

The Spring Festivals

Shavu'ot: The Feast of Weeks

by
Dean & Susan Wheelock

Then you shall keep the Feast of Weeks
To the LORD your God
With the tribute of a freewill offering from your hand,
Which you shall give as the LORD your God blesses you.
Deuteronomy 16:10

~ Table of Contents ~

<i>The Feast of Weeks</i>	1
<i>Counting the Omer</i>	6
<i>The Starting Point</i>	18
<i>Omer Wave Offering, 2001, etc.</i>	21
<i>Two Great Gifts of Shavu'ot</i>	26
<i>Sources</i>	27

Copyright © 1997, 2009 by Dean & Susan Wheelock
All rights reserved.
Printed in the United States of America

The Scriptures used in this booklet are:

- The Holy Bible - King James Version (KJV)*
Oxford University Press
London
- The Open Bible (New King James Version [NKJV]),*
Thomas Nelson, Inc., Nashville, 1985.
- The Tanakh (TNK),*
Jewish Publication Society,
Philadelphia/New York, 1988

~ Feast of Weeks ~

And you shall observe the Feast of Weeks,
Of the firstfruits of wheat harvest.
Exodus 34:22

The Festival of *Shavu'ot* (Shah-voo-oat'), or *Feast of Weeks*, occurs 50 days after a ceremony which was held in the Tabernacle (and later in the Temple) during the Days of Unleavened Bread. This ceremony is commonly translated as the *Wave Sheaf Offering* but would be more properly translated as the *Omer Wave Offering*:

"Speak to the children of Israel, and say to them: 'When you come into the land which I give to you, and reap its harvest, then you shall bring a sheaf [*omer*] of the firstfruits of your harvest to the priest. ¹¹ He shall wave the sheaf [*omer*] before the LORD [YHVH], to be accepted on your behalf; on the day after the Sabbath the priest shall wave it. ...

¹⁵ 'And you shall count for yourselves from the day after the Sabbath, from the day that you brought the sheaf [*omer*] of the wave offering: seven Sabbaths shall be completed. ¹⁶ Count fifty days to the day after the seventh Sabbath; then you shall offer a new grain offering to the LORD [YHVH]. ¹⁷ You shall bring from your dwellings two wave loaves of two-tenths of an ephah. They shall be of fine flour; they shall be baked with leaven. *They are the firstfruits to the LORD [YHVH]. ...*

²¹ 'And you shall proclaim on the same day that it is a holy convocation to you. You shall do no customary work on it. *It shall be a statute forever in all your dwellings throughout your generations. ...*

²² 'When you reap the harvest of your land, you shall not wholly reap the corners of your field when you reap, nor shall you gather any gleaning from your harvest. You shall leave them for the poor and for the stranger: *I am the LORD [YHVH] your God.*'" (Lev. 23:10-11, 15-17, 21, 22)

In the Greek Scriptures (New Testament) the fiftieth day after the *Wave Sheaf Offering* is identified by its common name, the *Day of Pentecost*. However, in reality it is a day that has different names: *Feast of Harvest* (Ex. 23:16), *Feast of Weeks* (Ex. 34:22), and *Day of Firstfruits* (Num. 28:26). In the Hebrew language this day is known as *Shavu'ot*, which literally means, *Weeks*. The Hebrew phrase *Chag Ha Shavu'ot* is translated *Feast of Weeks*, but is usually just called *Shavu'ot*.

Shavu'ot occurs in the late spring and is a harvest festival. It marks the end of the grain harvest and the beginning of the fruit harvest. In Israel there were three main harvest seasons. The barley harvest began at Passover (Heb. *Pesach* = Peh'-sock). The wheat harvest started after the barley harvest and culminated at *Shavu'ot* (Pentecost). The early beginning of the fruit harvest began at *Shavu'ot* and was concluded prior to The Feast of Tabernacles (Heb. *Sukkot* = Sue-coat').

Shavu'ot (Pentecost) is a most interesting festival. It is the only time during the year that an offering containing leaven could be brought into the Temple. It is also the only festival that is not given a fixed date on the Hebrew calendar.

Jewish tradition teaches that *Shavu'ot* is the day on which the law (*Torah*) was given at Mt. Sinai, while the New Testament scriptures make it clear that Pentecost (*Shavu'ot*) is the day the Holy Spirit was given to the Believers.

Shavu'ot was one of the three pilgrimage festivals celebrated by the children of Israel each year at the Temple in Jerusalem:

"Three times a year all your males shall appear before the LORD [YHVH] your God in the place which He chooses: at the Feast of Unleavened Bread, at the Feast of Weeks, and at the Feast of Tabernacles; and they shall not appear before the LORD [YHVH] empty-handed. ¹⁷ Every man shall give as he is able, according to the blessing of the LORD [YHVH] your God which He has given you."

(Duet. 16:16-17)

During the time of the Temple, which includes the lifetime of *Y'shua*, 'the place' that God had chosen to dwell was in the Temple itself in Jerusalem:

"Yet I have chosen Jerusalem, that My name may be there; and I have chosen David to be over My people Israel."

(II Chron. 6:6)

"... then there will be the place where the LORD [YHVH] your God chooses to make His name abide. There you shall bring all that I command you: your burnt offerings, your sacrifices, your tithes, the heave offerings of your hand, and all your choice offerings which you vow to the LORD [YHVH]. ¹² And you shall rejoice before the LORD [YHVH] your God, you and your sons and your daughters, your male and female servants, and the Levite who is within your gates, since he has no portion nor inheritance with you. ¹³ Take heed to yourself that you do not offer your burnt offerings in every place that you see; ¹⁴but in the place which the LORD [YHVH] chooses, in one of your tribes, there you shall offer your burnt offerings, and there you shall do all that I command you."

(Duet. 12:11-14)

~ Going Up to Jerusalem ~

The procession of the people of Israel coming to Jerusalem for the festivals must have been a magnificent sight. Even in the first century there were already a great many Jews in the Diaspora (Jews that had been dispersed out of the land of Judea). In *Y'shua's* time there were more Jews in Babylon than in Jerusalem. We read in Acts, and in Paul's writings, about the many places where Jews were living:

"And there were dwelling in Jerusalem [attending the festival of *Shavu'ot*] Jews, devout men, from every nation under heaven. ... Parthians and Medes and Elamites, those dwelling in Mesopotamia, Judea and Cappadocia, Pontus and Asia, ¹⁰ "Phrygia and Pamphylia, Egypt and the parts of Libya adjoining Cyrene, visitors from Rome, both Jews and proselytes, ¹¹ "Cretans and Arabs -- we hear them

speaking in our own tongues the wonderful works of God."
(Acts 2:5, 9-11)

For those Jews, living outside of Jerusalem, the highlight of their life was to be able to attend a Festival at the Temple in Jerusalem. For those that lived great distances away, in far off lands, they may have made the pilgrimage only one time in their life. Because of this, they sometimes came and stayed for several months so they could attend more than one festival, perhaps even attend all three in one year.

For those who lived in Judea, outside of Jerusalem, or in the Galilee, they may have been able to come to every festival, every year. We know that *Y'shua* came to the Passover in Jerusalem, with His parents, when He was twelve years old. We can safely assume that He was a regular attendee at the Festivals.

Whenever the pilgrims came to Jerusalem it was said they were going up'. It did not matter the direction from which they came, be it north or south, east or west, they were always 'going up':

"... 'Come, and let us go up to the mountain of the LORD [YHVH],

To the house of the God of Jacob;

He will teach us His ways,

And we shall walk in His paths.'

For out of Zion shall go forth the law,

And the word of the LORD [YHVH] from Jerusalem."

(Isa. 2:3)

The reason the people were said to be 'going up' was twofold. First of all, Jerusalem is in the mountains and requires a physical climb no matter from which direction you are coming. Secondly, to 'go up' to the Temple means to rise higher spiritually as well as physically. The festivals were the spiritual 'high' of Jewish life.

During *Shavu'ot* (Pentecost) the Pilgrims would bring with them the firstfruits of the harvest as an offering to the LORD. There are seven kinds of firstfruits listed in the *Torah*:

"For the LORD [YHVH] your God is bringing you into a good land, a land of brooks of water, of fountains and springs, that flow out of valleys and hills; ⁸ a land of wheat and barley, of vines and fig trees and pomegranates, a land of olive oil and honey; ..."
(Deut. 8:7-8)

As these firstfruits were presented at the Temple, the bearer of them was to recite the following blessing:

"And it shall be, when you come into the land which the LORD [YHVH] your God is giving you as an inheritance, and you possess it and dwell in it, ² that you shall take some of the first of all the produce of the ground, which you shall bring from your land that the LORD [YHVH] your God is giving you, and put it in a basket and go to the place where the LORD [YHVH] your God chooses to make His name abide. ³ And you shall go to the one who is priest in those days, and say to him, 'I declare today to the LORD [YHVH] your God that I have come to the country which the LORD [YHVH] swore to our fathers to give us.'

"⁴ Then the priest shall take the basket out of your hand and set it down before the altar of the LORD [YHVH] your God. ⁵ And you shall answer and say before the LORD [YHVH] your God: 'My father was a Syrian, about to perish, and he went down to Egypt and dwelt there, few in number; and there he became a nation, great, mighty, and populous. ⁶ But the Egyptians mistreated us, afflicted us, and laid hard bondage on us. ⁷ Then we cried out to the LORD [YHVH] God of our fathers, and the LORD [YHVH] heard our voice and looked on our affliction and our labor and our oppression. ⁸ So the LORD [YHVH] brought us out of Egypt with a mighty hand and with an outstretched arm, with great terror and with signs and wonders. ⁹ He has brought us to this place and has given us this land, "a land flowing with milk and honey;" ¹⁰ and now, behold, I have brought the firstfruits of the land which you, O LORD [YHVH], have given me.'

"Then you shall set it before the LORD [YHVH] your God, and worship before the LORD [YHVH] your God. ¹¹ So you shall rejoice in every good thing which the LORD [YHVH] your God has given to you and your house, you and the Levite and the stranger who is among you."

(Deut. 26:1-11)

The women and children would attend if the family could afford it. If not, the men would go by themselves. Without modern transportation the primary mode of transportation was what used to be called "shank's mares," that is, one's legs. The very young, old, or infirm people would have ridden on the backs of animals. Those that had to travel the farthest would be the first to leave their homes. As they proceeded towards Jerusalem others would join them. The Priests and Levites that lived outside of Jerusalem in the various Levitical cities, would join the procession. They would sing psalms, accompanied by the Levitical musicians playing their flutes. What a sight and sound it must have been. They would camp out at night on the way, sleeping under the stars of heaven. The fellowship, the camaraderie, and the joy of going to worship God at the Temple in Jerusalem, where He had placed His name, must have been immense. What a contrast to the way Festival Keepers go to the Feast today.

This is not to say that it is wrong to attend the Feast of Tabernacles (*Sukkot*) at a site outside of Jerusalem. It is a wonderful time to put the cares of this world out of our lives for eight days, to focus on the Word of God, and rejoice in fellowship before the LORD. We just need to recognize that what we are doing is somewhat different from what the Israelites were instructed to do when the Temple existed. It is right and proper to 'keep the Feast,' however, when attending the Feast we need to focus entirely on God, His word and His people. We must not become distracted by the things of this world, even if they are not wrong in themselves.

In *Y'shua's* day Jerusalem would be swarming with people, all intent on rejoicing before the LORD. The center of activity was the Temple Mount itself. The Temple Complex was considerably larger than the Temple itself, so there was a lot of room for people to gather and listen to the various Rabbis teach. Many of the pilgrims might have stopped to listen to a country Rabbi from the *Galil* (Galilee) named *Y'shua ben*

Yosef of Nazareth. They may have been surprised at His teaching:

"For he taught them as *one* having authority, and not as the scribes." (Matt. 7:29)

This meant that *Y'shua* did not quote from 'the sages' (ancient Rabbinic sources) but spoke directly to the people those things which He had received from His Father in heaven and from the Scriptures.

The main entrance to the Temple Mount was from the south side. Today one can walk up some of the very steps that *Y'shua* and His disciples trod as they entered the Temple area from that direction. Many of the Rabbis sat on these steps teaching their disciples. *Y'shua* was undoubtedly one of those Rabbis (teachers).

Before going onto the Temple Mount proper, a pilgrim had to be ritually cleansed. This was accomplished by being immersed in a ritual bath called a *mikvah* (meek'-vah) below the southern entrance. Today, thanks to extensive excavations, one can see dozens of these *mikvaot* (meek'-vah-oat, the plural form of *mikvah*). Did *Y'shua* and the disciples immerse themselves in these very ritual baths before entering the Temple grounds? If they were going to keep the law perfectly they most certainly did.

Have you ever wondered where the three thousand were baptized (immersed) on the day of Pentecost?

"Then those who gladly received his word were baptized; and that day about three thousand souls were added to them." (Acts 2:41)

The only possible explanation are the *mikvaot* outside the south wall of the Temple Mount. It all fits. The speaking in tongues would have occurred in the immediate Temple area, possibly on the south wall steps, or up on the Temple Mount platform:

"And when this sound occurred [margin = *when this voice was made*], the multitude came together, and were confused [margin = *troubled in mind*], because everyone heard them speak in his own language." (Acts 2:6)

Then:

"... when they heard *this*, they were cut to the heart, ..." (Acts 3:37)

and when they desired to be immersed (baptized), the waters of the *mikvaot* were right at hand.

An interesting side note: a certain percentage of the water in a *mikvah* had to be what is called "living water"; that is water that came from rainwater, a river or a lake, rather than a well. Once again we have what many believe to have been a 'Christian' term being used in Judaism for centuries before the time of *Y'shua*. *Y'shua* did not make up new terminology, rather, He used what was familiar to the people of His day, sometimes giving the traditional words new or additional meaning. For example:

"... 'If anyone thirsts, let him come to Me and drink. ³⁸He who believes in Me, as the Scripture has said, out of his heart will flow rivers of living water.'" (John 7:37-38)

This teaching was given at the Temple during *Sukkot* (the Feast of Tabernacles).

~ Symbols of *Shavu'ot* ~

The main *Shavu'ot* ritual involved the "new meal-offering" which consisted of two loaves of leavened bread. (This was the only meal offering that could ever contain leaven.) These two loaves were made from flour that had come from that spring's wheat harvest.

This was a follow up ritual to the 'Wave Sheaf Offering' that was presented to God in the Temple during the Days of Unleavened Bread. There can be no doubt that the unleavened Wave Sheaf Offering performed during the Days of Unleavened Bread represented the resurrected *Y'shua* being presented before the Father in heaven for acceptance:

"But now Christ [*Messiah*] is risen from the dead, and has become the firstfruits of those who have fallen asleep." (I Cor. 15:20)

The wave sheaf was cut at the end of the weekly Sabbath, during the Days of Unleavened Bread, and presented in the Temple on the first day of the week according to the practice of the Sadducees. This means that the cutting of the barley took place at the very same time that *Y'shua* was resurrected from the grave, and the *Omer* of flour was offered in the Temple at the precise time that He was being presented before God in the heavenly Tabernacle.

It was the first day of the week (Sunday), during the Days of Unleavened Bread, that served as the starting point for the "counting of the omer" which identifies when the day of Pentecost is to be observed. Anciently, these two festivals were considered to be connected by this ritual of "Counting the *Omer*," and *Pesach* (Passover) was not considered fully completed until *Shavu'ot* had likewise been fulfilled. Thus, there is a direct connection between these two spring pilgrimage festivals.

This leads us to make a symbolic connection between these two meal offerings. At *Pesach* the meal offering was unleavened and represented the resurrected Messiah. At *Shavu'ot* the meal offering was leavened, and consisted of two loaves. Is it possible these two leavened loaves were meant to represent the 'firstfruits' of God's people?

"Of His own will He brought us forth by the word of truth, that we might be a kind of firstfruits of His creatures." (James 1:18)

We, the Believers, sinful (leavened) by nature, made pure by the sacrifice of the Passover Lamb.

Several other possibilities come to mind concerning the need for two leavened loaves: 1.) they could represent the two houses of Israel and Judah, 2.) one could represent Israel and the other the Gentiles, or 3.) one for the patriarchs like Abraham;

"Your father Abraham rejoiced to see my day, and he saw it and was glad." (John 8:56)

who, along with others, saw the Kingdom 'afar off' and believed, and will be a part of the first resurrection. The other

loaf could then represent those Believers who have come later and will also be a part of the first resurrection.

The second *Shavu'ot* Temple ritual (after the meal offering of the two leavened loaves) was an offering of "first fruits" mentioned above. Included among them were the very first produce of the fruit harvest. Again, we can deduce Messianic symbolism out of this practice. God calls sinners to repent and accept *Y'shua* all the way from that first century Pentecost up until the time of the Wedding Feast to come (a major symbol of Tabernacles).

~ Two Fulfillment's ~

There were two great events that took place on *Shavu'ot*. The first was the giving of the *Torah*, the second was the giving of the Holy Spirit.

Scripture tells us the giving of the *Torah* took place at Mt. Sinai near the beginning of the third month on the Hebrew calendar, called *Sivan* (See-vahn):

"In the third month after the children of Israel had gone out of the land of Egypt, on the same day, they came to the Wilderness of Sinai. ... ¹⁰ Then the LORD [YHVH] said to Moses, 'Go to the people and consecrate them today and tomorrow, and let them wash their clothes. ¹¹ And let them be ready for the third day. For on the third day the LORD [YHVH] will come down upon Mount Sinai in the sight of all the people.'" (Ex. 19:1,10-11)

Thus began the final countdown to the giving of the 'ten words' or the ten commandments as they are commonly known. This occasion was considered to be the consummation of the marriage between *YHVH* (the LORD) and the children of Israel, the betrothal period having begun when God first called Abram (Heb. *Avram* = Ahv-rahm'):

"Now the LORD [YHVH] had said to Abram:

'Get out of your country,

From your family

And from your father's house,

To a land that I will show you.

² I will make you a great nation;

I will bless you

And make your name great;

And you shall be a blessing.

³ I will bless those who bless you,

And I will curse him who curses you;

And in you all the families of the earth shall be blessed.'

⁴ So Abram departed as the LORD [YHVH] had spoken to him, and Lot went with him. And Abram was seventy-five years old when he departed from Haran."

(Gen. 12:1-4)

Chapter 15 of Genesis tells the story of how God formalized this betrothal covenant with *Avram* (Ahv-rahm' = Abram). First, God promised *Avram* a physical heir that would grow into a multitude of people:

"... 'Look now toward heaven, and count the stars if you are able to number them.' And He said to him, 'So shall your descendants be.'

"⁶ And he believed in the LORD [YHVH], and He [the LORD] accounted it to him for righteousness.."

(Gen. 15:5-6)

Once *Avram* had accepted the LORD's offer by believing, the betrothal covenant was sealed by a sacrifice in which God provided the fire. *Avram* took the commanded selection of animals and birds and prepared them for sacrifice:

"And it came to pass, when the sun went down and it was dark, that behold, there appeared a smoking oven and a burning torch that passed between those pieces."

(Gen. 15:17)

This betrothal covenant was confirmed during the evening portion of the fifteenth day of *Nisan* (Nee-sahn') and lasted 430 years:

"And it came to pass at the end of the four hundred and thirty years -- on that very same day -- it came to pass that all the armies of the LORD [YHVH] went out from the land of Egypt." (Ex. 12:41)

This fact is confirmed both in Jewish tradition and in the book of Galatians (see Gal. 3:17).

During the betrothal period the bride and groom are considered as husband and wife. The betrothal can only be broken through a legal divorce (issued by the husband) or the death of one of the partners. It barely resembles our modern day engagement which has no legal status and can be broken by a word from either party. Once God had made His betrothal promise to *Avraham* (Ahv'-rah-ham = Abraham) and his descendants, He could not terminate it without a legal divorce or the death of one of the parties. In this case it would have required the complete destruction of all of the children of Israel to annul the betrothal covenant by death.

God was true to His word and waited until Israel had matured into a full grown nation of people. Then He went, at night, to take them out of their sin (Egypt) to the final wedding ceremony, which took place at Mt. Sinai.

All ancient Israelite marriages required a marriage contract, or covenant document, called a *Ketuvah* (Keh-too'-vah). The *Torah* constitutes the *Ketuvah* between God and the children of Israel. The bride was required to accept the terms of the *Ketuvah* (covenant) so they could be fully married. Israel, as the bride, did this when she said:

"... 'All that the LORD [YHVH] has spoken we will do.'" (Ex. 19:8)

The *Ketuvah* was not just a one sided affair. The groom (*YHVH* = the LORD) also accepted obligations:

"... then you shall be a special treasure to Me above all people; for all the earth is Mine. ⁶ And you shall be to Me a kingdom of priests and a holy nation.' ..." (Ex. 19:5-6)

All of these things happened on that day of Pentecost (*Shavu'ot*). How about this for a wedding day ceremony?

"Then it came to pass on the third day, in the morning, that there were thunderings and lightnings, and a thick cloud on the mountain; and the sound of the trumpet was very loud, so that all the people who were in the camp

trembled. ¹⁷ And Moses brought the people out of the camp to meet with God, and they stood at the foot of the mountain. ¹⁸ Now Mount Sinai was completely in smoke, because the LORD [YHVH] descended upon it in fire. Its smoke ascended like the smoke of a furnace, and the whole mountain quaked greatly. ¹⁹ And when the blast of the trumpet sounded long and became louder and louder, Moses spoke, and God answered him by voice."

(Ex. 19:16-19)

The marriage proved to be a rocky one. Within the first forty days the bride committed adultery by worshipping the golden calf. But God was a patient husband, and He established the Day of Atonement (*Yom Kippur* = Yohm Key-poor') as a 'day of covering' for the sins of His adulterous wife.

The second great event of *Shavu'ot* (Pentecost) is, of course, found in the book of Acts:

"When the Day of Pentecost had fully come, they were all with one accord in one place. ² And suddenly there came a sound from heaven, as of a rushing mighty wind, and it filled the whole house where they were sitting. ³ Then there appeared to them divided tongues, as of fire, and one sat upon each of them. ⁴ And they were all filled with the Holy Spirit and began to speak with other tongues, as the Spirit gave them utterance."

(Acts 2:1-4)

Now that the giving of the Holy Spirit had taken place, the Bride was able to abide by the marriage covenant (*Ketuvah* = Keh-two-vah or *Torah*), for now she shared the Spirit of her Husband (the Holy Spirit). If she does slip and fall into inadvertent sin, she has the sacrifice of her Husband to, not just cover, but completely remove her sins so that she is always the spotless, virgin bride that every husband desires.

The day of Pentecost (*Shavu'ot*) is indeed a great day for each one of us. It signifies the completion of the cleansing and preparation of the Bride of Messiah (that's us!) for her wedding day. The bride price has been paid through the blood of the Lamb. The two leavened loaves have been accepted by God and He has confirmed that acceptance by sharing His Holy Spirit with us mortals:

"... who are the called according to His purpose. ²⁹ For whom He foreknew, He also predestined to be conformed to the image of His Son, that He might be the firstborn among many brethren."

(Rom. 8:28-29)

Now we (the Bride) have much work to do. We must be preparing for our wedding day, for the Messiah will come to take His betrothed bride into the full marriage relationship. How do we prepare?

"Let us be glad and rejoice and give Him glory, for the marriage of the Lamb has come, and His wife has made herself ready." ⁸ And to her it was granted to be arrayed in fine linen, clean and bright, for the fine linen is the righteous acts of the saints. ⁹ Then he said to me, 'Write: "Blessed are those who are called to the marriage supper of the Lamb!"' And he said to me, 'These are the true sayings of God.'"

(Rev. 19:7-9)

It is time for us to lay aside our contentious spirits, that cause so much anger and division in the Body of Messiah, and begin earnestly preparing for our wedding day. This preparation absolutely requires that we make every effort to 'make ready' our Wedding dress of righteousness as pictured in the above scripture. Like Queen Esther, we must be going through a period of purification:

"Each young woman's turn came to go in to King Ahasuerus after she had completed twelve months' preparation, according to the regulations for the women, for thus were the days of their preparation apportioned: six months with oil of myrrh, and six months with perfumes and preparations for beautifying women."

(Esther 2:12)

Right now the Bride is badly soiled by unrighteous and unloving behavior. She needs to be purified. If each of us resolves to not take part in unrighteous behavior, and learn to love one another, we will be doing our part to prepare the Bride for the greatest wedding ever.

~ ~ ~ ~ ~

Shavuot

Shavuot is a biblical festival in the late spring, marking the giving of the *Torah* and – more so in Israel – the first fruits of summer. *Shavuot* is cheesecake and other milky foods (*Torah* is like mother's milk), scent-laden flowers decorating the synagogue, marathon through-the-night study sessions (called *Tikun Leyl Shavuot*), and loads and loads of sleep to cope with it all. It all lasts just a day or two, and most non religious Jews don't see it and don't know it.

from: *The Joys of Hebrew*
by: Lewis Glinert

~ Counting the Omer ~

So teach us to number our days,
That we may gain a heart of wisdom.
Psalm 90:12



All of the *moedim* (mow-ah-deem' = appointed times or festivals) of God fall on specific days of the month except for one. That exception is *Shavu'ot* (Shaw-voo'otat = Pentecost), also known as the Feast of Weeks, or Feast of Firstfruits. For some reason, God, chose to set the date for this particular festival by having the children of Israel count seven Sabbaths plus one day (or fifty days) from the day of the Wave Sheaf offering:

"And you shall count for yourselves from the day after the Sabbath, from the day that you brought the sheaf of the wave offering: seven Sabbaths shall be completed. Count fifty days to the day after the seventh Sabbath, then you shall offer a new grain offering to the LORD [YHVH]."
(Lev. 23:15-16)

God does not give instruction (*torah*), concerning His appointments with His people without there being a reason. This being the case, there must be a profound reason why He chose to set the date for *Shavu'ot* through a method of counting rather than by giving it a specific date on the calendar, the way He did with the other festivals. If we can discover the reason(s) for the counting of these fifty days, and what we should be trying to accomplish during them, it could lead us into a closer and more profound relationship with our Creator God.

~ What Is the Wave Sheaf? ~

"And the LORD [YHVH] spoke to Moses saying, 'Speak to the children of Israel, and say to them: "When you come into the land which I give to you, and reap its harvest, then you shall bring a sheaf of the firstfruits of your harvest to the priest. He shall wave the sheaf before the LORD [YHVH], to be accepted on your behalf; on the day after the Sabbath the priest shall wave it. ...

""You shall eat neither bread nor parched grain nor fresh grain until the same day that you have brought an [omer] offering to your God; it shall be a statute forever throughout your generations in all your dwellings.""
(Lev. 23:9-11,14)

There tends to be some confusion on what constitutes a 'wave sheaf,' because of the translation of the Hebrew word *omer* (oh-mer) into the English word 'sheaf.' Literally, *omer* means a "measure of dry things," and it is believed to be a quantity of about two quarts. If one wanted to be strictly literal in the translation it might read something like this in English:

"...then you shall bring a measure of dry things of the firstfruits of your harvest to the Priest. He shall wave the measure of dry things before the LORD, ..."

In English, the word sheaf means; "a bundle of cut stalks of grain or similar plants bound with straw or twine." Needless to say, the average reader of the English Scriptures probably visualizes the Priest taking a bundle of barley grain stalks and waving it in the Temple in a manner similar to what is done with the *lulav* (loo'-lahv) at the festival of Sukkot (Tabernacles). However, this is not the manner in which it was done.

What was actually offered in the Temple as a 'wave sheaf' or 'firstfruits' offering was two quarts of barley grain that had been threshed, parched, beaten, and sieved into fine flour. The Jewish Encyclopedia, in the article entitled *Omer*, has this to say about the preparation:

"After the grain had been gathered it was brought to the courtyard of the Temple, where, according to R. [Rabbi] Meir, it was parched while it was still in the ear; according to the other rabbis, it was first thrashed and then parched. The grain was ground into coarse meal and then sifted through thirteen sieves until it became very clean, after which the tenth part was taken, the measure of the omer, and given to the priest. ... The priest proceeded with the omer as with any other meal-offering, he poured oil and frankincense over the meal, 'waved' it, and then burned a handful of it on the altar; the remainder was eaten by the priests." (Vol. IX, p. 399).

The manner of waving is also described in the same article:

"The offering was placed on the extended hands of the priest, who moved them backward and forward (to counteract the effects of injurious winds) and then upward and downward (to counteract the effects of injurious dews; ...). As soon as the omer ceremony was completed the people of Jerusalem were permitted to eat of the newly harvested grain; people of towns far from Jerusalem might not do so until after noon, when it was certain that the ceremony at Jerusalem had been concluded." (Vol. IX, p. 399)

As any grain farmer will tell you, the most harmful things to a ripe grain crop are: high winds, which cause the ripe grain to fall to the ground making it impossible to harvest; heavy rains which flatten the grain stalks, making it difficult to harvest; or several days of consistently heavy dew which can cause the grain to mildew. Apparently the 'waving' part of the ceremony was accompanied by the priest's prayer that these conditions not occur, so that the farmers could bring in the full harvest of good grain during the next fifty day period.

Since the 'Offering of the *Omer*' took place during the morning hours of the "morrow after the Sabbath;" and since there was considerable work that had to take place before the *Omer* was properly prepared, the next question is: When did the cutting of the grain take place? Alfred Edersheim (a nineteenth century Messianic Jew), in his classic work; *The Life*

and *Times of Jesus the Messiah*, tells that part of the story in beautiful detail:

"It was probably about the same time, that a noisy throng prepared to follow delegates from the Sanhedrin to the ceremony of cutting the Passover-sheaf. ... This Passover-sheaf was reaped in public the evening before it was offered, and it was to witness this ceremony that the crowd had gathered around the elders. ... When the time for cutting the sheaf had arrived -- that is, on the evening of the 15 Nisan [Edersheim holds to the Pharisaic view that the sheaf was always cut at the end of Nisan 15] even though it were a Sabbath, just as the sun went down, three men, each with a sickle and basket, set to work. Clearly to bring out what was distinctive in the ceremony, they first asked of the bystanders three times each of these questions: 'Has the sun gone down?' 'With this sickle?' 'Into this basket?' 'On this Sabbath?' ... and lastly, 'Shall I reap?' Having each time been answered in the affirmative, they cut down barley to the amount of one ephah, ..." (Vol. 2; Book IV, p. 619).

Even though the sun had just gone down, the Sabbath did not officially end until three stars were visible and the *Havdalah* (hahv-dah-lah') ceremony had been performed. In our opinion, the cutting of the sheaf actually took place just before dark at the very end of the weekly Sabbath day.

In summary this is what occurred. At the end of the Sabbath, as the sun was going down, but before *Havdalah* had been performed, the barley grain was cut by members of the *Sanhedrin* (San-head'-rin), the Supreme Court of the Jewish people. This cutting was witnessed by pilgrims who were in Jerusalem for the festival. The cut grain was then taken to the courtyard of the Temple that evening, where it was threshed, parched with fire, and ground into flour. The flour was then put through thirteen different sieves so that what remained was both pure and very fine in texture. From this fine flour, the equivalent of two quarts (an *Omer*) was taken. The next morning this *Omer* of barley flour was offered in the Temple in the manner of an ordinary meal offering with the exception that it was 'waved' before God prior to it being offered, and prayers were said in preparation for the coming grain harvest.

After this ceremony was completed the general grain harvest could begin. During the first part of the fifty day count, barley would be the chief grain to be harvested. However, as other grains became ripe they too could be harvested without any further ceremony. The other chief grains, in addition to barley, were wheat and spelt. Of the three grains, barley was the more common and of coarser texture. It was primarily used as food for animals (oats were not grown in ancient Israel). The preferred grain for bread was wheat, and only the common people of the land ate bread made from barley.

~ The Time Setting ~

In the time of the first and second Temple periods, the religious Hebrew calendar (which is a solar lunar calendar) was governed by actual observation. Each new moon had to be

visually sited by at least two credible witnesses and then approved by the *Sanhedrin* (the seven member supreme court at the Temple). Because the calendar months were based on the cycles of the moon (each of which had either 29 or 30 days), the twelve month 'lunar' year always came up several days short of the 'solar' year (the year as determined by the rotation of the earth around the sun). Thus it was necessary to add a 'thirteenth' month every two or three years. Eventually, in a span of nineteen years, the 'solar' and 'lunar' years came back into perfect conjunction.

In the days when the Temple was in use, and observation from Jerusalem was the key to the calendar, the *Sanhedrin* had to take several things into account before proclaiming the beginning of the month of *Aviv** (also known as *Nisan*), the first month of the sacred Hebrew calendar. It was during the month of *Aviv* that the festivals of Passover and the Days of Unleavened Bread were celebrated. Because the *Omer* had to be waved during this period, it was crucial that the barley grain be properly ripened so that the required offering could be performed. It was for this reason that the first month was named '*Aviv*,' which literally means "a green ear." Thus, *Aviv* is "the month of green ears."

As the end of the twelfth month (*Adar*) approached, representatives of the *Sanhedrin* would examine the barley fields around Jerusalem to see if the grain would be ready for harvesting during the upcoming Days of Unleavened Bread, a little over two weeks away. If it was apparent that the grain would not be ready, they would proclaim a thirteenth month (called *Adar II*) and everything would be postponed one month.

However, there were earlier signs that could also indicate whether the new year would need to be postponed or not. One of these signs was the appearance of the almond blossoms. Since they would appear well ahead of the 'green ears' of barley, the blossoms were early indicators as to when the new year would begin. Another factor, to be considered, were the weather conditions. If the rains lasted later than usual it would be highly unlikely that the almond blossoms and the barley crop would be ready as expected. In addition, late rains would make it well nigh impossible for the pilgrims to come to Jerusalem for Passover because the roads would be impassable. However, in the end, the bottom line was that ripe barley grain had to be available in order for the *Omer Wave Offering* (*Wave Sheaf Offering*) to take place. Without the ripe barley there could be no *Omer Wave Offering*; without the *Omer Wave Offering* there could be no festival of Passover; and without the festival of Passover there could be no festival of *Shavu'ot*. All of these conditions were determined, not at the whim of individuals, but only by the confirmation of a legitimate sitting *Sanhedrin*.

* Many Christian sources and some Jewish ones spell the name of this month 'Abib.' This is because the second letter of the Hebrew alphabet a (bet) or (vet), can be pronounced either as a "b" or a "v." When the dot, or *dagesh* is present in the center of the letter it is pronounced "b," when it is missing it is pronounced "v." The first month of the sacred calendar is correctly pronounced *Aviv* (Ah-veev') rather than *Abib* (Aa-bib), as many English speakers are prone to do.

~ The Passover Connection ~

Passover (and the Days of Unleavened Bread), and *Shavu'ot* are tied together by a common thread known as *Sifret HaOmer* (See-fret' Hah Oh-mehr' = Counting the Omer). It is for this reason that Jewish tradition teaches that *Shavu'ot* is the conclusion or culmination of the Passover season and not a 'stand alone' festival.

- ◆ Passover* is the celebration of redemption, freedom, liberty, and the release from slavery, fully accomplished at the Reed Sea.
- ◆ *Shavu'ot*, on the other hand, is the celebration of revelation, when the children of Israel became a nation with its own set of instructions, because that is the day on which God revealed the Ten Words or Ten Commandments to them.
- ◆ *Sifret HaOmer* is the time period during which the children of Israel journeyed from the Reed Sea to Mount Sinai.

It is taught that *Shavu'ot* is part of the Passover experience and cannot be separated from it, because the children of Israel needed to have instruction (*Torah*) in order to function as a viable free nation under the authority of God. In other words, they could only experience true liberty if it were under the rule of law (*Torah*).

So it was, on the fiftieth day of the *Omer* count, that the spring *moed* or appointed time of *Shavu'ot* (Day of Pentecost) was observed. It too was called a day of 'firstfruits.' Thus the 'Counting of the *Omer*' both begins and ends with a day which, in some way, represents the 'firstfruits' of the harvest. During this entire time, not only was grain harvesting taking place, but late in the fifty days some early fruits also began to appear. Thus, *Shavu'ot* marked the end of the spring grain harvest and also the beginning of the summer fruit harvest, the time when the 'firstfruits' of that harvest were brought to the Temple.

Another way of looking at these festivals is in the context of a marriage ceremony. Passover represents the acceptance by the Bride (the children of Israel) of the betrothal cup presented to her by her prospective Husband, *YHVH*. By accepting the blood of the lamb and placing it on the doorpost of their homes, the children of Israel were accepting the *Ketuvah*, their marriage contract or covenant (the *Torah*). Then, at Mount Sinai, the actual wedding took place. The Bridegroom (*YHVH*) appeared, the Bride (the children of Israel) was present, the best man (*Moshe*) was there, and the wedding vows were exchanged by the Bride accepting the terms of the *Ketuvah* or covenant:

"So Moses came and called for the elders of the people, and laid before them all these words which the LORD [YHVH] commanded him. Then all the people answered together and said, 'All that the LORD [YHVH] has spoken we will do.' So Moses brought back the words of the people to the LORD [YHVH]." (Ex. 19:7-8)

* We will be using the term Passover in its generic sense to include the entire span of time from 10 *Aviv* through the Last Day of Unleavened Bread, 21 *Aviv*.

In Jewish practice, the Sabbath before *Shavu'ot* is termed, *Shabbat Kalah*, which is the same name given to the Sabbath before any bride's wedding. It is interesting to note that, at this point, the actual terms and conditions of the *Ketuvah* (the *Torah*) had not been given. Nevertheless, the children of Israel agreed to comply with whatever instruction God chose to give them in the future. However one views this event, the simple fact is that Passover and *Shavu'ot* are definitely interconnected.

~ Sifret HaOmer ~

Although the day of the 'Wave Sheaf Offering' is not a commanded assembly, and the day is not designated as a Holyday, it nevertheless was an extremely important event in ancient Israel. Since no harvesting of any spring grain could take place until this ceremony had been successfully completed, and since the Scripture also commands that one 'count' the days starting with this day, it truly is an important and pivotal day on the spring calendar.

The fact that we are commanded to specifically 'count' the fifty days of *Sifret HaOmer*, leads to the conclusion that each one of these days could have special significance. In Jewish thought, *Sifret HaOmer* is not a 'countdown,' but rather a 'count up' to the next *moed* (appointed time or festival), the Feast of Pentecost or *Shavu'ot*. In other words, it is leading us from one very important Festival up to another. This same connection is made with *Sukkot* (The Feast of Tabernacles) and *Shemini Atzeret* (The Eighth Day) in the fall. Here the 'Eighth Day' is tacked on immediately following the conclusion of *Sukkot*. It is said that God intended *Shemini Atzeret* to also fall some fifty days later, but in His mercy decided not to require the children of Israel to have to make a pilgrimage during the cold and rainy winter season.

Why do we need to count the days? What could possibly be the significance of such an exercise? Our Father has His reasons. It is our duty to try and determine what those reasons might be and what spiritual lessons we might learn from the exercise given to us.

~ Still In Darkness ~

Jewish tradition teaches that the Exodus began during the early morning hours of *Aviv* or *Nisan 15* (while it was still dark), which tradition teaches was the fifth day of the week that year (a Thursday morning).

Before moving on to Mount Sinai, the children of Israel had to find a way across the Sea of Reeds. Most Jewish tradition places this event on the Last Day of Unleavened Bread, seven days after the Exodus. However, another view has it on the third day of the Exodus. Three days would have brought them to the first day of the week (a Sunday) for the crossing of the sea.

The crossing of the Reed Sea marks the completion of the redemption phase of the journey, because up until that point there was still a danger that Pharaoh might be able to force the children of Israel to return to slavery. Once the crossing of the sea took place, Pharaoh and his army (representing *HaSatan* and his demons) no longer had any hold over the redeemed

children of Israel. Thus, the Reed Sea crossing symbolized baptism and completed the redemption phase.

Now, the children of Israel had to journey on to Mount Sinai to receive God's instruction (*Torah*). This journey was intended to bring them to the fullness of their wedding with *YHVH*, for He had redeemed them from slavery under their evil adoptive father, the Pharaoh of Egypt, who had held them in bondage. The Mount Sinai experience brought them into the fullness of being God's people, by giving them the instruction (*Torah*) they needed to fulfill that role.

The symbolism of crossing the Reed Sea after three days of exposure to the darkness of Pharaoh's pursuit, corresponds with *Y'shua's* three days and nights in the heart of the earth before He fully conquered sin, thereby completing the redemption phase for our lives. The symbolism of baptism in the Reed Sea corresponds to our baptism. *Y'shua's* burial, and the Father's faithfulness in raising us up with Him makes it possible that we too might live a new life:

"In Him you were also circumcised with the circumcision made without hands, by putting off the body of the sins of the flesh, by the circumcision of Christ [*Messiah*], [you were] buried with Him in baptism, in which you also were raised with Him through faith in the working of God, who raised Him from the dead. And you, being dead in your trespasses and the uncircumcision of your flesh, He has made alive together with Him, having forgiven you all trespasses, having wiped out the handwriting of requirements that was against us, which was contrary to us. And He has taken it out of the way, having nailed it to the cross." (Col. 2:11-14)

"What shall we say then? Shall we continue in sin that grace may abound? Certainly not! How shall we who died to sin live any longer in it?

"Or do you not know that as many of us as were baptized into Christ Jesus [*Messiah Y'shua*] were baptized into His death? ... For if we have been united together in the likeness of His death, certainly we also shall be in the likeness of His resurrection, knowing this, that our old man was crucified with Him, that the body of sin might be done away with, that we should no longer be slaves of sin. ...

"Now if we died with Christ [*Messiah*], we believe that we shall also live with Him. ..." (Rom. 6:1-2, 5-6, 8)

~ On the Road To Sinai ~

Let us take the *Sifret HaOmer* journey which the children of Israel walked, by examining the events that were recorded as they made their trek from the Reed Sea to Sinai.

* Marah *

The first recorded stop in their '*Omer*' journey, after their passage through the Reed Sea, was at *Marah*:

"So Moses brought Israel from the Red Sea; then they went out into the Wilderness of Shur. And they went three days in the wilderness and found no water. Now when they came to Marah, they could not drink the waters of Marah,

for they were bitter. Therefore the name of it was called Marah.

"And the people murmured against Moses, saying, 'What shall we drink?'

"So he cried out to the LORD [*YHVH*], and the LORD [*YHVH*] showed him a tree; and when he cast it into the waters, the waters were made sweet. There He made a statute and an ordinance for them. And there He tested them, and said, 'If you diligently heed the voice of the LORD [*YHVH*] your God and do what is right in His sight, give ear to His commandments and keep all His statutes, I will put none of these diseases on you which I have brought on the Egyptians. For I am the LORD [*YHVH*] who heals you.'" (Ex. 15:22-26)

If indeed the children of Israel crossed the Reed Sea on the first day of the week, and their journey to *Marah* took another three days, they would have arrived there on 21 *Aviv*, the Last Day of Unleavened Bread. However, Jewish tradition teaches that the children of Israel spent many days by the shore of the Reed Sea after their crossing, because of the spiritual high which they were experiencing from that event. But the decision to move did not rest upon the children of Israel, it was determined by God who led them with the pillar of cloud by day and the pillar of fire by night.

The Wilderness of Shur is said to mean 'envision,' so it is thought that they followed the 'pillar of cloud' because they wanted to 'envision' another encounter such as they had experienced at the Reed Sea. However, things were to be different now. Instead of experiencing another great event they ran out of water, one of several trials the children of Israel were to go through during their journey to Sinai. When they did arrive at *Marah* the water there turned out to be bitter and undrinkable. They complained to *Moshe*, who intervened on their behalf with *God*, and the water was made sweet:

- ◆ Lesson number one: Once we have been redeemed (bought with a price by the blood of the Lamb), and have passed through the waters of baptism, trials will be forthcoming. However, our Father in heaven can turn bitter trials into great blessings if we will only go to Him through our Mediator, *Y'shua HaMashiach*, and ask for help. For we are told to:

"...count it all joy when you fall into various trials, knowing that the testing of your faith produces patience. But let patience have its perfect work, that you may be perfect and complete, lacking nothing." (James 1:2-4)

* Elim *

Following this trial, *God (YHVH)* granted the children of Israel a brief time of peacefulness and plenty:

"Then they came to Elim, where there were twelve wells of water and seventy palm trees; so they camped there by the waters." (Ex. 15:27)

According to tradition, there were twelve wells or springs so that each tribe could have one to itself. Also there were

seventy palm trees so that each of the seventy elders could sit in shade while performing their judgment duties.

** The Wilderness of Sin **

The next event occurred on the fifteenth day of the month of *Iyar*, the second month of the sacred calendar. The children of Israel were now one full month removed from the beginning of the Exodus. It was on this day that they entered the Wilderness of Sin (in Hebrew the word is pronounced 'zeen'). Once again problems arose. The food which the children of Israel brought with them from Egypt had run out. They were tired and hungry and complaining came easy:

"And the children of Israel said to them, 'Oh, that we had died by the hand of the LORD [YHVH] in the land of Egypt, when we sat by the pots of meat and when we ate bread to the full! For you have brought us out into this wilderness to kill this whole assembly with hunger.'"

(Ex. 16:3)

As a result of their complaining, God determined to give them food in a manner that would provide a daily test for them:

"Then the LORD [YHVH] said to Moses, 'Behold, I will rain bread from heaven for you. And the people shall go out and gather a certain quota every day, that I may test them, whether they will walk in My law or not. And it shall be on the sixth day that they shall prepare what they bring in, and it shall be twice as much as they gather daily.'"

"Then Moses and Aaron said to all the children of Israel, 'At evening you shall know that the LORD [YHVH] has brought you out of the land of Egypt. And in the morning you shall see the glory of the LORD [YHVH]; for He hears your murmurings against the LORD [YHVH]. But what *are* we, that you murmur against us? ... Your murmurings *are not* against us but against the LORD [YHVH].'"

(Ex. 16:4-8)

- ◆ Lesson number two: God tests His children to see if they will walk in His way on a daily basis. The purpose of these trials are:

"...that the genuineness of your faith, *being* much more precious than gold that perishes, though it is tested by fire, may be found to praise, honor, and glory at the revelation of Jesus Christ [*Y'shua Ha Mashiach*] ..."

(1 Pet. 1:7)

Although the manna was sufficient to provide all of the nutritional needs for the children of Israel, because they complained about not being able to eat from the 'flesh pots' of Egypt, God decided to also give them meat to eat in the form of quail:

"And the LORD [YHVH] spoke to Moses saying, 'I have heard the murmurings of the children of Israel. Speak to them, saying, "At twilight you shall eat meat, and in the morning you shall be filled with bread. And you shall know that I *am* the LORD [YHVH] your God.'"

"So it was that quails came up at evening and covered the camp, and in the morning the dew lay all around the

camp. And when the layer of dew lifted, there, on the surface of the wilderness, was a small round substance, *as* fine as frost on the ground.

"So when the children of Israel *saw it*, they said to one another, 'What is it?' For they did not know what it *was*. And Moses said to them 'This *is* the bread which the LORD [YHVH] has given you to eat. This is the thing which the LORD [YHVH] has commanded: "Let every man gather it according to each one's need, one omer for each person, *according to the number of persons*; let every man take for those who *are* in his tent.'"

(Ex. 16:11-16)

The amount of manna which the children of Israel were to gather was one *omer* for each person. Likewise on the sixth day of the week they were to gather two *omers* for each person. Also, no matter how much each person gathered, they all ended up with one *omer* apiece.

Then came what seemed to be an unusual test:

"And Moses said, 'Let no one leave any of it till morning.'"

(Ex. 16:19)

Of course that did not seem logical. After all, they had already experienced hunger on this trip, who was to say it would not happen again? So instead of obeying the direct command of God, some decided to put aside a portion for the next day:

"Notwithstanding they did not heed Moses. But some of them left part of it until morning, and it bred worms and stank. And Moses was very angry with them." (Ex. 16:20)

Of course the story of the manna does not end here. On the sixth day of the week the people were commanded to gather two *omers* of manna so they would not need to go out to gather on the Sabbath:

"And so it was, on the sixth day, *that* they gathered twice as much bread, two omers for each one. And all the rulers of the congregation came and told Moses.

"Then he said to them, 'This is *what* the LORD [YHVH] has said; "Tomorrow *is* a Sabbath rest, a holy Sabbath to the LORD [YHVH]. Bake what you will bake *today*, and boil what you will boil; and lay up for yourselves all that remains, to be kept until morning.'"

"So they laid it up till morning, as Moses commanded; and it did not stink, nor were there any worms in it.

"Then Moses said, 'Eat that today, for today *is* a Sabbath to the LORD [YHVH]; today you will not find it in the field. Six days you shall gather it, but on the seventh day, *which is* the Sabbath, there will be none.'

"Now it happened *that some* of the people went out on the seventh day to gather, but they found none. And the LORD [YHVH] said to Moses, 'How long do you refuse to keep My commandments and My laws? See! For the LORD [YHVH] has given you the Sabbath; therefore He gives you on the sixth day bread for two days. Let every man remain in his place; let no man go out of his place on the seventh day.'

"So the people rested on the seventh day."

(Ex. 16:22-30)

- ◆ Lesson number three: Trust and obey the instructions of God (*YHVH*). Living according to God's instruction book (the *Torah*) requires faith:

"But without faith it is impossible to please Him, for he who comes to God must believe that He is, and that He is a rewarder of those who diligently seek Him." (Heb. 11:6)

Without faith we could become frightened by the consequences of certain prescribed practices. Some of His instructions do seem a little peculiar to those of us who have been raised in the modern world. For this reason many of us try to rationalize our way out of observing them, because they might make us seem strange to our relatives and neighbors.

"But you are a chosen generation, a royal priesthood, a holy nation, His own special (*KJV = peculiar*) people, that you may proclaim the praises of Him who called you out of darkness into His marvelous light; who once were not a people but are now the people of God, who had not obtained mercy but now have obtained mercy."

(I Pet. 2:9-10)

Keeping the Sabbath is often times one of these 'frightening' instructions:

**"If you turn away your foot from the Sabbath,
From doing your pleasure on My Holy day,
And call the Sabbath a delight,
The holy day of the LORD [*YHVH*] honorable,
And shall honor Him, not doing your own ways,
Nor finding your own pleasure,
Nor speaking your own words,
Then you shall delight yourself in the LORD [*YHVH*];
And I will cause you to ride on the high hills of
the earth,
And feed you with the heritage of Jacob your father.
The mouth of the LORD [*YHVH*] has spoken."**

(Isa. 58:13-14)

** Rephidim **

The next trial on the journey to Mount Sinai is an old one revisited:

"Then all the congregation of the children of Israel set out on their journey from the Wilderness of Sin, according to the commandment of the LORD [*YHVH*], and camped in Rephidim; but there was no water for the people to drink. Therefore the people contended with Moses. ..."

(Ex. 17:1-2a)

Once again, *Moshe* had to go to God for instruction on how to provide for the needs of the people. In this case, *Moshe* was called upon to strike a rock, out of which flowed the water that was so necessary for life.

- ◆ Lesson number four: We need to have daily contact with our Father in heaven. We must continually drink

of the 'living water' in order to live a *Torah* centered lifestyle amidst a world of sin.

"Jesus [*Y'shua*] answered and said to her, 'If you knew the gift of God, and who it is who says to you, 'Give Me a drink,' you would have asked Him and He would have given you living water.'"

(John 4:10)

"...For they drank of that spiritual Rock that followed them, and that Rock was Christ [*Messiah*]."

(I Cor. 10:4)

** War **

The next trial of the children of Israel was an all out war against them by the people of Amalek. We must remember that the children of Israel had been slaves in Egypt for at least eighty years, if not longer. They did not have fighting skills, and without the help of God they would have been at the complete mercy of Amalek and his troops:

"Now Amalek came and fought with Israel in Rephidim. And Moses said to Joshua, 'Choose us some men and go out, fight with Amalek. Tomorrow I will stand on the top of the hill with the rod of God in my hand.'"

(Ex. 17:8-9)

As long as *Moshe* was able to hold the 'rod of God' with his hands raised to heaven, the men of Israel prevailed. However, when his arms became tired and he had to rest them, the army of Amalek prevailed. Therefore, *Moshe*, called on Aaron and Hur to help him by supporting his hands so that Israel could win the battle:

"So Joshua defeated Amalek and his people with the edge of the sword."

(Ex. 17:13)

- ◆ Lesson number five: We need God's help to win our spiritual battles. At those times we need to humble ourselves by asking our brothers and sisters to lift us up in prayer, that we might prevail over the attacks of the enemy.

** Jethro's Visit **

The last recorded event in the journey of the children of Israel from Egypt to Mount Sinai was the visit of *Moshe's* father-in-law, Jethro. *Moshe* had acquired the burden of being the sole judge for all of the children of Israel, some 600,000 men, plus women and children. This proved to be a problem for both *Moshe*, who had to listen to every dispute and make a judgment, and for the children of Israel, who had to wait long periods of time to have their cases heard. Jethro provided the perspective needed to solve this problem by suggesting that *Moshe* appoint lower level judges to hear the less difficult cases, leaving only the most difficult for himself:

"So Moses' father-in-law said to him, 'The thing that you do is not good. Both you and these people who are with you will surely wear yourselves out. For this thing is too much for you; you are not able to perform it by yourself."

"Listen now to my voice; I will give you counsel, and God will be with you: Stand before God for the people, so that you may bring the difficulties to God. And you shall teach them the statutes and the laws, and show them the way in which they must walk and the work they must do. Moreover you shall select from all the people able men, such as fear God, men of truth, hating covetousness; and place *such* over them *to be* rulers of thousands, rulers of hundreds, rulers of fifties, and rulers of tens. And let them judge the people at all times. Then it will be *that* every great matter they shall bring to you, but every small matter they themselves shall judge. So it will be easier for you, for they will bear *the burden* with you.

"If you do this thing, and God *so* commands you, then you will be able to endure, and all this people will also go to their place in peace.'

"So Moses heeded the voice of his father-in-law and did all that he had said." (Ex. 18:17-24)

- ◆ Lesson number six: Do not try to be Super Man or Wonder Woman. We are only human, and we need to learn to bring other good people into the service of God. The mark of a good leader is that the work over which he has been given charge will continue to function in the proper manner and direction once he is gone.

~ Mount Sinai At Last ~

Although it took less than fifty days, it has nevertheless been a long and eventful road from the Reed Sea to Mount Sinai. Now final preparations had to be made before the wedding ceremony and the reading of the *Ketuvah* (giving of the law) could take place.

"Then Moses went down from the mountain to the people and sanctified the people, and they washed their clothes. And he said to the people, 'Be ready for the third day; do not come near *your* wives.'" (Ex. 19:14-15)

The people were to be 'sanctified' (that is 'set apart') by two methods; the washing of their clothes and refraining from sexual relations with their wives. In Jewish understanding the command to 'wash their clothes' also implies bathing and then immersion in a *mikvah* (mEEK-vah = immersion pool). (You do not put clean clothes on a dirty body.) The bottom line for both of these instructions was that the people had to become ritually clean so that they could be allowed to come before their Husband, God. It is interesting to note that a Jewish bride always immerses in a *mikvah* the night before her wedding.

- ◆ Lesson number seven: In order for us to come before the very throne of our Father in heaven, we too must be ritually clean. While immersion in the *mikvah* symbolizes this cleanliness, true spiritual cleanliness comes only through the cleansing blood of the Lamb, *Y'shua*.

"But if we walk in the light as He is in the light, we have fellowship with one another, and the blood of

Jesus Christ [*Y'shua HaMashiach*] His Son cleanses us from all sin." (I John 1:7)

~ The Big Day ~

Sifret HaOmer is now complete. The children of Israel have arrived at the fiftieth day from the day on which the *Omer* Wave Offering was to be made. It must be remembered that in the year of the Exodus there was no actual *Omer* Wave Offering. That instruction had not yet been given, nor could it be observed until they became permanent residents of the land, for they did not raise crops during their forty years in the wilderness. Nevertheless, their journey was a 'type' of the future *Sifret HaOmer* (Counting of the Omer). The children of Israel did indeed act out (for our instruction) the difficult fifty day journey from their baptism in the Reed Sea to their full acceptance of the *Torah* at Mount Sinai. Just as we do not know when our Husband, Messiah *Y'shua*, will come for us, they did not know exactly how long they would have to journey before their marriage was consummated through the giving of the *Torah*.

This fiftieth day was also symbolic in another way, for the *Torah* laid down the rules they were to observe concerning the land Sabbaths and the Jubilee year once they had entered into the land:

"And the LORD [*YHVH*] spoke to Moses on Mount Sinai, saying, 'Speak to the children of Israel, and say to them: "When you come into the land which I give you, then the land shall keep a sabbath to the LORD [*YHVH*]. Six years you shall sow your field, and six years you shall prune your vineyard, and gather in its fruit; but in the seventh year there shall be a sabbath of solemn rest for the land, a sabbath to the LORD [*YHVH*]. You shall neither sow your field nor prune your vineyard.'" (Lev. 25:2-4)

Just as the seventh day of the week was to be a Sabbath of rest for the people, so each seventh year was to be a Sabbath of rest for the land:

"And you shall count seven sabbaths of years for yourself, seven times seven years; and the time of the seven sabbaths of years shall be to you forty-nine years. Then you shall cause the trumpet of the Jubilee to sound on the tenth *day* of the seventh month; on the Day of Atonement you shall make the trumpet to sound throughout all your land. And you shall consecrate the fiftieth year, and proclaim liberty throughout *all* the land to all its inhabitants. It shall be a Jubilee for you; and each of you shall return to his possession, and each of you shall return to his family.'" (Lev. 25:8-10)

Just as each week begins with six working days and ends with a Sabbath of rest, so the land was to be farmed for six years, ending with a Sabbath year of rest. Then, just like the counting of the *Omer*, forty-nine years (days) were to be complete and the fiftieth year (day) was to be the Jubilee when everything was restored to its original state. Thus we can see that *Shavu'ot* also symbolizes God's plan to return us to our original state, without sin, just as Adam and Eve were without sin in the Garden of Eden prior to the fall. No wonder this was

the day on which our Saviour sent His Bride the engagement ring of the *Ruach HaKodesh* (The Holy Spirit):

"Now when the Day of Pentecost had fully come, they were all with one accord in one place. And suddenly there came a sound from heaven, as of a rushing mighty wind, and it filled the whole house where they were sitting. Then there appeared to them divided tongues, as of fire, and one sat upon each of them. And they were all filled with the Holy Spirit and began to speak with other tongues, as the Spirit gave them utterance." (Acts 2:1-4)

At that point the Bride had not only been redeemed from her sins, she had also been given liberty in law (*Torah*), plus the empowerment (Holy Spirit) to be able to follow the instructions found in that law. If any one of these three essential ingredients is missing in a person's life, the completion of the redemption process cannot take place for that individual. The beautiful part about it is that initially all we need to do is believe and say "Yes," just like the Bride at her wedding. So it is that the offerings of *Shavu'ot* picture the Bride of Messiah, those who are the called out ones.

It now becomes clear why the festival of *Shavu'ot* is the goal of the redemption process, for it completes that process thus bringing to an end the Spring Festivals. The 'firstfruit' offerings are now complete, and the long summer harvest season can begin.

~ Firstfruit Symbolism ~

The counting of the *Omer* begins and ends with special offerings that carry the designation 'firstfruits.' It must be understood that in the *Brit Chadasha* (Breet Hah-dah-shah' = New (or Renewed) Covenant or Testament), there are two applications of the word 'firstfruits' to human beings. *Shaul* (Paul), makes it clear that the designation of 'firstfruits' is primarily applied to *Y'shua* Himself:

"But now Christ [*Messiah*] is risen from the dead, and has become the firstfruits of those who have fallen asleep. For since by man *came* death, by Man also *came* the resurrection of the dead. For as in Adam all die, even so in Christ [*Messiah*] all shall be made alive. But each one in his own order: Christ [*Messiah*] the firstfruits, afterward those who are Christ's [*Messiah*'s] at His coming."

(I Cor. 15:20-23)

But there are others who are also called to be a type of 'firstfruits':

"Every good gift and every perfect gift is from above, and comes down from the Father of lights, with whom there is no variation or shadow of turning. Of His own will He brought us forth by the word of truth, that we might be a kind of firstfruits of His creatures." (James 1:17-18)

"Then I looked, and behold, a Lamb standing on Mount Zion, and with Him one hundred and forty-four thousand, having His Father's name written on their foreheads. ... These are the ones who were not defiled with women, for they are virgins. These are the ones who follow the Lamb wherever He goes. These were redeemed from

among men, being firstfruits to God and to the Lamb. And in their mouth was found no guile, for they are without fault before the throne of God." (Rev. 14:1,4-5)

Thus we see that certain human beings are going to be redeemed into a group that are referred to as 'firstfruits.' Since *Y'shua* was the first to be 'cut free from the earth' (resurrected), He becomes the 'first of the firstfruits.'

"For whom He foreknew, He also predestined to be conformed to the image of His Son, that He [*Y'shua*] might be the first born among many brethren." (Rom. 8:29)

Y'shua is indeed the first to be raised from the dead, but there will be many more to follow Him. Thus He is properly symbolized by the very first offering of the spring grain, in the ceremony known as the 'Wave Sheaf Offering' or, more properly, the *Omer Wave Offering*. Likewise, "...those who are Christ's at His coming." are properly symbolized by the leavened bread offerings at the festival of *Shavu'ot*. God's planning and symbolism is quite profound.

The dictionary defines 'firstfruits' as: "The first gathered fruits of a harvest, offered to God in gratitude." In the symbolism of the *Omer Wave Offering*, the barley must be offered before any other harvesting can take place. As already mentioned this offering represents the Messiah, who offered Himself as a sacrifice so that this initial harvest of souls can take place. Barley is the coarsest of grains, it was only used for bread baking by the poor common people. It is no accident that our Messiah, *Y'shua* took upon Himself the lowliness of human flesh, for thus He is represented by the barley grain of the *Omer Wave Offering*:

"Let this mind be in you which was also in Christ Jesus [*Messiah Y'shua*], who, being in the form of God, did not consider it robbery to be equal with God, but made Himself of no reputation, taking the form of a servant, and coming in the likeness of men. And being found in appearance as a man, He humbled Himself and became obedient to the point of death, even the death of the cross." (Phil. 2:5-8)

"But we see Jesus [*Y'shua*], who was made a little lower than the angels, for the suffering of death crowned with glory and honor, that He, by the grace of God, might taste death for everyone. ...

"Inasmuch then as the children have partaken of flesh and blood, He Himself likewise shared in the same, that through death He might destroy him who had the power of death, that is, the devil, and release those who through fear of death were all their lifetime subject to bondage. ...

"Therefore, in all things He had to be made like *His brethren*, that He might be a merciful and faithful High Priest in things *pertaining* to God, to make propitiation for the sins of the people. For in that He Himself has suffered, being tempted, He is able to aid those who are tempted."

(Heb. 2:9, 14-15, 17-18)

Not only does the barley grain itself provide a beautiful symbol for *Y'shua*; the cutting of the sheaf of barley, the processing of the grain, and the waving of the *Omer* all provide us with a fitting review of the things which He experienced.

For example, the

barley grain was

cut free from the

earth just as *Y'shua* was

resurrected back to life from the emptiness of death. Just as the Priests had to prepare the barley grain for the *Omer* Wave Offering, so *Y'shua* had been prepared throughout His life for the sacrificial role He was to play. They threshed the grain (*Y'shua* was thrashed by the Romans), they parched the grain (*Y'shua* went through the fiery trial of death), they sieved the grain through thirteen sieves (*Y'shua* was sieved by constant testing throughout His entire lifetime). In other words, *Y'shua* was fully prepared to represent the finest human 'barley flour' possible. He was fully prepared to be the *Omer* Wave Offering for the early harvest of the 'firstfruit' souls, just as the barley grain was fully prepared to be the *Omer* Wave Offering for the early grain harvest.

Finally there was the actual ceremony of the *Omer* Wave Offering which was held in the Temple itself. This was accomplished during the morning sacrifice ceremony on the first day of the week during the festival of Passover. As the group of women made their way to the tomb early Sunday morning, the priests in the Temple were offering their *omer* of barley grain in the traditional *Omer* Wave Offering ceremony. At that very same time, *Y'shua* was being presented before His Father in heaven as our *Omer* Wave Offering. We can rejoice in the fact that he was accepted by the Father, after which He returned to spend the next forty days with His disciples here on earth.

It was the prior evening, at the very beginning of the first day of the week, "... while it was still dark ..." (John 20:1), that Mary Magdalene met *Y'shua* in the garden:

"Jesus [*Y'shua*] said to her, 'Do not cling to Me, for I have not yet ascended to My Father; but go to My brethren and say to them, "I am ascending to My Father and your Father, and to My God and your God."'" (John 20:17)

It was the next morning that He was accepted by His Father as our totally acceptable *Omer* Wave Offering:

"But Christ [*Messiah*] came as High Priest of the good things to come, with the greater and more perfect tabernacle not made with hands, that is, not of this creation. Not with the blood of goats and calves, but with His own blood He entered the Most Holy Place once for all, having obtained eternal redemption." (Heb. 9:11-12)

The spiritual Counting of the *Omer* could now begin. Its culmination came fifty days later when *Y'shua* sent His Bride a most precious betrothal present, the *Ruach HaKodesh* (The Holy Spirit).

~ Sifret HaOmer With *Y'shua* ~

The forty days that *Y'shua* spent with His disciples, from the time of His resurrection until He was taken up into heaven, were the first forty days of *Sifret HaOmer* (Counting of the *Omer*). Therefore, we need to examine what took place during those days to see if there are any clues to help us better understand them.

The information given in the Gospel accounts concerning those particular days is sketchy at best. Matthew and Mark tell us practically nothing except for the fact that *Y'shua* did indeed appear to His disciples on a number of occasions. In general, both accounts tell us that at first the disciples did not believe

the reports of *Y'shua's* resurrection until

they actually saw Him with their own eyes. For this lack of faith they were rebuked:

"Afterward He appeared to the eleven as they sat at the table; and He rebuked their unbelief and hardness of heart, because they did not believe those who had seen Him after He had risen." (Mark 16:14)

Faith is a gift. It is not something that a person can 'work up.' Either a person has it or he does not. However, if we lack faith, we can go to our Father in heaven and ask for it:

"For I say, through the grace given to me, to everyone who is among you, not to think of himself more highly than he ought to think, but to think soberly, as God has dealt to each one a measure of faith." (Rom. 12:3)

Luke gives a little more information by including the story about *Y'shua* meeting the two men on the road to Emmaus. The core of this teaching was about the many passages in the *Torah* and the Prophets that alluded to the first coming of the Messiah:

"And beginning at Moses and all the Prophets, He expounded to them in all the Scriptures the things concerning Himself." (Luke 24:27)

John brings in an additional account about *Y'shua's* appearance to the seven disciples at the Sea of Tiberias (Sea of Galilee). The disciples had gone fishing at night and had not caught even one fish. In the morning, as they drew near shore, they saw *Y'shua* standing there, but they were too far out to see that it was He:

"Then Jesus [*Y'shua*] said to them, 'Children, have you any food?' They answered Him, 'No.'

"And He said to them, 'Cast the net on the right side of the boat, and you will find some.' So they cast, and now

they were not able to draw it in because of the multitude of fish. ...

"Simon Peter went up and dragged the net to land, full of large fish, one hundred and fifty-three; and although there were so many, the net was not broken."

(John 21:5-6,11)

What is significant about the number 153 that it should be included in this story? E.W. Bullinger in his book *Number in Scripture*, tells us that the number 153 is a gamatria (the numerical equivalent of Hebrew words) of the phrase "sons of God" (in Hebrew; *bonei haElohim*). Bullinger equates the phrase with 'redemption.' According to Yacov Rambsel, author of *Y'shua, the Hebrew Factor*, the Hebrew phrase *ha Pesach* (the Passover) also has a gamatria of 153. Of course, Passover is the festival of redemption.

It was after their breakfast of fish that *Y'shua* inquired of Simon Peter about the extent of his love for the Messiah:

"So when they had eaten breakfast, Jesus [*Y'shua*] said to Simon Peter, 'Simon, son of Jonah, do you love (*agape*) Me more than these?' He said to Him, 'Yes, Lord: you know I love (*phileo*) You.' He said to him, 'Feed My lambs.'

"He said to him again a second time, 'Simon, son of Jonah, do you love [*agape*] Me?' He said to Him, 'Yes, Lord: You know that I love [*phileo*] You.' He said to him, 'Tend My sheep.'

"He said to him a third time, 'Simon, son of Jonah, do you love [*phileo*] Me? Peter was grieved because He said to him a third time, 'Do you love [*phileo*] Me?' And he said to Him, 'Lord, You know all things; You know that I love [*phileo*] You.' Jesus [*Y'shua*] said to him, 'Feed My sheep.'"

(John 21:15-17)

This passage cannot be understood unless one knows about the two different Greek words used in the New Testament that are both translated into our English word 'love.' *Agape* refers to the highest level of love, the kind of love that *Y'shua* and the Father have for us. *Phileo* is the word used to describe a typically human love between brethren, that of 'brotherly love.' At this point in Peter's *Sifret HaOmer* journey to the Day of Pentecost (when he would be imbued with the Holy Spirit), he did not yet have the fullness of God given *Agape* love.

Then *Y'shua* made another point to Simon Peter by letting him know that the fate of each of us lays in the hands of the Father and *Y'shua*. It is not up to us to decide whether we live long and prosperous lives, or die a martyr's death:

"Most assuredly, I say to you, when you were younger, you girded yourself and walked where you wished; but when you are old, you will stretch out your hands, and another will gird you and carry you where you do not wish.'

"This He spoke, signifying by what death he would glorify God. And when He had spoken this, He said to him, 'Follow Me.' ...

"Peter, seeing him (*the apostle John*), said to Jesus [*Y'shua*], 'But Lord, what about this man?'

"Jesus [*Y'shua*] said to him, 'If I will that he remain till I come, what is that to you?'"

(John 21:18-19,21-22)

One of the major lessons both the children of Israel and Believers in *Y'shua* must learn, is that we have no choice but to place ourselves into the care of our Messiah and our Father in heaven. They control our destiny if we will but let them rule our lives.

At the end of the forty days, *Y'shua* gave His disciples their final instructions:

"The former account I made, O Theophilus, of all that Jesus [*Y'shua*] began both to do and teach, until the day in which He was taken up, after He through the Holy Spirit had given commandments to the apostles whom He had chosen, to whom He also presented Himself alive after His suffering by many infallible proofs, being seen by them during forty days and speaking of the things pertaining to the kingdom of God."

(Acts 1:1-3)

One of those last instructions included the 'Great Commission':

"And He said to them, 'Go into all the world and preach the gospel to every creature. He who believes and is baptized will be saved; but he who does not believe will be condemned. And these signs will follow those who believe: In My name they will cast out demons; they will speak with new tongues; they will take up serpents; and if they drink anything deadly, it will by no means hurt them; they will lay hands on the sick, and they will recover.'

"So then, after the Lord had spoken to them, He was received up into heaven, and sat down at the right hand of God."

(Mark 16:15-19)

Luke fills in the rest of the story at this point in the Book of Acts:

"And being assembled together with them, He commanded them not to depart from Jerusalem, but to wait for the Promise of the Father, 'which,' He Said, 'you have heard from Me; for John truly baptized with water, but you shall be baptized with the Holy Spirit not many days from now.'"

(Acts 1:4-5)

Given that it was only ten more days until *Shavu'ot*, it is very probable that the disciples expected the baptism *Y'shua* spoke about to take place on that soon coming festival. However, just like most modern Believers, the disciples were more interested in prophecy than in the power of the *Ruach HaKodesh* (The Holy Spirit):

"Therefore, when they had come together, they asked Him, saying, 'Lord will you at this time restore the kingdom to Israel?'

"And He said to them, 'It is not for you to know times or seasons which the Father has put in His own authority. But you shall receive power when the Holy Spirit has come upon you; and you shall be witnesses to Me in Jerusalem, and in all Judea and Samaria, and to the end of the earth.'"

(Acts 1:6-8)

Y'shua skillfully directed their attention away from the current political situation and the timelines for future events, back to what was really important, the receiving of the *Ruach HaKodesh*. We can all take a valuable lesson from *Y'shua's*

final words. It is not for us, the Bride of Messiah, to know exactly when He will return for us. But rather, while we wait, we need to occupy our time with both learning and doing the will of our Father in heaven. Perhaps this is the ultimate lesson in the entire experience of *Sifret HaOmer*.

~ Omer Counting for Believers ~

It is all well and good to understand intellectually the meanings behind the symbolism surrounding the *Omer* Wave Offering. However, as physical human beings we often need certain forms or rituals to help us not only grasp, but to hold on to the truths that we have learned. It would be easy to enjoy the understanding of the Counting of the *Omer*, as you read this or other articles, and then totally forget it when the actual days of the *Omer* are occurring. As a modern bride awaits her wedding day, she counts the days. Each day is filled with some activity that points her towards the big day which is her primary focus. The same should be true with the days of the *Omer*, for the final goal of the spring festival season is the wedding on *Shavu'ot*. As each day proceeds, we should focus towards that goal, preparing ourselves during the forty-nine day journey that culminates in our acceptance of the *Torah* instruction, and the receiving of our engagement present, the Holy Spirit. It is both an annual review of past events, and a rehearsal of the very fullness which is yet to come.

The traditional Jewish practice during these days is to count each day in the evening, as it begins. A blessing may be said as part of the counting ceremony. It might go something like this: "Blessed art Thou, O Lord our God, King of the universe, who has given us Your commandments and commanded us concerning the counting of the *omer*." It is customary to count both the days and the weeks. For example, on the fifteenth day one would say: "Today is the fifteenth day of the *Omer* count. That is, two weeks and one day."

For those who wish to delve deeper into the spiritual meaning of these days, there is another ancient Jewish tradition which teaches that during this period of time one should meditate on what are known as 'The Seven Holy Attributes.' These seven attributes are:

- ◆ *Chesed* (Heh-sehd') Loving Kindness.
- ◆ *Gevurah* (Geh-voo-rah') Vigor/Discipline.
- ◆ *Tiferet* (Tee-fehr-eh't') Beauty/Compassion.
- ◆ *Netzach* (Neh-tzahk') Victory/Endurance.
- ◆ *Hod* (Hohd) Splendor/Glory.
- ◆ *Yesod* (Yeh-sohd') Bonding/Foundation.
- ◆ *Malchut* (Mahl-khoot') Majesty/Nobility.

Since there are seven weeks and seven days in each week, there is one predominant attribute for each week, which is then combined with each of the seven during the individual days of that week. For example, the first week would primarily focus on various aspects of *Chesed* or Loving Kindness. Here is how it would work:

- ◆ The first day meditate totally on *Chesed* -- how to become truly Loving and completely Kind.

- ◆ The second day combine *Chesed* with *Gevurah* -- Vigor and Discipline with Loving Kindness. This could be a day to think on what has come to be known as 'tough love.'
- ◆ The third day focus on *Chesed* with *Tiferet* -- the Beauty and Compassion of Loving Kindness.
- ◆ The fourth day, *Chesed* with *Netzach* -- becoming Victorious through Loving Kindness.
- ◆ The fifth day, *Chesed* with *Hod* -- the Splendor that is found in Loving Kindness.
- ◆ The sixth day, *Chesed* with *Yesod* -- the personal Bonding that will be forthcoming by living a life of Loving Kindness.
- ◆ On the seventh day, *Chesed* with *Malchut*. Since this is the Sabbath day it is fitting that the focus of this day would include Majesty and Nobility. (In Jewish thought the Sabbath is likened to a Queen.) Therefore, since our Husband and Messiah is coming back as King of kings, our focus on the Sabbath of the first week would be the Majesty of Loving Kindness.

During the second week the primary focus is on *Gevurah* -- Vigor and Discipline. Again, each of the other attributes are combined with *Gevurah* as the subject for meditation each day of the week.

- ◆ The eighth day (first day of the second week) the focus would be the *Chesed* of *Gevurah* -- Vigor and Discipline tempered by Loving Kindness.
- ◆ The ninth day (*Gevurah* of *Gevurah*) focuses totally on Vigor and Discipline.
- ◆ The tenth day, *Tiferet* of *Gevurah* -- the Beauty and Compassion found in Vigor and Discipline.
- ◆ The eleventh day is *Netzach* of *Gevurah* -- Victory through Discipline.
- ◆ The twelfth day the *Hod* of *Gevurah* -- Splendor found in Discipline.
- ◆ The thirteenth day focuses on *Yesod* of *Gevurah*, -- Bonding that comes through shared Vigor and Discipline.
- ◆ The fourteenth day is *Malchut* of *Gevurah* again a Sabbath. This day brings us to focus on Majesty and Nobility coupled with Vigor and Discipline as exemplified by our Husband and King, *Y'shua HaMashiach*.

The overall focus of the third week is *Tiferet*, Beauty and Compassion. Again, all seven attributes are combined with Beauty, one on each day of the week.

The fourth week finds *Netzach* or Victory and Endurance to be the key. Combining each of the other attributes with Victory helps us to understand how we can become victorious Believers in *Y'shua*.

The fifth week is the week of *Hod* or Splendor and Glory. Now the Glory of *God* and of *Y'shua* are the center of our

attention as the attributes are combined on each one of the seven days.

The sixth week centers around *Yesod* -- Bonding and Foundation, how we can create a firm Foundation by Bonding with each other and with our Father in heaven and with His Son, *Y'shua*.

The seventh week is taken up with the attribute of *Malchut* or Majesty and Nobility. *Y'shua* is King of kings and Lord of lords. He is our Husband, Saviour, Elder Brother, High Priest and Mediator. Reflecting on how each attribute is displayed in His life, will help bring us to completion of our forty-nine day journey to *Shavu'ot*.

A spiritual exercise of this nature is like climbing a ladder. As we move up each step on the ladder we move closer to our Father in heaven. When we reach the top rung of the ladder (step number forty-nine) we are then prepared to move into the Day of Pentecost, a picture of the great year of Jubilee. Because we have taken the time, and made the effort to move closer to God, it is believed that He will come down to meet us, on that great day of *Shavu'ot* just as He did when He gave the *Torah* to the children of Israel, and the *Ruach HaKodesh* (The Holy Spirit) to the Believing community:

"Then it came to pass on the third day, in the morning, that there were thunderings and lightnings, and a thick cloud on the mountain; and the sound of the trumpet was very loud, so that all the people who were in the camp trembled. And Moses brought the people out of the camp to meet with God, and they stood at the foot of the mountain. ... Then the LORD [YHVH] came down upon Mount Sinai, on the top of the mountain. ..."

(Ex. 19:16-17,20)

~ In Summary ~

In the past, many Believers have paid little or no attention to the forty-nine days that lead us from the crossing of the Reed Sea to the experience of receiving God's instruction and gift of the Holy Spirit. It is our hope that this article will stir the hearts of all of our readers to make the most of these extremely important days. They are days during which we should focus on moving from the slavery of our former lives, to the experience of liberty in law, through the power of the Holy Spirit. For both the giving of the *Torah* and the giving of the Holy Spirit are indeed, gifts of freedom and revelation for those who experience them. Our experience should be just as profound, but it cannot be so unless we take the time to prepare and move towards that goal.

However, there are pitfalls. Forty-nine days can be a long time. Just as the children of Israel were constantly distracted by their physical problems (thirst, hunger, war, etc.) so the Adversary will try to distract us from focusing on moving forward spiritually during this period of time. Perhaps it would be helpful to take forty-nine 3 X 5 cards and write one of the forty-nine combinations of attributes on each card, and number a card for each of the forty-nine days. Then each day we can carry that card with us and, when time permits, look at it to remind us what should be the focus of that day. Notes concerning the insights we gain throughout the day can be written on the back.

Sure, it's a crutch, it's a physical thing, like writing the law on our doorposts or tying *tzit-tzit* on the corners of our garments, but it sure can help us to stay focused. There is nothing wrong with using physical reminders of what our spiritual obligations should be, as long as we do not begin to worship the object instead of our Creator.

The Significance of Shavu'ot

The creation has two aspects: the static and the dynamic, the old and the new, natural laws and the world of renewal. Each thing that was created deteriorates and disintegrates. Nothing is permanent and everlasting; rather, everything is impermanent. The way things are is incomplete; wholeness and completeness are in renewal. Renewal comes from God Who is forever new. He does not change in any way, nor does He age or get old in any aspect of His being. Any instant that you encounter Him, He is totally fresh and new. Although you had already met Him yesterday and He is not a different one today, He is nevertheless not the same old God, but rather He is fresh and new. And the *Torah*, which is the revelation of God's name, is a means to connect to His renewal. Therefore we bring the *Bikurim*, "the first fruit." It teaches that just as a physical tree renews itself by producing new fruit each year, similarly, the Tree of Life, the *Torah*, renews those who cleave to it.

~ ~ ~

The word *Shavu'ot* also means to swear an oath. But the word *Shavu'ot* is plural and means two oaths. So who swears to whom? The Jewish people swore to God what they declared, "Whatsoever God has spoken we will do and listen" (Exodus 24:8). And God swore to the Jewish people too that He will eternally be their God. Just as God's oath is eternal, so is the oath of the Jewish people to keep the *Torah* eternally inscribed on their hearts.

From: *The Jewish Holy Days*

By: Moshe A. Braun

Another possible method to keep our spiritual focus during these days, is to review each of the stops made by the children of Israel during their journey from the Sea of Reeds to Mt. Sinai. The seven 'lessons' that are given in this article might provide a starting point for your spiritual journey of *Sifret HaOmer*. This method could also be combined with the teachings which *Y'shua* gave to His disciples during those last important days He spent with them before He was taken up into heaven.

Whatever we do during these forty-nine days, the important thing is to remember that each day is special unto itself. Because it is special, it is important that we remember each day in some special way, so that when we arrive at *Shavu'ot* we have a sense of having completed a very important journey.

Shalom and happy counting!

~ ~ ~ ~ ~

~ *The Starting Point* ~

And you shall count for yourselves
From the day after the Sabbath,
From the day that you brought the sheaf of the wave offering:
Seven Sabbaths shall be completed.
Leviticus 23:15

The debate over the correct starting point for counting the *Omer*, and, as a result, the proper day to celebrate *Shavu'ot* (Pentecost) has been raging for over two millennia. Consider the following opinions that were extant at the time *Y'shua* walked the earth.

The Sadducean sect (composed primarily of Priests and Levites) believed that the *Omer* was to be waved on the day following the weekly Sabbath during the Days of Unleavened Bread. Thus, they would cut the barley grain at the end of the weekly Sabbath and offer the refined grain at the Temple on the morning of the first day of the week. With this method of counting, *Shavu'ot* always fell on the first day of the week (Sunday).

The sect of the Pharisees (made up primarily of synagogue Rabbis) believed that the *Omer* should be cut at the end of the First Day of Unleavened Bread, and offered on the morning of 16 *Aviv* or *Nisan*. This always placed *Shavu'ot* on 6 *Sivan*, no matter on which day of the week it fell.

These were the two major points of view during the time of *Y'shua*, and they continue to be to this day. There are years when these two days coincide. This occurs whenever 16 *Aviv* falls on the first day of the week.

However, there were other opinions, some of which tied Pentecost to the day on which it was believed the *Torah* was given. One opinion states that the Israelites left Egypt on Friday, 15 *Aviv*, and the *Torah* was given on Sabbath, 6 *Sivan*. Another opinion states that the Israelites left Egypt on

Thursday, 15 *Aviv*, and that the Law was given on Sabbath, 7 *Sivan*.

The Falashas (Ethiopian Jews) observe *Shavu'ot* on 12 *Sivan*, which is the fiftieth day after the conclusion of the Last Day of Unleavened Bread. In other words, they count from the day after the last Holyday (22 *Aviv*). Meanwhile, the apocryphal book of Jubilees (called a 'proto-Essene' writing by some scholars) uses a 13 month calendar of 28 days each. In that calculation *Shavu'ot* always fell on a Sunday.

There is one last opinion that is of obscure Christian origin, and was never used by any of the Jews. Like the Sadducees, this method counts from the first day of the week during the Days of Unleavened Bread, but does not include that day as day number one. Therefore, Monday becomes the first day of *Sifret HaOmer*. This places Pentecost always on a Monday, one day after the Sadducean *Shavu'ot*.

When one couples these possibilities with all of the various calendars that are being used, it is clear there are many different dates on which people celebrate *Shavu'ot*. Of course, we forgot to mention that in mainstream Christianity, the Day of Pentecost is set in relationship to when Easter is celebrated, and Easter is set by the vernal equinox, plus a hard and fast rule that it must never occur on the same day as the Jewish Passover.

As Abraham Lincoln once said; "In this great conflict it is not possible that both sides can be correct, but it is possible that both may be wrong." The same is true for the dating of Pentecost. Whatever day we, as individuals, decide upon, we all must understand that there is a chance we might be wrong. Anyone who does not understand this principle is in danger of setting themselves up as the authority on the matter, to whom all of the rest of us would then be expected to look.

~ A Scriptural Basis ~

Some say that we should always follow the rulings of the Pharisees because, as *Y'shua* said:

"The Scribes and Pharisees sit in Moses' seat. Therefore whatever they tell you to observe, that observe and do, but do not do according to their works; for they say and do not do." (Matt. 23:2-3)

Does this mean that we are to follow the Pharisees even if it means contradicting the Scriptures? No, for after giving this instruction, *Y'shua* then launched into His famous condemnation of the Pharisees -- for the poor example some of them set in certain areas of their lives. Obviously, we are not to emulate this type of behavior, for it goes against *Torah*. In fact, *Y'shua* gave us some additional instruction concerning this matter which is recorded for us in yet another passage:

"Then the scribes and Pharisees who were from Jerusalem came to Jesus [*Y'shua*], saying, 'Why do Your disciples transgress the tradition of the elders? For they do not wash their hands when they eat bread.'

"But He answered and said to them, 'Why do you also transgress the commandment of God because of your tradition? For God commanded, saying "Honor your father and your mother;" and, "He who curses father or mother, let him be put to death." But you say, "Whoever

says to his father or mother, 'Whatever profit you might have received from me has been dedicated to the Temple' -- is released from honoring his father or mother.'" **Thus you have made the commandment of God of no effect by your tradition.**" (Matt. 15:1-6)

In the first instance the Pharisees took a command that was given to the Priests, to ritually wash their hands, and applied it to the common people. This was a position of the dominant Pharisaic school, the School of Shammai. It was not the position of all of the Pharisees. In the second example, *Y'shua* showed how some of the Pharisees used the practice of dedicating an offering to the Temple as an excuse not to support their elderly parents.

What does all of this have to do with *Shavu'ot*? Quite a bit. It is clear that *Y'shua* did not intend for us to follow the teachings of a Pharisaic school if what they taught puts us in violation of Scripture.

~ Shabbat vs. Shavuah ~

The entire argument concerning when to offer the *Omer* Wave Offering centers around how one reads the word *Shabbat* in Leviticus 23:11, 15 and 16. The Sadducees said that it could only mean the weekly Sabbath, while the Pharisees said that in this passage it meant the first Holy day of Unleavened Bread. We believe the Sadducees were correct in their interpretation. Because of our conviction on this point, following the Pharisaic tradition would require us to break what we see as the clear Scriptural instruction of the passage in question.

This is precisely what *Y'shua* warned against when He spoke to the Pharisees about how they taught people to handle their dedicated Temple sacrifices. Certainly dedicating a portion of one's earnings in order to purchase a Temple sacrifice was, in itself, a good deed. But, if doing so caused a person to forsake the clear command of Scripture to honor one's parents, then it was clearly wrong.

Let us examine the verses in question:

"He shall wave the sheaf before the LORD [YHVH], to be accepted on your behalf; on the day after the Sabbath (*Shabbat* = Strong's #7676) the priest shall wave it. ...

"And you shall count for yourselves from the day after the Sabbath (*Shabbat*), from the day that you brought the sheaf of the wave offering: seven Sabbaths (*Shabbatot* = plural form) shall be completed. Count fifty days to the day after the seventh Sabbath (*Shabbat*); then you shall offer a new grain offering to the LORD [YHVH]."

(Lev. 23:11, 15-16)

The Pharisees claimed that the word '*Shabbat*' (Strong's #7676), as it is used in verse 11 and its first usage in verse 15, identifies the First Day of Unleavened Bread (15 *Aviv*). Then they turn around and claim the second usage of the word '*Shabbat*' in verse 15, and its use in verse 16, mean 'weeks' and 'week' respectively. In order to follow the Pharisaic teaching we would have to retranslate it into English as follows:

"He shall wave the sheaf before the LORD, to be accepted on your behalf; on the day after the Sabbath the priest shall wave it. ...

"And you shall count for yourselves from the day after the Sabbath, from the day that you brought the sheaf of the wave offering: seven weeks shall be completed. Count fifty days to the day after the seventh week; then you shall offer a new grain offering to the LORD."

In the opinion of this writer, that is a real stretch, especially since there is another perfectly good word for week in Hebrew. That word is *shavuah* (shaw-vooh-ah, Strong's #7620). The root of *shavuah* (week or weeks) is #7650, *shavah* (shah-vah), and it means; "to be complete," or "to swear." However, the word *Shabbat* comes from the root word *shavat* (#7673) which means; "to repose or desist from exertion." The two root words are related, however, they are different root words, with two quite different meanings, as any Hebrew lexicon will tell you.

As you can see, all four cases found in Leviticus 23, where the English word Sabbath is used, is derived from the Hebrew word *Shabbat*. Strong's defines this word very simply as: "the Sabbath."

Some may argue that a passage in Deut. 16 modifies this passage in Leviticus and teaches that we are to count seven weeks instead of seven Sabbaths.

"You shall count seven weeks (*shavu'ot* #7620, plural form) for yourself; begin to count the seven weeks (*shavu'ot*) from the time you begin to put the sickle to the grain. Then you shall keep the Feast of Weeks (*shavu'ot*) to the LORD [YHVH] your God ..." (Deut. 16:9-10a)

By starting on the first day of the week, and counting seven Sabbaths, one is automatically counting seven full weeks. So starting from the day after the weekly Sabbath, as did the Sadducees, does not require us to change the meaning of any Hebrew words. However (as shown earlier), starting from 16 *Aviv* does require that we change the meaning of *Shabbat* to that of *Shavu'ot*. Yes, *Shavu'ot* is the Feast of Weeks, that is the meaning of the word. But no matter how one twists it, the word *Shabbat* just does not mean 'weeks.'

~ Shabbaton ~

Another word, *Shabbaton* is also used in a few Scriptures. It is Strong's #7677 and is defined as: "a sabbatism or special holiday: -- rest, sabbath," in other words, a 'high day,' or Holyday.

The Hebrew word *Shabbat* is only used in Scripture to identify the weekly Sabbath, with two exceptions (found in Lev. 23:32 and Lev. 16:31), both of which refer to *Yom Kippur* (Day of Atonement). In both of these cases, when *Shabbat* is used in this context, it is qualified by the addition of the word '*Shabbaton*.'

Also, following are three cases, where our English Bibles use the word 'Sabbath' denoting a Holyday; but the Hebrew word, from which it is mistranslated, is in every case, *Shabbaton*:

"Speak to the children of Israel, saying: 'In the seventh month, on the first day of the month, you shall have a sabbath-rest (*Shabbaton*), a memorial of blowing of trumpets, a holy convocation.'" (Lev. 23:24)

"Also on the fifteenth day of the seventh month, when you have gathered in the fruit of the land, you shall keep the feast of the LORD [*YHVH*] for seven days; on the first day there shall be a sabbath-rest (*Shabbaton*), and on the eighth day a sabbath-rest (*Shabbaton*)." (Lev. 23:39)

(Note: The New King James Version quoted here, adds the word 'rest' to indicate that the Hebrew word from which they derived Sabbath is really '*Shabbaton*.)

In addition, *Shabbaton* is used seven times in conjunction with the word *Shabbat*, where it is usually translated as "sabbath of rest." In one instance *Shabbat Shabbaton* refers to the seventh year land rest (Lev. 25:4), while in four places it refers specifically to the weekly Sabbath. In the other two cases it refers to *Yom Kippur* (Day of Atonement):

"It shall be to you a sabbath (*Shabbat*) of solemn rest (*Shabbaton*), and you shall afflict your souls; on the ninth day of the month at evening, from evening to evening, you shall celebrate your sabbath (*Shabbat*)." (Lev. 23:32)

"It is a sabbath (*Shabbat*) of solemn rest (*Shabbaton*) for you, and you shall afflict your souls. It is a statute forever." (Lev. 16:31)

The reason the phrase *Shabbat Shabbaton* (Sabbath of rest) is used in relationship only to the weekly Sabbath and *Yom Kippur*, has to do with the fact that both are to be days of complete rest. Since *Yom Kippur* is a fast day, no food was to be prepared on that day even though it was specifically allowed on the other Holydays. This separates it from all of the other six Holydays. Giving instruction concerning the two Holydays during the Days of Unleavened Bread, *Moshe* wrote:

"On the first day there shall be a holy convocation, and on the seventh day there shall be a holy convocation for you. No manner of work shall be done on them; but that which everyone must eat -- that only may be prepared by you." (Ex. 12:16)

There is one other stand-alone use of the word *Shabbaton* in Scripture. That is found in Leviticus 25:5 where it refers to the land 'rest.'

All of the other references to the annual Holydays are indicated by other Hebrew words: *chag* (khag = festival), *chagag* (khah-gahg = to dance), *moed* (mow-ed = appointed time) and *Kodesh Mikrah* (Koh-dehsh Meek-rah = Holy Convocation).

To summarize this point: the Hebrew word *Shabbat* always refers to the weekly Sabbath and never to an annual Holyday. The only exception is when it is combined to make the phrase *Shabbat Shabbaton*, which literally means a "Sabbath of rest." When *Shabbaton* is used by itself, it always refers to an annual Holyday.

In addition to the Scriptures just mentioned, there is also good historical evidence to believe that, in *Y'shua's* day, *Shavu'ot* was celebrated according to the manner of the Priests and Levites, and not the synagogue Rabbis. The reason being that the Priests and Levites (Sadducees) had control of the Temple service. While modern Rabbinic Judaism claims that the Priests took their directions from the Pharisees, historians (including Jewish ones) do not agree. Here is what Rabbi Stephen M. Wylen has to say on this matter in his book entitled; *The Jews in the Time of Jesus*:

"The Pharisees were renowned among the Jews for their knowledge of the law, and it seems that people accepted Pharisaic authority in the legal interpretation of scripture. The Sadducees rejected the Oral Torah. They held to priestly traditions that, in their own eyes, hewed more closely to the literal meaning of the Torah." (p. 58, emphasis added).

"To summarize the opposing views on the Oral Torah of the Pharisees: the claim of traditional Jewish piety is that the Pharisees preserved the true traditions of Jewish law, while the Sadducees veered off to establish a new path. The more accepted historical view is that the Sadducees attempted to preserve the more ancient teachings of the traditional priesthood, while the Pharisees were innovative." (p. 59).

According to Rabbinic Judaism (based on the teachings of the Talmud) the Pharisees gained control over the *Sanhedrin* (the Supreme Court) during the time of the Hasmonean reign. This would have occurred in the first century before *Y'shua's* time, 100 to 1 BCE (Before the Common Era). Thus, according to their view, by the time *Y'shua* came on the scene the Temple was being run according to what the Pharisees taught, even though the Sadducees maintained control of the Levitical Priesthood. Wylen takes a decidedly different point of view:

"Historians doubt the veracity of the Talmud's reconstruction of the ancient Sanhedrin. It is more likely that the high priest retained his authority in Jewish affairs as long as the Temple stood, until the year 70. ... In Judean society, as in all ancient societies, power lay in the hands of a small group of hereditary aristocrats. The notion of a high council of scholars, appointed for their wisdom despite humble origins, is appealing but unrealistic." (p. 71).

"The Sanhedrin [*under the control of the Pharisees*] posited by the Talmud did not exist in the time of Jesus, but something like it did exist in later times. After the destruction of the Temple the Jews reconstituted their self-government in the village of Yavneh, near the Mediterranean coast. The Sanhedrin of seventy-one members that met in Yavneh did contain a majority of Pharisees. ... The Talmud's reconstruction anachronistically reads this later rabbinic Sanhedrin back into Temple times, the time of Jesus." (p. 71).

In other words, since the Pharisees were the ones who ended up writing the history, they slanted it in favor of their own sect. Is that not precisely what is done by all historians? The history books of Germany and Japan tell a somewhat different story about World War II than do the history books of the United States and Britain.

~ Why Count? ~

Finally, if God wanted us to celebrate *Shavu'ot* on 6 *Sivan*, why did He not identify that as the date, the way He did the other six festivals? A possible answer is that this is the only festival which has a fixed day of the week instead of a fixed day of the month. Therefore, it is absolutely necessary to count the required fifty days in order to know when to celebrate it.

There is an interesting scripture in the Book of Acts, where it speaks of the Pentecost when the Holy Spirit (*Ruach HaKodesh*) was given.

"Now when the Day of Pentecost had fully come, they were all with one accord in one place." (Acts 2:1)

Under the Sadducean method of derivation, Pentecost can occur as early as 6 *Sivan* and as late as 12 *Sivan*. Thus, the Sadducean calculation can never occur before the Pharisaic one, but it often times occurs later. Is it possible the phrase "fully come" might allude to the fact that in this particular year the Pharisaic Pentecost did not coincide with the Sadducean one, and that the Holy Spirit was given on the later one? Just a thought.

~ Summary ~

The main reason we here at *Hebrew Roots* celebrate *Shavu'ot* on the day prescribed by the Sadducees, is because we are convinced that is what the Scriptures tell us. In our view, to accept a 6 *Sivan* date requires a stretching of the Scriptures that we are just not willing to do. In addition, there is the historical possibility that the Sadducees did control the Temple service until its destruction in 70 CE (Common Era). It seems unlikely they would have given in to the Pharisees on such an important point. However, once the Temple was destroyed, the Pharisees did in fact gain total control for setting Jewish *Halacha* (Hah-lah-cah' = the way one walks), and it was at that time they

Now then,
 'If you will obey Me faithfully and keep My covenant,
 You shall be My treasured possession
 Among all the peoples.
 Indeed, all the earth is Mine, but you shall be to Me
 A kingdom of priests and a holy nation.'
 All the people answered as one, saying,
 "All that the LORD has spoken we will do!"
Exodus 19:5-6, 8

permanently changed the celebration of *Shavu'ot* to 6 *Sivan*. The Pharisees are the founders of modern Rabbinic Judaism, and so today the vast majority of Jews follow the Pharisaic traditions concerning the counting of the *Omer* and the keeping of *Shavu'ot*.

Please understand, we do recognize that 6 *Sivan* is an accepted date in the minds of many thousands of people, primarily those who practice Rabbinic Judaism as well as many in Messianic Judaism. If you are absolutely convinced that 6 *Sivan* is the proper day to keep this festival, then it behooves you to follow your faith in this matter, for it is written:

"Do you have faith? Have it to yourself before God. Happy is he who does not condemn himself in what he approves. But he who doubts is condemned if he eats, because he does not eat from faith; for whatever is not from faith is sin." (Rom. 14:22-23)

May you all have a most wonderful and blessed *Shavu'ot*, whatever day you observe it.

~ ~ ~ ~ ~

~ Omer Wave Offering ~
 ~ 2001, 2005, 2008, ~
 ~ 2021 and 2025 ~

He shall wave the sheaf before the LORD,
 To be accepted on your behalf;
 On the day after the Sabbath
 The priest shall wave it.
Leviticus 23:11

Even though the Temple ceremony of the *Omer Wave Offering* cannot be performed at this time (because the Temple does not exist), it continues to be a very important day because it serves the function of setting the proper day for the observance of the Festival of *Shavu'ot* (Pentecost) which is a *Shabbaton* (Shah-bah-tone') or high day.

~ Controversy Abounds ~

Controversy abounds concerning the proper day on which the *Omer Wave Offering* (commonly called the 'Wave Sheaf Offering') was brought before God in the Temple for His acceptance. This is an age old disagreement, dating back before the time of *Y'shua HaMashiach*. Today, the controversy still rages among those who wish to follow the Festivals as laid out in Leviticus chapter 23.

Most years the controversy only involves whether the day from which the *Counting of the Omer* is begun should be according to the *Pharisaic* method (beginning the count on the day following the First Day of Unleavened Bread or *16 Aviv*), or according to the *Sadducean* method (beginning on the day after the weekly Sabbath that falls during the Days of

Unleavened Bread, which would always be the first day of the week).

However, some years things are complicated further because the only weekly *Shabbat* that falls during the Days of Unleavened Bread is the very Last Day of Unleavened Bread. Therefore, if one follows the *Sadducean* method of counting, the *Omer Wave Offering* will fall on the first day of the week (Sunday) following the Days of Unleavened Bread rather than within the Days of Unleavened Bread. Of course, those who follow the *Pharisaic* method do not have this problem because they always begin their count on *16 Aviv* and their method of counting always causes *Shavu'ot* to fall on *6 Sivan*, a fixed day of the month, but a fluctuating day of the week.

Because, in some years the normal *Sadducean* method of determining the *Omer Wave Offering* causes it to fall outside of the Days of Unleavened Bread, some have argued that the *Omer Wave Offering* should be held on *15 Aviv*, the First Day of Unleavened Bread. Calculating it in this manner would put the weekly Sabbath, from which the counting begins, outside the Days of Unleavened Bread, causing it to be counted from *14 Aviv*, or the day of the Passover sacrifice. This would result in *Shavu'ot* being observed on *5 Sivan*, one day earlier than the *Pharisaic* observance.

~ Confused? ~

If you are confused at this point do not be alarmed. Calendar issues are always confusing at first. However, we will try and sort it all out for you so that it becomes understandable. Then you can make your decision on when to celebrate *Shavu'ot* based on information, rather than on emotion.

The issue between the *Sadducean* and *Pharisaic* observances of the *Omer Wave Offering* and *Shavu'ot* was covered in the last chapter. It is important to understand that controversy before reading the next section.

~ The *Sadducean* Count ~

For those who are convinced the *Sadducean* method of establishing the *Omer Wave Offering* and, subsequently, the first day of the week dating for *Shavu'ot*, is correct, some years present another question. Should the *Omer Wave Offering* take place on *15 Aviv* or on *22 Aviv*? The answer to this question will determine when *Shavu'ot* is to be celebrated.

The first method places the *Omer Wave Offering* within *Hag HaMatzot* (Days of Unleavened Bread), but the weekly *Shabbat* from which it is counted outside of those days. The second method places the weekly *Shabbat* within *Hag HaMatzot* (Days of Unleavened Bread) but places the *Omer Wave Offering* outside of them. Most years this is not a problem, since both days usually fall within *Hag HaMatzot* (Days of Unleavened Bread). Some years it is not that easy. Therefore, the first question which must be addressed is: Do the Scriptures actually say that the *Omer Wave Offering* must be performed during *Hag HaMatzot* (Days of Unleavened Bread)?

We recognize that others may read it differently, but we find no explicit Biblical command which says the *Omer Wave Offering* must be presented within the days of *Hag HaMatzot* (Days of Unleavened Bread). Rather, we find that it is written:

"He shall wave the sheaf before the LORD [YHVH], to be accepted on your behalf; on the day after the Sabbath the priest shall wave it." (Lev. 23:11)

In *Y'shua's* day there were many different Rabbis, with many different opinions concerning the interpretation of the *Torah*, just as today. Some argue that there is no direct connection between *Hag HaMatzot* (Days of Unleavened Bread) and the *Omer Wave Offering* at all. They claim that the *Omer Wave Offering* is to be offered whenever the 'green ears' of barley appear (the meaning of the word *Aviv* is 'green ears'), regardless of when Passover and *Hag HaMatzot* (Days of Unleavened Bread) are celebrated.

However, Jewish tradition has always intimately connected these two events. It seems likely that a connection was intended by God because of the manner in which the verses delineating the *Omer Wave Offering* are juxtaposed to the verses about the Festival of Unleavened Bread. However, as we saw in the chapter *The Starting Point*, there has always been much disagreement among the various sects concerning when to wave the *Omer*, just as there is today. It is our contention that the two events are intimately related and that it is the weekly *Shabbat* that must fall during *Hag HaMatzot* (Days of Unleavened Bread).

Since *Y'shua* is our Rabbi (teacher), He is the one to whom we must look for correct answers. Unfortunately, in this case He has given us no specific guidance. However, we do know that *Y'shua* participated in Temple worship and that He never once condemned what the Priests were doing in terms of their service there. What He consistently spoke out against was the hypocrisy of some Scribes and *Pharisees*, and the corruptness of some Chief Priests.

In relationship to this question, we believe the Scriptures uphold the concept that *Y'shua* supported Temple Worship and therefore would have supported the manner in which the *Omer Wave Offering* was celebrated at the Temple. The next question is: Can we determine how that was done?

~ A Dearth of *Sadducean* Documents ~

One of the problems in being the loser of a war is that the losers version of history is ignored and then finally lost. Such is the case with the *Sadducees*. Even though they controlled the Temple as long as it stood, they ultimately lost their war with the *Pharisees* when the Temple was destroyed, for the Rabbis reestablished the *Sanhedrin* at *Yavneh* under their own control. As a result, the writings of the *Sadducees* have not been preserved and the only information we have about their teachings is what the *Pharisees* wrote about them. Needless to say, that presents us with a biased view.

Nevertheless, there is enough material on this particular subject to learn at least a few things about how the *Sadducees* practiced the ceremony of the *Omer Wave Offering*:

"The exact meaning of 'the day after the sabbath' in the biblical passage was a major point of controversy between the rabbis and the Boethusians (Men. 65a-b) and, later, the Karaites. The latter argued that the ceremony was to be performed on the day after the Sabbath immediately following the first day of Passover whereas the rabbis

argued that in this context the word "sabbath" was to be understood not as the weekly Sabbath but as a "holy day" and meant the first day of Passover itself." (*Encyclopedia Judaica* CD Rom version, article: *Omer*, underlining ours.)

This article confirms that the practice of the *Sadducees* (the *Boethusians* were an elite group of priests within the *Sadducean* sect) was to establish the *Omer Wave Offering* from the weekly *Shabbat* "immediately following the first day of Passover." In other words, it is the *Shabbat* which was given primary importance by the *Sadducees* when reckoning the *Omer Wave Offering*.

~ Eating the Produce of the Land ~

The Scriptures state that the children of Israel were not to eat any of the 'new,' or 'fresh' grain harvest until after the *Omer Wave Offering* had been successfully completed:

""You shall eat neither bread nor parched grain nor fresh grain until the same day that you have brought an offering to your God; it shall be a statute forever throughout your generations in all your dwellings.""
(Lev. 23:14)

However, the children of Israel were always permitted to eat any of the 'old grain' or produce left over from the previous year prior to the *Omer Wave Offering* as well as later on during the year. This is what was done for the Passover *Seder*, which is eaten during the evening portion of *15 Aviv*, a time that is always prior to the *Omer Wave Offering* no matter who is setting it. In addition, every seventh year only old grain could be eaten for the entire year, since it was forbidden to harvest new grain:

"And the LORD [YHVH] spoke to Moses on Mount Sinai, saying,

""Speak to the children of Israel, and say to them: "When you come into the land which I give you, then the land shall keep a sabbath to the LORD [YHVH]. Six years you shall sow your field, and six years you shall prune your vineyard, and gather its fruit; but in the seventh year there shall be a sabbath of solemn rest for the land, a sabbath to the LORD [YHVH]. You shall neither sow your field nor prune your vineyard. What grows of its own accord of your harvest you shall not reap, nor gather the grapes of your untended vine, for it is a year of rest for the land.""
(Lev. 25:1-5)

When the children of Israel, under *Joshua*, crossed the Jordan and came into the Promised Land, they prepared a Passover meal:

"And the children of Israel encamped in Gilgal, and kept the passover on the fourteenth day of the month at even in the plains of Jericho." (Josh. 5:10 KJV)

They were required to eat roasted lamb, unleavened bread (*matzah*), and bitter herbs (*maror*) in order to properly celebrate the Passover:

""Then they shall eat the flesh on that night; roasted in fire, with unleavened bread and with bitter herbs they shall eat it.""
(Ex. 12:8)

The children of Israel probably had the lambs with them, but where could they have obtained the *maror* (bitter herbs) and the grain for the *matzah*? It had to come from the land which they had just entered since they surely did not carry it with them for forty years. Yet Lev. 23:14 clearly states they could not eat the fresh grain of the land until they had performed the *Omer Wave Offering*. Neither the *Sadducees*, nor the *Pharisees*, nor anyone else assumes that the *Omer Wave Offering* was performed on *14 Aviv* or earlier. Yet that is precisely what would have had to have taken place if they were to make *matzah* from new grain. Once again, the Scriptures state they:

"... kept the passover on the fourteenth day of the month at even [between the two evenings] in the plains of Jericho."
(Josh. 5:10b KJV)

The children of Israel, under *Joshua*, could freely eat of any grain or other produce left over from the previous year which they found stored in the land of Canaan. Only the new grain was forbidden prior to the *Omer Wave Offering*. According to the *King James Version*, it appears this is precisely what they did:

"And they did eat of the old corn of the land on the morrow after the passover, unleavened cakes, and parched corn in the selfsame day."
(Josh. 5:11 KJV)

Why does it say they ate the 'old corn' on the 'morrow after the passover?' Because the Passover lamb is sacrificed on the afternoon of *14 Aviv*, and is eaten after sundown on *15 Aviv*, which technically would be the 'morrow.' Therefore, we understand that the grain used for the *matzah* was 'old grain.'

The next puzzle is when exactly the *manna* ceased to appear:

"And the manna ceased on the morrow [15 Aviv or 16 Aviv?] after they had eaten of the old corn of the land; neither had the children of Israel manna any more; but they did eat of the fruit of the land of Canaan that year."
(Josh. 5:12 KJV)

This passage describes the day on which the *manna* ceased and the children of Israel began to eat regular food. Let us review briefly:

- ◆ They offered the Passover sacrifice on the afternoon of *14 Aviv* (*between the two evenings* = mid-afternoon (see Ex. 12:5-6)) as required by the *Torah*.
- ◆ They ate the Passover after sundown on the evening portion of *15 Aviv* (just as they had done in Egypt) along with "unleavened cakes and parched *corn*." (As noted above, this would have had to be 'old' grain.)
- ◆ It is unclear from the *KJV* whether the *manna* ceased on the morning of *16 Aviv* or on the morning of *15 Aviv* when they ate "of the fruit of the land of Canaan..." In any event, they ate of the 'fruit of the land' for the remainder of that year.

The *Tanakh* (Tah-nahk = Old Testament) translates the Joshua passage in a manner which clearly states the *manna* ceased to appear on *15 Aviv*:

"Encamped at Gilgal, in the steppes of Jericho, the Israelites offered the passover sacrifice on the fourteenth day of the month, toward evening.

"On the day after the passover offering, on that very day [15 Aviv], they ate of the produce of the country, unleavened bread and parched grain. On that same day [15 Aviv], when they ate of the produce of the land, the manna ceased. The Israelites got no more manna; that year they ate of the yield of the land of Canaan."

(Josh. 5:10-12 *Tanakh*)

Here again we see confirmation that the children of Israel ate of the produce of the land sometime on *15 Aviv*. If they were to properly observe the Passover (with unleavened bread and bitter herbs) it must have meant they ate these items on the evening of *15 Aviv*. Since the *Pharisees* teach that the *Omer Wave Offering* was always performed on *16 Aviv*, this would indicate that the produce eaten here, outside of Jericho, was in fact 'old corn' just as the KJV states.

Of course, it is possible that the *Omer Wave Offering* could also have been performed on *16 Aviv*, under the *Sadducean* method, if the First Day of Unleavened Bread (*15 Aviv*) fell on a weekly *Shabbat*. However, if the food they were eating for the Passover meal was made from 'new grain,' they would definitely have been out of compliance with the dictates of Leviticus 23.

~ Old Vs. New ~

In the Promised Land the first grain to become ripe in the springtime is barley. If the children of Israel could only eat of the 'new grain' after the *Omer Wave Offering* had been performed, they would have had only barley to eat for the next fifty days until *Shavu'ot*:

"Count fifty days to the day after the seventh Sabbath; then you shall offer a new grain offering to the LORD [YHVH]." (Lev. 23:16)

The 'new grain offering' mentioned in this verse pertains to the firstfruits of the wheat harvest, for the wheat did not ripen until the time of *Shavu'ot*:

"This feast [*Shavu'ot*], one of the three pilgrim festivals (Deut. 16:16), marked the end of the barley and beginning of the wheat harvest." (*Encyclopedia Judaica* CD Rom version, article: *Shavuot*).

Going back to Joshua 5:11, please note that the word 'corn,' is added to the word 'parched.' It is not found in the original. It is assumed by the translators that the Hebrew word *kahlah* (kah-lah = parched, Strong's #7033) signifies 'grain' of some type. However, the definition of *kahlah* is: "to toast, i.e. scorch partially or slowly; dried, loathsome, parch, roast." As you can see, it could also indicate some type of dried food, which surely would not have just been harvested.

More importantly is the way in which the *King James Version* renders the Hebrew word *avur* (ah-voor, Strong's #5669) in verses 11 and 12. They translate it as 'old corn.' While most modern translations render this word as 'produce,' *Young's Literal Translation* also renders it 'old corn,' as does J.P. Green in *The Interlinear Bible*. In addition, it is translated as 'old' in *The Webster Bible*, *The Darby Bible* and the *Revised Webster Update*.

Deriving a correct interpretation of *avur* is compounded by the fact that it is used only two times in the Hebrew Scriptures, both of which are in this passage. Therefore it cannot be compared to other Biblical usage's for clarification.

If this word should be rendered as 'old corn,' then it is clear the children of Israel did not transgress the command of Lev. 23:9-14 because they ate 'old corn,' not 'new grain,' when they first entered the Promised Land.

Of course, once the *Omer Wave Offering* had been performed on the designated day (whenever it fell that year), they could then eat of the 'new' grain which was just beginning to ripen. In the meantime, they would have had to depend upon the food stuffs that had been stored from previous years.

~ A Matter of Timing ~

In Jewish teaching it is said that all of Scripture (if we understand it properly) points to the Messiah. If that is the case, then all of the festivals and offerings point to the coming of the Messiah and the events of His life. With this in mind, let us look at *Pesach* (Passover), *Hag HaMatzot* (Days of Unleavened Bread), and the *Omer Wave Offering*, in light of our Messiah *Y'shua's* crucifixion and resurrection, for that is what is really being taught by these days and these events:

- ◆ *Y'shua* was crucified on the afternoon of *14 Aviv* (the day of the Passover sacrifice). He died at about 3 p.m. (between the two evenings), at the precise time when the Passover lambs were beginning to be sacrificed at the Temple. We believe this took place on the fourth day of the week (Wednesday) that year.

"Therefore, because it was the Preparation Day, [14 Aviv is the preparation day for the Passover Seder] that the bodies should not remain on the cross on the Sabbath (for that Sabbath was a high day [15 Aviv is the First Day of Unleavened Bread]), the Jews asked Pilate that their legs might be broken, and that they might be taken away."

(John 19:31)

- ◆ *Y'shua* was laid in the tomb about sundown that same day.
- ◆ *Y'shua* was in the grave for 'three days and three nights.' This means His resurrection took place right at the end of the weekly *Shabbat*, seventy-two hours later. This would have been the exact time when the Priests (of the *Sadducean* party) were cutting the

firstfruits of the barley grain free from the earth in preparation for the *Omer Wave Offering*.

- ◆ During the night, this firstfruit barley grain was prepared for offering. It was threshed, parched over fire, ground and sieved through thirteen sieves. This represented the suffering our Savior had gone through in order that our sins might be forgiven. (His sufferings all took place prior to and during His crucifixion, but they are symbolized by the preparation of the grain for the *Omer* ceremony.)
- ◆ The next morning (the first day of the week) the *Omer Wave Offering* was presented at the Temple for acceptance by God. At this same time, *Y'shua* was being accepted as the first of the firstfruits before His Father, in the heavenly Temple. Once this ceremony was accomplished, the first grain crop of the year (the barley crop) could be harvested. Symbolically, we Messianic Believers are the rest of the firstfruits (those to be raised in the first resurrection).

If this scenario has merit, then let us reason together about what it would mean if the *Omer Wave Offering* were to be cut at the end of *14 Aviv* and offered in the Temple on the morning of *15 Aviv*, the First Day of Unleavened Bread, as would be the case if the *Omer Wave Offering* were to be performed on Sunday, *15 Aviv*:

- ◆ First of all, it would mean that the Priests would be out in the fields harvesting the grain for the *Omer Wave Offering* when they should have been with their families preparing for the eating of the Passover Lamb as required by Scripture.
- ◆ Likewise, in the case of the children of Israel coming into the Promised Land at the time of Joshua, this would have meant they would be cutting and preparing the *Omer Wave Offering* at the same time they were to be in their houses with their families preparing for the eating of the Passover on the evening portion of *15 Aviv*.
- ◆ The first day of *Hag HaMatzot* (Days of Unleavened Bread) symbolizes *Y'shua* being in the grave. (It also symbolizes our first day of freedom from sin and being reconciled to God.) Conversely, the first cutting of the Barley grain symbolizes *Y'shua's* resurrection. (It also symbolizes our being given salvation, which is eternal life.) To mix these two important symbols would confuse the meaning of the season:

"For if when we were enemies we were reconciled to God through the death of His Son, much more, having been reconciled, we shall be saved by His life." (Rom. 5:10)

- ◆ Regarding the symbolism pertaining to *Y'shua*, a *14 Aviv* cutting of the Barley does not fit. Such a scenario would require that He be symbolically resurrected immediately upon being placed in the tomb, in order to be symbolically ready for the *Omer Wave Offering* in heaven the next morning.

By delaying the *Omer Wave Offering* to the day following the weekly *Shabbat* at the end of the Days of Unleavened Bread, none of these symbolic conflicts arise. It is true that in some years the time between the symbolic slaying of the Passover Lamb until the time of His being symbolically cut free from the earth (when the barley grain is cut) is seven days apart. However, that time span fluctuates each year anyway, depending on what day of the week Passover falls. Some years it is only one day, while in other years it is three days, or five days. We submit to you that it can be seven days, but it cannot be zero days. Most importantly, the symbolism did fit perfectly for the year in which *Y'shua* died (when the Passover sacrifice was offered on the fourth day of the week; a Wednesday).

~ Summary ~

Based on our understanding of the Scriptures, it is our position that the correct method for establishing the *Omer Wave Offering* (and subsequently setting the proper date for *Shavu'ot*) is to offer the Barley *Omer* on the first day of the week (Sunday) following the weekly *Shabbat* that occurs during *Hag HaMatzot* (Days of Unleavened Bread). As stated in the chapter *The Starting Point*, the word *Shabbat*, found in Lev. 23:9-16, can only mean the weekly Sabbath, therefore, the *Pharisaic* method of always counting from *16 Aviv* (when it does not occur on the first day of the week) is not Scriptural, but is based on oral tradition.

The effort by the *Pharisees* to use Joshua 5:10-12 as a proof text to show that the children of Israel offered the *Omer* on *16 Aviv* is also not Scriptural since it clearly states they ate of the 'produce' of the land on the evening portion of *15 Aviv* when they celebrated the Passover. Therefore, new grain is not a requirement of this passage. The produce must have been 'old corn' just as the *King James Version*, *Young's Literal Translation*, and *The Interlinear Bible* and others translate.

In some years, when the only weekly Sabbath to fall during the Days of Unleavened Bread is the very last day, the Priests would never have cut the barley at the end of *14 Aviv* (the beginning of *15 Aviv*) because that is when they would have been preparing to eat the Passover with their families as required by Scripture. Therefore, we believe they would have cut the barley at the end of *21 Aviv*, at the very end of the festival of *Hag HaMatzot* (Days of Unleavened Bread).

In addition, the rich symbolism of these days, as they pertain to our Savior, Messiah *Y'shua*, becomes confused if the *Omer Wave Offering* is cut at the same hour in which our Savior's body was being placed in the tomb. There cannot be a resurrection until after there is a death and burial. The miracle was not only that *Y'shua* was resurrected from being dead, but that He also walked out of the sealed tomb.

~ Disagreement ~

We understand that all of our readers will not agree with our position concerning this matter. While we wish that all of us could agree, we know that will not happen until Messiah *Y'shua* returns to earth and sets all of us straight.

In the meantime, we accept the fact that in certain years some will observe the *Omer Wave Offering* on *16 Aviv* and

Shavu'ot on 6 *Sivan*. Others will observe the *Omer Wave Offering* on 15 *Aviv* and *Shavu'ot* on 5 *Sivan*. As for us, in those years we will be observing the *Omer Wave Offering* on 22 *Aviv* and *Shavu'ot* on 12 *Sivan*. As a courtesy to our readers, we do list both the *Sadducean* and *Pharisaic* dates for *Shavu'ot* in the calendar we print.

We do not condemn anyone who believes they should observe the *Omer Wave Offering* or *Shavu'ot* on different days than we do. Nor do we condemn anyone who believes they must follow a different calendar. For if we are to please God, everything we do must be done in Faith. If it is not of Faith it is sin, because then we are believing one thing but doing something different. When action opposes belief, we are left with hypocrisy:

"Let each be fully convinced in his own mind. ...for whatever is not from faith is sin." (Rom. 14:5, 23)

~ ~ ~ ~ ~

~ Two Great Gifts ~ ~ of Shavu'ot ~

Repent,
And let every one of you
Be baptized in the name of *Y'shua HaMashiach*
For the remission of sins;
And you shall receive the gift of the Holy Spirit.
Acts 2:38

The Feast of *Shavu'ot* (Pentecost) pictures the time when God gave His people two great gifts. The first was given at Mount Sinai, when He spoke the Ten Words (Ten Commandments), giving the children of Israel the basic outline of the most important tool they could ever possess, the *Torah*; the rule book by which they were to conduct their lives.

This first gift was given amid much smoke, fire, and noise:

"Then the LORD [YHVH] said to Moses, 'Go to the people and consecrate them today and tomorrow, and let them wash their clothes. And let them be ready for the third day. For on the third day the LORD [YHVH] will come down upon Mount Sinai in the sight of all the people.

...

"Now Mount Sinai was completely in smoke, because the LORD [YHVH] descended upon it in fire. Its smoke ascended like the smoke of a furnace, and the whole mountain quaked greatly. And when the blast of the trumpet sounded long and became louder and louder, ...

"... God spoke all these words, saying: 'I am the LORD [YHVH] your God, who brought you out of the land of Egypt, out of the house of bondage.'"

(Ex. 19:10-11, 18-19; 20:1-2)

"And you shall observe the Feast of Weeks, of the firstfruits of wheat harvest, ..."

(Ex. 34:22)

"Also on the day of the firstfruits, when you bring a new grain offering to the LORD [YHVH] at your Feast of Weeks, you shall have a holy convocation. You shall do no customary work."

(Num. 28:26)

"You shall count seven weeks for yourself; begin to count the seven weeks from the time you begin to put the sickle to the grain. Then you shall keep the Feast of Weeks to the LORD [YHVH] your God with the tribute of a freewill offering from your hand, which you shall give as the LORD [YHVH] your God blesses you. You shall rejoice before the LORD [YHVH] your God, you and your son and your daughter, your male servant and your female servant, the Levite who is within your gates, the stranger and the fatherless and the widow who are among you, at the place where the LORD [YHVH] your God chooses to make His name abide. And you shall remember that you were a slave in Egypt, and you shall be careful to observe these statutes."

(Deut. 16:9-12)

The second gift was given on the same day some 1500 years later in the city of Jerusalem. This gift was the power of the *Ruach HaKodesh* (Rue-ahk' Hah' Koh-dehsh'); the Holy Spirit. Armed with the *Ruach*, the early Believing community (made up of descendants of those Israelites who were present at Mount Sinai) were able to keep the *mitzvot* (meets'-vote = commandments) that had been given to their fathers in the form of the written *Torah*. Just as it was at Mount Sinai, the giving of this gift was accompanied by fire and noise:

"When the Day of Pentecost had fully come, they were all with one accord in one place. And suddenly there came a sound from heaven, as of a rushing mighty wind, and it filled the whole house where they were sitting. Then there appeared to them divided tongues, as of fire, and one sat upon each of them. And they were all filled with the Holy Spirit and began to speak with other tongues, as the Spirit gave them utterance."

(Acts 2:1-4)

And so today, a growing number of Believers in *Y'shua HaMashiach* (Jesus the Messiah) observe this very special day in remembrance of the two great gifts which their Father in heaven has given them:

"And you shall count for yourselves from the day after the Sabbath, from the day that you brought the sheaf of the wave offering: seven Sabbaths shall be completed. Count fifty days to the day after the seventh Sabbath; then you shall offer a new grain offering to the LORD [YHVH]. ...

"And you shall proclaim on the same day that it is a holy convocation to you. You shall do no customary work on it. It shall be a statute forever in all your dwellings throughout your generations."

(Lev. 23:15-16, 21)

~ Sources ~

The American Heritage Dictionary,
Houghton Mifflin Co.,
Boston, New York, London, 1992.

BibleWorks 7,
Hermeneutika, 2007.

Bloch, Abraham P.,
The Biblical and Historical Background of the Jewish Holy Days,
Ktav Publishing House,
New York, 1978.

*The Biblical and Historical Background of Jewish
Customs and Ceremonies*,
Ktav Publishing House,
New York, 1980.

Edersheim, Alfred, *The Life and Times of Jesus the Messiah*,
Wm. B. Eerdmans,
Grand Rapids, 1971.

Encyclopedia Judaica,
CD Rom Version.

Green, Jay P., Sr., *The Interlinear Bible*,
Hendrickson Pub.,
Peabody, MA, 1986.

The Holy Bible - King James Version
Oxford University Press
London

The Jewish Encyclopedia, 12 vols.,
Funk & Wagnalls Co.,
New York & London, 1901.

Kasden, Barney, *God's Appointed Times*,
Lederer Messianic Publications,
Baltimore, 1993.

The Open Bible,
The New King James Version,
Thomas Nelson Publishers,
Nashville, 1985.

Speir, Arthur, *The Comprehensive Jewish Calendar*,
Feldheim Publishers,
Jerusalem/New York, 1986.

Strong, James, S.T.D., LL.D.,
Strong's New Exhaustive Concordance of the Bible,
World Bible Publishers, Inc.,
Iowa Falls, 1986.

Strassfeld, Michael,
The Jewish Holidays,
Harper & Row,
New York, 1985.

Tanakh - The Holy Scriptures,
The Jewish Publication Society,
New York, 1988.

Tregelles, Samuel Prideaux, LL.D.,
Gesenius' Hebrew and Chaldee Lexicon,
Baker Book House, Grand Rapids, 1979.

Trepp, Leo, *The Complete Book of Jewish Observance*,
Behrman House, Inc.,
New York, 1980.

Waskow, Arthur, *The Seasons of Our Joy*,
Beacon Press,
Boston, 1982.

Weissman, Moshe,
The Midrash Says, 5 vols.
Kenei Yakov Publications,
Brooklyn, 1982.

Wigram, George V.,
*The Englishman's Hebrew and Chaldee Concordance of the
Old Testament*,
Baker Book House,
Grand Rapids, 1980.

Wyllen, Stephen M., *The Jews in the Time of Jesus*,
Paulist Press,
New York, 1996.

~ ~ ~ ~ ~

Because we have received these two precious gifts, which enable us to both understand and follow the precepts of the Creator God of the earth, it behooves us to remember to impart good gifts to those around us who are in need:

"When you reap the harvest of your land, you shall not wholly reap the corners of your field when you reap, nor shall you gather any gleaning from your harvest. You shall leave them for the poor and for the stranger: I am the LORD [YHVH] your God." (Lev. 23:22)

May we keep the Feast of *Shavu'ot* in the spirit of generosity and charity in which it was intended.

~ ~ ~ ~ ~