

PENTECOST

Shavu'ot

Festival of Weeks

Festival of the Giving of Our Torah

Pentecost of the Old Covenant

Pentecost in regards to the Old Covenant represents the giving of the Law at Mt. Sinai. It first occurred on the 50th day (thus the name meaning 50) from the Passover in Egypt when the blood of the sacrificial lamb (a type of Christ) saved them from the judgment of God. Pentecost in regards to the New Covenant represents the giving of the Holy Spirit at Jerusalem. It occurred on the 50th day from Passover when the blood of the true sacrificial lamb –CHRIST- saved followers of HIM from the coming judgment of God.

Jewish Significance: Remembers the giving of the Torah; also a harvest festival (wheat)
Observances: Studying Torah. Length: 2 days (Some: 1 day). Customs: Eating dairy foods

Jewish Pentecost, the Festival of Weeks, is the second of the three major festivals with both historical and agricultural significance (the other two are Passover and Sukkot). Agriculturally, it commemorates the time when the first fruits were harvested (not to be confused with First Fruits which occurred 2 days after Passover) and brought to the Temple, and is known as Hag ha-Bikkurim (the Festival of the First Fruits). Historically, it celebrates the giving of the Torah at Mount Sinai, and is also known as Hag Matan Torateinu (the Festival of the Giving of Our Torah).

The period from Passover to Pentecost is a time of great anticipation. Jews count each of the days from the second day of Passover to the day before Pentecost, 49 days or 7 full weeks, hence the name of the festival. The counting reminds them of the important connection between Passover and Pentecost: "Passover freed us physically from bondage, but the giving of the Torah on Pentecost redeemed us spiritually from our bondage to idolatry and immorality [in Egypt]." It is customary to stay up the entire first night of Pentecost and study Torah, then pray as early as possible in the morning.

Counting of the Omer is a verbal counting of each of the forty-nine days between the Jewish holidays of Passover and Pentecost. This mitzvah derives from the Torah commandment to count forty-nine days beginning from the day on which the Omer, a sacrifice containing an omer-measure of barley (handful), was offered in the Temple in Jerusalem, up until the day before an offering of wheat was brought to the Temple on Pentecost. The Counting of the Omer begins on the second day of Passover (the 16th of Nisan) for Rabbinic Jews, (and after the weekly Shabbat during Passover for Karaite Jews), and ends the day before the holiday of Shavuot, the 'fiftieth day.'

The idea of counting each day **represents spiritual preparation and anticipation** for the giving of the Torah, which was given by God on Mount Sinai at the beginning of the month of Sivan, around the same time as the holiday of Pentecost. (The Sefer HaChinuch states that the Jewish people were only freed from Egypt at Passover in

order to receive the Torah at Sinai, an event which is now celebrated on Pentecost, and to fulfill its laws.) Thus the Counting of the Omer demonstrates how much a Jew desires to accept the Torah in his own life.

The omer is a Biblical measure of volume of grain. On the second day of Passover, an omer of barley was offered in the Temple, signalling the allowance of the consumption of grains from the new harvest. On the 50th day after the beginning of the count, corresponding to the holiday of Pentecost, two loaves made of wheat were offered in the Temple to signal the start of the wheat harvest.

The origins of the omer count, enumerated in the Midrash Rabbah Parashas Emor, explains that when the Children of Israel left Egypt they were told by Moses that 49 days after the exodus, they would be given the Torah. The populace was so excited at the prospect of a spiritual liberation, following the physical emancipation from Egypt, they kept a count of the passing days that ended with the giving of the Torah at the foot of Mount Sinai. The Torah itself, in Leviticus 23:15-16, and Deuteronomy 16:9, states that it is a commandment to count seven complete weeks from the day after Passover night ending with the festival of Shavuot on the fiftieth day.

Scripture References

(Exodus 23:14-19, NIV)

Three Harvest Festivals

"Three times a year you are to celebrate a festival to me." Celebrate the Festival of Unleavened Bread; for seven days eat bread made without yeast, as I commanded you. Do this at the appointed time in the month of Aviv, for in that month you came out of Egypt. "No one is to appear before me empty-handed. "Celebrate the Festival of Harvest [Pentecost] with the firstfruits of the crops you sow in your field. "Celebrate the Festival of Ingathering [Tabernacles] at the end of the year, when you gather in your crops from the field. "Three times a year all the men are to appear before the Sovereign Lord. "Do not offer the blood of a sacrifice to me along with anything containing yeast. "The fat of my festival offerings must not be kept until morning. "Bring the best of the firstfruits of your soil to the house of the Lord your God. "Do not cook a young goat in its mother's milk. (Exodus 23:14-19, NIV)

(Exodus 34:22-26 NIV)

"Celebrate the Festival of Weeks [Pentecost] with the firstfruits of the wheat harvest, and the Festival of Ingathering [Tabernacles] at the turn of the year. Three times a year all your men are to appear before the Sovereign Lord, the God of Israel. I will drive out nations before you and enlarge your territory, and no one will covet your land when you go up three times each year to appear before the Lord your God. "Do not offer the blood of a sacrifice to me along with anything containing yeast, and do not let any of the sacrifice from the Passover Festival remain until morning. "Bring the best of the firstfruits of your soil to the house of the Lord your God. "Do not cook a young goat in its mother's milk" (Exodus 34:22-26, NIV).

***(Leviticus 23:15-22, NIV) Festival of Weeks/ Pentecost**

"From the day after the Sabbath, the day you brought the sheaf of the wave offering, count off seven full weeks. Count off fifty days up to the day after the seventh Sabbath, and then present an offering of new grain to the Lord. From wherever you live, bring two loaves made of two-tenths of an ephah of the finest flour, baked with yeast, as a wave offering of firstfruits to the Lord. Present with this bread seven male lambs, each a year old and without defect, one young bull and two rams. They will be a burnt offering to the Lord, together with their grain offerings and drink offerings—a food offering, an aroma pleasing to the Lord. Then sacrifice one male goat for a sin offering and two lambs, each a year old, for a fellowship offering. The priest is to wave the two lambs before the Lord as a wave offering, together with the bread of the firstfruits. They are a sacred offering to the Lord for the priest. On that same day you are to proclaim a sacred assembly and do no regular work. This is to be a lasting ordinance for the generations to come, wherever you live. "When you reap the harvest of your land, do not reap to the very edges of your field or gather the gleanings of your harvest. Leave them for the poor and for the foreigner residing among you. I am the Lord your God." (Leviticus 23:15-22, NIV)

(Numbers 28:26-31 NIV)

"On the day of firstfruits, when you present to the Lord an offering of new grain during the Festival of Weeks (Pentecost), hold a sacred assembly and do no regular work. Present a burnt offering of two young bulls, one ram and seven male lambs a year old as an aroma pleasing to the Lord. With each bull there is to be a grain offering of three-tenths of an ephah of the finest flour mixed with oil; with the ram, two-tenths; and with each of the seven lambs, one-tenth. Include one male goat to make atonement for you. Offer these together with their drink offerings, in addition to the regular burnt offering and its grain offering. Be sure the animals are without defect. (Numbers 28:26-31 NIV)

***(Deuteronomy 16:9-12 NIV)**

Count off seven weeks (49 days) from the time you begin to put the sickle to the standing grain. Then celebrate the Festival of Weeks (Pentecost) to the Lord your God by giving a freewill offering in proportion to the blessings the Lord your God has given you. And rejoice before the Lord your God at the place he will choose as a dwelling for his Name—you, your sons and daughters, your male and female servants, the Levites in your towns, and the foreigners, the fatherless and the widows living among you. Remember that you were slaves in Egypt, and follow "carefully" these decrees. (Deuteronomy 16:9-12, NIV)

Pentecost of the New Covenant

(Acts 1:1-11 NIV)

In my former book, Theophilus, I wrote about all that Jesus began to do and to teach until the day he was taken up to heaven, after giving instructions through the Holy Spirit to the apostles he had chosen. After his suffering, he presented himself to them and gave many convincing proofs that he was alive. He appeared to them over a period of "forty days" (First Fruits: two days count after Passover, est. day 42)) and spoke about

the kingdom of God. On one occasion, while he was eating with them, he gave them this command: "Do not leave Jerusalem, but wait for the gift my Father promised, which you have heard me speak about. For John baptized with water, but in a few days you will be baptized with the Holy Spirit."

"Then they gathered around him and asked him, "Lord, are you at this time going to restore the kingdom to Israel?" He said to them: "It is not for you to know the times or dates the Father has set by his own authority. But you will receive power when the Holy Spirit comes on you; and you will be my witnesses in Jerusalem, and in all Judea and Samaria, and to the ends of the earth."

After he said this, he was taken up before their very eyes, and a cloud hid him from their sight. They were looking intently up into the sky as he was going, when suddenly two men dressed in white stood beside them. "Men of Galilee," they said, "why do you stand here looking into the sky? This same Jesus, who has been taken from you into heaven, will come back in the same way you have seen him go into heaven." (Acts 1:1-11, NIV)

When the day of Pentecost came [a few days later], they were all together in one place [in Jerusalem for the Feast of Pentecost] [**spiritual preparation and anticipation.**] Suddenly a sound like the blowing of a violent wind came from heaven and filled the whole house where they were sitting. They saw what seemed to be tongues of fire that separated and came to rest on each of them. All of them were filled with the Holy Spirit and began to speak in other tongues as the Spirit enabled them. Now there were staying in Jerusalem God-fearing Jews from every nation under heaven. When they heard this sound, a crowd came together in bewilderment, because each one "heard" their own language being spoken. Utterly amazed, they asked: "Aren't all these who are speaking Galileans? Then how is it that each of us hears them in our native language? Parthians, Medes and Elamites; residents of Mesopotamia, Judea and Cappadocia, Pontus and Asia, Phrygia and Pamphylia, Egypt and the parts of Libya near Cyrene; visitors from Rome (both Jews and converts to Judaism); Cretans and Arabs—we hear them declaring the wonders of God in our own tongues!" Amazed and perplexed, they asked one another, "**What does this mean?**"

(Acts 2:1-41 NIV)

[Peter began to preach]

Some, however, made fun of them and said, "They have had too much wine." Then Peter stood up with the Eleven, raised his voice and addressed the crowd: "Fellow Jews and all of you who live in Jerusalem, let me explain this to you; listen carefully to what I say. These people are not drunk, as you suppose. It's only nine in the morning! No, this is what was spoken by the prophet Joel: "'In the last days, God says, I will pour out my Spirit on all people. Your sons and daughters will prophesy, your young men will see visions, your old men will dream dreams. Even on my servants, both men and women, I will pour out my Spirit in those days, and they will prophesy. I will show wonders in the heavens above and signs on the earth below, blood and fire and billows of smoke. The

sun will be turned to darkness and the moon to blood before the coming of the great and glorious day of the Lord.

And everyone who calls on the name of the Lord will be saved.' "Fellow Israelites, listen to this: Jesus of Nazareth was a man accredited by God to you by miracles, wonders and signs, which God did among you through him, as you yourselves know. This man was handed over to you by God's deliberate plan and foreknowledge; and you, with the help of wicked men, put him to death by nailing him to the cross. But God raised him from the dead, freeing him from the agony of death, because it was impossible for death to keep its hold on him.

David said about him: "I saw the Lord always before me. Because he is at my right hand, I will not be shaken. Therefore my heart is glad and my tongue rejoices; my body also will rest in hope, because you will not abandon me to the realm of the dead, you will not let your holy one see decay. You have made known to me the paths of life; you will fill me with joy in your presence.' "Fellow Israelites, I can tell you confidently that the patriarch David died and was buried and his tomb is here to this day. But he was a prophet and knew that God had promised him on oath that he would place one of his descendants on his throne. Seeing what was to come, he spoke of the resurrection of the Messiah, that he was not abandoned to the realm of the dead, nor did his body see decay. God has raised this Jesus to life, and we are all witnesses of it. Exalted to the right hand of God, he has received from the Father the promised Holy Spirit and has poured out what you now see and hear. For David did not ascend to heaven, and yet he said, "The Lord said to my Lord: "Sit at my right hand until I make your enemies a footstool for your feet."

"Therefore let all Israel be assured of this: God has made this Jesus, whom you crucified, both Lord and Messiah." When the people heard this, they were **cut to the heart** and said to Peter and the other apostles,

"Brothers, **what shall we do?**" Peter replied, "Repent and be baptized, every one of you, in the name of Jesus Christ for the forgiveness of your sins. And you will receive the gift of the Holy Spirit. The promise is for you and your children and for all who are far off—for all whom the Lord our God will call." With many other words he warned them; and he pleaded with them, "Save yourselves from this corrupt generation." Those who accepted his message were baptized, and about three thousand were added to their number that day. (Acts 2:1-41, NIV)

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