

# The Good Word

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## THE BIBLICAL APPOINTED FEASTS OF UNLEAVENED BREAD AND PENTECOST

BY

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In the May-Jun 2016 issue of **THE GOOD WORD**<sup>1</sup> we began our study of the 7 “*Appointed Feasts*” (דְּמוֹעִים mo’edim) of Israel delineated in *Leviticus 23*, with a look at the Festival of First-Fruits. That these 7 appointed feasts (Pascha, Unleavened Bread, First-Fruits, Pentecost, Trumpets, Day of Atonement, and Tabernacles/Booths) were planned even from the time of creation and testify to our LORD’S foreknowledge of and the planning for the fall and redemption of mankind is supported by *Genesis 1:14* concerning the 4th day of creation. Unfortunately this is not readily apparent in most of our English translations<sup>2</sup> from the Septuagint or the Masoretic Hebrew text:

*And God said, Let there be lights in the firmament of the heaven<sup>3</sup> to divide the day from the night; and let them be for signs, and for seasons,<sup>4</sup> and for days, and years:*

However, when the Hebrew Masoretic (9th-10th century AD) text of *Genesis 1:14* is consulted we see

the Hebrew words being translated into English *and for seasons* is דְּמוֹעִים (vul’mo’edim). Jewish and Messianic Christian English translations of this passage include: *and for appointed seasons,<sup>5</sup> for the set times,<sup>6</sup> and for festivals,<sup>7</sup> and for appointed Feasts.<sup>8</sup> Only 2 Dead Sea scrolls, 4Q2 and 4Q10 (both from cave 4 at Qumran) contain *Genesis 1:14*. But no variations in the Hebrew Masoretic text for this verse are noted in the *Biblia Hebraica Stuttgartensia*, which lists all the variant manuscript readings.*

Commenting on why this passage is interpreted this way among the Jews, the revered Jewish medieval scholar Rabbi Solomon ben Isaac (Shlomo Yitzhaki), known as Rashi (AD 1040-1105), noted: “This refers to the future, when the Israelites are destined to be commanded concerning the festivals and they [the festivals] are reckoned from the first phase of the moon. — [from *Genesis Rabbah* 6:1].”<sup>9</sup>

Now we will consider how the appointed Biblical feasts of Unleavened Bread and Pentecost were celebrated in Judea in the time of our LORD Jesus Christ’s sojourn on earth. Both feasts were obligatory for adult male Israelites:

*Deuteronomy 16: 16-17 Three times in a year shall all thy males appear before the LORD thy God in the place which He shall choose; in the feast of unleavened bread, and in the feast of weeks,<sup>10</sup> and in the feast of tabernacles: and they shall not appear before the LORD empty: 17 Every man shall give as he is able, according to the blessing of the LORD thy God which He hath given thee.*

### THE BIBLICAL CELEBRATION OF THE FEAST OF UNLEAVENED BREAD

The Feast of Unleavened Bread is intimately associated with the Egyptian Passover and the exodus of

1. Article on the “Biblical Festival of First Fruits” available at <https://www.facebook.com/groups/1875863895991667/> and [http://www.stseraphimstjohnsandiego.org/St\\_Seraphim\\_of\\_Sarov\\_and\\_St.\\_John\\_of\\_Kronstadt\\_Orthodox\\_Church/%22THE\\_GOOD\\_WORD%22/Entries/2016/4/20\\_THE\\_GOOD\\_WORD\\_Vol\\_III%2C\\_Issue\\_5\\_May\\_Jun\\_2016.html](http://www.stseraphimstjohnsandiego.org/St_Seraphim_of_Sarov_and_St._John_of_Kronstadt_Orthodox_Church/%22THE_GOOD_WORD%22/Entries/2016/4/20_THE_GOOD_WORD_Vol_III%2C_Issue_5_May_Jun_2016.html)

2. Scripture passages are from the King James Version unless otherwise stated.

3. Brenton translation of the Septuagint LXX adds *to give light upon the earth*.

4. The Apostoliki-Diakonia official Greek Septuagint text reads καιρουσ here. <http://www.apostoliki-diakonia.gr/bible/bible.asp> Brenton, Thompson, NETS, and Michael Asser (Orthodox England) all translate it as seasons. However, depending on the context, it might also be translated as a *fixed time*, or *festal season*. such as in Exodus 23:14,17, Lev 23:4 of the LXX. See W Bauer (WF Arndt & FW Gingrich, translators, *A Greek-English Lexicon of the New Testament and Other Early Christian Literature, 2nd Ed.*, University of Chicago Press, Chicago, IL, 1979, pp.394-5, see definition 2b.

5. Chabad Translation: [http://www.chabad.org/library/bible\\_cdoaid/8165#](http://www.chabad.org/library/bible_cdoaid/8165#)

6. Jewish Publication Society, *Tanakh, The Holy Scriptures*, Jewish Publication Society, New York, NY, 5748/1988, p 3.

7. *Bereishis, Genesis*, Artscroll Tanach Series, Mesorah Publications, Ltd, Brooklyn, NY, 1989, pp. 54-56.

8. *Cepher*, Cepher Publishing Group, LLC, Eureka, Montana, 2014, p. 24. Website: [www.cepher.net](http://www.cepher.net). a Messianic Christian organization.

9. [http://www.chabad.org/library/bible\\_cdoaid/8165#](http://www.chabad.org/library/bible_cdoaid/8165#)

10. שַׁבּוּעוֹת, *Shavuot*, is the traditional Jewish name of this feast.



Israel from Egypt and is well described in the scriptures:

**Exodus 12:1-20** The LORD said to Moses and Aaron in the land of Egypt: 2 This month shall mark for you the beginning of months; it shall be the first month of the year for you. 3 Tell the whole congregation of Israel that on the tenth of this month they are to take a lamb for each family, a lamb for each household. 4 If a household is too small for a whole lamb, it shall join its closest neighbor in obtaining one; the lamb shall be divided in proportion to the number of people who eat of it. 5 Your lamb shall be without blemish, a year-old male; you may take it from the sheep or from the goats.

6 You shall keep it until the fourteenth day of this month; then the whole assembled congregation of Israel shall slaughter it at twilight. 7 They shall take some of the blood and put it on the two doorposts and the lintel of the houses in which they eat it. 8 They shall eat the lamb that same night; they shall eat it roasted over the fire **with unleavened bread** and bitter herbs. 9 Do not eat any of it raw or boiled in water, but roasted over the fire, with its head, legs, and inner organs. 10 You shall let none of it remain until the morning; anything that remains until the morning you shall burn. 11 This is how you shall eat it: your loins girded, your sandals on your feet, and your staff in your hand; and **you shall eat it hurriedly. It is the passover of the LORD.** 12 For I will pass through the land of Egypt that night, and I will strike down every firstborn in the land of Egypt, both human beings and animals; **on all the gods of Egypt I will execute judgments: I am the LORD.** 13 **The blood shall be a sign for you on the houses where you live: when I see the blood, I will pass over you, and no plague shall destroy you when I strike the land of Egypt.** 14 **This day shall be a day of remembrance for you. You shall celebrate it as a festival to the LORD; throughout your generations you shall observe it as a perpetual ordinance.** 15 **Seven days you shall eat unleavened bread; on the first day you shall remove leaven from your houses, for whoever eats leavened bread from the first day until the seventh day shall be cut off from Israel.** 16 **On the first day you shall hold a solemn assembly, and on the seventh day a solemn assembly; no work shall be done on those days; only what everyone must eat, that alone may be prepared by you.** 17 **You shall observe the festival of unleavened bread, for on this very day I brought your companies out of the land of Egypt: you shall observe this day throughout your generations as a perpetual ordinance.** 18 **In the first month, from the evening of the fourteenth day until the evening of the twenty-first day, you shall eat unleavened bread.** 19 **For seven days no leaven shall be found in your houses; for whoever eats**

**what is leavened shall be cut off from the congregation of Israel, whether an alien or a native of the land.** 20 **You shall eat nothing leavened; in all your settlements you shall eat unleavened bread ...**

**Exodus 12:37-39** The Israelites journeyed from Rameses to Succoth, about six hundred thousand men on foot, besides children. 38 A mixed crowd also went up with them, and livestock in great numbers, both flocks and herds. 39 **They baked unleavened cakes of the dough that they had brought out of Egypt; it was not leavened, because they were driven out of Egypt and could not wait, nor had they prepared any provisions for themselves.**

**Leviticus 23:4-8** These are the feasts of the LORD, even holy convocations, which ye shall proclaim in their seasons. 5 **In the fourteenth day of the first month at even is the LORD's passover.** 6 **And on the fifteenth day of the same month is the feast of unleavened bread unto the LORD; seven days must ye eat unleavened bread.** 7 **In the first day ye shall have a holy convocation unto you; ye shall do no servile work therein.** 8 **But ye shall offer an offering made by fire unto the LORD seven days; in the seventh day is a holy convocation: ye shall do no servile work therein ...**

#### **JEWISH PRACTICE OF CELEBRATING THE FEAST OF UNLEAVENED BREAD IN THE TIME OF CHRIST**

The traditional Jewish practices of celebrating the Feast of Unleavened Bread in the time of Jesus are described in the Rabbinical books of oral tradition known as the *Mishnah* and the *Talmud*. They provide additional information to the biblical record. The *Mishnah*, literally meaning "teaching" or "instruction" is a terse summary of Jewish Law and practices compiled in Israel after the crushing defeat of Judea in A.D. 70 by the Roman Armies of Vespasian. The final form of the book emerged about A.D. 200. Additional rabbinic commentary related to the *Mishnah* is found in the collected writings of the two rabbinic schools: the *Babylonian* and *Jerusalem Talmudim*. These additions are known as the *Gemara* ("that which is learned from the tradition"). Several hundred years were required to edit these latter texts to their present form (c. AD 600).

*Babylonian Talmud*<sup>11</sup>-- **Tractate PESACHIM: (2a) Mishnah 1:1. ON THE EVENING [OR] OF THE FOURTEENTH [OF NISAN] A SEARCH IS MADE FOR LEAVEN BY THE LIGHT OF A LAMP..**

*Babylonian Talmud* -- **Tractate PESACHIM: (5b) GEMARA ...It was taught likewise: '[Even] the first day ye shall put away leaven out of your houses': [this means] on the eve of the Festival. Yet perhaps that is not so, but**

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11. *Hebrew-English Edition of the Babylonian Talmud, Seder Mo'ed Pesachim*, The Soncino Press, London, 1983.

[rather] on the Festival itself? – Therefore it is stated, ‘**thou shalt not offer the blood of thy sacrifice with leavened bread,**’ [i.e.,] **thou shalt not kill the Passover sacrifice while leavened bread still exists [in thy, house]:** that is R. Ishmael’s view. R. Akiba said, That is unnecessary: lo, it is said, ‘**Even the first day ye shall put away leaven out of your houses**’, and it is written, **no manner of work shall be done in them; while we find that kindling is a principal labour.** R. Jose said, It is unnecessary: lo, it is said, ‘Even [ak] on the first day ye shall put away leaven out of your houses’: [that means,] from the eve of the Festival. Or perhaps it is not so, but rather on the Festival? Therefore is stated, ‘Ak’, which serves to divide; hence if [it means] on the Festival itself, can [part of it] be permitted? Surely the putting away of leaven is likened to [the prohibition of] eating leavened bread, while the prohibition of eating leavened bread is likened to [the duty of] eating unleavened bread.

An important point is made here. The Mosaic Law commands that during the Feast of Unleavened Bread no leaven is to be found within their households for the entire 7 days of the feast. Yet, it also commands that on the first day you should put away the leaven from your houses. At the same time the Law commands that no work is to be done on the first day. Obviously, the searching for and burning of the last bits of leaven had to be done on the previous day. Indeed, the interpreters of the Torah found the solution in beginning the search for leaven almost 24 hours earlier --at the beginning of the 14th of Nisan, the eve of the Passover. And, indeed, the 1st century Jewish-Roman historian Flavius Josephus describes the Feast as one of eight days, not seven: “Whence it is that, in memory of the want we were then in, we keep a feast for eight days, which is called *the feast of unleavened bread.*”<sup>12</sup> Thus, in the year Christ was condemned and crucified, the Jews would have considered it starting at dusk, the beginning of Thursday the 14th of Nisan (night of the Last Supper), and continuing till dusk at the end of the 21st of Nisan on Friday (after the burial of Christ).

**Babylonian Talmud -- Tractate PESACHIM: (10b) Mishnah 1:3. R. JUDAH SAID: WE SEARCH [FOR LEAVEN] ON THE EVENING OF THE FOURTEENTH, AND IN THE MORNING OF THE FOURTEENTH, AND AT THE TIME OF REMOVAL. BUT THE SAGES MAINTAIN: IF HE DID NOT SEARCH IN THE EVENING OF THE FOURTEENTH, HE MUST SEARCH ON THE FOURTEENTH; IF HE DID NOT SEARCH IN [THE MORNING OF] THE FOURTEENTH, HE MUST SEARCH AT THE APPOINTED TIME; IF HE DID NOT SEARCH AT THE APPOINTED TIME, HE MUST SEARCH AFTER THE APPOINTED TIME. AND WHAT HE LEAVES OVER HE MUST PUT AWAY IN A**

12. Josephus F. *Antiquities of the Jews* ii, 15, 1, in *The Works of Flavius Josephus, Vol II*, ,, Baker Book House, Grand Rapids, MI, 1974, p. 171.

**HIDDEN PLACE, SO THAT HE SHOULD NOT NEED SEARCHING AFTER IT.**

Here we see the Rabbis confirming that Jewish days begin with the evening and are followed by the night, morning, and afternoon. So the leaven would have to have been removed preferably Thursday evening, night, or in the morning, and certainly by dusk when the Sabbath began when no work would have been allowed.

**Babylonian Talmud -- Tractate PESACHIM: (11a/b) Mishnah 1:4. R. MEIR SAID: ONE MAY EAT [LEAVEN] THE WHOLE OF THE FIVE [HOURS] AND MUST BURN [IT] AT THE BEGINNING OF THE SIXTH. R. JUDAH SAID: ONE MAY EAT THE WHOLE OF THE FOUR [HOURS]. KEEP IT IN SUSPENSE THE WHOLE OF THE FIFTH, AND MUST BURN IT AT THE BEGINNING OF THE SIXTH. R. JUDAH SAID FURTHER: TWO UNFIT LOAVES OF THE THANKS OFFERING USED TO LIE ON THE ROOF OF THE [TEMPLE] IZTABA: AS LONG AS THEY LAY [THERE] ALL THE PEOPLE WOULD EAT [LEAVEN]; WHEN ONE WAS REMOVED, THEY WOULD KEEP IT IN SUSPENSE, NEITHER EATING NOR BURNING [IT]; WHEN BOTH WERE REMOVED, ALL THE PEOPLE COMMENCED BURNING [THEIR LEAVEN]. R. GAMALIEL SAID: HULLIN {unconsecrated food} MAY BE EATEN THE WHOLE OF THE FOUR [HOURS] AND TERUMAH {leaven in the status of heave offering} THE WHOLE OF THE FIVE [HOURS]. AND WE BURN [THEM] AT THE BEGINNING OF THE SIXTH [HOUR].**

This mishnah essentially notes that leavened bread could be eaten as late as the 5th hour, or 11:00 A.M. on the 14th of Nisan, the morning before the sacrifice of the passover lambs which started in the early afternoon.

Interpreting leaven allegorically, we understand that leaven is often synonymous with sin in the Scriptures. E.g.:

**1 Corinthians 5:6-8: Your boasting is not a good thing. Do you not know that a little yeast leavens the whole batch of dough? 7 Clean out the old yeast so that you may be a new batch, as you really are unleavened. For our paschal lamb, Christ, has been sacrificed. 8 Therefore, let us celebrate the festival, not with the old yeast, the yeast of malice and evil, but with the unleavened bread of sincerity and truth.**

During the Last Supper on Thursday evening after dusk, the 14th of Nisan just beginning, our LORD Jesus Christ unmasked the leaven of sin (and Satan) in Judas and had him depart from the rest of His disciples, thus, removing the “leaven” from their midst. Similarly, later that night, after Christ’s arrest, in their interrogation and condemnation of Him, the Chief Priests and Elders mistakenly thought they were unmasking what they considered the “leaven” in Jesus and needed to remove



His presumed corrupting influence on the nation of Israel by the 6th hour (noon) at the latest. But they were able to have him condemned by Pilate to crucifixion by the 3rd hour (9:00 am). Thus they purged Israel of Him Whom they considered the “corrupting leaven” in their midst by turning Him over to the Romans early that very morning (for only the Romans had the authority to carry out capital punishment):

*Babylonian Talmud, Tractate SANHEDRIN (43a): Mishnah 6.1 ... GEMARA ... On the eve of the Passover Yeshu [Jesus’ name in Aramaic] [Footnote: Ms. M. adds ‘the Nasarean’] was hanged ... ‘He is going forth to be stoned because he has practised sorcery and enticed Israel to apostasy ... since nothing was brought forward in his favour he was hanged on the eve of the Passover! [Footnote: A Florentine Ms. adds: and the eve of Sabbath] — ‘Ulla retorted: Do you suppose that he was one for whom a defence could be made? Was he not a Mesith [enticer], concerning whom Scripture says, Neither shalt thou spare, neither shalt thou conceal him?’<sup>13</sup>*

Yes, our LORD Jesus Christ was purged like leaven from unbelieving Israel and on the very eve of Passover, the 14th of Nisan--and before dusk when the weekly and festival sabbath began.

*Babylonian Talmud -- Tractate PESACHIM: (50a) Mishnah 4:1. WHERE IT IS THE CUSTOM TO DO WORK ON THE EVE OF PASSOVER UNTIL MIDDAY ONE MAY DO [WORK];*

*Babylonian Talmud -- Tractate PESACHIM: (55a) Mishnah 4:5 ...BUT THE SAGES MAINTAIN, IN JUDEA THEY USED TO DO WORK ON THE EVE OF PASSOVER UNTIL MIDDAY,*

This means that the Sanhedrin could potentially work as late as noon in Judea on the morning of the 14th of Nisan. In other words, in the *Gospel of St. John*, chapter 18, the High Priest, chief priests, and elders of the Sanhedrin needed to finish their interrogation, condemnation, and delivery of Christ to Pilate for crucifixion by noon or risk breaking the Oral Law for Unleavened Bread by working past the allotted time and thereby become defiled--no matter that they condemned an innocent man to death in the meantime! They also seemed more concerned about entering into the Pretorium and becoming defiled by contact with the Gentiles so as not to be able to perform their duty as priests in the Temple (*Leviticus 22:1-7*). Were they to become defiled, they would be denied the choicest parts (the תְּרוּמָה, the terumah) of the lambs designated as festal peace offerings<sup>14</sup> (the חֲגִיגָה, the chagigah) (*Leviticus 7:28-34*). For this type of defilement they

would have to be bathed for the day and would become clean only in the evening. They remained unclean throughout the afternoon of the sacrifices of the passover and the festal peace offerings. Were the priests to be unclean, they would not be able to serve in the Temple, and would receive none of the terumahs that afternoon--lest they should be cut off from Israel. But after dusk they would be clean and would be allowed to eat their own Passover lambs, as long as the lambs had been slain by clean priests. Their slaying of the festival chagigahs, also traditionally called “passover lambs”, and their eating of the choicest parts in the Temple on the afternoon of the Eve of Passover, is what is meant by *Gospel of St. John 18:28*: *Then led they Jesus from Caiaphas unto the hall of judgment: and it was early; and they themselves went not into the judgment hall, lest they should be defiled; but that they might eat the passover.* This will be covered in great depth in a future article on the Appointed Feast of Passover.

#### SPIRITUAL LESSONS IN THE FEAST OF UNLEAVENED BREAD

We have examined almost exclusively the eve of the Feast of Unleavened Bread as it was practiced in Judea in the time of Christ. Yet the feast with its eating of unleavened bread continued for another week just as our Orthodox Paschal celebration continues through Bright Week until the Sunday of St. Thomas. What spiritual lessons are to be learned from it? Let’s turn to *I Corinthians 5:6-7* and see what St. John Chrysostom has to say about this in Homily XV:

[7.] ... “But if a man asketh me, he shall hear not of Egypt nor of Pharaoh; **but of our deliverance from the deceit of demons and the darkness of the devil**: not of Moses but of the Son of God; not of a Red Sea but of a Baptism overflowing with ten thousand blessings, where the “old man” is drowned.

“Again, shouldest thou ask the Jew why he expels all leaven from all his borders; here he will even be silent and will not so much as state any reason ... ”

“[8.] But first let us explain why the leaven is cast out of all their borders. What then is the hidden meaning? **The believer must be freed from all iniquity. For as among them he [the Jew] perishes with whomsoever is found old leaven, so also with us [Christians] wheresoever is found iniquity: since of course the punishment being so great in that which is a shadow, in our case it cannot choose but be much greater. For if they so carefully clear their houses of leaven, and pry into mouse-holes; much more ought we to search through the soul so as to cast out every unclean thought ...**

“[11.] But I have a strong conviction that the saying

13. *Hebrew-English Edition of the Babylonian Talmud, Seder Nezikin, Sanhedrin*, The Soncino Press, London, 1987.

14. Cf. *Leviticus 7:28-34 and 10:12-15*.



about the leaven refers also to the priests who suffer a vast deal of the old leaven to be within, not purging out from their borders, that is, out of the Church, the covetous, the extortioners, and whatsoever would exclude from the kingdom of Heaven ...”<sup>15</sup>

#### THE BIBLICAL CELEBRATION OF THE FEAST OF WEEKS

The Feast of Weeks is the second of the three great annual appointed pilgrim feasts in which all Israelite males were required to appear. Thus, once the city of David, Jerusalem, became the capital, and once the Temple was erected with its Holy of Holies containing the Ark with the staff of Moses, the jars of manna, and the Tablets of the Law, the LORD consecrated it with His own presence. Henceforth, it was the Temple to which all the male Israelites were then required to celebrate each of these feasts:

**Exodus 34:22:** *And thou shalt observe the feast of weeks [תַּבְּעֵת], of the firstfruits of wheat harvest ...*

**Deuteronomy 16:9-12:** *9 Seven weeks shalt thou number unto thee: begin to number the seven weeks from such time as thou beginnest to put the sickle to the corn. 10 And thou shalt keep the feast of weeks unto the LORD thy God with a tribute of a freewill offering of thine hand, which thou shalt give unto the LORD thy God, according as the LORD thy God hath blessed thee: 11 And thou shalt rejoice before the LORD thy God, thou, and thy son, and thy daughter, and thy manservant, and thy maidservant, and the Levite that is within thy gates, and the stranger, and the fatherless, and the widow, that are among you, in the place which the LORD thy God hath chosen to place his name there. 12 And thou shalt remember that thou wast a bondman in Egypt: and thou shalt observe and do these statutes.*

**Leviticus 23:14-21** *And ye shall eat neither bread, nor parched corn, nor green ears, 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. 15 And ye shall count unto you from the morrow after the sabbath, from the day<sup>16</sup> that ye brought the sheaf<sup>17</sup> of the wave offering; seven sabbaths shall be complete: 16 Even until the morrow after the seventh sabbath shall ye number fifty days; and ye shall offer a new meat offering<sup>18</sup> unto the LORD. 17 Ye shall bring out of your habitations two wave*

*loaves of two tenth deals<sup>19</sup>: they shall be of fine flour; they shall be baken with leaven; they are the firstfruits unto the LORD. 18 And ye shall offer with the bread seven lambs without blemish of the first year, and one young bullock, and two rams: they shall be for a burnt offering unto the LORD, with their meat offering, and their drink offerings, even an offering made by fire, of sweet savour unto the LORD. 19 Then ye shall sacrifice one kid of the goats for a sin offering, and two lambs of the first year for a sacrifice of peace offerings. 20 And the priest shall wave them with the bread of the firstfruits for a wave offering before the LORD, with the two lambs: they shall be holy to the LORD for the priest. 21 And ye shall proclaim on the selfsame day, that it may be an holy convocation unto you: ye shall do no servile work therein: it shall be a statute for ever in all your dwellings throughout your generations.*

Unlike the other 6 feasts which are appointed to a specific date on the Jewish calendar, no date is prescribed for the Feast of Weeks, but rather an interval of 50 days following the Feast of First Fruits, the day after the sabbath of the Feast of Unleavened Bread. But was that the weekly sabbath or the 1st day of the festival which was also called a sabbath? The rabbis considered the day to be the festival sabbath, so the second day of the Feast of Unleavened Bread was the day of First Fruits, so it could potentially be any day of the week, and its calendar date variable--a moveable feast. But in the 1st century AD the Sadducees and later, in the middle ages, the Karaite Jews<sup>20</sup> reasoned that the proper day was the day after the weekly Sabbath, so always a Sunday.

So, how was it practiced in our LORD Jesus Christ's day? Both the Jewish-Roman historian Flavius Josephus (c. AD 37 - c. AD 100) and the Jewish philosopher Philo (20 BC - AD 50) wrote about this feast and both concurred that the Feast of First Fruits was celebrated on the second day of the Feast of Unleavened Bread.<sup>21,22</sup> Thus, they agreed with the Pharisees that the date and day of the week of the 50th day was variable. Importantly, in Jesus' day, since the Feast of Unleavened Bread officially started on the

15. <https://www.ccel.org/ccelschaff/npnf112.iv.xvi.html>

16. the appointed day of First-fruits

17. עֶמֶר, the omer, a refined flour/meal offering, not a sheaf of grain. See footnote 1.

18. new meat offering here refers to flour/meal offering, which are the two loaves of leavened bread

19. a deal corresponds with an ephod in the Hebrew, a unit of volume.

20. A sect of Judaism arising in the 7th century AD who rejected the authority of the Oral Law. They recognized the authority only of the Hebrew Scriptures and their natural interpretation, not that of the Sanhedrin, Pharisees, rabbis in the *Midrashim*, *Talmudim* and other works of Rabbinic Judaism.

21. Josephus F, *Antiquities of the Jews*, Book III, Chapter X, 5, in Whiston W (translator), *The Works of Flavius Josephus*, Vol. II, Baker Book House, Grand Rapids, MI, 1978, p. 218.

22. Philo, "The Special Laws, Treatise II," Section XXIX, (¶162-175), in Yonge CD, (translator), *The Works of Philo, Complete and Unabridged*, Hendrickson Publishers, Peabody, MA 1993, pp. 583-4.



weekly sabbath, both the festal and weekly sabbaths were exactly the same day -- perhaps the reason that the Apostle John described that sabbath as being a great sabbath:

*Gospel of St. John 19:31 (Young's Literal Translation of the Holy Bible)* *The Jews, therefore, that the bodies might not remain on the cross on the sabbath, since it was the preparation, (for that sabbath day was a great one,) asked of Pilate that their legs may be broken, and they taken away.*<sup>23,24</sup>

Consequently, the day of First Fruits for Jesus' last Feast of Unleavened Bread was Sunday, the day of His resurrection. Since, by tradition, the Jews counted the 50 days to the Feast of Weeks by counting the day of First Fruits itself as the first of the 50 days, when the day of Pentecost was fully come, it would have been a Sunday.

Because of the variableness of the day and date of this feast, it is not discussed in the *Mishnah, Seder Mo'ed* where the other appointed feasts with specific dates are discussed. It is a variable feast according to their calendar, not a fixed feast with an appointed date.

However, there is a very short tractate (full of minutia) for First Fruits in the *Mishnah, Seder Zeraim* (Agriculture), entitled *Bikkurim* (First Fruits) that discusses aspects of the freewill offerings brought to the Temple on this day, but there are no *Gemara*, thus there is no Tractate in the *Babylonian Talmud* for the feast. In *Mishnah 1:3* those freewill offerings must be from the 7 kinds for which the land of Israel was noted, i.e., those listed in *Deuteronomy 8:8* ... *wheat, and barley, and vines, and fig trees, and pomegranates; a land of oil olive, and honey.* And, as we saw in *Exodus 34:22* above, this time corresponded primarily with the wheat harvest.

Much more interesting is the offering of the two loaves of leavened bread--in stark contrast to Passover and the Feast of Unleavened Bread where leaven was absolutely forbidden. Indeed, in regular meal offering, no leaven was permitted:

**Leviticus 2:11** *No meat [meal / flour] offering, which*

23. *Young's Literal Translation of the Holy Bible* was created by Robert Young who also compiled *Young's Analytical Concordance*. Produced and printed in the late 19th century, <http://www.biblestudytools.com/yjt/john/19.html>

24. Official Greek Bible text: **Κατὰ Ἰωάννην** 19:31 Οἱ οὖν Ἰουδαῖοι, ἵνα μὴ μείνη ἐπὶ τοῦ σταυροῦ τὰ σώματα ἐν τῷ σαββάτῳ, ἐπεὶ παρασκευῆ ἦν· ἦν γὰρ μεγάλη ἡ ἡμέρα ἐκείνη τοῦ σαββάτου· ἠρώτησαν τὸν Πιλάτον ἵνα καταγαῶσιν αὐτῶν τὰ σκέλη, καὶ ἀρθῶσιν. . [http://www.apostoliki-diakonia.gr/bible/bible.asp?contents=new\\_testament/contents\\_ioanni.asp&main=ioanni&file=1.4.1.htm](http://www.apostoliki-diakonia.gr/bible/bible.asp?contents=new_testament/contents_ioanni.asp&main=ioanni&file=1.4.1.htm)

*ye shall bring unto the LORD, shall be made with leaven: for ye shall burn no leaven, nor any honey, in any offering of the LORD made by fire.*

Unleavened bread reminded the Jews of their departure from the land of Egypt, a land of bondage and slavery for them.

St. Paul, circumcised on the 8th day, a Hebrew of Hebrews of the tribe of Benjamin, as touching the law a Pharisee, equated sin with leaven and Egypt and Pharaoh to the bondage of sin and to Satan. Yet, here, on the 50th day, only leavened bread is presented before the LORD. So what is going on here? Do the unbelieving Jews have any idea? The following Orthodox Jewish commentary<sup>25</sup> reveals that they really have no understanding of what these loaves represent:

“On the Festival of Shavuot [Weeks], the Torah [Five Books of Moses] requires an offering of two loaves of leavened bread. These are accompanied by two communal *shelamim* lambs [peace-offerings], as well as ten *olah* [elevation] offerings and one *chatas* [sin-offering]. This offering serves to permit the year's new crop of grain to be used in Temple offerings. (The *omer* offering brought previously on Pesach [Pascha] only permitted the new grain to be used for *personal* consumption, but not for Temple offerings.) Although no part of these loaves is placed on the Altar, (indeed, it is forbidden even to offer anything leavened (*chametz*) on the Altar [*Vayikra/Leviticus*] 2:11), they become sanctified by the slaughter of the two lambs and thereby subject to all the prohibitions and invalidations that relate to sanctified offerings. **The Torah requires the two loaves to be “waved” together with the two lambs**, and the loaves are eaten by the Kohanim [priests] once the blood *avodah*<sup>26</sup> of the lambs has been completed.”

There it is--just a requirement of the Torah! Rashi provides no insight either.

To the Jews *Shavuot* (Pentecost) represents the birth of Israel as a nation, since they consider Pentecost to be the time of the giving of the Torah to Moses on Mount Sinai after their crossing of the Red Sea, i.e., 50 days after their Egyptian Passover. Moses and the children of Israel came to Mount Sinai on the 3rd day of the 3rd

25. Rabbi Yehezkel Danziger & Rabbi Hersh Goldwurm, *Summary of the Laws of Korbanos, E. Additional Minchah-type Offerings*, in *Vayikra/Leviticus, A New Translation with a Commentary Anthologized from Talmudic, Midrashic and Rabbinic Sources, Vol. III(a)*, ArtScroll Tanach Series, Mesorah Publications, Ltd., 1990, p. 301.

26. The *avodah* refers to the ritual slaughter of the lambs, collection of their blood in a sacred vessel, carrying of their blood, and the application of the blood to the altar by the priests.



month (Exodus 19:1). The LORD descended on Mount Sinai 3 days later, which, according to Jewish Tradition, was on the 6th of the month (of Sivan), and spoke the Law to Moses who wrote it down in the Book of the Covenant סֵפֶר הַבְּרִית, the “Old Covenant,” and read it within the hearing of all the people (*Exodus 24:7*). That was 51 days after the eating of the Passover lambs by Israel, and 50 days after the second day of Unleavened Bread (the appointed date of First Fruits which began the 50 day countdown to Shavuot). So, for the Jews, *Shavuot* marks the beginning of the Old Covenant for the children of Israel. But where is their understanding of the two loaves? Nowhere to be seen.

For the Christian, the descent of the Holy Spirit on the Apostles at Pentecost represents the beginning of the priesthood of grace -- not the birth of the Church as many erroneously believe. St. Clement of Rome wrote, “The books and the apostles declare that the church not only exists now but has been in existence from the beginning,” before the sun and the moon and at least from the time the angels were created since they were members of the Church from the beginning.<sup>27</sup> On Pentecost a New Covenant was established with the house of Israel and the house of Judah:

*Jeremiah 31:31-34, Behold, the days come, saith the LORD, that I will make a new covenant with the house of Israel, and with the house of Judah: 32 Not according to the covenant that I made with their fathers in the day that I took them by the hand to bring them out of the land of Egypt; which my covenant they brake, although I was an husband unto them, saith the LORD:*

*33 But this shall be the covenant that I will make with the house of Israel; After those days, saith the LORD, I will put my law in their inward parts, and write it in their hearts; and will be their God, and they shall be my people. 34 And they shall teach no more every man his neighbour, and every man his brother, saying, Know the LORD: for they shall all know me, from the least of them unto the greatest of them, saith the LORD: for I will forgive their iniquity, and I will remember their sin no more.*

*Joel 2:28-32 And it shall come to pass afterward, that I will pour out my spirit upon all flesh; and your sons and your daughters shall prophesy, your old men shall dream dreams, your young men shall see visions: 29 And also upon the servants and upon the handmaids in those days will I pour out my spirit ...32 And it shall come to pass, that whosoever shall call on the name of*

27. Clement of Rome, “Clement 2, ¶14” in Michael Holmes, *The Apostolic Fathers, Greek Texts and English Translations, 3rd Ed.*, Baker Academic, Grand Rapids MI, 2007, p. 157.

*the LORD shall be delivered: for in mount Zion and in Jerusalem shall be deliverance, as the LORD hath said, and in the remnant whom the LORD shall call.*

*Acts 11:15-18 And as I [St. Peter speaking to the Apostles in Jerusalem] began to speak, the Holy Ghost fell on them, as on us at the beginning. 16 Then remembered I the word of the Lord, how that he said, John indeed baptized with water; but ye shall be baptized with the Holy Ghost. 17 Forasmuch then as God gave them the like gift as he did unto us, who believed on the Lord Jesus Christ; what was I, that I could withstand God? 18 When they heard these things, they held their peace, and glorified God, saying, Then hath God also to the Gentiles granted repentance unto life.*

With the blossoming of the New Testament Church as documented in *Acts of the Apostles*, and the *Epistles of St. Paul*, the meaning of these two loaves has become apparent: The leavened loaf in one hand, offered up and waved before the LORD, represents the Israel of God composed of Jewish followers of Christ Jesus. The loaf in the other hand represents the Gentile followers of Christ Jesus. Both are chosen by God and both are holy to Him. Our hierarchs and presbyters, who have replaced the Aaronic priesthood of Israel, now lift up their flocks in intercessory prayer to our Father in Heaven. Holy, yet not without sin like Christ, Orthodox Christian believers, whether Jew or Gentile, are represented by these two indistinguishable loaves as the Venerable Bede (AD 672-735) writes:

“Two loaves of bread made from the first fruits of the new harvest were rightly ordered to be offered, for the church gathers those it can consecrate to its Redeemer as a new family from both peoples, the Jews and the Gentiles.”<sup>28</sup>

Thus, the leavened bread represents the living bricks that form the body of Christ, holy, but mixed with sin.

HOMILY ON HOLY PENTECOST  
ST. JOHN MAXIMOVICH, ARCHBISHOP OF SHANGHAI  
AND SAN FRANCISCO<sup>29</sup>

“The Father, the Son and the Holy Spirit share one nature, one essence, one substance. That is why the Three Faces are the Trinity, one-in-substance. Humans also have one nature, one substance. But while God is the Indivisible Trinity, divisions occur in mankind constantly...

“The Father, the Son and the Holy Spirit have common

28. Venerable Bede, on *Leviticus 23:17 Two Loaves of Bread, Homilies on the Gospels*, 2:17, as quoted in *Old Testament III: Exodus, Leviticus, Numbers, Deuteronomy*, Ancient Christian Commentary on Scripture, Intervarsity Press, Downers Grove, IL, 2001, p. 194.

29. <http://www.pravoslavie.ru/english/62403.htm>



## THE GOOD WORD

c/o St. Seraphim of Sarov & St. John of Kronstadt Orthodox Church  
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thought, common will, common actions. What the Father desires, the Son also desires, and the Holy Spirit also desires. Whatever the Son loves, so do the Father and the Holy Spirit also love. Whatever is pleasing to the Holy Spirit, is pleasing to the Father and Son. Their actions are also common among them, all act in conjunction and in accord. This is not so with man. We are in constant disagreement, we have differing desires. Even a small child expresses his own wishes, willfulness, disobedience to his loving parents. As he grows older, he separates from them more, and so often in our day becomes completely alienated from them. People simply don't share identical opinions, on the contrary, there are perpetual divisions in all things, quarrels and conflicts between individuals, wars between nations.

“Adam and Eve, before their Fall, were in full accord and of common spirit with one another at all times. Having sinned, alienation was immediately sensed. Justifying himself before God, Adam blamed Eve. Their sin divided them and continues to divide all of mankind. Emancipated from sin, we approach God, and, filled with His grace, we sense our unity with the rest of mankind. Such unity is very imperfect and lacking, since in each person some portion of sin remains. The closer we approach God, the closer we approach each other, just as the closer rays of light are to each other, the closer they are to the Sun.

“In the coming Kingdom of God there will be unity, mutual love and concord. The Holy Trinity remains

eternally unchanging, all-perfect, united in essence and indivisible. The One, Indivisible Trinity ever remains the Trinity. The Father always remains the Father, the Son remains the Son, the Holy Spirit remains the Holy Spirit. Besides Their personal Properties, They all share all in common and in unity. That is why the Holy Trinity is One God.”

SUNDAY OF PENTECOST, MATINS, SESSIONAL HYMN  
FOLLOWING THE FIRST READING FROM THE PSALTER

*Fourth Tone. Joseph was amazed*

“Let us faithful celebrate  
this fair post-festal time with joy  
and the final festival:

this is the day of Pentecost,  
which now fulfilleth the promise and **time appointed.**

For on this day, the fire  
of the Good Comforter  
straightway came on earth,  
like unto tongues in form,  
and it enlightened the disciples  
and made them Heaven's initiates.

Behold, the Comforter's light hath come down  
and enlightened the whole world.”<sup>30</sup>

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30. Sunday of Pentecost, Matins, Sessional Hymn following the first reading from the Psalter, *Pentecostarion*, 2nd edition, Holy Transfiguration Monastery, Boston, MA, 2014, p. 240.