

When Pentecost Had Fully Come!

Those with background in Holy Day Observances, find there are many Diverging Opinions as to which Traditions are valid. Not the least of which is the method of determining which is the True Day of Pentecost.

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Within our genre, there is an enduring question as to what is meant by the phrase “the morrow after the Sabbath”. This particular phrase is the basis for beginning the count to Pentecost (which is the fiftieth day by counting).

Following Long-Held Tradition

With ‘traditional’ Jews, the ‘morrow’ in question is deemed to be after the first annual Sabbath, a Holy Day, and the first day of their count to the fiftieth day is thus the second day of unleavened bread. Identifying the ‘morrow’ in question to be the second day of unleavened bread results in the fiftieth day being Sivan 6, the sixth day of the third lunar month. Sivan six, like the second day of unleavened bread, can occur on any day of the week, only occasionally falling on a Sunday.

The Wave Sheaf Factor

What else is involved on this ‘morrow after the Sabbath’ is the presentation of the wave sheaf offering. The first of the first-ripe grains (typically barley) is brought to the priest and waved on this day. With this offering having been presented, it then became ceremonially legal to begin that year’s grain harvest.

This particular offering has a secondary function in that it was used to determine which of two pending months would be declared the first month of the new year. We might wonder why there would be such a question until we realize that the lunar calendar (using the new moon to determine the start of each month) twelve lunar months is typically some eleven days short of a 365 day solar year. That means that generally one-third of the time, it is necessary to ‘intercalate’ an additional month to keep the lunar calendar more in sync with the solar year. Failing to do so would cause the lunar calendar to seriously fall out of sync with the solar year.

Roughly one year out of three, a thirteenth month needs to be added to maintain a rough correlation between the two calendar methods.

The Month of Green Ears

Where the wave sheaf offering factored-in, the priests would assess the condition of the ripening barley in advance of the end of the twelfth month to ascertain if the barley would be sufficiently ripened to be offered on the ‘morrow after the Sabbath’, some two weeks or more hence. If they deemed it would not be sufficiently ripened by the needed date, they would add a second twelfth month (in effect a thirteenth month) offsetting the ‘first month’ (called Abib in reflection of the ‘green ears’ designation) postponing the start of the new year until the next ‘new moon’.

Which Sabbath is Meant?

But as to the Sivan six question, it is necessary to determine what is meant by the term, “Sabbath”. The answer can make a difference.

With those who ascribe to a Sivan six Pentecost, the Sabbath in question is the first annual Sabbath, with day one of the count being always the second day of unleavened bread. To address this question (whether annual or weekly Sabbath) we also have the instruction which addresses when to end the count as well. The instruction is given to count to a particular end date, that day being a ‘morrow after a Sabbath’. The instruction is this: “*And ye shall eat neither bread, nor parched corn, nor green ears, (abib) until the selfsame day that ye have brought an offering unto your God: it shall be a statute for ever throughout your generations in all your dwellings. And ye shall count unto you from the morrow after the **sabbath**, from the day that ye brought the **sheaf of the wave offering**; seven **sabbaths** shall be complete: Even unto the morrow after the seventh **sabbath** shall ye number fifty days; and ye shall offer a new meat offering unto the LORD.*” (Lev. 23:14-16)

Two consideration need to be made with this extended set of instructions. (The earlier instruction continuing from verses 10 and 11 of Leviticus 23.) First, we must ascertain what is meant by 'the Sabbath'. Is it properly the annual or the weekly Sabbath? The other matter is the term 'sabbaths' in this place. The original Hebrew for sabbaths is "*shabbath*" (Strong's #7676). (Pentecost is also known by the term "feast of weeks" (e.g. Ex. 34:22 & Deut. 16:16)). The place where 'sabbaths' is translated from "*shabbath*" is presented in bold type above. Our question is, how do we correlate between the term 'weeks' and 'sabbaths'? Why is Pentecost referred to as the 'feast of weeks' but nowhere as 'the feast of Sabbaths'?

Count Fifty Days

What is insightful is that the fiftieth day (the Day of Pentecost) is properly the 'morrow after the seventh Sabbath'. Sivan six is not usually the morrow after the seventh Sabbath. It is effectively unrelated to any particular fixed day of the week. It can be any day of the week.

And what is a whole (or complete) week? Using the second day of unleavened bread as the first day of the count to Pentecost, we are forced to accept broken weeks as opposed to whole or 'complete' weeks, which would consist of seven consecutive days beginning with the first day of the week thru the seventh day of the week, as opposed to parts of two weeks strung out into seven consecutive days.

This passage also helps identify which 'Sabbath' is meant. The 'morrow after the seventh Sabbath' could not be referring to an annual Sabbath, as the seventh annual Sabbath occurs in the fall Holy Day season. Then, the reference must be to the weekly Sabbath, reflecting seven whole (seven day) weeks having passed.

This passage also tells us that each of the weeks in the count is to end with a weekly Sabbath!

Whole or Complete Weeks?

In addition, we see that the seven Sabbaths are to be 'complete'. What does that indicate? Does it merely mean that seven weeks are to have been completed, or does it more fully mean that seven whole weeks are to have passed?

Loose Terminology

In our culture, we define a week as any seven day period, irrespective of what day the week it might begin with. Tuesday to Monday can be understood to be a week. Similarly, as we use the term, a month can be any 30 day interval, not necessarily just from a first day of the month to the 30th. It can be any 30-day segment of time. Not so with the Hebrew. A month is the full interval from new moon to new moon. Parts of months (beginning anywhere within) would not be represented by that expression. Weeks also. A biblical week is the full seven numbered days, beginning with the first day thru the seventh day. That defines a (complete or whole) week, as we see referenced in the instruction above.

Dismissal by Reasonings

Of course, this definition doesn't facilitate the Sivan six tradition, so it has to be reasoned around. (And, if Pentecost is Sivan six, why is there any need to count? We'd only need to read the calendar date every year, as with all other Holy Days.) The fact of the need to count suggests a floating date with respect to it being any fixed calendar date.

But what is particularly interesting and relevant is the account of the Day of Pentecost found in the second chapter of the book of Acts.

When Pentecost Had Fully Come

In Acts 2 we see the disciples gathered together in a house (v.2), not with the Jews in the Temple. This is insightful, as they were observing the day separately of them. How did they know to disassociate from the main body of traditionalists?

Verse 1 explains that 'the day of Pentecost had fully come', which would suggest that there had been a prior observance. In fact, there had been a prior observance that year. Sivan six was a Friday in the year of crucifixion!

A further indication that the Jews had observed Pentecost earlier was the presence of so many foreign ethnicities still at Jerusalem at the time. They had remained in Jerusalem, staying over to also keep the weekly Sabbath, and they themselves were not at the Temple observing anything. That is why they were available to hear the rumors on the streets and to gather to hear the shocking

manifestation of the Spirit seen in the translation of Peter's and the others' utterances into each of their native tongues simultaneously.

Crucified ON the Passover Day

The crucifixion was on the fourteenth day of the first month (Passover Day), a Wednesday, with Christ's death occurring mid-afternoon of the fourteenth, when the Temple Veil was torn 'from top to bottom'. He was entombed as the sun was setting, remaining in the tomb all of Thursday, Friday and Saturday (three full days and nights) then arising from the dead just after sunset ending that Saturday, the weekly Sabbath.

That would then make the fifteenth (a Thursday) it being the High Day, the first day of unleavened bread. The Jewish count to their Pentecost would thus have begun with their 'day one' being on the sixteenth day of Abib (Nisan), a Friday, the morrow after the first day of unleavened bread. This also would have been the day when they would have offered their wave sheaf offering.

So, the morrow after that (annual) Sabbath would then have been a Friday. Day one and the fiftieth day (seven 'weeks' plus one day) would then be the same day of the week, thus another Friday. So, Sivan six that year was a Friday, where the Disciples gathered to observe the day of Pentecost two days later, on a Sunday, that year: Sivan eight, when – as it says – the date had fully and properly come!

Was it Really a SUNDAY?

So, how do we know definitively that this day in Acts 2 was a Sunday? Well, Christ was our Wave Sheaf Offering, and we know with certainty that He was presented before the Father just hours after His resurrection on the morrow after the weekly Sabbath. (Daniel 7:13 & Psalm 110:1 with John 20:17).¹ The traditional time of day for offering the wave sheaf was early to mid-morning.

All denominations recognize this day as being a Sunday. John 20:1 also positively establishes the fact as does Matthew 28:1. So, the Jews observed their Sivan six Pentecost on a Friday that year,

¹ Daniel 7:13 describes the scene of this true wave sheaf presentation, where Psalm 110:1 shows us what was said by the Father to the Son at this event.

while the Disciples observed it on a Sunday, which is also the morrow after a weekly Sabbath, and in fact, the morrow after the seventh Sabbath! This positively was NOT a Sivan six.

Legitimate or Fraud?


So, was this later-observed Pentecost legitimate?

Why did the Disciples observe it employing a different count method than the traditionalists? Why were we given no explanation as to this obvious difference? (Incidentally, the same was the case with Passover. The Disciples observed that occasion differently also, with no explanation given to us in that case either. Is it that no explanation was needed in their days?) There obviously were differing traditions in the first century. The Jews were chided for opting to hold fast to their traditional observances, rather than following the commandments. (Mark 7:9 et al.)

This account in Acts 2 is the most inescapable indication as to the meanings of the instructions to offer the Wave Sheaf offering and by it to establish day one to the count to Pentecost on 'the morrow after the weekly Sabbath', that key Sabbath being the Sabbath that falls within the seven days of Unleavened Bread. We're given instruction when to begin the count, and exactly when to end the count: On the morrow after a weekly Sabbath in each case.

The Holy Spirit is Dramatically Given

Like with Passover, where the traditional Jewish observance was positively cancelled that year by the tearing of the Temple Veil (just as the traditional slaying of the lambs was to have begun there), so also, the fulfillment of Pentecost (its first fulfillment – there is another yet to come)² was dramatically endorsed as being the correct observance by the long prophesied³ outpouring of the Holy Spirit, on that 'morrow after that seventh Sabbath'.

This Day of Pentecost was established, counting from the presentation before the Father of the first of the Firstfruits, (what the Wave Sheaf Offering represented), that offering being accepted for us, exactly on time. 

² Pentecost, the feast of weeks, is also known as the Feast of Firstfruits!

³ Joel 2:28-32