

# 119

## MINISTRIES

*“The following is a direct script of a teaching that is intended to be presented via video, incorporating relevant text, slides, media, and graphics to assist in illustration, thus facilitating the presentation of the material. In some places, this may cause the written material to not flow or sound rather awkward in some places. In addition, there may be grammatical errors that are often not acceptable in literary work. We encourage the viewing of the video teachings to complement the written teaching you see below.”*

### **The Mo’edim: Shavuot**

In the Bible, God gave his people special days to remember and celebrate every year. In Hebrew, these holy days, or holidays, are called *mo’edim*, which means “appointed times.” The purpose of these days is to remember what God has done in the past, and anticipate the fulfillment of his promises for the future. God’s biblical calendar brings rhythm and intentionality to our lives, uniting us around significant events and the truths they reveal about God.

In this teaching, we are going to talk about one particular *mo’ed* or appointed time. That is the Feast of Shavuot, or in English, the Feast of Weeks. You might have heard of a festival called Pentecost. That’s the Greek name for this festival.

Shavuot means “weeks,” hence “Feast of Weeks.” This word is the plural form of *shavua*, “week.” You might notice that this word is part of the traditional Hebrew greeting said at the end of the Sabbath: *shavua tov*, which means “good week.”

The name Shavuot comes from one of the main instructions connected to this festival. God said to count seven weeks from the firstfruits offering within the week of Unleavened Bread to the day of Shavuot.

#### **Leviticus 23:15-16**

*You shall count seven full weeks from the day after the Sabbath, from the day that you brought the sheaf of the wave offering. You shall count fifty days to the day after the seventh Sabbath. Then you shall present a grain offering of new grain to the Lord [YHWH].*

So, from the firstfruits offering at the time of Passover and Unleavened Bread, we count seven weeks—seven *shavuot*—to the Feast of Shavuot, which occurs on the fiftieth day of this count. And that’s where the name Pentecost comes from. It means “fiftieth.”

There are a few commandments regarding this festival and some traditions that have developed over time, which we’ll discuss a little later. But right now, let’s talk about the meaning of this festival. What is Shavuot all about?

## The Meaning of Shavuot

Just like Unleavened Bread and Sukkot, Shavuot is a harvest festival and pilgrimage festival. Shavuot celebrates the wheat harvest in ancient Israel, but like the other two, it's much more than a celebration of the harvest. Shavuot is a memorial of God's saving acts in history on behalf of his people, specifically related to the events surrounding Israel's journey out of Egypt to the Promised Land.

After the command to celebrate Shavuot is reiterated in Deuteronomy, God says:

### Deuteronomy 16:12

You shall remember that you were a slave in Egypt; and you shall be careful to observe these statutes.

So, just like Passover and Unleavened Bread, Shavuot is a memorial of the events surrounding Israel's deliverance from slavery in Egypt.

God's *mo'edim* are divided into two seasons: the spring festivals and the fall festivals. Shavuot marks the end of the spring festivals. It's connected to Passover by way of the counting of the weeks and is regarded as the climax or completion of the Passover season.

While it can't be proven conclusively, tradition has long held that Shavuot was when God initially gave the Torah to Israel (b.*Pesachim* 68b). Israel had reached the wilderness of Sinai in the third month, which would have been close to the time of Shavuot (Exodus 19:1). The two loaves of bread given as a wave offering during Shavuot (Leviticus 23:16-17) have been said to symbolize the two stone tablets containing the Ten Commandments.

The giving of the Torah around or on the Feast of Shavuot is significant. When Israel was in Egypt, God told Moses to tell them four things he promised to do:

- "I will deliver you from slavery"
- "I will redeem you"
- "I will take you to be my people"
- "I will bring you into the land"

-See Exodus 6:6-8

The giving of the Torah is widely regarded as the fulfillment of God's promise to take Israel to be his people. "I will take you to be mine" is marriage covenant language, which is why the giving of the Torah is traditionally seen as a type of marriage ceremony. The prophet Jeremiah hints at this concept when he references the Sinai covenant and portrays YHWH as Israel's "husband":

### Jeremiah 31:31-32

Behold, the days are coming, declares the Lord [YHWH], when I will make a new covenant with the house of Israel and the house of Judah, not like the covenant that I made with their fathers on the day when I took them by the hand to bring them out of the land of Egypt, my covenant that they broke, **though I was their husband**, declares the Lord [YHWH].

YHWH betrothed Israel at Mount Sinai, and they became his people. Israel spoke as one saying, "All YHWH has spoken we will do" (Exodus 19:8), which can be seen as Israel's wedding vows. Finally, the

marriage contract was then written down in the form of the Torah.

When we receive the Messiah and commit to following him, we become part of God's people, Israel. Israel's story becomes our story too. Thus, we make those same wedding vows to keep all that YHWH has spoken. That is what Shavuot is all about—it's like a wedding anniversary. It's a day to remember and celebrate the day that God took us to be his people.

Now we can see why Shavuot is considered the completion of Passover. Passover is a memorial of Israel's deliverance from Egypt. That deliverance was made "complete" when Israel committed to following the Torah as God's people. Israel was saved by God's grace and then given the Torah as the way to walk out their relationship with God. To put it in New Testament terms, "faith apart from works is dead" (James 2:26). Being freed from Egypt means now living as free people—and the Torah defines what that looks like. As followers of Yeshua—Jesus—we've been freed from the slavery of sin and death. Now that we've been set free, we are to live as free people in accordance with God's ways.

Speaking of Yeshua, in the New Testament, Shavuot is given even greater significance. As the Book of Acts records, Yeshua visited his disciples prior to his ascension and promised that the Holy Spirit would soon empower them in a remarkable new way. They would be his witnesses to Jerusalem, Judea and Samaria, and eventually to the ends of the earth (Acts 1:8).

Shortly after Yeshua's ascension, when the disciples were all gathered together, God suddenly poured out his spirit upon them, and they were given "tongues of fire." As we read in the second chapter of Acts, the Gospel message was then preached in many different languages, and thousands came to know the Messiah as Savior and Lord. God chose to launch this world-changing, Spirit-driven movement on—you guessed it—Shavuot (Acts 2:1)! And the movement continues to this day.

Thus, Shavuot is a memorial of the giving of the Torah as well as the giving of the Holy Spirit in Acts 2. God said that all the nations would be blessed through Abraham's offspring. Through Messiah, we are adopted as Abraham's children (Galatians 3:29) and given this same mission to bless the nations. God gave us both the Torah and the Holy Spirit so that we may bring in the harvest of the nations for his glory.

That's what Shavuot is all about. It's a time to remember and celebrate the fact that we've been delivered, taken to be God's people, and empowered to reach the nations with the Gospel. It's a day that the apostles continued to observe (Acts 2:1; 20:16; 1 Corinthians 16:8). We hope that believers everywhere see the value of this biblical festival and make it a part of their lives.

Speaking of which, what are some ways we can celebrate this festival today?

## **How to Celebrate Shavuot**

The Bible tells us to count fifty days from the firstfruits offering within the week of Unleavened Bread to the day of Shavuot (Leviticus 23:15-16; Deuteronomy 16:9). That's how we calculate the date of the festival. The firstfruits of ripe barley was tied together in a bundle and brought to the priest at the Temple to be waved before the Lord. In ancient times, beginning with the firstfruits offering after the "Sabbath" within Unleavened Bread, an omer of barley was brought to the Jerusalem Temple and waved before the Lord on each of the 49 days of the count. Traditionally, this period of counting is called "the counting of the omer." An omer is a unit of dry measure equal to one-tenth of an ephah (half a gallon dry measure).

There is actually some debate about when the firstfruits offering, and thus the start of the count to Shavuot, should be performed. Leviticus 23:15 says to count “from the day after the Sabbath.” Some say the count should start from the *weekly Sabbath* within Unleavened Bread, which would put the firstfruits ceremony always on Sunday. Others argue that it should start after the opening *high Sabbath* of Unleavened Bread, which would put it always on the 16<sup>th</sup> of the first month. There is some ambiguity in the text, and even the Pharisees and Sadducees debated this issue in the first century.

For our perspective on calculating the start of the count, see our teaching, [How to Calculate First Fruits](#). Nevertheless, no matter how you calculate the date, we still encourage you to celebrate the festival.

Now, the firstfruits ritual pertains specifically to the land of Israel and depends on a working priesthood and tabernacle or temple in Jerusalem. Since that is not available today, we can’t observe many of the aspects of the ritual the way it is written in the Torah. We can’t do the traditional wave offerings on each of the days of the omer like they did in ancient Israel. However, just like with the other festivals in the Torah, we can honor the memory of these rituals as we look forward to the time when the temple and priesthood are restored.

One way Judaism has traditionally done this is by reciting a blessing every evening from firstfruits to Shavuot. They count the day and recite a blessing, anticipating the day when God will restore the temple and priestly service.

Many people have also come up with their own traditions. For example, some families will make a calendar for this season and pick Bible verses to recite and memorize every evening. Some parents might have small treats that they give to their kids when they learn a new Bible verse every evening. There are lots of things you can do to celebrate this season of counting toward Shavuot.

As for the actual day of Shavuot, the Torah says we are to treat this day as a type of “Sabbath”—a day when no “ordinary work” is to be done (Leviticus 23:21). So on Shavuot, we enjoy God’s blessing of rest.

Also, the Torah commands us to “rejoice” with our families and others on this day:

#### **Deuteronomy 16:11**

And you shall rejoice before the Lord [YHWH] your God, you and your son and your daughter, your male servant and your female servant, the Levite who is within your towns, the sojourner, the fatherless, and the widow who are among you, at the place that the Lord [YHWH] your God will choose, to make his name dwell there.

Many will get together at their local congregation or someone’s home and worship and celebrate together for all God has done for us in light of this commandment.

Also, traditionally, many people will make it a point to give to the poor during Shavuot. This is based on the Torah commandment to leave the edges of your field unharvested for the poor, which is connected to this festival in the Torah:

#### **Leviticus 23:22**

And when you reap the harvest of your land, you shall not reap your field right up to its edge, nor shall you gather the gleanings after your harvest. You shall leave them for the poor and for the sojourner: I am the Lord your God.

Another popular tradition is to read the Book of Ruth on Shavuot. This is because the story of Ruth takes place during the harvest season, where Ruth is seen gleaning from the fields. Also, Ruth was a Moabite who became part of the people of Israel. This reminds us of how we become part of God's people through the Gospel of Messiah Yeshua, which fits the theme of Shavuot.

Some other common traditions include eating dairy, such as cheesecake and ice cream, which is a reminder of God's promise to bring us to a land flowing with milk and honey and of the sweetness of the Torah. Sometimes people will also decorate their home or congregation with fresh greens and flowers, another symbol of the Torah and how it is a "tree of life" to those who hold fast to its wisdom (Proverbs 3:18).

There are other traditions, but hopefully this overview has given you some ideas you can maybe use in your observance of this festival.

Shavuot is an amazing biblical holiday filled with meaning and reminds us of our purpose as followers of Messiah. If you're new to the biblical festivals, we hope this teaching has inspired you to look into Shavuot and consider incorporating this season into your life.

*We pray you have been blessed by this teaching.*

*Remember, continue to test everything.*

*Shalom!*

*For more on this and other teachings, please visit us at [www.testeverything.net](http://www.testeverything.net)*

**Shalom, and may Yahweh bless you in walking in the whole Word of God.**

**EMAIL:** [Info@119ministries.com](mailto:Info@119ministries.com)

**FACEBOOK:** [www.facebook.com/119Ministries](http://www.facebook.com/119Ministries)

**WEBSITE:** [www.TestEverything.net](http://www.TestEverything.net) & [www.ExaminatoTodo.net](http://www.ExaminatoTodo.net)

**TWITTER:** [www.twitter.com/119Ministries#](https://www.twitter.com/119Ministries#)