

Selah

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For Out of Zion Shall Go Forth the Law

SHAVUOT! Weeks! First Fruits! Pentecost! Many names for one holiday! Well, this is typical of the Feasts of the Lord because each one is multi-faceted and profound.

By now, the holiday of Shavuot is over, the first night having been on May 19th. However, there is still much to learn from it!

This particular festival is unusual in that, unlike the other feasts of the Lord, there is no specific date ascribed to it! The only way to ascertain the time of this feast was to count 50 days 'from the morrow after the sabbath' of Passover (Lev 23:15). Because there are 2 sabbaths during the Passover period (the first day of the feast *and* the Saturday during that week), much fierce debate used to take place as to its actual date!

As with other holidays, this one is celebrated with particular foods and customs, including specific readings from the Bible. For example, certain fruits and vegetables are eaten, as suggested by the name 'First Fruits' or 'Bikkurim'. The eating of sweet dairy foods is also a tradition

during this festival, which is great if one likes ice cream! Among the special readings, in the synagogues, is the public reading of the entire book of Ruth, since that story took place at this time of year.

One very strong tradition, connected to this holiday, is that Moses received The Law at Sinai on this date, so the synagogue readings for the first night of Shavuot include Ex. 19:1 – 20:23. Another tradition is for people to gather in synagogues, on the evening before the feast, to stay up all night and study the Bible! I recall attending one of these study nights. Many people came, but only 3 of us could speak Hebrew: the Rabbi, an Israeli Kibbutznik and me! You can imagine that the discussions became quite lively, at times! Thankfully, there were plenty of cheesecakes and blintzes to keep things sweet!

In the New Testament, we read of an event that took place on Shavuot, in Acts, chapter 2. It is interesting that v.1 says, 'And when the day of Pentecost was fully come...!' No matter what disagreements there may have been about the date, God is in charge of His Feasts! It was at that time that the

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Holy Spirit filled the disciples of Jesus and they spoke with other tongues, with the appearance of 'cloven tongues as of fire' resting on each one of them! It certainly is reminiscent of what happened at Sinai, where the mountain smoked because the Lord descended on it in fire (Ex 19:18).

In the Biblical pattern for observing this feast, I find a very curious instruction: besides the various animal sacrifices and offerings to be brought, the scripture says, 'Ye shall bring out of your habitations *two* wave loaves...they shall be baked *with leaven*; they are the *firstfruits* unto the Lord.' (Lev. 23:17). What?! *Leaven*?! The previous feast (Passover) was all about *purging out* the leaven!! What does this mean?



As some have proposed, the two wave loaves could refer to Jews and Gentiles. I believe that there is substance for this. Remember that the story of Ruth is read at Shavuot. It is the story of a Gentile woman who, by faith, enters into the plans and purposes of God for Israel and the world!

Also, with Shavuot being such an important festival, do we find Jesus referring to it?

Jesus spoke to the woman of Samaria, at the well in Sychar, in the 4th chapter of John's Gospel. The Samaritans were not Jewish. In fact, Jewish people were almost prohibited from having dealings with Samaritans! In Jesus' encounter with her, He reveals that He is the Messiah and the

giver of the 'living water' (a symbol of the Holy Spirit). Later, when His disciples approached Him, He said to them, 'Say not ye, "There are yet four months, and then cometh the harvest?"' Four months before the final Harvest Festival (Sukkot/Tabernacles) is the feast of Shavuot! So this event must have taken place at Shavuot, with the non-Jewish woman and the souls of Sychar being referred to as 'harvest' between the fourth and seventh months, as 'many of the Samaritans of that city believed on Him...and many more' (John 4: 39-41); a firstfruits from among the Gentiles!

But what about the leaven? Well, these loaves are referred to as 'wave loaves'. The Hebrew (תנופה) signifies 'swinging' or 'brandishing'. The root (נפה) also means 'to sieve' or 'sift'. When we first come to God, we still have vestiges of old, sinful tendencies, which need to be examined and 'sifted' by the Lord. The Samaritan woman's sins were revealed by Jesus. Isaiah 30:28 tells us that God will 'sift the nations' and Amos 9:9 shows that God will 'sift the House of Israel.'

At Sinai, the Covenant was made between God and Israel and the 10 Commandments written on stone. But Jeremiah prophesied that God was going to make a New Covenant with the house of Israel and the house of Judah – not like the old one made at Sinai! By the new one, He promised to put His Law in their inward parts and write it in their hearts! (Jer. 31: 31-33) God also promised, through Ezekiel, that He would give Israel a new heart and a new spirit; that He would put His Spirit within them and cause them to walk in His ways. (Ezek. 36:26)

In Hebrew, there are two different ways of expressing a verb in the negative: One is אל - negative command: 'Don't'. The other is לא – 'You won't'. The negative



form used in the 10 Commandments is the 'you won't' form. In other words, it's more of a promise than a prohibition: 'You won't kill, you won't steal', etc.

The Feast of Shavuot certainly speaks of the days in which we are now living, as we look forward to the final Ingathering at the end of the age. When it comes to Biblical covenants, a new one could only supersede an old one if it improved the old one! As a result of putting one's trust in Jesus (Yeshua), we can receive a new heart, a new spirit, have God's Holy Spirit put within us and have our sinful tendencies sifted out, while God changes us and writes His Law on our hearts! Believing in Jesus is Jewish! Just ask those first 3000 Jewish 'Bikkurim' who believed in Jesus, while in the Temple at Shavuot, as recorded in the second chapter of Acts!

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