

# The Feast of Shavuot

## Introduction

The Feast of **Shavuot** is one of the **seven feasts** or **sacred days** **commanded by God** for **Israel** to keep throughout the **calendar year**. It is one of the “**Sholosh Regalim**”— one of the **three pilgrimage festivals** which required Jewish males to travel to **Jerusalem** and **present offerings** before **the Lord**.

**Shavuot** is a **harvest festival**, that required the **dedication** of a “**firstfruits offering**” to **the Lord**.

Israel had **two** **feasts of firstfruits**.

The **first** involved the **presenting to the Lord** a “**sheaf**” or “**omer**” of the **barley harvest**. According to **Jewish tradition**, this took place on the **second day of Passover week**, the **16<sup>th</sup> day of the month of Nisan** (March/April).

This offering of an “**omer**” of the **firstfruits** of the **barley harvest** began a **counting of days** called the “**counting of the omer**.”

**God commanded** that **Israel** was to **count** from *the day* that they **presented the omer offering**, **seven complete weeks** (Sabbaths) plus a **day (50 days)**.

On **that day (6<sup>th</sup> of Sivan)**, they were to present *another* **firstfruits offering** from the **wheat harvest**.

This **feast of firstfruits** was called **Shavuot**, which means “**weeks**,” because of the requirement of **seven weeks (sevens) plus a day** (49 plus 1) before its celebration. The **counting** between the **two** **firstfruits offerings** *connected* the **two harvest seasons**.

### A. Biblical Basis

<sup>15</sup> You shall also **count** for yourselves from **the day after the sabbath, from the day** when you brought in the **sheaf** of the **wave offering**; there shall be **seven complete sabbaths**.

<sup>16</sup> You shall count **fifty days** to the **day after** the **seventh sabbath**; then you shall present a **new grain offering** to the **LORD**.

<sup>17</sup> You shall bring in from your dwelling places for a **wave offering**, made of **two-tenths of an ephah**; they shall be of **two loaves of bread** a fine flour, baked with **leaven** as **first fruits** to the LORD.

<sup>18</sup> Along with the **bread** you shall present **seven** one year old **male lambs** without defect, and **a bull** of the herd and **two rams**; they are to be a **burnt offering to the LORD**, with their **grain offering** and their **drink offerings**, an **offering by fire** of a **soothing aroma to the LORD**.

<sup>19</sup> You shall also offer **one male goat** for a **sin offering** and **two male lambs** one year old for a sacrifice of **peace offerings**.

<sup>20</sup> The **priest** shall then **wave them** with the **bread** of the **first fruits** for a **wave offering** with **two lambs** before the LORD; they are to be **holy to the LORD** for the **priest**.

<sup>21</sup> On this **same day** you shall make a **proclamation** as well; you are to have a **holy convocation**. You shall do **no laborious work**. It is to be a **perpetual statute** in all your dwelling places throughout your generations.

<sup>22</sup> "When you **reap the harvest** of your land, moreover, you shall **not reap** to the **very corners** of your field nor gather the **gleaning of your harvest**; you are to leave them for the **needy** and the **alien**. **I am the LORD your God.**" (Leviticus 23:10-22)

## **B. Feast Titles**

1. **Shavuot** – **Feast of Weeks** – **Shavuot**, which means *weeks*, refers to the time of the **feast** which occurs *seven weeks (Sabbaths)* and **a day**, from the day that the **firstfruits** of the **barley harvest** is **offered before the Lord**.
2. **Yom Habikkurim** – the **day of the firstfruits** – Called *firstfruits (habikkurim)* because **Israel**, at this time, would bring **another firstfruits**—the *firstfruits* of the **wheat harvest** as an **offering to the Lord**.
3. **Z'man matan Toratenu** – the season of the **Giving of the Law** – Given this title because of the belief in **Judaism** that the **Law** was given to **Israel** during the time of **Shavuot**.
4. **Pentecost** – (**Greek** for *fifty*) – Named because of the **fifty day counting** of the **omer** that **culminates** on **Shavuot**.

## **C. Customs and Traditions**

1. The **Wave Offering** – The baking of **two loaves** of **leavened bread** to commemorate the **two loaves** from the **firstfruits** of the **wheat offering** that were **waved before the Lord**.

2. The **Celebrating** of the **Giving of the Law** – Some **rabbinical scholars** claimed to have calculated that **the Torah** was *given on Shavuot*. This emphasis on **celebrating** the revelation of **the Law** during the *agricultural holiday* of **Shavuot** increased after the **Temple** was **destroyed** (70 A.D.), and the **people** were *scattered* from **their land**.

Without a **temple** there could be **no sacrifice**. Without a **land** there could be *no firstfruits*. Because of this **new emphasis**, other **scripture readings** became associated with the **feast** of **Shavuot**. The books of **Ruth** and **Habakkuk** became popular readings during this **feast**.

3. **Special Decorations** – During **Shavuot**, the **home** and the **synagogue** are to be *decorated* with **green leaves, plants, flowers, and fruit**. This is a reminder of the **provision** that the **Lord of the harvest** has given.

4. **Special Foods** – During **Shavuot** **dairy products** are traditionally eaten as a **reminder** that **God** has given to **Israel** a land “flowing with **milk and honey**.” Special **dairy foods** like **blintzes, cheesecake, and kugel** along with **assorted fruit** are eaten during **Shavuot**.

#### **D. Prophetic Significance**

As **believers**, the **Levitical feasts** and **sacred days** are wonderful to learn about and participate in. There is **rich meaning** and **significance** to all of them, as they **teach** and proclaim the **works** and **provision of God** to each succeeding **generation**.

The **Levitical feasts** also have **great significance** because they point to **major events** that would take place on **God’s prophetic calendar**. Just as the **feast of Passover** pointed to **Yeshua** as *our Passover Lamb*, and **Firstfruits** pointed to **His resurrection**, the **feast of Shavuot** would point to the coming of the **Holy Spirit**, which was **promised by Yeshua** to all those who **believe**.

It was during **Shavuot**, that the **Spirit** was “**poured out**” upon **Messiah’s disciples**, and the **good news** about the **Messiah** was boldly proclaimed to the numerous Jewish pilgrims, that had come from all over the **world** to gather in **Jerusalem** for the **feast**.

As a result, **3,000 Jews** entered into **God’s kingdom**, the **spiritual “firstfruits offering”** of **Jesus to God, our Father**.

This dramatic event would be the beginning of a **new age** (called the **Church**), where both **Jews and Gentiles** (symbolically seen in the **two leavened loaves waved** during **Shavuot**) would be brought into *one body* of **believers**, **accepted** as the **firstfruits** of a **larger harvest** to come during this age.