

# The Dating of Shavuot

## The History and Controversy

לְכוּ-נָא וְנִזְכָּחַה יַאֲמַר יְהוָה

*Come Now Let Us Reason Together*<sup>1</sup>

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1. Isaiah 1:18

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# When Is Shavuot?

## Introduction

Every year as the festival of Shavuot approaches, the questions about the dating of this holiday resurface. The discussion of the dating of this festival has a very long history that probably dates back to the first commonwealth.<sup>2</sup> It is my contention the longstanding controversy that has engulfed this festival extends far beyond any exegetical difficulties that the biblical texts in question present. If it were just a matter of proper exegesis, then no doubt this controversy would have been solved centuries ago. At the very base of this problem the scholar will soon uncover substantial political and sociological intrigue. That this controversy found its way into the liturgy is proof enough to substantiate my hypothesis.<sup>3</sup> The date of

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2. See Louis Finklestein The Pharisees, JPS 1962. pages 116-118 and 641-654

3. a) During the entire month of Nisan, Tachanun is not recited. The root of this exemption may stem from the establishment of a fixed date to celebrate Shavuot. To establish a 'min- holiday' to celebrate the resolution of a conflict between the Pharisees and the Sadducees concerning

Shavot has never been resolved to the satisfaction of everyone and the general consensus has been to politely and civilly agree to disagree.

Although the implications and conclusions of this study have far reaching academic and spiritual implications, I hope to approach the material in a fair and unbiased nature. I have allowed, whenever possible, for the Tanak to speak on its own terms and have used secondary sources to aid in the

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another holiday definitely has the mark of political, religious and sociological intrigue : see Ta'anit 17B:

אלין יומיא דלא להתענאה בהון ומקצתהון דלא למיספד בהון. מריש ירחא דניסן עד תמניא ביה איתוקם תמידא דלא למיספד בהון. מתמניא ביה עד סוף מועדא איתותב חגא דשבועיא דלא למיספד בהון

These are the days on which fasting is not permissible, and on some of them mourning also is forbidden. From the New Moon of Nisan until the eighth of the month mourning is not permissible because the Daily offering was established;<sup>11</sup> from the eighth day of the same month until the end of the festival [of Passover] mourning is not permissible since the date of the observance of the Feast of Weeks was then definitely fixed.

also in Ta'anit 17B

אמר מר: מתמניא ביה עד סוף מועדא איתותב חגא דשבועיא דלא למיספד

b) Maharitz Chiyos -The first day of the omer is yom echad and not yom rishon. We count in this fashion to abrogate any idea that the omer must begin on Sunday.

c) it has been taught that Shabbat HaGadol (the sabbath before Pesach) is so called to distinguish it from Sabbat Hakatan-the 16th of Nisan.

clarification of Torah interpretative difficulties.

I hope to not only add my voice to this very ancient discussion but to also re-explore the many issues involved in this dating question, with the desire to come to a satisfactory resolution of the issue. HaShem does indeed desire that we "reason together" to explore, question, observe and study His word, with the ultimate goal of becoming more faithful servants.

Sometimes we become so entangled in the minute details of an issue that we fail to see that which should be obvious, so I shall begin by laying out the problem, reviewing the issues involved and discussing how various groups have attempted to resolve the problem. In the conclusion I hope to present new insights into the text and resolve any lingering doubts, or difficulties in the dating issue of Shavuot.

## **The Problem**

As with the celebration of Passover and the Feast of Unleavened Bread there exist considerable scholarly debate with regards to just how and when one is to count to חג שבועות-the Feast of Weeks. The regulations for observing all the holidays are preceded by the phrase 'and the Lord spoke

to Moses saying..., ' except in the case of Shavuot.<sup>4</sup> This debate is sparked by the fact that there is no direct statement in scripture telling us exactly on what date one is to keep the Festival of Weeks. The dating of this festival has been dependent upon scriptural interpretations, post -biblical exegesis, political volatility, spiritual exigency and rabbinic dogma. The date is reliant upon 1) the timing of the omer- wave offering, as it relates to the seven days of Unleavened Bread 2) the interpretation of key words and 3) the inferences provided from context and statements made in Scripture.

Leviticus 23:15 is the central text that needs to be discussed and analyzed in any attempt to resolve the dating issue.

טו וּסְפַרְתֶּם לָכֶם מִמַּחֲרַת הַשַּׁבָּת מִיּוֹם הַבִּיאְכֶם אֶת-עֹמֶר הַתְּנוּפָה שֶׁבַע שָׁבָתוֹת תְּמִימֹת תִּהְיֶינָה: טז עַד מִמַּחֲרַת הַשַּׁבָּת הַשְּׁבִיעִת תִּסְפְּרוּ חֲמִשִּׁים יוֹם

15 And you shall count from the morrow after the Sabbath, from the day that you brought the sheaf of the wave offering; seven full weeks shall they be, 16 counting fifty days to the morrow after the seventh Sabbath; (Leviticus 23:15)<sup>5</sup>

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4. see Nehama Liebowitz- Studies in Vayikra. -page 219. This is true is you separate the wave sheaf from the festival of shavuot.

5. Unless otherwise stated, english translations of the biblical hebrew text are quoted from either The Jewish Publication Society (JPS) or the Mellel Hebrew /English Tanak

In order to determine the proper day for the observance of the Feast of Shavuot, the following questions need to be posed and answered:

- 1) What is the meaning of the word "sabbath"?
- 2) Which sabbath is being referred to?
- 3) How should one interpret the phrase מִמָּחָרַת הַשַּׁבָּת  
'from the morrow' after the Sabbath?
- 4) What is the origin of Shavuot and how did the development of this festival affect the interpretation of key words and phrases for determining the date of Shavuot?
- 5) What was the original (if any) relationship of Shavuot to the Feast of Unleavened Bread?
- 6) Does the wave sheaf have to occur during the days of Unleavened Bread?
- 7) What motivations caused various groups to select their date for the wave sheaf and Shavuot?
- 8) What is the true and valid meaning and significance of Shavuot?
- 9) What is the significance of the counting?

The date of the festival of Shavuot is determined by how one answers any



or all of these questions.

## Background

The festival of שבועות<sup>6</sup> -Shavuot holds a special place in the history of the Hebrew people<sup>7</sup> for it was a time of great joy.<sup>8</sup> This festival is one of the seven annual holy days mentioned in Leviticus 23. Shavuot is the second of the שלוש רגלים - three pilgrimage festivals<sup>9</sup> when all male Israelites were required to journey to Jerusalem. It is a full יום טוב festival day on which no work is to be performed. In the Tanak and rabbinic literature the festival of Shavuot is referred to with several designations:

### 1.The Feast of First Fruits

וּחַג הַקִּצִּיר בַּכּוֹרֵי מַעֲשֵׂיךָ אֲשֶׁר תִּזְרַע בַּשָּׂדֶה

6. And the Feast of Harvest, the first fruits of your labors, which you have sown in the field;  
(see Exodus 23:14-16)

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6. Literally 'weeks'

7. It is also a significant day in the Christian church

8. See Deuteronomy 16:9-11, Isaiah 9:2

9. Deut. 16:16

וּבְיוֹם הַבְּכוּרִים בְּהַקְרִיבְכֶם מִנְחָה חֲדָשָׁה לַיהוָה בַּשָּׁבְעַתֵיכֶם

26. Also in the day of the firstfruits, when you bring a new meal offering to the Lord, in your feast of weeks ,

(Numbers 28:26)

With this designation, Shavuot marked the beginning of the season in which one could bring the voluntary offering of first fruits. This season ended with the Feast of Sukkot.<sup>10</sup>

## 2. The Feast of Weeks (Pentecost)

a) Exodus 34:22

וְחַג שִׁבְעַת תַּעֲשֶׂה לְךָ בְּכוּרֵי קִצִּיר חֲטִיִּם

And thou shalt observe the feast of weeks, even of the first-fruits of wheat harvest,

b) Deuteronomy 16:10

וַעֲשִׂיתָ חַג שִׁבְעוֹת לַיהוָה אֱלֹהֶיךָ מִסֹּת נִדְבַת יָדְךָ אֲשֶׁר תִּתֶּן כַּאֲשֶׁר יְבָרַכְךָ

יְהוָה אֱלֹהֶיךָ:

10. And you shall keep the Feast of Weeks to the Lord your God with a tribute of a freewill offering of your hand, which you shall give according as the Lord your God has blessed you.

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10. The Mishnah informs us that the bikkurim could be bought to the Temple anytime between Shavuot and Sukkot. see Men 8:1 ...מֵעֶצְרַת וְעַד הַחֵג, מִבֵּיא וְקוֹרָא...

## C) Deuteronomy 16:16

בַּחֹג הַמִּצּוֹת-שְׁלוֹשׁ פְּעָמִים בַּשָּׁנָה יֵרָאֶה כָּל-זְכוּרְךָ אֶת-פְּנֵי יְהוָה אֱלֹהֶיךָ, בַּמָּקוֹם אֲשֶׁר יִבְחַר  
 וּבַחֹג הַשְּׁבֻעוֹת, וּבַחֹג הַסֻּכּוֹת; וְלֹא יֵרָאֶה אֶת-פְּנֵי יְהוָה, רֵיקָם.

Three times in a year shall all your males appear before the Lord your God in the place which he shall choose; in the Feast of Unleavened Bread, and in the Feast of Weeks, and in the Feast of Booths; and they shall not appear before the Lord empty

This expression refers to the fact that the Feast of Weeks was the fiftieth day in a specific counting commanded in the Torah. Greek speaking Hebrews and Christians called this same festival πεντηκοστή -Pentekoste. Pentecost is derived from a Greek word -pentekoste meaning fiftieth. This Greek term is a translation of the Hebrew expression "festival of fifty days." In Exodus 34:22, the Septuagint utilizes the Greek equivalent of the Feast of Weeks<sup>11</sup>. In Hellenistic Judaism<sup>12</sup>, Pentekoste is used for the Feast of Weeks Philo<sup>13</sup> and Josephus<sup>14</sup> also utilized this term.

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11. **Exodus 34:22 και εορτην εβδομαδων ποιησεις μοι αρχην θερισμου πυρων και εορτην συναγωγης μεσουντος του ενιαυτου**

And thou shalt keep to me the feast of weeks, the beginning of wheat-harvest; and the feast of ingathering in the middle of the year.

12. 180 B.C.E to 100 C.E

13. Philo-Decal.,160; Josephus- "Antiquities" Book III,(252)10:6, Book XIV (337)13,4, Book XVII, (252) 10,2

14. Josephus - "Antiquities" Book XIV (13:4) (257), "Antiquities" Book III,(252)10:6, Book

### 3, The עצרת -Closing Assembly

In rabbinic literature and in segments of Josephus' history, the festival is known as עצרת 'atseret or closing assembly<sup>15</sup>. This designation refers to the fact that some consider Shavuot as the concluding feast of Passover.

Examples:

a)

בְּעֶצְרַת עַל פְּרוֹת הָאֵילָן<sup>16</sup>

**On Atseret (shavuot), for the fruits of the tree.**

b)

When a week of weeks has passed over after this sacrifice, (which weeks contain forty and nine days,) on the fiftieth day, which is Pentecost, but is called by the Hebrews *Asartha*, which signifies *Pentecost*, they bring to God a loaf, made of wheat flour, of two tenth deals, with leaven; and for sacrifices they bring two lambs;<sup>17</sup>

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XVII, (10:2)

15. See the discussion of Menahem Haran in Temple and Temple Service in Ancient Israel Eisenbrauns, 1985. pages 296-297. Meaning is uncertain - but may mean - solemn assembly. This word also occurs in reference to the day after Sukkot- thus the meaning closing assembly See Encyclopedia Judaic "Shavuot" 2nd edition - vol 18 page 422.

see also Targum Onkelos -Numbers 28:26-Likewise on the day of your firstlings, when you offer the gift from the new produce before the Lord in your ingatherings, after the seven weeks are completed, you shall have a holy convocation, no servile work shall you do;

16. Mishnah -Rosh Hashanah 1:2, (see also - Song R.7:4, Hag 2:4),

17. Josephus "Antiquities" Book III ( 10:6) (252)

#### 4. The Feast of the Harvest

The dating of this festival also suggests its original agricultural context<sup>18</sup>. Shavuot was a harvest festival and throughout biblical history it maintained an agricultural context.

Example:

וּחַג הַקָּצִיר בַּכּוֹרֵי מַעֲשֵׂיךָ אֲשֶׁר תִּזְרַע בַּשָּׂדֶה

6. And the Feast of Harvest, the first fruits of your labors, which you have sown in the field; (Exodus 23:16)

Though the Feast of Weeks commonly refers to the particular festival day on which the first fruits of the wheat harvest were presented to HaShem, It actually has reference to the entire period of the grain harvest. In ancient Israel, the day that the count began was the day of the offering that began the barley harvest. Seven weeks would elapse from the beginning of the barley harvest in late April until the beginning of the wheat harvest in the beginning of June.

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18. Shavuot as a midsummer agricultural festival may have been adopted from Canaanite customs.- see Encyclopedia Judaica "Shavuot" 2nd edition vol. 18 page 422.

ט שְׁבַע שָׁבָעַת תִּסְפֹּר—לָךְ מֵהַחֵל חֲרַמְשׁ בְּקֶמָה תִּחַל לִסְפֹּר שִׁבְעָה שָׁבָעוֹת:  
 י וְעָשִׂיתָ חֵג שִׁבְעוֹת לַיהוָה אֱלֹהֶיךָ מִסֵּת גְּדֵבַת יָדְךָ אֲשֶׁר תִּתֶּן כְּאֲשֶׁר יְבָרַכְךָ  
 יְהוָה אֱלֹהֶיךָ:

9. Seven weeks shall you count; begin to number the seven weeks from such time as you begin to put the sickle to the grain.

10. And you shall keep the Feast of Weeks to the Lord your God with a tribute of a freewill offering of your hand, which you shall give according as the Lord your God has blessed you.

**(Deut. 16-9-10)**

The harvest season culminated at the Feast of Shavuot. The count to the festival day of Shavuot concluded on the 50th day. This is the day on which two loaves of bread that were baked from the first fruits of the wheat harvest were offered to HaShem.

יז מִמּוֹשְׁבֵיכֶם תָּבִיאוּ | לֶחֶם תְּנוּפָה שְׁתֵּים שְׁנֵי עֶשְׂרֹנִים סֵלֶת תִּהְיֶינָה חֶמֶץ  
 תִּתְּפִינָה בְּכוּרִים לַיהוָה:

17. You shall bring out of your habitations two wave loaves of two tenth deals; they shall be of fine flour; they shall be baked with leaven; they are the first fruits to the Lord **(Leviticus 23:17)**

## 5. The Time of the Giving of the Torah

In post Biblical history Shavuot began to be associated with the giving of

the Torah at Mt Sinai (זמן מתן תורתנו). The association of Shavuot with the establishment of the Sinai covenant between HaShem and Israel is not explicit in the Bible. In Exodus 19 we are told that the Israelites arrived in Sinai on the new moon of the third month ( i.e. Sivan). In IIChronicles, during the third month Sivan, King Asa of Judah calls for a convocation to celebrate covenant renewal. It is likely that this ceremony took place during the Shavuot pilgrimage festival. The community of Qumran held an annual 'covenant feast' on Shavuot (held according to their reckoning of the date of Shavuot).<sup>19</sup> The book of Jubilees makes the first explicit connection between Shavuot and the giving of the law.<sup>20</sup> Seder Olam,<sup>21</sup> the Babylonian Talmud,<sup>22</sup> Exodus Rabbah<sup>23</sup> and Midrash Tankhuma<sup>24</sup> all make the

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19. See Dwight D. Swanson., - The Temple Scroll and the Bible: The Methodology of 11QT. page 48.

20. Book of Jubilees-- second century BCE

Jubilees 6:17,18 reads: 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.

21. Sedar Olam (rabbah)., 5

22. -B.Pes.,68b; B . -R. Eleazar said: All agree in respect to the Feast of Weeks [‘azereth] that we require [it to be] ‘for you’ too. What is the reason? It is the day on which the Torah was given

-Shab., 86b-Our Rabbis taught: On the sixth day of the month [Siivan] were the Ten Commandments given to Israel.

23. שמות רבה -Exodus Rabbah- 31

24. Midrash Tankhuma., 26c

connection between Shavuot and the giving of the law at Sinai.

## Historical Developments

### 1. Second Temple Period

The Festival of First Fruits as described in the Torah, was observed until the destruction of the Second Temple in 70 CE. During this time period how was Shavuot celebrated? There is a brief description of some of the ritualistic aspects of the celebration given in Devarim:

א וְהָיָה כִּי-תָבוֹא אֶל-הָאָרֶץ אֲשֶׁר יְהוָה אֱלֹהֶיךָ נָתַן לְךָ נַחֲלָה וּירְשָׁתָהּ  
 וַיִּשְׁבֶּתָּ בָּהּ: ב וּלְקַחְתָּ מֵרֵאשִׁית א | כָּל-פְּרֵי הָאֲדָמָה אֲשֶׁר תָּבִיא מֵאֲרָצְךָ אֲשֶׁר  
 יְהוָה אֱלֹהֶיךָ נָתַן לְךָ וּשְׂמַתָּ בַטֶּנָּא וְהִלַּכְתָּ אֶל-הַמְּקוֹם אֲשֶׁר יִבְחַר יְהוָה  
 אֱלֹהֶיךָ לְשִׁכּוֹן שְׁמוֹ שָׁם: ג וּבֹאתָ אֶל-הַכֹּהֵן אֲשֶׁר יְהוָה בְּיָמֶיךָ הָהֵם וְאָמַרְתָּ  
 אֵלָיו הַגִּדְתִּי הַיּוֹם לַיהוָה אֱלֹהֶיךָ כִּי-בָאתִי אֶל-הָאָרֶץ אֲשֶׁר נִשְׁבַּע יְהוָה  
 לְאַבְתֵּינִי לָתֵת לָנוּ: ד וּלְקַח הַכֹּהֵן הַטֶּנָּא מִיָּדְךָ וְהִנִּיחוּ לְפָנַי מִזֶּבַח יְהוָה  
 אֱלֹהֶיךָ: ה וְעָנִיתָ וְאָמַרְתָּ לְפָנָי | יְהוָה אֱלֹהֶיךָ אֲרָמִי אֲבִד אָבִי וַיִּרְדַּ מִצְרַיִמָּה  
 וַיְגַר שָׁם בְּמַתִּי מֵעַט וַיְהִי-שָׁם לְגוֹי גָּדוֹל עָצוּם וְרַב: ו וַיִּרְעוּ אֶתְנוּ הַמִּצְרַיִם  
 וַיַּעֲנוּנוּ וַיִּתְּנוּ עָלֵינוּ עֲבֹדָה קָשָׁה: ז וּנְצַעַק אֶל-יְהוָה אֱלֹהֵי אֲבֹתֵינוּ וַיִּשְׁמַע  
 יְהוָה אֶת-קִלְנוּ וַיִּרְא אֶת-עַנְיֵנוּ וְאֶת-עַמְלָנוּ וְאֶת-לַחְצָנוּ: ח וַיּוֹצֵאֵנוּ יְהוָה  
 מִמִּצְרַיִם בְּיַד חֲזָקָה וּבְזֶרַע נְטוּיָה וּבְמַרְא גָּדֹל וּבְאֹתוֹת וּבְמִפְתִּימִם: ט וַיְבִאֵנוּ  
 אֶל-הַמְּקוֹם הַזֶּה וַיִּתְּנוּ-לָנוּ אֶת-הָאָרֶץ הַזֹּאת אֲרָץ זָבַת חֶלֶב וּדְבָשׁ: י וְעַתָּה  
 הִנֵּה הִבֵּאתִי אֶת-רֵאשִׁית פְּרֵי הָאֲדָמָה אֲשֶׁר-נָתַתָּה לִי יְהוָה וְהִנְחַתּוּ לְפָנָי  
 יְהוָה אֱלֹהֶיךָ וְהִשְׁתַּחֲוִיתָ לְפָנָי יְהוָה אֱלֹהֶיךָ: יא וּשְׂמַחְתָּ בְּכָל-הַטּוֹב אֲשֶׁר  
 נָתַן-לְךָ יְהוָה אֱלֹהֶיךָ וּלְבֵיתְךָ אֶתָּה וְהַלְוִי וְהַגֵּר אֲשֶׁר בְּקִרְבְּךָ



1. And it shall be, when you come in to the land which the Lord your God gives you for an inheritance, and possess it, and live in it;
2. That you shall take of the first of all the fruit of the earth, which you shall bring of your land that the Lord your God gives you, and shall put it in a basket, and shall go to the place which the Lord your God shall choose to place his name there.
3. And you shall go to the priest who shall be in those days, and say to him, I declare this day to the Lord your God, that I have come to the country which the Lord swore to our fathers to give us.
4. And the priest shall take the basket from your hand, and set it down before the altar of the Lord your God.
5. And you shall speak and say before the Lord your God, A wandering Aramean was my father, and he went down into Egypt, and sojourned there with a few, and became there a nation, great, mighty, and populous;
6. And the Egyptians dealt ill with us, and afflicted us, and laid upon us hard slavery;
7. And when we cried to the Lord God of our fathers, the Lord heard our voice, and looked on our affliction, and our labor, and our oppression;
8. And the Lord brought us out of Egypt with a mighty hand, and with an outstretched arm, and with great awesomeness, and with signs, and with wonders;
9. And he has brought us to this place, and has given us this land, a land that flows with milk and honey.
10. And now, behold, I have brought the first fruits of the land, which you, O Lord, have given me. And you shall set it before the Lord your God, and worship before the Lord your God;
11. And you shall rejoice in every good thing which the Lord your God has given to you, and to your house, you, and the Levite, and the stranger who is among you.

(Deuteronomy 26:1-11)

The Mishnah contains one of the few description of how Shavuot was celebrated during the days of the second Temple. Some of the first fruits offered were figs and grapes<sup>25</sup>

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25. The Bikkurim were brought from the seven species- barley wheat, grapes, figs, olives, pomegranates, dates. see Deuteronomy 8:8

ג הקרובים מביאים התאנים והענבים, והרחוקים מביאים גרוגרות וצמוקים. והשור הולך לפניהם, וקרניו מצפות זָהב, ועטרה של זית בראשו. החליל מכה לפניהם, עד שמגיעים קרוב לירושלים. הגיעו קרוב לירושלים, שלחו לפניהם, ועטרו את בכוריהם. הפחות, הסגנים והגזברים יוצאים לקראתם. לפי כבוד הנכנסים היו יוצאים. וכל בעלי אמניות שבירושלים עומדים לפניהם ושואליו בשלומם, אחינו אנשי המקום פלוני, באתם לשלום:

MISHNAH 3. THOSE WHO LIVED NEAR BROUGHT FRESH FIGS AND GRAPES, BUT THOSE FROM A DISTANCE BROUGHT DRIED FIGS AND RAISINS.<sup>9</sup> AN OX WITH HORNS BEDECKED WITH GOLD AND WITH AN OLIVE-CROWN ON ITS HEAD<sup>10</sup> LED THE WAY.<sup>11</sup> THE FLUTE WAS PLAYED BEFORE THEM<sup>12</sup> UNTIL THEY WERE NIGH TO JERUSALEM; AND WHEN THEY ARRIVED CLOSE TO JERUSALEM THEY SENT MESSENGERS IN ADVANCE,<sup>13</sup> AND ORNAMENTALLY ARRAYED THEIR BIKKURIM.<sup>14</sup> THE GOVERNORS AND CHIEFS AND TREASURERS [OF THE TEMPLE]<sup>15</sup> WENT OUT TO MEET THEM. ACCORDING TO THE RANK OF THE ENTRANTS<sup>16</sup> USED THEY TO GO FORTH. ALL THE SKILLED ARTISANS OF JERUSALEM WOULD STAND UP BEFORE THEM AND GREET THEM:<sup>17</sup> 'BRETHREN, MEN OF SUCH AND SUCH A PLACE, WE ARE DELIGHTED TO WELCOME YOU' <sup>26</sup>

## 2. Post Biblical Period

As previously discussed, during later Israelite, Shavuot began to be associated with the giving of the Torah at Mt Sinai (זמן מתן תורתנו).

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26. Mishnah- Bikkurim -Chapter 3, Mishnah 3

With the destruction of the second temple in 70 CE, the custom of bringing the first fruits of the harvest to the Temple was no longer possible. The Rabbis sought to give this holiday new significance and new purpose. Since Shavuot was the only holiday which the Rabbis felt was not associated with any historical development or religious experience and they sought to develop one for it<sup>27</sup> During the third century CE, Shavuot began to be associated with the giving of the Torah on Mt. Sinai. The Rabbis sought to demonstrate that the Torah was given on the sixth of Sivan. They accomplished this with their interpretation of Exodus 19.

א בַּחֹדֶשׁ הַשְּׁלִישִׁי לְצֵאת בְּנֵי-יִשְׂרָאֵל מֵאֶרֶץ מִצְרַיִם בַּיּוֹם הַזֶּה בָּאוּ מִדְבַּר  
:סִינַי

1. In the third month, when the people of Israel were gone forth out of the land of Egypt, the same day came they into the wilderness of Sinai. (Exodus 19:1)

The third month is clearly Sivan but no date of the month is given. The Rabbis decided that 'the same day' means the first day of the month because הַזֶּה was utilized in that sense elsewhere in Torah.<sup>28</sup>

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27. The association of Shavuot with the giving of the Torah is a major fallacy that was committed in relation to Shavuot. As I shall argue later, Shavuot does indeed have its own historical significance, The invention of a connection to the giving of the Torah was totally errant and unnecessary.

28. א וַיֹּאמֶר יְהוָה אֶל-מֹשֶׁה וְאֶל-אַהֲרֹן בְּאֶרֶץ מִצְרַיִם לֵאמֹר: ב הַחֹדֶשׁ הַזֶּה לָכֶם רֵאשׁ חֹדְשֵׁי רֵאשׁוֹן  
הוּא לָכֶם לְחֹדְשֵׁי הַשָּׁנָה: Shabbat 86b quoting Exodus 12;2)

The Rabbis also stated that חדש –Chodesh (month) can also convey the meaning of the new moon. They therefore read the above passage as follows: "...on the third new moon (the first day of Sivan) after the children of Israel came out of Egypt."<sup>29</sup> Their further reasoning produced the following chronology:

### On the second day.

ג ומֹשֶׁה עָלָה אֶל-הָאֱלֹהִים וַיִּקְרָא אֵלָיו יְהוָה מִן-הַהָר לֵאמֹר כֹּה תֹאמַר  
לְבֵית יַעֲקֹב וְתִגִּיד לְבְנֵי יִשְׂרָאֵל:

3. And Moses went up to God, and the Lord called to him from the mountain, saying, Thus shall you say to the house of Jacob, and tell the people of Israel;(Exodus19;3)

### On the third day

ז וַיָּבֹא מֹשֶׁה וַיִּקְרָא לְזִקְנֵי הָעָם וַיֵּשֶׁם לִפְנֵיהֶם אֵת כָּל-הַדְּבָרִים הָאֵלֶּה אֲשֶׁר  
צִוָּהוּ יְהוָה:

7. And Moses came and called for the elders of the people, and laid before their faces all these words which the Lord commanded him. (Exodus 19:7)

### On the fourth day

ח וַיַּעֲנוּ כָל-הָעָם יַחְדָּו וַיֹּאמְרוּ כֹל אֲשֶׁר-דִּבֶּר יְהוָה נַעֲשֶׂה וְנִשְׁמָע מִשֶׁה

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29. Mechilta ad. loc.

אֶת־דְּבָרֵי הָעָם אֶל־יְהוָה:

8. And all the people answered together, and said, All that the Lord has spoken we will do. And Moses returned the words of the people to the Lord. (Exodus 19:8)

### The fifth day

יִּוְיֹאמֶר יְהוָה אֶל־מֹשֶׁה לֶךְ אֶל־הָעָם וְקִדְשְׁתָּם הַיּוֹם וּמָחָר וּכְבַסוּ שְׂמֹלֹתָם:

10. And the Lord said to Moses, Go to the people, and sanctify them today and tomorrow, and let them wash their clothes, (Exodus 19:10)

### The sixth day

יֵא וְהָיוּ נִכְנָיִם לַיּוֹם הַשְּׁלִישִׁי כִּי | בַּיּוֹם הַשְּׁלִישִׁי יֵרֵד יְהוָה לְעֵינֵי כָל־הָעָם  
עַל־הַר סִינַי:

11. And be ready by the third day; for the third day the Lord will come down in the sight of all the people upon Mount Sinai. (Exodus 19:11)

(Meaning the third day from the conversation that took place between Moses and Hashem on the fourth day- i.e. -the sixth of Sivan

Rashi noticed difficulties in the chronology that is presented above. In his commentary on Shemot 19, he sought to clarify and reinforce the chronology. Rashi concedes that the verses in Shemot are difficult to follow because they are not arranged by a strict chronology. Several jumps in verses must be made to lend coherence to the chronology.<sup>30</sup> I am purposefully taking the time to

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30. "The difficulties begin with the fifth aliya of Yisro (the sequence of events surrounding Yisro himself is a separate issue), and continue until the end of Ki Siso." The quote above and most of the above

lay out the problems in the chronology because it will have far reaching implications for some of my conclusions.

1. ביום הזה: בראש חודש On Rosh Chodesh Sivan the Israelites arrive at the wilderness of Sinai. (19:1; cf. Rashi).
  
2. ומשה עלה: ביום השני.  
Early the following morning, the 2nd of Sivan, Moses goes up Mt. Sinai for the first time. He is instructed to offer the Israelites the opportunity of accepting the Torah, and of becoming a holy people. (19:3-6).
  
3. That same day Moses descends and assembles the elders and passes on the message. The entire people respond in unison that whatever *HaShem* says, they will do. (19:7-8).
  
4. וישב משה את דברי העם וגו': ביום המחרת, שהוא יום שלישי, שהרי בהשכמה עלה.  
During the morning of the 3rd of Sivan, Moses once again ascends the mountain to give the people's response to *HaShem*. (19:8; cf. Rashi).
  
5. On this occasion Moses is told that on the day of Matan Torah

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chart are arranged according to the insight of another Rabbi. Internet source- citation missing. |

*HaShem* will speak to him (i.e. to Moses alone) from the midst of a very thick cloud. The people will bear witness to this event, and this will establish the authenticity of Moshe's prophecy forever. (19:9; ).

6. `Moses' descent, as well as his next conversations with the people is not described in the verses, but is inferred by Rashi from *HaShem's* response in verse 10 (see paragraph 8 below). The people seem to have protested against hearing Matan Torah second hand from Moses, and insisted on hearing it from *HaShem* directly. (Rashi 19:9).

את דברי העם וגו': תשובה על דבר זה שמעתי מהם שרצונם לשמוע ממך אינו דומה השומע מפי השליח לשומע מפי המלך, רצוננו לראות את מלכנו:

[Namely] a response to this statement I have heard from them [the Israelites], that they want to hear [directly] from You. [They maintain that] there is no comparison between one who hears [a message] from the mouth of the messenger and one who hears [it] from the mouth of the king [himself]. [They say,] "We want to see our King!" -[from Mechilta]

7. ויגד משה וגו': ביום המחרת שהוא רביעי לחודש  
On the 4th of Sivan Moses returns to the mountain to bring the people's request to *HaShem*. (see 19:9{b}).
8. It is during this encounter that *HaShem* informs Moses that if the Israelites desires to hear for themselves, they must purify themselves on the 4th and 5th in order to receive the Torah on the 6th. In addition, Moses is to instruct the people how close

they may approach the mountain during the revelation, and for how long the restriction is to last. (see: Rashi 10-13 ).

קדשתם: וזימנתם, שיכינו עצמם היום ומחר

**and prepare them:** Heb. וקדַשְׁתֶּם, and you shall prepare them (Mechilta), that they should prepare themselves today and tomorrow

9. This is the same conversation with *HaShem* that is mentioned in Parashat Mishpatim (24:1-2; cf. Rashi), where Moses is told that he, Aharon, Nadav, Avihu, and the elders are all to ascend on the day of the revelation, but that only Moshe will approach the cloud.
10. Still on the 4th of Sivan, Moshe descends, and informs the people of the command to purify themselves on these days. According to Rabbi Yose, Moshe interpreted days mentioned in paragraph 8 as two complete days in addition to the 4th, the delaying Matan Torah until the 7th of Sivan. (19:14-15; cf. Rashi and Shabbat 87a).

היו נכנים לשלשת ימים: לסוף שלושה ימים, הוא יום רביעי שהוסיף משה יום אחד מדעתו, כדברי רבי יוסי, ולדברי האומר בששה בחדש ניתנו עשרת הדברות לא הוסיף משה כלום. לשלשת ימים, כמו (פסוק יא) ליום השלישי

For the end of three days. That is the fourth day, for Moses added one day of his own volition. This is the view of Rabbi Jose [who says that the Torah was given on the seventh of Sivan]. According to the one who says that the Ten Commandments were given on the sixth of the month, however, Moses did not add anything, and “for three days” has the same meaning as “for the third day.”



[see: Shab. 87a]

11. This is the very same conversation described in Parashat Mishpatim in which Moses reminds the people of the Noachide Laws,. All the people agree to keep all of *HaShem's* commandments. Moshe writes down all of the Torah.
  
12. On the 5th of Sivan Moses builds an altar at the base of the mountain. Offerings are made. Moses reads the book he has written to the people. The Israelites respond, "We will do and we will hear." The blood of the sacrifices is sprinkled on the altar on behalf of the people. (24:4-8; Rashi ad loc. and cf. Rashi 19:11)
 

ליום השלישי: שהוא ששה בחדש. ובחמישי בנה משה את המזבח תחת. ההר ושתים עשרה מצבה, כל הענין האמור בפרשת ואלה המשפטים, (שמות כד ד) ואין מוקדם ומאוחר בתורה

**for on the third day:** which is the sixth of the month, and on the fifth [of the month], Moses built the altar at the foot of the mountain, and the twelve monuments, the entire episode stated in the section of *וְאֵלֶּה הַמִּשְׁפָּטִים* (Exod. 24), but there is no sequence of earlier and later incidents in the Torah. — from Mechilta]
  
13. On the 6th of Sivan, or the 7th according to Rabbi Yose, Moses leads the people to the base of the mountain. We are informed, parenthetically, that during Matan Torah the people are destined to hear only two commandments directly. As for the others, Moshe will speak and *HaShem* will amplify his voice. (19:16-19; Rashi)

Rashi's commentary to the midrash in Shabbat 88a not only links Sivan 6 with the giving of the Torah, it links Shavuot–Sivan 6, with the 6th day of of creation.<sup>31</sup>

There is further evidence to support the premise that the association of Shavoth with the giving of the law was a much later development. Neither Josephus, who lived during the time period of the second Temple, nor the Mishnah which was redacted during the second century CE, mentions the historical association of Shavoth with the giving of the Law. It is not until the Talmud (5th Century CE) that we find this association.<sup>32</sup>

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31. See Shabbat 88a- Rashi's commentary is based on the numerical value of the Hebrew letter "heh"-- five -- The five is interpreted to refer to the five books of Moses. This also explains why day six of creation is referred to as "the" sixth day, rather than "day six." of creation.. So for Rashi when Genesis 1:31 speaks of "the sixth day," it is in fact referring to two things: (1) the sixth day of creation, on which humanity is created, and (2) the sixth day of Sivan, when Israel accepted Torah.

32. Ta'nith 28b, - בששה לחדש ניתנו עשרת הדברות לישראל רבי יוסי אומר בשבעה בו- מאן דאמר בששה ניתנו ובשבעה עלה משה מ"ד בשבעה בשבעה ניתנו ובשבעה עלה משה

On the sixth of the month [of Sivan] the Ten Commandments were given to Israel; R. Jose says: On the seventh of the month. He who says that they were given on the sixth takes the view that on the sixth they were given and on the seventh Moses ascended the mount. And he who says that they were given on the seventh holds that they were given on the seventh and on the seventh Moses ascended the mount

**Shabbat 86b-** ת"ר בששי בחדש ניתנו עשרת הדברות לישראל

Our Rabbis taught: On the sixth day of the month [Siwan] were the Ten Commandments given to

### 3. In Christian Tradition

In Christian tradition, Shavuot became associated with the coming of the Holy Spirit and the beginning of the Christian Church.

a)

<sup>1</sup>Καὶ ἐν τῷ συμπληροῦσθαι τὴν ἡμέραν τῆς πεντηκοστῆς (pentecost) ἦσαν πάντες ὁμοῦ ἐπὶ τὸ αὐτό. <sup>2</sup>καὶ ἐγένετο ἄφνω ἐκ τοῦ οὐρανοῦ ἦχος ὥσπερ φερομένης πνοῆς βιαίας καὶ ἐπλήρωσεν ὅλον τὸν οἶκον οὗ ἦσαν καθήμενοι. <sup>3</sup>καὶ ὠφθησαν αὐτοῖς διαμεριζόμεναι γλῶσσαι ὡσεὶ πυρός, καὶ ἐκάθισεν ἐφ' ἓνα ἕκαστον αὐτῶν, <sup>4</sup>καὶ ἐπλήσθησαν πάντες πνεύματος (Holy Spirit) ἁγίου, καὶ ἤρξαντο λαλεῖν ἑτέραις γλώσσαις καθὼς τὸ πνεῦμα ἐδίδου ἀποφθέγγεσθαι αὐτοῖς.

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Israel.

**Yoma 4b**, במאי קא מיפלגי רבי יוסי הגלילי ור"ע בפלוגתא דהני תנאי דתניא בששה בחודש ניתנה תורה לישראל רבי יוסי אומר בשבעה בו מאן דאמר בששה ניתנה ובשבעה עלה <דכתיב (שמות כד) ויקרא אל משה ביום השביעי> מאן דאמר בשבעה בשבעה ניתנה ובשבעה עלה

In what do R. Jose the Galilean and R. Akiba differ? — In the controversy of these Tannaim. For we have been taught:<sup>9</sup> On the sixth day of the month<sup>10</sup> was the Torah given to Israel. R. Jose says on the seventh. He who says that the Torah was given on the sixth day holds that on the sixth it was given and on the seventh Moses ascended the mountain;<sup>11</sup> he who holds that the Torah was given on the seventh assumes that on the seventh both the Torah was given and Moses ascended, as it is written,

**Pesachim 68B** - א"ר אלעזר הכל מודים בעצרת דבעינן נמי לכם מ"ט יום שניתנה בו תורה -

R. Eleazar said: All agree in respect to the Feast of Weeks [‘azereth]<sup>14</sup> that we require [it to be] ‘for you’ too. What is the reason? It is the day on which the Torah was given.

see -footnote 8 The Book of Jubilees 6:17-18

:1 When the day of Pentecost had come, they were all together in one place. :2 And suddenly from heaven there came a sound like the rush of a violent wind, and it filled the entire house where they were sitting. :3 Divided tongues, as of fire, appeared among them, and a tongue rested on each of them. :4 All of them were filled with the Holy Spirit and began to speak in other languages, as the Spirit gave them ability.

(Acts 2:1-4)

b) Augustine, a Christian Bishop and theologian states:

Why do the Jews celebrate Pentecost? This is a great mystery, brethren, and quite wondrous. Consider this: on the day of Pentecost they received the Torah written by the finger of the deity, and on the day of Pentecost the sacred *ruach* came to the disciples of the Messiah.<sup>33</sup>

### Analysis of The Problem

As stated, Leviticus 23:15 is the central text that needs to be discussed and analyzed and properly exegeted in any attempt to resolve the dating issue.

טו וּסְפַרְתֶּם לָכֶם מִמַּחֲרַת הַשַּׁבָּת מִיּוֹם הַבִּיאְכֶם אֶת-עֹמֶר הַתְּנוּפָה שֶׁבַע שָׁבֻתוֹת תְּמִימֹת תִּהְיֶינָה: טז עַד מִמַּחֲרַת הַשַּׁבָּת הַשְּׁבִיעִית תִּסְפְּרוּ חֲמִשִּׁים יוֹם

15 And you shall count from the morrow after the Sabbath, from the day that you brought the sheaf of the wave offering; seven full weeks shall they be, 16 counting fifty days to the morrow after the seventh Sabbath; (Leviticus 23:15)

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33. Augustine, Serm. Mai, 158:4

This text raise several issues:

- 1) What does the word Sabbath refer to?
- 2) Which Sabbath is being referred to?
- 3) How should one interpret the phrase מִמָּחָרֵת הַשַּׁבָּת  
'from the morrow" after the Sabbath?
- 4).What is the meaning of seven complete weeks?
- 5) Should the term מִמָּחָרֵת הַשַּׁבָּת "from the morrow" be interpreted to mean inclusive reckoning of the morrow or exclusive reckoning? In other words, in counting to Shavuot does one include the day or exclude the day?

Depending on the perspective that one takes, there are at least four possible options for Shavuot.

### 1. Option [1-Pharisees - View \(majority\)](#)-

Sivan 6th or a fixed date for Shavuot. With this scenario the actual day of Shavuot can fall on any day of the week. The Sabbath referred to is the high Sabbath (Yom Tov) festival day of Pesach. For the Pharisees this festival day is Abib 15 and the count begins on Abib 16. Sivan 6th is 50 days after Abib 16. The omer wave offering always occurs on the 16th of Abib, the day after Pesach. By beginning the count on a fixed date of the

month you will always arrive at a fixed date for the festival

## 2. Option [2-Pharisees View \(minority\) and Ethiopian Hebrews \(Beta Israel\) View](#)

Sivan 12 or fixed date for Shavoath. The Sabbath referred to is the high Sabbath festival day occurring on the last day of the seven days of unleavened Bread which is Abib 21. Proponents of this view begin the count on Abib 22 and Shavuot falls in Sivan 12.

## 3. Option [3-/ Sadducees, Boethusians<sup>34</sup>, Karaites<sup>35</sup> and Samaritans<sup>36</sup> View](#)

The Sabbath referred to is the weekly Sabbath. The omer wave offering always occurs on the first day of the week (Sunday) falling just after the festival day of Pesach. The count begins the Sunday during the festival of

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34. Boethusians - A schism of the Sadducees

35. Karaites- This group gives utmost interpretative authority to the Torah and does not recognize the authority of the oral law or hold the oral as binding.

36. Samaritans- This group originated with the conquering of Samaria in 722 BCE by the Assyrians.

Unleavened Bread.

4. Option [4-/ Qumran](#) - The Sabbath referred to is the weekly Sabbath. The omer wave offering occurs on the Sunday falling just after the end of the seven days of Unleavened Bread. According to their calendar Shavuot always occurs on Sivan 15th.

5. Option [5- Inclusive reckoning](#). This option can include any of the above options for the Sabbath, but the count begins including the day called the מִמָּחָרֵת הַשַּׁבָּת "morrow after the Sabbath".

6. Option [6-Exclusive reckoning](#). This option can include any of the above options for the Sabbath, but the count begins excluding the day called the "morrow after the Sabbath."

## **Discussion**

### **Options 5 and 6**

I shall begin the discussion of the options with a review of options five and

six because I believe that these options are the easiest to resolve.

וּסְפַרְתֶּם לָכֶם מִמָּחֳרַת הַשַּׁבָּת מִיּוֹם הַבִּיאָכֶם אֶת-עֹמֶר הַתְּנוּפָה

And you shall count unto you from the morrow after the sabbath, from the day that you brought the sheaf of the wave offering (Leviticus 23:15)

מִמָּחֳרַת הַשַּׁבָּת

"mi-mohorat. Shabbat"

(On the day after the Sabbath)

Options five and six arise from difficulty interpreting the word "from." When counting days a person may say "seven days from today, I will go back to work." If this is stated on a Monday, there is no problem in knowing that you mean the following Monday or seven days later. This count would not include the day that the statement was made. The English word "from" as the JPS translation reads in Leviticus 23:15 cannot include the day on which you start the count. Is the Hebrew phrase - מִמָּחֳרַת הַשַּׁבָּת "from the morrow" to be interpreted inclusively or exclusively? The count was to begin from a specific date to another specific date, with a set period of time in between. .

An analysis of the Hebrew expression מִמָּחֳרַת הַשַּׁבָּת

"from the morrow" will provide a better understanding of how the count



was to proceed. Brown, Driver, Briggs Hebrew Lexicon states this:<sup>37</sup>

מָחָרַת --the morrow (the day following past day)... Leviticus 23;11 the morrow

מִמָּחָרַת - on the morrow (see Genesis 19:34)

According to Strong's Concordance this word is used 32 times in the King James Version of the Tanak. 29 times it is translated "morrow," 2 times it is translated "next day," and 1 time it is translated as simply "next." Of these 32 references, 28 of them contain the preposition "mi" in front of the word. In the King James Version in 26 of these instances it is translated as "on the morrow. " Below is a table of 27 references that include the preposition "mi," along with the translation in the King James Version and the JPS translation.

Text	KJV	JPS
Gen 19:34	on the morrow	the next day
Exodus 9:6	on the morrow	the next day
Exodus 18:13	on the morrow	next day
Exodus 32:6	on the morrow	next day
Exodus 32:30	on the morrow	the next day
Lev 7:16	on the morrow	on the morrow
Lev. 19:6	on the morrow	day following

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37. Brown Driver Briggs -Hebrew Lexicon page 564

Lev 23:11	on the morrow	the day after
Lev 23:15	from the morrow	the day after
Lev 23:16	unto the morrow	the day after
Numbers 17:6	on the morrow	the next day
Numbers 33:3	on the morrow	on the morrow
Joshua 5:11	on the morrow	on the day after
Judges 5:12	on the morrow	on the same day (foot note states day after)
Judges 6:38	on the morrow	the next day
Judges 9:42	on the morrow	the next day
Judges 21:4	on the morrow	the next day
I Samuel 5:3	on the morrow	the next day
I Samuel 5:4	on the morrow	the next day
I Samuel 11:11	on the morrow	the next day
I Samuel 18:10	on the morrow	the next day
I Samuel 20:27	on the morrow	the day after
I Samuel 31:8	on the morrow	the next day
2 Samuel 11:12	on the morrow	the next day
II Kings 8:15	on the morrow	the next day
Jeremiah 20:3	on the morrow	the next day
I Chronicles 10:8	on the morrow	the next day

This analysis supports the premise that the preposition מן- "min" when it is used in relation to or in conjunction with time should never be translated into the English "from," but "beginning on." The overwhelming evidence is in favor of beginning the count "on the day after the Sabbath"<sup>38</sup>. This would

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38. The JPS translates correctly-'the day after the Sabbath'

be inclusive and not exclusive reckoning. Therefore, day one is the day after the Sabbath. Ibn Ezra<sup>39</sup> makes this point clear in his commentary<sup>40</sup> on Lev 23:16 . He states:

"Dissenters explain complete to mean that we should not count the first Sabbath, but rather that the counting should begin with the day immediately following. **In Biblical hebrew, the number given always includes both the first and the last day of the count.**

This interpretation is consistent with the Hebrew understanding of the expression מִמּוֹהֲרַת הַשַּׁבָּת "mi-mohorat Shabbat.-the day after the Sabbath"

### [The Wave Sheaf Within the Days of Unleavened Bread?](#)

Options 2 and 4

Option 2 was originally advocated by a minority of Pharisees, Essenes, the Beta Israel (Ethiopian Jews) and a few Syrian groups. Option 4 was advocated by the Qumran community.

The people who advocated for option 2 understood the instructions in

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39. Ibn Ezra- אבן עזרא - A famous Spanish Rabbi and exegete of the middle ages

40. Jay F. Schacter (translator-) The Commentary of Abraham ibn Ezra on the Pentateuch Vol.3: Leviticus page 135.

Leviticus 23:7-8, Leviticus 23;11 and Leviticus 23;15 to mean that the count was to begin on the 'day after the Sabbath' as referring to the high Sabbath of the last day of Unleavened Bread. They believed that the Sabbath referred to was the weekly sabbath but the counting began on the first day of the week occurring after the days of Unleavened Bread.

Shavuot had a fixed date of Sivan<sup>12</sup>. The Peshitta<sup>41</sup> supports this interpretation. For the major verse in questions the Peshitta reads:

23:11 And you shall wave the sheaf before the Lord to be accepted for you; on the morrow the priest shall wave it<sup>42</sup>.

Notice that the problematic phrase *ממחרת השבת* is missing. In 23:8 we are instructed to keep the last day of Unleavened Bread as a holy convocation, therefore it seemed natural that the morrow would be the morrow after the last day of Unleavened Bread.

This view of the Beta Israel is difficult to argue against in light of their use of the Syriac reading to substantiate their position. Omission of the problematic *ממחרת השבת* does seem to solve the issue, but the Peshitta is

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41. Peshitta- A Syriac (eastern Aramaic) translation of the Tanak (date- 1st or 2nd century CE)

42. George M. Lamsa- Holy Bible - From the Ancient Eastern Text-Translation of the Aramaic of the Peshitta.

later than the Dead Sea Scrolls, and the Septuagint. Perhaps, this reading along with the reading of the Septuagint and Targums Onkelos and Jonathan were intended to solve the issues that the Masoretic Text presented.

#### Option 4

The Qumran calendar is a solar calendar that contains 364 days. The calendar begins on the 4th day (since it was during the 4th day of creation that the solar light was created). The year was divided into four seasons and each season contained 3 months of 30,30,31 days. Every date falls on the same day of the week every year because 364 is divisible by seven (52). For the community at Qumran the Festival of the First Wheat always occurred on Sivan 15<sup>43</sup> Sivan 15 is the date chosen because according to the book of Jubilees, Moses goes up on the mountain to receive the tablets on the 16th of the third month-Sivan. This indicated that the revelation took place on Sivan 15.

1. And it came to pass in the first year of the exodus of the children of Israel out of Egypt, in the third month, on the sixteenth day of the month, that God spake to Moses, saying: "Come up to Me on the Mount, and I will give thee two tables of stone of the law and of the commandment, which I have written, that thou may teach them."<sup>44</sup>

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43. Jubilees also has this practice. See-Jubilees 15:1, 44:4-5

44. Jubilees 1:1

According to the Qumran calendar reckoning, the 15 of the month was always on a Sunday<sup>45</sup> as noted by the table below.<sup>46</sup> It then follows that the omer offering that took place seven weeks earlier would always be on Sunday Nisan 26.

<b>Month</b>		<b>1</b>	<b>4</b>	<b>7</b>	<b>10</b>		<b>2</b>	<b>5</b>	<b>8</b>	<b>11</b>		<b>3</b>	<b>6</b>	<b>9</b>	<b>12</b>
Wed	1	8	15	22	29		6	13	20	27		4	11	18	25
Thur	2	9	16	23	30		7	14	21	28		5	12	19	26
Fri	3	10	17	24		1	8	15	22	29		6	13	20	27
Shabb at	4	11	18	25		2	9	16	23	30		7	14	21	28
Sun	5	12	19	26		3	10	17	24		1	8	15	22	29
Mon	6	13	20	27		4	11	18	25		2	9	16	23	30
Tues	7	14	21	28		5	12	19	26		3	10	17	24	31

45. See Talmon- "The Calendar Reckoning of the Sect from the Judean Desert". In Aspects of the Dead Sea Scrolls, 162-199. Scripta Herosolymitana 4 Jerusalem: Hebrew University

46. Table taken from Jacob Milgrom, The Anchor Bible- Leviticus 23-27, pages 2060-2061

According to the proponents of options 2 and 4, the omer offering must always fall outside of the days of Unleavened Bread. They interpret the instructions in Leviticus to infer that the wave sheaf offering must follow the days of Unleavened Bread.

This view can be easily resolved by examining the very clear evidence within the Tanak. The advocates of these two views err in that they do not take into account the considerable evidence from Joshua 5;10-12. These verses in Joshua very clearly demonstrates that the omer offering can be waved within the seven days of Unleavened Bread.

י וַיַּחֲנוּ בְנֵי־יִשְׂרָאֵל בְּגִלְגָל וַיַּעֲשׂוּ אֶת־הַפֶּסַח בְּאַרְבַּעָה עָשָׂר יוֹם לַחֹדֶשׁ בְּעָרֵב  
בְּעַרְבוֹת יְרִיחוֹ: יָא וַיֹּאכְלוּ מֵעֵבוֹר<sup>47</sup> הָאָרֶץ מִמַּחֲרַת הַפֶּסַח מִצּוֹת וְקִלּוֹי בְּעֶצֶם  
הַיּוֹם הַזֶּה: יב וַיִּשְׁבֹּת הַמָּן מִמַּחֲרַת בְּאֲכָלֶם מֵעֵבוֹר הָאָרֶץ וְלֹא־הָיָה עוֹד לְבְנֵי  
יִשְׂרָאֵל מִן וַיֹּאכְלוּ מִתְּבוּאֹת אֶרֶץ כְּנָעַן בַּשָּׁנָה הַהִיא:

10. And the people of Israel encamped in Gilgal, and kept the Passover on the fourteenth day of the month in the evening in the plains of Jericho.

11. And they ate of the old grain of the land on the next day after the Passover, unleavened cakes, and parched grain in the same day.

12. And the manna ceased on the next day after they had eaten of the old grain of the land; nor had the people of Israel manna any more; but they ate of the fruit of the land of Canaan that year

(Joshua 5:10-12)

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47. עבוֹר - produce or old produce- see Brown driver, Briggs- Hebrew and English Lexicon - page 721

They could only eat of the produce of Canaan if the sheaf had been waved!

Lev. 23:14 You shall eat no bread or parched grain or fresh ears until that very day, until you have brought the offering of your God: it is a statute forever throughout your generations in all your settlements

Since the book of Joshua clearly informs us that the Israelites ate of the 'old' grain<sup>48</sup> of the land 'on the morrow after the Passover.'" and thereafter ate of the produce of Canaan. This means that the day of the wave sheaf was Abib 16.

The Israelites ate from the new crop on Abib 16, which makes the omer wave offering occur on a date that is well within the seven days of Unleavened Bread. This strikes a resounding blow to any that state that the wave sheaf must occur outside of the days of Unleavened Bread!

### [Which Sabbath?](#)

Options One and Two

The Pharisees, contemporary European Jews and some Hebrew Israelite

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48. eating of the old grain does not in any way imply that they ate leaven. The prohibition is against eating leaven, not grain.



groups begin their count on Abib 16 and Shavuot is always on Sivan 6.<sup>49</sup> If the count begins on a specific day each year then it will always end on the same day every year.

As previously stated, The words מִמֶּחֶרֶת הַשָּׁבֹת in Leviticus 23:15 is problematic to some because it does not specify which Sabbath is intended. The accepted rabbinic interpretation is that the Shabbat in this verse does not imply the weekly Sabbath but should be interpreted similar to שְׁבֻתוֹן in verse 39 (relating to Sukkot), - a time of resting.

לֹט אַךְ בַּחֲמִשָּׁה עָשָׂר יוֹם לַחֹדֶשׁ הַשְּׁבִיעִי בְּאַסְפְּכֶם אֶת-תְּבוּאֹת הָאָרֶץ  
תַּחֲגוּ אֶת-חַג-יְהוָה שִׁבְעַת יָמִים בַּיּוֹם הָרִאשׁוֹן שְׁבֻתוֹן וּבַיּוֹם הַשְּׁמִינִי  
שְׁבֻתוֹן:

Lev. 23:39 Now, the fifteenth day of the seventh month, when you have gathered in the produce of the land, you shall keep the festival of the LORD, lasting seven days; a complete rest on the first day, and a complete rest on the eighth day.

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49. For further evidence that Shavuot had a fixed date

Ta'nanith- 17b- לְמִסְפַּד-17b אָמַר מֵר מִתְּמַנְיָא בֵּיה עַד סוּף מוֹעֵדָא אִיתוּתַב חַגָּא דְשַׁבּוּעִיא דְלֵא לְמִסְפַּד-

The Master said: 'From the eighth of the same month until the end of the festival [Passover] mourning is not permissible since the date of the observance of the Feast of Weeks was then definitely fixed.

Taa'nith 18A-The reason why it is stated 'the eighth day' is this, should it ever come to pass that the seven festive days be abolished,<sup>8</sup> even then on the eighth day it would still be forbidden to mourn, because it is the first day on which the date of the Feast of Weeks was definitely fixed.

Sifra 'Emor<sup>50</sup> explains 23:11,15 to mean- on the morrow of the Sabbath-on the morrow of the festival.

Targum Onkelos<sup>51</sup> follows suit with the following explanation of Lev 23:11:

וְתִתּוֹן יְתַעֲמֵר רִישׁ-וְתִימֵר לְהוֹן, אֲרִי תִיעֲלוֹן לְאַרְעָא דְאַנָּא יְהִיב לְכוֹן, וְתִתְעַדּוֹן יְתַתְּעַדָּהּ  
תְּעַדְכוֹן, לְוֹת פְּהֵנָּא. יֵא וִירִים יְתַעֲמֵרָא קָדָם יִי, לְרַעֲנָא לְכוֹן; מִפְתֵּר, יוֹמָא טָבָא, יְרִימְנִיה,  
פְּהֵנָּא. יֵב וְתִתְעַדּוֹן, בְּיוֹם אֲרָמוֹתְכוֹן יְתַעֲמֵרָא, אֲמֵר שְׁלִים בְּרַ שְׁתִּיה לְעֵלְתָא, קָדָם יִי

When you have entered into the land which I give you, and you reap the harvest, you shall bring the sheaf of the first fruits of your harvest unto the priest; and he shall uplift the sheaf before the Lord to be accepted for you. After the first festal day of Pascha (or, the day after the feast-day of Pascha) on the day on which you elevate the sheaf, you shall make (the sacrifice of a lamb of the year, unblemished a burnt offering unto the Name of the Lord

The Septuagint<sup>52</sup> translation of 23:11 reads:-

**23:11 και ανοισει το δραγμα εναντι κυριου δεκτον υμιν τη  
επαυριον της πρωτης ανοισει αυτο ο ιερεις**

11 and he shall lift up the sheaf before the Lord, to be accepted for you.  
On the morrow of the first day<sup>53</sup> the priest shall lift it up

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50. An Halackhic Midrashim to Leviticus

51. Targum Onkelos- an Aramaic translation of the Tanak

52. Greek translation of the Tanak

53. NB: In the Septuagint the words "morrow after the sabbath" are absent

(te epaurion tes protes, --on the morrow of the first day (1.e. the first day of the festival)

The Babylonian Talmud states;

ז"ר יוספיהם לכם \*שהיה ספירה לבל  
' ואתך, ממדרת השבת ממדרת יו"ט

Our rabbis taught ; and you shall count unto you-that is, counting is the duty of everyone-from the day after the Sabbath, that is , from the day after yom tov (festive day)<sup>54</sup>

Josephus dates the offering of the first fruits by stating:

But on the second day of unleavened bread, which is the sixteenth day of the month, they first partake of the fruits of the earth, for before that day they do not touch them.<sup>55</sup>

Philo similarly writes;

XXIX. (162) There is also a festival [But within the festival (of Pesach) there is another ε ο ρ τ η --(heorte; -festival] on the day of the paschal feast, which succeeds the first day, and this is named the sheaf, from what takes place on it; for the sheaf is brought to the altar as a first fruit both of the country which the nation has received for its own, and also of the whole land;<sup>56</sup>

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54. B. Menachot 65b

55. Josephus( a Pharisee, priest and historian) "Antiquities" Book 3, chapter 10:5

56. Philo ( a Philosopher) Spec. 2:29 (162)- the brackets in the quote are my remarks)

Since the 16th could fall on any day of the week, this meant that the 50th day could also come on any day of the week and not just after a sabbath. How then did they explain the reference to seven complete Sabbaths? The Pharisees defined the seven complete sabbaths in Leviticus 23:16 by the seven weeks of Deuteronomy 16:9. Each of the seven Sabbaths represent a 'week' as a period of seven days-not as a scriptural week extending from Sunday to the Sabbath. For the Pharisees, this seven complete sabbaths meant a random period of seven days. Each of the seven day periods could begin and end on any day of the scriptural week. With this view one does not count Sabbaths, but days. The Rabbis followed the instructions in Leviticus 23:16 which commands counting 50 days. Rabbi Joshua stated that from the day of the omer, one must 'count days and sanctify the עצרת -(Atsarth- closing assembly).<sup>57</sup> Rabbi Jose ben Judah also states "'Scripture says, You shall number 50 days."<sup>58</sup> Some scholars did recognize a contradiction in their logic and attempted to reconcile the statements.

Rabbi Johanan ben Zakkari states;

Now one verse says, You shall number 50 days, while the other verse says, seven complete sabbaths there shall be. How are they to be reconciled? The latter verse refers to the time when the Yom Tov (Pesach) falls on the Sabbath, while the former to

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57. B. Men.,65b.

58. B. Men 65b

time when the Yom Tov (Pesach) falls on a weekday.<sup>59</sup>

Although these interpretations may resolve a difficulty in the text, they do not convey the simple meaning of the text! The Tanak never calls the first day of Unleavened bread a Sabbath day as it does for the weekly Sabbath and Yom Kippur<sup>60</sup>.

Some have suggested that the phrase *מִמָּחֳרַת הַשַּׁבָּת* in verses 11 and 15a actually represent an abbreviation of the phrase in verse 16 *עַד מִמָּחֳרַת הַשְּׁבִיעִית* -'until the morrow of the seventh sabbath of days. Verses 15-16 use the term 'shabbat' in the sense of 'week. Verse 11 utilizes the abbreviation Shabbat in its normal sense of a particular day, the Sabbath. If this is true, then the phrase *מִמָּחֳרַת הַשַּׁבָּת* in verse 11 and 15a were editorial glosses inserted to ensure that the period of counting the seven weeks would begin on the day after the Sabbath. This would then require that seven 'sabbaths of days' (shabbatot) would pass during the period of the fifty days. The original text may have read -"and you shall count off, from the day on which you bring..."<sup>61</sup> The text of the Temple Scroll from

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59. B. Men 65b

60. Leviticus 23:32

61. This is the argument as presented in Baruch A. Levine -Leviticus, The JPS Torah

Qumran supports this hypothesis.<sup>62</sup> The omission of "מִמֶּחֳרַת הַשַּׁבָּת" in 11QT 18:10-13, eliminates the difficulty in the text. It reads:<sup>63</sup>

WSPRT (LKM̄H)SB SBTWT  
 TMYMWT MYWM HB' KM̄H ' T  
 H̄ MR (HTNWPH) TS/PWRW  
 ' D MMHRT H̄SBT H̄SBY' YT  
 TSPWRW (HM̄SYM) YWM<sup>64</sup>

You shall count seven complete sabbaths; on the day on which you bring the sheaf of the elevation offering you shall count until the day after the seventh sabbath you shall count fifty days

An additional point that refutes the majority Pharisee view is that the discussion in Leviticus 23 begins with a discussion of the weekly sabbath (see verse 1-3). The term 'sabbath' is not used again until the discussion of the wave-sheaf in verse 11 and then again in verses 15-16. The logical conclusion would be that since there has been no reference to festivals

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Commentary. page 158.

62. The words מִמֶּחֳרַת הַשַּׁבָּת in Leviticus 23:11 are absent from the Qumran Temple scroll. See Baruch A. Levine, "The Temple Scroll: Aspects of Its Historical Provenance and Literary Character" BA.SOR 232 (1978) 5-23.

63. Taken From Jacob Milgrom The Anchor Bible -Leviticus 23-27 . Page 2063

64. Contained within the parenthesis are emendations or probable readings for the text. The scrolls were unreadable, missing or damaged in those areas.

being annual sabbaths, but only weekly sabbaths, we are still dealing with weekly sabbaths in verses 11,15 and 16. In Leviticus 23 the first clear reference to a festival being an annual Sabbath does not occur until verse 24 in the discussion of the Feast of Trumpets. In verse 24 the word is שַׁבָּתוֹן (shabbaton). Yom Kippur is referred to in verse 32 as שַׁבַּת שַׁבָּתוֹן - shabbat shabbaton, however at the end of the verse Israel is commanded- תִּשְׁבְּתוּ שַׁבְּתֵיכֶם to observe your sabbath. In verse 39, the first day of הַגִּידוֹת - the festival of Sukkoth and the holy day immediately following the seven days of the festival of Sukkoth are referred to by the term- שַׁבְּתוֹן - 'shabbathon'. So in Leviticus 23, with the exception of the Yom Kippur reference, the word shabbat is used only for the weekly Sabbath. Arguing for consistency, if verse 3 refers to the weekly sabbath, then we have no clear reason to conclude that verse 11,15 and 16 refers to anything other than the weekly Sabbath. The Hebrew word is identical in all three verses with the exception of the word 'seventh' that appears in verse 16.

verse 11 יֵאָדָּם וְהֵנִיף אֶת-הָעֹמֶר לִפְנֵי יְהוָה לְרִצְוֹנְכֶם מִמִּחֲרַת הַשַּׁבָּת

:יִנִּיפְנוּ הַכֹּהֵן (...on the day after the sabbath)

verse 15- וְסִפְרֹתֶם לָכֶם מִמִּחֲרַת הַשַּׁבָּת מִיּוֹם הַבִּיאָכֶם אֶת-עֹמֶר

הַתְּנוּפָה שֶׁבַע שַׁבָּתוֹת תְּמִימֹת תִּהְיֶינָה: the day after the Sabbath

verse 16- עַד מִמָּחָרַת הַשַּׁבָּת הַשְּׁבִיעִת

until the day after the seventh sabbath.

In Leviticus 25:8 וְסִפְרָתָ לָךְ שֶׁבַע שַׁבָּתוֹת שָׁנִים--sheva shabbetot means seven septenaries, or seven years, each of which ends with a sabbatical year in which no planting or harvesting may be done. Utilizing this analysis, שֶׁבַע שַׁבָּתוֹת in verse 15 must mean seven weeks of days with each week ending on a Sabbath

Furthermore, there are no Tanak references in which the first Day of Unleavened Bread is called a Sabbath. Only in the New Testament do we find such a reference to the first day of Unleavened Bread as a Sabbath<sup>65</sup>.

Οἱ οὖν Ἰουδαῖοι, ἐπεὶ παρασκευὴ ἦν, ἵνα μὴ μείνη ἐπὶ τοῦ σταυροῦ τὰ σώματα ἐν τῷ σαββάτῳ, ἦν γὰρ μεγάλη ἡ ἡμέρα ἐκείνου τοῦ σαββάτου, ἠρώτησαν τὸν Πιλάτον ἵνα κατεαγῶσιν αὐτῶν τὰ σκέλη καὶ ἀρθῶσιν.

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65. In contrast to the synoptic gospels, in the gospel of John, this sabbath was also the Passover day.- see also John 13;1. 19:14. John presents Jesus as the Passover lamb-see John 1:29.



John 19:31 Since it was the day of Preparation, the Jews did not want the bodies left on the cross during the sabbath, especially because that sabbath was a day of great solemnity. So they asked Pilate to have the legs of the crucified men broken and the bodies removed.

In contemporary times arguments have been advanced to support the majority Pharisees view. The rabbis give several 'proofs' to advance their position that the sabbath in question must mean Pesach.

1. If the sabbath means Saturday and the Torah does not give us the details of which sabbath, then any sabbath of the year or any sabbath after Pesach, would do

Why didn't the Torah simply state - the morrow after Pesach?

2. If the Torah has states Pesach perhaps it would refer to Nisan 14 when the Passover sacrifice occurred.
3. If the Torah stated Pesach it could refer to the conclusion of the holiday
4. Shabbat - implies stopping and on Passover we stop eating chamatz
5. One may not carry on Shabbat and during the very first Pesach in Egypt Israelites were forbidden from walking out of their homes and eating the Passover sacrifice outside.
6. Shabbat and Pesach both have the theme of guarding "shemira": guard/keeping- keep the pesach, guard the matzah, keep the Sabbath.

Items 4 through 6 were used to demonstrate that Pesach is 'like' the sabbath.

7. In Gur Areyh<sup>66</sup> The Maharal<sup>67</sup> states that sabbath (not Yom Tov) has the concept of stopping. What came before has now stopped and a new phase is beginning. The Torah then calls Pesach, a sabbath because a new count means that an old phase a stopped and a new one is to begin.

8. The Zohar<sup>68</sup> states that the Israelite's impurity (like the life draining impurity of a menstruating woman) stopped (sabbath implies stopping) in Egypt and when when they left, a phase phase of transition from death to life began. The transitional phase of going from death to life is the time of counting the omer. Thus the omer count begins during Passover.

Hopefully, it has been demonstrated that the majority Pharisee view is riddled with problems and inconsistencies. Within the span of a few verses (Leviticus 23:15-16), the Pharisee's interpretation requires several meanings for sabbath- 1. sabbath equals annual holy day 2. seven

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66. Gur Areyh - The Maharal's super commentary on Rashi's comentary. See Gur Areyh on Vayikra 23:11

67. Maharal -YehudahL Bev Ben Bezalel Lowe of Prague *Moreinu ha-Rav Loew*, 16th century Jewish philosopher and mystic

68. 13th century Seminal kabbalah -mysticial work

sabbaths is the equivalent of seven periods of a random seven days 3. Sabbath equals a period of seven days. None of the majority Pharisee views are substantiated by the evidence and proofs of the text.

### Additional Arguments

1. There are some sociological considerations that may have prompted the Pharisees to insist on a fixed date for Shavuot. The agricultural context of Shavuot may have had little meaning for the Pharisees who were basically town dwellers. They had not ploughed fields, planted seedlings, nor observed crops growing to maturity. Finkelstein rightly observes that if Shavuot was to have any meaning for the Pharisees and their descendants, they had to find meaning for this festival other than its' agricultural basis.<sup>69</sup> After the destruction of the Temple there was a new impetus for creating new meaning for the holiday (מן מתן תורתנו) and having a fixed date that commemorated their date for the giving of the Torah at Sinai.
2. Another reason for having a fixed date that was close to the date of Passover, may have been motivated by practical concerns. Originally

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69. Louis Finkelstein -The Pharisees- The Sociological Background of Their Faith Vol 1. page 117

the wave sheaf was brought to the local sanctuary but after it was required to be brought to the Jerusalem Temple, it would be more practical to wave the sheaf close to the days that males were already in Jerusalem for the Passover.

## The Oldest System

### option 3

This option seems to be the oldest of all of the various Shavuot reckoning systems. The Sadducees, the Karaites and the Samaritans priests counted the 50 days from the day after the weekly Sabbath following Pesach-- Sunday to Sunday. The wave sheaf always occurred on a Sunday and Shavuot always occurred on a Sunday.

Josephus recalls a relevant record from Nicholas of Damascus (an earlier writer). Antiochus VII Euergetes<sup>70</sup> compels John Hyracanus to send troops to support his campaign against the Parthians (Parates II). Although he was initially successful, eventually Antiochus VII is soundly defeated and

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70. Antiochus VII -( 158-129) nicknamed' Sidetes' - ruled as the king of the Selucid state of Syria 9139/8-129 BCE

killed in battle. Josephus, quoting Nicholas of Damascus, states that the Jews under his command had requested that Antiochus VII not march out for two days after the victory over the Parthians because it was the beginning of Pentecost. He explains that the Jews were not required to march on the sabbath or in the first day of a festival.<sup>71</sup> This must mean that the festival of Shavuot was the day immediately following the weekly Sabbath. If we place this statement in its historical context, it demands a double Sabbath for Shavuot after Antiochus VII conquered Hyracanus, yet before the former's death. The Shavuot season of 133 BCE is too early, while that of 129 BCE, which followed Anthiochus VII's death, is too late. It appears that the double Sabbath in question occurred during one of the years of 132 to 130 BCE. In the year 131 BCE Sivan 6 occurred on a Sunday, therefore producing a double Sabbath. Some use this argument to demonstrate that the Pharisee's system was in operation, but since Nisan 14 also fell on a Friday, the morrow after the sabbath (יום טוב) Nisan 16 would be a Sunday<sup>72</sup>. This same Sunday would also be the same day that the Sadduces would have utilized in keeping with their

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71. For this incident see Antiquities of the Jews 13:8.4 and Wars of the Jews 1.2.5

72. The interpolation of dates and days of the week Before The Cmmon Era can be highly problematic. I approach this dating with caution and I am fully cognizant of the issue of dating difficulties.

interpretation of the "morrow after the sabbath."

It is possible to understand Josephus' comments to mean that the Sadducee's system was in use. Josephus states:

And truly he did not speak falsely in saying so; for the festival, which we call Pentecost did **then** fall out to be the next day to the sabbath, nor is it lawful for us to journey , either on the Sabbath day or on a festival day.<sup>73</sup>

It is probable that Josephus is saying by utilizing the word 'then' that at the time period that he is describing the Sadducees system was in use.

This evidence neither proves nor disproves which system of reckoning Shavuot was operational but very strongly advocates for the view that the Sadducean system was in use.

Still another argument to advance my hypothesis is: if the Pharisees had to state that the date of Shavuot was by then 'definitely fixed'<sup>74</sup> this seems to strongly imply that there was a time when the date was not fixed (i.e. not Sivan 6). This means that the Sadducean system of a non-fixed date<sup>75</sup>

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73. Josephus - The Antiquities of the Jews - Book 13:8:4

74. See footnote 46

75. With the other options (Qumran, Beta Israel) t, the date, although not Sivan the 6th is a fixed annual date.

must have been in use at some point in time.<sup>76</sup>

The Pharisaic interpretation probably did not come into common use until such time that they took control of the Temple. Since the omer wave offering was solely a function of the High Priest, the Pharisees could not have forced the Sadducees to submit to their practice unless they had control of the Temple. The time period that the above events describe would most likely be during the time of the Jewish revolt against Rome beginning in 66 CE. The Zealots murdered Ananias, the senior High priest and took control of the Temple and the priesthood.<sup>77</sup> The Temple was destroyed in 70 CE and with its destruction the Sadducees power was greatly diminished. The reorganization of Judaism at Jamnia (circa 90 CE) was for the most part in compliance with Pharisaic principles. With the Pharisees ascension to power came the normative practice of observing

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76. I argue this to oppose those who believe that although the Sadducees held the office of the High Priest, they were forced to submit to the will of the Pharisees. They argue that that under Herod the importance of the High Priest was greatly diminished and that the Segan, a Pharisee, controlled all of the regular Temple functions. Josephus also argues for the popularity of the Pharisees and many of his comments reflect Pharisaic tendencies ( Josephus was a Pharisee . Until the death of Alexander, Jannaeus (king of Judea from 103-76 BCE) in 76 BCE, the Sadducees wielded considerable political and religious influence. Josephus' assessment of the role of the Pharisees seems to reflect a later time period than the one that I am advancing. In the New Testament (again a later time period) Jesus states that the Pharisees occupy Moses seat (see Matthew 23:1)

77. Josephus, "Wars" Book 4;3:7, Book 4:3:8

Shavuot on the sixth of Sivan.

The Sadducees may have also had material interest in establishing and maintaining a fixed Sunday date for the festival. The Aaronid priesthood consisted of 24 clans and each group served at the Temple for a week in the winter and a week in the summer. On the pilgrimage festivals all the priest would gather to attend to the vast number of sacrifices being offered. Obtaining the priestly portion of the sacrifice was incentive for the priest to make the trip to the Jerusalem Temple. If a festival occurred during the week, the clan serving the twice yearly terms would find that their incomes were greatly diminished by the presence of so many priests. Normally, this would be offset by the great number of sacrifices being brought. This was not the case with Shavuot because of the relatively small number of pilgrims at the Temple<sup>78</sup> The clans in charge of the service on the preceding week would have to stay over and bear the additional expense of lodging when their terms were up and the clan about to begin their service would have to bear additional expense until their term began. If the festival were always on a Sunday the previous weeks clan only had to stay over an

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78. Ezekiel does not even mention Shavuot in his ecclesiastical calendar- See Ezekiel 45:18



additional day to share in the festival income. The priest that entered their service on the sabbath day before Shavuot would also partake of the additional payments, as well as the income from the week day sacrifices. Finklestien believes that this arrangement was so enticing that it helped to persuade the Sadduces to have a permanent Sunday date for the festival.<sup>79</sup>

As previously stated, the Pharisees as town dwellers had sociological concerns for establishing a fixed date for Shavuot. In contrast to the Pharises, the Sadducees had a rural background and therefore could find no valid reason to invent new meaning for this festival. The Sadducees could find absolutely no biblical authority for a fixed date of Sivan 6, beginning the count on the Nisan16 or equating Shavuot with the giving of the Torah. Very aptly and correctly, the Sadducees denounced the Pharisee's premises as pure imagination.<sup>80</sup>

### [Additional Arguments](#)

1. Still another argument that can be advanced for **not** having a fixed date for Shavuot (Sivan 6, Sivan12 or Sivan15 ), is that with other festivals, when it is intended for the festival to fall on a specific calendar date

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79. Louis Finklestein The Pharisees, op cit., pages 643-645

80. Louis Finklestein The Pharisees Op.Ci.,t page 118.

each year, we are told the dates.<sup>81</sup> Some examples of this are: 1 Abib 1 for the religious New Year, 14 Abib for Passover, Tishrei 1- The Feast of the Shofar, marking the beginning of the old agricultural calendar, Tishri 10-Yom Kippur, and Tishri 15-Sukkoth and Tebeth 10, צומ -the fast of the tenth month.

2. If one is so inclined to take the New Testament<sup>82</sup> evidence into account then it is clear that Jesus arose from the dead on the first day of the week, Sunday<sup>83</sup>, the day after the Sabbath, as the fulfillment of the festival of First fruits.<sup>84</sup> Thursday was Abib the 14, the day that the Passover lambs were sacrificed. Jesus ate the traditional Passover

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81. As demonstrated the date for the commemoration of this festival is not given in the Torah.. Others recognize this fact and state: "But it's highly improbable that the commemoration of such an universe-shattering event, whose date IS indeed a holiday, would be ignored by the Torah itself" The Jerusalem Jewish Voice "Shavuot Sheaves 5757-1997"

82. I am using this New Testament reference not to advance any messianic argument but to demonstrate that some Jews (the early followers of Jesus were all Jews) most likely observed a Sunday observance of Shavuot

83. There are some groups within the Christian community that stress that Jesus was put into the grave on Abid 14- Wed evening- (CE-30) and that he arose from the dead on Saturday evening. In fulfillment of the prophecy of Jonah- Jesus had to be in thee grave three full days and nights. see the writings of Herbert W. Armstrong's - WorldWide Church of God

84. See "The Wave Sheaf Offering" Christian Churches of God No 106b (Edition 3.0 19950416-20000423-20080105)"As we have seen, Christ had to be resurrected before the morning of the first day of the week following the weekly Sabbath because he was the Wave or Sheaf Offering, which was the first-fruits of all the harvests, from Exodus 29:24-27"

meal and died on Friday Abib 15. First fruits, the omer offering would have been waved on Sunday Abib 17 (the day after the Sabbath) the day of the recorded resurrection. In that year, Shavuot would have fallen on Sivan 7. Paul makes the connection clear :

Νυνὶ δὲ Χριστὸς ἐγήγερται ἐκ νεκρῶν, ἀπαρχὴ τῶν κεκοιμημένων.

But in fact Christ has been raised from the dead, the first fruits of those who have died.

I Corinthians 15:20

3. The original agricultural nature of the Shavuot festival also argues against a set date. According to Deut. 16:9, Shavuot would have to be determined according to the state of the fields and the ripening of the barley harvest. One could only put the sickle to the standing grain if the grain were ripe and ready to be harvested. It is highly doubtful that the grain would be ripe on exactly the same date every year!
4. The biblical mandate to count each and every day for fifty days also argues against a set date for this festival. Why would we need to go through the elaborate process of counting seven sabbaths if the festivals of Shavuot always occurred on a fixed date? What then would

be the purpose in the counting? The emphasis in the Festival of Shavuot seems to be that it would always fall on the same day of the week-**Sunday** every year, rather than on a fixed numerical calendar date.<sup>85</sup>

### [Abib 14 on a weekly Sabbath](#)

Another question remains. A problem arises for some when the 14th of Abib falls on a weekly Sabbath. In this scenario, the first day of Unleavened Bread would be observed on Sunday Abib 15 and if the rules are held, the wave sheaf would take place the following Sunday which would be outside of the days of Unleavened Bread. The Sadducees waited until the next Sunday which would mean that the omer would have been waved on Abib 22, outside of the days of Unleavened Bread. If Passover falls on the weekly Sabbath then everyone would have already removed the leavening from their homes (removing leavening would constitute work). In this instance the Israelites would be keeping eight days of Unleavened Bread, rather than seven. For the people who feel that this is

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85. Jacob Milgrom The Anchor Bible -Leviticus 23-27 Milgrom argues that since each landowner initially brought the firstfruits of the barley omer to his local sanctuary but later the words "from the day after the "sabbath-week" were inserted so that the omer would be brought to the sanctuary on the nearest Sunday.

problematic, beginning the season on Passover day would best harmonize the scriptures. This approach assures that the wave-sheaf is always offered on Sunday and that it is always offered within the days of Unleavened Bread. If the first day of Unleavened Bread is a Sunday, this day will also be the day of the wave-sheaf offering. The Biblical evidence to support this practice is also found in Joshua 5:11-12.

י וַיַּחֲנוּ בְנֵי־יִשְׂרָאֵל בְּגִלְגָּל וַיַּעֲשׂוּ אֶת־הַפֶּסַח בְּאַרְבַּעָה עָשָׂר יוֹם לַחֹדֶשׁ בְּעֶרְבֹב בְּעֶרְבוֹת יְרִיחוֹ: יָא וַיֹּאכְלוּ מֵעֵבוֹר הָאָרֶץ מִמַּחֲרַת הַפֶּסַח מִצּוֹת וְקִלּוֹי בְּעֶצֶם הַיּוֹם הַזֶּה: יב וַיִּשְׁבֹּת הַמָּן מִמַּחֲרַת בְּאֲכָלָם מֵעֵבוֹר הָאָרֶץ וְלֹא־הָיָה עוֹד לְבְנֵי יִשְׂרָאֵל מִן וַיֹּאכְלוּ מִתְּבוֹאֹת אֶרֶץ כְּנָעַן בַּשָּׁנָה הַהִיא:

While the people of Israel were encamped in Gilgal they kept the Passover on the fourteenth day of the month at evening in the plains of Jericho. And on the morrow after the Passover, on the very day, they ate of the produce of the land, unleavened cakes and parched grain. On that same day when they ate of the produce of the land, the manna ceased. The Israelites got no more manna; that year they ate of the yield of the land of Canaan. (Joshua 5:10-12).

What was the meaning of the "morrow after the Passover?" The Passover sacrifice was carried out near the end of the 14th of Nisan (ie "between the evenings") and the beginning of the 15th<sup>86</sup> i.e. the morrow after the Passover, the morning of the 15th (i.e. the following morning- the first day of unleavened bread) or the morning of the 16th (i.e. the morning of the next calendar day).

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86. see Exodus 12:18 and Deuteronomy 16:4)

The "morrow after the Passover sacrifice" must be the morning of the 15th of Nisan. This can be confirmed by referencing Numbers 33:3

ג וַיִּסְעוּ מִרַעְמֵסֶס בַּחֹדֶשׁ הָרִאשׁוֹן בַּחֲמִשָּׁה עָשָׂר יוֹם לַחֹדֶשׁ הָרִאשׁוֹן מִמִּצְרַיִם  
הַפֶּסַח יֵצְאוּ בְנֵי-יִשְׂרָאֵל בְּיַד רָמְהָ לְעֵינֵי כָל-מִצְרָיִם:

3. And they departed from Rameses in the first month, on the fifteenth day of the first month; on the next day after the Passover the children of Israel went out with a high hand in the sight of all the Egyptians.

An analysis of this passage makes it clear that the morrow after the Passover is the 15 th of Nisan. Clearly then the "morrow after the Passover" refers to the morning of Nisan 15.

The reference in Joshua can also be reconciled with the biblical command if in that year Abib 14 fell on the weekly Sabbath. The first day of Unleavened Bread fell on Abib 15 and the omer was waved on that day. Leviticus 23:14 prohibits eating of the new produce until the offering of the wave-sheaf. This chronology of events would allowed the Israelites to eat of the new produce of the land on that day.

## Wave Sheaf and the Days of Unleavened Bread

The argument presented above was argued for those who believe that the wave sheaf must take place during the festival of Unleavened Bread. In reality though, must the wave sheaf take place during the days of Unleavened Bread? There seems to be absolutely no Biblical mandate that would require that the wave sheaf be offered during the festival of Unleavened Bread. I strongly suspect that Unleavened Bread and Shavuot only began to be connected because of their close proximity: 1. The barely harvest occurs during Passover 2. In the discussion of the holidays in Leviticus (Shavuot being the next holiday after Passover) and the ambiguity of the meaning of 'the morrow after the Sabbath.'<sup>87</sup> After all, 'the morrow after the sabbath' has to be anchored to a particular Sabbath (however you

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87. Of course my particular argument is in contrast to those who argue that Passover and Shavuot are connected by variations on the theme of freedom--fulfillment. as it relates to the giving of the law. Nahama Liebowitz looks derisively on my view of the nature-land connection of Shavuot (see my argument below- What is the Purpose of Shavuot?

She states Those who wish to emphasis the "nature" content of the festival, regarding it purely a harvest celebration...ignoring or belittling its religious character as commemorating the giving of the Law, are merely replacing a lofty spiritual conception by primitive motifs. They are in fact putting the clock back, before the children of Israel came into the world and accepted the precedence of mind over matter. Strange and pitiful indeed is the spectacle of those modern representatives of the people of the Book, cherishing a material and transitory interpretation of their festival rather than its spiritual meaning". See Liebowitz, op.cit., page 223

define the term - Yom Tov or weekly sabbath) or else it has absolutely no meaning. 3. HaShem, in His all-knowing, infinite wisdom knew that the Israelites would come into the land of Israel during this particular harvest season.

## Other Considerations

### What is the Purpose of Shavuot?

I have already demonstrated that the purpose of Shavuot was not to commemorate the giving of the law as the Pharisees have proposed. If it is not that, then what is the reason for our celebration of Shavuot? Rather than become inventive, one should look to the Tanak for the answer. It is my contention that Shavuot was an annual festival that was intended to commemorate the gift of the land of Israel.<sup>88</sup> The land was to be God's gift to the children of Israel. In Genesis chapter 12 God tells Abram1.

And the Lord had said to Abram, Get out from your country, and from your family, and from your father's house, to a land that I will show you;..... and they went forth to go to the land of Canaan; and to the land of Canaan they came...And the Lord appeared to Abram, and said, To

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88. This insight was initially pointed out to me by Rabbi Baruch Yehudah



your seed will I give this land; .

(Gen 12:1,5,7)

When the Israelites entered the land, then and only then could the wave the sheaf be offered. The festival of Shavout is intricately connected to the entrance into Israel and the fulfillment of God's promise to give the Israelites the land of Canaan.

This connection of Shavuot with the land is again demonstrated in Shemot 34.

כב וְחַג שִׁבְעַת תַּעֲשֶׂה לָךְ בְּכוּרֵי קִצִּיר חֲטִיִּם וְחַג הָאָסִיף תִּקְוֹפֶת הַשָּׁנָה:  
 כג שְׁלֹשׁ פְּעָמִים בַּשָּׁנָה יִרְאֶה כָּל־זְכוּרְךָ אֶת־פְּנֵי הָאֵדֶן | יְהוָה אֱלֹהֵי יִשְׂרָאֵל:  
 כד כִּי־אֹרִישׁ גּוֹיִם מִפְּנֶיךָ וְהִרְחַבְתִּי אֶת־גְּבֻלְךָ וְלֹא־יַחֲמַד אִישׁ אֶת־אַרְצְךָ  
 בְּעֵלְתְּךָ לְרֵאוֹת אֶת־פְּנֵי יְהוָה אֱלֹהֶיךָ שְׁלֹשׁ פְּעָמִים בַּשָּׁנָה:

22. And you shall observe the Feast of Weeks, of the first fruits of wheat harvest, and the Feast of Ingathering at the year's end.

23. Thrice in the year shall all your males appear before the Lord God, the God of Israel.

24. For I will cast out the nations before you, and enlarge your borders; nor shall any man desire your land, when you shall go up to appear before the Lord your God thrice in the year.(Shemot 34:22-24)

The first fruits are offered to Hashem in response to His driving out the nations before the Israelites in order that they would be able to live in and peacefully occupy the land of Israel. Hashem promised the Israelites that they they would reap what they did not sow and this promise was fulfilled upon their entrance into Canaan.

י וְהָיָה כִּי-יָבִיֵאֵךְ אֶל-הָאָרֶץ אֲשֶׁר נִשְׁבַּע לְאַבְרָהָם לְיִצְחָק וּלְיַעֲקֹב לָתֵת לָךְ עָרִים גְּדֹלֹת וְטֹבֹת אֲשֶׁר לֹא-בָנִיתָ: יֵא וּבָתִּים מְלֵאִים כָּל-טוֹב אֲשֶׁר לֹא-מִלַּאתָ וּבָרֹת חֲצוּבִים אֲשֶׁר לֹא-חֲצַבְתָּ כְרָמִים וְזֵיתִים אֲשֶׁר לֹא-נִטְעַתָּ וְאֲכַלְתָּ וְשָׂבַעְתָּ: יב הַשֶּׁמֶר לָךְ פֶּן-תִּשְׁכַּח אֶת-יְהוָה אֲשֶׁר הוֹצִיאָךְ מֵאֶרֶץ מִצְרַיִם מִבֵּית עֲבָדִים

10. And it shall be, when the Lord your God shall have brought you into the land which he swore to your fathers, to Abraham, to Isaac, and to Jacob, to give you great and goodly cities, which you did not build,

11. And houses full of all good things, which you did not fill, and wells dug, which you did not dig, vineyards and olive trees, which you did not plant; when you shall have eaten and be full;

12. Then beware lest you forget the Lord, who brought you out of the land of Egypt, from the house of slavery. (Devarim 6:10-12)

In both of the passages cited above, the entrance into the land of Israel is discussed with the admonishment to remember that they were slaves in Egypt. In other words, remember that if you do not obey, that you can once again become a landless people and therefore a powerless people! The entrance into the land, the giving of the land and offering the first fruits of the land are all intricately connected.

Throughout the Tanak, no specific date is given for the observance of Shavuot because the date was not known until the Israelites entered the land during the time of Joshua. The Israelites entered the land on or before

the 10th day of Abib<sup>89</sup> and waved the sheaf offering. Since they were now in possession of the land, HaShem no longer had to provide manna for them for they could now eat of the produce of the Canaanites until such time as they could grow their own food.

י ויחֲנוּ בְּנֵי־יִשְׂרָאֵל בְּגִלְגָּל וַיַּעֲשׂוּ אֶת־הַפֶּסַח בְּאַרְבַּעָה עָשָׂר יוֹם  
 לַחֹדֶשׁ בְּעָרֵב בְּעַרְבוֹת יְרִיחוֹ: יֵא וַיֹּאכְלוּ מֵעֵבוֹר הָאָרֶץ מִמַּחֲרַת  
 הַפֶּסַח מִצּוֹת וְקֻלּוּי בְּעֶצֶם הַיּוֹם הַזֶּה: יב וַיִּשְׁבֹּת הַמָּן מִמַּחֲרַת  
 בְּאֹכְלֵם מֵעֵבוֹר הָאָרֶץ וְלֹא־הָיָה עוֹד לְבְנֵי יִשְׂרָאֵל מִן וַיֹּאכְלוּ  
 מִתְּבוֹאֹת אֶרֶץ כְּנַעַן בַּשָּׁנָה הַהִיא

10. And the people of Israel encamped in Gilgal, and kept the Passover on the fourteenth day of the month in the evening in the plains of Jericho.

11. And they ate of the produce of the land on the next day after the Passover, unleavened cakes, and parched grain in the same day.

12. And the manna ceased on the next day after they had eaten of the produce of the land; nor had the people of Israel manna any more; but they ate of the fruit of the land of Canaan that year. (Joshua 5:10-12)

This gift of the land was fulfilled during the time of Joshua, and in Devarim 26 Hashem give explicit instructions to the Israelites when they first enter the land.

## Instructions Upon Entering The Land

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89. See Joshua 4:19

1. Recognize the gift.

אוֹתָיִהּ כִּי-תָבוֹא אֶל-הָאָרֶץ אֲשֶׁר יְהוָה אֱלֹהֶיךָ נָתַן לְךָ נַחֲלָה

And it shall be, when you come in to the land which the Lord your God gives you for an inheritance,

2. Give thanks (wave the sheaf).

וְלָקַחְתָּ מֵרֵאשִׁית אֶל-פְּרֵי הָאֲדָמָה אֲשֶׁר תָּבִיא מֵאֲרָצְךָ אֲשֶׁר יְהוָה אֱלֹהֶיךָ נָתַן לְךָ

you shall take of the first of all the fruit of the earth, which you shall bring of your land that the Lord your God gives you,

3. Believe that you possess it and live in the land!

וּרְשַׁתָּהּ וַיֵּשְׁבָתָּ בָּהּ  
and possess it, and live in it;

3. Establish a place of worship that is in conformity with Hashem's desires.

וְהָלַכְתָּ אֶל-הַמָּקוֹם אֲשֶׁר יִבְחַר יְהוָה אֱלֹהֶיךָ לְשָׁכֵן שְׁמוֹ שָׁם  
and shalt go unto the place which HaShem your God shall choose to cause His name to dwell there.

4. Remember your history and the One who has guided it from beginning to end.

ה וְעָנִיתָ וְאָמַרְתָּ לִפְנֵי יְהוָה אֱלֹהֶיךָ אֲרָמִי אֲבִד אָבִי וַיֵּרֶד מִצְרַיִם וַיִּגְר שָׁם  
 בְּמַתִּי מֵעֵט וַיְהִי-שָׁם לְגוֹי גָּדוֹל עָצוּם וְרָב: וַיִּרְעוּ אֶתְנוּ הַמִּצְרִים וַיַּעֲנוּנוּ  
 וַיִּתְּנוּ עָלֵינוּ עֲבָדָה קָשָׁה: ז וַנִּצְעַק אֶל-יְהוָה אֱלֹהֵי אֲבוֹתֵינוּ וַיִּשְׁמַע יְהוָה  
 אֶת-קִלְנוּ וַיִּרָא אֶת-עַנְיֵנוּ וְאֶת-עַמְלָנוּ וְאֶת-לַחֲצֵנוּ: ח וַיּוֹצֵאֵנוּ יְהוָה מִמִּצְרַיִם  
 בְּיַד חֲזָקָה וּבְזֵרַע נְטוּיָה וּבְמַרְא גָּדֹל וּבְאֵתוֹת וּבְמִפְתִּים: ט וַיְבֵאֵנוּ  
 אֶל-הַמָּקוֹם הַזֶּה וַיִּתֵּנוּ-לָנוּ אֶת-הָאָרֶץ הַזֹּאת אֶרֶץ זָבַת חֶלֶב וּדְבָשׁ:

5. And you shall speak and say before the Lord your God, A wandering Aramean was my father, and he went down into Egypt, and sojourned there with a few, and became there a nation, great, mighty, and populous

6. And the Egyptians dealt ill with us, and afflicted us, and laid upon us hard slavery.

7. And when we cried to the Lord God of our fathers, the Lord heard our voice, and looked on our affliction, and our labor, and our oppression;

8. And the Lord brought us out of Egypt with a mighty hand, and with an outstretched arm, and with great awesomeness, and with signs, and with wonders.

9. And he has brought us to this place, and has given us this land, a land that flows with milk and honey

### 5. Be forever thankful and learn to live in peace with everyone

יָא וְשָׂמַחְתָּ בְּכָל-הַטּוֹב אֲשֶׁר נָתַן-לְךָ יְהוָה אֱלֹהֶיךָ וּלְבֵיתְךָ אֶתָּה וְהַלְוִי  
 :וְהִגֵּר אֲשֶׁר בְּקִרְבְּךָ:

11. And you shall rejoice in every good thing which the Lord your God has given to you, and to your house, you, and the Levite, and the stranger who is among you.

In sum, the annual offering of the first fruits is a ***commemorative*** festival that celebrates God's gift of the land of Canaan to the Israelites.<sup>90</sup>

### [Why Do We Count to Shavuot?](#)

The question remains that if we know the date of the first Shavuot (Sivan 6) as recorded in Joshua and it is a commemorative festival that celebrates the bestowing of the land, then why not make Sivan 6th the fixed date? I readily admit that most commemorative festivals or holidays do occur on the date that they are purported to be recognizing, however I believe that the reason that we are mandated to count argues against this principle.

Ibn Ezra makes this explicit for he states:<sup>91</sup>:

"Most people do not realize that the reason why Scripture does not mention the day on which Shavu'ot falls--alone among all the festivals-- is that we are commanded to count

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90. The instructions that HaShem gives to the Israelites upon entering the land was not only sound then but is full of infinite wisdom for all of us here today.

91. Ibn Ezra-, Op. .Cit., page 134

to the day of the festival."

The purpose of the annual each and every day counting to this festival is to constantly, persistently and urgently remind us of just how tenuous our stay in the land of Israel was, is and will forever be.<sup>92</sup> Every sabbath when we recite וְהָיָה אִם-שָׁמַע<sup>93</sup> - we are reminded that if we do not obey the commands of Hashem, then it will not rain on the land of Israel וְאֲבַדְתֶּם וְכִי תִּפְּרוּ מְהֵרָה מֵעַל הָאָרֶץ הַטֹּבָה אֲשֶׁר יְהוָה נָתַן לָכֶם -and you will quickly perish from the good land which Hashem gives you. The theme of our delicate

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92. Even those who believe that Shavuot is a time of commemoration of the giving of the Torah see significance in the counting. See The Jerusalem Jewish Voice "Shavuot Sheaves 5757-1997. "Counting the omer is an exercise in human self-development, orderly progression toward a great goal. A necessary pre-condition is to govern and sanctify, not destroy, the vital animal side of man; this is symbolized by the barley offering, animal fodder. The 7 weeks terminate in higher human development, also dedicated to God-- the offering of the first wheat loaves. Wheat is that food uniquely designed by God for man to PROCESS, the beginning of his intelligence and civilization (a child does not utter his first words-- *abba, ima*-- until he's tasted wheat-- Ber. 40a). Passover is simple physical freedom, Shavuot the ultimate holy development of a free man, ready to receive the Torah-- "*YOUR*" WEEKS (Num. 28:26). Man who develops his Divine Image is a creature of free will, not just animal instinct, and requires a guide--"

The Torah may prefer the phrase *THE FESTIVAL OF WEEKS-- YOUR WEEKS*, to *THE FESTIVAL OF THE GIVING OF OUR TORAH*.

Sefer Ha-hinukh states that we count to give expression to our deepest and inner most yearnings for the arrival of the day of the giving of the Torah- see Naham Liebowitz- Studies in Vayikra - page 220.

93. see Deuteronomy 11:13-21.

and fragile connection to the land of Israel resounds throughout Leviticus and Deuteronomy:

כד אל-תטמאו בכל-אלה כי בכל-אלה נטמאו הגוים אשר-אני משלח  
 מפניכם: כה ותטמא הארץ ואפקד עונה עליה ותקא הארץ את-ישביה:  
 כו ושמרתם אתם את-חקתי ואת-משפטי ולא תעשו מכל התועבת האלה  
 האזרח והגר הגר בתוככם: כז כי את-כל-התועבת האל עשו אנשי-הארץ  
 אשר לפניכם ותטמא הארץ: [מפטיר] כח ולא-תקיא הארץ אתכם בטמאכם  
 אתה באשר קאה את-הגוי אשר לפניכם:

24. Defile not you yourselves in any of these things; for in all these the nations are defiled which I cast out before you;

25. And the land is defiled; therefore I do punish its iniquity upon it, and the land itself vomits out her inhabitants.

26. You shall therefore keep my statutes and my judgments, and shall not commit any of these abominations; nor any of your own nation, nor any stranger who sojourns among you;

27. For all these abominations have the men of the land done, which were before you, and the land is defiled;

28. That the land should not vomit you out also, when you defile it, as it vomited out the nations that were before you. (Leviticus 18:24-28)

Obedience to the laws, commandments and decrees that are enjoined upon us is the one and only way that we can remain peacefully in the land that was given to us by the Most High. The daily counting is intended to be a daily reminder! Shavuot, albeit a commemorative day, always occurs on a different day each year, thus forcing us to count to determine where we shall end. Will we be in the land or will the land as Leviticus states- vomit



us out? We do not want to be in the same place that we were in last year. Hopefully, each year, with counting anew, we will be wiser and closer to full obedience, thus securing our connection to the land that was gracious and through no merit of our own bestowed upon us.

The Psalmist succinctly captures this theme of counting, wisdom and fragility:

לְמִנּוֹת יְמֵינוּ כֵּן הוֹדַע וְנָבֵא לִבְבִּי חֵכְמָה

Teach us to count our days rightly,  
that we may obtain a heart of wisdom ( Tehillim 90:12)  
and

הוֹדִיעֵנִי יְהוָה | קְצֵי וּמִדַּת יְמֵי מָה—הִיא אֲדַעָה מָה—חֲדַל אֲנִי

Lord let me know my end, and the measure (count) of my days, what it is:  
that I may know how frail I am.(Tehillim 39:5).

The count serves to remind us of the commands and instructions that He gave us for living in our land. We do not want to find ourselves in the same situation that we were in in the previous year. Daily, we count the fifty days to Shavuot each and every year and Shavuot occurs on a different date each and every year with the hope that we will be closer to the ideal relationship with HaShem.

## Summary

After this lengthy examination of all the issues involved, the majority of the

evidence leads me to to make the following conclusions:

1. Shavuot in all details is land based: beginning with its' agricultural basis, down to the commemorative purpose of the festival.
2. There is no fixed annual date for Shavuot.
3. The count begins on the Sunday after the weekly Sabbath of the Feast of Unleavened Bread.
- 4 The count then always begins on a Sunday and ends on a Sunday.
5. The Feast of Shavuot commemorates the gift of the land of Israel to the Israelites.
- 6 .Counting to a different end point each year is a reminder of our frail connection to the land and our responsibilities to HaShem. Obedience is the only means by which we shall remain בשלם -wholesomely and peacefully in our land.

## Conclusion

בֵּית יַעֲקֹב לְכוּ וְנִלְכֶה בְּאוֹר יְהוָה

O House of Jacob Come,

Let Us Walk By the Light of Hashem<sup>94</sup>

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94. Yeshaya 2:5

Ancient models have provided us with examples of when the wave-sheaf was offered and when Shavuot was celebrated. While their insights provide a basis to aid in our inquiry, we must be guided by the urgent imperative of William Saunders Crowdy to "search the Scriptures." Since we are the 'people of the Book,' we are led in our inquiry of this and all issues by the light and guidance of HaShem. If we subscribe to the philosophy of '*Sola Scriptura*' meaning that Torah is our ultimate and final source of inspiration and wisdom, then we must seriously consider the Biblical evidence for the dating of Shavuot and the wave offering and be governed accordingly.

The Word of The Most High is true, but HaShem sometimes conveys His truth in such a manner that only diligent and prayerful study of the Torah will yield this truth.

*Whom will he teach knowledge,*

אֶת-מִי יוֹרֶה דָּעָה

*and to whom will he explain the message?*

מִי יִבִּין שְׂמוּעָה

*Those who are weaned from milk,*

גְּמוּלֵי מִחֶלֶב

*those taken from the breast?*

עֲתִיקֵי מִשְׁדָּיִם

*For it is precept upon precept,*

כִּי צוֹ לְצוֹ

*precept upon precept,*

צוֹ לְצוֹ

*line upon line, line upon line,*

קוֹ לְקוֹ קוֹ לְקוֹ

*here a little, there a little.*

שָׁם זְעִיר שָׁם

*Yeshayah 28:9-10*

*Shalom,*

*Rabbi Malchah Netanyahu*