

# ***Messianic Jews Natsarenes***

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*Dedicated to*

**The Glory of Yehoshua HaMashiach**

**Holy Convocation – What  
does the Bible say about  
Convocation?**

## Holy Convocation – What does the Bible say about Convocation?

Convocation (also referred to as “set-apart gathering”) is the most widely used word to bring people together, by churches, Christian religious institutions and synagogues in today’s generation. It is said that on the Sabbath or Festivals, we must gather/come together to worship. The aim of this study paper is to shed light on what the word “convocation” means in its “correct context” and its spiritual meaning for all true believers of Yehoshua HaMashiach who live by the Torah (laws of Elohim).

### Holy Convocation

The word “convocation” appears in the scriptures as follows:

Word	Number of times it appears in the scriptures
Convocation	15
Convocations	3

In Hebrew, the word “convocation” means “miqra”, spoken as “Mik-raw” (Strong’s concordance number 4744). In Hebrew, this word means “rehearsal”. What does the word rehearsal mean? Rehearsal is defined as “the act of practicing in preparation for an event”. The term “miqra” also means to “read and understand” the laws of Elohim (God in English).

The word “holy” in Hebrew in this context means “qadash”, spoken as “Kaw-dash” (Strong’s concordance number 6942). In Hebrew, this word means to be set-apart or to be holy/sanctify for God.

We can clearly understand that the word “convocation” is firstly to practise, secondly to read and understand the laws of Elohim. In a nutshell, we can say that the term “convocation” means to set apart an appointed time (Sabbath/Festivals) to Elohim and to read, understand His laws so that you can use His laws in your life (practise them).

## The word “convocation” as per the scriptures in its chronological order

In order to understand the depth of what Elohim is telling us, we need to read and understand the word “convocation” in its “chronological order”.

Exodus 12:16 – “And in the first day there shall be a holy convocation, and in the seventh day there shall be a holy convocation for you; no manner of work shall be done on them, except that which every man must eat, that only may be done by you”.

Leviticus 23:3 – “Six days shall work be done: but the seventh day is the Sabbath of rest, a holy convocation; you shall do no work on it: it is the Sabbath to YHWH in all your dwellings”.

Leviticus 23:7 – “In the first day you shall have a holy convocation: you shall do no regular work on it”.

Leviticus 23:8 – “But you shall offer an offering made by fire to YHWH for seven days. On the seventh day is a holy convocation: you shall do no regular work on it”.

Leviticus 23:21 – “And you shall proclaim on the same day a holy convocation unto you: you shall do no regular work on it: it shall be a statute forever in all your dwellings throughout your generations”.

Leviticus 23:24 – “In the seventh new moon, on the first day of the new moon, you have a rest, a remembrance of Teruah, a set-apart gathering”.

Leviticus 23:27 – “On the tenth day of this seventh new moon is Yom haKippurim. It shall be a set-apart gathering for you. And you shall afflict your beings, and shall bring an offering made by fire to YHWH”.

Leviticus 23:34-36 – “Speak to the children of Yisrael, saying, ‘On the fifteenth day of this seventh new moon is the festival of Sukkot for seven days to YHWH. On the first day is a set-apart gathering, you do no servile work. For seven days you bring an offering made by fire to YHWH. On the eighth day there shall be a set-apart gathering for you, and you shall bring an offering made by fire to YHWH. It is a closing festival, you do no servile work”.

Numbers 28:17-18 – “and on the fifteenth day of this new moon is a festival. For seven days unleavened bread is

eaten. On the first day is a set-apart gathering, you do no servile work”.

Numbers 28:25-26 — “and on the seventh day you have a set-apart gathering, you do no servile work. And on the day of the first-fruits, when you bring a new grain offering to YHWH at your festival of Weeks, you have a set-apart gathering, you do no servile work”.

Numbers 29:1 — “And in the seventh new moon, on the first day of the new moon, you have a set-apart gathering, you do no servile work, it is Yom Teruah for you”.

Numbers 29:7 — “And on the tenth day of this seventh new moon you have a set-apart gathering, and you shall afflict your beings, you do not work”.

Leviticus 23:2 — “Speak to the children of Yisrael and say to them, ‘The appointed times of YHWH, which you are to proclaim as set-apart gatherings. My appointed times, are these’”.

Leviticus 23:4 — “These are the appointed times of YHWH, set-apart gatherings which you are to proclaim at their appointed times”.

Leviticus 23:37 — “These are the appointed times of YHWH which you proclaim as set-apart gatherings, to bring an offering made by fire to YHWH, an ascending offering and a grain offering, a slaughtering and drink offerings, as commanded for every day”.

From all the above verses, we can understand one main theme, which is to assemble (to do a rehearsal) for all the festivals which are the Sabbaths of Elohim. The words “assemble” and “gathering” are used interchangeably on many occasions. Gathering is defined as “an assembly or meeting. It can be also called as a place where two or more people come, like a family gathering”.

In order to understand the significance of the words “assemble” and “gathering”, we need to look at an example. Assume that you are an officer in the army. It is a well-known fact that every week and many times every year you have normal trainings and special advanced trainings. Even though you have never been to war, it is important that you train yourself as per the army training schedule every week and also on appointed days. This training goes on every year, even though you have never been to war. The whole purpose of the training is to equip you with all the skills

necessary so that you can use them when that day (war) comes. The important thing is to train and prepare yourself whether war comes in your life time or not.

When we apply the above army principle, that same principle applies in the convocation. The weekly training that you have in the army is compared to the Sabbath training that you do to learn the laws (Torah) of God. The appointed advanced trainings that you have in the army are compared to the training (rehearsal) that we do during the Feasts/Festivals of God. We all know that we are all waiting for the Kingdom of God to reign on earth. But we do not know when exactly that will happen (precise day/month), even though we can decipher the times which we live in. The important thing is to prepare our self for that day, so that when God’s kingdom finally arrives, we can use our skills that we learned in His kingdom.

Now we need to examine what is the purpose of this assembling and what is the main rehearsal that is being done.

When Israel came out of Egypt, “**the covenant**” that YHWH our Elohim made with His people on Mount Sinai was “**you shall be to Me a reign of priests and a set-apart nation**” (Exodus 19:6).

What do we mean by the term “priest”? The word “priest” comes from the Hebrew word “kohen”, spoken as “ko-hane” (Strong’s concordance number 3548). “A priest is a person who represents the people before God (Elohim)”. When the covenant was made by YHWH our Elohim, we were to be a reign of holy priests so that our Elohim could use us to teach other nations. In a layman’s language, you could say that a priest is similar to an ambassador. In today’s world, an ambassador is sent by a country to another so that the people of that country can learn about the other’s people and culture (the food they eat, the God they worship, the clothes they wear, their family structure and the laws that govern their society).

The next question to be asked is how do you become a priest?

In a gentile world (the present society in which we live), people go to a seminary or to a university to undergo training to become a priest. For example, they first enrol in a Bachelor’s in Theology or in a Divinity degree. From there,

some may undertake further studies, such as a Master's in Divinity or a PhD in Theology. So we have approximately 4 to 10 years of training to become a priest in a gentile world.

For us to become a priest in the Kingdom of YHWH our God, the rules are quite different from those in a gentile world. These rules include:

1. Understanding what the Feasts of Elohim are all about and learning the Sabbaths of Elohim.
2. Keeping or celebrating the Feasts of Elohim every year. Today we can only celebrate the feasts. We cannot keep the feasts, as the Temple of YHWH is no longer there in Jerusalem. Previously, where ever the Ark of the Covenant was, the children of Israel would keep the feasts in that location. Since we no longer have the Ark of the Covenant or the Temple of YHWH in Jerusalem, we only celebrate the feasts as these are a shadow of good things (feasts/festivals) to come in the future.
3. Understanding and learning the laws of Elohim (the first five books of Torah). You cannot become a priest unless you understand and learn the first five books of Torah. The first five books of Torah (Genesis, Exodus, Leviticus, Numbers, and Deuteronomy) contain all the laws and regulations on how a priest must conduct himself in God's temple. What he must do and not do. How he must conduct himself in the community he lives in. While we cannot practise some of the priestly laws today as there is no Temple, it is important that we learn these laws.

Many people would try to tell you that since we no longer have a Temple in Jerusalem there is no need to read and learn the laws of the temple. It is almost like saying, I want to become the Prime Minister in the future, but I don't want to learn the laws on how to rule and govern the country. As foolish as it sounds, the same principle applies over here.

There are others who say that when God's kingdom comes He will teach us (retrain) on how to become a priest. If this statement is true, then there is no need to do anything. When God comes, He will teach us everything and at that time we will learn. If we cannot learn God's way of life and His instructions today, do you think that God will teach you

when He comes? Others will try to counter-argue this by saying that there is a time of restoration of all things and during the restoration we will learn. Yes, there is a time of restoration, but we have to do our part now in this life before we even have a chance in the next (during the reign of the Kingdom of Heaven).

Yehoshua HaMashiach knew that in the future people would come with arguments that would twist His words so that God's people would not learn the Torah. That is why when Yehoshua HaMashiach came He told everything in parables.

One of the parables that Yehoshua told about the Kingdom of Heaven was the parable of talents. Matthew 25:14-30 talks about how the Master gave talents to his servants according to their ability to develop until the Master came back. In this parable, the Master is Yehoshua HaMashiach who gave talents to His servants, meaning us. In this context, the talents are His knowledge to understand the scriptures and the tools for us to learn (Bible or the Scriptures, learning the Torah, the feasts/festivals of Elohim, helping others). Throughout the parable, we find that the servants who had used the talents to do the right thing were rewarded when the Master returned. The servant who did not do anything (he was under the delusion that many church going people have today, which is, when God comes He will teach us everything) was thrown out where there was weeping and gnashing of teeth.

Many people would then say that the Scriptures do not say anywhere that we need to learn the Torah to become a priest in God's kingdom. But Hosea 4:6 says, "My people have perished for lack of knowledge. Because you have rejected knowledge, **I reject you from being priest for Me. Since you have forgotten the Torah of your Elohim, I also forget your children**" (The Scriptures translation). Because we have rejected the Torah of Elohim and since we have said in our heart that we do not want to learn His ways (the Torah), He has rejected us in becoming a priest.

There are people who have faithfully attended churches over many years in order to learn the way of God. Some have attended churches for 10 years, others for more than 40 years. One would assume that if you attended the church for 30 years plus, you would definitely read and understand the Torah. But when you talk to these people, they would

tell you that in the past 30 years, their church has never taught them the Torah. They have taught them the New Testament and some verses of Genesis and Exodus (Garden of Eden, Noah's flood, Mount Sinai, Red Sea Crossing and other easy topics). The reason the church ministers don't teach the Torah is that:

1. They don't understand the Torah themselves.
2. They consider the Torah as burdensome and say it is the Old Testament. They classify it as Jewish. They do not want anything to do with the Jews (because they don't like Jews/Israel), even though Yehoshua HaMashiach was a Jew and He was also the King of the Jews.
3. Since the temple is no longer there, we no longer need to read or learn these primitive laws and we need to look at the big picture (convert as many people as possible and just love Jesus Christ).
4. God is love and we are saved by His grace. The Torah is not important at this point in time. God will teach us when He comes.

The question you have to ask yourself is:

- I have attended the church for the past 20 years. Have I learnt anything about the Torah?
- Why is the Torah never read in the church?
- Why isn't anyone teaching the Torah?

There is no point in attending churches or any religious institutions under the banner of convocation if they don't teach you the Torah. You can assemble in a church for 80 years till you die and say that all your life you have faithfully assembled under the banner of convocation; but in God's eyes, this is absolutely useless. Why is it useless? The time that God gave you to learn His ways, you just wasted it by learning nothing. So don't expect, when His Kingdom comes, that suddenly Yehoshua is going to tell you, "Tom, well done, faithful servant. For the past 80 years, you attended church under the banner of convocation. Now I will teach you my Torah". If you think God is going to tell you the prior statement, it is time that you wake up from your worldly pagan church delusion.

Yehoshua HaMashiach clearly said, **"Do not think I came to destroy the Torah or the Prophets. I did not come to**

**destroy but to complete. For truly, I say to you, till the heaven and the earth pass away, one yod or one title shall by no means pass from the Torah till all be done. Whoever, then, breaks one of these least commands, and teaches men so, shall be called least in the reign of the heavens; but whoever does and teaches them, he shall be called great in the reign of the heavens"** (Matthew 5:17-20; The Scriptures translation).

If a church minister teaches you not to bother about the Torah, then be very cautious! What did Yehoshua HaMashiach say about such a person? "He shall be called least in the Kingdom of God or during the reign of the heavens". But if you teach them to follow the Torah and help them to learn, then such a person shall be called "great" in the Kingdom of God.

## Understanding Holy Convocation

When Israel came out of Egypt, they had forgotten God's name and His laws. The only way for them to learn His ways and laws was to come together on the Sabbath and on His festivals to learn on how to become a priest in the future (Kingdom of God). That is why they had to assemble to learn them from Moses and from the Aaronic priesthood. Moses was the mediator between God and His people at that point in time. So Moses had all the laws with him, as God communicated with the people through Moses. Keep in mind that in those days there was no bible, no scriptures, nothing. They only had the laws of God that were told to Moses by God. No one had access to the stone tablets that were kept in the Ark of the Covenant.

On every Sabbath and on God's festivals, people during the time of Moses used to rehearse (practise) the laws of Elohim so that a day would come in the future when they could use these laws to teach others. **That is why in Hebrew the word "convocation" means rehearsal. In order to rehearse something, we need to learn, then practise and wait for that day when God will fulfil His covenant that He made with us.** What was the covenant that God made with us? **"And now, if you diligently obey My voice, and shall guard My covenant, then you shall be My treasured possession above all the peoples – for all the earth is Mine and you shall be to Me a reign of priests**

**and a set-apart nation”** (Exodus 19:5-6). This covenant is going to be fulfilled in the reign of Yehoshua on earth. The Book of Revelation states, “...and made us kings and priests to our Elohim, and we shall reign upon the earth” (Revelation 5:10). As you can see, the final fulfilment of the covenant will be when our King Yehoshua returns to the earth.

During the time of Yehoshua HaMashiach, faithful people wrote these laws (Torah) on goat skin and were passed from one generation to another, so that people would not forget the laws of God that were given to Moses. Keep in mind that during the time of Yehoshua, no one had a copy of the Torah, except the King, in the temple, and a few synagogues. So on the Sabbath/Festivals, God’s people used to go to the temple or a synagogue to read the Torah or the books of Prophets. That is the only way they could have access to the laws of God, so that they could learn the laws of God.

That is why it says in the scriptures, “...He (*Yehoshua*) came to Nazareth, where He had been brought up: and, as His custom was, He went into the synagogue on the Sabbath day, and stood up for to read” (Luke 4:16). So what did Yehoshua do on the Sabbath day? He read the Torah.

This is the same custom that many people still do in synagogues in the land of Israel. They go to the synagogue and take a scroll from the Tanakh (Old Testament) and read it. The word synagogue means “gathering of people” (Strong’s concordance number 4864). If they have any questions, they discuss among each other. This is the same thing even Paul did, “And he was reasoning in the congregation every Sabbath, and won over both Jews and Greeks” (Acts 18:4).

But in today’s churches, we cannot do that. We have to shut up and listen, and the moment we ask questions they will...

- try not to answer;
- ask us where we got that information from (they want to know the source so that they can discredit it);
- tell us they need to get the information from their supreme leader who is their evangelist or bishop (a man who claims that he is appointed by God);
- say not to worry about the question as it is not important since we are the chosen people and we are already saved;

- if you pester them too much, they will kick you (disfellowship) out of the church under the banner “you are making divisions/strife among the brethren”.

So now you have to again ask the question “I am gathering (convocation) to learn, but how odd that I cannot ask anything or share about what I learnt with others”. Each time I tell them, they reply, “We are the teachers and hence we will teach you, not vice versa”. They will go further and tell you, “God works in a hierarchy and we have to follow the human leader just like how it was during the time of Moses. Do not rebel against God’s appointed leaders, otherwise you will lose your salvation”. There are thousands of people who fall for these statements as they (today’s religious leaders) take God’s words out of context from the scriptures to convince you that they are some sort of supreme beings on planet earth.

Some say that on every Sabbath Yehoshua went into the Synagogue to teach and hence we must also go to a religious institution like a church to fellowship and learn. While it is correct that our redeemer Yehoshua did go to the Synagogue/Temple on every Sabbath to teach the people, you also need to understand that He was teaching and reading the Torah to them and was explaining what would come to pass as per the Torah and the Book of Prophets.

You can attend a church for 40 years and still not learn anything. You can attend and still not read one book from the Torah and put it into practice. This is not the convocation that the children of Israel and Yehoshua set as an example for us to follow.

There are many people who attend churches just for the sake of convocation and fellowship. They themselves admit that they know that the church/minister is not teaching anything. But they say they cannot forsake themselves from the appointed assembly. Indirectly, they are saying, “It is alright that if we don’t read or learn the Torah, but it is more important to assemble together for fellowship”.

The above-mentioned way of assembly (it is fine to attend and not learn the Torah) was prophesied by Isaiah the prophet, that the children of Israel would do evil and not learn the ways of God and would assemble, and this would be an abomination to God.

Isaiah 1:10 to 17 (The Scriptures translation)

“Hear the word of YHWH, you rulers of Sedom (*Sodom*); give ear to the Torah of our Elohim, you people of Amorah (*Gomorra*)! Of what use to Me are your many slaughtering’s? declares YHWH. I have had enough ascending offerings of rams and the fat of fed beasts. I do not delight in the blood of bulls or of lambs or goats. When you come to appear before Me, who has required this from your hand, to trample My courtyards? Stop bringing futile offerings, incense, it is an abomination to Me. New Moons, Sabbaths, the calling of gatherings – I am unable to bear unrighteousness and assembly. My being hates your New Moons and your appointed times, they are a trouble to Me, I am weary of bearing them. And when you spread out your hands, I hide my eyes from you; even though you make many prayers, I do not hear. Your hands have become filled with blood. Wash yourselves, make yourselves clean; put away the evil of your doings from before My eyes. Stop doing evil! Learn to do good! Seek right-ruling, reprove the oppressor, defend the fatherless, plead for the widow.”

Isaiah 1:10 starts with hearing the word of Torah and then live by it. Even though they were having convocation on Sabbaths and Festivals, God was not listening to their prayer. Why? Because they forsook His laws and Torah, and they were practicing unrighteousness. This is the exact thing that is happening in today’s churches and religious institutions.

Ministers in almost all churches/religious institutions:

- Don’t want to read or teach the Torah.
- They oppress and rule over people who don’t have money, who don’t have a job and who do not come to their status quo.
- They don’t do anything good for people in the church and those outside the church.
- They don’t help people who are orphans or widows who do not have food to eat. As long as the ministers have a house and have food to eat, that is all that matters.

What did God say about this sort of convocation? This is an abomination to me! Is this the type convocation that God requires from His people? The answer is NO.

When the children of Israel returned to Jerusalem from their captivity from the Persian Empire, on the Sabbaths and on the Festivals, Nehemiah restored God’s laws to them. Nehemiah chapter 8 is the best example of **what we must do when we assemble/gather (convocation) on the Sabbaths and on the Festivals of Elohim.**

**Nehemiah chapter 8, 1-10** (Translation shown below is from The Scriptures):

“And when the seventh new moon came, the children of Israel were in their cities. And all the people gathered together as one man in the open space that was in front of the Water Gate. And they spoke to Ezra the scribe to bring the Book of the Torah of Moses, which YHWH had commanded Israel.

And Ezra the priest **brought the Torah before the assembly** of both men and woman and all who could hear with understanding, on the first day of the seventh new moon (*this was the day of Trumpets. Italics added for understanding*).

**And he read from it in the open spaces in front of the Water Gate from morning until midday, before the men and women and those who could understand. And the ears of all the people listened to the Book of the Torah.**

And Ezra the scribe stood on a platform of wood which they had made for the purpose. And beside him on this right stood Mattithyah, and Shema, and Anayah, and Uriyah, and Hilqiyah, and Maaseyah. And on his left stood Pedayah, and Mishael, and Malkiyah, and Hashum, and Hashbaddanah, Zekaryah, Meshullam.

**And Ezra opened the book in the sight of all the people,** for he was above all the people. And when he opened it, all the people stood up.

And Ezra blessed YHWH, the great Elohim. Then all the people answered. Amen, Amen, while lifting up their hands. And they bowed their heads and worshipped YHWH with faces to the ground.

And Yeshua, and Bani, and Sherebyah, Yamin, Aqqub, Shabbethai, Hadiyah, Maaseyah, Qelita, Azaryah, Yozabad, Hanan, Pelayah, and the Lewites, caused the people to understand the Torah while the people were in their place.

**And they read in the Book of the Torah of Elohim, translating to give the sense, and caused them to understand the reading.**

And Nehemyah, who was the governor and Ezra the priest, the scribe, and the Lewites who taught the people said to all the people, 'This day is set-apart to YHWH your Elohim. Do not mourn or weep.' **For all the people wept when they heard the words of the Torah.**

Then he said to them, 'Go, eat the fat, drink the sweet, and send portions to those for whom none is prepared. For this day is set-apart to our YHWH'. Do not be sad, for the joy of YHWH is your strength.'"

Nehemiah chapter 8 (read the whole chapter) is the best example of what the children of Israel did whenever they assembled (convocation) together during the Sabbath and the Festivals. They heard the word of Torah and they learnt and did what the Torah (laws of Elohim) said.

### **What we must do on convocation (assemble)?**

Firstly, we need to understand that **it is not a sin** if we do not assemble with regular church goers. Many churches will teach you that it is a sin if you do not assemble. If you do not assemble, then they (the ministers in the church) lose your 10 percent that you give them as tithe/donation. Isaiah 1:10-17 clearly shows that you can assemble all that you want for the next 40 years, but it is absolutely useless in God's eyes if you don't understand or practise the Torah. The main points we need to do is:

1. Read and understand the Torah (The first five books).
2. Practise these laws in our life that our Master YHWH Yehoshua the Messiah gave us.
3. Some laws (laws of sacrifices, laws of burnt offerings, temple worship laws and a few others) cannot be practised during this generation, because we do not have a Temple any more in Jerusalem. But we have to learn them as we will be doing them in the millennium when God's kingdom is established.
4. **Convocation is your time that you spend with God, not in manmade churches.** This is very important to understand. It is your appointed time with your creator, so that you can learn His ways, not the ways

of churches or of the so called ministers who rule over people under the banner of "shepherds".

5. You can assemble with people who want to obey and learn God's laws and with people who diligently seek God and want to learn and keep His Torah. If you do gather together, keep in mind that everyone is equal in status and there is no hierarchy. The head of every man is Yehoshua HaMashiach and we are His servants. Therefore, our role when we come together is to serve one another, not to rule over the other person.
6. If you do find a church that teaches and practises the Torah on the Sabbath and on God's festivals, by all means ensure that you take time to assemble.

An example of convocation, if you do not assemble with others for the Sabbaths, includes:

- Friday sunset – open your home for the needy and share the food that you have with them and share the word of God with them. Have a Sabbath dinner with them, share bread and wine with them, just like how *Melchizedek (King of Righteousness & King of Peace) shared bread and wine with Abraham.*
- Saturday morning – have a good rest, freshen up and spend time reading and understanding the Torah and learn to practise (rehearse) the laws of the Torah in your life and that of your family.
- Saturday afternoon – have lunch with your family and discuss what you have learnt and rest.
- Saturday sunset – once the Sabbath finishes, many people spend time reading the book of prophets or the messianic writings (New Testament). Others would take time to watch sermons on DVDs or on the You Tube. You can also invite people to your home, have dinner and discuss about God.

Convocation is a shadow picture of good things to come during the reign of Yehoshua the Messiah on earth. Colossians chapter 2: 16-17 says, "Let no one (*man/churches/ministers*) therefore judge you in eating or in drinking or in respect of a festival or a new moon or Sabbaths which are a shadow of what is to come – but the body of the Messiah". The word "body" refers to "soma" in Greek (Strong's concordance

number 4983). It means the instrument of life. What this means is that we should let the laws (the instrument of life) of the Messiah judge you. We should not allow men/ministers judge us in these matters, as there is only one righteous judge and that is Yehoshua HaMashiach.

In conclusion, we need to learn the Torah and prepare our self, so that when our Master and King Yehoshua returns as King of Kings we can practise the rehearsal (what we have been doing for many years) during His reign on the earth. AMEN. AMEN.

