

God's Prophetic roadmap Part 2 Shavu'ot

By

Former Pastor Dr. Joel Minto *

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As we discussed in the introduction, God gave to Moses on Mt Sinai seven feasts which he commanded the Nation of Israel to celebrate each year:

“23 The LORD said to Moses, “Speak to the Israelites and say to them: These are my appointed festivals, the appointed festivals of the LORD, which you are to proclaim as sacred assemblies.”

Today we discuss the final feast of the spring season and the culmination of the Passover season.

Leviticus 23:16-19 English Standard Version (ESV)

16 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. 17 You shall bring from your dwelling places two loaves of bread to be waved, made of two tenths of an ephah. They shall be of fine flour, and they shall be baked with leaven, as first fruits to the Lord. 18 And you shall present with the bread seven lambs a year old without blemish, and one bull from the herd and two rams. They shall be a burnt offering to the Lord, with their grain offering and their drink offerings, a food offering with a exactly seven weeks after the Exodus pleasing aroma to the Lord.

Like many Jewish holidays, Shavu'ot is known by several names. Shavu'ot means “weeks,” and, because of the counting of seven weeks, the festival is called the Feast of Weeks. As it also relates to the harvest and the offering of the first fruits of the standing wheat harvest, Shavu'ot is also called the Feast of First Fruits. The 50-day count gave Shavu'ot a Greek name as well: Pentecost. This festival was also one of the three festivals that required the nation to assemble in Jerusalem at the Temple to present their first fruits.

According to the sages: The new moon of Nisan marks the start of this feast period. Passover remembers the sacrifice of the Passover Lamb, the first day of Unleavened Bread, remembers the exodus from Egypt. The seventh day of Unleavened Bread marks the crossing of the Red Sea, and the counting of the Omer recalls the time before the giving of the Torah or Law at Sinai. Shavu'ot

remembers the giving of the Law exactly seven weeks after the Exodus on Sivan 6 or 7.

Centuries after God gave the Law on Mount Sinai, He said there would come a day when He would write His law on the hearts of His People. Jeremiah foretold the day when God would make a new covenant with His People, saying, **Jeremiah 31:31-34** New International Version (NIV)

³¹ **“The days are coming,” declares the Lord,**

**“when I will make a new covenant
with the people of Israel
and with the people of Judah.**

³² **It will not be like the covenant**

**I made with their ancestors
when I took them by the hand
to lead them out of Egypt,
because they broke my covenant,
though I was a husband to^[a] them,^[b]”
declares the Lord.**

³³ **“This is the covenant I will make with the people of Israel
after that time,” declares the Lord.**

**“I will put my law in their minds
and write it on their hearts.**

**I will be their God,
and they will be my people.**

³⁴ **No longer will they teach their neighbor,
or say to one another, ‘Know the Lord,’
because they will all know me,
from the least of them to the greatest,”
declares the Lord.**

**“For I will forgive their wickedness
and will remember their sins no more.”**

He also declared, in **Ezekiel 36:27**: ²⁷ **And I will put my Spirit in you and move you to follow my decrees and be careful to keep my laws.** God fulfilled this prophecy when He gave His Holy Spirit (ruach) at the Feast of Shavu'ot.

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Most Evangelicals today call Pentecost the birth of the Christian Church. That type of thinking I believe is outside of God's plan for all mankind and is also steeped in the history of anti-Semitism that pervades the Church today. In 325 A.D., the Council of Nicea emphatically separated the celebration of Jesus' resurrection from Passover. Though the resurrection occurred on the Sunday following Passover, the Council did not want the holiday associated with Passover. Animosity toward Jewish People had grown in the Church, which by then consisted largely of Gentiles. The Council overlooked that the Gospel was "for the Jew first" (Romans 1:16) and that Gentiles are grafted into the covenant God made with the Jewish People (Romans 11) through Jesus. The decision was unfortunate and revealed just how soon in history that the Church let the Apostle Paul's words fade from their understanding. The Nicean Council abandoned the Jewish calendar for the Gregorian and declared the resurrection would be celebrated the first Sunday after the new moon following the Spring Equinox, which is always March 21. Since the Nicean Council's decision, Pentecost has been marked as 50 days after Easter.

History plays a significant way that we look at the world and how we celebrate or commemorate The Feasts of God. In my thinking this is not the birth of something new, rather it was the beginning of a new way in which God would interact with His people both Jew and Gentile. A New Covenant. There are some interesting things that the Israelites did to celebrate this feast that are both significant and prophetic. After they had settled into the Promised Land the Feast of Shavu'ot became an agricultural feast that signified the start of the spring harvest season. The first fruits of crops were called the *bikkurim* and were referred to as the *Shivat Haminim* (the seven species of fruits) These were; wheat, barley, dates, figs, grapes, pomegranates and olives. When a farmer would see these first emerging crops he would tie a string around them and designate them as the *bikkurim*. This is the fruit that he would then harvest and take with him to the Temple to offer as God had commanded. It is interesting that the fruits of the Nation were seven in number. While it may not hold any significance in this context it is easy to think that since there were seven fruits in the Promised Land it could represent the fruits as being finished or complete. If we equate the fruits to the representation of people joined back to God, then we have a beautiful picture of all the nations being called back to God through the Messiah Jesus. Both Jew and Gentile under a New Covenant on that special Feast of Shavu'ot. This is the offering that is given to the Priests to lay at the altar.

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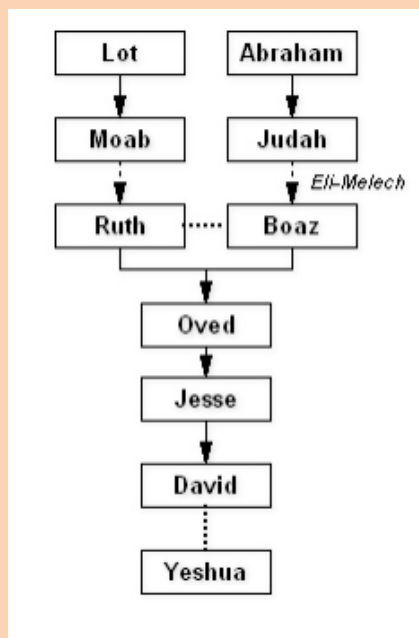
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Similar to the first crop of barley that was waved before the altar during the Festival of First Fruits, so on Shavu'ot a sample of the first fruit of the Spring harvest, wheat, baked with yeast made into two loaves was also waved before the altar. Leviticus 23:15-20. There is some uncertainty by the Jewish scholars as to the meaning of the use of leaven that was forbidden (Leviticus 2:11) though prophetically it is a picture of the one new man (composed of both Jew and Gentile) before the altar of the Lord. (Ephesians 2:14)

There is one final custom that has been passed down through the centuries and read in every synagogue at this time. That is the reading of the Book of Ruth (Megillat Rut). This book is read in the synagogue at this time, since the events of the story took place during the time of the spring harvest, linking it to the agricultural aspect of the Feast. It is also a story of the willing acceptance of a Jewish lifestyle linking it to the events at Sinai. Ruth was a Moabite, a non-Jew who converted to the Jewish faith and became part of the lineage of King David and the Messiah, Jesus through the love of a *goel*, or kinsman redeemer.

As the *goel* or kinsman redeemer, Boaz was a wealthy man of the tribe of Judah who married a Gentile bride. Boaz's name means "in Him is strength" a picture of the Messiah to come. This is a beautiful picture of Jesus, who also redeemed to Himself a bride from among the Gentile nations.



The genealogy comes from the website hebrew4christians.com.

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The prophetic significance of this Feast is the culmination of the redemptive acts of Jesus. He has taken all of us that believe in Him as the Messiah as His Bride both Jew and Gentile, we now await the Feasts that have yet to be fulfilled, the first being the Feast of Trumpets.

The Holy Days have meanings that build upon each other. Together they progressively reveal how God works with humanity.

Earlier we saw Passover symbolizing Christ's giving of Himself for us so our sins could be forgiven and we could be redeemed from death. We also learned how the Days of Unleavened Bread teach us that we must remove and avoid sin and instead obey God in actions and attitudes. The next festival and Holy Day, Pentecost, builds on this important foundation.

This festival is known by several names that derive from its meaning and timing. Also known as the Feast of Harvest (Exodus 23:16), it represents the firstfruits (Numbers 28:26) gathered as the result of the labor of those who completed the spring grain harvests in ancient Israel (Exodus 23:16).

It is also called the Feast of Weeks (Exodus 34:22), with this name coming from the seven weeks plus one day (50 days in all) that are counted to determine when to celebrate this festival (Leviticus 23:16). Similarly, in the New Testament, which was written in Greek, this festival is known as Pentecost (Pentekostos in the original), which means "fiftieth" (W.E. Vine, Vine's Complete Expository Dictionary of Old and New Testament Words, 1985, "Pentecost").

Among Jews the most popular name for this festival is the Feast of Weeks, or Shavuot, in Hebrew. When celebrating this festival, many Jewish people recall one of the greatest events in history, God's revealing of the law at Mount Sinai.

But Pentecost doesn't just picture the giving of the law; it also shows—through a great miracle that occurred on the first Pentecost in the early Church—how we can persist in living by the spiritual intent of God's laws.

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