

# Shavuot & Spiritual Warfare

## A Two Part Message

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### Part 1: Shavuot

Once again we have arrived at *Shavuot*, the biblical Feast of Weeks that the Christian world calls Pentecost, so I would like to speak to you about both the feast and the Holy Spirit who came to earth in power one particular *Shavuot* many years ago.

*Shavuot* is probably the most theologically complex of all the feasts because it links together so much, and over two covenants. To understand it, let's begin with its appearance in the Mosaic Covenant, and so I don't have to continually give you chapters and verses, here are all the occasions of the Feast mentioned in the *Torah*:

Exodus 23:14-17, 19

Leviticus 23:9-22

Numbers 28:26

Deuteronomy 16:9-12

Deuteronomy 26:1-11

Each of the Scriptures has something important to say about *Shavuot*, but let's take Leviticus 23 as a jumping off point. It begins, not with *Shavuot*, but with Passover and Unleavened Bread, and that is very significant because it shows that *Shavuot* is not just a day, but the finality of an entire season that begins with the Israelites' release from Egyptian bondage, and culminates with a harvest that was to be celebrated when the Israelites came into their promised land.

Leviticus 23:15-16: *“And you shall count for yourselves from the day after the Sabbath, from the day that you brought the sheaf of the wave offering: seven Sabbaths shall be completed. Count fifty days to the day after the seventh Sabbath; then you shall offer a new grain offering to the LORD.”*

It is an understatement to say that it took more than 50 days for the Israelites to get from Egypt to their promised land, but God chose 50 days to represent that period of travel so that the Feast of *Shavuot* could be celebrated annually. It is also intriguing that within those 50 days, two of them are referred to as days of “firstfruits.” Now let's look at Leviticus 23, beginning with verse 4:

*“These are the feasts of the LORD, holy convocations which you shall proclaim at their appointed times. On the fourteenth day of the first month at twilight is the LORD's Passover. And on the fifteenth day of the same month is the Feast of Unleavened Bread to the LORD;”*

So far, we have Passover and the Feast of Unleavened Bread that are related to *Shavuot*. Let's continue with verse 10:

*“When you come into the land which I give to you, and reap its harvest, then you shall bring a sheaf of the firstfruits of your harvest to the priest. He shall wave the sheaf before the*

*LORD, to be accepted on your behalf; on the day after the Sabbath the priest shall wave it. And you shall offer on that day, when you wave the sheaf, a male lamb of the first year, without blemish, as a burnt offering to the LORD.”*

So to the Passover and Feast of Unleavened Bread, we have now added a prophecy of coming into the promised land and a harvest in the land, during which the first fruits of that harvest are said to belong to God. The Israelites were to commemorate that harvest by offering both the agricultural firstfruits and also a perfect male lamb. Remember that perfect lamb because it is important as we will soon see.

We are also told that this remembrance was not to be just on that one occasion but year after year, for in verse 14 we are commanded:

*“It shall be a statute forever throughout your generations in all your dwellings.”*

And now Scripture starts us counting days toward another Feast; beginning with verse 15 we read again:

*“And you shall count for yourselves from the day after the Sabbath, from the day that you brought the sheaf of the wave offering: seven Sabbaths shall be completed. Count fifty days to the day after the seventh Sabbath; then you shall offer a new grain offering to the LORD. You shall bring from your dwellings two wave loaves of two-tenths of an ephah. They shall be of fine flour; they shall be baked with leaven. They are the bikkurim [or firstfruits] to the LORD.”*

Here we encounter another Firstfruits offering 50 days (including seven Sabbaths) after the initial Firstfruits offering. The day of this latter offering is the day we call *Shavuot* which means “weeks,” and it is also referenced as a day of Firstfruits in Numbers 28:26. Notice that the 50-day count begins with a wave offering of a sheaf of grain (which is a raw product), and ends with an offering of baked bread (which is a finished product). It’s as though this season that begins with *Bikkurim* and ends with *Shavuot* represents progressive movement from an initial event to the fullness of a culminating event. I believe it prophetically represents the event of Yeshua’s resurrection culminating in the finished product of His sending us the Holy Spirit on *Shavuot*.

So now we have this second day commemorating Firstfruits, and Scripture says that on this day, in addition to the agricultural offering and other offerings, the Israelites were once again to sacrifice an unblemished lamb – this time not one lamb but seven; continuing in Leviticus 23, verse 18:

*“And you shall offer with the bread seven lambs of the first year, without blemish, one young bull, and two rams. They shall be as a burnt offering to the LORD, with their grain offering and their drink offerings, an offering made by fire for a sweet aroma to the LORD.”*

And as with the first occurrence of Firstfruits, this second day of Firstfruits must also be celebrated every year, for in verse 21 we read:

*“It shall be a statute forever in all your dwellings throughout your generations.”*

So now let's review:

1. We have Passover and the Feast of Unleavened Bread.
2. We have a prophecy of coming into the promised land.
3. We have a day of Firstfruits which we call *Yom HaBikurim*, where an unblemished lamb is offered to the Lord.
4. We then count 50 days (and seven Sabbaths) to a second day of Firstfruits called *Shavuot*, where not one, but seven unblemished lambs are offered to the Lord.

All of this was commanded during the time of Moses and, even today, the Jewish people celebrate it, absent the sacrifices. The fifty-day, seven Sabbath count is called “Counting the Omer.”

Now we take a long jump into the future, to the year and time of Yeshua's death, where we see the beginning of the New Covenant and the parallels and fulfillments of the history we have just recounted. Yeshua celebrated his last Passover in a most unpleasant way that year, for he was put to death before the Feast of Unleavened Bread even began. As always, Israelites sacrificed their unblemished lambs on Passover, but that particular year, Yeshua was one of those lambs. He was resurrected from the tomb on the first day of the week which was *Bikkurim*, the Day of Firstfruits, and so He could be said to be the firstfruit of the resurrection. He then walked the earth in his resurrected body for forty of the 50 days of the Omer count, and then left the earth to join His Father in Heaven. But before He left, He instructed His disciples to wait in Jerusalem for the “comforter,” whom we now know was the *Ruach Ha Kodesh* – the Holy Spirit. At the time, His disciples did not understand what Yeshua meant, but they were going to Jerusalem anyway to conduct their annual *Shavuot* sacrifices. They did not know that that year, on that day, they would be visited by the *Ruach HaKodesh*, beginning an era when He would dwell with (and in) all men who would receive Him, making mankind the Temple of His dwelling, and enabling the born-again common man with prophetic insight, supernatural counsel, spiritual gifts, authority over unclean spirits, and the power to prevail over sin.

Prayer has always been a characteristic of God's people. In the Mosaic Covenant, prayer for the common Israelite was more of a one-way conversation between man and God, where God heard men's expressions of worship and their praise and petitions, but He spoke back to men through only a few of them – prophets who were gifted with the Holy Spirit. All that changed in the New Covenant, with the coming of the Holy Spirit on the *Shavuot* following Yeshua's death. Now men could not only speak to God, but could hear God speaking back and, in that sense, all men acquired a measure of prophetic capability and unparalleled intimacy with God reminiscent of Jeremiah 31:31-34:

*"Behold, the days are coming, says the LORD, when I will make a new covenant with the house of Israel and with the house of Judah-- not according to the covenant that I made with their fathers in the day that I took them by the hand to lead them out of the land of Egypt, My covenant which they broke, though I was a husband to them, says the LORD. But this is the covenant that I will make with the house of Israel after those days, says the LORD: I will put My law in their minds, and write it on their hearts; and I will be their God, and they shall be My people."*

And here is the part I want to emphasize:

*"No more shall every man teach his neighbor, and every man his brother, saying, 'Know the LORD,' for they all shall know Me, from the least of them to the greatest of them, says the LORD..."*

## **Part 2: Spiritual Warfare**

Now that we have reviewed the historical, agricultural, and Holy Spirit background of *Shavuot*, let us examine a specific empowerment that the Holy Spirit brought us on the *Shavuot* when He first visited – the power and authority to conduct Spiritual Warfare.

You have probably heard the term “Spiritual Warfare,” but possibly not from a Messianic Jewish pulpit. The likely reason is that knowledge of it comes to us from Christian sources and, therefore, it is not culturally Jewish in the ways it is typically conducted. That notwithstanding, it is useful, powerful, and biblical, so I do not want you to be ignorant of it and its value.

In Mathew 13:39, in explaining his parable of the wheat and tares, Yeshua refers to the Devil as “the enemy.” And in 2 Corinthians 10:3-5, we are told that we are in the midst of a spiritual war against all things that is not of God:

*"For though we walk in the flesh, we do not war according to the flesh. For the weapons of our warfare are not carnal but mighty in God for pulling down strongholds, casting down arguments and every high thing that exalts itself against the knowledge of God, bringing every thought into captivity to the obedience of Messiah ..."*

To wage this spiritual war, we are given spiritual armor that is described in Ephesians 6:11-18, and we are told to put it on:

*"Put on the whole armor of God, that you may be able to stand against the wiles of the devil. For we do not wrestle against flesh and blood, but against principalities, against powers, against the rulers of the darkness of this age, against spiritual hosts of wickedness in the heavenly places. Therefore take up the whole armor of God, that you may be able to withstand in the evil day, and having done all, to stand. Stand therefore, having girded your waist with truth, having put on the breastplate of righteousness, and having shod your feet with the preparation of the gospel of peace; above all, taking the shield of faith with which you will be able to quench all the fiery darts of the wicked one. And take the helmet of salvation, and the sword of the Spirit, which is the word of God; praying always with all*

*prayer and supplication in the Spirit, being watchful to this end with all perseverance and supplication for all the saints-- ...”*

There are several aspects to Spiritual Warfare but, what is common to all of them is that they are our deliberate attack on Satan and his minions (demons whom he rules). This may be through prayers that petition God to act against Satan in our behalf, or through direct action on our part, using authority that God has given us to heal sicknesses in His name, and to command demonic spirits to leave and not return. This latter ministry is commonly known as “deliverance.”

Conducting Spiritual Warfare has certain facets to it, and requires certain preparation for it to be effective. Here is a short list:

- Repentance
- Prayer
- Resistance
- Protection
- Weapons
- Discernment

Most everyone knows about the “Great Commission” to preach the Gospel to the world, but the call to Spiritual Warfare that is part of it is often overlooked. Let’s therefore take a fresh look at what is commonly called the “Great Commission:”

Matthew 9:37 – 10:1 *“Then He said to His disciples, “The harvest truly is plentiful, but the laborers are few. Therefore pray the Lord of the harvest to send out laborers into His harvest. And when He had called His twelve disciples to Him, He gave them power over unclean spirits, to cast them out, and to heal all kinds of sickness and all kinds of disease.”*

Luke 9:1-6 *“Then He called His twelve disciples together and gave them power and authority over all demons, and to cure diseases. He sent them to preach the kingdom of God and to heal the sick. And He said to them, ‘Take nothing for the journey, neither staffs nor bag nor bread nor money; and do not have two tunics apiece. Whatever house you enter, stay there, and from there depart. And whoever will not receive you, when you go out of that city, shake off the very dust from your feet as a testimony against them.’ So they departed and went through the towns, preaching the gospel and healing everywhere.”*

You will notice that this authority was given to the disciples by Yeshua during His lifetime and before the Holy Spirit made his appearance on the *Shavuot* following His death. But Yeshua signaled that the authority would continue when He said (as recorded in John 14:12):

*“Most assuredly, I say to you, he who believes in Me, the works that I do he will do also; and greater works than these he will do, because I go to My Father.”*

And also:

Luke 24:49 *"Behold, I send the Promise of My Father upon you; but tarry in the city of Jerusalem until you are endued with power from on high."*

Acts 1:8 *"But you shall receive power when the Holy Spirit has come upon you; and you shall be witnesses to Me in Jerusalem, and in all Judea and Samaria, and to the end of the earth."*

It is impossible, today, to give you a complete course in Spiritual Warfare; the most I can do in the time we have together is touch on it, and recommend that you study more about it. Theoretically, the authority to command unclean spirits to leave those who are troubled by them is available to all believers. I do not, however, recommend that it be practiced by all believers because, when it is performed unwisely, damage can be done such as is spoken of in Matthew 12:43-45:

*"When an unclean spirit goes out of a man, he goes through dry places, seeking rest, and finds none. Then he says, 'I will return to my house from which I came.' And when he comes, he finds it empty, swept, and put in order. Then he goes and takes with him seven other spirits more wicked than himself, and they enter and dwell there; and the last state of that man is worse than the first..."*

But there is a kind of deliverance that is perfectly safe, and that anyone can perform on him or herself as needed:

James 4:7 *"Therefore submit to God. Resist the devil and he will flee from you."*

The reason this is safe is that the personal resistance that is needed to cast out (or away) a demon is sufficient to keep the demon from returning with others; the spiritual house is not left empty if it is filled with godly resistance. There is a huge argument among theologians as to whether born-again believers can have demons living within them or whether demons can just hang around on the outside causing trouble. To me the question is academic. If a demon is pestering a believer, the believer ought to exercise the resistance called for in James 4:7 to get rid of it.

One last thing. You will hear a lot about Spiritual Warfare and demonic deliverance that is not true, so remember this: We don't "bind" spirits, we don't "loose" spirits, and we don't have conversations with spirits. All of that comes from faulty biblical exegesis which I could explain if we had more time. All I can hope to accomplish today is to open a new horizon for you on this *Shavuot*-related subject, and give you a head start in learning. And please! Don't do what many do when they first encounter this subject – become demon-obsessed – seeing them lurking in every corner and being the source of all that goes wrong. Philippians 4:8 exhorts us:

*"Finally, brethren, whatever things are true, whatever things are noble, whatever things are just, whatever things are pure, whatever things are lovely, whatever things are of good report, if there is any virtue and if there is anything praiseworthy-- meditate on these things."*

God wants us to spend the bulk of our time, thoughts, and attention on Him – not on demons.

I pray that the Holy Spirit who has empowered us to conduct Spiritual Warfare in God's behalf will also guide us in it.