

שבועות Shavuot (Pentecost)

Shavuot is described in Vayikra (Leviticus) 23: 15-16 as the culmination of 50 days, or seven weeks, that have been counted, starting with the day of Firstfruits. Shavuot is a very significant and glorious celebration for Messianic Jews and Gentiles!



Meaning of Shavuot

Its original emphasis was the firstfruits of the wheat harvest. In fact, it is *this* holiday that is understood when the Hebrew term, *Yom HaBikkurim*, Day of Firstfruits, is used.

[Therefore, it is better to designate the day just after Pesakh as *Ray-sheet HaOmer*, Beginning of the Omer. The day after Pesakh has sometime been called *Yom HaBikkurim* among Messianics, but *Yom HaBikkurim* is better reserved for Shavuot.]

At Shavuot the farmers would gather the Bikkurim into baskets and bring them to the city of Jerusalem where they would be eaten in the holy city. The farmers living close to Jerusalem would bring fresh fruits, while those who had to travel a long distance carried dried raisins and figs. This joyful occasion was celebrated with the music of fifes, timbrels, and drums. As the pilgrims approached the city walls they were greeted by the inhabitants of the city. Sometimes the King himself would join the procession to the Temple Mount. The Bikkurim ritual is no longer practiced in present day Israel.

A Shavuot allusion seems to be what the Messiah intended when He described the fruitfulness of His atoning sacrificial death as a wheat harvest. Yohanan (John) 12: 24, "Yes, indeed! I tell you that unless a grain of wheat that falls to the ground dies, it stays just a grain; but if it dies, it produces a big harvest."

Shavuot also has come to commemorate the giving of the Torah, as our people were at Mt. Sinai at this point in time. (Ex. 19: 1) The day come be the anniversary of the giving of the Torah, or at least the 10 Commandments of the Torah, and had a sense of covenant renewal. This covenant



renewal is particularly exciting to Messianics, who see the coming of the Spirit on the Day of Shavuot in the Brit Hadashah as the fulfillment of Yermiyahu (Jeremiah) 31:31, and many other promises in the Tanakh (the Hebrew scriptures) to give us the new and inwrought covenant. "Here, the days are coming," says Adonai, "when I will make a new covenant with the house of Isra'el and with the house of Y'hudah. It will not be like the covenant I made with

their fathers on the day I took them by their hand and brought them out of the land of Egypt; because they, for their part, violated my covenant, even though I, for my

part, was a husband to them," says Adonai: "I will put my Torah within them and write it on their hearts; I will be their G-d, and they will be my people."

Practice of Shavuot

Our *Ruakh* [Spirit] Celebration for Shavuot, entails waving loaves of leavened bread unto the Lord as part of the Shabbat worship. (Lev. 23:17) After waving and praising, we eat the bread during the Oneg. Harvest and agricultural decorations adorn the sanctuary, which is not inconsistent with the idea of the receiving of the Word and the Spirit. Dairy dishes are part of the kiddush lunch. The Ten Commandments were given on Shavuot, so it is customary to have food that reflects the "milk of the Word." (This is a Messianic Writings phrase, but was clearly not foreign to the ancient Rabbis.)

Tikkun Layl Shavuot

The *Tikkun* is a late night midrashic style Bible study interspersed with dairy treats (and coffee). The traditional topics are the book of Ruth, and the opening and closing verses of any Shabbat portion. Therefore, cheesecakes, cheese blintzes, cheese kugel, and cheese kreplach, veggies or salads and dips, nachos and cheese, chips and dip, cheese danish, etc., would all be appropriate at the Tikkun.

Between Shavuot (Pentecost), which is the last of the Spring holidays, and Rosh HaShannah, the first of the Fall holidays, there is the four month summer harvest season described by the Messiah in Yohanan (John) 4: 34-35. If we have indeed received the fullness of the Spirit, as depicted by Shavuot, then this time of family, social, travel, and sports, activities can be a time of joy and fruitfulness.

Shmot (Exodus) 19:14 "Moshe went down from the mountain to the people and separated the people for G-d, and they washed their clothing. 15 He said to the people, "Prepare for the third day; don't approach a woman."

The Midrashic [traditional explanatory] comment is that our ancestors understood this expectation, but nevertheless fell asleep, until they heard: "On the morning of the third day, there was thunder, lightning and a thick cloud on the mountain. Then a shofar blast sounded so loudly that all the people in the camp trembled."

To compensate for that failure, and to deepen our walk with G-d, the custom has developed of spending the whole of the night as a vigil in which selected passages from all the Torah are read.