

A Holiday by any other Name is NOT the Same!

By Barbara L. Klika, MSW, LCSW, Personal Life Coach
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A very good question came to my attention recently. It seemed to deserve a thoughtful answer that summarized the main points as to the difference between the holidays we have celebrated as part of the fabric of our lives before we came into a Torah understanding and what we choose to observe after our understanding of Torah increased. Perhaps you have asked a similar question and would also like to read the summary of my thoughts and resources along the journey of returning to the "ancient paths" spoken of in Scripture.

"Isn't a 'holiday' what you believe and make of it?"

Yes, I would agree that a holiday is what we make it. It is true all my life, up until the last six years, that I just had a sort of personal view of holidays; they were what we did because it was what everybody did. I didn't really question who it was that decided we should celebrate what days for what purposes. Christmas and Easter and Halloween were among these days, although I knew there was spiritual significance to Christmas and Easter that wasn't there for others.

Many people today want to discount the origins of something, and just stay focused on their own personal perception as the only thing that matters. They see no problem with the sort of "metamorphosis" of understanding that happens over time. My best example is that of the U.S. Constitution. Most people are aware that actions have been taken through the years, usually in the wake of one war or another, that have actually made significant changes in the constitution so that it is not what it originally was. If you are one who values the protections of liberty that were originally written there, would you want it to be interpreted as it was originally written or as it has been changed over time? I would stand for the original every time. I believe the same is true for our faith.

Francis Schaeffer's book and video series "*How Then Shall We Live?*" is excellent to explore this concept further.

Halloween was the first holiday that became apparent to me that it wasn't a God pleasing thing to do; unless you didn't care which God and settled for god, little g. This celebration of darkness seemed harmless enough for most of my life as we didn't do anything dangerous literally. When I began to understand that it represented a time in which great evil is practiced (as I learned of those hurt in occult rituals), it became impossible for me to give even the appearance of participating in such an event. My husband also understood and agreed with the changes to be made. For a few years, we tried the Harvest Festival theme that many churches used to try to replace it but that didn't sit right with me either, though I didn't know why. (Halloween was gone from our lives by 1993 I think.)

Now, through prayer and study, I have come to understand that my view was really what could be called a humanistic view. It is characteristic of this age, that people think each person has their own "truth," and that everyone is even entitled to interpret everything in their own unique way, whether that is a universally agreed upon understanding or not. This is contrary to a Biblical standard of Truth, in which we understand that our God, *YHWH* and His Son, our Messiah, *Yeshua*, is the author of Truth; in fact, He is THE way, THE Truth and THE Life, not one among many. Loving Him, honoring Him, accepting Him, means that HE is the standard for what we view as Truth; not our little puny human perceptions!

I never knew until I studied *Torah* that God, *YHWH* Himself, had a calendar for us to follow that was in fact, different from the calendar the world at large followed! I tried to follow both for about a year and became aware that there is a sort of different life "rhythm" between the two and that it was exceedingly difficult to try to do both. Every "holiday" in His calendar is totally a picture of Messiah while the holidays on my daily calendar celebrated human traditions and events!

All too often, as we come into greater understanding of something, we rush in and may try to force our own or another's understanding in the same direction. It was a process for me, and I think I can speak for others, too, as we began to comprehend that there is a different agenda underneath the typical "world" calendar and the pattern of set apart days and that it is not the same as our God's (big G, the God of Abraham, Isaac and Jacob) agenda.

When push comes to shove, I understood in the early 90's that I wanted to honor God; and be a sheep rather than a goat. When later I understood that *YHWH* is accomplishing His purposes in me and in fellowship with others through observation of His set apart times (which are called *moedim* in Hebrew, which means "appointments") this became more attractive to me to keep an appointment with *YHWH*, than staying where I was in the world system. Keeping these feast days in accordance with Scripture is actually a type of rehearsal we participate in on an annual basis; rehearsing to be prepared when our Messiah does return. Along with this eschatological picture, the feast days cycle is also a picture of our spiritual growth toward maturity, complete with the ancient version of a PowerPoint presentation in which we ourselves walk out the steps.

Here is a brief definition of the word "**holiday**" and it's origins.

<http://www.answers.com/topic/holiday> if you want to check further into their history of the word and it's meanings.

hol-i-day (hōl'ĭ-dā)

n.

1. A day free from work that one may spend at leisure, especially a day on which custom or the law dictates a halting of general business activity to commemorate or celebrate a particular event.
2. A religious feast day; a holy day.
3. Chiefly British. A vacation. Often used in the phrase on holiday.

intr.v. Chiefly British., -dayed, -day-ing, -days.

To pass a holiday or vacation.

[Middle English *holidai*, *holy day*, from Old English *hālig dæg*: *hālig*, *holy*; see *holy* + *dæg*, *day*; see *day*.]

So the origin of the word, holiday, came from "holy day." The word Holy came from the Hebrew word, *kadosh*, through Greek I think where it was *holi*, then the Middle English as above and finally into our modern English as holiday. To be "kadosh" means to be set apart from the others for a special purpose. The word itself doesn't say whether that special purpose is a good one or a bad one; it only means to distinguish one from the other.

Keeping these appointed times is part of being set apart for YHWH's purposes. It has become more meaningful for me each of the past six years. I came in first at Passover seven years ago, celebrating at a friend's house a year before we in our family came to understand the more full significance of it all.

We can divorce the concept of "set apart" and holi-days from God and keep the festivals and traditions that the world keeps, but when we do this, we are choosing to follow someone else's footsteps, not His. When I first was coming into understanding, I remember feeling sort of angry, I" Why would a loving God take these vacation days of relaxation away from me!" I realized eventually that He DOES know we need times of relaxation and refreshing away from our regular routines and His calendar provides them! Even more of them than we have known! Every week! The difference is that this rest and relaxation away from the daily grind is still centered in Him. We laugh, sing, dance, pray, worship, eat, rest, study, eat, talk, study, eat because we have unity in our Messiah and His plan for us.

The commentary on *Emor* in the *Torah Club 1* Bible study from *First Fruits of Zion*, www.ffoz.org does a fine job of describing the physical and the spiritual significance of keeping this calendar of set apart "holi-days" and how they are an actual walking out picture of what YHWH/Yeshua is doing in our spirits as we grow in knowledge of Him and faith. Batya Wootten's book, *Israel's Feast and Their Fullness* is another source of well done description of Messiah's place in each of the feast days, as is the online study resource on this subject at Hoshana

Rabbah congregation's website,
<http://www.hoshanarabbah.org/teaching.html#feast>

May these few words encourage you to get to know our Messiah in each of these set apart days, just as He told the disciples of Himself from the Torah while on the road to Emmaus. The first cycle of participation often does feel somewhat strange, like the proverbial "fish out of water" but we have found that with each year, our own memories and traditions have grown until these celebrations are as much "ours" as what we used to celebrate. When we choose to walk in His set apart times, we are not giving up something so much as we are walking more fully *into* our heritage! We believe that it is a part of our preparation for His return.