

## Shavuot (Pentecost)

By Moshe Schwab

To start with, here are some interesting points about this time of year:

\* The book of Jubilees chapter 6 says that before Israel's Mt. Sinai experience, Shavuot was a perpetual celebration of God saving man from the flood. It also says there that Shavuot was celebrated since the time of creation.

\* Zechariah served as a Cohen (priest) on the course of Aviyah. According to some, this course began on the seventh Shabbat after Pesach (Passover). All priests served on the holidays, so he would have begun his service after Shavuot. That is likely when the angel told him that he would have a son. His son, Yochanan the Immerser, would be the Elijah type person who came before Yeshua (Jesus). If you allow for the timing of conception, Yochanan the Elijah to come before Yeshua would have been born around Pesach (Passover).

Pesach is the time that we set a place for Elijah at the Pesach table, and we open our doors and sing a song asking Elijah to come with the Messiah, son of David (the song is Eliyahu Hanavi). Yeshua was then born 6 months after Yochanan. Some say on Rosh Hashanah also known as the Day of Shouting (the angels were shouting and the trumpets were blowing), others say on Sukkot. It had to be a major Jewish holiday because the inns were full and Bethlehem is near Jerusalem (Luke 2:7).

\* We know that Rome installed a high priest in Jerusalem; their high priest **was not the real high priest**. The real High Priest would have been selected from the real priests in the line of Aaron. That meant when Zechariah was picked to serve at the Temple, Zechariah was the real High Priest. He was chosen by "lot," (Luke 1:8-9) so he was the real High Priest. It is very likely then that since an angel announced Yochanan the Immerser's birth (John the Baptist; Yeshua's cousin), God Himself picked Yochanan the Immerser to be the next high priest.

Yeshua was not only in the line of David, but was in the line of Aaron which also made Him a priest. It is likely then that after the death of the High Priest Yochanan the Immerser, Yeshua became the real High Priest. That's why it says in Hebrews 4:14-16 NKJV, "Seeing then that we have a great High Priest who has passed through the heavens, Jesus the Son of God, let us hold fast our confession. For we do not have a High Priest who cannot sympathize with our weaknesses, but was in all points tempted as we are, yet without sin. Let us therefore come boldly to the throne of grace, that we may obtain mercy and find grace to help in time of need." The High Priest made the sacrifice for sin once a year on Yom Kippur. The year Yeshua gave Himself for our sins, He was the High Priest and lamb of God who gave Himself for our sin.

How could something so amazing as Zechariah being the High Priest be forgotten? We have to remember that the Roman Empire made up their own religion mixed with pagan practice. They were trying to disassociate the Bible from its Jewish roots and even made celebrating God's feasts illegal (true believers would never had made God's feasts illegal; Leviticus 23:2, "These are My feast."). Because of this, believers in the Messiah had lost all sense of its Jewish roots and how to follow God the way they were supposed to. The Jews were believers in the true God. Remember, Yeshua (Jesus) was Jewish and so were all the apostles and Paul. All the early believers were Jewish and we now have historic proof that mainstream Judaism and Messianic Judaism coexisted and **were never** at odds with each other. The church of the Roman empire killed and persecuted the true early believers in the Messiah in order to establish their false religion. Messianic Jews never persecuted Jews; they were the ones being persecuted.

Also, it is recorded that after Yeshua died and rose from the dead, Ya'akov (James), Yeshua's half-brother, served as High Priest for Yom Kippur a couple of times. So, not only was Yeshua the High Priest when he died and rose from the dead, but his brother became High Priest after Yeshua ascended to heaven! The High Priest is the only one allowed to do the ceremony for Yom Kippur (the day of atonement). Before the Temple was destroyed, we had a Messianic High Priest! Remember, Jews and Messianic Jews were never at odds. It was the pagan church of the Roman Empire that was at odds with the true believers.

\* The Passover (Pesach) lamb foreshadows the Messiah Yeshua (Jesus) giving Himself to set us free from sin. Yochanan the immerser (John the Baptist) said about Yeshua, "Look! God's lamb! The one who is taking away the sin of the world!" John 1:29 CJB. He was referring to Isaiah 53:6-7 CJB, "We all, like sheep, went astray; we turned, each one, to his own way; yet ADONAI laid on him the guilt of all of us. Though mistreated, he was submissive - he did not

open his mouth. Like a lamb led to be slaughtered." God said to Abraham, "God will provide himself the lamb;" Genesis 22:8 CJB.

- \* The first day of unleavened bread reminds us of the first day of freedom for God's people as they fled idolatrous Egypt so they could serve God, and the unleavened bread reminds us to flee sin.
- \* The giving of the law at Mt. Sinai in about 1447 BC to set God's people free to serve God foreshadows the future time that we are now in. The Holy Spirit was also given on Shavuot in about 30 AD to free us to serve God and free us from sin.
- \* The counting of the Omer before Shavuot reminds us of the anticipation of those who waited to be betrothed to God at Mt. Sinai when God gave us His instructions (Torah). Also, the counting of the Omer before Shavuot reminds us of the anticipation of those who waited to be betrothed to the Messiah at Jerusalem when He gave us the Holy Spirit as our helper through Yeshua our Messiah. Will the counting of the Omer be a future time of anticipation for the rule and reign of our God?
- \* The counting of the Omer is a time of harvest. Perhaps, the counting of the Omer is symbolic of the harvest of true believers over the years. The 49 days of the counting of the Omer also correlates with the years in between Jubilees. The Jubilee (Yovel) year is on the 50th year when debts are forgiven, slaves are set free, and land is returned. The Jubilee is a picture of the future kingdom and rule and reign of God with his people.
- \* The Mt. Sinai experience on Shavuot was like a wedding ceremony where Israel affirmed their commitment to God. The law was their Ketubah (marriage contract). Mt. Sinai was their wedding canopy (Chuppah). The counting of the Omer before Shavuot was a countdown to the marriage of the bride (believers in the true God) to the Messiah Yeshua in the future. Also, the Rabbis said that it rained and the desert bloomed the year Israel received God's commands at Mount Sinai. Israel was surrounded by flowers when God spoke to them from the heavens.
- \* Just like the confession Israel made to God ("All the words which the Lord has said we will do." in Ex. 24:3), our confession of faith in Yeshua affirms our commitment to follow God's commandments and be led by the Holy Spirit (also like affirming a Ketubah – a marriage agreement).
- \* The gift of the Holy Spirit is the evidence of God's commitment to us. The Holy Spirit would be the evidence of our messianic Ketubah (marriage agreement). We are to be faithful to the end, "We have become partakers of Christ if we hold the beginning of our confidence **steadfast to the end**;" Hebrews 3:14 NKJV.
- \* The giving of the law was a blessing from God to help Israel. They made Him their God and King and they had a personal relationship with Him. We also have a personal relationship with our God and King through the Holy Spirit.
- \* The final wedding celebration is to occur at the return of Yeshua and the wedding feast will likely occur on The Feast (of Sukkot) in the future kingdom.
- \* Israel was to bring their giving to the Temple when they went there for the three main feasts. Shavuot was one of those. Rather than giving all at once, it is a good idea to give as we get paid. Israel was supposed to give a little more than 10% per year. It says about those who work the scriptures for us and teach us, "The laborer is worthy of his wages;" 1 Timothy 5:18 NKJV. We are to give to those in need, "Be kindly affectionate to one another with brotherly love, in honor giving preference to one another; not lagging in diligence, fervent in spirit, serving the Lord; rejoicing in hope, patient in tribulation, continuing steadfastly in prayer; **distributing to the needs of the saints, given to hospitality**;" Romans 12:10-13 NKJV. Shavuot is a good time to remember to give; we are commanded to give.

### **Words of encouragement**

The year I wrote this, I had a couple of appropriate words from God that I want to share with you for Shavuot. Shavuot is time to reflect on what God has given us – deliverance, the law, the Holy Spirit, everything.

**\* We need to hear God's words of refreshing that renew our hearts.**

King Rehoboam, Solomon's successor was a failure because He didn't seek the Lord. "He did what was evil, because he had not set his heart on seeking ADONAI." 2 Chronicles 2:14 CJB

Rabbi Shaul (Paul) said, "**Do all you can** to present yourself to God as someone worthy of his approval, as a worker with no need to be ashamed." 2 Tim. 2:15 CJB. This is talking about the Old Testament portion scriptures. Shaul was a leading Jewish rabbi in the first century (Acts 23:6-9; They argued about the resurrection, not whether Shaul was a Pharisee or not). He says we need to know the scriptures so we can do what is right and good.<sup>1</sup>

When I first got on fire for God, I worked tirelessly trying to understand the Bible. I thought it was a book of mysteries that I had to read into; some call it reading in between the lines or adding extra meaning. People are still searching the Bible for extra meanings instead of encouraging others to do what is right.

Perhaps this is the mistake that the leadership in Yeshua's time made. Yeshua said, "You keep examining the Tanakh because you think that in it you have eternal life. Those very Scriptures bear witness to me;" John 5:39 CJB. The Tanakh (Old Testament portion) was a witness of Yeshua. If you read the New Testament gospel portions you think, "How could some of the people of Yeshua's time have missed it?" Most Jewish people accepted Him as the Messiah, but some didn't. Perhaps some were too busy reading extra into the scriptures and making extra laws.

It's not true the Jews didn't accept their Messiah. There were tens of thousands (myriads) who believed and kept the law, "You see, brother, how many myriads of Jews there are who have believed, and they are all zealous for the law;" Acts 21:20 NKJV. We know that this was about 28 years after Yeshua died and rose from the dead.<sup>2</sup> They were being led by the Holy Spirit to keep God's commandments.

Years ago, I talked to my Jewish friend David Roth about God and told him he should read the Bible (my grandmother was a Roth). I saw him a couple weeks later and I asked him if he read the Bible. He said he did and it had some nice stories.

The Bible are God's words and we need to believe they are not just stories or myths. The Greek myths are just that, myths. Rabbi Kefa (Peter) said in 2 Peter 1:20-21 NKJV, "Knowing this first, that no prophecy of Scripture is of any private interpretation, for prophecy never came by the will of man, but holy men of God spoke as they were moved by the Holy Spirit." 2 Peter 1:20-21 NKJV. The Old Testament are God's words and so is the New Testament. We are to believe them and also not to read more than into them than is there. We also have to understand the biblical cultural context or we will have a false understanding. Context is very important.

I once talked to a Bible scholar who told me that Yeshua didn't walk on water, He merely walked beside the water. The Bible says He walked on water; calmed the sea; created food for the people to eat; He died and He rose from the dead and wants to be our Messiah. We read other books without adding our own interpretations, why do that to the Bible? It says in Proverbs 30:6 (CJB) "Don't add anything to his words."

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<sup>1</sup> In 2 Timothy 3:14-17, Timothy is told to use the scriptures his mother taught him. His mother was Jewish (Acts 16:1). Therefore, the Old Testament portion is, "Valuable for teaching the truth, convicting of sin, correcting faults and training in right living; thus anyone who belongs to God may be fully equipped for every good work;" 2 Timothy 3:16-17 CJB.

<sup>2</sup> This scripture places Shaul in Jerusalem about 58-59 AD.

We also need to understand the words of the Bible in their context. Did you know the Bible says there is no God? Fools say in their hearts, "There is no God." Ps. 14:1 CJB. Did you know that Yeshua was Jewish and lived in a Jewish society that followed the Old Testament laws? If Yeshua was saying not to keep the law, no one would have listened to Him.

The same would be true about Shaul (Paul). If he was saying not to keep the Old Testament law, no one would have listened to Him. Shaul said, "Does it follow that we abolish Torah by this trusting? Heaven forbid! On the contrary, we confirm Torah;" Romans 3:31 CJB. If you think he is saying the Old Testament law is abolished you are misunderstanding him. He says to Timothy, "All Scripture is God-breathed and is valuable for teaching the truth, convicting of sin, correcting faults and training in right living; thus anyone who belongs to God may be fully equipped for every good work;" 2 Timothy 3:16-17 CJB. This has to be talking about the Old Testament portion; there was no New Testament portion at the time!

Not reading between the lines helped me immensely in my studies. Always stay bolted to what's written. It is God that gave us the scriptures and they need to be understood within their Jewish biblical or Hebraic context or we will have false teaching. The scriptures cannot be understood by plainly reading them or reading them without this context.

**\*Also, don't be superstitious. That is not trusting in God. Do what the Bible says. Amen.**

We touch our Mezuzot (which hold scriptures) because we love the scriptures.

We lay hands on people because that is the biblical model. God does the healing.

**Also, \*God has a design for His body of believers.**

Be part of the design. Find out what God wants you to do and participate. We don't belong to a book club, but to a living thriving body Shaul said. That body is to be actively working together on a mission for God. "The whole body is being fitted and held together by the support of every joint, with each part working to fulfill its function; this is how the body grows and builds itself up in love." Eph. 4:16 CJB

**\*We don't come to synagogue just to get out of the house and get our ears tickled.**

We are on a mission for God. Rabbi Shaul said, "For this reason, I am reminding you to fan the flame of God's gift." 2 Tim. 1:6 CJB. Get with it, let the Holy Spirit lead you and use you and also keep God's commandments (and let the Holy Spirit help you to keep God's commandments). Get involved doing something. Someone I know said He was going over and over in His mind about doing something for God when God said to him, "Do something."

**Finally,**

"Let us continue holding fast to the hope we acknowledge, without wavering; for the One who made the promise is trustworthy. And let us keep paying attention to one another, in order to spur each other on to love and good deeds;" Hebrews 10:23-24 CJB. Amen!

Shavuot means weeks because we are to count 7 **weeks** (not Sabbaths) from Pesach (Passover) and the 50th day is Shavuot. It is also known as Pentecost. Pentecost refers to the 50 day count following Pesach/Passover. Shavuot was celebrated from the time of creation and Noah celebrated it after that as a sign of God's covenant – that God would not destroy the earth by flood again.

"He set His bow in the cloud for a sign of the eternal covenant that there should not again be a flood on the earth to destroy it all the days of the earth. For this reason it is ordained and written on the heavenly tablets, that they should celebrate the feast of weeks in this month once a year, to renew the covenant every year. And this whole festival was celebrated in heaven from the day of creation till the days of

Noah.” Jubilees 6:16-18.<sup>3</sup>

Shavuot was celebrated since the time of creation. Noah and those after him celebrated it for God's deliverance, Israel was delivered from the Egyptians and was given the law at Mount Sinai on Shavuot.

We are delivered from sin through Yeshua the Messiah and the Holy Spirit was first given on Shavuot to help us. God wants us to receive His Messiah Yeshua and the Holy Spirit. "Kefa answered them, "Turn from sin, return to God, and each of you be immersed on the authority of Yeshua the Messiah into forgiveness of your sins, and you will receive the gift of the Ruach HaKodesh! For the promise is for you, for your children, and for those far away - as many as ADONAI our God may call!" Acts 2:38-39 CJB. Accept the authority of Messiah Yeshua and accept the Holy Spirit.

Shavuot is God's feast and a day of rest (Deuteronomy 16:9-12). It is one of the three feasts we are required to observe together.

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<sup>3</sup> <http://www.pseudepigrapha.com/jubilees/6.htm>