

Two Loaves Baked with Leaven

“¹⁷ You are to bring out of your houses two loaves of bread for a wave offering, made of two tenths of an ephah (an ephah is about 93 US dry cups, thus, 20% is about 18.6 cups) of fine flour. They are to be baked with hametz as firstfruits to Adonai... ²⁰ The kohen is to wave them with the bread of the firstfruits as a wave offering before Adonai, with the two lambs. They shall be holy to Adonai for the kohen. ²¹ You are to make a proclamation on the same day that there is to be a holy convocation, and you should do no regular work. This is a statute forever in all your dwellings throughout your generations” (Lev. 23:17, 20-21)

In ancient times, the people of Israel brought two loaves of wheat bread, from the first fruits of the wheat harvest, baked with leaven as an offering. They were not small loaves! Why two loaves? Wheat in Scripture represents souls, that is, the harvest of souls. These loaves represent two peoples, Jews and Gentiles. These are two peoples knitted together in *Yeshua*, baked into one loaf. These people are not yet so spiritual that they have “no leaven” (which is a type of sin). Today we are asked to bring real flesh and blood humans – people with their problems (leavening). These are to be the first fruits of the wheat harvest.

What qualifies as a first fruit? How are first fruits generated? I once tried to be a potato farmer and planted twenty one hundred foot rows of potatoes in a large garden area with its own “Israeli” irrigation system. I learned that potatoes were planted from a 50 lb. bag of “old potatoes” where you took each eye from a single potato and planted each eye as a future plant. A single potato would yield as many as 7-8 plants. As you go on each row, you plant each potato eye segment under banked up dirt. For sure then, each seven or eight plants in each row came from the same source. To my great amazement as the plants grew, some were maturing faster than others. There was no pattern and we had twenty one hundred foot rows to observe. In a few weeks my son Ian (he about 4 or 5 years old) and I went to the garden to see if any plants had yielded any potatoes. You check by digging each mature-looking plant to see if you could find precious “new potatoes” which we intended to fry in a deep fryer and let Marilyn use the rest for her green beans. Ian and I could savor those fried cut-in-half new potatoes and when they were ready (we tried looking for new potatoes for two weeks every third day or so) Ian and I were going to have a feast! Finally we dug almost a bushel of new red and white potatoes and we had an Arroyo Family fried new potato festival for two or three days or so.

What made some plants become first fruits while others took longer? Was it the source? No, as many as eight plants came from the same original potato but the first fruit plants were scattered throughout the garden. Was it the fertilizer or amount of water? No, the entire field was fertilized with the same additives and the water lines were identical. Clearly something inside each individual plant, regardless of origin or environment or location determined to grow faster than its neighbors.

This is a great Scriptural and spiritual picture. Who are these first fruit people? The people that comprise these loaves are people who mature faster than their neighbors, even if the spiritual source, spiritual land, spiritual environment and spiritual food are the same. There is something inside first fruit people that compels them into becoming first fruits for their Master to have a festival. And they are thrust together into loaves baked with leaven, in the presence of human problems and made up of real flesh and blood humans.

Shavuot is one of the three pilgrimage feasts where all Jewish males were required to attend: *“¹⁶ Three times a year all your males are to appear before Adonai your God in the place He chooses—at the Feast of Matzot, the Feast of Shavuot, and the Feast of Sukkot. No one should appear before Adonai empty-handed—¹⁷ the gift of each man’s hand according to the blessing Adonai your God has given you” (Deut. 16: 16-17)*. We see evidence of the importance of this command in the Gospels where you see *Yeshua* making his way to Jerusalem numerous times throughout the three and one half years of His public ministry. We also see this in the life of the apostle Paul: *“¹⁶ For Paul had decided to sail past Ephesus so that he might not spend much time in Asia, because he was hurrying to be in Jerusalem, if possible, by the day of Shavuot. ¹⁷ From Miletus, dispatching someone to Ephesus, he called for the elders of the*

community.¹⁸ When they came to him, he said to them, “You yourselves know how I behaved among you all the time from the first day I set foot in Asia,¹⁹ serving the Lord with all humility and tears and trials which fell upon me through the plots of the Jewish leaders.²⁰ I did not shrink back from proclaiming to you anything that was profitable, teaching you publicly as well as from house to house,²¹ testifying to both Jewish and Greek people repentance to God and trust in our Lord Yeshua.²² “And now, look, bound by the Ruach, I am going to Jerusalem—not knowing what will happen to me there,²³ except that the Ruach ha-Kodesh bears witness to me from city to city, saying that bondage and afflictions await me.²⁴ However, I don’t consider my life of any value, except that I might finish my course and the office I received from the Lord Yeshua, to declare the Good News of the grace of God.²⁵ “Now, look! I know that none of you, among whom I have gone proclaiming the kingdom, will ever see my face again.²⁶ Therefore, I testify to you this day that I am innocent of the blood of all.²⁷ For I did not shrink back from declaring to you the whole purpose of God.²⁸ “Take care of yourselves and all the flock of which the Ruach ha-Kodesh has made you overseers, to shepherd the community of God—which He obtained with the blood of His own” (Acts 20:16-28).

Paul knew that bondage and afflictions awaited him, but he was determined to finish his mission and his course. The TLV heading in Acts 21 is “Going to Jerusalem Despite Warnings.” In fact in the following chapter we see that Paul indeed knew what he was talking about when Agabus comes and prophesies over Paul: “¹⁰ While we stayed there for a number of days, a prophet named Agabus came down from Judea.¹¹ He came to us, took Paul’s belt, tied his own hands and feet, and said, “The Ruach ha-Kodesh says this: ‘In this way shall the Jewish people in Jerusalem bind the man who owns this belt and deliver him into the hands of the Gentiles.’”¹² When we heard these things, both we and the local people urged Paul not to go up to Jerusalem.¹³ Then Paul responded, “What are you doing, weeping and breaking my heart? For I am ready not only to be bound but to die for the name of the Lord Yeshua!”¹⁴ Since he would not be persuaded, we fell silent, saying only, “May the Lord’s will be done” (Acts 21:10-14).

Paul was ready to meet his final destiny and accomplish what the Lord Yeshua had in store for him. Keeping Torah, by attending and observing the Feast of Shavuot figures prominently in the narrative. From there Paul is counseled by Jacob (the brother of Yeshua?) to “take four selected men who have taken the Nazirite vow and purify yourself along with them and pay their expenses, so that they may shave their heads. That way, all will realize there is nothing to the things they have been told about you, but that you yourself walk in an orderly manner, keeping the Torah”(Acts 21:24). The rest of the story is that Paul is taken prisoner and incarcerated for one year and finally appears before Felix, then two years later before Festus and King Agrippa. One of the most important Scriptures about the apostle Paul is part of his testimony before Felix: ¹⁴ “But this I confess to you, that according to the Way (which they call a sect), I worship the God of our fathers, believing everything written in the Torah and the Prophets” (Acts 24:14). As we approach the end of Paul’s journeys Paul confesses that he is a Torah observant Jew. This is after writing Galatians, and many of the books of the Newer Testament. From here Paul goes to Rome where he remains incarcerated until his death and pens the last few of his letters (those to Timothy and Titus).

How important is being Torah observant to you? How important is it for you to keep Adonai’s Festivals and thereby demonstrate a life that parallels Paul’s and Yeshua’s? I believe this is a matter of destiny, your Yeshua given destiny. No excuses not to become first fruits people. No excuses that you are not yet in a glorified state and that you are human with your myriad of problems and issues. Shavuot beckons. Therefore “Let us Keep the Feast” and let us keep it unto the Lord of the Harvest by appropriating His gift of the Ruach so we can become witnesses from Judaea, Samaria and uttermost parts of the world. Let us Press On: “¹³ Brothers and sisters, I do not consider myself as having taken hold of this. But this one thing I do: forgetting what is behind and straining toward what is ahead,¹⁴ I press on toward the goal for the reward of the upward calling of God in Messiah Yeshua.¹⁵ Therefore let all who are mature (**that is, those who are striving to be first fruit**) have this attitude; and if you have a different attitude in anything, this also God will reveal to you.¹⁶ Nevertheless, let us live up to the same standard we have attained” (Phil. 3:14-16). Shabbat Shalom!