

When Is PENTECOST?

Anciently, God told His people Israel to 'COUNT' from the morrow after the wave sheaf offering (Omer) fifty days to arrive at the "Feast of Sabbaths" or the "Feast of Firstfruits." From the practice of counting seven Sabbaths plus one day, or fifty days, the High Day Holy Day of "Firstfruits" became known as "Pentecost," or "Fiftieth." Here, from your Bible, is HOW to count the fifty days to Pentecost.

By Garner Ted Armstrong

The only one of God's Holy Days which was never given a fixed date was "Pentecost," or the "Feast of Sabbaths" (Shavuot).

All others, from the Passover to the Last Great Day following the Feast of Tabernacles, are on fixed dates of God's calendar.

WHY did God tell the Israelites to COUNT from a certain day to the fiftieth day following the Wave Sheaf offering? To answer that question, you need to remember that God's annual Sabbaths are seasonal; that they revolve around the spring and the fall harvests in Palestine. Why is this so? Because the rich types associated with God's annual holy days reveal God's PLAN He is working out here below — the plan of the redemption and salvation of mankind! Creation was not completed in the Garden of Eden, it was merely begun!

And because the harvests are always dependent upon weather; upon the yearly journey of the earth around the sun; the monthly journeys of the moon around the earth [the lunar month], the phases of the moon and associated weather phenomena, and because they are not always the SAME each year, God told Israel to COUNT fifty days to arrive at Pentecost from the day following the "Wave Sheaf Offering."

Notice it, "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..." (Leviticus 23:15,16). Seems simple enough. All they needed to do was to determine when they should offer the "Wave Sheaf Offering." But the Wave Sheaf, which was an armload of barley which had just begun to form ears, could not be waved in thanksgiving and supplication to God until it had reached the stage where it had become a sheaf of "green ears."

Again, this is simple enough! You cannot wave a sheaf of ripening grain until the grain is in the ear, and clearly visible!

In this simple statement is found the key to prevent much confusion and misunderstanding. For example, modern-day Rabbis of Orthodox Jewry celebrate their "Shavuot" (they do not use the New Testament term, "Pentecost") on the 6th of Sivan. Why? Because they decided that the count should begin, NOT on the morrow after the Wave Sheaf offering, but on the second day of "Hag HaMatzot" (the 16th of Nisan)! This would automatically bring them to the 6th of Sivan each year.

Once this error had been made, there was no further need to COUNT to find the correct date for Pentecost, for they had now assigned a specific date on the calendar for their "Shavuot" each year. There is no need to count if God intended that the count always begin on the SAME DATE! If this had been intended, then the "terminus ad quem" would ALSO be a fixed date, just as are all of the other annual Sabbaths! The key is found in the simple command to COUNT FROM a certain day!

God's annual Holy Days revolved around the seasons. The Spring Barley Harvest depicts the "firstfruits" of salvation. In this truth is the destruction of the falsehood that "Today is the ONLY day of salvation" taught by

most "evangelical" and "missionary" churches! There is a "firstfruits" to God among all mankind, and there is a later "harvest" of the earth AFTER the millennium.

When John saw the redeemed in vision, at the time of the beginning of the Kingdom of God on earth, He said, "...These are they which follow the Lamb whithersoever he goeth. These were redeemed from among men, being the firstfruits unto God and to the Lamb" (Revelation 14:4).

Jesus Christ is the FIRST of the firstfruits of the harvest. Since the armload of barley, called the "wave sheaf" was the FIRST cutting of the barley, it depicted Jesus Christ CUT OFF from among the living, being offered to God as a perfect sacrifice, not yet having ascended to God the Father in heaven. It depicted the RISEN Christ, being offered to God, not yet having been taken up to heaven.

Christ arose on a late Sabbath afternoon. But He ROSE to God the Father ON THE SUNDAY FOLLOWING THE RESURRECTION! Paul wrote, "But now is Christ risen from the dead, and become the firstfruits of them that slept" (1 Corinthians 15:20).

For decades, the church taught that we should count fifty days "from the morrow after the Sabbath during the days of Unleavened Bread." This was correct insofar as it applied when the Sunday following the wave sheaf fell WITHIN the Days of Unleavened Bread. But it was NOT correct when the Sunday following the Wave Sheaf falls OUTSIDE the Days of Unleavened Bread, as it does every few years! The count must begin on the morning following the WAVE SHEAF OFFERING. In other words, the count always begins ON A SUNDAY DURING THE DAYS OF UNLEAVENED BREAD. Counting from a Sunday (inclusively) for seven weeks plus one day ($49 + 1 = 50$) brings us to the SUNDAY seven weeks later!

Pentecost is always on a Sunday! The error is found in the assumption that the count begins "after the weekly Sabbath!" Therefore, when, as in the case of 2001, the Weekly Sabbath during the Days of Unleavened Bread does not fall until the LAST DAY OF UNLEAVENED BREAD, it was assumed by some that the count should begin with the Sunday AFTER THE DAYS OF UNLEAVENED BREAD HAVE PASSED!

But the Wave Sheaf Offering is inextricably linked to the Days of Unleavened Bread! NEVER did the Priests wait until after the Days of Unleavened Bread had expired to cut the Wave Sheaf!

Remember, there is only ONE Sunday; only ONE weekly Sabbath; only ONE Monday, Tuesday, Wednesday, and so-on, during a week! Never are there TWO, or you have EIGHT days, not a week!

Now, notice WHY God told the ancient Israelites to COUNT from a certain day — the Sunday following the "omer" sacrifice.

Sometimes, Spring Is Late

Seasons vary! The barley is not always in the ear on the precise same date! Talk to any farmer, and you will eventually hear about an "early Spring," or a "late Fall." Farmers know that seasons vary; that some crops ripen earlier in a given year than other years because of seasonal variations in the weather.

Anciently, the High Priest announced when the month of Abib commenced, based upon the new moon following the Vernal Equinox.

The "equinox" is that time when the sun appears to be centered exactly above the equator, as the tilt of the earth causes the sun's rays to shorten in the northern hemisphere, thus bringing on warmer weather. Because the seasons varied, no fixed date on a man-made calendar was adopted. Only when the "green ears" of barley appeared could the Priests know for sure. Thus, it was God Almighty, who controls the movement of the

planets, and who controls the weather, who indicated to the priesthood when to declare the beginning of the month Abib. "Abib" means, literally, "green ears."

Notice the admission of the Catholic Encyclopedia in this regard: "The computation of time among the Jews was based primarily upon the lunar month. The year consisted normally of twelve such months, alternately of 29 and 30 days each; such a year, however, contains only 354 days, which by no means agrees with the number of days in the mean solar year. Moreover, the exact length of the mean lunar month is not exactly 29 ½ days as the above arrangement would suggest. To compensate for the irregularity two corrections were introduced. First, a day was added to the month Hesvah or subtracted from the month Kislev, as need arose, in order to keep the months in agreement with the moon; secondly, eight years out of every nineteen were made 'embolismic', i.e. an intercalary month seems to have been introduced when necessary, at this point, in order to prevent the 14th day of Nisan from arrive too early" (The Catholic Encyclopedia, Vol. III, p. 158).

Note that well! The 14th of Nisan (or Abib) was what the corrections were all about. The precise time for the Passover was reckoned on the beginning of the second week of the first month, or the 14th of Abib (Nisan, as it was called after the Babylonian captivity), "at even."

The Catholic Encyclopedia continues: "On that day [Lev. xxiii,5,10] the firstfruits of corn [sic] in the ear had to be brought to the priests and the paschal lamb sacrificed. This made it necessary to delay the Pasch [14 Nisan] until the corn [sic] was in the ear...and the rule was accordingly established that 14 Nisan must fall when the sun had passed the equinox...Down to the time of the destruction of Jerusalem in A.D. 70, it would seem that in the insertion of this intercalary month the Jews followed no fixed rule based on astronomical principles, but that the Sanhedrin decided each time whether the year should be embolismic or not, being influenced in their decision not by astronomical considerations alone, but also, in some measure, by the forwardness or backwardness of the season" (ibid. P. 158, Article "Calendar").

There are two errors here: (1), Corn was never known in the Mideast at the time. "Maize" was discovered among the aboriginal tribes of the Americas many centuries later, and selective cross fertilization produced corn as we know it from "Indian Corn." The grain in Israel was barley, not corn. (2), The decision was not made to fix the beginning of months (Abib) "in some measure" by the "forwardness or backwardness" of the seasons. It was ENTIRELY decided based upon whether the barley was ripening earlier or later.

Thus, since the seasons varied, the Priests could not always announce the beginning of the Month of "Green Ears" (Abib, later called Nisan) on precisely the same date each year. This is obvious when studying the Hebrew Calendar. Now, notice again how they were to count to determine the date for Pentecost:

"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..." Leviticus 23:15,16).

How simple! Not only were they instructed how to BEGIN the count, they were also told how to END the count, with a "morrow after the seventh Sabbath," which is ALWAYS a Sunday, or the first day of the week.

For many years, it was assumed (and vigorously argued) that the "Sabbath" of the Wave Sheaf Offering was the "weekly Sabbath during the Days of Unleavened Bread." I used that term many times, having heard my father use the same term innumerable times. But the term is misleading because it focuses more on the "weekly Sabbath" than it does on the MORNING AFTER THE WAVE SHEAF!

It is an absolute, inviolable fact that the count had to begin on a SUNDAY (the first day of the week). It had to be an INCLUSIVE count, commencing on the "morrow after the Sabbath." The expression "mimoharat" in Hebrew literally means "on the morrow," or "the morning after."

Now, notice the proscription of Leviticus 23:14: "And ye shall eat neither bread, nor parched corn [barley], nor green ears, until the selfsame day that ye have brought an offering unto your God [this was the Wave Sheaf Offering]: it shall be a statute for ever throughout your generations in all your dwellings."

Next, notice the key scripture which disposes of all the confusion: "And the children of Israel encamped in Gilgal, and kept the Passover on the fourteenth day of the month at even in the plains of Jericho.

"And they did eat of the old corn [barley] of the land on the morrow after the passover, unleavened cakes, and parched corn [barley] in the selfsame day" (Joshua 5:10,11).

The Passover sacrifice was killed "at even" late on the fourteenth!

The First Day of Unleavened Bread was an annual Sabbath, a High Holy Day, called "The Feast." It fell commencing with sunset, on the 15th of Nisan.

This is absolutely conclusive, in the light of God's proscription of Leviticus 23:14 and 15: "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.

"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."

Since they could not eat of the old produce of the land UNTIL they had brought the wave sheaf offering, and since they DID eat of it ON THE MORROW [MORNING] AFTER THE PASSOVER, it is demonstrated that they began the count with the following day, a Sunday, to arrive at the "Feast of the firstfruits" or Pentecost!

How do we know when the "morrow after the Passover [Pesach] was? Because the term "mimoharat" in Hebrew means, literally, "on the following morning."

The Passover sacrifice was killed late on the 14th, before sunset. It was eaten as "The FEAST" during the hours before midnight on the night of the 15th. The next morning was the daylight part of the 15th, when the Omer offering occurred.

The following day, a Sunday, was the "terminus a quo," or the starting point for the count to Pentecost. Seven Sabbaths (49 days) later, until the "morrow after the seventh Sabbath" (49 + 1) was the "Fiftieth" day, or Pentecost. The "terminus ad quem" HAD to be the "morrow after the seventh Sabbath!"

The Karaite Jews, just as the ancient Israelites the Sadducees, and the Boethusians, always counted Pentecost BEGINNING WITH THE SUNDAY FOLLOWING THE WAVE SHEAF, exactly as the Bible says! The Pharisees and Rabbinites argued that the term "the morrow after the Sabbath" meant the First Day of Unleavened Bread!

But notice what happens when, as it often does, the First Day of Unleavened Bread occurs on a Wednesday! (See chart)

When Is Pentecost?

SUNDAY	MONDAY	TUESDAY	WEDNESDAY	THURSDAY	FRIDAY	SATURDAY

.	.	PASSOVER (evening) NISAN 14	1 st Day of Unleavened Bread NISAN 15	NISAN 16 Day of Pharisee & Rabbi's Count	Day 3	Day 4
Day 5 (Only Sunday within Days of Unleavened Bread) Day following "Omer" when count begins.	Day 6	Day 7 Last Day of Unleavened Bread	.	1 Week 7 Days	.	.
.	.	.	.	2 Weeks 14 Days	.	.
.	.	.	.	3 Weeks 21 Days	.	.
.	.	.	.	4 Weeks 28 Days	.	.
.	.	.	.	5 Weeks 35 Days	.	.
.	.	.	.	6 Weeks 42 Days	.	.
.	.	.	.	7 Weeks 49th Day NOT a "7 th Sabbath"	50 th Day NOT a Sunday 6 th Siven	.
50 th Day From Omer "Shavuot" or PENTECOST Morrow after 7 th Sabbath

As you can see by the chart, the counting from the "Morrow after a Wednesday" brings one to the "morrow after the seventh Wednesday, NOT the "morrow after the seventh SABBATH."

Clearly, the seventh week following such a count (beginning with a Thursday) IS A THURSDAY, and NOT THE SABBATH! And the morrow after the seventh week is a FRIDAY, and not a SUNDAY!

But the "terminus ad quem" MUST ALWAYS BE ON A SUNDAY!

Joshua 5:11 provides a clear Biblical and historical precedent!

The Wave Sheaf Offering is inextricably linked to "Hag HaMatzot," or the Days of Unleavened Bread. The priests would NEVER wait to offer the Wave Sheaf until the Days of Unleavened Bread had PASSED! In 2001, if the count were to begin FOLLOWING the Days of Unleavened Bread, Pentecost would be celebrated a whole week late!

The key is in understanding that the count MUST ALWAYS BEGIN WITH A SUNDAY in order to arrive at the "morrow AFTER THE SEVENTH SABBATH"! There is only ONE Sunday during any seven day period. Because the focus was primarily on the "SABBATH," and it was assumed to be the "weekly Sabbath during the Days of Unleavened Bread," the fact that the count had to begin with a SUNDAY DURING "Hag HaMatzot," or the Days of Unleavened Bread was ignored.

Some thought the printed Holy Day Calendar for 2001 was in error, for they wanted to begin the count on the Sunday OUTSIDE of the Days of Unleavened Bread.

Therefore, the only question is what PART of the phrase "the morrow after the Sabbath" must occur during the Days of Unleavened Bread! The primary focus is on the "terminus a quo,"

THE STARTING point from whence we must count fifty until reaching the "terminus ad quem."

God said, "...Even unto the morrow after the seventh sabbath shall ye number fifty days" (Leviticus 23:16). A morning after a Sabbath is always a Sunday!

The calendar as published by the church is correct.

One need only remember to begin the count with the SUNDAY which falls within the Days of Unleavened Breads

-End-

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