

One of the ongoing debates in the feast keeping community is how to calculate the timing for the feast of Firstfruits and, by extension, the feast of Shavuot (Pentecost). One school of thought is that Firstfruits is always on Aviv 16, the morrow after the Sabbath of Unleavened Bread. The other school of thought is that Firstfruits is always on the first day of the week, the morrow after the first seventh-day Sabbath following the first Day of Unleavened Bread. As always, I want to see from the Bible, and the Bible alone, which method of calculation is correct. Often you will see people point to Josephus, Ellen White, or other sources to answer this question. Frankly, what any post-Biblical historian cites can only be confirmation of the traditions being followed at the time of their writing, and is not necessarily what YHVH would have His people do. It is no different than asking any one person today what opinion that person holds – that one opinion does not equal Scripture. I don't know of any post-Biblical historian who has advocated that their writing should supersede Scripture, and even if they were so presumptuous to suggest such a thing, it should land in the trash heap along with the Little Horn's writings. So with that in mind, what can we learn solely from Scripture on this topic?

The Biblical reference books I have employed in this study are:

1. The King James Bible
2. Strong's Concordance
3. The Interlinear Bible
4. The Englishman's Hebrew Concordance of the Old Testament, by George Wigram
5. The New Brown-Driver-Briggs-Gesenius Hebrew-English Lexicon

Some of the key words involved in this study are as follows: (the English word, followed by the Hebrew transliteration in parenthesis, followed by the Hebrew Strong's number, followed by the definition in the Brown-Driver-Briggs)

Feast (chag) 2282, festival-gathering, feast, pilgrim-feast

Feasts (moedim) 4150, appointed time, place, meeting

Rest (sabbaton) 7677, Sabbath observance, usually the phrase "Sabbath of sabbatic observance". Used of weekly Sabbath (in Ex 31:15, 35:2, Lev 23:3, Ex 16:23), Day of atonement, sabbatical year, Feast of Trumpets, and Feast of Tabernacles.

Sabbath (Shabbat) 7676, Sabbath

Seventh (shebebe) 7637, seventh (ordinal)

Weeks (Shavuot) 7620, period of seven, heptad, week

Leviticus 23, verses 9 – 14 detail Firstfruits, and verses 15-22 detail the Feast of Weeks (aka Pentecost). In both sections, we are told that the key date is the morrow (Strong's 4283) after the Sabbath (Strong's 7676). The word for Sabbath, Strong's 7676, is never translated as any other word than Sabbath(s), but that still doesn't tell us if it refers to the annual Sabbath of Unleavened Bread, or the weekly seventh-day Sabbath. It also doesn't tell us, as some people believe, that it simply means a period of any seven days, weeks, or years.

We generally refer to all of YHVH's feasts as "Sabbaths", but the terms employed in Leviticus 23:2 are "feasts" (Strong's 4150 "moed") and "holy convocations" (Strong's 6944, 4744). Verses 6-8, which detail Unleavened Bread, never call it a Sabbath, but rather a holy convocation. Elsewhere, it is called an ordinance (Strong's 2708, Exodus 12:17), feast (Strong's 2282 "chag" in Exodus 13:6, 23:15, 34:18, Leviticus 23:6, and Numbers 28:17), and a solemn assembly (Strong's 6116, Deuteronomy 16:8). I was unable to find a single instance of the First Day of Unleavened Bread ever referred to as a "Sabbath" (Strong's 7676). In fact, those terms only appear in the same verse one time (2 Chronicles 8:13) and it is

clear that 7676 is the seventh day of the week, and 4682 (unleavened bread) is the feast day. Of all of the moedim, I could only find the term 7676 Sabbath, standing alone, being applied to the seventh day of the week. Occasionally you will see the term “Sabbath of rest” applied to one of the moedim, which is Sabbath (7676) of rest (7677 sabbaton), but never did I find this term applied to Unleavened Bread. This phrase is also used to apply to the Sabbatical years. As such, there is no precedence or hint in Scripture to lead us to that conclusion that the word Sabbath (7676) is meant to refer to Unleavened Bread for purposes of timing Firstfruits and Shavuot. The only precedence would be to interpret it to mean the seventh day of the week.

Additionally, for the timing of Shavuot, we are told in Leviticus 23:16 that it is the morrow after the “seventh Sabbath” (7637, 7676), and that it will be 50 days. You cannot count seven Sabbaths (when counting both annual and weekly) and have the morrow after be the 50<sup>th</sup> day. People who adhere to the theory that Pentecost is always the 6<sup>th</sup> day of the third month interpret the term Sabbath (7676) in this instance as referring to any set of seven days (one week), so it could be the seven days from a Monday through Sunday, Wednesday through Tuesday, etc. Nowhere else in Scripture does 7676 mean “weeks”. In fact, Hebrew has a word for “week” that does mean any seven consecutive days, Strong’s 7620, shavuot. But that is not the term employed in Leviticus 23:16. We are not told to count seven weeks, but rather seven rest days. Had YHVH intended us to count weeks that could begin on any day, rather than Seventh-day Sabbaths, he would have specified it as such.

We will see 7676 used in Leviticus 25, speaking of the Sabbath years, in the term “seven Sabbaths of years”. Some people point to this use to say that Sabbath can refer to any unit of seven, so by extension when used in timing of Firstfruits and Shavuot the 7676 can mean any set of seven days. But the phrase in Leviticus 25:8 includes the words seven and years. The 7676 does not translate as seven, nor does it translate as years. It only means rest. So for timing of Shavuot, when using this Scripture as a reference it should teach us that we are to count seven “rests” not seven “weeks” that might start at any arbitrary given point.

God, who does things with simplicity (2 Corinthians 11:3) so that even a child can understand (Matthew 18:3, et al), and who is not the author of confusion (1 Corinthians 14:33), would have no logical reason to make this term mean something (Unleavened Bread) this one time than it means every other time it appears (Sabbath, rest). Especially when he could simply have done like he did with all of the other feasts days, and said that Firstfruits is always the 16<sup>th</sup> day of the first month, and Shavuot is always the 6<sup>th</sup> day of the third month, if that was what he meant. Or when he could have said to count seven “weeks” instead of seven “Sabbaths” if that is what he meant. The only logical reason for phrasing it with the words and method he uses is if indeed, he wanted us to have to count the weeks and days to arrive at the correct date. There would be no purpose for him giving counting instructions if he intended a set date.

(NOTE: In Deuteronomy 16:9 it does use the term “seven weeks” (7620) instead of “seven Sabbaths” (7676), but it is also linked with counting those weeks after the day of Firstfruits, so the only time that “weeks” is used instead of “Sabbaths”, by pointing us back to the day of putting “the sickle to the grain” it still points to the morrow after the 7676 Sabbath. As such, the weeks would be from Sabbath to Sabbath, and not referring to any arbitrary period of seven days.)

Like most Messianic believers, and in fulfillment of the only sign He promised, given in Matthew 12:40, I understand the crucifixion to have fallen on Wednesday with Yahshua being resurrected at the end of the seventh day Sabbath. I have two articles dated August 2009 that are posted at

[www.nailedtocross.com](http://www.nailedtocross.com) that explain this, so I won't cover it here. In this scenario, it is further evidence that the "Sabbath" referred to in the counting of Firstfruits had to be the 7<sup>th</sup> day. If the Firstfruits was the 16<sup>th</sup>, and Yahshua was in the grave on the 15<sup>th</sup> and 16<sup>th</sup> and raising on the 17<sup>th</sup>, it would have been impossible for him to be the Firstfruits offering (as he is claimed to be in 1 Corinthians 15:20 and 23) on the 16<sup>th</sup>. But if he rose late on Saturday (17<sup>th</sup>), told Mary not to touch him on Sunday (18<sup>th</sup>) morning, then he ascended to heaven to be the Firstfruits offering on Sunday, and returned to earth and allowed Thomas to touch him Sunday evening, that fits with the interpretation that Firstfruits always falls on the first day of the week.

#### Conclusions:

1. There is no Biblical basis for interpreting the 7676 Sabbath in Leviticus 23:11 as anything other than the weekly seventh-day Sabbath. There is no precedence for interpreting it to mean the Feast of Unleavened Bread.
2. There is no Biblical basis for interpreting the 7676 Sabbath(s) in Leviticus 23:15 and 16 as anything other than seven consecutive weekly seventh-day Sabbaths. There is no precedence for interpreting it to mean any seven day period.
3. As such, these two movable feasts will always fall on the first day of the week.

To those who have come to a different conclusion, here are my questions to you:

- 1) Where can you find a single verifiable instance where 7676 specifically refers to Unleavened Bread?
- 2) Where can you find a single verifiable instance where 7676 specifically refers to any seven day period instead of to the seventh-day Sabbath?
- 3) Can you give a credible explanation why God didn't just spell out the dates like he did every other feast day, and instead gave a formula to count, if no counting is necessary to arrive at the correct date?
- 4) Can you give a credible explanation why God would use 7676 (Sabbath) instead of 7620 (week) in Leviticus 23:15?
- 5) Can you explain either a) how Yahshua could be our Firstfruits if he was in the grave on the day of Firstfruits (if you accept the Wednesday crucifixion), or b) how He could be our Messiah if he was not in the grave the 3 days and 3 nights that he said in Matthew 12:40 was the only sign we would be given (if you accept a Friday crucifixion)?

As with all understanding of Scripture, it is up to you to study to show yourself approved. (2 Timothy 2:15) May whoever reads this study be blessed. See you at the Feasts!