

# **Peninsula City Church**

**Taste and See: All Hail King  
Jesus!**

**Today we celebrate *Shavuot***

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**9<sup>th</sup> Jun 2019 the AM Service**

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# Today we celebrate *Shavuot* or it's Pentecost Sunday

## An Introduction

**Q.** How would you explain, the context and purpose of *Shavuot* (Pentecost)?

Do you like a birthday celebration? For many this is a time of fun and partying to celebrate God's goodness for another year. While for some others, well, let's just say that they don't do celebrations. They simply and quietly like to reflect on God goodness and faithfulness over the year. However, wherever you sit on this matter, some annual celebrations and milestones come our way regardless of how we celebrate them.

You may remember that we spoke about Palm Sunday before the week of Easter under the title of 'All Hail King Jesus.' Furthermore, later on that week we had a day of reflection on Good Friday. Then finally, we celebrated the Resurrection on the following Sunday on what Jews would call First-Fruits. On that Sunday i.e. the Feast of First Fruits Israel would give thanks and celebrated God's goodness and faithfulness of the barley harvest i.e. the early harvest. This day after the Sabbath, commenced seven weeks known as the Counting of the Omer (a Jewish measure of weight). Finally, within this first lot of feasts of the Jewish calendar, Israel also celebrated what is called *Shavuot*.

So, at present, we will briefly review *Shavuot* in an attempt to find out what it all meant. Firstly, we will briefly review what was the purpose of *Shavuot* (Pentecost) from a Jewish context was? Then secondly, we will look at what is the purpose of *Shavuot* (Pentecost) from a New Testament context?

## 1. What was the purpose of *Shavuot* (Pentecost) from a Jewish context?

**Q.** What did God declare and incorporate through *Shavuot*?

### 1. One of the three principal feasts of remembrance

The feast that we know as Pentecost today was initially called *Shavuot* in Hebrew and means 'Weeks.' This is the fourth of the Jewish feasts and took place fifty days after the day after the Sabbath, which led into the Feast of First Fruits. But it is also the second of the three great pilgrimage feasts, these being Passover, Weeks or Pentecost and Tabernacles.<sup>1</sup> These three feasts recall and celebrate three essential aspects of Israel's life in the desert, the Exodus of Israel out of Egypt, Israel's desert journeys and the giving of the land to them.<sup>2</sup> It has been said that *Shavuot*,

"Is one of the three pilgrimage feasts when all Jewish males were required to appear before the Lord in Jerusalem."<sup>3</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> Driver, S.R. *The Book of Exodus*. (Cambridge, UK: The University Press, 1911), 243.

<sup>2</sup> Wagner, J.R. "Piety: Jewish." In *Dictionary of the New Testament Background*. Craig A. Evans & Stanley E. Porter (eds). (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity, 2000), 798.

<sup>3</sup> "A Christian Perspective on the Feast of Pentecost." <https://www.learnreligions.com/feast-of-pentecost-700186> (15<sup>th</sup> May 2019).

## 2. Harvest and thanks

*Shavuot* was an agricultural feast observing the spring i.e. the later wheat harvest; however over time it became a religious feast.<sup>4</sup> The feast was first known by various names like the 'Feast of Weeks' (Ex 34:22; Num 28:26; Deut 16:9-10; 2 Chron 8:13),<sup>5</sup> 'Feast of Reaping or Harvest' (Ex 23:16 this is the first time that it is mentioned in the Bible).<sup>6</sup> It has been said regarding the naming of this feast that,

"This name is not descriptive of the character and substance of the holiday. Rather, it is a chronological tag, which addresses itself to the time lapse between Passover and *Shavuot*, thus emphasising the relationship and independence of the two holidays."<sup>7</sup>

In Lev 23:15-22 Israel was given instruction concerning this feast and what they were to do. It was celebrated on the day after the Sabbath, which would make it a Sunday.<sup>8</sup> It is from this passage in verse 16 that we get the Greek name Pentecost,

"You shall count fifty days to the day after the seventh Sabbath. Then you shall present a grain offering of new grain to the LORD" (Lev 23:16 ESV).

Specifically, the word in the Greek translation of the Hebrew Scriptures (the Septuagint i.e. LXX for the so call 70 scholars that interpreted it in the third century BC) is *Pentēkostē*, which means fiftieth.<sup>9</sup> So, it was celebrated fifty days after the Sunday after Passover. So, initially it was called *Shavuot* because in Lev 23:15 it says,

"You shall count seven full weeks (49 days) from the day after the Sabbath, from the day that you brought the sheaf of the wave offering" (Lev 23:15 ESV).

Israel was to count seven weeks from Passover (a Sabbath day) and include the day after Passover which was the first or early harvest of barley. Then on the following day after the seven weeks (after the Sabbath) they were to celebrate *Shavuot*. It was during the Feast of Weeks that Israel had been waiting for this historical-agricultural feast called *Shavuot* to celebrate the later harvest.<sup>10</sup> Josephus called it "a week of weeks," i.e. seven weeks of seven days.<sup>11</sup> It is also called *Yom Ha-Bikkurim*, which means 'the day of the first fruits.'<sup>12</sup> The feast defined the end of the counting of the seven weeks. It has been said on this matter that,

"In Palestine the grain harvest lasted seven weeks and was a season of gladness (Jer 5:24; Deut 16:9; Is 9:2). It began with the harvesting of the barley during the Passover and ended with the harvesting of the wheat at Pentecost, the wheat being the last cereal to ripen."<sup>13</sup>

<sup>4</sup> Armerding, C.E. "Festivals and Feasts." In *Dictionary of the Old Testament: Pentateuch*. T. Desmond Alexander & David W. Baker (eds). (Downers Grove, IL: IVP, 2003), 310. See also "Shavuot Themes and Theology." <https://www.myjewishlearning.com/article/shavuot-themes-theology/> (22<sup>nd</sup> May 2019).

<sup>5</sup> Berlin, Adele & Brettler, Marc Zvi. *The Jewish Study Bible*. (New York, NY: Oxford Press, 1999), 190.

<sup>6</sup> Feinberg, C.L. "Pentecost." In *The Zondervan Pictorial Encyclopedia: Vol Four – M-P*. (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 1982), 692. See also Driver, *The Book of Exodus*, 243. See also Bosman, Hendrik L. "ḥag Šābu 'ôt" (Feast of Weeks)." In *New International Dictionary of Old Testament Theology and Exegesis*. Vol. 4. Willem A. VanGemeren. (ed.). (Cumbria, UK: Paternoster, 1997), 24-26.

<sup>7</sup> Isaacs, Ronald H. *Every Person's Guide to Shavuot*. (North Bergen, NJ: Book-mart Press, 1998), 3.

<sup>8</sup> Cohen, Gary G. "Sheba, Shib'ā." In *Theological Wordbook of the Old Testament*. Vol. 2. R. Laird Harris et al. (ed.). (Chicago, IL: Moody Press, 1981), 899. Josephus, *The Works of Josephus: Complete and Unabridged*. William Whiston (trans.). (Peabody, MA: Hendrickson, 2004), 352. Antiq. 13.8.4.

<sup>9</sup> "Pentēkostē." <https://biblehub.com/greek/4005.htm> (6<sup>th</sup> May 2019).

<sup>10</sup> Neusner, Jacob. *An Introduction to Judaism: A Textbook and Reader*. (Louisville, KY: Westminster, 1991), 58-59.

<sup>11</sup> Josephus, *The Works of Josephus*, 96. Antiq. 3.10.6.

<sup>12</sup> Clark, Eli. "Shavuot." In *Celebration: The Book of Jewish Festivals*. Naomi Black (ed.). (London: Collins, 1987), 132. See also Berlin, & Brettler, *The Jewish Study Bible*, 264. Also see *The Complete Jewish Study Bible*. (Peabody, MA: Hendrickson, 2016), 161.

<sup>13</sup> "PENTECOST ('fiftieth')." <http://www.jewishencyclopedia.com/articles/12012-pentecost> (29<sup>th</sup> May 2019).

At this feast there was to be the offering of the sheaf from the wheat harvest. It usually falls somewhere in May or June. It has been said that the feast took place, “after the corn harvest and before the vintage.”<sup>14</sup> It was to be a time to,

“Commemorate the time when the children of Israel received the Law on Mount Sinai. Its agricultural significance is that it marked the beginning of the summer harvest in ancient Palestine.”<sup>15</sup>

### 3. What it remembers

It is suggested that, Jewish people remember receiving the covenant of the Torah, which was supposed to have happened on *Shavuot* at the foot of Mount Sinai, Ex 19.<sup>16</sup> It was said to be a time of recalling the “hope of a universal covenant.”<sup>17</sup> The book of Jubilee states that,

“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.”<sup>18</sup>

In light of what has been said here, the timing of *Shavuot* is as follows,

“Thursday morning, the fifteenth of Nissan (the month in which Passover falls i.e. the season of Spring in the northern hemisphere), the Jewish people left Egypt. That year *Nissan* and *Iyar* (the month after Nissan, i.e. the second month of the Hebrew calendar) were both full months of thirty days. The Torah was given on a Shabbat, and halachic authorities have accepted the view that it was the sixth of *Sivan* (the month that *Shavuot* falls May-June in our western calendar). By adding the sixteen days of *Nissan* (from the Jews’ departure till the end of the month) and the thirty days of *Iyar* and six days of Sivan, we learn that the Jews received the Torah fifty-two days after leaving Egypt.”<sup>19</sup>

The halachic Jews are those who supplement parts of the Scriptures for the Talmud.<sup>20</sup> That is, they see the, “Jewish law and jurisprudence, based on the Talmud.”<sup>21</sup> So, although the feast of *Shavuot* is a Jewish feast, it is not always seen from the same perspective. However, for most Jews it is pretty standard. So, Israel was physically able to “taste and see that the LORD is good” (Ps 34:8a ESV). That is, when they saw the wheat being harvested and then taste the bread made from it.

Each year the time of harvest relies on when the harvest is ready and the lunar cycle. However, the section of time from Passover to *Shavuot* usually looks something like the following see over the page,<sup>22</sup>

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<sup>14</sup> Freeman, James M. *Manners and Customs of the Bible*. (Plainfield, NJ: Logos, 1972), 71

<sup>15</sup> Pearl, Chaim & Brookes, Reuben. *The Guide to Jewish Knowledge*. (Bridgeport, CT: Hartmore House, 1985), 25.

<sup>16</sup> Greenberg, Irving. *The Jewish Way: Living the Holidays*. (New York, NY: Touchstone, 1993), 68. See also *Pentateuch and Haftorahs: Hebrew Text English Translation & Commentary*. J.H. Hertz. (ed.). (London: Soncino Press, 1989), 521.

<sup>17</sup> Greenberg, *The Jewish Way*, 85.

<sup>18</sup> “Jubilee. 6:17.” <http://www.pseudepigrapha.com/jubilees/6.htm> (3<sup>rd</sup> June 2019). See also Beale, G.K. & Carson, D.A. (eds). *Commentary on the New Testament use of the Old Testament*. (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker, 2007), 531.

<sup>19</sup> Bogomilsky, Moshe. “Dvar Torah Questions and Answers on Shavuot.” Shulchan Aruch Harav 494:1:

[https://www.sie.org/templates/sie/article\\_cdo/aid/2865690/jewish/Dvar-Torah-Questions-and-Answers-on-Shavuot.htm](https://www.sie.org/templates/sie/article_cdo/aid/2865690/jewish/Dvar-Torah-Questions-and-Answers-on-Shavuot.htm) (29<sup>th</sup> May 2019). Cf. also “Shavuot – the feast of weeks.”

[https://www.hebrew4christians.com/Holidays/Spring\\_Holidays/Shavuot/shavuot.html](https://www.hebrew4christians.com/Holidays/Spring_Holidays/Shavuot/shavuot.html) (29<sup>th</sup> May 2019).

<sup>20</sup> “The Talmud is a collection of writings that covers the full gamut of Jewish law and tradition, compiled and edited between the third and sixth centuries.” “Talmud.” [https://www.chabad.org/library/article\\_cdo/aid/3347866/jewish/What-Is-the-Talmud-Definition-and-Comprehensive-Guide.htm](https://www.chabad.org/library/article_cdo/aid/3347866/jewish/What-Is-the-Talmud-Definition-and-Comprehensive-Guide.htm) (3<sup>rd</sup> June 2019).

<sup>21</sup> “Halacha.” <https://en.oxforddictionaries.com/definition/halacha> (3<sup>rd</sup> June 2019). Jurisprudence is “the study of law and the principles on which law is based.” <https://dictionary.cambridge.org/dictionary/english/jurisprudence> (6<sup>th</sup> June 2019).

<sup>22</sup> “The Jewish Calendar: Mindfulness of the Divine Rhythm.”

<https://www.hebrew4christians.com/Holidays/Calendar/CalendarIntro.pdf> (29<sup>th</sup> May 2019).

- ii. **Passover (*Pesach*)** - Celebration of freedom (*Major Holiday*)
  - a. The Passover Seder [Nisan 15 (evening of the 14th)]
  - b. Unleavened Bread (*Chag HaMatzah*) - Sanctification [Nisan 15-22]
  - c. Sefirat HaOmer - Counting the Omer [Nisan 16- Sivan 5]; the countdown to Shavu'ot.
  - d. Firstfruits (*Reishit Katzir*) - Messiah's Resurrection; [Nisan 17]
    - Yom HaShoah - Holocaust Memorial Day [Nisan 27]
    - Yom Hazikaron - Israel Memorial Day [Iyyar 4th]
    - Yom Ha'atzmaut - Israel Independence Day [Iyyar 5th]
  - e. Lag B'Omer - 31st day of the Omer count [Iyyar 18]
    - Yom Yerushalayim - Jerusalem Reunification Day [Iyyar 28th]
- iii. **Pentecost (*Shavu'ot*)** - The giving of the Torah at Sinai and the giving of the Ruach HaKodesh to the Church [Sivan 6-7] (*Major Holiday*)

The Hebrew Year: 3793

The Roman Year: AD 33

	24	25	26	27	28	29	1	15	16	17	18	19	20	21	
(1) Nisan	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	22	23	24	25	26	27	28	
	9	10	11	12	13	14	15	29	30	31	1	2	3	4	April
	16	17	18	19	20	21	22	5	6	7	8	9	10	11	
	23	24	25	26	27	28	29	12	13	14	15	16	17	18	
(2) Iyar	30	1	2	3	4	5	6	19	20	21	22	23	24	25	
	7	8	9	10	11	12	13	26	27	28	29	30	1	2	May
	14	15	16	17	18	19	20	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	
	21	22	23	24	25	26	27	10	11	12	13	14	15	16	
	28	29	1	2	3	4	5	17	18	19	20	21	22	23	
(3) Sivan	6	7	8	9	10	11	12	24	25	26	27	28	29	30	
	13	14	15	16	17	18	19	31	1	2	3	4	5	6	June
	20	21	22	23	24	25	26	7	8	9	10	11	12	13	
	27	28	29	30	1	2	3	14	15	16	17	18	19	20	

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The dates of *Shavuot* in 33AD

However, *Shavuot* was primarily a cherished time for remembering God's faithfulness. God fulfilled His promises and Israel could take this time to remember the past harvests and joyfully celebrate by faith God's provision of the current harvest, Lev 23:21. This is a delightful time for Israel to show "an offering of gratitude."<sup>24</sup> This was a reminder for Israel to remember God's endless love. It began with the barley harvest during the Passover and ended with the wheat harvest on *Shavuot*, this is its consistent and primary Old Testament usage.<sup>25</sup>

#### 4. The loaves of bread

*Shavuot* was celebrated after seven weeks known as the 'Counting of the Omer.' This is 'Sefirat HaOmer,' which falls between First Fruits and *Shavuot*. On *Shavuot* two Omers (a Jewish weight) of flour was brought to the Temple courtyard and then two loaves of bread containing yeast were made from the flour.<sup>26</sup> This was known as the offering of the Omer (see below) of the wheat flour and was brought before the Lord and waved as an offering of thankfulness for this later fruit, Lev

<sup>23</sup> "Calendars." <http://www.cgsf.org/dbeattie/calendar/?roman=33> (29<sup>th</sup> May 2019).

<sup>24</sup> Philo, *The Works of Philo: Complete and Unabridged*. C.D. Yonge (trans.). (Peabody, MA: Hendrickson, 2008), 532. *The Decalogue*. XXX. 160.

<sup>25</sup> Feinberg, "Pentecost," 692.

<sup>26</sup> Chilton, B.D. "Festivals and Holy Days: Jewish." In *Dictionary of the New Testament Background*. Craig A. Evans & Stanley E. Porter (eds). (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity, 2000), 373.

23:20. This was a symbolic act of offering the first of the later harvest to the Lord.<sup>27</sup> Let us take some time to understand these loaves.

- The loaves had yeast in them and were made from two-tenths of a weight called an ephah, which is about 23 kgs in weight, and is approx. - 92 cups of flour.
- So then, two-tenths (i.e. two omers), which is about 4.6 kgs - 18 cups.
- An omer was one-tenth of an ephah i.e. 2.3 kgs (about 9 cups) in weight, that is a large loaf of bread. So, each loaf that was waved before the Lord weighed about 2.3 kgs.

These two loaves were to be offered together with parts of the lamb and waved by the priest before God as a symbol of thanks for the later whole grain offering of the land of Israel,

“And 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” (Lev 23:20 ESV).

Some of the two loaves and the lambs were to be burnt on the altar before the Lord and then the rest would be eaten by the priests. It was only after this ceremony was completed could the people of Israel eat the wheat that they saw being harvested. This festival was a holy and joyful time of celebration because of the faithful provision of the Lord,

“And you shall make a proclamation on the same day. You shall hold a holy convocation (assembly). You shall not do any ordinary (daily) work. It is a statute forever in all your dwelling places throughout your generations” (Lev 23:21 ESV).

“And you shall rejoice before the LORD your God, you and your son and your daughter, your male servant and your female servant, the Levite who is within your towns, the sojourner, the fatherless, and the widow who are among you, at the place that the LORD your God will choose, to make his name dwell there” (Deut 16:11 ESV).

## 5. Taste and see that the LORD is good!

It was a time to celebrate and physically see and taste the goodness of God by consuming the wheat harvest of *Shavuot*.<sup>28</sup> The book of Ruth in chapter three also records celebrating the goodness of God who provided for her and Naomi leading up to *Shavuot* through Boaz. To celebrate the goodness of God on *Shavuot* was initially set in a rural lifestyle.

However, for many Jews today things have changed there is no temple and they are now living in cities and working in other industries. So, now they go to Synagogue and they have special readings for *Shavuot*. These readings come from sections in the books of Exodus 19, Leviticus 23, Numbers 28, Deuteronomy 16 and the Book of Ruth; the people participate in these readings.<sup>29</sup>

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<sup>27</sup> Armerding, “Festivals and Feasts,” 311. See also, “The Talmud18 explains that by waving the loaves in the four directions and up and down, we acknowledge the One who created the four directions, heaven, and earth. Alternatively, waving in the four directions blessed the winds that originate from them, so that they should only be good, beneficial winds, and lifting the loaves blessed the dew, that it too should be beneficial.” “The Shte Halechem (Two Breads).” [https://www.chabad.org/library/article\\_cdo/aid/2599670/jewish/The-Shte-Halechem-Two-Breads.htm#footnoteRef9a2599670](https://www.chabad.org/library/article_cdo/aid/2599670/jewish/The-Shte-Halechem-Two-Breads.htm#footnoteRef9a2599670) (22<sup>nd</sup> May 2019).

<sup>28</sup> “After the summit, the climb: a Shavuot teaching.” <https://velveteenrabbi.blogs.com/blog/2013/05/after-the-summit-the-climb-a-shavuot-teaching-.html> (22<sup>nd</sup> May 2019).

<sup>29</sup> *Siddur Lev Chadash* (Basically meaning “Order Heart Anew”): *Services and Prayers for Weekdays and Sabbaths, Festivals and Various Occasions*. (London: Union of Liberal and Progressive Synagogues, 1995), 416-419, 444-447. See also *Pentateuch and Haftorahs*, 521-524, 696-697.

For some modern Jews they eat what is called “Mount Sinai Cakes.”<sup>30</sup> To them this is seen as the fulfilment of custom to, “fulfil the dictum,”<sup>31</sup>

**“Oh, taste and see that the LORD is good!” (Ps 34:8a ESV).**

On this matter of taste and see an aspect of *Shavuot*, there is a fantastic welfare aspect to the feast that God included. Those who were in need could go to a wheat field and get some food. An example of this is seen in the book of Ruth. Both she and Naomi needed food and Boaz enacted what the Lord had put in place in the book of Leviticus. That is, the idea that the Lord was always looking out for the poor and traveller temporarily living in a place and those who owned the field where to help them. That is, as it says,

“And when you reap the harvest of your land, you shall not reap your field right up to its edge, nor shall you gather the gleanings after your harvest. You shall leave them for the poor and for the sojourner: I am the LORD your God” (Lev 23:22 ESV).

So, there was always a caring aspect of the feast, which the Lord had included.<sup>32</sup> People knew that they were able to go to any field and get some grain to process to have a meal because Leviticus had said that it would be so. Consequently, we have seen the historical context, some of the traditions, and the spiritual meaning of *Shavuot*. However, as we now move forward to *Shavuot* in the New Testament what does it now mean?

## **2. What is the purpose of *Shavuot* (Pentecost) from a New Testament context?**

**Q.** Explain some of the purposes of *Shavuot* (Pentecost) for New Testament believers?

There are some of the things that happened on the *Shavuot* after Jesus’ ascension, which stand out for all New Testament believers. This feast is far more than merely a revamp of the feast of *Shavuot* (the Day of Pentecost) for a New Testament believer. It was a fulfilment of the feast by Christ. Some of these will be mentioned below.

### **1. Jesus fulfilled the annual feasts**

If we stop for a moment and think about it, Jesus was the fulfilment of the whole Jewish calendar. In dealing with the first lot of feasts it could be said that, Jesus has died on Passover (*Pesach*) as the Passover Lamb, Jn 1:29,36. Then He was the First Fruits, as He rose again on the Feast of First Fruits (*Bikkurim*) as the first fruits of the New Covenant, 1 Cor 15:20.<sup>33</sup> This was followed the Counting of the Omer (*Sefirat HaOmer*), but Jesus ascended on the fortieth day of weeks, Lk 24:40-53; Acts 1:3,9,

“to heaven, leaving the disciples to continue waiting, praying, and Counting the Omer without Him.”<sup>34</sup>

Jesus was also the fulfilment of the feast of *Shavuot*, which will be discussed over the page.

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<sup>30</sup> ““Mount Sinai Cakes – honey cakes filled with almonds and raisins.” Greenberg, *The Jewish Way*, 85. See also “The Roots of Pentecost.” <https://www.catholic.org/news/hf/faith/story.php?id=36649> (22<sup>nd</sup> May 2019).

<sup>31</sup> Greenberg, *The Jewish Way*, 85.

<sup>32</sup> Armerding, “Festivals and Feasts,” 311.

<sup>33</sup> Cohen, “Sheba, Shib’â,” 899.

<sup>34</sup> “Yeshua (Jesus) Appeared While His Disciples Were Counting the Omer.” <https://free.messianicbible.com/feature/yeshua-appears-while-counting-the-omer/> (29<sup>th</sup> May 2019).

## 2. Jesus fulfilled the feast of *Shavuot* and sent the Spirit

Jewish people from all over the Roman and Parthian Empire had come to Jerusalem at the end of the Counting the Omer to celebrate *Shavuot* as in previous years. This was a requirement under the Jewish Law that all males need to go up to Jerusalem three times a year,

“Three times a year all your males shall appear before the LORD your God at the place that he will choose: at the Feast of Unleavened Bread, at the Feast of Weeks, and at the Feast of Booths. They shall not appear before the LORD empty-handed” (Deut 16:16 ESV).

However, although those who attended did not know it, this *Shavuot* things would be different from any other in the past. It has been said that,

“Although the agricultural aspect of *Shavuot* concerns mainly the spring harvest, it also marks the beginning of the birth of new fruits of the land, and those the fruits were brought to the Temple at *Shavuot*, cf. Deut 8:7-10.”<sup>35</sup>

By now due to the use of the Septuagint (LXX) the use of the name Pentecost was entrenched.<sup>36</sup> *Shavuot* was seen also seen as a time of renewal of the covenants with Noah and Moses.<sup>37</sup> When this *Shavuot* came the heavens were opened and the Holy Spirit came as a fulfilment of the feast, Acts 2:1-4.<sup>38</sup> The way the Holy Spirit came down was similar to Jesus receiving the Holy Spirit at His baptism, Matt 3:16; Mk 1:10; Lk 3:21-22.<sup>39</sup> It is also understood to be the fulfilment of the prophecy in the book of Ezekiel 36:27, which said,

“And I will put My Spirit within you, and cause you to walk in My statutes and be careful to obey My rules” (Ez 36:27 ESV).

On this matter also see what Paul had to say about the Holy Spirit living in the Christ-follower,

“If the Spirit of Him who raised Jesus from the dead dwells in you, He who raised Christ Jesus from the dead will also give life to your mortal bodies through His Spirit who dwells in you” (Rom 8:11 ESV).

As a result, the Holy Spirit went from merely being with them, to being within the 120 on this day. This was an indication that there would be a later harvest of the new fruit this *Shavuot*, since 3000 people would come to know the Messiah, Acts 2:4. On that day they became a new creation and entered into His Kingdom, 2 Cor 5:17. In light of what has been said above and as Jesus the fulfilment of the feasts,

“Yeshua (Jesus) resurrected the same day that the Jewish people were commanded to bring their omer of barley to the Temple as a wave offering. This day was also known as Firstfruits! Firstfruits is a day to remember the Lord is our provider, so we give back to Him a portion of what He gives to us. It is also the day that Yeshua (Jesus) was resurrected, becoming the Firstfruits for all of us.”<sup>40</sup>

Consequently Paul stated that in light of the feast of First Fruits ending with *Shavuot*,

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<sup>35</sup> “Shavuot and Pentecost.” <https://www.catholic.com/magazine/print-edition/shavuot-and-pentecost> (30<sup>th</sup> May 2019).

<sup>36</sup> Keener, Craig S. *Acts an Exegetical Commentary: Introduction and 1:1-2:47*. Vol. 1. (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker, 2012), 797.

<sup>37</sup> Beale, & Carson, *Commentary on the New Testament use of the Old Testament*, 531.

<sup>38</sup> *The Complete Jewish Study Bible*, 1560.

<sup>39</sup> Levine, Amy-Jill, & Brettler, Marc Zvi. (eds). *The Jewish Annotated New Testament*. 2<sup>nd</sup> ed. (New York, NY: Oxford Press, 2017), 223.

<sup>40</sup> “Yeshua (Jesus) Appeared While His Disciples Were Counting the Omer.” <https://free.messianicbible.com/feature/yeshua-appears-while-counting-the-omer/> (29<sup>th</sup> May 2019).

<sup>20</sup> “But in fact Christ has been raised from the dead, the firstfruits of those who have fallen asleep... <sup>23</sup> But each in his own order: Christ the firstfruits, then at His coming those who belong to Christ” (1 Cor 15:20,23 ESV).

It has been said that,

“Because seven weeks have passed since the Feast of Firstfruits (when Yeshua resurrected) and the waving of the omer offering took place. This day is called the Feast of Weeks and then *Shavuot* (Exodus 34:22). Before they eat any of their own harvested wheat, the Jewish people present a portion to the Lord this day. They also hold a sacred assembly.”<sup>41</sup>

### 3. Christ-followers since *Shavuot* when the Holy Spirit came

For many a modern Christ-follower we know this annual day as Pentecost Sunday. This was the day when the Holy Spirit came upon those at Jerusalem, but He continues to transform lives and live within His children. However, there is an aspect, which has often been overlooked, that is, it was not a new festival, but a Jewish feast that was already established and known as *Shavuot*. Luke knowing this fact recorded at the end of his gospel Jesus saying that He would send the Holy Spirit,

<sup>46</sup> “Then He said to them, ‘Thus it is written, and thus it was necessary for the Christ to suffer and to rise from the dead the third day, <sup>47</sup> and that repentance and remission of sins should be preached in His name to all nations, beginning at Jerusalem. <sup>48</sup> And you are witnesses of these things. <sup>49</sup> Behold, I send the Promise of My Father upon you; but wait in the city of Jerusalem until you are endued with power from on high” (Lk 24:46–49 NKJV).

This was then fulfilled on an established day at the feast of *Shavuot* of that year,

<sup>1</sup> “When the Day of Pentecost had fully come (fulfilled completed); they were all with one accord in one place. <sup>2</sup> And suddenly there came a sound from heaven, as of a mighty rushing wind, and it filled the whole house where they were sitting. <sup>3</sup> Then there appeared to them divided tongues (tongues as of fire, distributed and resting on each), as of fire, and one sat upon each of them. <sup>4</sup> And they were all filled with the Holy Spirit and began to speak with other tongues, as the Spirit gave them utterance” (Acts 2:1-4 NKJV).

The Complete Jewish Bible says that,

“The festival of *Shavu'ot* arrived...” (Acts 1:1a CJB).

For many Pentecostals there can be a narrow-minded reading of this part of the Bible only seeing the matter of speaking in tongues. However, there is far more to what happened on this day. As has previously been pointed out, the feast already had a history. The main thing is that, it had to do with harvest and thankfulness for this harvest. So, when Jesus said that,

“But you will receive power when the Holy Spirit has come upon you, and you will be My witnesses in Jerusalem and in all Judea and Samaria, and to the end of the earth” (Acts 1:8 ESV; cf. Lk 24:48).

Jesus was speaking from His understanding of *Shavuot* and being the fulfilment of this feast as He sent the Holy Spirit. The disciples as Jews were also waiting for the feast to begin, as were the many Jews that had come to Jerusalem. We read about the later fruits of this harvest with 3000 coming to know Jesus as their saviour and receiving the Holy Spirit, Acts 2:41. So, the 120 were able to “taste and see that the LORD is good” (Ps 34:8a ESV) as they witnessed the first of the later great harvest on this day.

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<sup>41</sup> “Yeshua (Jesus) Appeared While His Disciples Were Counting the Omer.” <https://free.messianicbible.com/feature/yeshua-appears-while-counting-the-omer/> (23<sup>rd</sup> May 2019).

## 4. Some similarities

### a. Beginnings

For many Jewish people, *Shavuot* is the actual beginning of the nation of Israel as they received the law (instruction) at this time, Ex 19. Similarly many Christ-followers have considered *Shavuot* (Day of Pentecost) as the beginning of the church. This is not just a coincidence, but an alignment of God's purpose here on earth. He chose a people for His own and then gave them gifts, but in both cases they were to "**Taste and see that the LORD is good!**" (Ps 34:8a ESV).

### b. Coming in power

Remember, it was when Moses went up on to Mount Sinai, that God came down, onto the mountain to meet the people and give them His instructions, Ex 19:1,16-20. There was smoke on the mountain, earthquakes, lightning, thunder and a very loud trumpet being sounded. However, the people were terrified and did not want to meet with God and said that Moses needed to do this, Ex 20:18-21.

Then about 33AD, God the Holy Spirit came down onto the mountain in Jerusalem. This happened in the upper room where suddenly there came a loud sound from heaven, like a mighty rushing wind, filling the whole house, divided tongues like fire, which sat upon each of them, Acts 2:2-3.<sup>42</sup> As a result, people in the city were confused, amazed and marvelled when they saw the result of hearing their language, Acts 2:6-7. On this *Shavuot* three thousand people came to know God and enter into His Kingdom as their eyes were opened to the truth, Acts 2:41.<sup>43</sup> The disciples were experiencing the presence of God in a whole new way. The Holy Spirit was not merely going to be on them, but now He would be within them. That is,

"They moved out of the realm of the natural into the supernatural, and so can all believers in Yeshua."<sup>44</sup>

### c. A new voice for the nations

We read that on this feast of *Shavuot* in 33AD that 120 in the upper room received a new voice i.e. the Spirit's voice. Then Luke drew the reader's attention to the supernatural and theological theme in the Book of Acts. He pointed out on this day of *Shavuot* that there was new empowering work of the Holy Spirit, Acts 2:1-4. Then Luke went on to record where the Jewish people were from that had come to Jerusalem for the feast,

<sup>7</sup> "And they were amazed and astonished, saying, 'Are not all these who are speaking Galileans?' <sup>8</sup> And how is it that we hear, each of us in his own native language? <sup>9</sup> Parthians and Medes and Elamites and residents of Mesopotamia, Judea and Cappadocia, Pontus and Asia, <sup>10</sup> Phrygia and Pamphylia, Egypt and the parts of Libya belonging to Cyrene, and visitors from Rome, <sup>11</sup> both Jews and proselytes, Cretans and Arabians—we hear them telling in our own tongues the mighty works of God.' <sup>12</sup> And all were amazed and perplexed (at a loss), saying to one another, 'What does this mean?' <sup>13</sup> But others mocking said, 'They are filled with new wine'" (Acts 2:7-13 ESV).

These areas are where the Jewish people had come from at *Shavuot* and are similar to the table of nations mentioned in Genesis 10, (See Appendix One). Then in Genesis 11 we read of these nations having one language (Gen 11:1,6). However, God confused their language (Gen 11:7-9)

<sup>42</sup> Waltke, Bruce K. & Yu, Charles. *An Old Testament Theology: An exegetical, canonical, and thematic approach*. (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 2007), 295-296 n.16. See also Berlin, & Brettler, *The Jewish Study Bible*, 402.

<sup>43</sup> "Shavuot." <https://shalomnyc.org/index.php/shavuot/> (30<sup>th</sup> May 2017).

<sup>44</sup> "Shavuot: The Supernatural Goodness of God." <https://free.messianicbible.com/holiday/shavuot/?t=Shavuot> (23<sup>rd</sup> May 2019).

due to the people trying to bring God down into their control and elevate themselves. In contrast, on this day of *Shavuot*, after Christ ascended God unified the Christ-followers speech into one Kingdom language, which is the Spirit's language, (See Appendix Two). That was the case, despite there being various dialects. An illustration of this matter, would be (any illustration to get the Kingdom idea across will fail) a little like in England there is one language, English, but various accents from area to area. In a sense, this was an undoing of Genesis 11 as the Spirit of God chose to come down and elevate His own and gives them one language again.

Whether the 120 and those attending the *Shavuot* realised it or not, they were tasting and seeing something beyond anything that they had experienced to date. The reason was that, Jesus had now ascended to the Father, but the Holy Spirit was always with them whether they experienced Him or not. So it was it all went to another level of faith. The Fest of *Shavuot* was fulfilled in Christ on this day with the beginning of the celebration of the wheat harvest.

## Some concluding thoughts

So, coming back to the opening question,

**Q.** How would you explain, the context and purpose of *Shavuot* (Pentecost)?

We have seen what the gospel writers wrote to the original hearers there and then in their day. It needs to be asked in the here and now, 'What is the Spirit of God saying to us?' Our theme over this season is "All Hail King Jesus!" He is the rightful King of all kings, and He has never ceased being the King. Today we celebrate is *Shavuot*.

*Shavuot* (*Pentecost*) was an essential day in the life of Israel and then the infant church. Things shifted on earth when the Holy Spirit came that day. The Kingdom of God has continued to expand across the earth and it continues to do so until this day. The rule of King Jesus continues, it is a Kingdom of celebration and thanksgiving for what God has done.

Therefore, we can "taste and see that the LORD is good" (Ps 34:8a ESV) every day of our lives. We have seen throughout the Scripture from Genesis 10 through to Acts 2 that God's plan 'A' for the *Shavuot* was being worked out. We are part of this plan as part of the latter harvest that is still being harvested. This harvest will continue until God says that, it is time for the harvesting to end.

So, today we celebrate is *Shavuot*, 'Stop and reflect.' We have seen what the Bible has said to each person in their day. But, what has the Holy Spirit been saying to us today? That is, what is the one thing that is standing out to us? We need to apply this otherwise it is merely all academic. Then we need to respond to what the Holy Spirit has been saying to us.

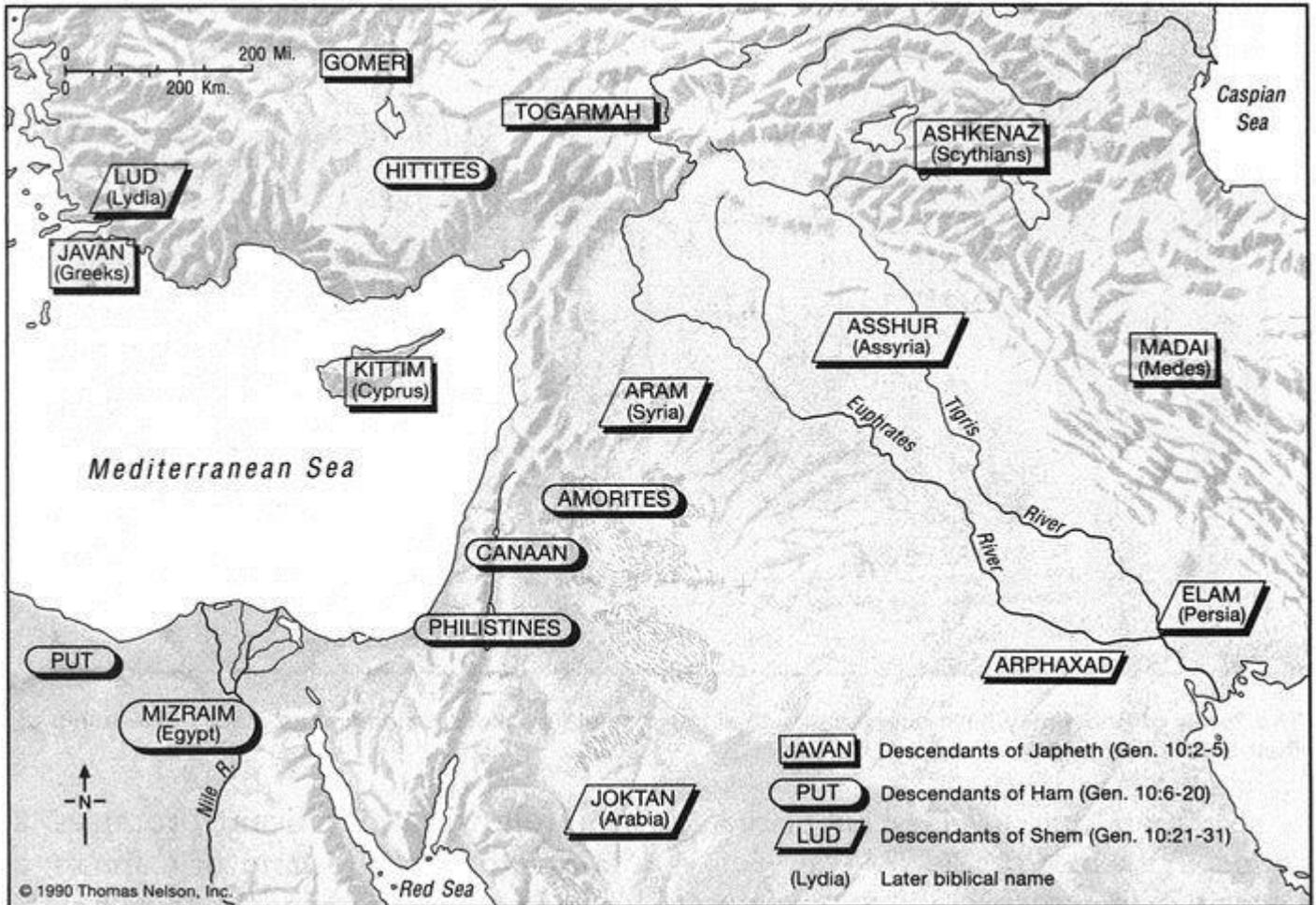
In response, we need to ask through this process:

- What personal application can be found from the passages?
- What is God teaching me today?
- That is, "What is God saying to me?"

How should I respond to what is being said, or so what?

- What are you going to do about it?
- What do you need to do to respond?
- Pray and respond

### Appendix One: The Table of Nations Genesis 10



## Appendix Two: The Nations Represented at Pentecost

