



## **Shavuot 2<sup>nd</sup> Day**

**May 30, 2020**

*Torah:* Exodus 20:1-17

*Haftarah:* Ezekiel 1:1-4; 13-14

*Ketuvim Shlichim:* Acts 2:1-13

*Shabbat shalom Mishpacha!* There is no *parasha* for today because the rabbis' interpretation of *Torah* has added a second day for *Shavuot* in the diaspora, the dispersion of Jews around the world. They are the ones who make our calendar which lays out our Scripture readings. So, our message title for today is *Shavuot 2<sup>nd</sup> Day*. But in Israel, *Shavuot*, Pentecost, is just one day and was yesterday, Friday, May 29<sup>th</sup>. ADONAI's *Torah* only speaks of one day: *16 Until the morrow after the seventh Shabbat you are to count fifty days, and then present a new grain offering to Adonai.* (Leviticus 23:16 TLV). But, since we want to be in sync with worldwide Judaism with regard to the weekly *parshiot*, the *Torah* portions, we follow along. But, our belief is in accord with Leviticus 23 which states that there is only one day for *Shavuot*, the day which we commemorated yesterday.

Many of our messages in recent months have contained some words about the unity of the body of Yeshua. And, many others in Yeshua's body are also proclaiming that message. But, regarding it, I will go out on a limb and say that unity is the most important thing needed in the body of Yeshua today and what is most lacking. There are many doctrinal differences between those of us in His body today, but it is my belief that it is great unity between Yeshua's followers which will hasten the salvation of all Israel and His return to earth. We will continue the theme of unity today, but before we consider it, it is important that we discuss and come to some understanding regarding our differences. The truth is, that over the last 2000 years, many different doctrines and many different ideas about Yeshua and interpretations of Scripture have developed. The result has been that we, Yeshua's body, are now seriously divided. Reportedly, there are currently 60 denominations in the United States with about 45,000 churches in their organizations. But overall, there are said to be some 300,000 churches in this nation, with most of them being independent and having their own doctrines. This is not necessarily a bad thing; it's just where we are. But, the problem, as I see it, is our being separated because of our doctrines. We are very blessed here in Thomasville to have Community Transformation and the unity of the local churches which are a part of that organization. But nationwide and worldwide, that's not the case.

What about doctrinal differences between the Church and the Messianic Jewish congregations which have formed since 1967? In addition to the differences between churches, we have some very obvious differences between the Church and Messianic Judaism. But here again, I don't believe that that's a bad thing. And I certainly don't believe that it was ADONAI's intention to create division when He supernaturally resurrected Messianic Judaism after 2000 years. But, we do have different understandings and all of us, from whichever vantage point we find ourselves, are passionate about the beliefs which we have come to understand. But, to understand each other, it is important for us to first understand our differences. We shouldn't be afraid of them. Because we have just celebrated

it, I will use the Festival of *Shavuot* as one example of how we may differ in our beliefs. But, I will also address the question of how those of us in the greater body of Yeshua can be in unity, even with our differences.

I'm certain that most of you already know that that some Messianic groups, and churches in general, celebrate the day of *Shavuot*, Pentecost, on different days. I say, some Messianic groups, because some of them celebrate it on the same day as churches. But, *Beit Shalom* Messianic Synagogue is not one of them. We're one of the different ones. We celebrated *Shavuot* yesterday and the Church will celebrate it tomorrow, Sunday. This year's celebration was very different for us. Usually, we spend all night at the synagogue with Bible study and movies and have a continuous reading of Scripture from right here where I'm sitting all through the night. The coronavirus has created some big changes for us. We missed being able to that this year.

Within the International Alliance of Messianic Congregations and Synagogues, of which *Beit Shalom* has been a member since 2002, there is a statement of faith to which each member congregation must adhere. And, we do. It's probably very similar to the statement of faith of most protestant churches. But, also within that framework, each congregation is free to develop their own theological approaches in other areas. Some of our IAMCS congregations celebrate *Shavuot* on Sunday every year and some celebrate it on whichever day the 50 day count falls each year. The blame for the fact that *Beit Shalom* uses this method of counting falls upon me. Many years ago, even before the year 2002, I was seeking an answer to this question. Based upon the evidence which I found, upon prayer and upon what I believed to be a confirmation from the Holy Spirit, this became the way in which our congregation understands this question. I realize that I could be wrong and the other way may be right. But, I am willing to be wrong until Yeshua returns and edifies us all. But right now, I believe that the most important thing about our different beliefs is that each of us must respect the other's position. As followers of Yeshua, we are already solidly together on the important belief that He is Messiah and that salvation is by faith through grace. The issues which we understand differently should not separate us.

How did the fathers arrive at these two different ways of counting down to *Shavuot*? To learn this, we have to go back to Yeshua's time. In His day and a generation before Him, there were three groups which held different opinions regarding when the *omer* count was to begin. Counting the *omer*, the sheaf of barley, is a symbolic way of counting the days until *Shavuot*. The barley harvest occurred shortly after Passover and the wheat harvest began some 40-50 days later. The question is, how are we supposed to count? <3> This is what *Torah* says; *11 He is to wave the omer* (the barley sheaf offering after Passover) *before Adonai, to be accepted for you. On the morrow after the Shabbat, the kohen* (the priest) *is to wave it."* *15 "Then you are to count from the morrow after the Shabbat, from the day that you brought the omer of the wave offering, seven complete Shabbatot* (Sabbaths). *16 Until the morrow after the seventh Shabbat you are to count fifty days, and then present a new grain offering to Adonai.* (Leviticus 23:11;15-16 TLV). The fiftieth day is *Shavuot* and the new grain offering was wheat. But, how we are to count is not clear at all. Our immediate question is: "after which *Shabbat*" do we begin counting? And, that was the big difference between the three groups in Israel. Each group chose a different Sabbath on which to base their count.

The three groups were the Sadducees, the Pharisees and the Essenes. The count which ends with Pentecost on a Sunday each year was promoted by a branch of the Sadducees called the Boethusians. They chose the day after the weekly Sabbath following Passover to

begin their count. The Pharisees chose two days after Passover, which was the day after the first Sabbath of the Feast of *Matzah*, the 16<sup>th</sup> day of Nisan. And the Essenes, the separatist group at *Kumran* by the Dead Sea, chose the day after the second weekly Sabbath following Passover. The Essenes' method has not survived, but the other two have. But, the Sadducees method didn't survive in Israel. After the Temple was destroyed, they basically disappeared. Today, as far as I know, all of Judaism follows the method of the Pharisees and as far as I know, all of the Church follows the method of the Sadducees. I am not promoting the method which we follow here at *Beit Shalom*, but merely pointing out the difference. The result of this difference is that most years, *Beit Shalom* and the Church, celebrate Pentecost on different days.

We will return to this line of thought in a few minutes, but because we are in this season, I would also like to consider the significance of the Day of *Shavuot*. Many times, Messianic Jewish belief systems and Church belief systems agree. And, I would say that we agree on many more things than we don't. Also, many of our differences are not threatening to either group and we can learn from each other.

Here is our view of *Shavuot*. To completely understand it, we have to first set the stage by going back to Mount Sinai. It was there after coming out of Egypt that ADONAI gave the *Torah* to Israel through Moses. Our reading of the Ten Commandments today is our connection with *Shavuot* at Mount Sinai and the events of the Day of *Shavuot* in the 1st century. To be completely clear, *Torah* does not specify when *Shavuot* occurred after coming out of Egypt, but the rabbis have counted and calculated it, believing that it was the day that the Ten Commandments were given.

In Acts 1, Yeshua gave His disciples instructions: *4 Now while staying with them, He commanded them not to leave Jerusalem, but to wait for what the Father promised—which, He said, “you heard from Me. 5 For John immersed with water, but you will be immersed in the Ruach ha-Kodesh not many days from now”* (Acts 1:4-5 TLV). And then, He ascended to the Father. They returned to Jerusalem to the upper room and gathered together regularly for prayer during the next ten days. Acts tells us that Yeshua had been with them for forty days. Ten more days would bring them to 50 days and *Shavuot*.

But, where were Yeshua's disciples gathered on the Day of *Shavuot*? I'm pretty sure that they were not in the upper room praying. As faithful Jews, Yeshua's disciples followed *Torah*. He had confirmed to them through His words in Matthew 5:18-19 that they were to follow *Torah*. He said that not one jot or tittle of *Torah* or the writings of the Prophets would pass away before heaven and earth pass away. Where, then, would faithful, *Torah* keeping Jews be on *Shavuot*? They would be in the Temple as they were commanded to be in Leviticus 23. The thing which most confuses the understanding of where they were is this verse: *1 When the day of Shavuot had come, they were all together in one place. 2 Suddenly there came from heaven a sound like a mighty rushing wind, and it filled the whole house where they were sitting* (Acts 2:1-2 TLV). Except, that “the house” wasn't the upper room. The place where they were gathered was the Holy Temple. It had a special name and was known to the Jews of that day as *Har HaBayit*, the Mountain of the House. Or for short, just *HaBayit*, “the House.” The Temple was the house where they were sitting which experienced the mighty wind. We believe that the events of *Shavuot* in the year 30 CE took place on the Temple mount and not in a house in the Essene quarter of Jerusalem. But, that's a minor point. The most important thing was what actually happened there on the Day of *Shavuot*.

Visualize the layout of the Temple Mount platform. Most worshippers would have entered by the double and triple gates, the Huldah gates, at the southern end of the mount. *Shimon Kefa*, Peter, and Yeshua's other disciples were gathered in the covered area along the eastern side of the mount which was called Solomon's Portico or Porch and was directly across from the Temple. On the day of *Shavuot*, there was a reading from the *Torah* and a reading from the Prophets. The traditional *haftarah* reading, the reading from the Prophets, which many believe goes all the way back to that time, is from Ezekiel chapter 1. Here is a portion of what was most likely read in the Temple that day. Ezekiel said: *4 I looked, and behold, a storm wind came from the north, a great cloud with flashing fire and brightness all around it, and something like a glowing alloy out of the fire* (Ezekiel 1:4 TLV). The reading continued and then this was heard: *13 As for the form of the living creatures, their appearance was like burning coals of fire, resembling torches moving between the living creatures. There was brightness to the fire, and lightning went forth from the fire. 14 The living creatures were running back and forth like flashes of lightning* (Ezekiel 1:13-14 TLV). The Jews in the Temple heard these words read and then heard a mighty rushing wind.

At the same time, Peter and the other disciples were across the Temple mount under Solomon's Portico, a sheltered area, but open on its side facing the Temple. *1 When the day of Shavuot had come, they were all together in one place. 2 Suddenly there came from heaven a sound like a mighty rushing wind, and it filled the whole house where they were sitting. 3 And tongues like fire spreading out appeared to them and settled on each one of them. 4 They were all filled with the Ruach ha-Kodesh and began to speak in other tongues as the Ruach enabled them to speak out* (Acts 1:1-4 TLV). When the Jews at the Temple heard the mighty wind and looked across and saw flames of fire above the people's heads, they rushed over. I would imagine that they were also a little frightened too. *5 Now Jewish people were staying in Jerusalem, devout men from every nation under heaven. 6 And when this sound came, the crowd gathered. They were bewildered, because each was hearing them speaking in his own language. 7 And they were amazed and astonished, saying, "All these who are speaking—aren't they Galileans? 8 How is it that we each hear our own birth language* (Acts 2:5-8 TLV)? *Chag HaShavuot*, the Festival of Weeks, was one of the *Regalim*, the three pilgrimage festivals, to which all adult male Jews were commanded to appear. The other two were *Chag HaMatzot*, the Festival of Unleavened Bread and *Chag HaSukkot*, the Festival of Tabernacles. For each of these, Jews came from all over the known world. According to estimates by Josephus, the Jewish historian regarding the year 70 CE, there may have been more than a million Jews in Jerusalem that year for Passover. This year, possibly the year 30, may not have been that large, but would probably have been hundreds of thousands. Jews who came from all over the known world realized that these *am ha'aretz*, these uneducated Galileans, were speaking in many of their languages.

*14 But Peter, standing with the Eleven, raised his voice and addressed them: "Fellow Judeans and all who are staying in Jerusalem, let this be known to you, and pay attention to my words. 15 These men are not drunk, as you suppose—for it's only the third hour of the day! 16 But this is what was spoken about through the prophet Joel: 17 'And it shall be in the last days,' says God, 'that I will pour out My Ruach on all flesh. Your sons and your daughters shall prophesy, your young men shall see visions, and your old men shall dream dreams"* (Acts 2:14-17 TLV). To make the connection with Mount Sinai, we can understand that *Torah*, that which Yeshua said would not pass away before heaven and earth pass away, was at that time written on stone; tablets of stone. But now, at this *Shavuot* thousands of years later, through the *Ruach Kodesh*, the Holy Spirit, the Comforter whom Yeshua sent, *Torah* was written on human hearts. That was a part of the fulfillment of Jeremiah's prophecy made

some 600 years earlier: 30 *“Behold, days are coming” —it is a declaration of Adonai— “when I will make a new covenant with the house of Israel and with the house of Judah— 31 not like the covenant I made with their fathers in the day I took them by the hand to bring them out of the land of Egypt. For they broke My covenant, though I was a husband to them.” it is a declaration of Adonai. 32 “But this is the covenant I will make with the house of Israel after those days” —it is a declaration of Adonai— “I will put My Torah within them. Yes, I will write it on their heart. I will be their God and they will be My people”* (Jeremiah 31:30-32 TLV). And, Yeshua’s disciples did continue to follow *Torah*, even the *Torah* of the Temple, until it was destroyed in the year 70 CE.

In Acts chapter 1, Yeshua said to the disciples with Him on the Mount of Olives: 8 *“But you will receive power when the Ruach ha-Kodesh has come upon you; and you will be My witnesses in Jerusalem, and through all Judah, and Samaria, and to the end of the earth”* (Acts 1:8 TLV). That power came upon Peter and the others and it has come upon us today. We have trusted in Yeshua and have been filled with His Spirit. But, we don’t seem to have the amount of power that the early disciples had. Why don’t we? What is our problem today? Why are blind eyes not being opened and the dead not being raised except in some places in Africa? The usual answer is lack of a child-like faith, but I believe that the major reason that this is not happening body-wide is our overall lack of unity. And, the basic cause of our disunity is our separation. He has called us to be one and we are far from one. Is it possible that our lack of unity is also keeping us from the revival which we see on the horizon and for which we are so anxious?

Our doctrines do divide us, but there is no way that we can deal with the doctrine problem. It’s too great. We can’t work it out. But, there is an answer. It is to be obedient to do what Yeshua asked of us. No, it was not to agree on doctrine. Nowhere in Scripture can we find words telling that we must all agree. Yeshua said: 20 *“I pray not on behalf of these only, but also for those who believe in Me through their message, 21 that they all may be one. Just as You, Father, are in Me and I am in You, so also may they be one in Us, so the world may believe that You sent Me”* (John 17:21 TLV). Yeshua wants His followers in every different denomination and every church and every different Messianic Jewish group to be one. It doesn’t matter that we don’t interpret the Scriptures in the same way. And, Yeshua also showed us why the world does not believe in Him. By saying, *“so the world may believe that You sent Me,”* His implication is, that if we were one, the world will believe that G-d sent Him. Here is what we as a body of Yeshua’s followers have most neglected, a commandment which He gave us. 34 *“I give you a new commandment, that you love one another. Just as I have loved you, so also you must love one another. 35 By this all will know that you are My disciples, if you have love for one another”* (John 13:34-35 TLV). I’m not saying that I’ve done this very well either. But, it’s time for it. That’s the answer. Love each other. And, it can start with us. We don’t have to agree on everything. We just have to love each other and accept each other as brothers and sisters in spite of our doctrine differences. And, when we as Yeshua’s body, do this in great enough numbers, the world will believe that ADONAI sent Yeshua and we will have revival.

I didn’t invent this line of thought. This idea didn’t come about through me. But, the fullness of time is now. We are living in the end of the Age. The time is now for Yeshua’s followers to come together in love, forgetting our differences. Speaking of the Holy Spirit, on *Shavuot* two thousand years ago, *Shimon Kefa* said: 16 *But this is what was spoken about through the prophet Joel: 17 ‘And it shall be in the last days,’ says God, ‘that I will pour out My Ruach on all flesh. Your sons and your daughters shall prophesy, your young men shall*

*see visions, and your old men shall dream dreams” (Acts 2:16-17 TLV). We need a refreshing from the Ruach. If the Holy Spirit rain which poured out on Yeshua’s followers at Shavuot was the former rain, we who are living at the end of the Age will receive an outpouring of the latter rain of the Holy Spirit. Hosea said: 3 So let us know, let us strive to know Adonai. Like dawn His going forth is certain. He will come to us like the rain, like the latter rain watering the earth (Hosea 6:3 TLV). Pray for the latter rain outpouring of the Holy Spirit to fall upon us! Shabbat shalom!*