

What is Shavuot?

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MAIN VERSES

[Leviticus 23](#) • [Deuteronomy 16](#) • [Exodus 19](#) • [Exodus 20](#) • [Exodus 23:16](#) • [Numbers 28:26](#) • [Deuteronomy 18:16](#) • [Deuteronomy 9:10](#) • [Jeremiah 2](#) • [Isaiah 2:2-3](#) • [Acts 2](#) • [Ephesians 5](#)

Shavuot: One of the Three Pilgrimage Feasts

Any of you guys know that we're coming up on Shavuot? Any of you guys know what Shavuot is? Lots of hands need to go up. Just a few people. Thank you. Okay, we need to have another lesson.

Shavuot is a very, very, very important feast day. It's a holiday listed in [Leviticus 23](#), which we're going to revisit here, and it's coming up next. That's what we're going to be celebrating in June at the park. Now, the thing about Shavuot is it's very, very, very, very important. Scripture puts a lot of emphasis on it. In [Deuteronomy 16](#), it's listed as one of the three major pilgrimage feasts. So there were three feasts that all the men of Israel had to go up to Jerusalem. All the other ones aren't necessarily required, but everybody needs to go to Jerusalem at least for these three feasts. Shavuot was the second of the three. But Scripture really doesn't tell us a lot more than that. It doesn't give us a huge purpose. Like Passover and unleavened bread reflect the miracles and the Exodus account when God saved Israel, redeemed Israel, and carried them out of Egypt, right? And we celebrate unleavened bread every year because the scripture says because when Israel left Egypt, they didn't have time to let the bread rise, so they just took the dough and ran.

Shavuot comes, and it's when you bring your barley and wheat crops to the tithe. It's like the first tithe, the first time of the year you bring your tithe, and then the second tithe is during Sukkot. But it really doesn't expound on it much more than that. And so I wanted to revisit that today just to kind of review it and see if we can glean a few things from it.

Learning from History: The Mishnah

We don't have a lot of documentation as far as the details of how Israel specifically did things three thousand years ago, thirty-five hundred years ago. The closest thing we have is two

thousand years ago. Now, in the first and second century, as I've mentioned before, we have this collection of Jewish writings called the Mishnah. Right? And this formula became pretty much Jewish law, if you will. But the Mishnah from a historical standpoint gives us a lot of insight for how Israel kept the commandments. Israel celebrated the feast days in the temple in the first century around the time of Yeshua. And so I find it very important, just to take a look and let's see what the Mishnah says about what they did during Shavuot in the temple. And I found some incredibly cool stuff that I cannot wait to share with you.

Seven Appointed Times of the Lord

So as you guys know, and this is kind of a review, but we always love review because it keeps things fresh in our mind, [Leviticus 23](#) discusses in detail seven different appointed times, anniversaries if you will, that God tells his people, listen, I want to meet with you on these days. Okay, husbands, you got an anniversary of a year, right? It's kind of important. Kind of important. It's kind of important to your wife. You meet on this day, right? And you spend the day together because you can recount the day that you got married and the day you said, I do. And the day that your love was really under a covenant of marriage. And so it's a really important thing.

Well, God picked out seven of these suckers to spend with Israel, to spend with you. Seven, right? Ladies, how would you like it if your husband set up seven anniversaries a year? Get you some flowers, right? Take you out to, I mean, pretty nice, right? So this is what God has done for Israel. And in [Leviticus 23](#), every single year, we know that the very first appointed time is Passover, right? We've reviewed this, right? The lamb, recount the day, the night, where all of the firstborn in Egypt were slayed, but the families and the homes that had the blood of the lamb around the doorposts were sealed and protected from the destroyer.

And then Passover typically kicks off a week-long festival known as unleavened bread, where you go a whole week and you do not have any leavening. And during this week, leavening is typically described as, or resembles, sin or pride or negativity in our lives. After we have been sealed by the blood of the Lamb, we should not have these things in our lives anymore, if you will. So we get out the leaven of our homes.

Now, throughout the scripture or narrative, leavening is not always sin. Yeshua said that the kingdom of heaven is like leaven. But that's different, and we'll get to that. During the week of unleavened bread, there is an appointed day where an omer of barley, or a sheaf of barley, is cut down. It's the very first sheaf that's cut down in Israel, and it's waved before the Lord at the

temple. And this day is known as first fruits, Yom HaBikrim, the first one, right? And then, roughly fifty days later, depending on when the morrow after the Sabbath starts, we come to Shavuot.

Now this year we've already gone through the first three. They happen very quickly within about a week of each other and we're counting to the day that we get to Shavuot. After Shavuot, we have the day that is sometimes known as Yom Teruah in scripture. It's also known as Rosh Hashanah. It's one of the beginnings of the year. It's listed in scripture. We have Yom Kippur which is the day of atonement, the weightiest day of the year in [Leviticus 23](#). And we also have Sukkot, which is the third and final pilgrimage feast. And this kind of concludes all of the appointed times throughout the year. And that's where we like to go out and hang out for a week. We like to go camping. There's no temple in Jerusalem and it's kind of far. We can't really make it there every single year. So we just take a bunch of tents out to the woods, camp out, and just fellowship with each other and praise and worship God as best we can there. And so these are the seven appointed times that we've been reviewing.

But today we're focusing on this one down here.

Reading Scripture and the Mechanics of Sacrifice

Now, we're going to read some scripture. And I'm going to read it a few times. And so I'd ask for you to join me in that. Sometimes, if I read a lot of scripture, it might get boring. Just pay attention. Just focus. It'll be okay. It's the word of God. We're going to. I know how it is. Trust me. I know how it is. After you get past the second verse, he's reading more than two verses. Oh, geez. And we're going to read some verses together. Okay. Is that okay? Can we read the word of God together?

Leviticus, my favorite book. Blood and knives and man, if I told you all the stuff in Leviticus is so cool because it's so mechanical, right? So not only are there sacrifices—everyone knows that—but what happens with them is what's incredible, the mechanics of the sacrificial system, if you will. And it's incredible because most of the sacrifices, especially the purification offerings, also known as sin offerings, when the throat of the animal is slit and the priest catches the blood in the bowl, that is where something fascinating takes place.

And the priest is commanded to take the blood from the bowl and sprinkle it on the corners of the altar. And then in some cases, he actually has to go into the holy place and sprinkle it on the corners of the incense altar. And then once a year, once a year, a specific priest called the high priest takes the blood of a bull and a goat all the way through to the holiest of holies. It's the

only time he goes back there. And at this day of the year, he sprinkles the blood on what I would call a third altar, which is the Ark of the Covenant. It's fascinating. And so Leviticus is fascinating to me because I like to see the mechanics of why God tells Israel to do these things. And so we're going to fast forward all the way to [Leviticus 23](#).

The First Tithe

And we're going to start in verse 15. I've already scratched the first 15 verses. You guys don't have to read them. We're just going to start at 15, right? I already gave you a head start. And this is talking about Shavuot, right? We've already discussed Passover, Unleavened Bread, First Fruits. Now we've counted 50 days and Shavuot is upon us.

I think if I got it up here, yeah. You shall count seven full weeks from the day after the Sabbath, from the day that you brought the sheaf of the wave offering. You shall count 50 days to the day after the seventh Sabbath. This would be the wheat. How much? Two-tenths of an ephah. What kind of flour? So not big flour, small, ground up. And you shall present the bread... And the priest shall wave them with the bread of firstfruits as a wave offering before the Lord with two lambs. They shall be holy to the Lord of the priest, and you shall make a proclamation on the same day. You shall hold a holy convocation. You shall not do any ordinary work. It shall be a statute forever in all of your dwelling places throughout your generations. And when you reap the harvest of your land, you shall not reap the field right up to its edge, nor shall you gather the gleanings after your harvest. You shall leave them for the poor and the sojourner forever. I am the Lord your God.

So there's a lot of stuff in these verses, and I know some of you guys are like, "Man, there are a lot of verses! I don't know what it all means." We're going to talk about some stuff in here, and I hope that you'll leave here at least thinking some of this is kind of cool, especially the way they did it in the temple.

But the first thing that we're going to talk about is the counting. So any of you guys ever heard of the counting of the Omer? Right? In Hebrew roots, there's a lot of us that love to point fingers and we hate tradition and the tradition's bad and we don't do tradition and so on and so forth. I'm not necessarily in that camp. I love tradition because tradition typically is used to breed reverence. Typically. Right? You can have an anniversary without flowers, chocolate, and good music. You know what I mean? Right? Traditionally, you bring flowers to your wife. It's a tradition. You'd give her some chocolate, right? Take her out to dinner, so on and so forth. Tradition breeds and makes the day more special. And so that is why we see a lot of traditions,

especially in Judaism, attached to days and feast days and different things. But you'll hear a lot that the counting of the Omer is tradition. It's something the rabbis made up. I was taught this a long time ago and it's incredible because we read right here that it's a commandment. You shall count seven full days. You shall count 50 days after the seventh Sabbath. You shall count 50 days to the day after the seventh Sabbath. There's a commandment in the Bible to count 50 days, right? So after the morrow, after the Sabbath, right? You're going to start counting 50 days after first fruits, if you will. 1, 2, 3, 4, 5. And you're not actually counting Omer, right? It's counting starting with the Omer that was brought to the temple, the first fruits. And so you've begun this counting. And that's why if you're on Facebook, you see, oh, it's the 23rd, third day, 30th day of Omer, so on and so forth. That's why. It's supposed to be an exciting time. That's why it's commanded. You're commanded to begin counting and anticipating this 50th day. So seven weeks you're supposed to count. Does that sound familiar? Seven, we got seven. Is there somewhere else in scripture where you're supposed to count by sevens—it's not weeks but years, right? Exactly. So you have the Shemitah every seventh year, and then after seven weeks, the year after that is the Jubilee. So this is like a mini Jubilee that you're counting up to, and it's called Shavuot. And so when we teach our children the counting of the Omer, as it's traditionally called, we're teaching them something that is based in scripture, and it gets them excited about something.

The Festival of Weeks

What's it get them excited about? It gets them excited about a feast day of the Lord called Shavuot. It's almost like a countdown, but we're counting up to it, right? Let's see here. Shavuot, the word, anybody... The word Shavuot means weeks. It's plural. It simply means weeks, plural. That's it. Okay? So at the end of services every week, we typically say Shavua Tov. Anyone ever heard me say that maybe? Shavua Tov, right? Tov means good and Shavua means week. So basically if I say Shavua Tov, it means have a good week, right? It's a pretty common phrase, right? And when we count to Shavuot, the reason why it's called Shavuot is because it is seven weeks, right? Weeks. It's the feast of weeks, Shavuot. It has many other names in scripture and in tradition. One of the names, let's see here, is Yom HaKa'ol in [Deuteronomy 18:16](#) and 9:10. It's the day of assembly. That's what it's called. Why? Because this is when Israel is supposed to assemble together, when all of Israel comes together. We also have in Jewish literature the atzeret. More or less it points to the conclusion. The conclusion of what? Well, in Judaism, they teach that this is the conclusion of Passover. You see, Passover isn't really over yet because the journey is still taking place. You see, Passover was the day that God sealed us with the blood of the lamb and then brought us out of Egypt, but there's still a journey that

needs to take place, right? And we are still on that journey until Shavuot. It's tradition. I love it. It's also called the Festival of Reaping in [Exodus 23:16](#). And it's also called Yom HaBikurim, the Day of First Fruits in [Numbers 28:26](#). So you have two days of first fruits. You have Yom HaBikurim over near Passover and then you have another Yom HaBikurim at Shavuot because you're bringing the first fruits of the wheat instead of the barley and so on and so forth. It's also known in the Greek as Pentecost because penta in Greek means five or fifty. In the first century, Hellenized Jews referred to this as Pentecost, and we also see that in the New Testament. Any of you guys ever attend a church that talks about Pentecost? Right? That's what they're talking about. They were talking about this feast day, and we're going to read a little bit more in Acts chapter 2 here a little bit later.

The Giving of the Law

Traditionally, the thing that you will see most associated with Shavuot is the giving of the Ten Commandments at Mount Sinai. We don't know for a fact, and it is debated even among Jewish literature, but most believe that after Israel left Egypt, they traveled 50 days, and on the 50th day, the Torah was given on Mount Sinai. [Exodus 19](#) and 20. Lots of fire, thunder, commandments were given. Israel said we were going to do everything that you tell us to do, God. It was quite a climactic day. And so I don't disagree with that teaching. I really like it. There's a debate whether it's like a day or two. We know it was around that time. But I love that because it illustrates why in Judaism they call it the atzeret, the conclusion of Passover. Because Passover wasn't really complete until Israel became a nation. Israel did not become a nation when God brought them out of Egypt. They were still a people of Israel, right? Of their patriarch Jacob, whose name was Israel. They were just a bunch of tribes, a bunch of different people that were related to the same guy. They were family. Mount Sinai, something changed. And what changed at Mount Sinai was a covenant. And what happened with this covenant is God said, listen, you're not just going to be a people anymore. You're going to be my people, which means I'm going to be your king. And if I'm going to be your king, that makes you a kingdom. And you are now going to be a nation, right? A priest. That's what he says. I love that because the counting of the Omer illustrates the journey to Mount Sinai. I want to focus real quick on this verse starting in verse 17 of [Leviticus 23](#), and you'll see this, and you'll wonder. I want you to kind of tilt your head and go, how are they going to do that? So we spoke a little bit. Now, the "you" here is typically described as the nation, the nation of Israel. So the nation of Israel is going to bring two loaves of bread presented by the priests. So the priests are going to have these two loaves of bread and they are going to wave them before the altar, if you will.

The Leavened Bread

"And you shall bring from your dwelling places two loaves of bread to be waved made of," how much? "Two tenths of ephah." An ephah is a measurement. Now, for those of you guys who have probably studied sacrifices, do you guys know how many minka offerings, how many meal offerings, bread offerings, if you will, were there in Torah? Thirteen. Now out of these 13 different meal offerings that either individuals would bring or they'd be communal offerings or whatever, out of these communal, these minka offerings, bread offerings, how many of them were leavened? One. One. This one. The two loaves that are baked. This one. I found that interesting because this is the only time in scripture that you will see leavened bread ever brought before God and he actually commands it. Now it wasn't brought to the altar. It wasn't offered on the altar. You're not supposed to; leavening cannot be seen on God's altar. But at the conclusion of Passover, if you will, I find it interesting that Israel must first purge out any old leavening that they had. And then something happens in this 50-day journey to Mount Sinai where the leavening that they now had is acceptable before God.

As I would petition, that's the journey of a believer. That's the journey of our lives. You see, when we're sealed with the blood of the Lamb, that's not the end of the road. When we become a believer in Yeshua, that's not the end of the road. No one has an amen for that. Okay, everybody's there. We know that's not the end of the road. But at the end of the road, when we're at the mountain of God standing before our King, there should be a change that takes place in our life. It shouldn't reflect the old ways of our life. It shouldn't reflect the old leaven in our life. It shouldn't reflect the things that we have from our past experience in Egypt. It should reflect who we are in the kingdom of God, and that is what we offer to God.

Of course, I also find it fitting that if Shavuot is a memorial of God giving His commandments to Israel, the nation, the Torah, everything—a joyous occasion—do you guys remember what happened on the journey to Mount Sinai? Was it a smooth journey for Israel? Let's be real. Were they happy the whole time, weren't they? I mean, Israel was just rejoicing the whole way to Mount Sinai. Like they left Egypt. They were like, yeah, this is awesome. And then they were like, man, we are starving. But you know what? It's awesome. And then they were like, man, the waters are too bitter. We can't. Nope. It's awesome. We love you, Moses. We love God. This is the best thing to ever happen to us. Nah, man, they complained. They conventioned the whole time to Mount Sinai, just going around, ah, this is horrible.

The Broken Journey

They had their high points, and then they had their low points, and then they'd have their high points and low points. They became a broken people during their journey to Mount Sinai. And I love that because I can't help but to make a comparison to this instance and the lives of believers. Because we know with our spiritual Passover—Mashiach, Messiah, Yeshua—when God looked upon our lives and that we had painted the blood on our doorposts of our lives, we were sealed. We were redeemed from our Egypt, from our life of slavery to sin. Did life get easier or harder after this? I'm going to be honest. Things didn't get easier. Things weren't supposed to get easier. Now it's time to live a life of brokenness. Now it's time to live a life reflecting on God's grace and mercy that you were undeserving of. And the life that you are now going to walk is going to be very hard.

And it's going to be very hard because as believers we now have the knowledge of sin. We now understand what sin does. We now understand how disgusting sin is to our lives and the people around us. And now, as believers, we cannot help but be disgusted by sin. We cannot help but be affected by it. If it's in our lives, as believers, we fall on our knees and say, Father, I am so sorry this exists in my life. Help me to overcome this. If you see it in your friends or your family, you cannot help but to be affected by it. Father, as a believer, redeem them from this thing that is in their lives. At least that's what you're supposed to be doing because that's evidence that you're a believer. You have the commandments of God now and the commandments define sin. So if there's sin in your life, then it's a contradiction. You can't have both. And it's a journey. Nobody's perfect, but we're pursuing perfection. We're pursuing Yeshua.

Following Messiah Through Persecution

And I love that because in the first and second centuries, the early believers, when we read the patristic writings and the accounts, it was incredible. I think I mentioned it last week. When pagans in the Roman Empire came into the faith of Yeshua in the second and third centuries, they understood that they were not going to have paradise on earth. They understood that they had just stepped into a life of brokenness, following Messiah, carrying their cross. They expected persecution in their life. When persecution came their way, they didn't even try to avoid it because they were like, "This is my life." Walking into the arenas with lions, "Hey, this is my life, and my king is so gracious to me that your lions can rip me apart, and that'll be okay because I have the promise of my king that I will be resurrected. So rip away."

There's a story of a Christian singing, being burnt alive. What's it called when they skin you? Filet? Or is that something different? Flaying you alive and they're tearing your skin away,

cutting it off your arms and your legs. Grabbing it, pulling it off your arms and your legs. Singing and praising God, forgiving them through the spirit of Messiah. That they would be so focused on wanting to spread the message of God's love as followers of Messiah that it doesn't matter even if they don't have skin and they're dying slowly. No, when you're sealed by the blood of the lamb, it's not an easy journey. It's a journey of brokenness. It's a journey of recognizing how much you needed the love of God and the grace of God to begin with.

The Sound of the Trumpet

And so when I see that the journey began in Egypt—yes, we are on fire. We were beginning a new life, no longer slaves. They stepped foot across the Red Sea. This was awesome. They start walking. Moses, we're hungry. Moses, have you brought us out here to die? Moses this, Moses that. But when they make it to Mount Sinai, the climax of Passover takes place. They get to see God's voice, the mountain shaking, the fire on the mountain, the lightning flashes, the thundering, the shofar that blows. Now, you guys, you ever seen a shofar blown? Blown a shofar? Anybody? What's the longest you can blow a shofar? Huh? Huh? As long as you're all in. So I'll tell you, I've heard one guy blow a shofar for about 45 seconds, maybe a minute.

And so what happens when you begin to run out of fuel in your lungs? Right? No one else, just me. Okay. Most people stop before that point. So Exodus tells us that there was a trumpet blowing on the mountain. Right? It was the trumpet of God. And instead of it tapering off, instead of it getting quieter and quieter and quieter, it didn't. It got louder and louder and louder and louder and louder. And it kept getting louder and louder and louder. And Israel was so excited. And they got so excited that it came to the point where they just got scared. Okay, we can't take it anymore, Moses. Moses, you're going to have to go up there and be a mediator between us. You've got to go in between us. We can't handle this. We're going to die because the power of God is so great. No one has ever experienced what we're experiencing right now, but they had to go through the journey to get there.

We as believers are on that journey. One day we will see the kingdom of God on earth. One day we will see our Messiah return. And guess what? It's going to be with the sound of a trumpet. And I guarantee you the trumpet that's going to be blown, that we're going to hear going off across the world throughout the skies. All nations are going to hear it. When Messiah returns, it's not going to get quieter either. It's going to keep getting louder and louder and louder and louder. And when we hear it, we're going to know we're here. We're here. Mashiach is coming back. I get excited about little things like that because, even though I try to live a life of

brokenness—because I am broken. I'm a broken person. I recognize that. Everybody's broken, but the point and the knowledge of Messiah is recognizing that.

Leaning on God's Strength

Recognizing that, through God's love and grace, is how you obtain a relationship and how you are reconciled with him, leaning on him for the strength to overcome the flesh. Leaning on him for the strength to be more patient. Leaning on him for the strength to love your neighbor as yourselves. That's the attribute of a believer. And I don't know why I said any of that. Two loaves of bread made of two tenths of... Oh yeah, we were talking about the minkah offerings. Thirteen minkah offerings, only one of them is eleven. This one is eleven. And so what they would do in the second temple is they would take a whole ephod of wheat. It's a big measurement. And they would put it through twelve sifts to filter it. And each sift would be a little bit finer. What would you call that, Brad? When you're sifting and the wire is more tight, more closely knit, the filter becomes more unforgiving, smaller, all the way down 12 times.

And they would sift all of this wheat through it so only the finest would come out of the bottom, right? And they would keep sifting until there were two tenths left. And that is what they would make the bread out of, right? Right? Go from a whole lot of flour, just a little bit. The finest, only the finest flour. All right? Let me show you a picture of this. Now this picture came out of a book called Colorful Ceremonies in the Beit HaMikdash, the temple, based on the Ram-Dam, and it's written by Yosef Israel. So the Ram-Dam was a famous 12th century rabbi, Rabbi Moshe Maimonides, and he did a full commentary on the Mishnah. So Rambam's commentary is his opinion on various aspects of the Mishnah. Yosef Israel took Rambam's commentary on the Mishnah and tried to illustrate a historical account of what took place.

The Loaves of the First Fruits

And so here we have instructions on how the two loaves of bread were made. So you guys remember when we did the unleavened? We talked about sior. What was sior? Bread starter. So they would place the starter at the bottom and then they would pour the flour on top and they'd mix it together with lukewarm or hot water, right? So they used bread starter, which means these were sourdough loaves. So they were pretty tasty. It's good stuff. Now, what do you think the loaves of bread look like, at least in the second temple? So today, traditionally, we always think of challah bread because we have challah bread on Shabbat and it's a traditional European type of bread and so on and so forth. Challah bread. What he is holding right now is the shape of the two loaves that they made in the second temple. Looks weird, doesn't it? Looks like the

top of the altar, almost, smaller. Has four horns just like the altar, right? Flat, rectangle. Fascinating, right?

The Weight of the Offering

Now, what I want to discuss—and what I find even more fascinating—is how much does a one-year-old lamb weigh? One-year-old, about 100 pounds? 20? 20? 25 pounds for a lamb? A one-year-old? I thought they were about 10 pounds when they were born and they gained an extra 5 or 10 pounds a month. Okay, well maybe this feat can be done by a normal priest. I'm thinking he's going to be like the Hulk or something. And you shall offer one male goat for a sin offering and two male lambs a year old as a sacrifice for peace. So they're going to be put in as peace offerings. And the priest shall wave them. Shall wave what? The priest shall wave them. The two lambs with the bread of the first fruits as a wave offering before the Lord. How do we do that? So we've got to wave two lambs.

Now these aren't dead lambs. These are alive, very much alive. And you gotta pick these up and wave them somehow. But no, you got these two big old pieces of bread you got to wave with them. How do you wave? I mean, you only have two arms. How are you going to wave? And traditionally in the Mishnah, they talk about how they used to wave it from, you know, what was it? The west and the east and the south and the north and then to heaven. So you're going to wave this thing all the way around. How do they do it? So allegedly the Mishnah states that they would make a lamb sandwich and put the lambs on top of each other. I don't know how they did that. I mean, what are they, Legos? They stick to each other? I don't know how, but they would stack the lambs on top of each other, and they'd have these two weird-looking sourdough loaves of bread, and they would stack them around the lambs, and then this priest would wave these lambs in front of the temple. And I can't help but chuckle a little bit. I mean, it's a very serious thing, and it was a very cool ceremony to watch, and it was very serious, because this is the offering to God, right? This is Shavuot, right? But in our culture, I just can't fathom this, right? And there would have been some years that the lambs fell over and the priest is trying to hold his composure, trying to get him back up there. And I wonder if God just smiled every year. He just wanted to see this happen. Let's see what they're going to do. How are they going to do this? How are they going to pull this off?

The Weight of the Offering

But allegedly in the second temple era, 30 to 80 pounds in Israel. If they're fed right, I bet they probably had these guys on a diet. But still, you're trying to take 60 to 100 pounds, shake this

sucker. But now once we get past the shock, look at the priest's face. Very serious. Imagine being able to witness something like this.

When the two loaves are waved, the only 11 loaves once a year that God commands need to be brought for him. It's made from the wheat harvest, the first fruits of the wheat harvest. This is going to kick off the tithing when we can go and pay tribute to our God, to his temple. This is going to kick off everything. Imagine the silence when he waved the lambs. And then I think after they were sacrificed, there were peace offerings. I think he waved their legs and something, a piece of them as well, but regardless.

So I thought that was interesting. Did you guys think that was interesting? I thought that was interesting.

A Betrothal at Mount Sinai

Traditionally, and I say traditionally a lot. And traditionally is not a bad thing. So when I say traditionally, I mean there's an opinion. So when I say traditionally, there's an opinion. There's an opinion that I very much agree with. And I believe it's scripture. Scripture talks about it. So I guess it's not even a tradition that God was betrothed to Israel at Mount Sinai. Have any of you guys ever heard that statement? That there was a type of marriage contract that was made with Israel.

Now I've studied, and I want to give you a kind of a disclaimer. I've studied a lot about marriage, at least in ancient Assyrian and Near Eastern myth. And I see some hints that the betrothal process took place, but I know in ancient Assyria, it was more of a transaction between the bridegroom and the father of the bride. So once they agreed on a bride price and they had an agreement of how the husband was going to treat the most precious possession of the father, right, his daughter, then it was basically they were married. If they wanted to do a ceremony, they could, but it was considered a marriage at that point in time.

So I don't know a whole lot about betrothal, but I do know in the first century, and possibly in ancient Israel, you can go either way, the betrothal process was interesting because the betrothal was considered marriage. Everybody says, to be betrothed is to be married. But it wasn't the final stage of marriage. In other words, a betrothal, you could be betrothed at a very young age, but the consummation of the marriage and everything that comes with being married does not come till a later date, till the fullness of the marriage is coming to play.

Betrothal and Engagement

So nowadays we have something called an engagement, right? This was not an engagement, right? With an engagement, you can just say, yeah, I'm gonna change my mind, sorry. You cry a little bit and you move on. With a betrothal, with a betrothal, it was, you were committed. This was happening, right? This is kind of like when you buy your 15-year-old a car and you have the keys. You got a car, you just can't drive it yet. Then you haven't reached that fullness of living together, starting a family together, ruling together over your home, so on and so forth, but you are committed to each other.

And if you were going to break off a betrothal, you would have to write, you would basically have to divorce. A get would be given. Divorce papers would be given.

Mary and Joseph

You guys know how Mary, when she became pregnant with Yeshua, was betrothed to Joseph, right? They weren't married fully, right? But they were betrothed. But then Joseph's over here like, man, I can't believe she did this. How did she get pregnant? Because we're not fully married yet, so we're still pure, but we're betrothed. Maybe I can just divorce her privately and not shame her. Why was Joseph wanting to divorce her if they weren't married? Because they were. They were betrothed. It was a fullness of the commitment of marriage, right?

And so, that being said, I would like for you to turn with me to Exodus chapter 19, and we're going to read the account. We're going to read the account of when Israel arrived at Mount Sinai. Exodus chapter 19, starting in verse 11. I believe it's 19.

The Mountain of God

So they've come to Mount Sinai and all of this is taking place and it states: For on the third day the Lord will come down on Mount Sinai in the sight of all the people. So God is speaking through Moses, if you will, and he's speaking to the people and he's saying, listen, I need everyone to prepare for this day that I'm going to come and meet with them. I'm going to be at Mount Sinai on the side of the people.

Verse 12: And you shall set limits for the people all around saying, take care not to go up into the mountain or touch the edge of it. Whoever touches the mountain shall be put to death. No hand shall touch him, but he shall be stoned or shot. They had guns back then.

And so what God says is, listen guys, I don't think I have it up here. I gotta start back, dag nabbit. Genesis chapter 2. It's the only place in Genesis that the word Kedosh, holy, is used.

Throughout the whole book, the word holy is used only in one place, and it's used to describe the Sabbath. We've gone over this before, but it's the only place in Genesis where the word holy is used. It shall be Kedosh, it will be a holy day to you.

Do you know the very next place in the Bible where the word holy appears? Exodus chapter 3, when Moses was on the mountain, the mountain of God, if you will, tending to Jethro's sheep, and the fire—the burning bush—spoke. And what did it say? It said, take off your shoes. You are on holy ground. The mountain that God dwells on is holy. It is set apart. It is untouchable by most folk. Kadusha, if you will. This is why the tabernacle was so important because the holiness from the mountain transferred to the tabernacle, if you will, and that became the holy ground of God. So he would come down and dwell among his people.

Preparing for the Holy God

And so this is the mountain that he's talking about and he's saying, Listen, Moses, your level of holiness, because of the office that you stand in—as, not really the Nasi, but the overseer of Israel, the prophet of Israel—you can ascend the mountain and the elders and judges of Israel will be able to ascend the mountain, but the people of Israel have to stay back. And if I'm going to come down and I'm going to meet them, then they need to prepare themselves. They need to wash their clothes. They need to get all the stains out of their clothes. They need to make sure that they're not defiled with any uncleanness, impurities. They have to be clean, blameless, and set apart and holy before I am going to meet them on this day.

It reminds me of [Ephesians 5](#) when Paul's talking about husbands love your wives as Yeshua loved the church, that he gave his life to the church, that they should be washed in the word, that he could present her to himself. So [Ephesians 5](#) is talking about Yeshua expecting his bride to be presentable to him for marriage without spot, without blemish, holy and set apart. This is what he's telling Israel to do. Make sure that you are clean, your clothes are washed, you're ready to meet me, if you will, on this day.

In the morning of the third day, there were thunders and lightnings and a thick cloud on the mountain and a very long trumpet blast so that the people in the camp trembled. Then Moses brought the people out of the camp to meet God. And they took their stand at the foot of the mountain. Now Mount Sinai was wrapped in smoke because the Lord had descended on it in fire. The smoke of it went up like smoke. If we turn to [Jeremiah 2](#), we find something very interesting. And this is why I agree with the terminology that God was betrothed to Israel in a sense on that day.

It was not only a suzerain vassal covenant, it was a king making a kingdom and meeting his people there, but it was a type of connection having to do with marriage and betrothal. Because in Jeremiah chapter 2, if you turn with me there, I believe starting in verse 1, it says, The word of the Lord came to me saying, Go and proclaim in the hearing of Jerusalem, thus says the Lord, I remember the devotion of your youth. So he's speaking about Israel, and they're just being a mess right now. And he's saying, listen, I remember how devoted you were to me in your youth, your love as the betrothed. So you were betrothed to me, how you followed me in the wilderness in a land not sown. So he's talking about the wilderness account and being betrothed. Israel's young and they're devoted to him and they're following him in the wilderness.

Israel: Betrothed to the Lord

Israel was holy to the Lord, the first fruits of his harvest. All who ate of it incurred guilt, disaster came upon them and declares the Lord. And so he's describing Israel with the very same term that are a sheaf. If you are the first fruits of, as Shavuot was meant to be, a first fruits offering, if you will. That was the day that it came. We talk a lot about the law, and we talk a lot about Torah, and it's incredible. I heard one of my mentors speaking recently, and he was contrasting essentially how we view the Torah of God, how we view the law of God, how we view God's commandments. And in Israel, if you talk about Torah, right, walk into a synagogue today and talk about Torah, people start getting happy. They're like, yeah, the Torah, man, the Torah of our king, the Torah of our God. This is the constitution of God's kingdom. And people get excited. They smile, yeah, man, I love the Torah, right? A simcha Torah, people dancing around. It's a beautiful thing. But if you go into a church and you say, yeah, man, that law, it's a totally different attitude because of the way that people perceive it, the way they see it. And it's very unfortunate because I view the Torah as being something that is delightful and worth rejoicing about because that's what was given to me as a believer. That's how we define sin. That's how we draw the line in the sand and say, hey, I know where I am now, and I know where I am going, and I know who I'm following, and I see where he's going, and I am going to try my best through the Spirit of God and the strength that he has given me to follow the example of Yeshua. That's what the Torah does. So James talks about the law, he calls it the Torah of liberty because it's freedom in God's kingdom. And it's amazing because we're on a journey to the mountain of God. Every single one of us is on a journey to the mountain of God. I believe that.

The Mountain of God

And we're taught that the law and Mount Sinai are things that are done away with or they're insignificant. And it's unfortunate because [Isaiah 2:2-3](#) has a parallel to Shavuot. Going to the mountain of God to receive the Torah. Have you guys read it? Everyone knows this verse, right? In the last days, so this is going to be at the end of times, right? After Mashiach returns, Messiah returns, it's going to be awesome. In the last days, the Lord's temple will be established as the highest of the mountains. It will be exalted above the hills and all nations. Who? All nations will stream to it. So this isn't going to be just a tourist attraction that you're like, oh, hey, my wife and I are planning a little trip, go see the temple this summer. No, this is all nations are going to run to it, pushing each other out of the way. No, I'm going to get there. Everybody wants to come to this great mountain of God. And many people will come and say, come, let us go up to the mountain of the Lord, to the temple of our God, of Jacob. He will teach us his way so that we may walk in his paths. The Torah will go out from Zion and the word of the Lord from Jerusalem. I love that because I don't know if this is specifically talking about Shavuot, but it sure does seem like it—like a day of celebration where everybody's going to be coming running to the mountain of God. They know what their journey's been like. They've depended on the faith of God and they're going to be swamping the mountain of God. Father, teach us your ways so that we can walk in your paths. Teach us your ways so that we can display your righteousness. Teach us your ways so that we can display your justice. Make us like your son. Show us the way. Let us go up to the mountain of God. Hey bro, you want to go to the mountain of God? Yeah, I want to go to the mountain of God. Let's go to the mountain of God so that we can be given his Torah.

The Future Vision of Torah

Many people today, many believers view the Torah as something that's bondage, something that's done away with, something that's law, it's restrictive. In the end of days, it will not be seen like that anymore. Because everyone will have the understanding of what it truly is and why it is worth rejoicing over.

Earlier, I mentioned about [Acts 2](#). And we know what happened in [Acts 2](#). It was the indwelling of the Spirit, right? The Spirit was given. The Spirit fell, if you will. Turn with me to [Acts 2](#). I'd like to show you guys something to study. And today's message was really kind of a brief overview of many different aspects that I hope you guys will study as a family leading up to Shavuot, that you can learn and discuss some things—talk about how that bread looked funny, why it may have looked that way, so on and so forth, how strong you would have to be to carry the big two lambs, raise them up over your head. In Judaism, they stay up all night studying

Torah and reading the book of Ruth on Shavuot. Why the book of Ruth? Because it's a love story, right?

Acts 2: The Spirit Poured Out

Acts 2. Now we understand what's happening in Acts 2. It's the day of Shavuot in Jerusalem. It's Pentecost, if you will. Pentecost didn't start here. The first Pentecostal movement was at Mount Sinai. But they were gathered together, all of the apostles, the disciples, all of the believers in Yeshua, if you will, were gathered together in one place and they were celebrating. And it reads, when the day of Pentecost arrived. So now we know what that word means, the Shavuot. When the day of Shavuot arrived, they were all together in one place. So it wasn't fire, but it was tongues as fire. And that word there in the Greek for tongues is also translated as languages. Okay, so they weren't just a bunch of little red things flopping around. It was the languages appeared as fire. Guys, I really hope one day in this movement that we can get back to the point where we're not afraid to use the gifts of the Spirit anymore.

The Gifts of the Spirit Are Real

In this movement, we have a very bad problem, and it's a horrible problem. It's a disgusting problem, and it's one that we really need to get over. And that is, if a denomination that we don't agree with, if they have the gifts of the Spirit, then somehow maybe that's not what we should be doing. Guys, the gifts of the Spirit are real. Speaking in tongues is a real thing. A real thing. I have mentors in this movement that I have seen and prayed with that have this gift. It is not something that is weird. It is not something that, ooh, just one church, those radical Christians over there do. No, it is scriptural. This is something that is given by the Spirit of God. Prophecy is a gift given by the Spirit of God. You have gifts that can enable you to change the world for the betterment of God's kingdom. And I hope one day, as a movement, we'll get over the fact that maybe we're too good for the gifts of God's Spirit, the gifts of the Spirit. Because it certainly rocked the first century. It certainly did.

Every Nation Heard God's Works

Now there were dwelling in Jerusalem Jews, devout men from every nation under heaven. And at this sound, the multitude came together and they were bewildered because each one was hearing them speak in his own language. And they were amazed and astonished saying, are not these who are speaking Galileans? And how is it that we hear each of us his own native tongue? Parthians, Medes, Elamites, the residents of Mesopotamia, Judea, Asia, all these folks, Egypt,

parts of Libya, I mean way over there. And the visitors from Rome, both Jews and proselytes, right? Cretans and Arabians. We hear them speaking in our own tongues the mighty works of God. And all were amazed and perplexed, saying to one another, what does this mean? But others mocking them said, "Oh man, they just drank too much wine this morning."

The first part of this reading, verses 2 through 4, describe the scene. And the disciples, the apostles, they're sitting there and they're together in one room. And it says that they were together in one place. In one place. It meant that they were not just together, but they were one together. They were praying together. They were worshiping together. They were in fellowship as one together. I love that because, do we have it here? I'm trying to figure out why my slides are different. This is describing the same thing that happened in [Exodus 20](#). So in [Exodus 20:18](#), the Ten Commandments are being given and it states, "All the people saw the thunder and the lightning flashes and the sound of the trumpet on the mountain smoking." Smoke, lightning, big loud roars.

The Hebrew Word for Voices

So that word "thunder" there is interesting. I believe it's the Hebrew word kol, I think, and it means voices. So it could be in thunder and thunder is an accurate translation, but it's a plural word in this sense and it could also just as accurately be translated voices. It literally reads in the Hebrew, they saw the voices, which is interesting, and the lightning and the flashes of the sound of the trumpet on the mountain smoking.

And when the people saw it, they trembled and stood at a distance. Then they said to Moses, speak to us yourself and we will listen, but let not God speak to us or we will die. They saw the voices. What voices? What voices did they see? Maybe it was just thunder, thunders, I guess plural. It would have to be plural. What voices did they see?

Jewish Commentary on Mount Sinai

So here is where Jewish commentary and Jewish literature really comes into play—to not necessarily explain things, but to give us as believers a little bit more understanding of what the Jewish mindset was in the first century when this day of Pentecost happened. Okay?

So I'm going to read you a couple things from the Mishnah. These are first, second, third century authors, Jewish authors, talking about what happened at Mount Sinai. Right?

So the first one is Rabbi Yochanan. This guy, Rabbi Yochanan, he was Rabbi Yochanan ben Zakkai, I believe his name was. And he lived in the late first century. He was actually the Nasi of the Sanhedrin for about 10 or 20 years until he died in 90 AD, somewhere around there. In Acts chapter 4:6, most people believe that's the John that was called in to question the apostles. It was this guy. Right? So this guy, he's a contemporary of the first century. He's pretty credible.

Seventy Voices in Seventy Languages

So what's he say? He wrote, God's voice as it was uttered split up into 70 voices, right? The 70 languages of the world so that all the nations should understand the Torah. So you're saying that the first Shavuot, if the Torah was given, that God spoke in a language that every single person, no matter where they were from, could understand. Well, that's what happened in Acts chapter 2.

Telling them the mighty works of God we have in the midrash of Exodus. This is what's taught in Judaism and the whole nation perceived or saw the thunderings, the sounds or voices. The voice emerged and became 70 voices in 70 languages so that all languages would hear in the occasion of the giving of the Torah. The children of Israel not only heard God's voice but actually saw the sound waves as they emerged from God's mouth. They visualized them as a fiery substance. Huh.

So God's voice, the languages that were coming out of the mountain, according to Jewish tradition, I mean, maybe it's tradition and it's just not worth anything. I just find it interesting, right? They appeared as fire, right? Mishnahic text. Right?

So rabbinic Judaism understands that when God spoke, it was in a language that everyone could understand. It was not just for Israel, if you will. It was for the whole world. And this guy apparently thought that when the voices, the sound waves that came off the mountain appeared as fire, the divided tongues of fire appeared as fire, and each one of these little fire flame languages went to every Jew, if you will, and sat upon them and said, hey, are you willing to accept the covenant of God? Are you ready to be a nation with God as your sovereign, with God as your king? Are you ready to be part of a kingdom, a citizen of the kingdom of God? Are you ready for this? Are you going to commit your life to following the commands of God's kingdom? I do. And at that point, the tradition goes, it all went back and they engraved on the tablet.

Understanding First Century Pentecost

Now this is midrash, if you will. This is just opinion. It's a way of explaining the story to give it meaning, if whatnot. But I found that interesting because, guys, in the first century, it may have looked kind of weird, everyone just walking around speaking a bunch of languages. But what if they already understood it as being that way? Whoa, this is on Shavuot. Whoa, we got people walking around speaking other languages and they're talking about the wondrous works and deeds of God.

Do you know what I think was spoken on Mount Sinai? Not only the commandments, but the emphasis. The whole thing that Shavuot was concluding: I am the Lord your God that brought you out of the land of Egypt. I put you up on an eagle's wings, I brought you out. You didn't even have any turbulence. Just fly out here to be my people. This was the miraculous works that God was doing for Israel.

On the day of Pentecost, disciples and apostles were all walking around being all Pentecostal, right? These are the things that they were reminding the Jews through, and I bet they were telling them all about Yeshua. How are you talking about Yeshua, and how do you speak my language? Guys, this is incredible. Imagine the day when a Torah observant believing movement begins to have the faith to use God's gifts in the world. Imagine. Joel's prophecies will come true at that point.

Closing

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