

The background of the slide features a vibrant, warm-toned image. It depicts a large crowd of people, with many individuals having their hands raised in the air, suggesting a moment of praise or worship. A bright, glowing light source, possibly a fire or a large lamp, is visible in the center, casting a golden glow over the scene. The overall atmosphere is one of joy and spiritual celebration.

**PASSOVER**

**TO**

**PENTECOST**

**LESSON 1**

# PASSOVER TO PENTECOST

A photograph of a church congregation with their hands raised in praise. The scene is lit with warm, golden light, creating a spiritual atmosphere. The text is overlaid on the top half of the image.

## A Spiritual Journey

# PASSOVER TO PENTECOST

## Preparing for a deep relationship with the Holy Spirit

In the Jewish tradition, the festival of **Pentecost** is celebrated on the 50th day (the seventh Sunday plus a day) after the first day of the “Feast of Unleavened Bread”.

- It is also known as the “**Feast of weeks,**” “**Feast of Harvest,**” (Exd. 23:16) or “Day of first fruits” (Num. 28:26), “**First-fruits of Wheat Harvest**” (Exd. 34:22) and “**Shavuoth**” (weeks)

*As a Jewish holiday, Shavuot* commemorates the single most important event in Israel’s history: the giving of the *Torah* (the first five books in the Hebrew Bible) to Moses at Mount Sinai.

Although it is not as well known among non-Jews as Passover or *Sukkot*, the Feast of Booths, Pentecost is one of the three major festivals often called “pilgrim” festivals because all Jewish males were required to observe them at the Holy Temple in Jerusalem.

- This movable feast is directed by God in Deuteronomy 16:9 and Leviticus 23:16

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During the Hellenistic period (321 BC to 31 BC), the ancient harvest festival also became a day of renewing the Noahic covenant, described in Genesis 9:8-17, which is established between God and "all flesh that is upon the earth".

According to Acts 2:5-11 there were Jews from "every nation under heaven" in Jerusalem, possibly visiting the city as pilgrims during Pentecost.

As Jewish history marks it as the time the law was given to Israel, so in the Church age it commemorates the descent of the Holy Spirit upon the Apostles and other followers of Jesus Christ while they were in Jerusalem celebrating the Feast of Weeks (Acts 2:1-31).

The holiday is also called "White Sunday" or "Whitsunday" or "Whitsun", especially in the United Kingdom.

- This name was derived from the white garments worn on Pentecost by the newly baptized

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In the Christian tradition, the symbols of Pentecost are those of the Holy Spirit and include flames, wind, the breath of God and a dove.

The two holidays, Pesach (Passover) and *Shavuot* (*Pentecost*), are linked by more than just their calendric proximity.

The Exodus from Egypt, which Passover celebrates, marked the beginning of physical freedom for the Jewish people.

But *Shavuot* is a reminder for the Jews that physical liberation was incomplete without the spiritual redemption represented by receiving God's law.

*Shavuot* is also called *Atzeret*, meaning "day of assembly," thus together with Passover it forms the completion of a unit of remembrance

- Jews gained their freedom from Egypt on Passover in order to receive the Torah on Shavout

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The earlier celebrations of *Shavuot* were more agricultural in nature and motif, as sheaves of barley (the winter crop) were brought to the Temple each day, starting on Passover until *Shavuot*, the beginning of the harvesting season 50 days later.

Farmers looked forward to *Shavuot* with great anticipation and when it finally arrived, the people would bring their first fruits to the Temple amid great pomp and ceremony.

- They rejoiced before God and thanked Him for their material blessings.

With the destruction of the Second Temple and the forced separation of the Jewish people from their land, the centrality of the harvest motif diminished.

Instead, the theme of the anniversary of the revelation of the *Torah* to Moses on Mount Sinai gained dominance—a theme continued today.

Many Jews today celebrate *Shavuot* by staying up the entire night studying and learning the *Torah*.

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At synagogue services on *Shavuot* morning, the Ten Commandments are read and the people reaffirm their commitment to treasure and obey God's Law.

According to a well-known Jewish *Midrash* (the oral traditions that eventually were written down), God initially offered the *Torah* to each of 70 nations, who would not accept it without first asking what it was about.

- After hearing the commandments, each nation had some excuse for not accepting them.
- God finally turned to the nation of Israel, who said "*kol asher diber Adonai na'aseh*," which means "all that the LORD says we will do."
- Unlike the other nations, Israel chose the *Torah* before knowing its contents (Exd. 19:8).

The book of Ruth is also traditionally read on *Shavuot* morning because of its link to the harvest season (when the story takes place) and because of Ruth's acceptance of the Jewish faith and God.

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Ruth was a brave, non-Jewish woman, whose love for God and the *Torah* led her to convert to Judaism.

Ruth has a further connection to *Shavuot* because she was the great-grandmother of King David who, according to tradition, was born and died on *Shavuot*.

Moving forward from the barely harvest in early spring, Israel waited with expectation for the wheat harvest which would occur 50 days later.

There appears to be a Duality in each of Israel's three major Festivals - Passover, Shavuot and Succoth—for they were once nature Festivals and then historical commemorations

- Passover is the both the Festival of Spring and the Festival of the Exodus from Egypt
- Shavuot marks the giving of the Torah and it is the First-fruit Festival of the wheat
- Succoth is the Festival of Harvest, commemorating the booths that Jewish forefathers sat in while wandering through the wilderness.

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In the Scriptures, this duality appears as one, without any sort of intervening considerations separating between the two aspects.

- The two meanings can be found consistently side by side in the same passages.
- It should come as no surprise that during the many years of exile, with the weakened relationship of Jews to nature and agriculture, the more spiritual-historical aspects of the Festivals received punctuation.
- The three Pilgrim Festivals were looked upon almost entirely as days of historical remembrance.

A shared characteristic of both Pesach and Shavuot is that they are **festivals of thanks** - thanks to the Almighty for having allowed His people to view the fruits of all of their preparation and hard work during the past year.

- Consequently, the Festival of Spring (Pesach) is not a festival of "nature's reawakening."

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Rather, the two Festivals are a single continuum beginning with Passover and ending with Shavuot -- even possessing a kind of ascent.

In Pesach, where the ripening of the barley crop is celebrated, the joy is not yet complete, for, in truth, barley was intended as fodder for animals (I Kings 4:28).

Although it is indeed possible to consume bread made from barley, such bread is generally eaten by the poorest of the poor, in times of famine and hardship.

- The normal bread which man eats, even coarse bread, is made from wheat.

Hence, even when the barley crop was successful, there followed a seven-week period of apprehension before the ripening of the principal crop - wheat.

- Only then was the joy complete: the "Atzeret" of Passover had arrived

Judaism does not accept detached abstraction, therefore, the physical redemption must come first—promoting the reality of a body of people capable of receiving the Torah.

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The Exodus from Egypt and the general concept of freedom which it embodies are only the first tidings - they are the springtime of national life - this is the Festival of the barley meal-offering.

- Woe to the nation which does not advance beyond the level of consuming food which is only fit for an animal.
- Woe to freedom which contains nothing more than a flight from slavery, freedom which is no more than a negation of others, lacking any true personal content.

**A good starting place to unpack the truth about Shavuot is Leviticus 23:9-21** And the LORD spoke to Moses, saying, <sup>10</sup> "Speak to the children of Israel, and say to them: **When you come into the land** which I give to you, and reap its harvest, then you shall **bring a sheaf of the firstfruits of your harvest to the priest.** <sup>11</sup> He shall wave the sheaf before the LORD, to be accepted on your behalf; on the day after the Sabbath the priest shall wave it. <sup>12</sup> And you shall offer on that day, when you wave the sheaf, a male lamb of the first year, without blemish

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as a burnt offering to the LORD. <sup>13</sup> Its grain offering shall be two-tenths of *an ephah* of fine flour mixed with oil, an offering made by fire to the LORD, for a sweet aroma; and its drink offering shall be of wine, one-fourth of a hin. <sup>14</sup> You shall eat neither bread nor parched grain nor fresh grain until the same day that you have brought an offering to your God; *it shall be* a statute forever throughout your generations in all your dwellings. <sup>15</sup> And you shall count for yourselves from the day after the Sabbath, from the day that you brought the sheaf of the wave offering: **seven Sabbaths shall be completed.** <sup>16</sup> Count fifty days to the day after the seventh Sabbath; then you shall offer a new grain offering to the LORD. <sup>17</sup> 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. <sup>18</sup> And you shall offer with the bread seven lambs of the first year, without blemish, one young bull, and two rams. They shall be *as* a burnt offering to the LORD, with their grain offering and their drink offerings, an offering made by fire for a sweet aroma to the LORD. <sup>19</sup> Then you shall sacrifice one kid of the goats as a sin offering, and two male lambs of the first year as a sacrifice of a

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peace offering. <sup>20</sup>The priest shall wave them with the bread of the firstfruits *as a* **wave offering** before the LORD, with the two lambs. They shall be holy to the LORD for the priest. <sup>21</sup> And you shall proclaim on the same day *that* it is a holy convocation to you. You shall do no customary work *on it*. *It shall be* a statute forever in all your dwellings throughout your generations.

Have you ever counted the days till an event you're excited about? Time can go so slowly when you're watching it.

There is the old adage "a watched pot never boils" meaning that the more we pay attention to the time, the more conscious we are of it going slowly.

God, unsurprisingly, is aware of this phenomenon, and has capitalized on it to drive a powerful truth home. I am talking about the Biblical tradition of "Counting the Omer".

The omer a ("sheaf") is an old Biblical measure of volume of unthreshed stalks of grain; and the Sunday after the start of each farmer's barley grain harvest, a sheaf of barley from each farm was waved by a Priest in the Temple in Jerusalem.

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This wave offering was to signal the allowance of the consumption of chadash (grains from the *new* harvest).

Later tradition evolved to: during the Feast of Unleavened Bread, an *omer* of barley was offered in the Temple in Jerusalem for the same reason just mentioned.

Process and waiting is part of the way of God, even evidenced in Jesus walking the earth for 40 days after coming back to life.

The Jewish people would have a good sense of how long that is, because it falls in their time of Counting the Omer for the 50 days between Passover and Pentecost.

It should come as no surprise that the seven weeks of the Omer counting, in the Jewish tradition, contain an element of **sadness** and **anticipation** for what the future holds.

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National liberation, in its initial stages, awakens great excitement which is generated by the joy of freedom and the throwing off of the burden of materialism and all that comes with it.

- It thus fills one with a sense of complete victory.

After this, though, a new period arrives - not necessarily a difficult one - in which one begins to sense that freedom is not the solution to all problems.

- Freedom offers opportunity but brings in its wake a sense of "the counting of the Omer."
- It is impossible to be satisfied for very long with a crop fit "for the horses and steeds."

Just as any woman who has given birth knows exactly how long nine months feels, the Jewish people know exactly how long it feels from Passover until the feast of Weeks.

Therefore, with the counting, the counting of freedom, there must commence an additional counting - a counting of anticipation and preparation for receiving the Torah, since only with the receiving of the Torah do the first-fruit Festivals draw to a close.

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Therefore, only when the nation Israel **receives Torah** and **wholeheartedly embraces it** for what it is - a guide to proper living - can they begin to walk in its ways.

Pentecost for Christians culminates the celebration and work of the church begun on Resurrection Day and is marked with the gifting of the Holy Spirit.

In early Christianity, Resurrection Day was the primary day for baptisms. The newly baptized were then trained in basic Christian doctrine, including the meaning of the sacraments they had now experienced, as they prepared to take up their ministries.

- On Pentecost, the early Church celebrated the commissioning of new members into ministry.
- Two colors are historically associated with Pentecost.
  - 1) Red is a visual reminder of the "tongues of fire" that empowered the apostles and others to proclaim the good news of Christ's resurrection in many languages to the crowds of pilgrims from many lands (Acts 2:3).

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2) White is also used in the early church because Pentecost became the major day for baptisms, which started out early on Resurrection Day.

➤ Those being baptized were given new white robes to wear as a sign they had taken off the world, died to sin, and were raised with the risen Christ to new life.

In the canonical gospels, the concept of the harvest of First Fruits is used allegorically and metaphorically.

- In Matthew's Gospel, Jesus is described as stating that "in the time of harvest" He would instruct the harvesters (i.e., the angels) to gather the "tares", bind them into bundles, and burn them, but to "gather the wheat into [his] barn" (Matt. 13:30).
- Some argue that this teaching is about the Last Judgment rather than offering any thanksgiving to a deity, the "tares" being sinners or unbelievers and His son Jesus and the "wheat" being believers of God.
  - Although it also fits the rapture as noted in Matt. 24:31 and Rev. 14:4

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Other Christians argued it was less about sin and more about following Jesus' teachings and abandoning the teachings they had formerly known.

In the Gospel of John, Jesus is described as stating "he that reapeth receiveth wages, and gathereth fruit unto life eternal: that both he that soweth and he that reapeth may rejoice together" (John 4:36).

- Which some argue is about rewards from God for those who perform God's work.

First Corinthians also referred to Jesus' resurrection as a type of First Fruit, "But now Christ has been raised from the dead, the first fruits of those who are asleep."

*From Passover to Pentecost* is a fifty-day journey specifically designed to prepare you for a fresh and deep experience with the Holy Spirit.

In the book of Acts, *from Passover to Pentecost*, was a time of waiting and anticipating the fulfillment of a promise Acts.

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**Acts 1:7-8** And He said to them, "It is not for you to know times or seasons which the Father has put in His own authority <sup>8</sup> But you shall receive power when the Holy Spirit has come upon you; and you shall be witnesses to Me in Jerusalem, and in all Judea and Samaria, and to the end of the earth."

But before we get to Acts 1, lets go back to Resurrection Day in Matthew 28:7  
"And go quickly and tell His disciples that He is risen from the dead, and indeed He is going before you into Galilee; there you will see Him. Behold, I have told you."

- Why did Jesus tell His disciples to meet Him in Galilee after His resurrection?
- What could His disciples gain from going to see Him in Galilee, that they won't already have by seeing Him after His resurrection in Jerusalem.
- Galilee was about eighty miles away, and Matthew and Mark both have accounts of the disciples being told, after His death it was important to see Him in Galilee (Matt 28:7, 10; Mark 14:28; Mark 16:9)

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On His resurrection day, Jesus appears to Mary Magdalene (John 20:14-18); to the women that had gone to the tomb with Mary (Matt 28:9-10), to Peter (I Cor. 15:5), and to the disciples as a group in a closed room (I Cor 15:6; Luke 24:36-39).

The best account of what transpires in Galilee with His disciples is from Matthew, which is also where scholars believe over five hundred followers saw Him at one time (I Cor 15:6).

Perhaps two questions can bring further clarity to us:

- 1) The first question is -- what question does Jesus resurrection answer?" Could it be "What is the meaning of life here on planet Earth?"
  - In studying Christ and His resurrection we will find all things (us included) were made for Him, and exist for His purpose and pleasure.
  - We are reminded that God is real, and really wants a relationship with people so earnestly that He would remove all barriers prohibiting people from truly knowing Him.

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- The sacrifice and God's love motivated and validated the resurrection of Jesus.
  - 1)The next question is: what is the proper context for having a living relationship with the Lord?"
    - Until the disciples are commissioned, the focal point for a Christ honoring life is unclear.
    - In Matt 28:18-20 we have those clarifying words.
      - a)V 18 "All authority has been given to Me in heaven and on earth.
      - b)V 19 Go therefore and make disciples of all the nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, and teach doctrine (V 20)

With these words we hear why it was so important for Jesus followers to hear what He had to say in Galilee.

- It was a message to all of His disciples – you and me included – and not just a select few. He wanted them to open their hearts and become committed to a calling

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