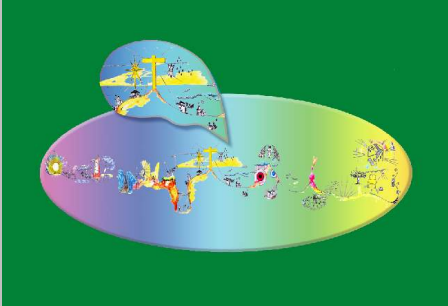


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## Eternal Fellowship News Bulletin

We believe in one GOD, in three persons; FATHER, SON and HOLY SPIRIT. We regard the Bible (both Hebrew Bible and New Testaments) as the only infallible authoritative WORD OF GOD.

HULDAH MINISTRY aims to return to the Word Of God, founded on Hebrew background and to interpret it from Hebraic perspective, acknowledging that Jesus is a Jew and the Jewish-ness of His teaching as a continuation from the Hebrew Bible. The Ministry also aims to put His teaching into practice, to have a closer relationship with the Lord, Jesus Christ, and to regularly have a Christian fellowship so that this-worldly kingdom of God will materialise in the midst of the followers of Jesus here and now, as well as earnestly seeking Christ's Return to establish the otherworldly Kingdom of God on earth.

*All activities are free of charge and no obligation whatever. Just enjoy our fellowship!*

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HULDAH MINISTRY

# LETTER TO THE BROTHERS AND SISTERS IN CHRIST

【 PENTECOST, "SHAVUOT"】

*After his suffering, he showed himself to these men and gave many convincing proofs that he was alive. He appeared to them over a period of forty days 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 baptised with water, but in a few days you will be baptised with the Holy Spirit." So when they met together, they 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 witness in Jerusalem, and in all Judea and Samaria, and to the ends of the earth." ...*

*When the day of Pentecost came, they were all together in one place. 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. ...*

*Peter replied, "Repent and be baptised, 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 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 baptised, and about three thousand were added to their number that day.*

ACTS 1:3—2:41.

After the ascension of the Lord Jesus Christ, the birth of the church, the flock of Christ took place on the second of the three Jewish pilgrim festivals, "**Shavuot** ('*Pentecost*', signifying the fiftieth day from the waving of the sheaf (omer), i.e., the fiftieth day from the '**Feast of First Fruits**')."<sup>2</sup> Jews and Gentiles, two separate groups of people joined together in Christ and became the church as one new entity. Paul comprehended this epoch-making, great event from a spiritual viewpoint as indicated in the following: '*Therefore, remember that formerly you who are Gentiles by birth and called "uncircumcised" by those who call themselves "the circumcision" (that done in the body by the hands of men) –remember that at that time you were separate from Christ, excluded from citizenship in Israel and foreigners to the covenants of the promise, without hope and without God in the world. But now in Christ Jesus you who once were far away have been brought near thorough the blood of Christ. For he himself is our peace, who has made the two one and has destroyed the barrier, the dividing wall of history, by abolishing in his flesh the law with its commandments and regulations. His purpose was to create in himself one new man out of the two, thus making peace, and in this one body to reconcile both of them to God through the cross, by which he put to death their hostility. He came and preached peace to you who were far away and peace to those who were near. For through him we both have access to the Father by one Spirit.'* (Eph.2:11-18).

This very unique unity promised to come about through the work of the Holy Spirit and its meaning were all pictured and foreshadowed in the feasts of Israel, just as all great events related to Christ such as Crucifixion, Resurrection, and Redemption, Re-gathering, and Restoration of the Jews into Christ's Kingdom were also foreshadowed in them. Hence understanding the rich symbolism behind the Hebrew feasts would greatly help deepen our understanding of God's plans for man's salvation through Christ. In Scripture, the Hebrew feasts are described as the '**appointed feasts of the LORD**', and also as the '**sacred assemblies**'. Among many scholars who have studied these feasts, I have found Bruce Scott's exploration to be particularly helpful. Thus, my examination of the Feast of Pentecost, "**Shavuot**" in this letter will be largely based on the information presented in "*The Feasts of Israel*" (The Friends of Israel Gospel Ministry, Inc.).

On the day of Pentecost, devout Jews out of '**every nation under heaven**' were gathered in Jerusalem because it was the Shavuot week, a time to celebrate their holy convocation according to Moses' law. The sudden God-promised incident of a sound from heaven like a rushing mighty wind and of the appearance of tongue-like fire upon Christ's followers is sure to have caught the attention of many God-fearing Jews who were in the vicinity of the place where Christ's followers had gathered together. They witnessed how believers in Christ were abruptly given the ability to speak out the gospel in languages which were utterly unfamiliar to the believers themselves, but familiar to the Jews that had gathered from all over the world! Above all, it was a very significant happening, much more than a simply astonishing event, especially for these devout Jewish pilgrims because according to Jewish tradition, God gave the Torah to Moses at Mt. Sinai on the sixth day of the third month 'Sivan,' i.e., on the traditional day on which "**Shavuot**" is observed. According to rabbinical calculations, having left Egypt on the fifteenth day of the first month 'Abib (or Nisan),' the Israelites arrived at Mt. Sinai on the first day of the third month 'Sivan' and then on the sixth day of the month the law was given. More than that, the tradition believes that God gave the Torah by speaking in all the languages of the world (seventy languages). However, it was only after the second century C.E., that the giving of the Torah was interpreted to be linked to the Feast of the Pentecost.

If the law-observing devout Jews had believed such tradition at that time, the impact of the event upon them would have been tremendous, beyond imagination. Indeed, it caught their eyes and ears, and the result was that three thousand souls were led to salvation on that single day. They were baptised and added to the flock of Christ, the church. The word '**church**' means '**called out ones**' beyond generations, i.e., the people themselves according to Acts 2:39 '*The promise is for you and your children and for all who are far off –for all whom the Lord our*

*God will call.* All those who have experienced a spiritual regeneration by confessing their faith in Christ are called to be part of the church so as to be united in one in Him as the *'body of Christ'*, whose head is Christ. Paul describes this spiritual union in the following way: *'The body is a unit, though it is made up of many parts; and though all its parts are many, they form one body. So it is with Christ. For we were all baptised by one Spirit into one body –whether Jews or Greeks, slave or free –and we were all given the one Spirit to drink.'* (1Co.12:12-13).

Interestingly, the story of Ruth is supposed to be read in the synagogue on "**Shavuot**". The story depicts God's foremost invitation to both Jews and Gentiles to be one entity through the Messiah whose ancestress is Ruth, a Moabite but not a Jew. While this interpretation is Christological, the readings of the Book of Ruth in the synagogue is based on the fact that the story of Ruth took place around harvest time and that it presents a good example of the willingness of abiding in the Torah. Along with the Book of Ruth, the entire book of Psalms as a memory of King David and Exodus 19 and 20 which is the story of the giving of the Torah are supposed to be read in the synagogue on the day.

"**Shavuot**" literally means *'weeks'* and it is described in Scripture by several names; *the 'Feast of Weeks', the 'Feast of Harvest', the 'day of firstfruits' and in the New Testament 'Pentecost' which literally means 'fiftieth.'* This feast was inaugurated at the beginning of the *'wheat'* harvest and a portion of the new harvest, the *'firstfruits'* was expected to be dedicated to God in recognition of His provision. Significantly this feast "**Shavuot**" is closely and rather inextricably related to the preceding *'Feast of First Fruits'*. While "**Shavuot**" presents the first fruits of the wheat harvest by waving the two loaves, and this feast is designated as a day of the *'sacred assemblies,'* the *'Feast of First Fruits'* presents the first fruits of the barley harvest by waving a sheaf of barley. The number of days between the two feasts is described as fifty. Accordingly, "**Shavuot**" is not given a fixed date of observance in Scripture and it only starts being counted after the first waving of the omer has been accomplished. In other words as they are bound together, both feasts are taken into account collectively, whose common theme is *'firstfruits'*.

Some features of the relationship between the two feasts well foreshadow the relationship between Christ as the first fruit and His followers as the first fruits in the New Testament. It was indeed on Sunday, the seventeenth day of Abib when the waving of the sheaf of the first fruit of the barley harvest should be brought before the Lord that Jesus Christ was raised from the dead. Christ's resurrection as the first fruit denoted the assurance of the subsequent resurrection of all believers. But for the first, the second would not take place because the believers' resurrection inextricably depends on Christ's as the first fruit, and it has undoubtedly inaugurated God's new creation towards the consummation of His followers' resurrection.

Significantly, "**Shavuot**" is uniquely different from the two other pilgrim festivals; the Feast of Passover and the Feast of Tabernacles in respect of the fact that while the other two feasts look back to past historical events, "**Shavuot**" is not related to a particular historical event but has some new significance as an agricultural feast in the promised land. The two agricultural feasts; the *'Feast of First Fruits'* and "**Shavuot**" were the feasts given to the Israelites as a prescription in advance of entering the promised land so that they should offer the first and best of the year's produce of the barley crop and of the two loaves of fine wheat flour baked with leaven, respectively. Concerning the sheaf of the first barley crop, **the tribe of Judah** is said to have been known for producing one of high quality and it was usually taken from the area near Jerusalem Temple. The fact that the reaping of the barley first fruits was so important that it could be done even on the Sabbath, and also that the sheaf was regarded as a *'meal offering'* which was to be made unleavened with oil and frankincense, to be waved during the early daylight hours, is worth being noted because all these factors involved in the omer coincide with that of Christ and His resurrection, that is, a sinless Jesus Christ, of the tribe of Judah was raised from the dead, very

early in the morning. Christ's resurrection was the most important epoch-making event since God's creation, at which point the new era of God's creation represented by the "**Eighth Day**" started.

David Pawson writes about this wonderful day: 'Giving Jesus a new body was God's first act of creation since he finished work on our present universe. Since then he had done many other things, including the maintenance of what he had made. But he had not done any more creating. His "seventh day" of rest lasted through all the centuries covered by our Old Testament. The word "new" hardly ever occurs in the Old Testament. The only text that springs readily to mind is: "there is nothing new under the sun". Yet the New Testament is full of the word. What has caused the change? God has gone back to work! He has made a start on his new creation. His intention is to "make all things new". The second week of creation has begun. We are living in the eighth day of creation. The very first part of the old creation to be made new was the body of Jesus, his Son. As his old body disappeared, so the whole heaven and earth will one day "pass away". Jesus is the "firstborn over all creation" and the "firstborn from among the dead" So his resurrection was only the beginning of a work of God that will change the entire universe.' ('The Resurrection' A Sovereign World International Booklet p50.)

The offering of the first fruits symbolised the consecration of the entire harvest to God and accordingly, until it was offered before the Lord, the people were not permitted to partake of it. Likewise, if Christ would not have been resurrected from the dead, we would have been left utterly hopeless to partake of the same resurrection as Christ's.

These two divinely and inextricably bound feasts under the theme of "**firstfruits**" give insight into the possibility that the resurrection of the believers might happen gradually in different batches. It may first be triggered by Christ's own resurrection, to be followed shortly by that of the many Jewish Old Testament-time holy people whose fascinating resurrection accounts are recorded in Matthew 27, and also by the two Jewish witnesses who are to appear during the time of tribulation at Jerusalem in the end of the age, and finally by the resurrection of Christ's followers. The train of all these resurrections might be regarded as an inseparable event of "**firstfruits**" as the close relationship between the two feasts involving the waving of the omer out of the barley harvest and the wheat harvest suggests.

During the daylight hours of Pentecost, the two loaves were presented to God but not offered with oil and frankincense unlike most other meal offerings because they were baked with leaven. Also unlike the omer of the first barley harvest, the two loaves were not thrown into the fire. The only meal offerings that did not have oil and frankincense were these associated with sin, i.e., sin offerings, in which '**oil**' symbolised the Holy Spirit and '**frankincense**' symbolised prayer. The fact that leavened loaves were offered before the Lord especially on the day of "**Shavuot**" unlike most other meal offerings gives significant insight into the nature of the church. This depicts that unlike Christ Himself, the church, though dedicated to the Lord, has been presented with leaven, i.e., with the presence of sin. This means that the church remains imperfect in the present age. After the birth of the church on Pentecost the present church age would last until the Lord's Second Coming. It would be only at that time that the church, the flock of Christ will completely be purified. On the Jewish calendar, the Lord's Second Coming is typified by a train of autumn feasts; the Feast of Trumpets (**Rosh Hashanah**), the Day of Atonement (**Yom Kippur**), and the Feast of Tabernacles (**Sukkot**). The time between Pentecost and "**Rosh Hashanah**" is considerably long, extending almost four months. This implies that this long period time is the very present church age.