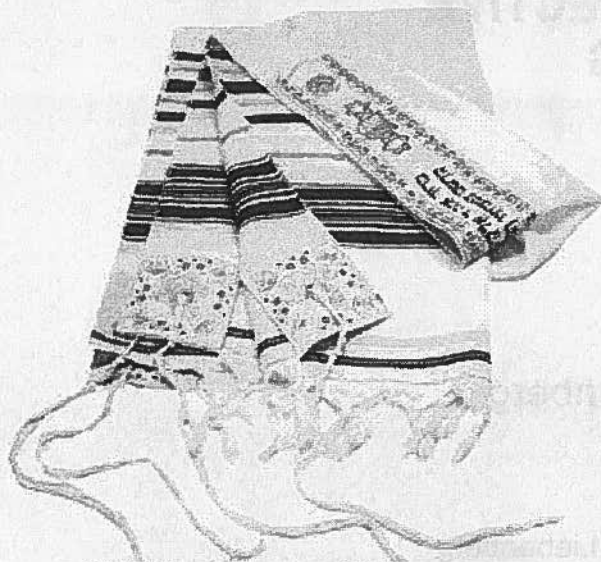


A HEBRAIC PERSPECTIVE ON FASTING



WE INFORM - YOU CHOOSE



PROFESSOR WA LIEBENBERG

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By

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Preface

YHWH "God" has called us to do two things. First, we are to never give up studying and seeking the correct interpretation of any given Bible passage. Second, such opportunities are golden moments for us to learn to show grace and love to others whose understanding of a given passage may differ from ours.

Throughout the HRTI's teachings, we use a slightly different vocabulary to that which some might be accustomed. We have chosen to use what many refer to as a Messianic vocabulary. The reasons being: firstly, using Hebraic-sounding words is another way to help you associate with the Hebraic Roots of your faith. Secondly, these words are not merely an outward show for us, they are truly an expression of who we are as Messianic Jews and Gentiles who have "taken hold" of our inheritance with Israel.

Instead of saying "Jesus", we call our Saviour "Y'shua" – the way His parents would have addressed Him in Hebrew. In addition, rather than referring to Y'shua as "Christ", we use the word "Messiah" – which is an Anglicized version of the Hebrew word, Moshiach.

"YaHoWaH" is the name of God in Hebrew, where it is written as four consonants (YHWH or YHVH, as the W and V are derived from the same Hebrew letter 'vaw'). These four letters are called the Tetragrammaton (Greek for "[a word] having four letters"). Jews ceased to use the name in the Greco-Roman period, replacing it with the common noun Elohim ("God") to demonstrate the universal sovereignty of Israel's God over all others. At the same time, the divine name was increasingly regarded as too sacred to be uttered and was replaced in spoken ritual by the word Adonai ("My Lord"). From about the 6th to the 10th century the Masoretes (Jewish scholars who were the first to add vowels to the text of the Hebrew Bible) used the vowel signs of the Hebrew words Adonai or Elohim as the vowels for YHWH; and later on the artificial name *Jehovah* was produced. Christian scholars and translators after the Renaissance and Reformation periods replaced the sacred name YHWH with GOD and LORD (all in capital letters in the Bible); which was a strategic move of satan for not using the Name. The Sacred Name occurs 6,828 times in the Hebrew text of the Bible, proving YHWH wants us to use it.

In the 19th and 20th centuries, biblical scholars again began to use the form Yahweh and it is now the conventional usage in biblical scholarship; but leading Hebrew Scholars suggest YHWH should be pronounced as Yah-oo-VaH (Y'shua is derived from Yah-shuvah which means Yah saves. Yah (יהוה) is an abbreviation of God's name, YHWH, as seen in Psalm 68:4. The Name is also found in the word hallelu-YaH, which means "you praise the LORD").

Did Y'shua Instruct us to Fast?

Introduction

Fasting is a very *emotional* and *volatile* subject. Views about fasting usually go to extremes!

Some have exalted religious fasting beyond all Scripture and reason, and others have utterly disregarded it. Some consider fasting unnecessary, undesirable, and therefore to be ignored. Others think fasting is to be bound as a matter of faith.

Fasting is a sensitive issue and touches upon a matter very personal to us: *food*! Many Believers are very dependent upon food and do not see food as just for survival. Many eat food for dealing with anxiety, depression, boredom, etc. Rather than eating to live, they live to eat, which is just another form of addiction.

Teaching on fasting is like preaching on gluttony or smoking; it often touches on raw nerves. On top of that it is an *untraditional* subject and one rarely hears a sermon on this topic.

But the Scriptures have so much to say about fasting... The great Biblical personalities who fasted are:

- | | |
|-----------------------|---------------------------|
| 1) Moshe the Lawgiver | 5) Dani'el the seer |
| 2) David the king | 6) Anna the prophetess |
| 3) Elijah the prophet | 7) Y'shua the Son of YHWH |
| 4) Esther the queen | 8) Sha'ul the apostle |

Did you know there are more teachings in the New Covenant on the topic of fasting than *repentance and confession*! Further, *Y'shua spoke more on fasting than on Immersion and the Covenant Meal*¹!

What would account for this almost total disregard for a subject so frequently mentioned in Scripture? Is it because many Believers have simply concluded that fasting is a Jewish custom, of no value or need in the current age? Is it because we have been convinced through constant propaganda that if we do not have three large meals each day, with several snacks in between, we are on the verge of starvation (we eat, not because we *need* to eat. but because it's *time* to eat).

¹ What Christians call Holy Communion.

In response to the inquiry by some Pharisees concerning the failure of Y'shua's disciples to fast, Y'shua said: "As long as the bridegroom is among them, the sons of the wedding feast are able not to fast. But the days will come when the bridegroom will be taken from them. In that day they will fast" Mark 2:19-20.

The instruction is clear but grossly misunderstood; we need to study this topic. Come journey with me on the ancient path, where the good way is and walk in it²...

The Etymology of the word "Fasting"

The Hebrew root for fasting, "tsom" (צום), can be used both as a verb and a noun, e.g., "David fasted a fast" (2 Sam 12:16), a meaning verified in the next verse: "he ate no food." A synonymous idiom *innah nefesh* which literally means "afflict the body" includes fasting as part of a general routine of abstinence. A broader meaning is confirmed by the following³:

- a) laws annulling women's vows and oaths that contain the phrase "all self-denying oaths to afflict her body" (Num 30:14, cf. verses 3, 7, 10-13), referring to all forms of abstinence, not just fasting;
- b) Daniel, who expressly "afflicts himself" (Dan 10:12) not only by abstaining from choice food, meat, and wine (in biblical terminology, he is not actually fasting) but also from anointing himself (10:3); and
- c) the example of King David, who, in addition to fasting, sleeps on the ground, does not change his clothes, and refrains from anointing and washing (II Sam 12:16-20, though the term *innah nefesh* is absent). In biblical poetry *tsom* and *innah nefesh* are parallel but not synonymous. Indeed, one verse (Isa 58:5) indicates that it is rather the root *tzom* which has taken on the broader sense of *innah nefesh*: "...that a man should bow his head like a bulrush and make his bed on sackcloth and ashes, is this what you call a fast...?" Thus, the rabbis declare that *innah nefesh*, enjoined for the *Day of Atonement (Lev 16:29, 31; 23:27-32), consists not only of fasting but of other forms of self-denial such as abstention from "washing, anointing, wearing shoes, and cohabitation" (Yoma 8:1; cf. Targ. Jon., Lev. 16:29)⁴.

² Jer 6:16

³ *Fasting and Fast Days*, Jewish Virtual Library. By Jacob Milgrom
http://www.jewishvirtuallibrary.org/source/udaica/ejud_0002_0006_0_06298.html

⁴ Babylonian Talmud

Fastings in the Scriptures and Other Writings

Fasting is attested in the oldest strata of biblical literature and there can be no doubt that spontaneous fasting was widespread from earliest times both among individuals and groups.

Moshe fasted for forty days and forty nights, twice back-to-back. The first, immediately before he received the Ten Commandments on the mountain with YHWH. And the second; after coming down, seeing the Israelites practicing idolatry and breaking the tablets in anger.⁵

The **death of a national leader** (e.g., King Saul) could initiate a day-long fast⁶, or alternatively, the fast might be observed for seven days. The authority to proclaim a public fast was vested in the elders of the local community, who, however, could be pressured by the royal palace to proclaim a fast (e.g., for Naboth's undoing, 1 Kings 21:8–12).

King David fasted when the son of his adulterous union with Bathsheba was struck sick by YHWH, in punishment for the adultery and for David's murder of Bathsheba's husband, Uriah the Hittite. Nevertheless, the son died, upon which David broke his fast.⁸ David used fasting as an act of humbling his soul.⁹

In the ritual practiced in the **First Temple**, fasting was clearly a permanent feature.¹⁰

King Jehoshaphat proclaimed a fast throughout Judah for victory over the Moabites and Ammonites who were attacking them.¹¹

The **prophet Isaiah** chastised the Israelites in Isaiah 58 for the unrighteous methods and motives of their fasting. He clarified some of the best reasons for fasting and listed both physical and spiritual benefits that would result.¹²

The **prophet Joel** called for a fast to avert the judgment of YHWH.¹³

⁵ Deut 9:7–21

⁶ 2 Sam 1:12

⁷ 1 Sam 31:13

⁸ 2 Sam 12:15–25

⁹ Psalm 35:13

¹⁰ Isaiah 1:13, LXX (Septuagint); Jer 36:9, "before the Lord"; Joel 1:14; 2:15–17

¹¹ 2 Chron 20:3

¹² Isaiah 58:3–13

¹³ Joel 1:14, 2:12, 15

The **people of Nineveh**, in response to Jonah's prophecy, fasted to avert the judgment of YHWH.¹⁴

The **Jews of Persia**, following Mordechai's example, fasted because of the genocidal decree of Haman. **Queen Esther** declared a three-day fast for all the Jews prior to risking her life in visiting King Ahasuerus uninvited.¹⁵

The **prophetess Anna**, who proclaimed the baby Y'shua to be the Messiah, prayed and fasted regularly in the Temple.¹⁶

Y'shua fasted for forty days and forty nights while in the desert and being tempted by satan.¹⁷

Y'shua teaches on the outward appearance and conduct of a fasting person. He also warned His followers against fasting only to make others admire them. He provided practical steps on how to fast in private.¹⁸

The **Pharisees** and **John's disciples** in Y'shua's time fasted regularly and asked Y'shua why His disciples did not. Y'shua answered them using a parable (Matt 9:14-15, Mark 2:18-20, Luke 5:33-39, see also Mark 2). In some manuscripts Y'shua ascribes the Disciples' inability to cast out spirits to a lack of prayer and fasting: Mark 9:29. NB. These, however, are found in the more recent manuscripts and not in the earlier ones. The words "*and fasting*" are omitted from many modern translations for this reason.

Sha'ul (Paul) did not eat or drink anything for three days after he converted on the road to Damascus.¹⁹

The **Assembly in Antioch** were worshipping YHWH and fasting when the Ruach told them to send Barnabas and Sha'ul for work.²⁰

Sha'ul and Barnabus appointed elders through prayer and fasting.²¹

There are indications in the New Covenant as well as from the Didache²² that **members of Early Assemblies** fasted regularly.

¹⁴ Jonah 3:7

¹⁵ Esther 4

¹⁶ Luke 2:37

¹⁷ Matt 4:2, Luke 4:2

¹⁸ Matt 6:16-18

¹⁹ Acts 9:9

²⁰ Acts 13:2

²¹ Acts 14:23

Reasons for Fasting during the Old Covenant Times

The purposes of fasting are various, and to understand fasting in the New Covenant and our time, we need to go back to the principle of "first use" in Scripture. Let's now go back in time and explore the reasons why individuals and groups fasted from the very beginning.

1) To win divine forgiveness:

Fasting's most widely attested function, for the community as well as the individual, is to divert or terminate a calamity by prompting YHWH's compassion. For example, YHWH mitigates Ahab's punishment because he fasted and humbled himself.²³ King David fasted in the hope that "YHWH will be gracious to me and the boy will live. But now that he is dead why should I fast?"²⁴ Many other passages also indicate the use of fasting as a means of winning divine forgiveness²⁵, implying that fasting is basically an act of self-punishment, a ritual expression of remorse, submission, and supplication.

2) To be shown a theophany:

To be shown a theophany²⁶, Moshe fasted for as long as 40 days²⁷ as well as Elijah²⁸. On the two occasions when Daniel's prayers were answered by means of a vision²⁹, his preparatory rituals included fasting³⁰.

3) Death occasioned a fast:

That death occasioned a fast is implied by the couriers' surprise when King David refused to fast after the death of the infant son born to him by Bath-Sheba.³¹

4) When a human or natural calamity threatened to strike a community:

²² The Didache or The Teaching of the Twelve Apostles (Didachē means "Teaching") is a brief early Believers treatise, dated by most scholars to the late first or early 2nd century.

²³ 1 Kings 21:27-29

²⁴ 2 Sam 12:22-23

²⁵ Psalm 35:13; 69:11; Ezra 10:6

²⁶ The appearance of YHWH in a visible form to a human being. YHWH manifests Himself in the body of Y'shua.

²⁷ Exod 34:28 [twice, according to Deut 9:9, 18].

²⁸ 1 Kings 19:8

²⁹ Dan 9:20ff.; 10:7ff.

³⁰ Dan 9:3; 10:3

³¹ 2 Sam 12:21

When a calamity, human or natural, threatened or struck a whole community, a public fast was proclaimed. Thus, Israel observed fasts in its wars against Benjamin³², the Philistines³³, and its Trans-Jordanian enemies³⁴; similarly fasts were observed in the hope of preventing annihilation by the Babylonians³⁵ and by the Persians³⁶. The purpose of fasts during wartime was to seek YHWH's direct intervention³⁷ or advice as transmitted through an oracle³⁸. Fasting served as a means of supplicating YHWH³⁹ to end a famine caused by a plague of locusts, and to alleviate the oppression of foreign rule⁴⁰. As a preventive or intercessory measure, fasting was used to avert the threat of divine punishment, exemplified by the fast declared for Naboth's alleged cursing of YHWH⁴¹ and after Jonah's prophecy of Nineveh's doom⁴².

NB:

The biblical evidence thus far cited indicates that fasting, both individual and collective, was a spontaneous reaction to emergencies. In the pre-exilic⁴³ period there is no record of specific fast days in the annual calendar (except the Day of Atonement), although some Bible critics even conjecture that this, too, was originally an emergency rite and was fixed on the tenth of Tishri only at the end of the First Temple. There is a record of a fast day in Jeremiah's time⁴⁴, but this too originated as an emergency rite ("a fast day was proclaimed," verse 9) and was not repeated. That portion of Deuteronomy-Isaiah which describes a fast⁴⁵ became the haftarah reading⁴⁶ for the Day of Atonement morning service, but the text can hardly be speaking of an observance of the Day of Atonement^{47 48 49}.

³² Judges 20:26

³³ 2 Sam 7:6; 14:24

³⁴ 2 Chron 20:3

³⁵ Jer 36:3, 9

³⁶ Esther 4:3, 16

³⁷ 1 Sam 7:9ff.

³⁸ Judges 20:26-28

³⁹ Joel 1:14; 2:12, 15

⁴⁰ Neh 9:1

⁴¹ 1 Kings 21:9

⁴² 1 Kings 3:5

⁴³ Pre-Exile (pre-taken to Egypt period).

⁴⁴ Jer 36:3ff.

⁴⁵ Isaiah 58:3ff.

⁴⁶ Yearly weekly cycle reading on the Prophetic Books.

⁴⁷ Isaiah 58:4

⁴⁸ Fixed fast days are first mentioned by the post-Exilic prophet Zechariah who proclaims the word of the Lord thus: "The fast of the fourth month, the fast of the fifth, the fast of the seventh

The origin of the word "Breakfast":

A "break fast" (two words) is a specific meal that takes place following the twenty-four hour fast on Yom Kippur, and this "break fast" meal is viewed as a festive meal. It is these two words that evolved into what is called today: "breakfast".

This concludes the reasons for fasting in the Old Covenant up to the second Temple period.

Reasons for Fasting during the Second Temple Era

1) For the practising of asceticism:

During the Second Temple period, daily or bi-weekly fasting was practiced for reasons of asceticism⁵⁰, especially among women⁵¹, but also among men⁵².

2) For the preparation for a revelation:

In the preparation for an apocalyptic revelation concerning end-times events⁵³.

3) For the atonement for unintentional and willful sin:

The Jewish literature of the Second Temple period also advocates fasting as a way of atonement for sins committed either unintentionally⁵⁴ or even deliberately⁵⁵, or to prevent them⁵⁶.

and the fast of the tenth..." (Zech. 8:19; cf. 7:3, 5). Jewish tradition has it that these fasts commemorate the critical events which culminated in the destruction of the Temple: the tenth of Tevet (the tenth month), the beginning of the siege of Jerusalem; the 17th of Tammuz (the fourth month), the breaching of the walls; the ninth of Av (the fifth month), when the Temple was destroyed; and the third of Tishri (the seventh month), when Gedaliah, the Babylonian-appointed governor of Judah, was assassinated.

⁴⁸ *Fasting and Fast Days*, Jewish Virtual Library.

http://www.jewishvirtuallibrary.org/jsource/judaica/ejud_0002_0006_0_06298.html

⁵⁰ Self-discipline

⁵¹ Judith 8:6 (Apocrypha Book); Luke 2:37; Jerusalem Talmud, Hag 2:2, 77d

⁵² Luke 18:12; Mark 2:18

⁵³ Dan 10:3, 12; ii Bar. 12:5; 20:5–21:1; 43:3; iv Ezra 5:13–20; 6:35; Sanh. 65b; Jerusalem Talmud, Kil. 9:4, 32b.

⁵⁴ Psalms of Solomon 3:9

⁵⁵ Test. Patr., Sim. 3:4

⁵⁶ Joseph 3:4; 4:8; 10:1–2

Fasting in the time of Y'shua

During the time Y'shua was on earth one of the Jewish customs was to fast two days a week and another custom was that the bridegroom and bride fasted twenty-four hours before the wedding:

*"Although it is **not recorded in the Talmud**, an ancient tradition advises bride and groom to fast on the day of their wedding. (This applies both to those who are marrying for the first time and to those who are remarrying.) They fast from daybreak until after the chuppah, eating their first meal during their yichud⁵⁷ seclusion at the end of the ceremony."⁵⁸*

But the Pharisees and the Rabbinical Jews even today (and many Messianics) use the following reference in the Babylonian Talmud out of context to say that fasting is a requirement when the bridegroom is gone, Sukkah 25b:

"Our Rabbis have taught, The bridegroom, and the shoshbins [attendants of the bridegroom] and all the wedding guests are free from the obligations of prayer and tefillin, but are bound to read the Shema".

Now note that **nothing** is said in this passage about mourning or fasting in the presence of the bridegroom or after the wedding. In any case, these man-made customs are from the Oral Law and not mentioned once in the Torah.

On top of that is the fact that fasting in the Torah is more properly categorized with "customs and manners" **rather than with legal prescriptions**:

The Torah does not regulate or enjoin fasting per se on the people of the covenant. But several key points emerge that contribute to and set the foundation for the rest of the biblical theology of fasting. Of the greatest significance are the nature of the food prohibition in the Garden of Eden, the supernatural fasting of

⁵⁷ The prohibition of yichud, in Jewish religious law is the impermissibility of seclusion of a man and a woman who are not married to each other in a private area. Such seclusion is prohibited in order to prevent the two from being tempted or having the opportunity to commit adulterous or promiscuous acts.

⁵⁸ *Fasting on the Wedding*, Chabbat.org.

http://www.chabad.org/library/article_cdo/aid/481616/jewish/Fasting-On-the-Wedding-Day.htm

Moses on Sinai, the injunction of personal affliction on the Day of Atonement, and the various dietary restrictions of the law. As seen in the following section, together these metathemes associate fasting with living in or returning to the sustaining presence of God.⁵⁹

The question is did Y'shua follow the Jewish custom at the wedding, yes or no?

Let's read the passage carefully concerning both Yochanan's (John's) disciples and the Pharisees' predicament about Y'shua's answer on the Pharisee's fasting:

"Then came to him the disciples of John, saying, Why do we and the Pharisees fast often, but your disciples fast not? And Y'shua said unto them, Can the children of the bridechamber mourn, as long as the bridegroom is with them? but the days will come, when the bridegroom shall be taken from them, and then shall they fast."⁶⁰

Y'shua answered their immediate question by telling them that a time would come for His disciples to fast, but it wasn't the time while He was present.

Now, Y'shua would not instruct His disciples to stop the Yom Kippur fast⁶¹ if it is indeed a full Torah-requirement fast, but rather to the custom wedding fast as well as the fasts on Mondays and Thursdays.⁶²

That means when Y'shua said that His followers **will fast**, He referred to a **specific fast** to the end-times, to the day just before His physical return. This fast is for the preparation and sanctification of His people as mentioned in Joel 2:15-32:

15 *"Blow the trumpet in Zion, sanctify a fast, call a solemn assembly: 16 Gather the people, sanctify the congregation, assemble the elders, gather the children, and those that suck the breasts: let the bridegroom (Y'shua) go forth of his chamber (in Heaven), and the bride (redeemed Israel) out of her closet (Chuppah). 17 Let the priests, the ministers of YHWH, weep*

⁵⁹ *Fasting in the Torah*, Bible.org. https://bible.org/seriespage/chapter-1-fasting-old-testament-and-ancient-judaism-mourning-repentance-and-prayer-hope-g#P68_35424

⁶⁰ Matt 9:14-15 [KJV]

⁶¹ Lev 16:29-31; 23:27-32; Num 29:7ff.

⁶² The fasts Israel as a nation kept, i.e. 1) Tishri 3 Tzion – Gedaliah, 2) Tevet 10 - Asarah Be Tevet, 3) Adar 13 - Ta'anit Ester, 4) Tammuz 17 - Shevah Asar, and 5) Av 9 - Tishnah Bi Av, are also not Torah requirements.

between the porch and the altar, and let them say, Spare thy people, O YHWH, and give not thine heritage to reproach, that the heathen should rule over them (Antichrist's armies): wherefore should they say among the people, Where is their God? 18 Then will YHWH be jealous for his land, and pity his people (on earth going through the Tribulation). 19 Yea, YHWH will answer and say unto his people (not the Bride), Behold, I will send you corn, and wine, and oil, and ye shall be satisfied therewith: and I will no more make you a reproach among the heathen: 20 But I will remove far off from you the northern army (Dan 11:40 and Ezek 38/39), and will drive him into a land barren and desolate, with his face toward the east sea, and his hinder part toward the utmost sea (north of Russia), and his stink shall come up, and his ill savour shall come up, because he hath done great things. 21 Fear not, O land; be glad and rejoice: for YHWH will do great things (Believers will be protected in Jordan Dan 11:41, Matt 24:16 Rev 12:14). 22 Be not afraid, ye beasts of the field: for the pastures of the wilderness do spring, for the tree beareth her fruit, the fig tree and the vine do yield their strength. 23 Be glad then, ye children of Zion, and rejoice in YHWH your God: for he hath given you the former rain moderately, and he will cause to come down for you the rain, the former rain, and the latter rain (Divine Spirit) in the first month (Nissan). 24 And the floors shall be full of wheat, and the fats shall overflow with wine and oil. 25 And I will restore to you the years that the locust hath eaten, the cankerworm, and the caterpillar, and the palmerworm, my great army which I sent among you. 26 And ye shall eat in plenty, and be satisfied, and praise the name of YHWH your God, that hath dealt wondrously with you: and my people shall never be ashamed. 27 And ye shall know that I am in the midst of Israel, and that I am YHWH your God, and none else: and my people shall never be ashamed. 28 And it shall come to pass afterward, that I will pour out my spirit upon all flesh (blinded Israel, Rom 11:7-10); and your sons and your daughters shall prophesy, your old men shall dream dreams, your young men shall see visions: 29 And also upon the servants and upon the handmaids in those days will I pour out my spirit. 30 And I will shew wonders in the heavens and in the earth, blood, and fire, and pillars of smoke. 31 The sun shall be turned into darkness, and the moon into blood (last days during the Tribulation), before the great and the terrible day of YHWH come (Second Coming, Zeck 14). 32 And it shall come to pass, that whosoever shall call on the name of YHWH shall be delivered: for in mount Zion and in Jerusalem shall be deliverance, as YHWH hath said, and in the remnant whom YHWH shall call."

Thus, the question presented to Y'shua has to do with neglecting the established custom of the fast twenty-four hours before a wedding (and very possible the weekly fasts on Mondays and Thursdays). It is important to note that when Y'shua the Messiah came the first time there was no wedding, but when He comes again there will definitely be a wedding and Joel was referring to this wedding! Let's read what the customs are about during this twenty-four hour fast up to the wedding and compare it to what Joel prophesied:

"Although it is not recorded in the Talmud, an ancient tradition advises bride and groom to fast on the day of their wedding. (This applies both to those who are marrying for the first time and to those who are remarrying.) They fast from daybreak until after the chuppah, eating their first meal during their yichud seclusion at the end of the ceremony.

Two reasons are advanced for fasting. First, tradition records that the sins of the bride and groom are forgiven on their wedding day. Because it is a day of forgiveness, it is considered a day of spiritual inventory and of repentance, akin to Yom Kippur—as represented by the fasting, the wearing of white, and the recitation of the confession at prayers (vidui and al chet).

The second reason is more practical, and halakhically more functional. The Sages sought to avoid the drinking of liquor before the wedding, as guests and relatives toast the future—it is a long way from stag nights and prenuptial bacchanalias, customary the world over, to the fast day of the traditional Jew. Unlike a Yom Kippur-type fast, which would require observance until nightfall, the wedding fast lasts only until after the chuppah, even if it takes place in the afternoon. It is not necessary to "make-up" the fast (hashlamah) on another day, in the event of a midday chuppah. Even though it is a personal fast, there need be no formal acceptance or vow to fast. If the chuppah is delayed beyond nightfall, and fasting becomes difficult, bride and groom may eat, but not drink intoxicating beverages. If even during the day the fast becomes too burdensome, they should discontinue it rather than arrive ill at the chuppah."⁶³

⁶³ *Fasting in the Torah*, Bible.org. https://bible.org/seriespage/chapter-1-fasting-old-testament-and-ancient-judaism-mourning-repentance-and-prayer-hope-g#P68_35424

From what we can see is that the prophet Joel was alluding to this Jewish custom. Furthermore, Messiah is specifically cast in a metaphor of a bridegroom in the Hebrew mindset. The TaNaCh⁶⁴ also compares the restoration of Israel (Northern Ten Tribes = Bride) in the last days to the joy that accompanies a wedding⁶⁵.

In Matthew, Y'shua as the promised Messiah has brought the dawn of the eschatological banquet, as the bridegroom. He is the primary focus of that wedding banquet and therefore His disciples cannot mourn or fast now as there is no wedding. That is why Y'shua taught it was forbidden for His bride to fast in the presence of the Bridegroom, as His bride will fast in the twenty-four hours before His wedding! Listen to Y'shua's words and compare it with Joel and the Jewish custom: *"Can the children of the bridechamber mourn, as long as the bridegroom is with them? but the days will come, when the bridegroom shall be taken from them, and then shall they fast"*⁶⁶. Y'shua uses a metaphor based on common sense. The metaphor compares Y'shua to a bridegroom and explains that while He is still with them, the metaphorical wedding celebration is a picture of what is to come.

Bottom-line, what Y'shua is plainly saying is that Believers should fast in preparation to prepare and sanctify them for His return. This thought is what Y'shua also meant in John 16:20:

"Verily, verily, I say unto you, That ye shall weep and lament, but the world shall rejoice: and ye shall be sorrowful, but your sorrow shall be turned into joy."

Classification of Fasts

Fast days fall into two main categories:

- 1) Fasts decreed in the Scriptures or instituted to commemorate biblical events, and
- 2) Private fasts.

Fasts Decreed or Mentioned in the Bible:

- a) The Day of Atonement (Yom Kippur) on which it is commanded *"Ye shall afflict your souls"* so that the individual may be cleansed

⁶⁴ Hebrew Bible, known by Believers as the Old Covenant.

⁶⁵ Isaiah 62:5

⁶⁶ Matt 9:15

from sins (Lev 16:29–31; 23:27–32; Num 29:7ff.); this is the only (possible) fast ordained in the Pentateuch.

- b) The Ninth of Av (Tishah be-Av), a day of mourning for the destruction of the First and Second Temples (see Jer 52:12–13, however, the date is given as the Tenth), and other calamitous occasions.
- c) The 17th of Tammuz, in commemoration of the breaching of the walls of Jerusalem in the First Temple period (Jer 39:2 where the date is the 9th) and Titus breaching the walls of Jerusalem, and of other calamities which befell the Jewish people.
- d) The Tenth of Tevet, in memory of the siege of Jerusalem by Nebuchadnezzar, king of Babylon (2 Kings 25:1–2, Jer 52:4ff.; Ezek 24:1–2).
- e) The Third of Tishri, called *Zom Gedalyah* (the Fast of Gedaliah), in memory of the slaying of Gedaliah and his associates (Jer 41:1–2; 2 Kings 25:25).
- f) The Fast of Esther (Ta'anit Ester) on the 13th of Adar, the day before Purim (Esth. 4:16).

Besides the Day of Atonement, which is a (possible) Torah fast, the other four fast days were observed also by the period of the Second Temple. Zechariah prophesied that they would be transformed into days of joy and gladness (Zech 8:19).

Note: If one of the above occurs on a Shabbat, the fasting is delayed until Sunday; only in the case of the Day of Atonement is the fast observed even on Shabbat. In the case of the Fast of Esther, observance is on the preceding Thursday⁶⁷.

Private Fasts:

In addition to the fixed days listed above, fasts are held on the following private occasions:

⁶⁷ *Fasting and Fast Days*, Jewish Virtual Library.
http://www.jewishvirtuallibrary.org/source/judaica/ejud_0002_0006_0_06298.html

- a) Fasting and prayer can restore the loss of your "first love" for YHWH your Elohim and result in a more intimate relationship with Messiah.
- b) Fasting is a Biblical way to truly humble yourself in the sight of YHWH (Psalm 35:13; Ezra 8:21). King David said, *"I humble myself through fasting."*
- c) Fasting enables the Ruach HaKodesh to reveal your true spiritual condition, resulting in brokenness, repentance, and a transformed life.
- d) The Ruach HaKodesh will quicken the Word of YHWH in your heart and His truth will become more meaningful to you!
- e) Fasting can transform your prayer life into a richer and more personal experience.
- f) Fasting can result in a dynamic personal revival in your own life.
- g) Fasting and prayer are the only disciplines that fulfill the requirements of 2 Chron 7:14: *"If my people, who are called by my name, will humble themselves and pray and seek my face and turn from their wicked ways, then will I hear from heaven and will forgive their sin and will heal their land."*

Do's and Don'ts during Fasting

1. Seek medical advice before a long fast, especially if you have any existing medical concerns or conditions. If you are under 18 years of age, discuss your desire to fast with your parents. Submission and unity are important factors when fasting. Remember, fasting is an attitude of the heart!
2. Fast and pray in order to humble yourself and purify your relationship with YHWH. In fasting we are not always trying to receive something from YHWH, but rather we are seeking to realign our hearts' affections with His. Fasting enables us to cleanse the sanctuary of our hearts from every other rival.
3. Don't boast about your fast. Let people know you won't be eating only if you need to (Matt 6:16-18).

4. Do the fast with someone else. Two are better than one! We encourage roommates and friends to fast together. We encourage parents and kids to consider fasting together. People fasting and praying together has a powerful impact!

5. Have a clear target as your prayer focus. Without a vision (a clear, prophetic prayer goal) the people perish. Write down your vision, so you can run with it (Hab 2:2).

6. Make your commitment and determine the length. You can fast in many different ways. Pray and ask YHWH what He will give you faith for as far as the length of time.

- * A Daniel fast, with vegetables and water, is good for those carrying a heavy workload, such as students.

- * A fruit or vegetable juice fast allows you to enter into fasting but still gives enough energy to function. Out of consideration for their health and metabolism, we encourage young people to use juice and protein drinks to sustain them. If you have sugar sensitivities or problems, consult your physician before attempting this fast.

- * A water-only fast has been practiced by many people. We would not encourage this without strong medical supervision, particularly for young people.

- * A total fast is without water. Do not go beyond three days without water. Discuss your plans with your doctor, close friends, and spouse or parents. We do not encourage this type of fast without specific confirmation from YHWH through your parents and leadership.

7. Prepare physically. Two days before you fast, limit your intake of food to fruit and vegetables. Fruit is a natural cleanser and easy to digest. Stop drinking coffee before the fast. Drink lots of water to help your body detoxify. Prepare yourself for mental discomforts such as impatience, crankiness, and anxiety. Expect physical discomforts. You may experience dizziness, headaches and different kinds of pains. The headaches are not a sign to stop fasting. Your body is working to cleanse itself of impurities.

8. Take time to pray and read the Scriptures. This may seem obvious, but busyness and distractions can keep you from devotions. Reading books with testimonies of victories gained through fasting will encourage you too.

9. Expect to hear YHWH's voice in the Word, dreams, visions and revelations. Daniel prepared himself to receive revelation through fasting (Dan 10:1-2). Revelation is a reward of fasting (Matt 6:18).

10. Prepare for opposition. On the day of your fast you can bet donuts will be at the office or in class. Your roommate (or your mom) will suddenly be inspired to cook your favorite meals. Persevere through. Many times you may feel more tension build at home. Satan tempted Y'shua on His fast, and we must expect the same. Discouragement may come in like a flood, but recognize the source and take your stand on the victory of Y'shua.

11. If you fail, don't give in to condemnation. The "to fast or not to fast" dilemma can be a major tool of the enemy. Even though you may fail several times, YHWH always extends grace. Just hit the "delete" button and continue on your fast!

12. Feel free to rest a lot and continue to exercise with supervision.

13. Breakthroughs often come after a fast, not during it. Do not listen to the lie that nothing is happening. It is our conviction that every fast done in faith will be rewarded.

14. Break the fast slowly over several days with fruit juice or light soups. On a light juice fast or water fast, your digestive system shuts down. This can be dangerous if you eat too much too soon. Break the fast with several days of diluted, non-acidic juice, then regular juice, followed by fruit and vegetables.⁶⁸

Conclusion

By its very nature, fasting seems to suggest that something is wrong. Eating is a normal part of human existence, so abstaining from eating implies a disruption in the very rhythm of life. Therefore, fasting and abstinence from food is to point to something even more necessary for life—communion with and dependence on YHWH.

Fasting behaviours were sometimes commanded, and sometimes voluntary, but the Hebrew Bible rather consistently portrays fasting in conjunction with themes of disruption and restoration. In the midst of disruption, fasting comes to symbolize hope. Through repentance and

⁶⁸ Luke 18 Project. Fasting 101: Practical Tips and Helpful Guidelines, by Lou Engle and Brian Kim. <http://luke18project.com/blog/707/fasting-101-practical-tips-and-helpful-guidelines/>

prayer, fasting can signify the centering of the self in humility, the renewal of the relationship to YHWH's sustaining force. As such, fasting takes on a dual significance of mourning and hope.

The hope evidenced in the proper kinds of fasting in the Scriptures is ultimately a hope in the fulfillment of the eschatological, Messianic Age, but make sure YHWH remains the focal point!

*Something mind-boggling is happening right now before our eyes!
What can only be seen as a sovereign work of the Ruach HaKodesh is breaking forth as Christians around the world are working to return to their historical Hebrew foundation. After being stained for more than eighteen centuries by Judaeophobia, anti-Judaism, and anti-Semitism, many Christians are being impacted by an unprecedented revolution of restoration. Scholars, clergy, and laity from virtually every nationality, ethnicity, and denomination are reconnecting their faith in Messiah Y'shua with its historical Hebraic Roots in the Torah. HalleluYAH*

We inform – You choose⁶⁹

Never be guilty of: **"By your traditions you make the Word of God of non-effect"⁷⁰**

As cold waters to a thirsty soul, so is good news from a far country. Prov 25:25

Thank you that we may minister to you from the Southern point of Africa – population ratio-wise the largest group of Messianic Judaism followers in the world.

⁶⁹ The truth of the Torah makes you see the mistranslations in the New Covenant. It's amazing how you can look at the epistles of Rabbi Paul one way and it looks like he's leading the body of Messiah away from Torah; when in reality, he's leading them to Torah. A paradox of vantage point. Let us remember, the intent of the law maker constitutes the law. We need to walk a mile or two in our Hebrew Messiah's shoes

⁷⁰ **Matt 15:3** *But he answered and said unto them, Why do ye also transgress the commandment of God by your tradition? Matt 15:6* *And honour not his father or his mother, he shall be free. Thus have ye made the commandment of God of none effect by your tradition. Mark 7:9* *And he said unto them, Full well ye reject the commandment of God, that ye may keep your own tradition*

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That 'narrow way' is the path of Torah,
which is the mission of the Believer...
to continuously direct you to the Crucifixion Stake.

*If you are going to achieve excellence in big things,
you develop the habit in little matters of Torah.*

***Excellence is not an exception,
it is a prevailing attitude.***

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