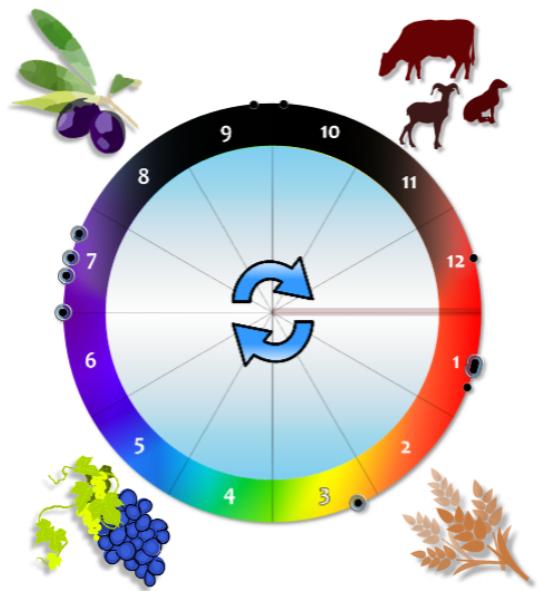


Introduction to God's Appointed Times

“For everything there is a season, and a time for every matter under heaven...” – Ecclesiastes 3:1

What are the moedim?

In the beginning, God created time. When God set aside the seventh day as special, the Sabbath, He created *holy*time. The essence of being "holy" is simply being set apart for a special purpose. Later, when God rescued Israel from Egypt and gave them His instruction book, the Torah, He set aside more days in the calendar as holy. We know these days today as Passover, Unleavened Bread, Firstfruits, Shavuot (Pentecost), Rosh Hashanah, Yom Kippur, and Sukkot (Tabernacles). In the Bible, these days are referred to as "moedim," which means "appointed times," and they are also called "mikra'ei kodesh," "times for proclaiming holiness" or "holy convocations." **These are times God has set aside as holy in order to meet with us, to be present with us.** He will be there waiting at the next moed – waiting for you. Will you show up? Ultimately the moedim are about being with God, walking with Him, having table fellowship with Him, knowing Him, being His Bride, growing in Him.



Aren't these days only for the Jews?

The moedim are not just for the Jews. As with other elements of the Torah, these times are for any who are willing to enter into them. All who choose to honor God's appointed times will reap the benefit of connecting to God through them. And connection is life. Biblically, separation is "death," and "connection" is life, and the moedim are all about connection to Him, to our families, and to our communities.

In the Torah's great listing of the moedim, Leviticus 23, God calls these days not the appointed times of the Jews but *His*moedim:

"The LORD spoke to Moses, saying, 'Speak to the people of Israel and say to them, These are the appointed feasts (moedim) of the LORD that you shall proclaim as holy convocations (mikra'ei kodesh); they are My appointed feasts.'" –Leviticus 23:1-2

Before there was Jew or Gentile, God established the Sabbath. Before Adam was even created on Day 6, God laid the foundation for the moedim:

"And God said, 'Let there be lights in the expanse of the heavens to separate the day from the night. And let them be for signs and for seasons (moedim), and for days and years...and there was evening and there was morning, the fourth day.' (Genesis 1:14,19)

The truth is that these moedim follow a universal pattern, a pattern for growth that is common to all people, a spiritual heartbeat that resonates not only within all people but within all things. The moedim follow God's cycle of development, God's plan for growth, and that cycle has a name: "salvation." As everything develops, as it grows, it experiences salvation. These moedim are important moments in God's yearly spiritual curriculum for mankind. Getting in tune with them – both the Sabbath and the yearly appointed times – brings us in line in a special way with the One through Whom everything was made, Yeshua, Whose name means "salvation."

We who follow the Master Yeshua should be aware that the Messiah, Himself, gave great weight to the moedim. John's gospel, in particular, takes pains to note what moed season is at hand as Yeshua goes about various events in His life and ministry. These days are not only important to Yeshua, Who kept each of them, but the Apostle John also recognizes their importance as part of the spiritual context for all that Yeshua did, which is why he consistently relates the changing moed seasons to the reader in his gospel. We do well to imitate firstly Yeshua, our Master, and secondly the specially treasured disciple, John.

For what purpose does God want to "meet" with us?

With this idea in mind that God has a yearly "spiritual curriculum" for us, let's return to the idea that God wants to "meet" with us on these certain set days. Why would God want a special "meeting" with us? Well, only God knows that fully, and often such meetings end up rather different from what we were expecting. In His Word, however, God *has* revealed at least some foundational intentions for these days. We are told to "remember" on many of these days, so that's one aspect of what we are doing together with God - remembering the exodus at Passover, for example, or the giving of the Torah at Shavuot.

But there's more to these days. What God emphasizes in the Bible even more strongly than these being days to remember is that these are days to celebrate the various harvests throughout the year, especially the grain harvest in the spring and the fruit harvest in the fall. God commands that firstfruits of these harvests be brought to Him. He wants to join us in a special way as we mark off stages of the yearly journey, to rejoice with us around the table, and He wants to "re-center" us by having us acknowledge that the bounty we have reaped ultimately comes from Him. "I'm not a farmer!" you say? Well, know that the physical harvests only reflect the spiritual harvests, and all of us are meant to grow spiritually throughout the year, whether you're a farmer or not. And that which we reap becomes the seed for a new round of planting. **So we aren't just remembering the distant past, and we aren't just celebrating yearly milestones with God and being re-centered in the truth of His kind provision; we are also being prepared for the next stage of growth.** In other words, these are

days for God to do a work in each of us as we grow in the here and now - at Passover, He does a work of freeing us like He did at the first Passover in Egypt, and at Shavuot, He opens up a new level of the Word to us like He did at the first Shavuot at Mt. Sinai. These are not days to take lightly. They are holy times set aside to not only mark our growth in Him but also to receive the keys to the next steps with Him.

How do we "show up"?

If God wants to meet with us to celebrate together and do a work in us, how do we join Him? How do we show up? Well, first understand that God is a good Father Who understands where we're at as we journey with Him, what our level of understanding and experience is. He is gracious. Like any good parent, He loves it when we take a new step toward Him, even if that step is a bit shaky, unsure. So point number one is start slowly, take small steps, and begin by just doing *something* from your heart to honor these days. Particularly at first, the heart is more important than the form.

Having said that, God has set forth some commandments regarding these days, and we do well to learn and follow these specific instructions. To start, these are days to rest from our normal work, special Sabbaths, and this pausing from work is probably our most practical means of setting these days apart and being "present" with God and others. The moedim are particularly good times to get down on our knees and just *listen* for what He might be saying to us, and listening requires pausing from our often frenetic activities. Beyond being special Sabbaths, most of these days are also described as "holy convocations," so whenever possible, we should seek to honor them with others who also want to honor God at these specially chosen times.

As we grow in our observance, we may reach out to see how the Jewish people have observed these days through the centuries, allowing these accumulated traditions to inspire and guide us. Over time, we get better at planning far ahead for these days, giving them the weight they deserve as appointments with the God of the universe.

Lastly, we understand that most of us in the modern world live in cultures where the biblical calendar is not widely followed, so it can be a bit of a battle to get these days off work, for example. As we come to grasp the special beauty and great significance of God's appointed times, we may start to feel a bit out of place, like a fish swimming against the current. **We need to do what we can do and extend much grace to each other** as we navigate these murky waters, even as we look forward to a time in the future when the moedim will be the heartbeat of the whole world!