

The Blessed Hope!

“Looking for that blessed hope, and the glorious appearing of the great God and our Saviour Jesus Christ;” –(Titus 2:13)

Diamond & Nugget #12

¹⁶**“For the Lord himself shall descend from heaven with a shout, with the voice of the archangel, and with the trump of God: and the dead in Christ shall rise first:
¹⁷Then we which are alive and remain shall be caught up together with them in the clouds, to meet the Lord in the air: and so shall we ever be with the Lord.
¹⁸Wherefore comfort one another with these words.”**

This past Saturday and Sunday were considered to be “high” watch days for the Rapture. When Monday came, many of us were clearly disappointed, and yet I sensed the Holy Spirit was speaking to me by impressing upon me to go back and take a closer look at the Hebrew text for what is known as Pentecost in the Feasts of the Lord. We (Christians and Jews) have overlooked something of great importance. The information I will be sharing casts a dark shadow on the past interpretation and understanding of the feast we call Pentecost. My intuition suggests this is good news for those anticipating the Rapture of believing Christians. Before I get to the bottom line, namely, the Rapture’s timing, there is much to learn about how we can establish both a correct date for Pentecost that can be considered credible and is also in full accord with the Biblical texts.

The Jewish Sanhedrin convened in 140 A.D. in the village of Usha near the modern city of Haifa. In order to keep the holiday alive, they decided to divert the focus of the **Shavuot** observance away from agriculture and instead associate it with a historical event. The rabbis suggested that **Shavuot** was the day that the Torah (the Mosaic Law) was given to Moses on Mt. Sinai. This was not done arbitrarily. Although the Bible never associated Shavuot with Sinai, this theme was chosen because the giving of the Law had also occurred in the third month –(Exodus 19:1). The Sanhedrin decision may have seemed appropriate enough but the idea to do so may have been ill-perceived, as were the many reasons the Jewish religious leaders rejected their True King and Messiah.

Thus the idea of the giving of the Law and the birthday of Judaism quickly caught on (as evidenced in ancient Jewish literature (Shabat 86b and Jubilees 6:19) and became the dominant motif of the modern **Shavuot**. And so **Shavuot** became known as “**Zeman Mattan Toratenu**”, “the Time of the Giving of Our Law”.

That is significant in itself but it is not the only issue. A second but larger issue resides in the fact that there is a serious error in the way the calendar count of fifty days began. A third issue is related to the fact that one of the three Biblical agricultural harvests is omitted by Jews and Christians alike. As to how these three issues could have compounded the problem is worth someone's time, research, and investment in a graduate thesis. It has certainly challenged my academic theological training and interest. I do not think we will have the time to finish the task. The summary points are:

- Abandonment of the agricultural purpose of **Shavuot**
- Error in the calendar calculation methodology for determining Pentecost
- Dropping of one of the three harvests by combining two harvests

This information is encouraging to readers for several reasons:

1. Pentecost/**Shavuot** is still a reliable typology for the Rapture.
2. We have ahead of us a true date for Pentecost, by mere weeks.
3. God's typology associates His "**Mo'eds**" to appointed festivals and the harvests.

In "**Blessed Hope**" #11, I noted that all of the factors were right for a Pentecost Rapture; and, they remain right for a forthcoming Pentecost Rapture. As anyone who has ever used a combination lock on their high school or gym locker, you know that if you miss a combination turn by even a single digit, the lock does not open and you have to start all over again. What I will be sharing in this "Diamond & Nugget" is extremely encouraging. The depth of the information and the details are so precise, it will take at least two or three segments to cover it well enough so that one can understand it with reasonable comprehensive clarity and appreciation.



The key passage of Exodus 23:14-17 below is our starting point of focus in sorting out the preconceived views that are commonly held by Christians and Jews in regards to the Feasts of the Lord. The other passages of Leviticus 23:15-21; Numbers 28:26-31; and Deuteronomy 16:9-12, will be dealt with in due process.

¹⁴Three times thou shalt keep a feast UNTO ME in the year. ¹⁵Thou shalt keep the feast of unleavened bread: (thou shalt eat unleavened bread seven days, as I commanded thee, in the time appointed of the month Abib; for in it thou camest out from Egypt: and none shall appear before me empty:) ¹⁶And the feast of harvest, the firstfruits of thy labors, which thou hast sown in the field: and the feast of ingathering, [which is] in the end of the year, when thou hast gathered in thy labours out of the field. ¹⁷Three times in the year all thy males shall appear before the Lord God. -(Exodus 23:14-17)

The Three Harvests: Barley, Wheat, and Grapes

One of the greatest gifts that God has given to mankind is the ability to express ourselves through the avenue of writing. Writing allows us to take all of our beliefs, visions, thoughts, hopes, and dreams and to spell them out in a way that they can be read, viewed, and preserved for generations to come. Unfortunately, one of the disadvantages of writing is that we are only able to write, explain, and elaborate on particular topics to the degree we understand them at that point in time. As time goes on, we will naturally find better ways to say things, even discovering that we may need to adjust, amend, or modify some of the things which we have already written and put in print. This is clearly one of those times. An explanation comes by recapping or doing a general review of the Appointed Times **“Mo’eds”** of the Lord.

When we speak of the Biblical Feasts of the Lord, we are referring to the Feasts of **Passover, Pentecost, and Tabernacles** that are mentioned in the Bible, and how they symbolically refer to our salvation on the individual level as well as God’s three harvests of souls at the corporate level. Every male Israelite was required to be at the Temple on those three feasts. There is a typological relationship between the three mandated feasts and what the Bible defines as three harvests.

The **Barley Harvest** represents the first part of God’s harvest. Those in this first harvest are referred to in Scripture as “overcomers”. The gathering in of the nations is actually a function of the Barley Harvest. It is in and through the manifestation of the sons of God that all nations will come to know the Lord and serve Him. These overcomers shall come forth in the first resurrection to rule and reign on the earth under the leadership of the Lord Jesus Christ!

The **Wheat Harvest** represents “the church in general”. It speaks of those who were justified by faith, but either did not go through or submit to the sanctification process of the Lord. They are believers, but are in need of further correction in order to be fully sanctified and to put on the divine nature and character of their Heavenly Father. There still remains iniquity (lawlessness) in their lives that must be purged by the fire (the fiery law) of God. Anyone watching the news can relate to this. Those who are part of the Wheat Harvest shall be brought forth in the second resurrection to be saved, yet so as through fire” (1st Corinthians 3:15).

The **Grape Harvest** represents “the unbelievers”. It speaks of those who have neither been justified nor sanctified. They shall go through God’s wrath, judgment, and the lake of fire for the purpose of correction. This relates to the Tribulation period.

The Good News to be associated with all of this is that these three harvests represent and guarantee the salvation of all in the fullness of time. As far as God is concerned, salvation for all is not “if”, but “when”. Let us call to remembrance what Paul told us in 1st Corinthians 15:22-23, which states:

22. ***“For as in Adam all die, so also in Christ all shall be made alive.”***
23. ***“But each in his own order [tagma, “squadron”].”***

If we were to study all the passages in the Bible where barley is mentioned, we would find valuable information about the first resurrection and the character and calling of those who qualified for it. The fact that barley matures early tells us that the “barley firstfruits” are the first people to mature spiritually to bring forth the fruits of the kingdom that God requires. Barley also can survive drought, heat, and cold much more easily than can wheat. Remember It was the ripeness of the barley for harvest that determined the entire Feasts of the Lord, beginning with Passover. The barley had to be ripe or “in **Abib**.” We see in the typology a theme of the physical and the spiritual!

The Church in general will be raised in the second resurrection. Jesus calls them “**the just**” who receive life at the same time “the unjust” are judged at the beginning of that final age in “**the lake of fire**.” In either case, the fire that judges is the same fire poured out on Pentecost. God’s judgment is designed to “**thoroughly clear His threshing floor; and He will gather His wheat into the barn**” -(Matthew 3:12).

The baptism of fire upon the wheat (Church) is both good and bad. It represents a purification process, which is judgment upon sin in order to bless the individual. When God works to refine or purify someone, it is not a pleasant experience. No judgment is. But those who understand the mind and purpose of God will readily submit to His “fire,” knowing that God is working all things out for their good.

Finally, a Biblical study of the grape harvest, with the treading of the grapes in the winepresses, tells us the fate of the unbelievers. The winepress depicts God's wrath, judgment, and the lake of fire. It speaks of Great Tribulation!

Months	Weather	Crops & activity
Tishri (Sep/Oct)	First rains	Ploughing begins
Heshvan (Oct/Nov)		Ploughing / grain planting
Kislev (Nov/Dec)		Grain planting continues
Tebeth (Dec/Jan)	Main rains	
Sebat (Jan/Feb)		
Adar (Feb/Mar)	Spring rains	Almond in bloom / flax harvest
Abib (Mar/Apr)		Barley harvest begins
Zif (Apr/May)		Barley harvest completed
Sivan (May/Jun)	Dry season	Wheat harvest begins
Tamuz (Jun/Jul)		Wheat harvest completed / first figs
Ab (Jul/Aug)	Summer heat	Vintage (grape harvest) begins
Elul (Aug/Sep)		Date harvest / summer figs

The purpose of the grain harvests of spring (barley and wheat) is to provide bread for God’s great communion table. The purpose of the feast of Tabernacles with its celebration of the winepress is to provide the wine for God’s table. Without this wine, His communion table would have only bread and would be incomplete. God will have

His wine, but it must come by means of the winepress, which speaks of the judgments of God. The typology is a beautiful drama of God's Master Plan of Redemption being unveiled symbolically.

God harvests His barley, wheat, and grapes in different manners, even as nature teaches us. The chaff from the barley falls away very easily, so barley is said to be winnowed. That is, the actions by the wind itself (or by means of fans) and is sufficient to get rid of the chaff. This speaks of the barley company, who so quickly respond to the wind of the Spirit.

To remove the chaff from the wheat requires threshing. This is a more severe action, but it does the job nonetheless. It depicts the fact that the Church will be harvested by means of judgment, or tribulation. The Latin word, "*tribulum*", is a threshing instrument.

Finally, to obtain the juice the grapes must be trodden under foot. Grapes do not have chaff, but they do have "flesh" that must be pressed severely in order to obtain the wine. This represents the most severe form of judgment upon the unbelievers. Yet the result is that God obtains wine for His communion table.

There is more than one resurrection coming. The typological analysis of these three harvests has long been lost to man. I noted earlier that the Sanhedrin in 140 A.D., diverted the focus from God's agricultural typology "theme" to that of Moses when he was given the Law.

I am going to give readers an overview of what the meaning of Pentecost represents from where we have preconceptions and this may require scrutiny. Names were very important in the ancient Jewish world. They usually reflected the significant character, history, or meaning of that to which they were attached. Three separate names were used by the Hebrew Scriptures for the feast of **Shavuot** (Hebrew – "weeks"). Each name emphasized a different facet of its observance.

The most common Hebrew designation was **Hag Hashavuot**, meaning "the Feast of Weeks" -(Exodus 34:22; Deuteronomy 16:10; 2nd Chronicles 8:13). **Shavuot** was called the Feast of Weeks because seven weeks were counted from the Feast of Firstfruits until observing this feast.

"The primary meaning of the Feast was reflected in the Hebrew name, **Yom Habikkurim** or "the Day of Firstfruits" -(Numbers 28:26), since Shavuot was the day on which the firstfruit offerings of the summer wheat crop was brought to the Temple. Thus **Shavuot** marked the beginning of the summer wheat harvest even as Israel's earlier Feast of Firstfruits marked the beginning of the spring barley harvest." [This statement contains a serious discrepancy that I will go into later. It is a quote from a Messianic Christian scholar].

The third designation, **Hag Hakatzir** or “the Feast of Harvest” –(Exodus 23:16), reflected the fact that this festival was the official beginning of the summer harvest season. We in the U.S. associate Memorial Day as the beginning of summer.

In addition to the Biblical designation, both the Talmud and Josephus referenced in this festival is **Ateretz** and it means “conclusion”. They viewed **Shavuot** as the conclusion of the **Passover** season and of the seven week spring harvest since there are no other major Jewish holy days until the summer.

In the Greek language, **Shavuot** was known as **Pentecost** –(Acts 2:1; 2nd Maccabees 12:32), meaning “fiftieth,” since it was celebrated on the **fiftieth** day from the Feast of Firstfruits.

The timing of **Shavuot** as all the Feast Days of the Lord, is determined by two things, 1. the setting of **Passover**, which depended on 2. when the barley is in **Abib**. About two decades ago, the Jewish sect known as the **Karaites**, were committed to the restoration of the Biblical agricultural calendar. Followers are out and about in the fields surrounding Jerusalem examining samples of barley to determine if they meet the criteria mentioned in Scripture. Random samples from the barley fields are checked to see if there is enough evidence indicating that a majority of the samples of the barley are determine to be ripe (**Abib**) for harvest. It becomes the determining factor upon which the date for the Passover is then set or fixed, along with all of the other six Feasts of the Lord in any given year as well.

Much of Judaism today, even in Israel, is secular, and the ancient Biblical feasts are treated like many of grandma’s treatments and ointments. The high-tech modern society of Israel has long left the Biblical calendar in the dustbin of eternity past. In my view, the modernization of Israeli culture is one of the reasons that the issues I cited early on in this segment have lost their meaning. We can learn much as well as reap the benefits by paying attention to the **Karaites!**

Three Scripture passages outline the Biblical observance for **Shavuot**. Temple offerings were described in Leviticus 23:15-21 and Numbers 28:26-31. The requirements for individual worshipers were outlined in Deuteronomy 16:9-12 where they were instructed to offer a freewill offering, to rejoice before the Lord, and to recommend as a reminder that the Lord had freed them from Egyptian bondage.

In Bible days, **Shavuot** was a particularly important Jewish feast. Seven divinely appointed feasts were given to Israel. Of these seven, three were decreed by the Lord as “solemn feasts” –(Exodus 23:14-17; Deuteronomy 16:16; 2nd Chronicles 8:13; cf. Exodus 34:22-23) during which all Israelite men were obligated to present themselves at the Temple. **Shavuot** was the second in this exclusive convocation of “solemn feasts”, the others being **Unleavened Bread** and **Tabernacles**. Like the Sabbath and many of the other feast days, **Shavuot** was a holy convocation or rest day –(Leviticus 23:21), and therefore, no work was permitted.

According to the Bible, it was forbidden to eat of the new barley crop and the barley firstfruits (*omer*) were offered on the Feast of Firstfruits. The same principle was applied to the wheat crop. Therefore, the numerous meal offerings and the showbread for the sanctuary were not made from the new wheat crop until after the wheat firstfruits were presented on **Shavuot**.

The Temple services for **Shavuot** followed much the same pattern as the Feast of Firstfruits since both holy days were celebrated with firstfruit offerings. However, the offering of **Shavuot** was unique. It consisted of two long, flat, leavened loaves of wheat bread as commanded by the Lord: ***“You shall bring from your dwellings two wave loaves of two-tenths of an ephah. They shall be of fine flour, they shall be baked with leaven. They are the firstfruits to the Lord”*** -(Leviticus 23:17).

The loaves were not burned because the Lord had forbidden leaven on the altar: ***“You shall burn no leaven nor any honey in any offering to the Lord made by fire”*** - (Leviticus 2:11). Instead these loaves and two lambs as a peace offering formed the wave offering for **Shavuot**. The priest waved them before the altar forwards and backwards, then up and down, in the manner of a “cross”. Afterward, they were set aside “for the priest” -(Leviticus 23:20) and formed the festive meal eaten by the priests later that day in the Temple.

As with Israel’s other holy days, customs and traditions were added over time. Roman rule was never welcome in ancient Judea. It was despised and was an ever-increasing stench in the nostrils of the Jewish nation. And although a Jewish resistance movement was active for almost a century, it never seriously challenged the Roman eagle’s grip until the year 66 A.D. During the summer heat of 66 A.D., the rebellion gained traction. Jerusalem was cleansed of Roman rule, and for three years a limited Jewish independence was restored.

The shock waves were felt throughout the Roman Empire. Determined to make the tiny Judea an object lesson to any other would-be rebel provinces, the Roman general Titus was dispatched to quell the uprising.

After a successful Roman siege, Jerusalem was viciously sacked, the Temple leveled, and the Jews were pushed out of the capital in 70 A.D. To ensure Roman control of Judea, a Roman garrison was permanently established on the ruins of Jerusalem. The importance that the Romans attached to the fall of Jerusalem in 70 A.D. was visible in their extensive media efforts. To proclaim this victory throughout the empire, thousands of coins were minted with the inscription “Judaea Capta.” The coins depicted Judea as a woman weeping under a palm tree with a fettered Jewish captive standing on the side. It was common for Rome to issue captive coins, but more were issued for this conquest than for other conquests.

In the city of Rome, the victory was commemorated by the construction of the massive Arch of Titus near the entrance to the Roman Forum. The elaborate relief sculptures over the arch showed a gigantic military parade of triumphant Roman soldiers carrying the Temple treasures and Jewish captives to Rome. Roman soldiers holding up the

golden Menorah led the Israeli government in January, 1996 to formally petition the Vatican to support an investigation of the holy lampstand's whereabouts as a symbol of reconciliation between the Jewish people and the Roman Catholic institution. In any case, ancient Rome made certain that the example of Judah was permanently kept before the eyes of every Roman citizen around the Empire.

As the intervening years unfolded, the hot coals of Jewish nationalism continued to smolder below the surface. Tensions from the resulting harsh Roman rule finally appeared to ease when Emperor Hadrian became emperor in 117 A.D. Hadrian promised to restore Jerusalem and the Temple. The Jewish people hoped that they might at last recover from the terrible destruction in 70 A.D.; but those hopes would soon go up in smoke.

Hadrian came under the influence of Greek culture (Hellenism) and became more and more anti-Semitic. Just as Hadrian did, so his cruel repression of the Jewish people followed on the footsteps of Antiochus Epiphanes of almost a century earlier. In an attempt to erase Jewish distinctions and assimilate the sons of Israel into the Roman Empire, Hadrian outlawed circumcision, Sabbath observance, and synagogue prayers. In 130 A.D., Hadrian abandoned his promise. Jerusalem would be rebuilt, but only as a Roman city named after his chief deities. A temple would be built on the Temple Mount, but it would be a pagan shrine, patterned after the temple to Jupiter located in Rome.

This led to the second Jewish revolt against Rome. Jewish forces liberated Jerusalem in 132 A.D. under the leadership of Simon Bar Kochba. Rabbi Akiba, the leading rabbi of the day and the head of the Sanhedrin, declared Bar Kochba the Messiah. This set off a firestorm of debate among the rabbis and forced believers in Jesus to leave his followers. Bar Kochba failed to throw off the yoke of Rome and in 133 A.D. Rome counter-attacked with its best force of 35,000 foot soldiers. For three years Rome steadily squeezed the resistance movement. In 135 A.D. Bar Kochba made his last stand at Betar where he was killed.

When the smoke cleared, the legacy of devastation left behind was mind-numbing. Some 50 fortresses and 985 villages lay in ruins. The death toll in Jewish lives was topped at 580,000. Thousands died from starvation and disease while thousands more were sold into slavery. Finally Jerusalem was rebuilt and renamed Aelia Capitolina. The nation was defeated, her people were dispersed, and her homeland devastated. This brings me back to where I started on page 1.

After **Shavuot** was refocused to the giving of the Law, Exodus 19-20 was included in the **Shavuot** Scripture readings. These chapters are the story of God's revelation on Mt. Sinai and the Ten Commandments. When read in the synagogue, it is a practice to stand during the reading. One of the more significant readings on **Shavuot** is that of reading the book of Ruth.

Several reasons are given for the reading of the book of Ruth. Most prominently given was that it celebrated the barley harvest and the summer wheat harvest. Secondly, Ruth the Moabitess willingly embraced the God of Israel and His Law (the Torah).

Therefore, her story is read on this holiday which focuses today on the giving of the Law. This led to a single celebration (combining the barley and wheat harvest together) into a single event. If time permits, I hope to research the history when this became a single observance. I have a few rabbi friends who can help in answering when this occurred. In essence, the Biblical meaning of a specific separate barley and wheat harvest became one, a single celebration. In this regard, many synagogues hold Shavuot confirmation services for their teenage youth to recognize their childhood studies and confirm their commitment to live according to the Mosaic Law. It is also customary to bake two loaves of *hallel* bread.

Hallel (Heb. הַלֵּיל), is the general term designating Psalms 113–118 when these form a unit in the liturgy. These psalms are essentially expressions of thanksgiving and joy for divine redemption. **Hallel** is recited in two forms: (a) The "full" Hallel, consisting of Psalms 113–118. It is chanted in the synagogue on Sukkot, Hanukkah, the first day of Passover (the first two days in the Diaspora), Shavuot (Tosef., Suk. 3:2, Ta'an. 28b), and (in many synagogues) Israel's Independence Day. Hallel is also recited during the Passover seder service (Tosef., Suk. 3:2), when it is known as **Hallel Mizri** ("Egyptian Hallel") because of the exodus from Egypt which the seder commemorates (Ber. 56a; cf. Rashi ad loc.). On this occasion it is recited in two parts (Pes. 10:5–7; Maim. Yad, HameZ u-Mazzah 8:5). (b) The "half" **Hallel**, consisting of the "full" **Hallel**, excepting Psalms 115:1–11, and 116:1–11.

Torah observant Jews stay up all night and study the Torah, and break for coffee and cheesecake.

For Christians, Pentecost is recognized as the birth of the church, and the book of Acts focuses on this as central to the history of the church. Why is Acts chapter 2 so important? It is the birth of the church. It is the very start of the things we know and teach and which is the True Church, the very body of Christ made up of believers that find eternal salvation in Jesus Christ. He is the only head of that body and in Him we live.

The Gospel accounts tell of the life and words of our Savior. The book of Acts tells us of some of the acts of the apostles, but to a greater degree, it tells us history. It tells of cities and dates and people that were affected by the Gospel. The letters or epistles after Acts tells us of the supreme care and guidance that God has for His people – then, now, and in the future. One whole testament for the rest of time. Amazing! And Jesus Christ ties it all together, as does the book of Acts.

Acts can be neatly divided into two sections, the first dealing primarily with the ministry of Peter in Jerusalem and Samaria -(Acts 1–12) and the second follows Paul on his missionary journeys throughout the Roman Empire -(Acts 13–28). Acts is significant for chronicling the spread of the gospel, not only geographically but also culturally. It records the transition from taking the gospel to an exclusively Jewish audience—with Peter preaching to a small group in the Upper Room—to the gospel going out among the Gentiles, primarily under the ministry of the apostle Paul. The transition is best illustrated by Peter's vision in which he heard a voice telling him, **"What God has**

cleansed, no longer consider unholy” -(Acts 10:15). This led Peter to then share the gospel with many Gentiles. The lesson being that God wants His message of hope and salvation to extend to all people — ***“in Jerusalem, and in all Judea and Samaria, and even to the remotest part of the earth”*** -(Acts 1:8).

The main purposes of the book appears to be:

- To present a history. The significance of Acts as a historical account of Christian origins cannot be overestimated ...
- To give a defense for our belief ...
- To provide a guide ...
- To depict the triumph of Christianity in the face of bitter persecution ...

That said, we need to now begin sorting out important Biblical history and data that supports my earlier comment that the typology of the Feasts is associated with the three Biblical harvests.

This will take the guesswork out of how to count to Pentecost by conclusively proving, from Scripture, that the numbering of the 50 days begins on the morrow AFTER the seventh Sabbath is completed -(Leviticus 23:15), instead of numbering from the wave sheaf. By doing this, it places Pentecost at the end of the FOURTH month instead of the beginning of the THIRD month. This makes for a perfect break point in this incredibly misunderstood Feast of ***Shavuot***.

In Blessed Hope #13, I will present the evidence that we are incorrectly observing the wrong date for Pentecost. This evidence is so incredible and yet it seems just as incredible that the church has erred as badly as the Jews of Jesus’ day did.

Blessings,

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