

A Study on the Festival of Shavuot

notes by Tim Hegg

The Festival of Shavuot

- Why is the Festival called “Shavuot”?
- Why are we to count the days and weeks between Pesach and Shavuot?
- What were the historical events which occurred on Shavuot and how do these reveal the lessons we are to learn as we celebrate the Festival?
- All of the appointed times offer us a special opportunity to do a personal, spiritual inventory. “How am I doing as someone who has been redeemed from slavery in order to serve God?”

Why is the Festival called Shavuot?

- *Shavu'ot* is the plural form of the Hebrew word *Shavu'a* meaning “week” or a period of seven consecutive days.
- The time period of a “week” is not marked by natural phenomena in the created universe.
 - Days are marked by the rising & setting of the sun.
 - Months are marked by the phases of the moon.
 - Years are marked by the position of the sun.
- The time period of a week is marked by the divine gift of the Shabbat. Hebrew שבוע (*shavu'a*) meaning “week” is derived from the word meaning “seven,” i.e., seven consecutive days.
- We only know when a week begins and ends by taking account of the Shabbat. Thus, the “week” is a gift of God’s grace given to His people.
- In the same way, the reckoning of Shavuot is not marked by sun or moon, but by observing the commandments given to us by God’s grace.
- “*Shavu'a*” literally means a “span of time made up of seven units.” This can be 7 days, 7 years, 7 sabbatical years or even 7 Yovel (Jubilee) years.
- Thus, the Torah commands us to count both days and units of seven (weeks) which is why the Festival is called “*Shavu'ot*,” literally “weeks.”

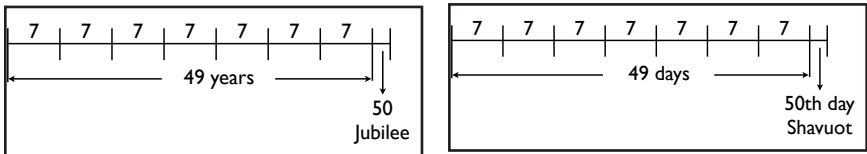
You shall also count for yourselves from the day after the sabbath, from the day when you brought in the sheaf of the wave offering; there shall be seven complete sabbaths. You shall count fifty days to the day after the seventh sabbath; then you shall present a new grain offering to ADONAI. (Lev 23:15–16)

Shavuot: Connected to Pesach

- Why did God command us to count the days from the Festival of Pesach in order to determine the day of the Shavuot Festival?
 - In order to teach us that Shavuot is tied to Pesach
 - Pesach = being redeemed from slavery
 - But for what purpose did God redeem us from slavery?
 - “Let My people go that they may serve Me” (Ex 8:20)

Why 7 Weeks & the 50th Day?

- The period of time between Pesach and Shavuot models the cycle of Shemittah (שְׁמִטָּה, *shemittah*) years and the Yovel (יּוֹבֵל, *yoveil*), Jubilee.



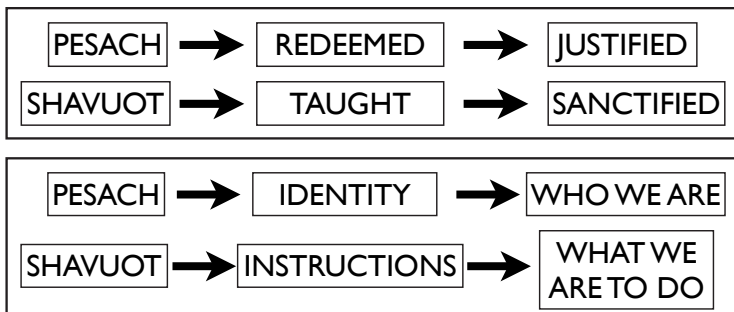
- What is the significance of this similar pattern between Pesach/Shavuot and the Shemittah/Jubilee cycle?
 - Jubilee (Yovel) signified “remission of debt” and a return of the land to its rightful owner.
 - In one sense, the Jubilee pictures the complete redemption of Israel and the final day of salvation in the world to come.
 - The Pesach/Shavuot cycle is therefore a yearly reminder to keep our eyes focused upon our final destination – eternity with Yeshua.

Beloved, now we are children of God, and it has not appeared as yet what we will be. We know that when He appears, we will be like Him, because we will see Him just as He is. And everyone who has this hope fixed on Him purifies himself, just as He is pure. (1John 3:2-3)

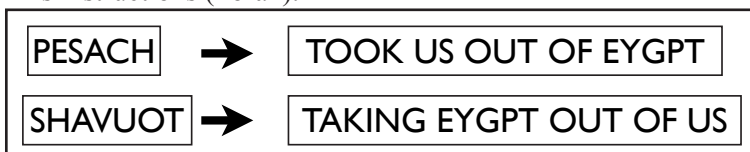
- Is the anticipation of the Messiah’s return something that is part of my daily life?
- Have I allowed the “tyranny of the urgent” or the “daily grind” to divert my attention away from those things which are eternal?
- How do my life priorities have eternity in view?

Shavuot in History

- The first major event which occurred on Shavuot was the giving of the Torah at Mt. Sinai.
- How does this give a primary definition to the meaning of the Festival?



- The Torah was given to Israel at Shavuot to instruct us how we are to serve God as His redeemed people.
- We can only serve God as He intends when our lives are conforming to His instructions (Torah).



And do not be conformed to this world, but be transformed by the renewing of your mind, so that you may prove what the will of God is, that which is good and acceptable and perfect. (Rom 12:2)

For we are His workmanship, created in Messiah Yeshua for good works, which God prepared beforehand so that we would walk in them. (Eph 2:9–10)

- The second major event which occurred at Shavuot was the outpouring of the Ruach, as recorded in Acts 2.

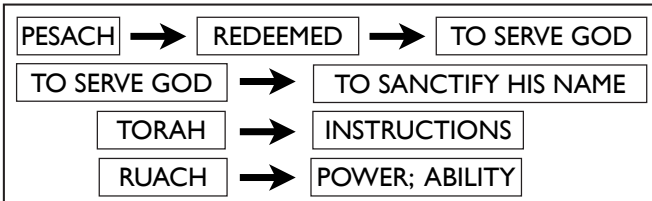
When the day of Shavuot had come, they were all together in one place. And suddenly there came from heaven a noise like a violent rushing wind, and it filled the whole house where they were sitting. And there appeared to them tongues as of fire distributing themselves, and they rested on each one of them. And they were all filled with the Ruach HaKodesh and began to speak with other languages, as the Ruach was giving them ability to speak. (Acts 2:1–4)

- What is the significance of the fact that the Ruach was given in this way at the Festival of Shavuot?

You are witnesses of these things. And behold, I am sending forth the promise of My Father upon you; but you are to stay in the city until you are clothed with power from on high.” (Lk 24:48–49)

...you will receive power when the Ruach HaKodesh has come upon you; and you shall be My witnesses both in Jerusalem, and in all Judea and Samaria, and even to the remotest part of the earth. (Acts 1:8)

The Empowering Presence of the Ruach



- We are to sanctify the Name by being Yeshua’s witnesses to all of the nations.
- The Festival of Shavuot reminds us that one of our primary duties as servants of HaShem is to spread the Good News of Yeshua to all of the nations.
- The Festival of Shavuot also reminds us that we must constantly be led by the Ruach HaKodesh Who empowers us to be effective in being living witnesses for Yeshua.
- Am I committed to sharing the Good News about Yeshua to others?
- Am I preparing myself to be ready to “give an answer to anyone who asks me about the hope that is within me”?

but sanctify Messiah as Lord in your hearts, always being ready to make a defense to everyone who asks you to give an account for the hope that is in you, yet with gentleness and reverence; (1Pet 3:15)

Let’s Summarize

- We were redeemed in order to serve God:
 - The giving of the Torah as God’s instructions in righteousness tells us how we are to serve Him: by living in accordance with His commandments.
 - Serving Him is the primary reason for which He redeemed us from the slavery of sin.
- We are empowered by the indwelling presence of the Ruach in order to be witnesses for Yeshua.
 - Do we have this mission as a priority in our daily lives?
 - How in touch are we with the leading of the Ruach in our individual lives? ...in the lives of our family? ...in our community?
- Shavuot follows the pattern of the Yovel (Jubilee), and thus emphasizes eternity.
 - Are we living our lives with eternity in view?
 - Are we regularly anticipating the return of Yeshua?
 - How does this affect our priorities, our choices, our ability to persevere?