

Shavuot – A Covenant of Fire and Spirit

by Elder Gordon Hayes
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Introduction:

Shalom chaverim! We now gather to remember and celebrate **Shavuot** – the Feast of Weeks. This appointed time (מוֹעֵד, *mo'ed*) connects two monumental events in our faith journey: the giving of the Torah at Mount Sinai and, for those of us who follow Yeshua as Messiah, the giving of the Ruach HaQodesh (Set-Apart Spirit) in Jerusalem.

Let us explore **three key perspectives**:

1. **The Biblical Foundation**
2. **The Jewish Understanding**
3. **The Messianic Fulfillment**

Then let us conclude with what this means for us today.

1. The Biblical Foundation of Shavuot

A. Torah Commandment (Leviticus 23:15-21)

NASB95

“You shall also count for yourselves from the day after the sabbath, from the day when you brought in the sheaf of the wave offering; there shall be seven complete sabbaths. You shall count fifty days to the day after the seventh sabbath; then you shall present a new grain offering to the LORD.” (Lev. 23:15–16)

This period of counting—the **Omer**—links the **Exodus (Passover)** to the **Sinai covenant**. It is a journey from **freedom from slavery** to **freedom to serve** Elohim through His commandments.

B. WLC – Exodus 19:18

וְהָרֹאשׁוֹן מִן־הָהָרָה כָּל־הָהָרָה בָּאֵשׁ

“Now Mount Sinai was all in smoke because YAH descended upon it in fire...” (Exod. 19:18, NASB95)

Sinai was a moment of **divine revelation** – a **covenant sealed with fire**, trembling, and the **spoken words of Elohim**. The people heard the *Devarim*, the Words, and responded in awe.

2. Jewish Understanding of Shavuot (Expanded)

In the Jewish tradition, **Shavuot** is much more than an agricultural holiday marking the wheat harvest—it is understood as **Z'man Matan Torateinu**, the **Season of the Giving of Our Torah**.

While the Torah does not give an explicit date for the giving of the Torah, **Jewish tradition carefully calculates the timing** from the Exodus to Sinai. Let's walk through it:

A. Timing from Exodus to Sinai

In **Exodus 19:1**, we read:

בַּחֹדֶשׁ הַשְּׁלִישִׁי לְצֵאת בְּנֵי־יִשְׂרָאֵל מֵאֶרֶץ מִצְרַיִם בְּיוֹם הַזֶּה בָּאוּ מִדְבַּר סִינַי

“In the third month after the sons of Israel had gone out of the land of Egypt, on that very day they came into the wilderness of Sinai.” (Exod. 19:1, NASB95)

This verse says that **on the very day** (בְּיוֹם הַזֶּה) in the **third month**, they arrived at Mount Sinai. The phrase “on that very day” has been interpreted by the Sages (e.g., Mekhilta de-Rabbi Ishmael) as pointing to the **first day of the third month, Sivan 1**.

If Israel left Egypt on **Nisan 15** (the first night of Passover) and then counted 49 days (about 1 and a half months)—the **seven full weeks** of the Omer—they would arrive at **the 50th day**, which is **Shavuot**. This is how Jewish tradition places **Matan Torah**, the giving of the Torah, on the **sixth of Sivan**, corresponding to **Shavuot**.

Thus, **Shavuot becomes the spiritual culmination of the Exodus**—not just freedom from slavery, but freedom to **enter into covenant** with God and live by His commandments.

Date (Hebrew)	Event
Nisan 15	Israel starts their journey from Egypt to Canaan.
Nisan 18	Israel crosses Yom Suph, thus leaving Egyptian territory.
Sivan 1	Israel arrives at Mount Sinai
Sivan 2	Moshe tells the people God's words. Israel responds the first time with, “All that the LORD has spoken we will do!” Ex. 19:7, 8
Sivan 3	Moshe reports people's answer to God
Sivan 4–6	People sanctify themselves
Sivan 6	God gives the Ten Commandments
Sivan 7	Covenant confirmed; Moshe ascends for tablets. Israel responds a second time, accepting the terms of the covenant (The Ten Words) by saying, “All

the words which the LORD has spoken we will do!” Moshe ascends Har Sinai.

Tammuz 17	Moshe comes down the mountain and sees the Golden Calf. He breaks the stones.
Elul 1	Moshe goes back up the mountain. (traditionally accepted date)
Tishri 10	Moshe comes down from the mountain the second time. Moshe reads the words of the covenant to Israel. Israel responds with, “All that Yah says we will do, and we will obey.”

Interesting note: If we count back six months from Tishri 10, we come to Nisan 10, the day the lambs for Pesach were to be selected.

B. Sinai and the Akedah – A Covenant Connection

Jewish tradition also draws a deep **midrashic connection** between **Mount Sinai** and **Mount Moriah**, the place where Abraham offered up Isaac (Genesis 22).

It is commonly accepted in Jewish interpretation that the **Akedah (Binding of Isaac)** occurred on what would later be the **Temple Mount in Jerusalem**, known as **Mount Moriah**:

וַיֹּאמֶר קַח-נָא אֶת-בְּנֶךְךָ אֶת-יִחִידְךָ אֲשֶׁר-אַהֲבָה אֶת-יִצְחָק וְלֵךְ-לָךְ אֶל-אֶרֶץ הַמֹּרְיָה

“Take now your son, your only son, whom you love, Isaac, and go to the land of Moriah...”
(Gen. 22:2, NASB95)

The **Akedah** is a foundational moment in Jewish theology. It is seen as the **ultimate act of covenantal obedience** by Abraham, and it becomes a model for later generations.

How does this relate to **Sinai**?

- At Mount Moriah, **one man**, Abraham, obeyed the voice of God and was willing to offer what was most precious to him.
- At Mount Sinai, an entire **nation** heard the voice of God and pledged to obey:

כָּל אֲשֶׁר-דִּבֶּר יְהוָה נַעֲשֶׂה

“All that the LORD has spoken we will do.” (Exod. 19:8, NASB95)

Both events are **covenantal mountaintop experiences**, marked by:

- **Divine testing and revelation**
- **A call to faith and obedience**
- **Sacrifice and surrender**

The **ram caught in the thicket** (Gen. 22:13) becomes a picture of **God's provision** in covenant. At Sinai, the people are offered a **covenant of obedience** and protection—a national identity shaped by Torah.

Jewish commentaries such as Midrash Tanchuma and Pirkei deRabbi Eliezer even say that the **ashes of Isaac** were seen as lying upon the altar, even though he wasn't physically offered. In this way, **Isaac's obedience and Abraham's faithfulness became merit** for the descendants of Israel receiving the Torah at Sinai.

In **Messianic understanding**, this pattern is fulfilled in Yeshua—not as a divine figure, but as a faithful **ben Avraham**, a son of Abraham, who lived out **total obedience**, even to death, and through whom we receive the **renewed covenant**.

C. Ruth and the Covenant of Inclusion

The reading of **Megillat Ruth (Book of Ruth)** on Shavuot is another connection in Jewish tradition that ties the **Sinai covenant** to **covenantal loyalty** and **inclusion of the nations**.

Ruth, a Moabite woman, says to Naomi:

כִּי אֶל־אֱשׁוּר תֵּלְכִי אֵלֶיךָ ... עַמִּי וְאֱלֹהֵיךָ אֶלֶּהִי

"For where you go, I will go... Your people shall be my people, and your God, my God." (Ruth 1:16, NASB95)

This echoes the Sinai commitment: *"We will do."* Ruth voluntarily enters into the covenant people of Israel, just as the Israelites did at Sinai. For Messianic believers, this speaks prophetically of the **grafting in of the nations** (Romans 11), not into a new religion, but into **Israel's covenant** with the God of Abraham.

This goes along with the statements in Torah that those who align themselves to the Torah will become as the native born.

D. Interesting Thoughts on Shavuoth from Jewish Sources

According to Jewish thought, there are two breaths breathed into mankind: 1) Nəshamah Chayim (Breath of Life or Divine Breath) which is unique to mankind (chayim is in a plural of majesty), and 2) Nefesh Chai (Breath of Life or our mortal being) which is shared with the animals. Please

allow me some room to midrash for a brief moment. One Hebrew word for ‘please’ is ‘Na’. The word for hear and obey is shema. So, we could say Na shema is we were asking a man to please hear and obey. BUT, without the neshamah we cannot na shema.

In Exodus 20:18 we read the words “V V'khol ha'am ro'im et ha-qolot v'et ha-lappidim v'et qol ha-shofar v'et ha-har ashen; vayar ha'am vayanu'u vaya'amdu me'rachok.” Then all the people saw specifically the voices and specifically the fiery torches and the voice of the shofar and the smoking mountain; and the people saw, and they trembled and stood at a distance.” Abraham saw Yah this way in Genesis 15:17. Moshe saw Yah this way in the burning bush. (Exodus 3) The people at Sinai saw Yah as burning torches. Yah's spirit fell upon those gathered in the upper room on Shavuot almost 1500 years later as “tongues of fire”. (Acts 2) Dare I say that they appeared as lappidim, burning torches? In each of these instances, the voice or words of Yah were also heard. In each of these instances Yah appeared in a mighty wind.

3. Messianic Fulfillment – The Giving of the Ruach in a Greater Measure

Acts 2:1–4 (NASB95)

“When the day of Shavuoth had come, they were all together in one place. And suddenly there came from heaven a noise like a violent rushing wind... and there appeared to them tongues as of fire... and they were all filled with the ruach haqodesh and began to speak with other tongues...”

This event happened on **Shavuot** – 50 days (about 1 and a half months) after Yeshua's resurrection. The **fire and voice** of Sinai now became the **fire and utterance** of the spirit of the Holy One. It's not a replacement, but an **empowerment**—the same Torah written on **hearts** (Jeremiah 31:33), not just tablets.

Acts 2 became the reversal of what happened at Bavel (Genesis 11)

Acts 2 was also a duplication of the events at Har Sinai, Matan HaTorah in that there was a mixed multitude of people at both events.

The sages say that when Moshiach comes, he will reverse the confounding of the languages at Bavel. They point to Tzəphanyah 3:9 where it is prophesied that Yah shall purify the lips of the people. I propose that this Jewish midrash and this prophecy were both fulfilled on the Shavuoth recorded in Acts 2.

Unlike the response of the people at Har Sinai which brought fear, the events some 1500 years later brought boldness.

At Sinai, 3000 people perished. At Shavuot in Acts 2, 3000 were restored to Yah.

Jeremiah 31:33 (WLC)

כִּי־זֹאת הַבְּרִית אֲשֶׁר אֶכְרֹת אֶת־בֵּית יִשְׂרָאֵל... נָתַתִּי אֶת־תּוֹרָתִי בְּקֶרֶבָם וְעַל־לִבָּם אֶכְתָּבָנָהּ

“But this is the covenant which I will make with the house of Israel... I will put My law within them and on their heart I will write it...” (Jer. 31:33, NASB95)

This isn’t a new religion. It’s a **renewal of the covenant**—just as at Sinai, but now through **Yeshua’s redemptive work**, the Spirit empowers obedience and understanding.

4. Relevance for Us Today

A. Our Call to Covenant Faithfulness

We are not just remembering history; we are being reminded of our **covenant identity**. Just as Israel said, “*Na’aseh v’nishma*” – “*We will do and we will hear*” (Exod. 24:7), we too must live with **obedience first**, then seek understanding.

B. A Renewed Heart and Mind

Yeshua, as the promised Prophet like Moshe (Deut. 18:15), brought the message of the Kingdom—not to abolish the Torah (Matt. 5:17), but to **fulfill and magnify it** in our lives. Through the **ruach haqodesh**, we now live out that Torah from the inside out.

C. A Global Harvest

Shavuot was also the **Feast of Firstfruits** of the wheat harvest (Exod. 34:22). In Acts 2, those gathered from **all nations** (Acts 2:5–11) heard the message in their own languages. This points to the **harvest of nations**—that through Israel and her Moshiach, the Torah and the Spirit go out to the world (Isaiah 2:3).

Conclusion: Fire on the Mountain, Fire in the Heart

On Mount Sinai, **Elohim wrote His covenant in stone** with fire. Har Moriah/Har Beit Mikdash on Shavuot, He wrote it **on hearts** through His Spirit.

We do not serve a **divided Elohim**, but the **One true Elohim**, יהוה, who speaks, acts, and redeems.

We believe Yeshua is His Messiah, the **faithful Son** who brings us into right standing and models perfect obedience.

As followers of Yeshua, Shavuot reminds us:

- We are part of a **covenant community** rooted in Torah.
- We are called to be **filled with the Ruach**, bearing the fruit of righteousness.
- We are commissioned to bring the message of truth to **the nations**, just as the disciples did.

Final Blessing

May this Shavuot be for us a rekindling of covenant fire.

May we receive the Torah anew—with joy.

And may the Ruach HaKodesh empower us to walk as Yeshua walked—faithfully, humbly, and full of love.

Chag Shavuot Sameach!