

# שבועות

## Shavuot

Deuteronomy 14:22-16:17, Habakkuk 2:20-3:19,  
John 4:25-42

### The Power of God during Shavuot

According to the Torah, HaShem commanded Israel with the Shalosh Regalim (שלוש רגלים) the three pilgrimage festivals. These festivals were meant to remind Israel to give thanks for the three good things He (God) did for them, the exodus from Egypt, the giving of the Torah, and the inheritance of the land of Israel. The purpose of coming to Jerusalem on those three festivals is (i) to give thanks to Hashem, (ii) through this the people will observe the fundamentals of the Torah, (iii) they will see the constant miracles of the Beit HaMikdosh (the Temple), its service and its sacredness, (iv) there will be an increase of recognition and peace amongst the people, and (v) that they will have an opportunity to learn Torah and to remove any doubts of their relationship with God. According to *Devarim / Deuteronomy 16:9-11*, the Lord spoke through Moshe on Shavuot (weeks) and whom should celebrate this festival, ט שְׁבַעָה שָׁבְעַת תִּסְפֹּר-לָךְ מִהַחֵל חֲרַמְשׁ בַּקָּמָה, תַּחֲל לִסְפֹּר שְׁבַעָה שָׁבְעוֹת: י וְעָשִׂיתָ חַג שְׁבַעָוֹת לַיהוָה אֱלֹהֶיךָ מִסֵּת גְּדֻבַת יָדָךְ אֲשֶׁר תִּמְצוּ פִּאֲשֶׁר יִבְרַכְךָ יְהוָה אֱלֹהֶיךָ: יא וְשִׂמַּחְתָּ לִפְנֵי | יְהוָה אֱלֹהֶיךָ אִתָּה וּבִנְךָ וּבִתֶּךָ וְעַבְדְּךָ וְעַמְּתֶךָ וְהַלְוֵי אֲשֶׁר בְּשַׁעְרֶיךָ וְהַגֵּר וְהַיְתוּם וְהָאֵלְמָנָה 16:9 'You shall count seven weeks for yourself; you shall begin to count seven

*weeks from the time you begin to put the sickle to the standing grain. 16:10 'Then you shall celebrate the Feast of Weeks to the Lord your God with a tribute of a freewill offering of your hand, which you shall give just as the Lord your God blesses you; 16:11 and you shall rejoice before the Lord your God, you and your son and your daughter and your male and female servants and the Levite who is in your town, and the stranger and the orphan and the widow who are in your midst, in the place where the Lord your God chooses to establish His name. (NASB)* Now according to *Devarim / Deuteronomy 16:11*, Moshe writes that we are to rejoice before the Lord our God (וְשִׂמְחֶתָּ לַפְּנֵי ה') (יְהוָה אֱלֹהֵיךָ) celebrating with our sons and daughters (וּבְנֶיךָ וּבָתְּרֶיךָ) with our male and female slaves (וְעַבְדֶּיךָ וְאִמָּתֶיךָ), with the Levite (וְהַלְוִי), the stranger (וְהַגֵּר), the orphan (וְהַיְתוֹם) and the widow (וְהָאֵלְמָנָה), that are in your gates (בְּשַׁעְרֶיךָ). It is interesting how this is written and whom it is that are to celebrate the festival of Shavuot. This reminds us of the study in Parashat Behar-Bekhukotai on slavery. When we think about what the Torah has to say concerning slaves, the Torah describes those who may be freed from slavery, who sell themselves into slavery to get out of debt, and also describes those who may not be freed from slavery such as what we read according to *Vayikra / Leviticus 25:45-46*.

### ספר ויקרא פרק כה

מה וגם מבני התושבים הגרים עמכם מהם תקנו  
וממשפחתם אשר עמכם אשר הולידו בארצכם והיו לכם  
לאחזה: מו והתנחלתם אתם לבניכם אחריכם לרשת  
אחזה לעלם בהם תעבדו ובאחיקם בני-ישראל איש בא-  
חיו לא-תרדה בו בפנה:

### *Vayikra / Leviticus 25:45-46*

*25:45 'Then, too, it is out of the sons of the sojourners who live as aliens among you that you may gain acquisition, and out of their families who are with you, whom they will have produced in your land; they also may become your possession. 25:46 'You may even bequeath them to your sons after you, to receive as a*

*possession; you can use them as permanent slaves. But in respect to your countrymen, the sons of Israel, you shall not rule with severity over one another. (NASB)*

Note *Vayikra / Leviticus 25:46* states וְהִתְנַחֲלֶתֶם אֹתָם לְבָנֵיכֶם אֲחֵרֵיכֶם לְרֶשֶׁת אֲחֻזָּה לְעֹלָם “and divide / bequeath them to your sons after you for a permanent possession.” This suggests that Israel is allowed to make slaves of the surrounding people or the ger (stranger) as permanent slaves. These kinds of slaves may be inherited in the sense of passing them down to one’s children. When someone makes an accusation about slavery and the bible, they point to this aspect of the Torah. Previously we discussed indentured servitude where one becomes a willing participant due to debt and wanting to get out of debt. The children of Israel had a 7 year limit and/or the Yoval (Jubilee) year of release. This however does not appear to be applied to the non-Jewish slave per what we are reading according to *Vayikra / Leviticus 25:46*. There are several points that we can make however concerning what was going on in Israel. First, God had commanded Israel to drive out the inhabitants. This was due to the Lord allowing time for them to repent and turn from their sins of which they did not and so God’s judgment came through Israel. We read however how Israel made a covenant with them against the command of God so they became permanent slaves. We note that only Israel or the ger toshav are to permanently live in the land. So the idea is that the people of Canaan should either be dead or gone. Coming back into the Land, the price would be slavery, if for no other reason than to force them to depart from idolatry. This issue of idolatry is a serious issue, problematic for Israel as idolatry leads to death. Idolatry is to not be found among God’s people and if one had once served idols one is to permanently depart from idolatry! The idea is when becoming a slave, one would be forced to leave their idolatry. Also, we have the command to treat the slave as a hired hand, coupled with the “do unto others as you would have them do unto you.” These two things would quantify exactly how one was to be treated as a slave. These things are illustrated by the repetition of the command here in *Devarim / Deuteronomy 16:14* which states that we are to rejoice in the festival of Shavuot before God (וְשִׂמְחֶתָּ לְפָנָי |) (וְהִנְּה אֶלְהֵיךְ) celebrating with our sons and daughters (וּבְנֵי וּבָתוּרֶיךָ) with

our male and female slaves (וְעַבְדְּךָ וְאִמְתֶּךָ), with the Levite (וְהַלְוִי), the stranger (וְהַגֵּר), the orphan (וְהַיְתוּם) and the widow (וְהָאֵלְמָנָה), that are in your gates (בְּשַׁעְרֶיךָ). Notice how the slave is to become a part of the family and taking part of the shelosh regalim, God's holy festivals. This suggests a certain kind of treatment of slaves, as removing them from their idolatry, and showing mercy and love toward the slave. We note also how we are to be kind to animals, the Torah speaks of these things! How much more so is man to be good to other human beings!

The verses we are looking at for this week are from *Devarim / Deuteronomy 19:13-21*.

### ספר דברים פרק טז

ט שְׁבַע שָׁבָעַת תִּסְפֹּר-לָךְ מֵהַחֵל חֲרַמְשׁ בְּקִמָּה תַחֵל לְסֹפֵר שְׁבַעַת שְׁבַעוֹת: י וְעָשִׂיתָ חֹג שְׁבַעוֹת לַיהוָה אֱלֹהֶיךָ מִסֹּת גְּדֻבַת יָדְךָ אֲשֶׁר תִּתֵּן בְּאֲשֶׁר יִבְרַכְךָ יְהוָה אֱלֹהֶיךָ: יא וְשִׂמַּחְתָּ לְפָנָי | יְהוָה אֱלֹהֶיךָ אִתָּה וּבְנֶה וּבְתָה וְעַבְדְּךָ וְאִמְתֶּךָ וְהַלְוִי אֲשֶׁר בְּשַׁעְרֶיךָ וְהַגֵּר וְהַיְתוּם וְהָאֵלְמָנָה אֲשֶׁר בְּקִרְבְּךָ בְּמָקוֹם אֲשֶׁר יִבְחַר יְהוָה אֱלֹהֶיךָ לְשָׂכֵן שְׂמוֹ שָׁם: יב וְזָכַרְתָּ כִּי-עֶבֶד הָיִיתָ בְּמִצְרָיִם וְשָׂמַרְתָּ וְעָשִׂיתָ אֶת-הַחֻקִּים הָאֵלֶּה: יג חֹג הַסֹּפֶת תַּעֲשֶׂה לָּךְ שְׁבַעַת יָמִים בְּאַסְפֹּף מִגִּרְנֶה וּמִיִּקְבֶּה: יד וְשִׂמַּחְתָּ בְּחֹגֶה אִתָּה וּבְנֶה וּבְתָה וְעַבְדְּךָ וְאִמְתֶּךָ וְהַלְוִי וְהַגֵּר וְהַיְתוּם וְהָאֵלְמָנָה אֲשֶׁר בְּשַׁעְרֶיךָ: טו שְׁבַעַת יָמִים תַּחֵג לַיהוָה אֱלֹהֶיךָ בְּמָקוֹם אֲשֶׁר-יִבְחַר יְהוָה כִּי יִבְרַכְךָ יְהוָה אֱלֹהֶיךָ בְּכָל-תְּבוּאָתְךָ וּבְכָל מַעֲשֵׂה יְדֶיךָ וְהָיִיתָ אֶהְיֶה שְׂמֵחַ: טז שְׁלוֹשׁ פְּעָמִים | בְּשִׁנְהַ יִרְאֶה כָּל-זְכוּרָה אֶת-פָּנָי | יְהוָה אֱלֹהֶיךָ בְּמָקוֹם אֲשֶׁר יִבְחַר בְּחֹג הַמִּצּוֹת וּבְחֹג הַשְּׁבַעוֹת וּבְחֹג הַסֹּפֹת וְלֹא יִרְאֶה אֶת-פָּנָי יְהוָה רִיקָם: יז אִישׁ כְּמַתְּנַת יָדוֹ כְּבָרַפֶּת יְהוָה אֱלֹהֶיךָ אֲשֶׁר נָתַן-לָךְ: יח ס ס ס [פִּרְשַׁת שׁוֹפְטִים] יח שְׁפָטִים וְשֹׁטְרִים תִּתֵּן-לָךְ בְּכָל-שַׁעְרֶיךָ אֲשֶׁר יְהוָה אֱלֹהֶיךָ נָתַן לָךְ לְשִׁבְטֶיךָ וְשִׁפְטוֹ אֶת-הָעָם מִשְׁפַּט-צֶדֶק: יט לֹא-תִטֶּה מִשְׁפָּט לֹא תִכִּיר פָּנִים וְלֹא-תִקַּח שֹׁחַד כִּי הַשֹּׁחַד יַעֲוֹר עֵינָי חֻקִּים וְיִסְלַף דְּבָרֵי צְדִיקִים: כ צֶדֶק צֶדֶק תִּרְדֹּף

למען תחיה וירשת את-הארץ אשר-יהנה אלהיה נתן  
לך: ס כא לא-תטע לך אשרה כל-עץ אצל מזבח יהנה  
אלהיה אשר מעשה-לך: כב ולא-תקים לך מצבה אשר  
שנא יהנה אלהיה:

***Devarim / Deuteronomy 16:13-22***

*16:9 'You shall count seven weeks for yourself; you shall begin to count seven weeks from the time you begin to put the sickle to the standing grain. 16:10 'Then you shall celebrate the Feast of Weeks to the Lord your God with a tribute of a freewill offering of your hand, which you shall give just as the Lord your God blesses you; 16:11 and you shall rejoice before the Lord your God, you and your son and your daughter and your male and female servants and the Levite who is in your town, and the stranger and the orphan and the widow who are in your midst, in the place where the Lord your God chooses to establish His name. 16:12 'You shall remember that you were a slave in Egypt, and you shall be careful to observe these statutes. 16:13 'You shall celebrate the Feast of Booths seven days after you have gathered in from your threshing floor and your wine vat; 16:14 and you shall rejoice in your feast, you and your son and your daughter and your male and female servants and the Levite and the stranger and the orphan and the widow who are in your towns. 16:15 'Seven days you shall celebrate a feast to the Lord your God in the place which the Lord chooses, because the Lord your God will bless you in all your produce and in all the work of your hands, so that you will be altogether joyful. 16:16 'Three times in a year all your males shall appear before the Lord your God in the place which He chooses, at the Feast of Unleavened Bread and at the Feast of Weeks and at the Feast of Booths, and they shall not appear before the Lord empty-handed. 16:17 'Every man shall give as he is able, according to the blessing of the Lord your God*

*which He has given you. 16:18 'You shall appoint for yourself judges and officers in all your towns which the Lord your God is giving you, according to your tribes, and they shall judge the people with righteous judgment. 16:19 'You shall not distort justice; you shall not be partial, and you shall not take a bribe, for a bribe blinds the eyes of the wise and perverts the words of the righteous. 16:20 'Justice, and only justice, you shall pursue, that you may live and possess the land which the Lord your God is giving you. 16:21 'You shall not plant for yourself an Asherah of any kind of tree beside the altar of the Lord your God, which you shall make for yourself. 16:22 'You shall not set up for yourself a sacred pillar which the Lord your God hates. (NASB)*

The festival of Shavuot (שבועות), is sometimes referred to as Pentecost due to its timing after Passover, “Pentecost” means “fifty” in Greek, since Shavuot occurs fifty days after the Passover. It is one of the Shelosh Regalim, the three holidays (festivals) in which one is to present himself before the Lord each year. This holiday occurs on the sixth day of the Hebrew month of Sivan. Shavuot marks the wheat harvest in the Land of Israel and according to the Jewish Sages, it also commemorates the anniversary of the giving of the Torah by God to the Children of Israel at Mount Sinai in 1312 BCE. Rabbinic writings state that the Oral Torah was given to Moses at Mount Sinai, which, according to the tradition of Orthodox Judaism, occurred at the same time. Rabbinic tradition holds that the Written Torah was recorded during the following forty years. This time of Shavuot is very significant as this is the time in which God had delivered Israel from Bondage, brought her through the Red Sea, provided the people with food and water, and brought her to the Mountain of Sinai. It was at this point in which the people heard the voice of God speaking and they asked that Moshe intercede on their behalf. We note how all of these things were done prior to the people receiving God’s Word. These things illustrate for us the Gospel message, the mercy of God to save, deliver, and bring us near due to His love and grace alone! The Targum on the Psalms also has some significant things to say.

## ספר טוביה פרק סח

יקום אלהא יתבדרון בעלי דבבוי ויערקון סנאוי מן קדמוי: ג היכמה דישקיף תננא קוטרא ישקפון היכמה די יתמסי שעוא מן קדם אשא יהוב־ דון רשיעיא מן קדם אלהא: ד וצדי־ קיא יחדון וידוצון קדם יהוה אלהא ויחדון בחדוא: ה שבחו קדם אלהא שבחו שום יקריה קלסון ליתיב על כורסי יקריה בערבות יה שמיה וביעו קדמוי: ו אבוהון דיתמי ודיינהון דא־ רמלן אלהא במדור בית שכנת קוד־ שיה ז אלהא די מזויג זוגים יחידאין לבר זוגא לברזגא כחדא למיבני ביתא מנהון דאפיק בית ישראל דהוון אסי־ רין במצרים על עובדיהון דאבהתהון כשרין פרקינן בפומבי ברם פרעה ומשיריתיה דסריבו לשלחותהון שרון צחיחין צחיין: ח אלהא כד נפקתא בעמודא דעננא ובעמודא דאישתא קדם קומי עמך כד טיילתא במדברא דישימון לעלמין כד יהבתא אוריתא לעמך: ט ארעא איתרגישת לחוד ענני שמיא אטיפו טלא דרעוא מן קדם יהוה דין סיני סליק תנניה כתננא דאתננא מן קדם דאתגלי עלוי יהוה אלהא דישראל: י כד שמעו בית יש־ ראל ית קל גבורתך פרחו נפשיהון מן יד אחיתתא עילויהון טלין די תחיותא ומיטרין דרעוא ארימתא אלהא על אחסנתך וכנשתא דאשתלהית את אנ־ תאתקינתא: יא חייתך תחייתך אתיב־ תא בה אתקינתא משירית כיתי מלא־ כיא לאוטבא לענני אלהא: יב יהוה מימרא דייי יהב פתגמי אוריתא לע־ מיה ברם משה ואהרן מברשן מימר אלהא לחילות רבא לאוכלוסין סגיעין

## Targum Tehillim 68

68:1 For praise, of David. A hymn and song. 68:2 God will arise, his enemies will be scattered, and his foes will flee from his presence. 68:3 Just as the smoke is driven out, they will be driven; just as wax will melt in the presence of fire, the wicked will perish in the presence of God. 68:4 And the righteous will rejoice and exult in the presence of the Lord, and they will rejoice joyfully. 68:5 Give praise in the presence of God, praise his glorious name; magnify the one who sits on his glorious throne in Araboth; Yah is his name; and be glad in his presence. 68:6 Father of the orphans, and judge of widows – such is God in the dwelling place of his holy presence. 68:7 God, who makes matches, joining the solitary to mates; who brought out the house of Israel, who were bound in Egypt; for the correct deeds of their fathers <he redeemed them> in public procession; but Pharaoh and his armies, who refused to let them go, dwelt in thirst. 68:8 O God, when you went forth in a pillar of cloud and in a pillar of fire before your people, when you traveled in the wilderness of Jeshimon forever; when you gave the Torah to your people – 68:9 The earth shook, also the heavens dropped dew in the presence of the Lord; as for this Sinai, its smoke went up like the smoke of a furnace before the Lord, God of Israel, was manifested upon it. 68:10 When the house of Israel heard the voice of your power, their souls flew away; at once he made to descend upon them the dew of resurrection; O God, you brought the favorable rain to your inheritance, and you supported the assembly which was exhausted. 68:11 You caused your vigor to go back to it; you appointed a troop of angels to do good to the poor of God. 68:12 The Lord gave the words of Torah to his people; truly, Moses and Aaron [were] proclaiming the word of God to the great army.



While studying *Tehillim / Psalms 68* it is always interesting to have a look at the Targum translation. The Targum on the Psalm speaks of the people as they arrive at the mountain of Sinai. The Psalm states, הָאֱלֹהִים בְּצִאתָךְ לִפְנֵי עַמֶּךָ בְּצַעֲדֶךָ בִּישִׁימוֹן סִלָּה: ט אֶרֶץ רַעְשָׁה | אֶף-שָׁמַיִם : 68:8 *The earth quaked; The heavens also dropped rain at the presence of God; Sinai itself quaked at the presence of God, the God of Israel.* 68:9 *You shed abroad a plentiful rain, O God; You confirmed Your inheritance when it was parched.* (NASB), the Aramaic Targum states, ט ארעא איתרגי, שת לחוד ענני שמיא אטיפו טלא דרעואמן קדם יהוה דין סיני סליק תנניה כתננא דאתונא מן קדם דאתגלי עלוי יהוה אלהא דישראל: י כד שמעו בית ישראל ית קל גבורתך פרחו נפשיהון מן יד אחיתתא עילויהון טלין די תחיותא ומיטרין דרעוא ארימתא אלהא על אחסנתך וכנשתא דאשתלהית : 68:9 *The earth shook, also the heavens dropped dew in the presence of the Lord; as for this Sinai, its smoke went up like the smoke of a furnace before the Lord, God of Israel, was manifested upon it.* 68:10 *When the house of Israel heard the voice of your power, their souls flew away; at once he made to descend upon them the dew of resurrection; O God, you brought the favorable rain to your inheritance, and you supported the assembly which was exhausted.* (EMC) Here the rabbis use a little Midrashic license to expand upon the psalm saying when Israel heard the power of God's voice, their souls fled. The rabbis say this refers to Israel having died at the foot of the mountain. The Targum goes on to say that the Lord descended upon the people in the dew of the resurrection. Notice how the Sinai experience involved a miracle of both death and resurrection. These things suggest Shavuot has great spiritual significance. The idea of death in the presence of God is an allusion to *Shemot / Exodus 33:20* *But He said, "You cannot see My face, for no man can see Me and live!"* (NASB) Here, based upon the description in the Torah on the Sinai experience, what the people heard was not the hearing of the בַּת קוֹל (the Still small voice). Israel heard the great power of God's voice speaking from the clouds over the mountain of Sinai. This hearing of God's word was so powerful their souls fled, they died, and the Lord descended upon them via His Spirit in the power of the resurrection.



In a Midrashic way the Targum writes the Lord raised Israel back to life as she stood before the mountain in order to receive God's word. What these things explain to us are how significant this time of Shavuot in the history of the people of God.

We note how the Targum describes the people at Sinai, death and resurrection. This is why Yeshua said what he did according to *John 6:63* *'It is the Spirit who gives life; the flesh profits nothing; the words that I have spoken to you are spirit and are life. (NASB)* We note the power of God's word to transform lives. The power of God is available when one hears and obeys. The Spirit gives life as motivating us to walk in God's ways and to serve Him. We note something here regarding the Scriptures, it is possible to read God's Word (the Bible) and remain bound to sin lacking both freedom and spiritual growth. The word of God is written to motivate to change and to seek the Lord, however without the giving of the spirit of the Lord, without His presence in our lives, we remain dead. Notice for a moment why in the NT it was during Shavuot the Spirit of the Lord was given as yeshua says it would be at that time he disciples would be endowed with power from above. (*Luke 24:49*) The reason this is so is due to the correlation to what we are reading here in the Targum, and because it is the Spirit of the Lord that imparts life, just as we see here in the Targum, God descending upon the people and giving them life, raising them from the dead. This is the power of God in our lives to be transformed and set free from sin. This is the power of the resurrection that Paul wrote about according to *Philippians 3*. We note also something here, remember what Yeshua said, *"You search the scriptures, for in them you think you have eternal life; and these are those that testify of me. But you will not come to me, so that you may have life."* (*John 5:38-40*) If we think about this based upon what we are reading here, this is a very powerful statement. This is why the power and presence of God is so important. The Spirit of God causes change, life, and truth to be revealed to our hearts and minds.

Shavuot marks the time that Israel was given the Torah on the Mountain of Sinai. This time is both a wheat harvest festival and the commemoration of the day when the Torah was given to the people of Israel. This is the event when God's people became betrothed to Him on Mount Sinai. The Torah is representative of the covenant between

the bride (God's people) and the bridegroom (God). The exodus from Egypt was intended to lead to this revelation at Sinai, the giving of God's word to His people, and the filling of God's people with His life giving Spirit. These things reveal to us how the Lord God Almighty is bringing us out of this world, delivering us from bondage, and making us His own treasured people, holy and separated from the pagan cultures around us. This was the point and the purpose of Yeshua doing what He did upon the cross paying the penalty of sin on our behalf. According to the NT text, these things are given to us by faith in Yeshua the Messiah, the power of God, the Holy Spirit, God's presence, and freedom from the things that would bring us under bondage and sin!