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A MESSIANIC BIBLE STUDY FROM ARIEL MINISTRIES



THE FEAST OF SHAVUOT (WEEKS OR PENTECOST)



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*And ye shall count
unto you from the
morrow after the
sabbath, from the day
that ye brought the
sheaf of the
wave-offering; seven
sabbaths shall there
be complete.
Leviticus 23:15*

NOTES

The seven holy seasons as outlined in Leviticus 23 fall into two cycles. The first cycle of four festivals come close together, and the second cycle of three festivals come close together. The first cycle includes the Feast of Passover, the Feast of Unleavened Bread, the Feast of First-fruits, and the Feast of Weeks.

The Feast of *Shavuot* or Weeks is the fourth holy season in the Jewish calendar. Among the Jewish people, this feast is known as the Feast of Shavuot or Weeks. Among most Gentile believers today, the same festival is known as the Feast of Pentecost. It will be studied in four major areas: the introduction, the Feast of Weeks in the Law of Moses, the Feast of Weeks in the New Testament, and the messianic implications.

I. INTRODUCTION

A. The Names

1. Hag Hashavuot

The first name is *Hag Hashavuot*, which means the “Feast of Weeks.” This is its common Old Testament name (Ex. 34:22; Deut. 16:10). It is called the Feast of Weeks, because it took place seven weeks plus one day after First-fruits or, by some reckoning, seven weeks plus one day after the Feast of First-fruits.

2. Hag Hakatzir

A second name is *Hag Hakatzir*, which means the “Feast of Harvest” (Ex. 23:16), because this feast marked the end of the spring harvest season.

3. Yom Habikkurim

The third name is *Yom Habikkurim*, which means the “Day of the First-

fruits” (Num. 28:26), because it also marked the time of the first-fruits of the summer harvest.

4. Hag Habikkurim

The fourth name is *Hag Habikkurim*, which means the “Feast of First-fruits.” This is a rabbinic name not found in Scripture. It became known as the Feast of First-fruits because, at this time, the first-fruits of the wheat and the barley harvests were offered.

5. Hag Atzeret

The fifth name is *Hag Atzeret*, which means the “Closing Festival.” This, too, is a rabbinic or Talmudic name. While this term is found in the Bible, it is not used for the Feast of Weeks. This expression is used in Deuteronomy 16:8 where it speaks of the seventh day of the Passover. It is also found in Leviticus 23:39, which speaks of the eighth day of the Feast of Tabernacles. In the Bible, it is used for either the Feasts of Passover or Tabernacles, but in rabbinic literature, it is used for the Feast of Weeks. This became the rabbinic name because it marked the end of the first cycle of festivals.

6. Atzeret Shel Pesach

The sixth name is *Atzeret Shel Pesach* which means the “Closing Season of the Passover.” This, too, is strictly a rabbinic name. It is known by this name because it is the last feast of the first cycle of festivals that began with Passover.

7. Zman Matan Torah

The seventh name is *Zman Matan Torah*, which means the “Season or the Time of the Giving of the Law.” This, too, is a rabbinic name based on the Jewish tradition that the Law of Moses was given to Israel on this occasion.

8. The Day of Pentecost

And the eighth name is the “Day of Pentecost.” This is its New Testament Greek name (Acts 2:1; 20:16; I Cor. 16:8). The word *pentecost* comes from the Greek word meaning “fifty.” Because this feast came fifty days after the Feast of Passover, it became known as the Feast of Pentecost.

B. The Biblical Practice

The Feast of Pentecost is a one-day festival. On this occasion, two loaves of bread made with wheat were to be placed on a single sheet and waved before the Lord. It was waved, but not actually offered on the Altar (Lev. 2:12). The loaves were to have leaven, which was unusual, because this was the only feast where leaven was permitted as an offering. When it is used symbolically in Scripture, leaven is a symbol of sin. The reason God permitted leaven to be used on this occasion is because those represented by this offering were sinners.

The exact date for this feast is the sixth day of the month of *Sivan*, which means that it is seven weeks and one day after the second day of Passover. The count actually began on the Feast of Unleavened Bread, and once it reached the fiftieth day, the Feast of Weeks would be observed.

C. The Jewish Observance

Nine things will be discussed concerning the Jewish observance of the Feast of Weeks.

1. The Date

The exact date of the Feast of Weeks was one of the areas of dispute between the Pharisees and the Sadducees. The dispute was over the exact understanding of Leviticus 23:15: *And ye shall count unto you from the morrow after the sabbath, from the day that ye brought the sheaf of the wave-offering; seven sabbaths shall there be complete.*

The issue between the Pharisees and the Sadducees was what Moses meant by the Sabbath in this verse. The Sadducees believed that the Sabbath was the regular weekly Sabbath; that is, from sundown Friday until sundown Saturday. They began their count on the day after the regular Sabbath; in other words, the first Sunday after the Passover. The Pharisees, however, interpreted the Sabbath here to refer to the day of the Passover so the count for the Pharisees began on the day after Passover, regardless of the day of the week that it fell on. In this case, the Sadducees were biblically correct and the Pharisees were wrong.

2. The Harvest Festival

The Jewish observance of this feast during the Second Temple Period, 515 B.C. until A.D. 70, consisted of being a harvest festival for farmers. Various first-fruits were brought as an offering: wheat, barley, grapes, figs, pomegranates, olive oil, and honey. The farmers would parade to the Temple with these first-fruits where they would offer them up in a special ceremony. People would follow them blowing flutes and playing other instruments. It was quite an elaborate observance as the farmers brought their first-fruits to the Temple.

3. The Two Loaves

The Jewish observance of the two loaves during the Second Temple Period was to wave them before the Altar twice. The first time they were waved was before the slaughter of the two sheep. The second time was after the slaughter of the two sheep, when they were waved with the breast and thigh of the sheep. The two loaves were then eaten by the priests. One loaf was eaten by the high priest and the second loaf was divided among the other priests. They were eaten either on the very same day that they were waved or that night sometime before midnight. The rabbis asked the question, "Why was it necessary to have two loaves?" Their answer was, "Because Pentecost is the season for the fruit of the tree; therefore, the Holy One, blessed be He, said,

Bring Me two loaves on Pentecost so that the fruit of your trees may be blessed.”

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4. The Laws

The fourth thing concerning the Jewish observance of the Feast of Weeks is the various specialized laws as to how the synagogue service was to be observed. We will not go into any details here, but one key law was that there was to be no fasting. During the Second Temple Period, if the Feast of Pentecost occurred on the Sabbath, the slaughter of the sacrifices was deferred until the following day because this was not to be a day of fasting.

5. The Three Days of the Bounds

The fifth thing concerning the Jewish observance of the Feast of Weeks is the tradition of the Three Days of the Bounds, based upon Exodus 19:10-13, which deals with the three days of preparation the Israelites underwent before receiving the Law. Because in Jewish tradition this is the occasion when the Law was given, they observe a special three-day period of being separated in order to make themselves worthy for this particular festival.

6. The Scripture Readings

The sixth thing concerning the Jewish observance of the Feast of Weeks is that certain Scriptures are read especially on this occasion. From the Law of Moses: on the first day, Exodus 19:1-20:17; Numbers 28:26-31; Deuteronomy 5:19-30; 9:9-19; 10:1-5 and 10 are read. On the second day, Deuteronomy 15:19-16:17 is read. From the Prophets: Ezekiel 1:1-28 and 3:12 are read on the first day; on the second day, Habakkuk 2:20-3:19 is read.

There is also the reading of the Book of Ruth because the story of Ruth takes place at harvest time as this feast does. Furthermore, Ruth was a convert to the Mosaic Law that was given on this occasion. The rabbis teach that just as Ruth suffered deprivation when she accepted the Torah or the Law, so believers suffer deprivation when they accept the Law. Furthermore, according to Jewish tradition, King David, who was a descendent of Ruth, was born on this feast and he died on this feast.

7. The Liturgies

The seventh thing concerning the Jewish observance of the Feast of Weeks is that two special liturgies are used during the synagogue service. The first liturgy is the singing of the *Akdmut*, an Aramaic hymn composed about A.D. 1030, which is a reference to the Ten Commandments. It has as its theme God's love for Israel and Israel's faithfulness to the Law of Moses. It is sung on the first day of the Feast of Weeks. The second song is the *Tikun Leil Shavuot* which means the "Service for the Night of Shavuot" or the "Service for the Night of Pentecost or Weeks." This is an anthology of the first and last verses

of every book of the Old Testament and also the entire Book of Ruth. It also has some of the Mosaic Law and other things. The main emphasis of this second song is the indivisibility of the Written Law and the Oral Law according to rabbinic teaching.

8. The Special Foods

The eighth thing concerning the Jewish observance of the Feast of Weeks is the special foods eaten by Jewish people on this occasion. Three things are mentioned.

a. Milk Products

There is a special emphasis on the eating of milk products on this day in order to remember that the Land God gave to Israel was *a land flowing with milk and honey*. Furthermore, according to Jewish tradition, on the day of the giving of the Law, only dairy foods were eaten. Cheese is eaten because it is a product of the Land reminding Jews that it is a land of milk and honey. There are cheese blintzes, which are a special form of Jewish crepes filled with cheese that are to remind us of the two tablets of the Law.

b. Challah

A second type of special food is *Challah*, which is egg bread that has a yellow color because of the heavy use of the yolk of the egg. This bread is eaten every Friday night on the Jewish Sabbath. On the Sabbath day the dough is braided, however on this occasion, the bread is not fixed in the braided form; it is fixed with the design of a ladder. The reason that it should be different is to remind us of the Jewish tradition that Moses used a ladder to climb into Heaven to receive the Law. Often two loaves of Challah were used to represent the two loaves that were once offered in the Temple Compound.

c. Kreplach

The third type of special food is *kreplach*, which is a form of Jewish ravioli made without tomato sauce and fixed in a triangle rather than a square. The three sides of the triangle represent a number of things. For example: they represent the patriarchs: Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob. They also represent the three divisions of the Old Testament: the Law, the Prophets, and the Writings.

9. Other Customs

And the ninth thing concerning the Jewish observance of the Feast of Weeks is some other customs. Although, in the Bible, this was a one-day observance, it became a two-day observance. Two reasons were offered for this: first, it was to commemorate the day of the giving of the Law; and secondly, as a remembrance of the first-fruits offering when the Temple was standing.

Another custom that has become somewhat prominent, although it not practiced today as much as it was in earlier days, is to stay up all

night to study the Law that was given on this occasion. The reason for this tradition is that, according to the rabbis, when God came down on Mount Sinai there was lightning and thunder, which kept the Jews awake all night. So on this occasion, it became customary for Jews to stay awake all night in order to study the Law.

Both the home and the synagogue are decorated to remind people of the harvest season and of the greenery around Mount Sinai when the Law was given. Branches from trees are spread all over the floor of the synagogue in remembrance of this harvest festival.

II. THE FEAST OF WEEKS IN THE LAW OF MOSES

A. Exodus 23:16

and the feast of harvest, the first-fruits of your labors, which you sowed in the field: and the feast of ingathering, at the end of the year, when you gather in your labors out of the field.

According to this verse, this is one of the three pilgrimage festivals that every Jewish male had to go to Jerusalem to observe. The other two pilgrimage festivals are the Feast of Passover and the Feast of Tabernacles. It is to be the feast of harvest, an agricultural observance marking the harvest of the spring season. Furthermore, it was to be an observance of the first-fruits of their labors in the field; this was the time of the first-fruits of the summer harvest.

B. Exodus 34:22

And you shall observe the feast of weeks, even of the first-fruits of wheat harvest, and the feast of ingathering at the year's end.

The common name found here is “the feast of weeks,” because it took place seven weeks plus one day from the first day of the Feast of Unleavened Bread. Here again, it is taught that it is “the first-fruits of the wheat harvest.”

C. Leviticus 23:15-21

The third passage is Leviticus 23:15-21, which contains some details concerning this festival. The count is emphasized in verses 15-16a: *And ye shall count unto you from the morrow after the sabbath, from the day that ye brought the sheaf of the wave-offering; seven sabbaths shall there be complete: even unto the morrow after the seventh sabbath shall ye number fifty days.*

The beginning of the count started on the day after the Sabbath. The debate between the Pharisees and Sadducees was over the meaning of the Sabbath. Did it mean Sunday or the first day after the Passover? They were to count forty-nine days plus one to make fifty days, because the feast itself was to be observed on the fiftieth day. Moses said that seven Sabbaths should be counted.

The purpose of the feast is explained in verse 16b: *and ye shall offer a new meal-offering unto Jehovah.*

The explanation of the meal-offering begins with the command in verse 17: *Ye shall bring out of your habitations two wave-loaves of two tenth parts of an ephah: they shall be of fine flour, they shall be baked with leaven, for first-fruits unto Jehovah.*

The command is in verse 17a: *Ye shall bring out of your habitations two wave-loaves.* For the Feast of First-fruits only one loaf is required, but in the Feast of Pentecost two loaves are required. While there were two, they were both to be on one sheet. Furthermore, the two loaves were to originate from their habitations, the homes of Jews. In verse 17b, they were to take the wheat and grind it into flour, allow it to leaven, and then bake two loaves and offer them as a meal-offering. These loaves were to be of fine flour and to be baked with leaven. This was the only time that leaven was allowed as a part of the offering. Then the specific purpose is stated in verse 17c: *for first-fruits unto Jehovah.* This was the first-fruits of the wheat harvest.

Verses 18-19 mention the blood sacrifices since everything had to be observed by the shedding of blood: *And ye shall present with the bread seven lambs without blemish a year-old, and one young bullock, and two rams: they shall be a burnt-offering unto Jehovah, with their meal-offering, and their drink-offerings, even an offering made by fire, of a sweet savor unto Jehovah. And ye shall offer one he-goat for a sin-offering, and two he-lambs a year old for a sacrifice of peace-offerings.*

Verse 18 specifies that with the bread they were to offer a burnt-offering. The sacrifices on this occasion were to consist of seven lambs without blemish each a year old, plus one young bull and two rams. Included with these offerings were also meal-offerings and drink-offerings. In verse 19a, there was another blood offering consisting of one male goat, which was the sin-offering. A third blood offering, verse 19b, was the peace-offering consisting of two male lambs, each a year old.

Verse 20 states how the ceremony was to be observed: *And the priest shall wave them with the bread of the first-fruits for a wave-offering before Jehovah, with the two lambs: they shall be holy to Jehovah for the priest.*

The priest was to wave the two loaves of bread with the two lambs of the peace-offering. These things then became holy to Jehovah and were to be eaten by the priests.

Then in verse 21, some rules and regulations concerning the feast are spelled out: *And ye shall make proclamation on the selfsame day; there shall be a holy convocation unto you; ye shall do no servile work: it is a statute for ever in all your dwellings throughout your generations.*

First, they were to make proclamation on the selfsame day; they were to proclaim the fiftieth day as the day of the Feast of Weeks. Secondly, there was to be a holy convocation; it was a time of gathering together; it was to be a pilgrimage festival. Thirdly, they were to do no servile work; it was to be a day of rest.

Furthermore, he closes with the statement that it is a statute for ever;

it is an age-long statute. For as long as the age existed, the law existed. During the entire Dispensation of Law, this was to be obligatory.

D. Numbers 28:26-31

The fourth passage is Numbers 28:26-31, which emphasizes the offerings that were mandatory for the Feast of Weeks.

Verse 26 begins by stating what the observance was to be like: *Also in the day of the first-fruits, when ye offer a new meal-offering unto Jehovah in your feast of weeks, ye shall have a holy convocation; ye shall do no servile work.*

This, too, was to be the first-fruits, but of the summer harvest. On that day they were to offer a new meal-offering unto Jehovah, which consisted of two loaves. The occasion is called the *feast of weeks*. The rules in this verse are: *ye shall have a holy convocation and ye shall do no servile work.*

Then he deals with the burnt-offering in verses 27-29: *but ye shall offer a burnt-offering for a sweet savor unto Jehovah: two young bullocks, one ram, seven he-lambs a year old; mingled with oil, three tenth parts for each bullock, two tenth parts for one ram, a tenth part for every lamb of the seven lambs.*

In verse 27, a blood sacrifice consisting of two young bulls, one ram, and seven male lambs, each a year old. Verses 28-29 describe the meal-offering, consisting of fine flour mingled with oil, which is to accompany the blood sacrifices.

Verse 30, describes the sin-offering: *one he-goat, to make atonement for you.* It is also to have a sin-offering consisting of one he-goat for the purpose of making atonement.

Next, it is pointed out that all this is in addition to the regular daily offering in verse 31: *Besides the continual burnt-offering, and the meal-offering thereof, ye shall offer them (they shall be unto you without blemish), and their drink-offerings.*

The offerings on the day of the Feast of Weeks were not in substitution for the regular sacrifices, but in addition to them.

E. Deuteronomy 16:9-12

The counting of the feast is first mentioned in verse 9: *Seven weeks shall you number unto you: from the time you begin to put the sickle to the standing grain shall you begin to number seven weeks.*

Once again it is called the Feast of Weeks, because it was seven weeks plus one day after the Feast of Unleavened Bread.

The observance of the feast is explained in verse 10: *And you shall keep the feast of weeks unto Jehovah your God with a tribute of a freewill-offering of your hand, which you shall give, according as Jehovah your God blesses you.*

On this occasion, they were to give a special offering, some kind of freewill-offering based upon how they were blessed and prospered in the previous year.

Verse 11 points out that this was to be a time of rejoicing for the entire family and the servants; everyone was to rejoice before God: *and you shall rejoice before Jehovah your God, you, and your son, and your daughter, and your man-servant, and your maid-servant, and the Levite that is within your gates, and the sojourner, and the fatherless, and the widow, that are in the midst of you, in the place which Jehovah your God shall chose, to cause his name to dwell there.*

The purpose of all this rejoicing, observance, and celebration was for remembrance in verse 12: *And you shall remember that you were a bondman in Egypt: and you shall observe and do these statutes.*

III. THE FEAST OF WEEKS IN THE NEW TESTAMENT

A. Acts 2:1-4

It was on this occasion that the Church was born. Verse 1 gives the date: *And when the day of Pentecost was now come, they were all together in one place.*

In verses 2-4, the birth of the Church resulted from the coming of the Holy Spirit. This will be discussed later in greater detail under topic IV.

B. Acts 20:16

For Paul had determined to sail past Ephesus, that he might not have to spend time in Asia; for he was hastening, if it were possible for him to be at Jerusalem the day of Pentecost.

The second passage in the New Testament states that Paul had a desire to be in Jerusalem for the Feast of Weeks. The Feast of Weeks was a pilgrimage festival and, under the Law, all Jews were required to be in Jerusalem for it. Although Paul, as a Jewish believer, was no longer under the Law, by way of option, he desired to be with his people in Jerusalem on this occasion.

C. I Corinthians 16:8

But I will tarry at Ephesus until Pentecost.

Paul expected to be in the Ephesus area for the Feast of Pentecost at the time he wrote the first epistle to the Corinthians.

IV. THE MESSIANIC IMPLICATIONS

In dealing with the Messianic implications involved in the Feast of Weeks, Acts 2:1-4 will be discussed first, and then the various facets of the fulfillment will be discussed.

A. The Birth of the Church: Acts 2:1-4

And when the day of Pentecost was now come, they were all together in one place. And suddenly there came from heaven a sound as of the rushing of a mighty wind, and it filled all the house where they were sitting. And there appeared unto them tongues parting asunder, like as of fire; and it sat upon each one of them. And they were all filled with the Holy Spirit, and began to speak with other tongues, as the

Spirit gave them utterance.

Verse 1 states the occasion: the day of Pentecost, meaning seven weeks plus one day following the Feast of Unleavened Bread. Verses 2-4 record the birth of the Church on this occasion. The specific ministry mentioned is the Spirit's ministry of filling. The filling of the Holy Spirit means, "to be controlled by the Spirit in some facet of one's life." When the Spirit came on this occasion, the day of Pentecost, verse 4 states: *they were all filled with the Spirit*, meaning that they all fell under the Spirit's control in some unique way.

It was not only the ministry of Spirit filling that occurred on this occasion. The filling of the Spirit was not something new because people were filled with the Spirit in the Old Testament and in the Gospels even before the events of Acts 2. An entirely new ministry began on this occasion: Spirit baptism. This can be determined by comparing two other passages in the same book.

First, Acts 1:5 states: *for John indeed baptized with water; but ye shall be baptized in the Holy Spirit not many days hence.*

In this verse, Yeshua (Jesus) used the future tense when He said: *ye shall be baptized in the Holy Spirit*. They had not been baptized by the Holy Spirit yet, but they will be not many days hence. Obviously, the expression not many days hence refers to the experience that occurred ten days later in Acts 2:1, on the day of Pentecost.

While chapter 2 does not mention the actual work of Spirit baptism, this is what happened on that occasion. This is obvious from the second passage as Peter defends his actions of going to the home of Cornelius, a Gentile, and preaching the gospel to them in Acts 11:15-16: *And as I began to speak, the Holy Spirit fell on them, even as on us at the beginning. And I remembered the word of the Lord, how he said, John indeed baptized with water; but ye shall be baptized in the Holy Spirit.*

In verse 15, Peter states that *the Holy Spirit fell on them*, meaning the Gentiles, even as on us, meaning the Apostles, at the beginning. In verse 16, Peter quoted Acts 1:5 where Yeshua spoke of the Spirit's ministry of baptism and pointed out that Yeshua's prophecy was fulfilled when the Holy Spirit came upon the apostles at the beginning, meaning the day of Pentecost.

This ministry of the Spirit was new, it had never happened before it began in Acts 2:1-4 on the Feast of Weeks. This is the way a believer enters the Body of the Messiah according to I Corinthians 12:13: *For in one Spirit were we all baptized into one body, whether Jews or Greeks, whether bond or free; and were all made to drink of one Spirit.*

So the means by which one enters the Body is by means of Spirit baptism.

Furthermore, the Body of the Messiah is the Church according to Colossians 1:18: *And he is the head of the body, the church: who is the beginning,*

the firstborn from the dead; that in all things he might have the preeminence.

Since the Church is the Body of the Messiah and the means of entering this Body is by means of Spirit baptism, this is why the Church was born with the ministry of Spirit baptism. Apart from Spirit baptism, the Church cannot and does not exist. And since Spirit baptism began in Acts 2:1-4, that is also when the Church began.

It is a fallacy, as some people teach, that the Church began with Adam or Abraham or that the Church was already in existence in the Old Testament. This is far from the truth. If one clearly understands the relationship of Spirit baptism to the Church, then one can clearly understand when the Church was born. The Church was born when Spirit baptism began. Spirit baptism only began as of Acts 2:1-4. Therefore, the birth of the Church is the fulfillment of the Feast of Pentecost.

B. The Two Loaves Concept

In the discussion of the feast in the Old Testament, it was pointed out that two loaves were to be offered on a single sheet. The Feast of Pentecost was fulfilled by the birthday of the Church, which is composed of both Jewish and Gentile believers united into one Body. One loaf represents the Jews, one loaf represents the Gentiles, and the single sheet represents the fact that Jewish and Gentile believers are united into one Body.

This is brought out clearly by Paul in Ephesians 2:11-16: *Wherefore remember, that once ye, the Gentiles in the flesh, who are called Uncircumcision by that which is called Circumcision, in the flesh, made by hands; that ye were at that time separate from Christ, alienated from the commonwealth of Israel, and strangers from the covenants of the promise, having no hope and without God in the world. But now in Christ Jesus ye that once were far off are made nigh in the blood of Christ. For he is our peace, who made both one, and broke down the middle wall of partition, having abolished in the flesh the enmity, even the law of commandments contained in ordinances; that he might create in himself of the two one new man, so making peace; and might reconcile them both in one body unto God through the cross, having slain the enmity thereby.*

This is stated again in Ephesians 3:5-6: *which in other generations was not made known unto the sons of men, as it has now been revealed unto his holy apostles and prophets in the Spirit; to wit, that the Gentiles are fellow-heirs, and fellow-members of the body, and fellow-partakers of the promise in Christ Jesus through the gospel.*

Thus the two loaves on the single sheet are fulfilled by the fact that there are Jewish and Gentile believers who have been united into one Body.

Another thing learned from the Old Testament observance of this feast is that these loaves were to be leavened (Lev. 23:17). Leaven, when used symbolically in Scripture, is a symbol of sin. It is Jewish and Gentile sinners who are saved by grace through faith and are

brought into this one Body, the Church.

Furthermore, these loaves were to be made of wheat. Wheat and harvest are common symbols of evangelism and salvation in the Gospels. In Matthew 3:11-12, the concepts of wheat and harvest are also connected with the baptism of the Holy Spirit, which began on the Feast of Pentecost, thereby bringing the Church into existence: *I indeed baptize you in water unto repentance: but he that comes after me is mightier than I, whose shoes I am not worthy to bear: he shall baptize you in the Holy Spirit and in fire: whose fan is in his hand, and he will thoroughly cleanse his threshing-floor; and he will gather his wheat into the garner, but the chaff he will burn up with unquenchable fire.*

These symbols of wheat, evangelism, and salvation are found again in Matthew 13:24-30: *Another parable set he before them, saying, The kingdom of heaven is like unto a man that sowed good seed in his field: but while men slept, his enemy came and sowed tares also among the wheat, and went away. But when the blade sprang up and brought forth fruit, then appeared the tares also. And the servants of the householder came and said unto him, Sir, did you not sow good seed in your field? whence then has it tares? And he said unto them, An enemy has done this. And the servants say unto him, Will you then that we go and gather them up? But he said, Nay; lest haply while ye gather up the tares, ye root up the wheat with them. Let both grow together until the harvest: and in the time of the harvest I will say to the reapers, Gather up first the tares, and bind them in bundles to burn them; but gather the wheat into my barn.*

This parable is an elaboration of the Matthew 3:11-12 passage. Here, wheat and harvest are again used as a symbol of evangelism and salvation that results in being unified into the Body of the Messiah, born on the Feast of Pentecost.

Another example where this same type of figure is used is John 4:35-38: *Say not ye, There are yet four months, and then comes the harvest? behold, I say unto you, Lift up your eyes, and look on the fields, that they are white already unto harvest. He that reaps receives wages, and gathers fruit unto life eternal; that he that sows and he that reaps may rejoice together. For herein is the saying true, One sows, and another reaps. I sent you to reap that whereon ye have not labored: others have labored, and ye are entered into their labor.*

Here again, wheat and harvest are used as a picture of evangelism and salvation. By means of evangelism, people come to a saving knowledge of Jesus and, when they exercise faith, they are baptized by the Holy Spirit into the Body of the Messiah.

C. The First-Fruits Concept

The first-fruits concept in the Old Testament observance of the Feast of Pentecost was the first-fruits of the wheat and barley harvest. The first-fruits concept is fulfilled by the first believers who were Jewish believers. Acts 2:41-42 states: *They then that received his word were baptized: and there were added unto them in that day about three thousand souls. And they*

continued steadfastly in the apostles' teaching and fellowship, in the breaking of bread and the prayers.

The first several thousands of believers were Jewish, since Gentile believers do not come into the picture until Acts 10. In a very special way, these Jewish believers were the first-fruits fulfillment of the Feast of Pentecost.

This is brought out again in James 1:18. According to verse 1 of this chapter, James wrote his epistle specifically to Jewish believers: *to the twelve tribes which are of the Dispersion*. The term the Dispersion is a technical term describing Jews living outside the Land. The people to whom James wrote were Jewish believers living outside the Land. James was not writing to the Church in general, but to Jewish believers in particular. This makes sense since he was the head of the Jerusalem Church. Then James stated in verse 18: *Of his own will he brought us forth by the word of truth, that we should be a kind of first-fruits of his creatures.*

These Jewish believers are a kind of first-fruits of his creatures. So the first-fruits aspect of the Feast of Pentecost was fulfilled by the Jewish believers who were the first believers of this new entity born on this occasion: the Church.

CONCLUSION

The Feast of Weeks completes the first cycle of the feasts that come close together, within fifty-one days of each other. First, the Feast of Passover was fulfilled by the death of the Messiah. Secondly, the Feast of Unleavened Bread was fulfilled by the sinlessness of His blood sacrifice and blood offering. Thirdly, the Feast of First-fruits was fulfilled by the Resurrection of the Messiah. And fourthly, the Feast of Pentecost or Feast of Weeks was fulfilled by the birthday of the Church.

This ends the first cycle of feasts and four months will pass before the second cycle starts. The first cycle of feasts was fulfilled in the program of the First Coming of the Messiah. The last three festivals, the second cycle, will be fulfilled only in the program of His Second Coming. Between the two cycles, there are four months symbolizing the present Church Age that separates the fulfillment of the two cycles of feasts.✧

NOTES

**IF YOU ENJOYED THIS
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RECOMMENDS:**

*MBS062, 114, 115, 116, 118,
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