives.

The multiplication of the bullocks, the beasts of burden would remind them of the life of service God required, the rams would remind them of the strength and the lambs of the complete submission. Not one person of the nation could ever come near to the level of expectation of God, because of sin, and weakness, but the offering spoke of one to come... why of course a goat was also offered for a sin offering.

This day, the feast of trumpets was called Yom Truach or the Day of Blasting and it commenced what was called the Days of Awe. This was because this day began a period of self examination. where people were strongly encouraged to examine their own lives, to take stock of themselves "to afflict their souls" to get back on track, to repent. In the next nine days they were to look back over the last year and see ways of improving, where they need to change and repent.

This feast was part of a group of feasts, and this one, was part of a build up to a national moment of cleansing from sin. However the nation were also being shown the lesson of God's purpose. We read in 1 Thessalonians 4:16 *16 For the Lord himself shall descend from heaven with a shout, with the voice of the archangel, and with the trump of God: and the dead in Christ shall rise first:* The trumpet sound of the alarm has been sounding for some time, calling for the need for self-examination and repentance. We can think of the period of the seven trumpets leading up to the Return of Christ in the book of Revelation, as the trumpet blasts of fulfilled prophecy, calling attention to those who have ears to hear of the imminent moment of the time of Judgement. Psalms 50: 4-5: *He shall call to the heavens from above, and to the earth, that he may judge his people. Gather my saints together unto me; those that have made a covenant with me by sacrifice.*

Day of Atonement

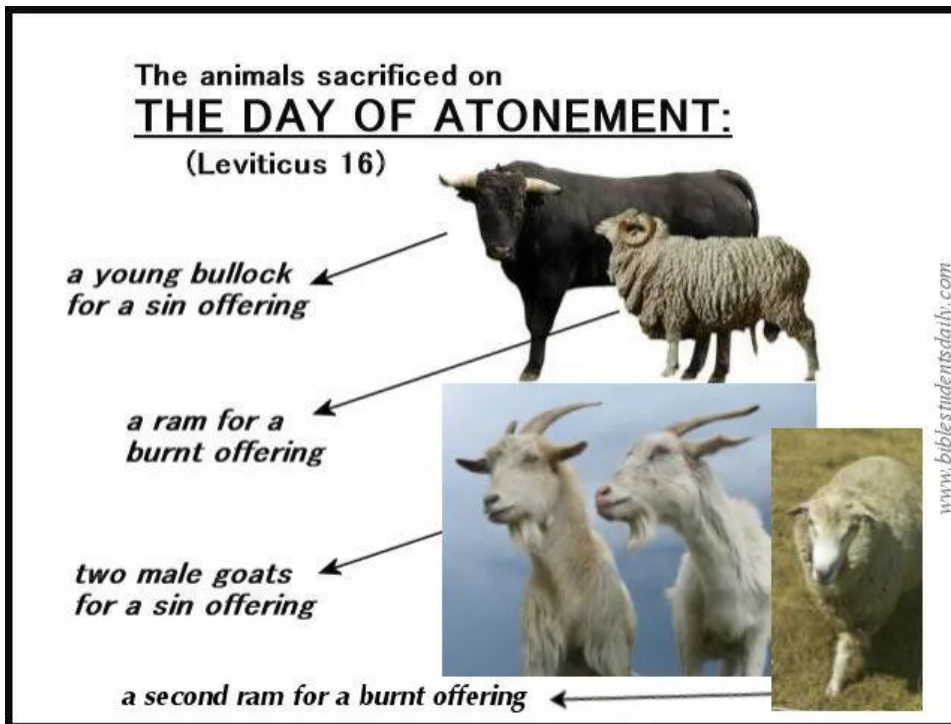
Verses 7 – 11:

After 9 nine days, on the 10th day of the month, an important memorial was to be celebrated. This feast for one day, was on the 10th day of this seventh month, and known as Yom Kippur, or Day of

Coverings.

This was the most solemn and sombre day in their whole calendar.

As before, one bullock, one ram, seven lambs and a goat for a sin offering



were to be offered beside the daily offering – we can see a theme of consistency here, - which should be a feature in every the life of every spiritual Israelite. The offering of the Lamb of God should be that focus – every day.

Of this day of Atonement, we can read that the nation were to afflict their souls [afflict – Hebrew *anah* to eye, and specifically *to look down*, modern parlance to be downcast], it was a day of national remembrance, contemplation, deep thought, and acceptance of the need for forgiveness of sins.

On this day Aaron was to completely wash from head to foot. He was to clothe himself in special linen garments which represented righteousness. He was to offer one bullock and a ram, and also two goats as a sin offering. We recall how lots were to be taken to determine which goat would be sacrificed and which goat would be

sent off free into the wilderness. Aaron, was then as high priest, to kill the bullock for himself and his house he had to then go into the Most Holy Place with incense, and to sprinkle blood of the bullock on the mercy seat seven times. The goat to be slain was killed and his blood likewise sprinkled. In this way he was making an atonement first for himself and then the people. He had to confess the sins of the nation over the living goat and then send it away into the wilderness. After this procedure he was to wash thoroughly once again, and then put his priestly clothes back on again. Then the rest of the Bullock and the goat had to be completely burned outside of the camp.

This quick summary, omitting many details, was designed to show and teach the nation of the Covering of their sins which was possible through the sacrifice which God would provide, by One who would pass through the veil, by his own blood, into the holiest, ONCE, to eradicate sin, and gain redemption, first for himself and then for the people.

As the Apostle reminds, 1 Corinthians 11:31; *if we would judge ourselves, we would not be judged.* And again *Without the shedding of blood there is no remission of sins* – Hebrews 9:22. Forgiveness of sins is only possible through the precious blood of Christ Jesus see verse 24-28: *24 For Christ is not entered into the holy places made with hands, which are the figures of the true; but into heaven itself, now to appear in the presence of God for us. Nor yet that he should offer himself often, as the high priest entered into the holy place every year with blood of others; For then must he often have suffered since the foundation of the world: but now once in the end of the world hath he appeared to put away sin by the sacrifice of himself. And as it is appointed unto men once to die, but after this the judgment: So Christ was once offered to bear the sins of many; and unto them that look for him shall he appear the second time without sin unto salvation.* Aware of the trumpet blasts of the fulfilled

prophecy alerting to repentance, the covering of the Messiah is provided to all those who believe on His name.

Feast of tabernacles

Verses 12-38

Held on the 15th day of the month, and known as Sukkot, (meaning booths or temporary shelters) on this day the nation were commanded to be happy. Yes, the mood was to change, and it was as if a burden was lifted, they were to rejoice and be happy in the sure knowledge that they were all together united as one with the God and Father. Their sins forgiven. As a nation they were made clean, and holy. A Kingdom of Priests and a Holy Nation.

It was known as a Feast of Tabernacles, as they all had to make little tabernacles, or booths, structures made out of sweet-smelling trees, chosen for their spiritual attributes, and they were to live in them for seven days with their families, and offer the designated offerings to God.

The trees branches chosen are described in Leviticus 23:40: *And ye shall take you on the first day the boughs of goodly trees, branches of palm trees, and the boughs of thick trees, and willows of the brook; and ye shall rejoice before the Lord your God seven days.*

Goodly[Heb. *hadar*] trees can be translated as majestic, and beautiful. Boughs of thick trees in Hebrew can be understood as referring to 'intertwined' and 'covering'- so branches with lots of leaves on. Josephus, the ancient Jewish historian wrote: *on this festival we carry in our hands a branch of myrtle and willow, and a bough of the palm tree with the addition of citron.*

Trees chosen to reflect fruitfulness, evergreen – life affirming, strength and uprightness. As the family gathered the branches together and constructed the shelter from the sun, they would have been reminded of the tents that they had lived in when they were strangers and pilgrims in a land that was not theirs and as they journeyed through the wilderness.

Awhile they were resting in their tents spending time together as a family, recounting the examples of the mercy of God, and remembering the promises made to the Fathers, the priests were busy in the tabernacle offering various beasts as sacrifice to God. They are described at length in this chapter, but here summarised in the little chart below.

Feast of Tabernacles				
Day/Beast	Lambs	Rams	Bulls	Goats
1	14	2	13	1
2	14	2	12	1
3	14	2	11	1
4	14	2	10	1
5	14	2	9	1
6	14	2	8	1
7	14	2	7	1
8	7	1	1	1

As can be seen the sacrifices remain constant except for the last day the 8th day, which is the beginning of a new week, and a new beginning, the end of the feast. There is one exception, the number of bulls offered, decreased by one, from 13 to 7, as the days passed. The bull was the most valued possession, being a beast of burden, a symbol of harnessed strength, but that without control could cause havoc. It is a reminder of the capability of men and women, and what they can achieve when harnessed by the Word. Rebellion is not far away, without that control. Yet here we see a decreasing number – perhaps as an emphasis that it was not by the blood of bulls and goats that sins could be taken away – (Hebrews 10:4)

Psalm 40:6 Sacrifice and offering thou didst not desire; mine ears hast thou opened: burnt offering and sin offering hast thou not required.

But they were required to participate as a nation by rejoicing, sacrificing their time – for 8 days – as a symbol of their whole life – to make a living sacrifice: Romans 12:1 *I beseech you therefore, brethren, by the mercies of God, that ye present your bodies a living sacrifice, holy, acceptable unto God, which is your reasonable service.*

This feast was also known also as the 'Feast of Ingathering', the last main harvest of the year, this day was a happy reflection on the journey in which God had brought them as once strangers and pilgrims, now to their desired haven. The great Feast of Ingathering will be when God will gather to him all – Hebrews 11: 13-16: *who have confessed that they were strangers and pilgrims on the earth. For they that say such things declare plainly that they seek a country... a better country, that is, an heavenly: wherefore God is not ashamed to be called their God: for he hath prepared for them a city.* A city, which is described in Ezekiel 40 – 44, the House of Prayer for all nations.



A House which will be created as described in Ezekiel as being adorned with majestic trees and foliage, to represent a giant dwelling place, where God will meet His people. In Isaiah 4:5-6 we read

And the Lord will create upon every dwelling place of mount Zion, and upon her assemblies, a cloud and smoke by day, and the shining of a flaming fire by night: for upon all the glory shall be a defence. And there shall be a tabernacle for a shadow in the day time from the heat, and for a place of refuge, and for a covert from storm and from rain.

The word for tabernacle is here *sukkot*- In Ezekiel 41: 16 *The door posts, and the narrow windows, and the galleries round about on their three stories, over against the door, cieled with wood round about, and from the ground up to the windows, and the windows were covered;*

The underlined sections above can be translated and interpreted as referring to climbing plants, foliage, vines, and greenery which will cover over the temple buildings and provide a wonderful ambience of calm beauty, like an enormous shelter.

So Zechariah 14:16 prophecies that all nations will go up to Jerusalem from year to year to keep this feast of booths, or tabernacles, to remind them of the temporary nature of their own bodies, and that it is only through the covering and shelter of God that we have hope of life eternal, and are able to rejoice in the great harvest – of people who have obeyed the trumpet call.

Brother Terry