

בשורה *Besorah!*

Two Wave Loaves - The mystery of the Church & Israel

Shavuot! The cycle of the Lord's Feasts enables us to take time each year to meditate afresh on their types and truths. Of all the Feasts, I find Shavuot (Feast of Weeks) the most intriguing. We remember and rejoice that the Holy Spirit came upon the early believers, as they observed Shavuot, in Acts 2. Is there anything else we can *glean*?

Previously, we discussed the Wave Sheaf and its fulfilment in Yeshua. The sheaf is cut down and waved immediately after Passover. Then, 50 days are counted (hence the term Pentecost) until the Two Wave Loaves are brought. Shavuot does not have its 'own' date affixed to it, but relies on the counting of days after the Wave Sheaf was offered. It is therefore directly linked to the timing of Passover and cannot be reckoned otherwise.

There are two references to 'firstfruits' in Leviticus 23. The first one (v.10) refers to the Wave Sheaf and uses the Hebrew word 'chief' or 'beginning' (ראשית – as in Gen. 1:1, 'in the beginning'), whereas the second one refers to the two wave loaves (v.17), and is בכורים – 'firstborn'. This word is also used regarding 'birthright'. Clearly, Jesus is 'first', as portrayed by the Wave Sheaf, and Israel is the 'firstborn-son', to whom belongs the birthright, as Moses declared to Pharaoh in Exodus 4: 22.

Perhaps the most thought-provoking aspect of this Holiday is the unique, central feature of two loaves of bread. They are peculiar in that they are to be made with leaven and that there are two of them (Lev 23:17)!

The Lord forbids the offering of leaven in any of the meat offerings (Lev 2:11, Lev 6:17) and leaven was *expressly* prohibited in the observance of Passover (Ex 12:15, 19), under penalty of being cut off. This applied to both the native and the stranger. So how can Shavuot, which is directly connected to Passover, specifically *require* leaven, when leaven is symbolic of sin?!

Well, we find leaven allowed in the Peace Offering. Scripture tells us that there are **three** types of Peace Offerings: Voluntary, Votive and Thanksgiving (Lev 7:11-16). Only the Thanksgiving Peace Offering was to include leaven (v 13). But 'why is *this* offering (Thanksgiving) different from all other offerings?!' Perhaps the answer lies in the name itself: Thanksgiving. The Hebrew word for 'thank/thanks/thanksgiving' is 'todah' (תודה). While it may imply gratitude, the essence of 'todah' is 'confession' or 'acknowledgement'. We see this in Joshua chapter 7. The whole nation was 'sifted' until the sin of Achan was located. Joshua adjured him to confess exactly what he had done, not



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hiding anything. Joshua told him, literally, to 'give thanks to God' (ותִּתְּנוּ לַיהוָה תְּהִלָּה - Josh 7:19).

There is a difference between sin IN us and sin ON us. We all have sin in us, but Leviticus 7:20 reads, 'But the soul that eateth of the flesh of the sacrifice of peace offerings, that pertain unto the LORD, having his uncleanness upon him, even that soul shall be cut off from his people. 1 John 1:8, 9 says, 'If we say that we have no sin (sing.), we deceive ourselves, and the truth is not in us. If we confess our sins (pl.), he is faithful and just to forgive us our sins, and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness'. The thanksgiving offering was brought only *after* sins were confessed and atoned for. The 'answer' to the leaven is found in Lev. 23:19: 'Then ye shall sacrifice one kid of the goats for a sin offering, and two lambs of the first year for a sacrifice of peace offerings'.

But why are there **two** loaves? Many have written that they represent the Jewish and Gentile members that make up the Body of Messiah. This may be, but I would like to offer another possibility: that they represent the whole, physical nation of Israel. There are many places in Scripture where 'two things' represent a composite unity (אֶחָד): The two tables of the Law (Ex 34:1), the two onyx stones on the High Priest's shoulder pieces, engraved with 12 tribes (Ex 28: 9 – 12), the 2 goats for the Day of Atonement (Lev 16:7) and Joseph's two dreams (Gen 37). These all have to do with *national* Israel. When Joseph interpreted Pharaoh's two dreams, he said, 'The dream of Pharaoh is one: God hath shewed Pharaoh what he is about to do... the dream is one...the dream was doubled unto Pharaoh twice; it is because the thing is established by God, and God will shortly bring it to pass' (Gen 41:25-32). Pharaoh's dreams also appertained to the salvation of Israel *as a nation*.

Ezekiel 37 contains a prophetic vision that somewhat mirrors Acts 2. Ezekiel was shown a valley of dry bones that represented the whole house of Israel (v. 11). As a result of his obedient prophecy, the bones came together with a 'noise and a shaking' (lit. 'rushing', v. 7). God commanded Ezekiel to prophesy again and the 'wind/breath' (lit. 'spirit') entered them (v. 9, 10). Ezekiel was then instructed to join two sticks – one for the northern kingdom and one for the southern kingdom; Judah and Ephraim (v. 16, 17) - and that they would become one in his hand.

Besides the two leavened loaves, the Lord commanded: 'And ye shall offer with the bread seven lambs without blemish of the first year, and one young bullock, and two rams' (Lev 23:18). Space only allows for comment on the seven lambs. These refer to Beersheva (Well of Seven/Oath), where Abraham made a covenant with Abimelech, after the Lord prevented Sarah from being violated, which would have ended God's plan for the nation (Gen 20:3 – 21: 32). Isaac also renewed this covenant with Abimelech, after the same thing nearly happened with Rebecca (Gen 26:7- 33). Then, it was at Beersheva that Jacob obtained the blessing in Esau's place (Gen 27:19; 28:10), confirming the birthright (בְּכֹרֶת) that he'd originally purchased from Esau (Gen 25:31). Again, these 7 lambs represent the preservation of the nation.

In suggesting that the two loaves represent the whole nation of Israel, am I excluding the Gentiles from salvation in any way? Not at all. Provision for the Gentiles comes immediately after the ordinance for Shavuot: 'And when ye reap the harvest of your land, thou shalt not make clean riddance of the corners of thy field when thou reapest, neither shalt thou gather any gleaning of thy

harvest: thou shalt leave them unto the poor, and to the stranger: I am the LORD your God' (Lev 23:22).

Writing to the largely Gentile church in Rome, Paul had to address a specific issue. Historically, the Jews had been expelled from Rome (Acts 18:2), but were later returning. Throughout the entire missive, Paul addressed an arrogance that had crept into the church in the interim and set out God's order according to the festival of Shavuot (as I see it): The JEW FIRST, THEN THE GREEK (Rom 1:16, 2:9, 2:10). Reaching chapter 8, Paul explained life in the Spirit - as opposed to the flesh and the Law – to the Romans. He instructs that those who are led by the Spirit of God are the sons of God, having received the Spirit of 'adoption' (lit. 'sonship'), whereby we can cry 'Abba', Father. While Gentiles become heirs as spiritual children, God still maintains His order: To the Jew first, and also to the Gentile.

Paul writes of his kinsmen, according to the flesh: '...who are Israelites; to whom pertaineth the 'adoption' (sonship), and the glory, and the covenants, and the giving of the law, and the service of God, and the promises' (Rom 9:4). He illustrates the spiritual aspect of the sonship of believing Gentiles again, using the Olive Tree in Rom 11:17-21.

The mystery of the Church and Israel is woven throughout scripture and Paul's warnings and exhortations to Gentile believers sadly still need to be understood and obeyed today.

Gleaning is the provision for the Gentiles, not as a poor urchin but rather with abundant favour (Ruth 2:8 – 11), full reward (2:12) and abundant provision (2: 14). Ruth, whose story took place at Shavuot, was given 'handfuls of purpose' – the only time in Scripture this phrase is used!

Physical Israel is God's firstborn son, even in unbelief. Regarding the Wave Loaves, Lev 23: 17 instructs: 'Ye shall bring out of your habitations two wave loaves of two tenth deals: they shall be of fine flour; they shall be baked with leaven; they are the firstfruits unto the LORD'. In his letter 'to the twelve tribes scattered abroad', James wrote: 'of His own will begat He us with the word of truth, that we should be a kind of firstfruits of his creatures' (James 1: 1, 18). After being sifted among all the nations (Amos 9:9), all Israel will be gathered and saved: 'And so all Israel shall be saved: as it is written, There shall come out of Sion the Deliverer, and shall turn away ungodliness from Jacob: For this is my covenant unto them, when I shall take away their sins' (Rom 11:26, 27). In light of current divisions within the nation, the 'two loaves' being gathered out of all the world and becoming 'one' unto salvation is a thrilling expectation! But for now, there is a remnant according to the election of grace (Rom 11:5).

To summarize, Passover's lamb and unleavened bread represent Yeshua in His perfect sacrifice. Shavuot represents the firstfruits of Jewish believers in Jesus – a remnant for now - along with Gentile believers ('gleaners') who are grafted in by faith, with the Holy Spirit being poured out upon both (Acts 2 and 10). Non-Jewish believers in Jesus have received the 'spirit of adoption' (lit. 'sonship') and are exhorted not to be ignorant of this mystery or arrogant towards Jewish people. Looking on with mercy, we must humbly embrace God's order in sharing the Gospel: to the Jew first, and also to the Greek, until all Israel is saved.

Chrissy Rodgers