



“The *Megillah* of Matthew”

28:1

Scriptures are from the TLV or as specified.

*Shalom aleichem Mishpacha!* Tonight we begin chapter 28, Matthew’s final chapter. As chapter 27 ended, it was *Nisan* 15, the first Sabbath of the Festival of Unleavened Bread. Yeshua had died the day before, *Nisan* 14, at about 3 PM. He was taken down from the cross and placed in Joseph of Arimathea’s tomb before sundown. We are not specifically told about it, but the Passover meal would have been eaten after sundown, the beginning of *Nisan* 15. I stated in our last lesson that it was on the morning of the 15<sup>th</sup> that the ruling *kohenim* asked Pilate to seal the tomb. After reading the Scripture again, I believe that this request was most likely made immediately after sundown, probably right before they went to their *seders* that evening.

We begin chapter 28: *1 Now after Shabbat, as it began to dawn on the first day of the week, Miriam of Magdala and the other Miriam came to look at the tomb* (Matthew 28:1 TLV). We have tracked the days since Yeshua came to Bethany on 9 *Nisan*, a Friday. 14 *Nisan*, the day He died on the stake, would have been a Wednesday. We know a little of what happened *Nisan* 15, a Thursday, but Friday, *Nisan* 16, is silent. There are no Scriptures relating to that day. Likewise, *Nisan* 17, the weekly *Shabbat*, is also silent. The Scripture which we just read, Matthew 28:1, would have occurred *Nisan* 18, the first day of the week. The words “as it began to dawn on the first day of the week” possibly indicate that it was very near sundown. Jewish days begin and end at sundown. According to Matthew, the day was dawning. The sun had just gone down.

We need to look at some other sources before drawing a conclusion. The direct translation from the Greek of Mathew 28:1 includes information which is not given in most Bibles: “1 After then Sabbaths, it being dawn toward first of week came Mary Magdalen and the other Mary, to see the tomb.” The Greek actually says Sabbaths, plural. The Greek word used is *sabbaton* (sab'-bat-on). In Thayer’s Greek Lexicon, this word in 28:1 is said to be plural. What does “after the Sabbaths” mean? It means that the two *Miriam*s went to the tomb after two Sabbaths had passed, the First Day of Unleavened Bread and the weekly *Shabbat*. This is shown in the International Standard Version of this verse: *1 After the Sabbaths, around dawn on the first day of the week, Mary Magdalene and the other Mary went to take a look at the burial site* (Matthew 28:1 ISV). Sabbaths in the plural is also found in the Literal Standard Version, the Berean Literal Bible, Smith’s Literal Translation, Worrel New Testament and Young’s Literal Translation and possibly others. The truth shown in these versions is that the women went after the weekly Sabbath, but also after the special Sabbath, the *moed*, the holy convocation of the first day of the *Chag HaMatzot*, the Festival of Unleavened Bread. They were at the tomb when Yeshua was placed in it late on Wednesday, but did not return to it until after two Sabbaths had taken place.

In some verses of the Gospels describing the same event, there are what appear to be conflicting reports. That is also true here. We just read Matthew. Now, Mark: *1 When Shabbat was over, Miriam of Magdala, Miriam the mother of Jacob, and Salome bought spices, so that they might come and anoint Yeshua's body. 2 Very early on the first day of the week, when the sun had risen, they come to the tomb* (Mark 16:1-2 TLV). Luke says: *1 Now on the first day of the week, at daybreak, the women came to the tomb, carrying the spices they had prepared* (Luke 24:1 TLV). And, John reports: *1 Early in the morning on the first day of the week, while it is still dark, Miriam from Magdala comes to the tomb. She sees that the stone had been rolled away from the tomb* (John 20:1 TLV). Two women were described in Matthew, three in Mark and just one in John. But, there were five or more reported by Luke: *10 Now it was Miriam from Magdala, Joanna, the Miriam of Jacob and others together with them who were telling these things to the emissaries.* (Luke 24:10 TLV). This verse allows for at least five women and possibly even more. But, I don't find that a conflict. The different authors just chose certain details to disclose. I believe that all of the women as described by Luke were there together at some point.

Regarding when they were there, Matthew says "as it began to dawn" and Luke says "at daybreak." This is no conflict. They are the same. The sun had set and the first day of the week was beginning. But, Mark says it happened "when the sun had risen" and John says it was "while it is still dark." How can both of these be true? We don't know for certain, but one possibility is that *Miryam* from *Magdala* came alone earlier when it was dark as reported by John and then she came back later with the other women after the sun had risen. She was probably staying nearby and could do this. Whatever the case, I believe in the truth of the Scriptures. There are explanations for everything, we just don't know them all- yet! But, we will when Yeshua returns.

The four Gospels each tell us that the women came to the tomb after the Sabbath, the seventh day Sabbath, was over. So, when did Yeshua rise from the dead? Our beginning point is an empty tomb. Matthew says: *6 "He is not here; for He is risen, just as He said. Come, see the place where He was lying."* (Matthew 28:6 TLV). Mark says: *6 .... "He is risen! He is not here!"* (Mark 16:6b TLV). Luke says: *2 They found the stone had been rolled away from the tomb; 3 but when they entered, they did not find the body of the Lord Yeshua.* (Luke 24:2-3 TLV). John says: *1 Early in the morning on the first day of the week, while it is still dark, Miriam from Magdala comes to the tomb. She sees that the stone had been rolled away from the tomb.* (John 20:1 TLV). The tomb was empty when the women arrived.

Since we have no direct Scripture which tells us when Yeshua rose, we have to apply the evidence which we have. We begin with Yeshua's statement to the *Torah* scholars and Pharisees: *40 "For just as Jonah was in the belly of the great fish for three days and three nights, so the Son of Man will be in the heart of the earth for three days and three nights"* (Matthew 12:40 TLV). Yeshua said words to this effect no less than 3 times in Matthew, 3 times in Mark, 3 times in Luke, and 1 time in John (Matthew 16:21, 17:23, and 20:19, Mark 8:31, 9:31, 10:34, Luke 9:22, 11:29-30, 18:33, and John 2:19). Luke 11 says: *29 With the crowds increasing, Yeshua began to say, "This generation is a wicked generation. It demands a sign, yet no sign will be given to it except the sign of Jonah. 30 For just as Jonah became a sign to the Ninevites, so also the Son of Man will be to this generation.* (Luke 11:29-30 TLV). The "sign of Jonah" is this: *1 Now Adonai prepared a great fish to swallow Jonah, and Jonah was in the belly of the fish three days and three nights.* (Jonah 2:1 TLV). *Sha'ul* confirmed this: *3 For I also passed on to you first of all what I also received— that Messiah died for our sins according to the Scriptures, 4 that He was buried, that He was raised on the*

*third day according to the Scriptures*,... (1Corinthians 15:3-4 TLV). The third day includes the third night. There is no conflict. Three days and nights is three days and nights. It can't be less.

If, as Christianity teaches, Yeshua died on a Friday afternoon at 3 PM, three days and three nights would require that He be resurrected on Monday, the second day of the week. To counter that, some Christian theologians state that any part of a day or night counts as a whole day or night. According to this method, counting Friday afternoon from 3 PM to sunset would be one day. Friday night during the dark would be one night. Saturday during daylight would be another day. Saturday night during dark would be one night. Finally, a part of the daytime on Sunday, the day they believe He rose, would be one day. But, even this logic does not yield three days and three nights. The total of this is only three days and two nights. Count it for yourself.

My personal belief is that Sunday was chosen for Yeshua's resurrection day in the very early centuries because of the antisemitism of the Gentile leaders. By the beginning of the 2<sup>nd</sup> century CE, the movement had stopped being a Jewish movement and was now completely Gentile. We don't know exactly when Yeshua's disciple John died, possibly sometime right before or shortly after the turn of the century. But, by the beginning of the 2<sup>nd</sup> century, all of Yeshua's disciples were dead and signs began to appear indicating that non-Jewish believers were losing sight of their identity with the Jewish people. Forces were set in motion for the non-Jewish believers to begin the process of divorcing themselves from their Jewish roots. Around 115 CE, Ignatius, Bishop of Antioch said: "Whoever celebrates the Passover along with the Jews, or receives emblems of their feast, he is a partaker with those who killed the L-rd and His apostles. For if we are still practicing Judaism, we admit that we have not received God's favor...it is wrong to talk about Jesus Christ and live like Jews. For Christianity did not believe in Judaism, but Judaism in Christianity." There is so much which could be documented here, but I'll just give a few examples to convey what was happening after the Jewish leaders died out. Around 130 CE a man named Marcion taught that the Hebrew scriptures "have no value or authority for the Church and that the grace of G-d as taught by Paul had replaced the *Torah*. This was the beginning of the "grace versus Law" concept which was accepted by the Gentile Christians. By 200 CE most Christian congregations were worshipping on Sunday. In 321, the Roman Emperor Constantine who had embraced Christianity, made a law for the whole Roman Empire to rest on Sunday in all cities and towns. This act officially sanctioned Sunday, known by the pagans as the venerable day of the Sun, as the Sabbath for Christians. As a result of Constantine's act, Sylvester, the bishop of Rome, changed the name of the day from the "venerable day of the Sun" to the "L-rd's Day". After the first Council of Nicea met in 325 CE, Constantine wrote this letter. "At this meeting the question concerning the most holy day of Easter was discussed, and it was resolved by the united judgment of all present, that this feast ought to be kept by all and in every place on one and the same day... First of all, it appeared an unworthy thing that in the celebration of this most holy feast we should follow the practice of the Jews, who have impiously defiled their hands with enormous sin, and are, therefore, deservedly afflicted with blindness of soul. For we have it in our power, if we abandon their custom, to prolong the due observance of this ordinance to future ages, by a truer order, which we have preserved from the very day of the passion until the present time. Let us then have nothing in common with the detestable Jewish crowd; for we have received from our Savior a different way." Easter was another adaptation of a pagan thing and the day was named for the goddess Oestre. Incidentally, this decision and the other decisions made at this Council of Nicea meeting were made by Gentile bishops and pastors. There were Jewish

pastors in some of the eastern congregations, the area where Yeshua's disciple John lived his last days, but no Jews were invited to Nicea. The evidence is very clear. Even in the beginning of the 2<sup>nd</sup> century, a little more than seventy years after Yeshua's death on the stake, antisemitism in the Christian body was rising and it continued to increase during the following centuries. And, the Hebrew *Tanach* became "the Old Testament" and was mostly ignored.

Here is a summary of Yeshua's last days. Six days before Passover, He arrived in Bethany and stayed with Lazarus and his family. (John 12: 6-11). Working backward from the 2000 year calendar with *Nisan* 14 being Wednesday, that Friday would have been *Nisan* 9. The next day, *Nisan* 10, Yeshua made his triumphal entry into Jerusalem. It was a Saturday, a *Shabbat*. In his book, *The Temple*, Jewish Christian Alfred Edersheim wrote: "At the original institution of Pesach in Egypt, the 10<sup>th</sup> of *Nisan*, the day on which the sacrifice was to be selected, fell on a Sabbath and the Sabbath preceding Passover became known as *Shabbat HaGadol*, the Great Sabbath, with special emphasis on preparation for the feast. That day began Yeshua's examination as the Lamb of G-d. He was examined in the city for the next 4 days, from the 10<sup>th</sup> of *Nisan* to the 14<sup>th</sup> of *Nisan*. Exodus 12: verses 3 and 6 are the Scriptural authority for this. They state that that a lamb is to be chosen on the 10<sup>th</sup> and it is to be "watched over" until the 14<sup>th</sup>. Yeshua needed to fulfill all Scripture requirements for the *Pesach* lamb and he was watched over, examined, from the 10<sup>th</sup> to the 14<sup>th</sup> of *Nisan*. After His entry into Jerusalem on the 10<sup>th</sup>, Saturday, Yeshua returned to Bethany for the evening. (Mark 11:11). He returned to Jerusalem on Sunday, the 11<sup>th</sup> of *Nisan* (Mark 11:15), and left the city in the evening (Mark 11:19). He returned to Jerusalem the next day, Monday, the 12<sup>th</sup> of *Nisan* (Mark 11:27). While in Jerusalem that day, Yeshua identified *Nisan* 14 as the day that He would die by saying: 2 "You know that Passover comes in two days, and the Son of Man will be handed over to be executed." (Matthew 26:2 TLV). Passover would arrive Tuesday evening at sundown, two days later. Monday, He returned to Bethany. That evening, the 13<sup>th</sup>, Yeshua was anointed in the house of Simon the Leper (Matthew 26: 7) and spent the night of that night in Bethany. He returned to Jerusalem the next morning, Tuesday, still the 13<sup>th</sup>, to continue his teaching (Luke 21:3). Sometime during that day he sent Peter and John to prepare the Passover. This would have included the sacrifice of a lamb at the Temple in the late afternoon. The lamb would have been eaten that evening after sundown, *Nisan* 14, at the *seder* with Yeshua and His disciples. Yeshua was arrested during the night of the 14<sup>th</sup> of *Nisan* and crucified the next day which was the day portion of the 14<sup>th</sup>. He died around 3:00 PM, the 9<sup>th</sup> hour, the time that the lambs were being slain in the Temple, a fulfillment as our Passover Lamb. (Luke 23:44-46). Since that day was a Preparation Day, the Judean leaders rushed to get Yeshua buried before the new day dawned. (John 19:31-42). He would have been placed in the tomb of Joseph of Arimathea just before sundown. John tells us that this day was a preparation day for an especially important *Shabbat*: 31 *It was the Day of Preparation, and the next day was a festival Shabbat. So that the bodies should not remain on the execution stake during Shabbat, the Judean leaders asked Pilate to have the legs broken and to have the bodies taken away.* (John 19:31 TLV). This aligns with *Torah*: 16 "On the fourteenth day of the first month is Adonai's Passover. 17 On the fifteenth day, there is to be a feast. For seven days, matzot will be eaten. 18 You are to hold a sacred assembly on the first day. You are not to do any laborious work. (Numbers 28: 16-18 TLV). This tells us that Passover is on the 14<sup>th</sup> followed by the Feast of Unleavened Bread on the 15<sup>th</sup>. The first day of the seven days of the Feast of Unleavened Bread is a Holy Convocation, a High Sabbath. This means that the day of Passover, the 14<sup>th</sup>, is the Preparation Day for the High Sabbath, the first day of the Feast of Unleavened Bread.

Yeshua was placed in the tomb late in the afternoon of the 14<sup>th</sup> of *Nisan*, a Wednesday. Yeshua died on *Nisan* 14 in accordance with Scripture and was resurrected before sundown on Saturday, the 17<sup>th</sup> of *Nisan*, which was also the weekly Sabbath, three days and three nights in the belly of the earth.

We also need to address the Thursday crucifixion theory since there are some within Messianic Judaism who believe that was the day. If Yeshua died at 3 PM on Thursday, three days and three nights in the grave would have ended late Sunday afternoon. But, we know that the tomb was already empty by early Sunday morning. Additionally, we can look at the 2000 year calendar. Locating the day of the week upon which *Nisan* 14 falls from 28 CE to 33 CE, we find the following:

27 CE	Wednesday	Hebrew Year 3787
28 CE	Monday	3788
29 CE	Saturday	3789
30 CE	Wednesday	3790
31 CE	Monday	3791
32 CE	Monday	3792
33 CE	Friday	3793

*Nisan* 14 does not fall on a Thursday in any of these years. In this group, 27 CE and 30 CE both fall on a Wednesday. Most theologians would agree that 27 is too early. Then, in 33 CE, *Nisan* 14 falls on a Friday, which again seems to be too far out of the range of possibilities. 30 CE, a Wednesday, fits best. We also have the Talmudic statement by *Rabbi Yochanan Ben Zakkai*: “Forty years before the destruction of the Temple the western light went out, the crimson thread remained crimson and the lot for the Lord always came up in the left hand. They would close the gates of the Temple by night and get up in the morning and find them wide open.” (Jerusalem Talmud Sota 6:3). Forty years before the Temple was destroyed was 30 CE. The most significant of these events was that the crimson thread on both the Temple door and the horns of the Scapegoat remained crimson. It did not turn white when ADONAI accepted the Scapegoat offering as it had in years past. That Yeshua died that year was sufficient cause for all those things to happen.

We also need to consider the offering of the firstfruits and the counting of the *omer*. Leviticus 23:10 commands that the firstfruits be brought. The next verse says: *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.* (Leviticus 23:11 TLV). Following the Pharisaic method of counting the *omer* fifty days to *Shavuot*, Pentecost, which I do, the wave offering took place on *Nisan* 16, a Friday. The first festival *Shabbat*, the first day of the Festival of Unleavened Bread was *Nisan* 15 and the day after when the *omer* was waved was *Nisan* 16. The Saddusaic method of counting, which some in the Messianic Jewish Movement follow, begins its count on Sunday because of their belief that the Sabbath referred to in Leviticus 23 was the weekly Sabbath and not the first Sabbath of the Festival. A more detailed discussion is included as Addendum A after this written message.

We also need to consider the “firstfruits,” the word translated from the Hebrew *reshit* in Leviticus 23:10. I do not believe that the “*omer* of *reshit*” fits Yeshua’s resurrection in

either the Pharasaic or Saddusaic way of counting, that is, Yeshua is not the fulfillment of *reshit*, the firstfruits offering of barley. In my understanding, Yeshua did not rise on either the 16<sup>th</sup>, a Friday according to Pharisaic counting, or the 18<sup>th</sup>, a Sunday, according to Saddusaic counting. He rose on Saturday, the weekly *Shabbat*. Even though Yeshua did not rise on either of those days, He remains the “firstfruits of the dead.” 20 “*But now Messiah has been raised from the dead, the firstfruits of those who have fallen asleep.*” (1Corinthians 15:20 TLV). The emphasis should be on “the firstfruits of those who have fallen asleep,” and not on the firstfruits offering. Yeshua as the firstfruits is a type of those who have fallen asleep (died). He is the firstfruits, the *reshit*, which means first or chief, of all of us in His body of believers who have died or will die before He returns. His *reshit* body, the first of its kind, His resurrection body, a glorified body, is a foreshadowing of the body which we who die in Messiah will receive at His return. That is *Sha’ul’s* focus: Yeshua’s resurrection and our future resurrections. In my opinion, we should focus on Yeshua’s resurrection on *Shabbat* as being the fulfillment of our eternal Sabbath rest. 9 “*So there remains a Shabbat rest for the people of God. 10 For the one who has entered God’s rest has also ceased from his own work, just as God did from His. 11 Let us, therefore, make every effort to enter that rest, so that no one may fall through the same pattern of disobedience.*” (Hebrews 4:9-11 TLV). This is not about the weekly Sabbath rest, but the eternal *Shabbat* rest which Yeshua fulfilled. Yeshua said: 28 “*Come to Me, all who are weary and burdened, and I will give you rest.*” (Matthew 11:28 TLV). We who have trusted in Yeshua have the promise of eternal Sabbath rest and will receive it when we die.

Here is our conclusion. By entering Jerusalem on the 10<sup>th</sup> day of *Nisan*, Saturday, the Hebrew Sabbath, Yeshua began to be examined as *Pesach* lamb for four days and fulfilled the examination requirement. He was crucified on Wednesday, the day the Passover lambs were slain, not Thursday or Friday, and remained in the tomb for 3 days and 3 nights. He rose from the dead on Saturday, the Hebrew Sabbath, the 17<sup>th</sup> of *Nisan*, late in the afternoon just before the dawning of Sunday, the first day of the week. Yeshua is the fulfillment of *Pesach*, the lamb slain from before the foundation of the earth for the sins of man (Revelation 13:8b) and his death provides atonement once and for all for the sins of man. After His death, it was no longer necessary to kill bulls, lambs, and goats to cover the sins of man. The blood of Yeshua is the only way by which the sins of man can be atoned. He is the perfect fulfillment of prophecy. As the Son of G-d, He came to earth, lived as a man subject to temptation but died victoriously, having lived a perfect, sinless life. *Shalom aleichem!*

Addendum A:

## **Counting The Omer**

*Beit Shalom Messianic Synagogue*

There seem to be three groups who held different opinions regarding when the count of the Omer began. We've generally credited the Sadducees with the count which ends on a Sunday each year, but we may not be strictly correct. There was a political group in Yeshua's day called the Boethusians by some and the Baitusim by others. This group was a branch of the Sadducees, probably founded by Simon ben Boethus, a man appointed high priest by Herod the Great in 24BCE. This group was not in step with the other Sadduceans and were loyal to the Herodians. It is possible that when Mark 3:16 and 12:13 refer to the Herodians it is to the Boethusians. The Boethusians said that the waving of the omer should occur not on Nisan 16, the day after the Sabbath of the festival, but on the first day of the week, the day after the weekly Sabbath. They were so rabid about this that they often hired false witnesses to trick the Pharisees regarding the time of the new moon. Another group that

differed in their opinion was the Qumran sect. They understood the word Sabbath to refer to the weekly Sabbath which occurred following the last day of Unleavened Bread. They did this in a similar manner to the Boethusians, but a week later. The third group, the Pharisees, said that the omer was to be waved on Nisan 16, the day after the first day of the Feast of Unleavened Bread on the 15th (the above is according to research by Tim Hegg).

Verse 11 of Leviticus 23 states: He shall wave the sheaf before the Lord for you to be accepted; on the day after the Sabbath the priest shall wave it. How is the word Sabbath to be understood? As we just said, the Pharisees took it to mean the first day of Unleavened Bread, or Nisan 15. Thus, they waved it on the 16th. The Boethusians considered Sabbath to refer to the first weekly Sabbath after the beginning of the Feast of Unleavened Bread and they waved the sheaf on the first day of the week following that Sabbath, Sunday. And the Qumran sect understood this to be one week later than the Boethusians. To understand how the Pharisees arrived at their conclusion you have to understand how Sabbath is used in this passage. In the first century the Hebrew word Sabbath, was also taken to mean week. Thus, after the seventh Sabbath was understood to mean after the seventh week. The scripture says to count seven complete Sabbaths. A Sabbath is complete in itself, thus the meaning must be to count seven complete weeks.

The King James Version of the Bible, in Leviticus 23:15, mistranslates (and other versions follow suit) the latter part of this verse, and also in verse 16, the word "Sabbath." It says: *"seven Sabbaths shall be completed. Count fifty days to the day after the seventh Sabbath."* This poses a problem. How do you "complete" a "Sabbath"? Or seven of them? A Sabbath is a whole day, from sunset on Friday till sunset on Saturday, the seventh day of the week. It is not observed "partially." There would be no need to tell somebody to "complete" a Sabbath. But the Septuagint uses the word "WEEK" in the place of Sabbath in the KJV. It says: *"You shall number to yourselves from the day after the Sabbath . . . seven FULL WEEKS: UNTIL THE MORROW AFTER THE LAST WEEK ye shall number fifty days."* Notice! You can "complete" a week — it is seven whole days. A complete week is seven FULL days, and seven FULL weeks is a total of 49 days (no partial "weeks"). The word the King James translates "Sabbaths" in this case should be translated, as the Septuagint has it, "WEEKS." Many modern translations do so. The Jewish Tanakh has this passage: *". . . you shall count off seven weeks. They must be complete: you must count until the day after the SEVENTH WEEK."*

The Septuagint translation of the Hebrew scriptures which was completed approximately 270 years before the Common Era, Yeshua's day, sheds light on this question. This Greek translation from the Hebrew by 6 scholars from each of the 12 tribes of Israel (tradition says) was the official translation of the Sanhedrin and the Jewish Court during the first century. This was the official translation of the five books of Moses into Greek and since Greek was the language of most of the Mediterranean world at that time, it was used in synagogues everywhere, including Israel. How is Leviticus 23:11 translated here? Read in the Septuagint verses 4 through 11 and then skip to verse 15 to get the complete picture. *"(4) These are the feasts of the Lord, holy convocations, which ye shall call in their seasons. (5) In the first month on the fourteenth day of the month, between the evening times is the Lord's Passover. (6) And on the fifteenth day of this month is the feast of unleavened bread to the Lord; seven days shall ye eat unleavened bread. (7) And the first day shall be a holy convocation to you; ye shall do no servile work. (8) And ye shall offer whole-burnt offerings to the Lord seven days; and the seventh day shall be a holy convocation to you: ye shall do no*

*servile work. (9) And the Lord spoke to Moses, saying, (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..... (15) And ye shall number to your selves from the day after the Sabbath, from the day on which ye shall offer the sheaf the heave offering, seven full weeks: until the morrow after the last week ye shall number fifty days."* Verse 11 plainly tells us: "On the morrow of the first day the priest shall lift it up" The morrow is the day after the first day of the feast. In this case it is Nisan 16 if the first day is Nisan 15. And we also see that the Septuagint uses weeks rather than Sabbaths. This along with the very clear words of verse 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,*" plainly shows that the Pharisaic way of counting is the correct one.

Philo of Alexandria, Egypt, a Jewish philosopher also called Philo Judaeus, who lived from 20BCE to 50CE comments on Shavuot in the same way that the Septuagint does. Page 532, *The Works of Philo*: "And also the day on which is offered the sheaf of corn, as an offering of gratitude for the fertility and productiveness of the plain, as exhibited in the fullness of the ears of corn. And the day of Pentecost, which is numbered from this day by seven portions of seven days, in which it is the custom to offer up loaves, which are truly called the loaves of the first fruits, since, in fact, they are the first fruits of the productions and crops of eatable grain, which God has given to mankind as the most tractable of all his creatures." Notice that Philo, an Alexandrian Jew speaks of "seven portions of seven days," or seven weeks.

The Jewish historian Josephus, whose real name was Yosef ben Mattityahu (37-c.100CE) also wrote about this situation. In Book 3, Chapter 10, Section 5 we read: ".....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."

*King Of The Jews*, a book by Daniel Lancaster adds even more evidence. On page 76 the author is speaking of Pharisaic conventions which were followed in the Gospels and the Messianic Writings: "Perhaps most telling are the two Pentecost scenes (Acts 2; Acts 21). The believers are depicted celebrating Pentecost along with the rest of the Jewish majority in the Temple according to Pharisaic reckoning of the calendar. If the believers were truly eschewing Jewish tradition, why did they retain the Pharisaic calendar reckoning for that festival? Even things as basic as their use of ritual immersion for a symbolic rite of conversion arise from Pharisaic tradition that taught that proselytes must undergo immersion."

Even though the Sadducees said that the weekly Sabbath was the day on which to begin the omer count, the Pharisees were the controlling party. They had authority to make halachah, including the way in which the omer was counted. The Pharisees were a major force in the Sanhedrin. Remember that the trial held by Caiphus at his home was a sham

trial. It was not a meeting of the Sanhedrin according to current Temple regulations. It was held illegally in a high priest's house rather than in the Temple and met without nearly all its members, including the Pharisees, Yosef (of Arimathea) and Nakdimon (Nicodemus).

Within Messianic Judaism we find both ways of counting the omer which we have discussed here. Those that follow the Sadducean method are within their right to follow their conscience. Probably, the majority of Messianic Jewish congregations follow what is called the Pharisaic count and this is what we do at Beit Shalom because it is believed that the best evidence is for that method.. It is an accepted right of each congregation to make halachah; how they will walk. The *halakhah* of Beit Shalom Messianic Synagogue is to follow the Pharisaic method of "Counting the Omer," which begins the count on Nisan 16. This results in the day of Shavuot falling on different days of the week each year rather than always on Sunday. But, it does fall on a Sunday when Sunday is the 50<sup>th</sup> day following Nisan 16. We all "see through a glass darkly," and we could be wrong as well. Yeshua will reveal the truth about all of our disagreements when he returns.