

Week #:	90	Series:	Hebrew Roots	Title:	Feast of Firstfruits; feast of Shavu'ot
Text:	Leviticus 23:4-22; Matthew 16:5-12; John 20:17; John 20:19; John 20:26-27; Matthew 26:2, Matthew 26:17; Matthew 28:1; Joel 2:28; John 14:26; Acts 2:1-4; Exodus 20:18; Jeremiah 31:33; Ezekiel 36:26-27;				
Songs:	You Are Holy (Prince of Peace) (4:18)				
	Barush Haba B'Shem Adonai – Paul Wilbur (8:39)				
	Kadosh – Paul Wilbur (5:54)				

The first of God's feasts listed in Leviticus 23 is the **Feast of Passover**, directly followed by a group of feasts that cluster together: **Feast of Unleavened Bread**, **Feast of Firstfruits**, and **Feast of Weeks (or Shavu'ot/Pentecost)**.

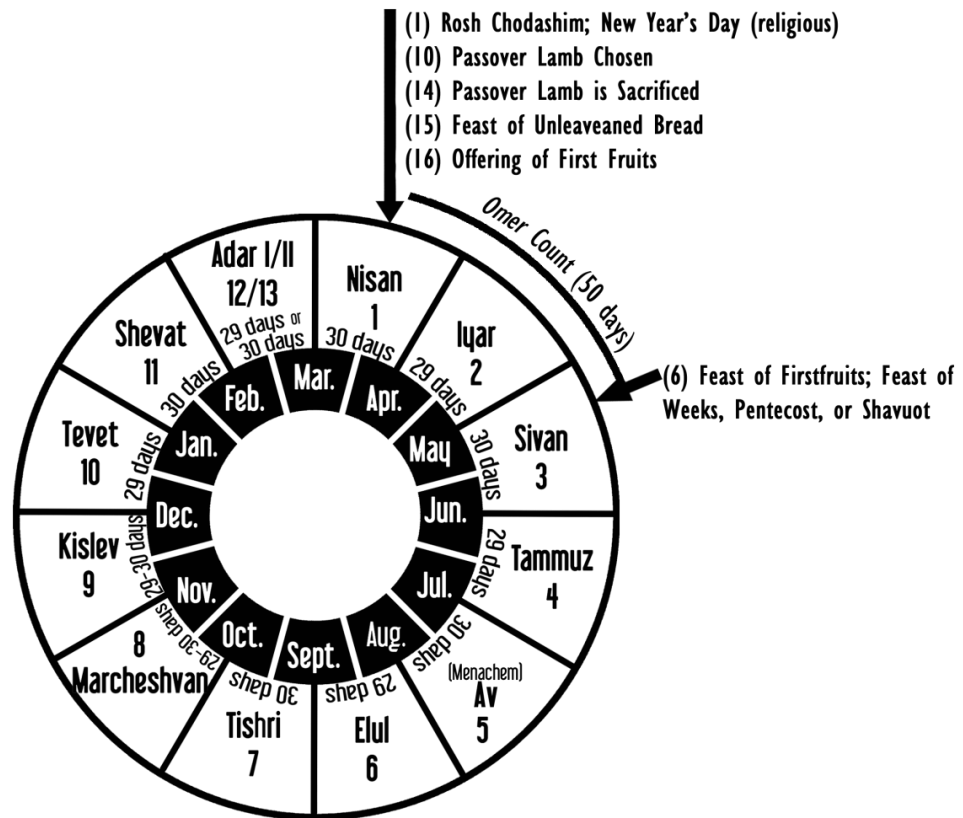
Leviticus 23:4-22 talks of them:

The Passover and Unleavened Bread

⁴ 'These are the feasts of the Lord, holy convocations which you shall proclaim at their appointed times. ⁵ On the fourteenth day of the first month at twilight is the Lord's Passover. ⁶ And on the fifteenth day of the same month is the Feast of Unleavened Bread to the Lord; seven days you must eat unleavened bread. ⁷ On the first day you shall have a holy convocation; you shall do no customary work on it. ⁸ But you shall offer an offering made by fire to the Lord for seven days. The seventh day shall be a holy convocation; you shall do no customary work on it.' "

The Feast of Firstfruits

⁹ And the Lord spoke to Moses, saying, ¹⁰ "Speak to the children of Israel, and say to them: 'When you come into the land which I give to you, and reap its harvest, then you shall **bring a sheaf of the firstfruits** of your harvest to the priest. ¹¹ He shall wave the sheaf before the Lord, to be accepted on your behalf; on the day after the Sabbath the priest shall wave it. ¹² And you shall offer on that day, when you wave the sheaf, a male lamb of the first year, without blemish, as a burnt offering to the Lord. ¹³ Its grain offering shall be two-tenths of an ephah of fine flour mixed with oil, an offering made by fire to the Lord, for a [b]sweet aroma; and its drink offering shall be of wine, one-fourth of a hin. ¹⁴ You shall eat neither bread nor parched grain nor fresh grain until the same day that you have brought an offering to your God; it shall be a statute forever throughout your generations in all your dwellings.



The Feast of Weeks

¹⁵ 'And you shall count for yourselves from the day after the Sabbath, from the day that you brought the sheaf of the wave offering: seven Sabbaths shall be completed. ¹⁶ Count fifty days to the day after the seventh Sabbath; then you shall offer a new grain offering to the Lord. ¹⁷ You shall bring from your dwellings two wave loaves of two-tenths of an ephah. They shall be of fine flour; they shall be baked with leaven. They are the firstfruits to the Lord. ¹⁸ And you shall offer with the bread seven lambs of the first year, without blemish, one young bull, and two rams. They shall be as a burnt offering to the Lord, with their grain offering and their drink offerings, an offering made by fire for a sweet aroma to the Lord. ¹⁹ Then you shall sacrifice one kid of the goats as a sin offering, and two male lambs of the first year as a sacrifice of a peace offering. ²⁰ The priest shall wave them with the bread of the firstfruits as a wave offering before the Lord, with the two lambs. They shall be holy to the Lord for the priest. ²¹ And you shall proclaim on the same day that it is a holy convocation to you. You shall do no customary work on it. It shall be a statute forever in all your dwellings throughout your generations.

²² 'When you reap the harvest of your land, you shall not wholly reap the corners of your field when you reap, nor shall you gather any gleaning from your harvest. You shall leave them for the poor and for the stranger: I am the Lord your God.' "

In ancient times the grain harvest lasted seven weeks. It began with the harvesting of barley, which marked when Passover was to begin, and ended with the harvesting of wheat at Shavu'ot. Shavu'ot was thus the concluding festival of the grain harvests. It is a tradition to read the book of Ruth at Shavu'ot, because the story is tied to the grain harvest.

The Torah states that the Sheaf Offering is the firstfruits of the barley harvest, and is to begin on the day after the Sabbath. It is to continue to be counted for seven Sabbaths – because these are the weeks it takes for the wheat to grow after the barley has been harvested. This is called **Counting of the Omer**. Omer means "sheaf" – it is calculated as being 1/10th of the harvest. This is where we get the TITHE offering. Tithe is 1/10th of the blessing, and it is given first.

The Feast of Firstfruits is then to be concluded on the day after the seventh Sabbath when two loaves of bread made from the harvesting of the firstfruits are offered. The loaves are given to the High Priest, and he offers a Wave Offering with them. They then are used for the priests.

The prophetic significance of the two loaves is that one loaf represents the Jewish people, God's people, and the other represents the Gentiles who are grafted in, or the church.

It's interesting to note that this bread is to be offered **with yeast**, because this feast follows after the Feast of Unleavened Bread in which all the yeast was to be removed from their houses. This is significant because we remove the old yeast and then bring in new yeast. God's spiritual spring cleaning is a reflection of the physical spring cleaning they were told to do at Passover.

Matthew 16:5-12 (The Leaven of the Pharisees and Sadducees)

⁵ Now when His disciples had come to the other side, they had forgotten to take bread. ⁶ Then Jesus said to them, “Take heed and beware of the leaven of the Pharisees and the Sadducees.”

⁷ And they reasoned among themselves, saying, “It is because we have taken no bread.”

⁸ But Jesus, being aware of it, said to them, “O you of little faith, why do you reason among yourselves because you have brought no bread? ⁹ Do you not yet understand, or remember the five loaves of the five thousand and how many baskets you took up? ¹⁰ Nor the seven loaves of the four thousand and how many large baskets you took up? ¹¹ How is it you do not understand that I did not speak to you concerning bread?—but to beware of the leaven of the Pharisees and Sadducees.” ¹² Then they understood that He did not tell them to beware of the leaven of bread, but of the doctrine of the Pharisees and Sadducees.

Leaven/yeast is basically old, fermented dough that is placed in new dough to make it rise. Anyone who has ever made fruitcake or sourdough can better understand this process. The yeast/leavening has to be started first (called a starter dough), then it has to be fed, and lastly it has to be used. This is a reflection of the Christian life: we first have to start in Christ, then we have to be fed on the Word, and then we can be used of God to spread Him to others, making them grow as well.

Jesus explained that the leaven represents teaching, and He warned against the leaven of the Pharisees and Sadducees, which is the doctrines and traditions of men.

Jesus also reminds them that after feeding 5000 there are 12 baskets left over, and after feeding 4000 there are 7 baskets left over. The first – the 12 – represents the Jewish nation... 12 tribes. The second – the 7 – represents the church... 7 churches of Asia Minor. So in this Jesus was the Bread of Life for the Jews and He was the Bread of Life for the Gentiles. (The priests are given two loaves of bread for an offering.)

In both of these instances Jesus took regular leavened bread, broke it, multiplied it miraculously, and passed out what he multiplied. What he passed out was not the original bread, it was HIS bread. This represents the replacing of man’s doctrines and teachings with that of God’s doctrines and teachings.

Once a year God required from the start that His people reevaluate what their doctrines were based upon. We should always go back to the original source [God’s Word!!] to see what God says about something.

So at Passover we learn to remove that old leaven, but at Shavu’ot we are given new leaven, new teaching, to apply.

The Feast of Firstfruits is a spring harvest festival following Passover. It begins with the waving of a single sheaf of the first fruits on the day after the Sabbath. Then seven weeks are counted, leading up to the culmination on the fiftieth day, the day after the seventh Sabbath.

The Feast of Shavu’ot/Weeks marks the conclusion of the counting of the seven weeks, also known as *Counting of the Omer*. This feast is known by several different names in the Bible. In Hebrew, Shavu’ot means *Weeks*. In Greek it’s called *Pentecost*, which means 50, and refers to the 50 days of counting. It’s also called the *Festival of Reaping*, and *Day of the Firstfruits*. However, calling it *Day of Firstfruits* seems a

bit confusing since the day beginning the count is also called *Firstfruits*. On the first day a single sheaf is waved to begin the grain harvest. At the end of seven weeks a celebration takes place.

History records that the sheaf was harvested on Saturday night, which began the first day of the week. It was then waved before and accepted by God on the first day of the week (Sunday) during the *Feast of Unleavened Bread* (Leviticus 23:11).

Jesus Christ, after His resurrection, would not let His followers touch Him until He had returned to God the Father (John 20:17). Later that same day, after He went to the Father, they could touch Him (John 20:19, John 20:26-27). Since Passover demonstrates the death of the Messiah for the sins of the world, the Feast of Unleavened Bread demonstrates his body would not experience the decaying effects of death in the grave.

This occurred on the first day of the week (John 20:19), the Sunday during the Feast of Unleavened Bread (Matthew 26:2, Matthew 26:17; Matthew 28:1). The wave-sheaf offering foretold the precise day of the week Christ would return to the Father more than 1,400 years before that day actually occurred!

These astounding parallels give us a much deeper appreciation of the significance of the wave-sheaf offering God commanded. Reading Leviticus 23:10-14 with this understanding helps us to better grasp both Jesus Christ's supreme importance in God's plan as well as the meaning of the wave sheaf. Without a Savior who would give His life and be resurrected to life again, there could be no later harvesting of humankind for salvation.

The Feast of Weeks/Shavu'ot commemorates the anniversary of the giving of the Torah on Mt Sinai and the giving of the Holy Spirit in Acts. On Passover, the people of Israel were freed from bondage and on Shavu'ot they were given the instructions about how to live as the people of God. The giving of the Law taught the Jewish people how to relate to one another as well as how to relate to God.

We remove the leaven of men at Passover and we add the leaven of God at Shavu'ot. This is why it is so important for us to unlearn the lies of men and learn the truths of God's Word.

God prophesied the coming of the Holy Spirit in Joel 2:28. (This is a two-fold prophecy as it applies to the end times as well)

²⁸ "And it shall come to pass afterward that **I will pour out My Spirit on all flesh**; Your sons and your daughters shall prophesy, Your old men shall dream dreams, Your young men shall see visions.

The word TORAH in Hebrew is: תורה

These letters (read right to left) are: Tav (cross), Vav (something that connects, a nail), Resh (head, or the highest person), Hey (a window, to behold or to reveal). So when you put them together, the very word means: **revealing the highest person nailed to the cross**.

The Torah is the teachings of God (through these teaching comes revelation), and in John 14:26 Jesus also spoke of the coming of the Holy Spirit and said that He would teach them and remind them of everything.

²⁶ But the Helper, the Holy Spirit, whom the Father will send in My name, He will teach you all things, and bring to your remembrance all things that I said to you.

We see the fulfillment of this on the Feast of Pentecost in Acts 2:1-4 when the Holy Spirit showed up.

¹ When the Day of Pentecost had fully come, they were all with one accord in one place. ² And suddenly there came a sound from heaven, as of a rushing mighty wind, and it filled the whole house where they were sitting. ³ Then there appeared to them divided tongues, as of fire, and one sat upon each of them. ⁴ And they were all filled with the Holy Spirit and began to speak with other tongues, as the Spirit gave them utterance.

Shavu'ot/Weeks/Pentecost is the most mysterious of all the Jewish festivals. It is the festival of the early summer harvest. But its associated symbols and metaphors invoke meanings far beyond the mere harvesting of grain.

Among the Jews, this is the festival that celebrates the giving of the Torah. Shavu'ot/Weeks was the time when the twelve tribes gathered at the foot of Mount Sinai. There they heard the actual voice of God, as He spoke the commandments. The Bible does not seem, at first glance, to make a clear connection between Sinai and Pentecost in Acts 2, nevertheless, the link is there, if we take the time to look. There are some interesting connections between the giving of the Torah and the giving of the Holy Spirit. Both events had similar sounds and symbols, such as wind, fire, smoke, and voices.

The Hebrew word translated THUNDER in Exodus 20:18 is KOLAT. It means voices or languages.

Exodus 20:18 New King James Version (NKJV)

¹⁸ Now all the people witnessed the thunderings, the lightning flashes, the sound of the trumpet, and the mountain smoking; and when the people saw it, they trembled and stood afar off.

According to the Midrash [which is the Jewish oral tradition] the Ten Commandments were spoken in all of the languages of the world in the thunderings so that the whole world might understand it. This is only a Jewish tradition, but I find it very interesting because at Pentecost the Holy Spirit enabled the disciples to speak in other languages to equip them for the great commission, which is to take the gospel to all the nations. At Mt Sinai God gave the law written on stone tablets. At Pentecost He gave the law written in the hearts of the people through the Holy Spirit.

Jeremiah 31:33 New King James Version (NKJV)

³³ But this is the covenant that I will make with the house of Israel after those days, says the Lord: I will put My law in their minds, and write it on their hearts; and I will be their God, and they shall be My people.

Ezekiel 36:26-27 New King James Version (NKJV)

²⁶ I will give you a new heart and put a new spirit within you; I will take the heart of stone out of your flesh and give you a heart of flesh. ²⁷ I will put My Spirit within you and cause you to walk in My statutes, and you will keep My judgments and do them.

It should be our prayer that the Holy Spirit is given to all and that He should write the Torah in our hearts and cause us to walk in all of His commandments.

The counting of fifty days (here seen as 49 + 1) from Firstfruits to Pentecost is typical of redemption in general. For the Jew, it has always represented the maturing relationship between God and Israel.

There are some remarkable connections between the Feast of Shavu'ot and the prophetic conclusion of the church age. It is the fourth and central feast among the seven feasts [Passover, Unleavened Bread, Firstfruits, Pentecost, Rosh HaShanah, Yom Kippur and Tabernacles].

- The first three are spring festivals, representing the blood sacrifice and resurrection. They are associated with the first coming of Jesus Christ.
- The last three come in the fall, calling forth judgment and the establishment of the Kingdom. They are associated with the second coming of Jesus Christ.
- At the center – in the early summer – is Pentecost. It is prophetic of the Church, which was birthed on the very day of this feast (Acts 2).

In the Bible, it is represented by two loaves of leavened bread, held aloft by the High Priest. Today's Jews celebrate it annually, in a ceremony called, "decorating the bride." This reminds us of the church, the "bride of Christ."

The purpose for the Holy Spirit is to give us power so that we can fulfill the commission of going and telling everyone about God's redemption story. It's a story He set up from the creation of the world. Even before He created man, He knew sin would try to ruin things, and from the outset God established that He had a greater plan. His plan is written in the details throughout creation and throughout the Bible. All of the teachings point to Jesus. Every feast celebrates either that He came the first time, or will celebrate His coming the second time. God's desire from the beginning is a relationship with us.