



## Parasha Bemidbar

May 31, 2025

Torah: Numbers 1:1-4:20

**See message notes [beitshalom.us](http://beitshalom.us) for parasha-specific messages**

Haftarah: Hosea 2:1-22

Ketuvim Shlichim: Acts 2:1-41

**Specific to today's message**

### Disciples of Yeshua 29

*Shabbat shalom, Mishpacha!* Today is the 48<sup>th</sup> day of counting toward our celebration of *Shavuot*, the Festival of Weeks. The details of how to do this are described for us in Leviticus chapter 23, which is the section of the *Torah* containing a complete list of Adonai's *moedim*, His appointed festivals. ADONAI said these festivals are מִקְרָאֵי קֹדֶשׁ *miqra'eh kodesh*, holy convocations, times when all Israel is to appear before Him. The list begins with the שַׁבָּת *Shabbat*, a *moed* commanded to be observed everywhere every week. Every other festival, listed in order, was to take place annually, but exclusively in Jerusalem, and required both the Temple and the Levitical priesthood for its observance. We, the Messianic followers of Yeshua in the United States today, are not commanded by ADONAI to observe these other festivals, but we choose to commemorate them, looking forward to their restoration under King Yeshua. ADONAI will require it in the future, and the Prophet Zechariah prophesied that in the *olam habah*, the world to come, there would be a penalty for not going to Jerusalem for *Sukkot*, the harvest festival. 17 Furthermore, if any of the nations on earth do not go up to Jerusalem to worship the King, Adonai-Tzva'ot, they will have no rain. (Zechariah 14:17 TLV).

To reach the celebration of *Shavuot*, we begin with Passover on the 14<sup>th</sup> day of *Nisan*. The lamb is slaughtered that afternoon and cooked. The 15<sup>th</sup> day begins the Festival of *Matzot*, Unleavened Bread, and מַצָּה *matzah* must be eaten for seven days. The 15<sup>th</sup> of *Nisan* is also a holy convocation, a special *Shabbat*, during which the festival meal was celebrated, and the פֶּסַח *Pesach* lamb was eaten. ADONAI said that an offering was to be brought to Him. He told Moses: 10 "Speak to Bnei-Yisrael and tell them: When you have come into the land which I give to you, and reap its harvest (**barley**), then you are to bring the omer of the firstfruits of your harvest to the kohen." (Leviticus 23:10 TLV). The Hebrew is אֶת עֹמֶר *et omer*, the sheaf. The grain of a sheaf of barley was ground and presented as a meal offering. 11 He is to wave the omer before Adonai, to be accepted for you. On the morrow after the Shabbat, the kohen 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. (Leviticus 23:11-12 TLV). *Omer* means sheaf, a sheaf of barley, brought from the barley harvest, which began at this time of year. The question is, to which *Shabbat* is ADONAI referring regarding the beginning of the count of seven complete *Shabbatot*, seven complete weeks?

We are just two days away from the 50<sup>th</sup> day and our celebration of *Shavuot*, and we have been counting the days until the festival. We are not instructed to count the *omer*. That is a *Talmudic* command, followed by those who accept the authority of the *Talmud*. We do not recognize its authority, but we may use the word *omer* as a method of counting,

understanding that it originates from the *Talmud*. However, we should be cautious about attaching any spiritual significance to the *omer*.

Leviticus 23 instructs us how to count the days, but there is more than one understanding of how it should be done. We recognize the right of others to view the count differently, which results in the celebration of *Shavuot* on a different day. Yeshua has given each leader the authority to determine for us how to interpret the *Torah*. So, how are we to count seven full weeks beginning the day after the *Shabbat*, the day on which the *kohenim* brought the barley offering? Seven whole weeks is 49 days, with the 50<sup>th</sup> day being *Shavuot*. At *Beit Shalom*, we count traditionally, following the Rabbinic Jewish method, because we believe it is the correct way to count. Some within Messianic Judaism count differently, but most follow our approach. We count this way because we believe the evidence for it outweighs the evidence for the other ways of counting.

The *Torah* says: “You are to count from the day after the *Shabbat*, from the day that you brought the *omer* of the wave offering.” We all agree that it is the day after a *Shabbat*, but we don’t agree on which *Shabbat* is being referenced. The question is, “Which is the *Shabbat* on which the wave offering of barley was brought?” There are several to choose from. The 15<sup>th</sup> of *Nisan*, the first day of the Festival of Unleavened Bread, is a special Sabbath, and the seventh day of this week is also a Sabbath. The seventh-day Sabbath is also under consideration. After which of these do we begin our counting?

We in *Beit Shalom* believe that we start counting after the first one, the special first Sabbath of the Festival of Unleavened Bread, which always falls on the 16<sup>th</sup> of *Nisan*. Others begin their count the day after the weekly Sabbath. Counting as we do, starting from the specific date of *Nisan* 16, the day after the first special Sabbath of the Festival of Unleavened Bread, the 50<sup>th</sup> day can fall on any of the seven days of the week, but it consistently falls on the specific date of *Sivan* 6. However, counting from the day after the weekly Sabbath, the 50<sup>th</sup> day always falls on a Sunday.

Three ancient groups held different opinions about when the count was to begin. Counting from the day after the weekly *Shabbat*, Sunday, the first day of the week, is generally attributed to the Sadducees. This may not be entirely correct because there were at least two factions. In Yeshua’s day, one of them was a political group called the Boethusians (also known as the Baitusim), a branch of the Sadducees founded by Simon ben Boethus, a High Priest appointed by Herod the Great in 24 BCE. They were not in political step with the other Sadducees, and were loyal to Herod and his descendants. In the Gospels, the Boethusians were referred to as Herodians. Several verses refer to them (Matthew 22:16, Mark 3:6, 8:15, and 12:13). One of these references is about Yeshua’s last week in Jerusalem: *6 The Pharisees went out right away with the Herodians and began plotting against Him, how they might destroy Him.* (Mark 3:6 TLV). The Herodians were a branch of the Sadducees, specifically the Boethusian branch. It is said that they were so rabid about counting from Sunday that they would hire false witnesses to trick the Pharisees regarding when the new moon was sighted. They and the Pharisees were unlikely bedfellows, with their different approaches to counting. However, their collaboration aimed to convict Yeshua. Another group that had a different opinion on when to begin counting was the sect from Qumran, the writers of the Dead Sea Scrolls. They understood the Sabbath to refer to the weekly Sabbath following the last day of Unleavened Bread, that is, the second weekly Sabbath after Passover. They counted similarly to the Boethusians, albeit a week later. The third group, the

Pharisees, stated that the *omer* was to be waved on *Nisan* 16, the day after the first day of the Festival of Unleavened Bread, which fell on the 15<sup>th</sup> of *Nisan*.

We choose to follow the Pharisees' method. But why? One reason is the way the Septuagint translates Leviticus 23. The Greek language translation of the *Tanakh* says: (10) "*Speak to the children of Israel, and thou shalt say to them, When ye shall enter into the land which I give you, and reap the harvest of it, then shall you bring a sheaf, the first-fruits of your harvest, to the priest; (11) and he shall lift up the sheaf before the Lord, to be accepted for you. On the morrow of the first day, the priest shall lift it up*" (Leviticus 23:10-11 LXX). The first day of the Festival of Unleavened Bread is *Nisan* 15. The morrow of the first day is the day after the first day, *Nisan* 16. That's very clear. We begin our count on *Nisan* 16. The Septuagint also translates the Hebrew *Shabbatot* as weeks. Although the Hebrew says *Shabbatot*, meaning Sabbaths, it is to be understood as "weeks." The Septuagint clearly states that the count begins on *Nisan* 16, which is the morrow after the *Shabbat* on the 15<sup>th</sup>.

Here is a second reason that we count in this manner. The Jewish historian Josephus (*Mattityahu ben Yosef*) also wrote about *Shavuot*: ".....And we do celebrate this Passover in companies, leaving nothing of what we sacrifice till the day following. The feast of Unleavened Bread succeeds that of the Passover, and falls on the fifteenth day of the month, and continues seven days, wherein they feed on unleavened bread; on every one of which days two bulls are killed, and one ram, and seven lambs. Now these lambs are entirely burnt, besides the kid of the goats which is added to all the rest, for sins; for is intended as a feast for the priest on every one of those days. But on the second day of unleavened bread, which is the sixteenth day of the month, they first partake of the fruits of the earth, for before that day they do not touch them" (Flavius Josephus, *Antiquities of the Jews*, Book 3, Chapter 10, Section 5). Josephus verifies that the fruit of the earth, the barley, was waved on the sixteenth day of *Nisan*, the second day of the Festival of Unleavened Bread. This also means that the count toward *Shavuot* began on that day, the day after the first special *Shabbat* of the Festival of Unleavened Bread. This is our evidence, which we consider conclusive. However, we don't wish to dispute about it, but to be in fellowship with those who may celebrate differently.

This brings us to *Shavuot*. According to Scripture, it is a very important festival, one of the three that ADONAI commanded to be observed in Jerusalem. *Chag HaMatzot*, the Festival of Unleavened Bread, *Chag HaShavuot*, the Festival of Weeks, and *Chag HaSukkot*, the Festival of Tabernacles, were known as the *Shalosh Regalim*, the festivals to which travel was commanded. (*rega* means foot, thus travel). Each Hebrew adult male was commanded by ADONAI to ascend to Jerusalem for these festivals and to worship Him. Does ADONAI have an underlying message in commanding these three Festivals? Is there a picture in them that He wants us to see?

Each of the events which ADONAI described in Leviticus chapter 23 are called His *moedim*, His designated times, *miqra'eh kodesh*, holy convocations. There are seven, and the first is *Shabbat*. The remaining six are: *Pesach* (Passover), *Matzot* (Unleavened Bread), *Bikkurim* (Firstfruits), *Shavuot* (Pentecost), *Yom Teruah* (Trumpets), *Yom Kippur* (Day of Atonement), and *Sukkot* (Tabernacles). If each of these six *moedim* is a holy convocation, a time of assembling before ADONAI, why did He single out the three *Regalim* of *Matzot*, *Shavuot*, and *Sukkot*, commanding all Israelite males to attend them? It wasn't just a suggestion: 16 "*Three times a year all your males are to appear before Adonai your God in the place He chooses—at the Feast of Matzot, the Feast of Shavuot, and the Feast of Sukkot. No*

*one should appear before Adonai empty-handed— 17 the gift of each man's hand according to the blessing Adonai your God has given you"* (Deuteronomy 16:16-17 TLV).

I believe He chose these three because they are an unfolding picture He was revealing to Israel. When Israel celebrated Passover in the wilderness and then forty years later in the land of Israel, all that they knew was the Egyptian Passover. Their *seder* included only the information revealing that ADONAI had redeemed Israel with His outstretched arm from Pharaoh and his slavery, and that He caused the angel of death to pass over them because of the blood of an innocent lamb painted on their doorposts. Year after year, Israel celebrated *Pesach*, remembering Egypt, and celebrating as if they had been there. What Israel didn't know was that they were rehearsing for a Passover yet to come. The earlier Passovers were rehearsals, and in due time, ADONAI sent His son Yeshua to be our Passover lamb, the sinless lamb whose blood paid the price for our sins. At that moment, when Yeshua died on the cross, the rehearsals ceased, and the true event commenced. The Passover we celebrated together seven weeks ago embodied elements from both the Egyptian Passover and Yeshua's last Passover. While the Egyptian Passover foreshadowed the future Passover, in which ADONAI would redeem us from the slavery of sin through the blood of His own Son, the Passover we commemorate now is a fulfillment of that first Passover in Egypt. But for us, it is a commemoration, not an observance, because it can only be fully observed in Jerusalem with a Temple and a Levitical priesthood to offer the sacrifices. The blood of lambs, bulls, and goats covered Israel's sins in those former days, but now, Yeshua's spotless blood has put our sins away from us as far as the east is from the west (Psalm 103:12).

*Shavuot* is also intimately tied to the first Passover in Egypt. Tradition tells us that ADONAI gave the *Torah* on Mount Sinai during *Shavuot*. The *Torah* doesn't specifically mention that it was *Shavuot*, but I believe it was. Exodus 19 states that it was in the third month after Israel left Egypt, and *Shavuot* would fall within that month. At Sinai, ADONAI essentially stated, "If you keep My covenant, I will take you to be My people, and I will make you a nation of priests" (Exodus 19:6-7). All Israel answered with one voice, accepting ADONAI's gracious offer: "Everything you say, we will do" (Exodus 19:8). Gracious is the appropriate word because Israel's salvation from Egypt was purely due to His grace. Israel did nothing to deserve deliverance, but because of His love for them and His commitment to Abraham, He delivered them. And His giving of the *Torah* on Mount Sinai allowed Israel to live under His loving protection.

At Sinai, ADONAI wrote His *Torah* on tablets of stone and gave Israel other commands to instruct them on how to relate to Him and how to deal with their sin. In the wilderness, Israel rebelled against Him and had to endure 40 years in a dry and harsh land when they could have reached *Eretz Yisra'el*, the land of promise, in just a few months. And Israel continued to rebel against ADONAI. During the time of the Judges, they rebelled, and He had to send a redeemer judge to rescue them constantly. Through the next hundreds of years, Israel continually rebelled against Him, until finally, He brought His punishment upon them. First, the Kingdom of Israel in the north was conquered and taken captive by Assyria. Then, a little over a hundred years later, the southern Kingdom of Judah was conquered and taken captive by Babylon.

It is reported that Jeremiah wrote his book over a span of approximately 70 years, during which he continually urged Israel to make *teshuvah*, to repent and return to ADONAI. Those in Judah did not listen to him. We must refer to Judah as Israel, as it encompassed all of Israel; some from all twelve tribes lived in Judah, and they did not heed Jeremiah's

warning. (see Disciples of Yeshua 23, April 19, 2025). About 25 years before Babylon conquered Judah in 586 BCE, Jeremiah wrote his chapter 31. Under the inspiration of the *Ruach Kodesh*, he foretold the New Covenant (Jeremiah 31:30-32 TLV). The rabbis don't teach about the New Covenant, just as they don't teach about Isaiah 53. However, both Scriptures convey what ADONAI promised Israel. Through Jeremiah, ADONAI told of a New Covenant in the days to come. And when the time came, He initiated it through the blood of His Son, Yeshua, as is vividly pictured in Isaiah 53. And He inscribed His Laws, His *Torah*, upon our hearts when we embraced Yeshua, even as the *Ruach Kodesh* spiritually circumcised our hearts.

*Shavuot*, one of the *Regalim*, is an important festival because it was at this time, about 10 days after Yeshua ascended to the Father, that the *Ruach Kodesh* fell upon the believers who had come to the festival. That outpouring of the Spirit was the fulfillment of the first *Shavuot* at Mount Sinai and the writing of the *Torah* on hearts, as described in Jeremiah 31. At Sinai, the *Torah* was written on stone tablets, but now in Jerusalem in the 1st century, it was written on the hearts of men and women who had accepted the sacrificial blood of Yeshua as payment for their sins. Mount Sinai was a rehearsal, and *Shavuot* in Jerusalem in the 1st century was its fulfillment.

We don't know everything that took place on that 1<sup>st</sup> century *Shavuot*, but here is a picture of the events that might have taken place following Yeshua's ascension to the Father (Acts 1:9). Thousands of Jews from around the known world gathered in Jerusalem for the festival, including born Jews and Gentile proselytes to Judaism who came to bring their offerings to ADONAI and to worship him as directed by the *Torah*. They were there in obedience to ADONAI's command: *9 Seven weeks you are to count for yourself—from the time you begin to put the sickle to the standing grain you will begin to count seven weeks. 10 Then you will keep the Feast of Shavuot to Adonai your God with a measure of a freewill offering from your hand, which you are to give according to how Adonai your God blesses you. 11 So you will rejoice before Adonai your God in the place Adonai your God chooses to make His Name dwell—you, your son and daughter, slave and maid, Levite and outsider, orphan and widow in your midst.* (Deuteronomy 16:9-11 TLV).

Yeshua's followers were no different than the other Jews. They believed in obeying the *Torah*, just as Yeshua, their example, had done and taught them to do. (Matthew 5:17-18). That being true, where would Yeshua's disciples have been on this day, the Day of *Shavuot*? It is unlikely that they would have been in some other place, doing their own thing on a day that ADONAI had commanded to be observed in such a particular way. They would not have been in an upper room of a house located across the city from the Temple. The book of Acts tells us that they were in a house, but it was not a house somewhere else in Jerusalem. The house they were in was *HaBayit*, the House of ADONAI, the Holy Temple, which was situated on *Har HaBayit*, "the mountain of the House," the Temple Mount. That's where they were when "the whole house shook" on *Sivan* 6 in 30 CE. The count had been made from *Nisan* 16, fifty days to *Sivan* 6, because the Pharisees were the majority and controlling party in the 1<sup>st</sup> century. The Bothusian sect of Sadducees was a minor party and was unable to overrule the Pharisees; evidently, the other Sadducees did not wish to either. Josephus confirmed this, saying, "The count began on the 16th day of the month," the counting method used by the Pharisees.

Yeshua's disciples often met in the area on the Temple Mount known as Solomon's Portico, or Porch, a covered area opposite the Temple. Ever since Yeshua ascended to

ADONAI, His disciples had prepared themselves as he had commanded. He said: 5 *“For John immersed with water, but you will be immersed in the Ruach ha-Kodesh not many days from now”* (Acts 1:5 TLV). They were gathered on the Temple Mount on *Shavuot*, expecting and waiting for something to happen. And something did.

On *Shavuot*, services began at sunrise with the presentation of first fruits. The people brought their first fruits of all kinds, and the kohanim offered their wheat offerings to ADONAI. 16 *Until the morrow after the seventh Shabbat you are to count fifty days and then present a new grain offering (wheat) to Adonai.* 17 *You are to bring out of your houses two loaves of bread for a wave offering, made of two tenths of an ephah of fine flour. They are to be baked with hametz as firstfruits to Adonai.* (Leviticus 23:16-17 TLV). This was different from the barley offering prepared by the *kohanim*. The people brought loaves of leavened wheat bread from their homes. Sacrifices were also offered, as specified in Leviticus 23. Before 9 AM, thousands of worshippers would have crowded around the Temple to hear the *Torah* portion for *Shavuot* read, which was followed by a reading from the *Haftarah*, the writings from the prophets. The ancient, traditional *Haftarah* reading for *Shavuot* is Ezekiel 1:1-28 and 3:12. What happened next is my speculation, but it's possible that it occurred in the manner described. As the *Haftarah* reading was concluded at the Temple, the Book of Acts says: 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* (Acts 2:2-3). You can imagine the amazement and possibly even the terror that came upon those gathered before the Temple when they saw this take place. It was a fulfillment of what they had just heard read from the Book of Ezekiel, the *Haftarah* reading for that day. Verse 4 says: 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). Ezekiel had seen living creatures and he said of them: 24 *“When they moved, I could hear the sound of their wings like the sound of rushing waters, like the voice of Shaddai, a noise of tumult like the noise of an army. Whenever they stood still, they let down their wings”* (Ezekiel 1:24 TLV). The thousands gathered at the Temple heard the noise and turned to see where it was coming from. What they saw were the followers of Yeshua with flames of fire on their heads. They had heard the wind, and now they saw this: 3 *And tongues like fire spreading out appeared to them and settled on each one of them.* (Acts 2:2-3 TLV). Rushing over to get a closer look, they heard a powerful sermon from *Shimon Kefa* about Yeshua. More than three thousand Jews could easily stand in the open space adjacent to Solomon's portico, and three thousand repented and turned away from their sins, placing their trust in Yeshua. They received the gift of the *Ruach Kodesh*, the Holy Spirit, and were immersed in the name of Yeshua the Messiah for the forgiveness of their sins (Acts 2:38). Approximately forty *mikvaot*, ritual immersion baths, were located just outside the southern steps of the Temple, and each person immersed himself, something that could have been done relatively quickly. Men and women, supervised by attendants, walked down into the *mikveh* in the nude, immersed themselves, and walked back up the steps. These 3000 Jews had come to celebrate the giving of the *Torah* to Israel at Mount Sinai, but instead found and trusted in Yeshua, with the *Torah* written on their hearts by the Comforter, Whom Yeshua had promised to send (John 14:15, 15:26, and 16:7; Acts 1:8),

The three Spring Festivals of ADONAI, *Chag HaMatzot*, including *Pesach*, *Bikkurim* (First Fruits), and *Chag HaShavuot*, have been fulfilled. But the three Fall Festivals have not been fulfilled. Year after year, we continue to rehearse them: *Yom Teruah* (*Rosh Hashanah*), *Yom Kippur* (Day of Atonement), and *Chag HaSukkot* (the Festival of Tabernacles). Thus far,

it seems that ADONAI is fulfilling them in the order in which He gave them, and we might expect *Yom Teruah*, the Day of Trumpets, also known as *Rosh Hashanah*, to be fulfilled next. It may be on a future *Rosh Hashanah* that Yeshua will return as *Melekh Mashiach*, King Messiah, coming on the clouds to gather us. *Sha'ul* told us it would happen: *16 For the Lord Himself shall come down from heaven with a commanding shout, with the voice of the archangel and with the blast of God's shofar, and the dead in Messiah shall rise first. 17 Then we who are alive, who are left behind, will be caught up together with them in the clouds, to meet the Lord in the air—and so we shall always be with the Lord.* (1 Thessalonians 4:16-17). We don't know the day, but we do know that He will return on the day that the last *shofar* is sounded in heaven. This is what happened after Yeshua ascended to His Father: *9 ...—He was taken up, and a cloud received Him out of their sight. 10 While they were staring into heaven as He went up, suddenly two men stood with them in white clothing. 11 They said, "Men of Galilee, why do you keep standing here staring into heaven? This Yeshua, who was taken up from you into heaven, will come in the same way as you saw Him go into heaven."* (Acts 1:9b-11 TLV). He ascended into the clouds and will return in the clouds for us! May His coming be soon!

What takes place with the fulfillment of *Yom Kippur* is teaching for another day, but we do need to mention *Sukkot*. Why did ADONAI include this festival with the Festivals of *Matzot* and *Shavuot* in the *Regalim*, the festivals He commanded Israel to attend? It is because *Sukkot* is a picture of the coming eternal reign of Messiah Yeshua. *Pesach* and its fulfillment through Yeshua gave us the way to be in right-standing before ADONAI. *Shavuot* reminds us of the written *Torah*, while its fulfillment in the *B'rit Chadasha*, the New Covenant, enables the *Torah* to be inscribed on our hearts, even as we are filled with the *Ruach Kodesh*. The Holy Spirit given on that 1<sup>st</sup> century *Shavuot* and given to us today helps us to live out our salvation before ADONAI. And the hope of *Sukkot*, a picture of the coming eternal reign of Yeshua, encourages us to persevere as we await His return to defeat his enemies and rule and reign over us from Jerusalem (Isaiah 2:3; Micah 4:1-3). Today, the nation of Israel is experiencing the turmoil of war, a part of the birth pangs of the Messiah. (Matthew 24:4-8). The *Shavuot* of 2025 in Israel will be a day marred by war. *6 "Pray for the peace of Jerusalem— "May those who love you be at peace! 7 May there be shalom within your walls— quietness within your palaces"* (Psalm 122:6-7 TLV). *Shabbat shalom!*