

# Messiah in the Hebrew Feasts

The Hebrew word for feasts, *moedim*, literally means “appointed times.” Seven special Jewish feasts were divinely appointed by God to point believers to the person and work of the Messiah (Col 2:16-17). These feasts, some of which were designated as extra Sabbath rests, are listed in Leviticus 23, and are separated into two groups: the first set of feasts take place in the spring and are generally understood to point to what Jesus did in His first coming c. 33AD. The second set of feasts takes place in the fall of each calendar year, yet to be fulfilled. It is believed that these fall feasts relate to Christ’s Second Coming.

While the Bible does not spell out every correlation between each feast and the fulfillment in Christ, a number of the connections are not difficult to see.

## Passover Feast – Pesach - Nisan 14 (Mar / Apr)

*Exodus 12:1-28; Leviticus 23:5*

### FEAST

The Children of Israel first celebrated this feast on the same night they left Egypt. The Angel of Death made his way through the land, killing the firstborn of every home but passing over all homes covered by the blood of the lamb. God marked the month of Abib (later named Nisan) as the first month of the religious New Year.

- On the 10<sup>th</sup> day of the first month, a spotless male lamb was to be chosen and then observed for 4 days to ensure the lamb was free of defect and imperfection.
- On the 14th, the Passover, the lamb was killed and roasted over an open fire.
- None of the lamb's bones were to be broken.
- Passover was only to be celebrated by true believers (Israelites and proselytes), the lamb was to be completely eaten (any portions not eaten was to be buried), and they were to be fully dressed for travel while eating the lamb.
- During the Exodus, the Israelites were required to put the blood of the lamb on their door posts, thereby causing the Angel of Death to pass over their homes. The Angel of Death struck every home not covered by the lamb’s blood.

### CHRIST

John the Baptist introduced Jesus as “The Lamb of God which takes away the sin of the world”. The parallels between Christ and the Passover Lamb are significant, and highlight the sacrificial Messiah (1 Cor 5:7) as the fulfillment of the prophecies, types, shadows and metaphors in the Law, Prophets and Psalms (Old Testament).

- In the final week of Christ's ministry on earth, He was examined/tested by His detractors. His responses proved His holiness. (Matt 21 - 22; Luke 11:53; Luke 11:54; John 8:46; 18:38)
- Jesus was tortured and crucified on the 14th and truly died.
- Unlike the thieves, none of Christ’s bones were broken.
- Followers of Christ must ‘consume’ Him completely (John 6:54-58), and be prepared to follow Him wherever He leads. (Matt 4:18-25)
- On Judgment Day, only those who believe in Jesus as the Messiah are saved by His blood from eternal death. Those not covered by the blood of the Lamb, regardless of their religion, beliefs or ethnicity, will be sent to hell. (2 Thess 1:7-9, Rev 13:8; 21:27)

## Unleavened Bread – Hag Hamatzot - Nisan 15 (Mar / Apr)

*Exodus 12; Leviticus 23:6*

### FEAST

Starting the day after Passover, the Israelite’s home was to be rid of all leaven (yeast), a representation of sin. Sin and a holy God cannot abide together (2 Cor 6:14-18), nor can a holy God allow sin to go unpunished (Exod 34:5-7). The feast lasted seven days, the first and last of which were special Sabaaths.

All Jewish males were required to travel to Jerusalem to attend the Feast of Unleavened Bread.

### CHRIST

Jesus was without sin and the perfect sacrifice for all time (1 Peter 2:22-24). After Jesus was killed on the cross, He was placed in a new tomb (Jn 19:41). While the Israelites celebrated the Feast of Unleavened Bread, the Holy Lamb of God was lying, sinless, in a tomb, awaiting resurrection as the Bread of Life. Perhaps it is coincidental, but after the resurrection, Jesus remained untouched by human hands during the remainder of the Unleavened Feast. (John 20:17; 20:26-27)

## Feast of Firstfruits – Yom HaBikkurim - Nisan 17 (Mar / Apr)

*Leviticus 23:9-14*

### FEAST

Three days after Passover, the Israelites celebrated the Feast of Firstfruits. This three-day ritual brought God's blessings on the spring harvest by way of a token blessing on the first budding crop. It also started a 50-day countdown to the Feast of Weeks.

- On the day of Passover, the farmer would go out into his field, find the ripest sheaf of barley, and bind a cord around it, marking it as the Firstfruit.
- The next day, he would cut the sheaf, and prepare it for offering.
- On the third day after the Passover, he would bring the Firstfruit, a lamb, grain and wine to the priest.
- The priest's blessing for the Firstfruit would be a token blessing whereby the remainder of the crop would also receive a blessing at harvest time.
- Notable Biblical events on this same day in history:
  - Noah's ark survived the flood and came to rest on the rock (Gen 8:4 – civil calendar)
  - Children of Israel survived the Red Sea and reached the other side. (Exod 14:26-15:22 cf Num 33:1-8)
  - Manna ceased as the Children of Israel ate for the first time from the Promised Land (Josh 5:10-12)
  - Esther received reprieve for entering the King's chamber unannounced in an effort to save her people from Hamaan's plot (Esther 3:12-5:5)

### CHRIST

Jesus rose from the dead three days after Passover. Paul calls Him the "Firstfruit from the dead". One day, just like our forerunner, we will be resurrected to new life and will join Him in glory. (1 Cor 15:12-25)

- On the day of Passover, Judas went into the garden, identified Jesus to the soldiers, and had Him bound.
- Jesus' trial began on the night of the Passover, and by noon the next day, He was crucified.
- Three days after the Passover, Jesus rose from the dead and presented Himself to God. (Jn 20:17)
- Jesus' resurrection from death is the ultimate victory over sin and death. By God raising Him up, we, as believers, will be raised up on the last day. (Jn 6:40)
- Jesus the Messiah, the Rock of our Salvation (Ps 18:1-3), the Manna from heaven (Jn 6:58), laid down His life and was raised from the dead on this day.

## Feast of Weeks – Shavuot / Pentecost - Sivan 6 (May / Jun)

*Leviticus 23:15-22*

### FEAST

Fifty days after Firstfruits (seven weeks and one day), the Children of Israel were to celebrate the Feast of Weeks, thanking God for the harvest. Jewish tradition says that the Mosaic Law was given at Mt. Sinai on this day. Jews were required to travel to Jerusalem to celebrate this special Sabbath feast.

- Offerings were presented as a "wave offering". The symbols were waved upwards, downwards and towards the 4 corners of the earth, symbolizing the goodness of God's provisions spread throughout the whole world<sup>1</sup>.
- Two loaves, made of fine flour with yeast, offered along with new grain and other animals.
- The feast commemorates God's giving of Moses' Law at Mt. Sinai on this day.
- People found in violation of the Law were slaves to sin and condemned to die. (Deut 30:15-20).
- People worshiped golden calf.
- 3,000 people killed following Aaron's worship.

### CHRIST

Fifty days after the resurrection, Holy Spirit was poured out on the Apostles and disciples as they gathered to pray. Jews and proselytes from all over the known world were in Jerusalem as required by the Mosaic Law. The Greek word for "fifty" is "pentecost".

- With the grafting in of the Gentiles, salvation started with the Jews first, but is now available to the whole world of Jews and Gentiles. (Acts 2:32-33)
- New crop of forgiven believers presented to God. (two loaves to represent both Jews and Gentiles?)
- God gave the Holy Spirit on Mt. Zion. (Jerusalem) on this same day.
- People with the Holy Spirit are freed from sin and live forever. (Jn 6:63; 2 Cor 3:1-8; Jer 31:31-34; Titus 3:3-6)
- People worshiped God.
- 3,000 people saved following Peter's preaching.

# Messiah in the Hebrew Feasts: The Fall Feasts

The following feasts take place in the fall of each calendar year. These feasts also point to Christ, but unlike the Spring feasts, the Bible does not specify how they are fulfilled in Christ. It is generally believed that the fall feasts refer to Jesus' Second Coming. There is some speculation as to how each feast represents the person and work of Christ.

## Feast of Trumpets – Rosh Hashanah - Tishri 1 (Sep / Oct)

*Leviticus 23:23-25*

### FEAST

On the first day of the seventh month (Tishri), the Children of Israel were to have a special solemn Sabbath followed by a ten-day period of repentance known as the High Holy Days. The new year of the civil calendar began on this day. (Nisan was the beginning of the religious calendar.)

- Trumpets sounded at the temple and synagogues around the world.
- Various practices were observed throughout Israel's history regarding the type, nature and meaning of the trumpet sounds. Generally, trumpets announce a warning, a judgment or an announcement of good news.
- The Mishnah and Talmud see this day as God judging all humans with the Books of Life<sup>2</sup>.
- Rosh Hashanah marked the beginning of ten days of repentance, in preparation of the next feast, the Yom Kippur (Day of Atonement).

### CHRIST

Some scholars speculate that the beginning of the new civil calendar might correspond to the return of Christ and the beginning of the new reign of Christ on earth.

- The whole world hears the last trumpet and voice of Archangel. (1 Cor 15:52)
- The Second Coming of Christ is both good news for His saints and bad news for those facing judgment. (1 Thess 4:13-18; 2 Thess 1:6-10; Joel 2:1-15; Zech 9:14-17; Matt 24:31)
- Jesus stated that Judgment was for Him to execute on the living and the dead. (John 5:24-27; 2 Tim 4:1)
- When man hears the call of the Gospel, he is to respond in repentance and faith in Jesus as the Messiah. He is granted new life in Christ.

## Day of Atonement – Yom Kippur - Tishri 10 (Sep / Oct)

*Leviticus 16; 23:26-32*

### FEAST

This special Sabbath feast took place ten days after the Feast of Trumpets. It is the most solemn of all Hebrew feasts, a day of self-denial, fasting, prayer and mourning. It was a national day of repentance and atonement for sins.

- A thick curtain separated the Holy of Holies from the Holy Place. Only the High Priest could enter the Holy of Holies, and only once a year on this day to make special sacrifices to atone for the sins of the nation.
- The High Priest acted as a mediator to perform the sacrifices required on the Day of Atonement.
- The High Priest first had to make atonement for himself before making atonement for the people.

### CHRIST

Some believe this is the day that Jesus will return for His people, and/or the day that all Israel will look on Him whom they pierced and repent (Zech 2:1). Many believe that on this day of repentance, ethnic Israel will be forgiven and restored. (Is 66:5-14; Rom 11:25-32)

- When Jesus died, the veil separating the Holy Place from the Holy of Holies was torn by God from top to bottom (Lk 23:44-49), and now access Him directly. (Heb 6:19-20; Heb 9; Heb 10:19-22).
- Jesus is the only Mediator between man and God. No other human is needed to intercede for man. (Heb 9:15)
- Jesus, as the sinless perfect High Priest, did not have to first offer an atonement for His sins before making atonement for His people. (Heb 7:26-28)

## Feast of Tabernacles – Sukkot - Tishri 10 (Sep / Oct)

*Leviticus 23:33-43*

### FEAST

Also known as the Feast of Booths, this weeklong feast was a joyful commemoration God's forgiveness and provision for His people. The booths were a reminder of God's sheltering them during the wilderness wanderings. Jews are required to travel to Jerusalem for this feast.

- Jews continue to celebrate Sukkot today by building booths (temporary shelters) and living in them during the feast.

### CHRIST

Sukkot represents the future final harvest when all nations will share in the joy and blessings of God's kingdom. Although celebrated only by believers, it praises God for His presence and goodness everywhere.

- This feast may represent the House of the Lord that Christ will make for His people to dwell in forever.

- Four special plants are used in this celebration: citron, myrtle, palm and willow. A *lulav*, made of willow, palm and myrtle branches, is waved up and down in all four directions (north, south, east and west) to symbolize God's presence everywhere.
- According to tradition, a priest would carry water from the Pool of Siloam to the Temple, symbolizing that when the Messiah comes, the whole earth will know God "as the waters cover the sea." (Is 11:9; Hab 2:14)
- People carrying torches marched around the Temple, placing lights around the outside perimeter of the Temple, indicating that the Messiah would be a light to the Gentiles. (Is 49:6; Is 60:1-3)
- The final day of the feast was an especially festive event called the "Day of the Great Hosanna", looking forward to the coming of the Messiah.
- In the Day of the Lord, all believers will one day celebrate this feast (Zech 14:16-19), coming in from all nations to worship before the Lord. Nations that do not respond in worship will be struck with drought and famine.
- On the last day of this feast, the great day, Jesus stood up and cried out, "If anyone thirsts, let him come to me and drink. Whoever believes in Me, as the Scripture has said, 'Out of his heart will flow rivers of living water.'" (Jn 7:37-38)
- The next morning, while the torches were still lit, Jesus declared "I AM the light of the world. Whoever follows Me will not walk in darkness, but will have the light of life." (Jn 8:12)
- During the Triumphal Entry, the crowds met the Messiah waving palm branches and calling out "Blessed is the coming kingdom of our father David! Hosanna in the highest!" (This did not take place during the Feast of Tabernacles, but the emblems and titles are the same.)

## COMMENTS

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The Hebrew feasts were given by God approximately 1445 years before Christ was born, and have continued till this day. Many sociologists and theologians believe that the nature of the feasts is a primary reason behind the Jewish people being able to maintain their language, religious practices and cultural identity for over 3,500 years – longer than any other civilization alive today.

Although some of the particular practices associated with the feasts have been modified over the centuries, most of the core symbols, elements and practices remain the same. The greatest changes have been due to geo-political changes in Israel's history: exile to Babylon and destruction of Solomon's temple in 586BC, rebuilding of the temple in 516BC, destruction of the temple in 70AD, destruction of Jerusalem in 90AD, banishment of Jews from the Holy Land in 131AD, etc. A large number of minor traditions have been woven into the festivals, particularly the Passover, and seem to point directly to the Messiah (nature of the matzah bread, number of wine drinks, etc). While some of the extra traditions were present in Jesus' day, the origins of many of these embellishments are unknown, and since they are not prescribed in the Bible, many of them have not been addressed in this document. Readers interested in these extra-biblical details might be interested in consulting publications from Messianic Jewish organizations such as Jews for Jesus ([www.JewsForJesus.org](http://www.JewsForJesus.org)).

Two other feasts were added to the Jewish calendar before Christ was born. These feasts are not part of the Levitical command, and are not covered in this document:

- **Hanukkah** 25 Kislev – 2 Tevet (Nov / Dec): commemorating the Maccabean victory over the Greeks and the rededication/purification of the Temple in 165BC after Antiochus Ephiphanes IV defiled it. Many believe this desecration of the temple was predicted in Daniel 11:21-35. Jesus celebrated this festival in John 10:22.
- **Purim** 14 Adar (Feb / Mar): commemorating Esther's bravery before Persian king Xerxes and the victory over Hamaan's plot to exterminate the Jews. Some believe Purim is the unnamed feast of John 5.

## SOURCES

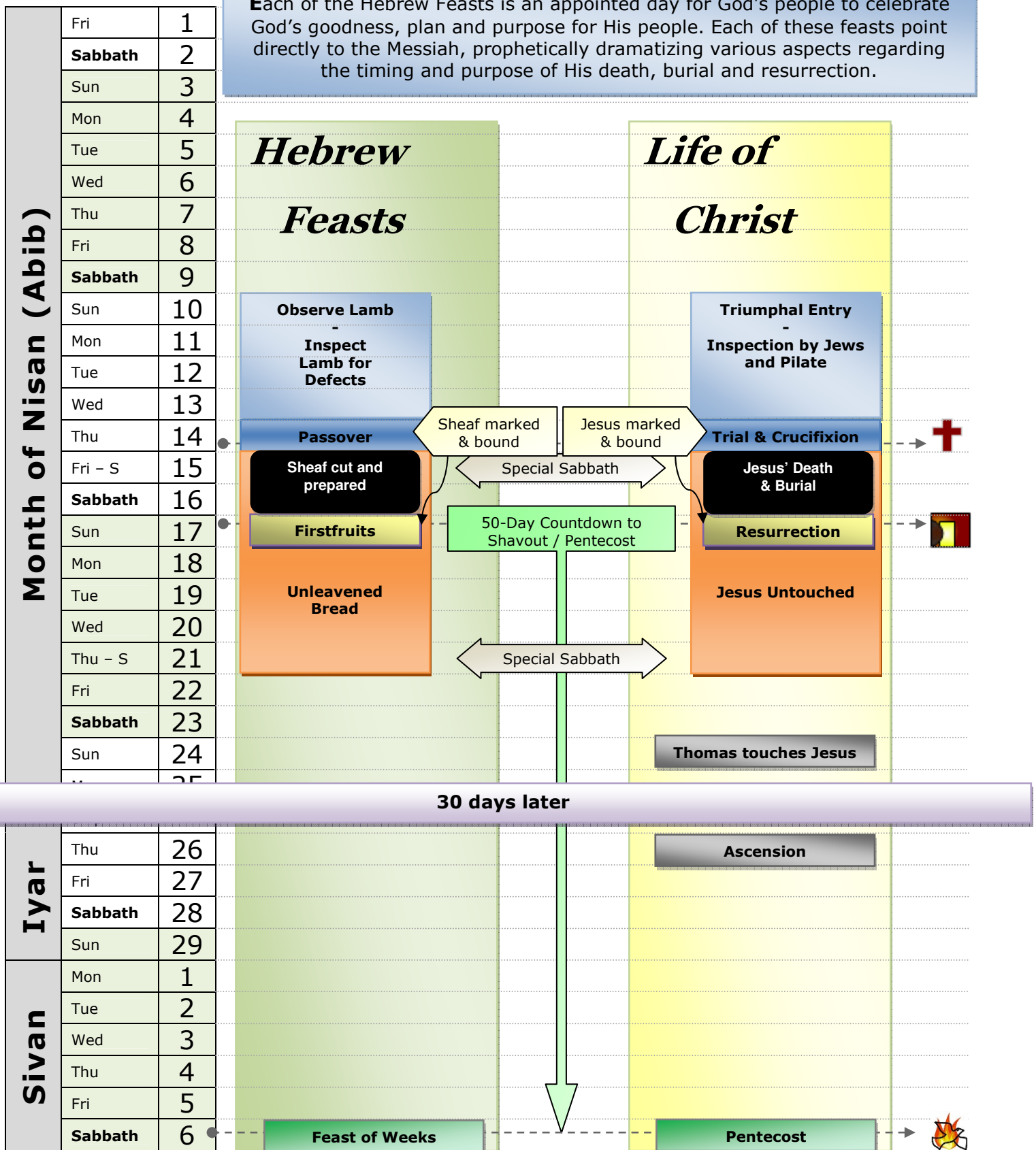
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- *NIV Archaeological Study Bible: An Illustrated Walk Through Biblical History and Culture.* - Zondervan
- *Rose Book of Bible Charts, Maps, and Time Lines.* – Rose Publishing
- *International Standard Bible Encyclopedia* - Wm. B. Eerdmans Publishing Co
- *John Gill's Exposition of the Entire Bible* - Gill, John

1. Vayikra Rabbah 28:5; R. Chama bar Ukva  
"He passes it back and forth, and up and down. He passes it back and forth for the One Who owns the entire universe, and he raises it up and down for Him Who owns those in Heaven and earth." R. Simon, son of R. Yehoshua says, "He passes it back and forth to cancel harsh winds, and he raises and lowers it to cancel harsh dews."
2. Schulchan Aruch, par. 1. c. 588. sect. 1. Lebush, par. 2. c. 588. sect. 1

# Feast Timeline and the Messiah

Each of the Hebrew Feasts is an appointed day for God's people to celebrate God's goodness, plan and purpose for His people. Each of these feasts point directly to the Messiah, prophetically dramatizing various aspects regarding the timing and purpose of His death, burial and resurrection.



# Hebrew Feast Calendar

Today, most of the Western world uses the Gregorian calendar, established by Pope Gregory VIII in 1582. It is a calendar based on the solar year, with 365 days and an additional leap year added every 4 years to approximate the 365.25-day solar year. The ancient Jewish calendar, however, is considerably more complicated as it is based on the movements of both the sun and moon. As a result, the Gregorian calendar dates for the Hebrew feasts changes from year to year.

Gregorian Year	2011	2012	2013	2014
Feast of Lots (Purim)	Mar 20	Mar 8	Feb 24	Mar 16
<b>Passover (Pesach)</b>	Apr 19	Apr 7	Mar 26	Apr 15
<b>Feast of Unleavened Bread (Hag Hamatzot)</b>	Apr 20	Apr 8	Mar 27	Apr 16
<b>Feast of Firstfruits (Yom HaBikkurim)</b>	Apr 22	Apr 10	Mar 29	Mar 18
<b>Feast of Weeks (Shavuot / Pentecost)</b>	Jun 8	May 27	May 15	Jun 4
<b>Jewish New Year (begins on Tishri 1)</b>	<b>5772</b>	<b>5773</b>	<b>5774</b>	<b>5775</b>
<b>Feast of Trumpets (Rosh Hashanah)</b>	Sep 29	Sep 17	Sep 5	Sep 25
<b>Day of Atonement (Yom Kippur)</b>	Oct 8	Sep 26	Sep 14	Oct 4
<b>Feast of Tabernacles (Sukkot)</b>	Oct 13	Oct 1	Sep 19	Oct 9
Feast of Dedication (Hanukkah)	Dec 21	Dec 9	Nov 28	Dec 17

## Some interesting facts about the Hebrew calendar:

- The years of the Jewish calendar are calculated from creation till now. By Jewish reckoning, Adam was created about 5700 years ago. The Chinese calendar has a similar approximation.
- The Hebrew day begins at sunset of the previous day and concludes on sunset of the day in question.
- The Gregorian New Year is January 1<sup>st</sup>, whereas the Jewish calendar follows two patterns:
  - The religious calendar begins in the month of Abib (also called Nisan) which corresponds to March/April. This calendar was initiated in 1446 BC, the year of the Exodus (Exod 12:1-2).
  - The civil New Year begins on Tishri 1, corresponding to Sept/Oct. The origins of the civil calendar are not completely known, but the ancient Babylonians used a similar calendar.
- Each new month on a Jewish calendar begins on a new moon, and the middle of the month (14<sup>th</sup> or 15<sup>th</sup>) is always a full moon. Since the orbit of the moon is 29.5 days, each month in the Jewish calendar alternates between 29 and 30 days. The 12-month year is 354 days, except in leap years, where an extra month is added.
- Gregorian calendars have one leap year every 4 years where an additional day is added in February. By contrast, the ancient Hebrew calendar's leap year adds an additional month every 2-3 years. The timing of the leap year is determined by the Feast of Firstfruits: if a Firstfruit cannot be found on the 14<sup>th</sup> of the first month, the month is considered to be Adar II instead of Abib, and therefore a leap-year month. This pattern of leap years forms a curious 19-year repeating pattern that has an unusual musical correlation: when compared to a 19-note octave (common in Eastern music and some classical music in the 15<sup>th</sup> century), the 7 leap years match the 7 major notes of the 19-note octave. Although there are several other luni-solar calendars known in history, this is the only calendar that has this curious musical correlation.
- As with many Jewish customs, the Jewish calendar has been revised over the centuries. Mathematically-based formulas have been implemented to give better accuracy, and to prevent certain feasts from falling on or near Sabbath days.