

The Feast of Shavuot: Some Chronological Suggestions

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The Sages fixed the coming of the people of Israel to Mt. Sinai on Shavuot in the following manner:

1. Ex 19 begins: בַּחֹדֶשׁ הַשְּׁלִישִׁי לְצֵאת בְּנֵי־יִשְׂרָאֵל מֵאֶרֶץ מִצְרַיִם בַּיּוֹם הַזֶּה בָּאוּ מִדְּבַר סִינַי, “In the third month of the going out of the children of Israel from the land of Egypt, on this day, they came to the wilderness of Sinai.” The text is emphatic in specifying בַּיּוֹם הַזֶּה, “on this (very) day,” and the opening “In the third month” seems to indicate that “on this (very) day” therefore refers to Rosh Chodesh of the third month, i.e., Sivan 1. Moreover, when Israel finally came to enter the Land after 40 years of wilderness wanderings, we read in Josh 5:10–12 that they celebrated the Pesach on the eve of Nisan 14, and on the day after the Pesach, i.e., on the 16th of Nisan, they ate from the produce of the Land, for the manna had ceased. This is in accordance with Lev 23:9–14, in which it is prohibited to eat from the new produce of the Land until the sheaf was waved as first-fruits. Then, following the waving of the sheaf (i.e., the first-fruits offered by the priests) on the 15th, the new grain may be eaten, i.e., on the 16th of Nisan. Starting with the 16th, 49 days are to be counted by bringing an omer of grain each day to the priests, and then, on the 50th day is the feast of Shavuot. This pattern of counting 49 days from the day after the Shabbat of Pesach (15th of Nisan) is pre-figured in the chronology of the exodus and the giving of the Torah at Sinai.
2. The chronology of the giving of the Torah:
 - Nisan 14
The passover lamb was slain in the afternoon, roasted, and eaten that night. The Angel of the Lord put the firstborn to death at midnight. Israel travelled for the remainder of Nisan and for the month of Iyar.
 - Sivan 1 - Sunday (*Yom Rishon*, יוֹם רִשְׁאוֹן), 45th omer Israel reaches the wilderness of Sinai and camped facing the mountain.
No word from God came on this day because of the people’s fatigue. (Ex 19:1-2)
 - Sivan 2 - Monday (*Yom Sheini* שְׁנֵי יוֹם), 46th omer
Moses addresses Israel according to the words of God, introducing the Torah to them and helping them understand what will be required if they accept the Torah. Moses ascends to the lower part of the mountain twice on this day. (Ex 19:3-9)
 - Sivan 3 - Tuesday (*Yom Sh’lishi*, יוֹם שְׁלִישִׁי), 47th omer
Moses ascends to the lower part of the mountain, speaks with God, Who gives him the commandments regarding the sanctification of the people and the restriction that neither they nor any animal should touch the mountain. They were to consecrate themselves today, tomorrow, and be ready for the appearance of God on the following day, i.e., the third day. Moses ascends the mountain only once on this day. (Ex 19:10-15)
 - Sivan 4 - Wednesday (*Yom R’vi’i*, יוֹם רְבִיעִי), 48th omer
The people continue their sanctification/consecration in anticipation of the giving of the Torah on the next day.
 - Sivan 5 - Thursday (*Yom Chamishi*, יוֹם חֲמִישִׁי), 49th omer
In the morning the people heard a loud blast of the Shofar, came to the foot of the mountain, and saw the mountain all in smoke as it quaked at the descent of God upon it. The Shofar blasts grew louder and louder, then Moses spoke to God and He answered him with thunder. God once again instructed Moses to warn the people about coming upon the mountain. He instructs Moses to return to the people, warn them about breaking through into the cloud on the mountain, and then to return again with Aaron.

- Sivan 6 - Friday (*Yom Shishi*, יום ששי, *erev Shabbat*), 50th day
The chronology is a bit uncertain. Some of the Sages say that Moses built the altar (Ex 24:4) on the 5th of Sivan while others reckon it to be built on the 6th (m.*Shabbat* 24.4; cf. Rashi). Exodus 24:4 seems to indicate that Moses arose early in the morning, which seems to be on the day after God's initial appearance in the cloud of smoke (Sivan 5). The biblical narrative seems to put the events of Ex 24 on the day following the events of Ex 19:25. If this is correct, it was on Sivan 6 that Moses, Aaron, Nadab, Abihu, and the 70 elders went up to the mountain (they returned to the people after Moses and Joshua went on alone), and Moses and Joshua continued on (Joshua apparently did not go the full distance with Moses, who alone entered the presence of the God, cf. 24:2) to receive the stone tablets of the Torah. Sivan 6 is Shavuot.
- Sivan 7 - Shabbat (שַׁבָּת)
Aaron and those with him rested on the Shabbat, as did Joshua who had ascended further with Moses. (There is no indication as to where Joshua stayed during this time. He did remain on the mountain for the 40 days and nights, since he accompanies Moses when he descends, cf. Ex 32:17). God begins to expound the Torah to Moses, the fuller explanation of the 10 words written on the stone tablets. (cf. b.*Shabbat* 86b)
- Sivan 8 - 13 (Sunday - Friday)
Ex 24:16 indicates that "the glory of the Lord rested on Mt. Sinai, and the cloud (of His glory) covered for six days, and on the seventh day He called to Moses from the midst of the cloud." Apparently the conversation between God and Moses was private until the 7th day, when His calling of Moses was heard by the others.
- Sivan 14 - Shabbat (שַׁבָּת)
A day of rest.
- Sivan 15 - Tammuz 16
Moses and Joshua remain on the mountain. Apparently Aaron and the rest of the elders came down off the mountain to the camp of the Israelites.
- Tammuz 16 (Wednesday, *Yom Revi'i*, יום רביעי)
The Sages teach that the people of Israel knew Moses would be on the mountain for 40 days, which, by their reckoning, should have been concluded on the 16th of Tammuz. However, God's reckoning began the 40 day count a day later, ending it on the 17th of Tammuz. When the people saw that Moses had not descended on the 16th, they thought he had died, and preceded to make the golden calf (Ex 32:1-6).
- Tammuz 17 (Thursday, *Yom Chamishi*, יום חמישי)
Moses and Joshua descend from the mountain with the stone tablets. Moses breaks the tablets against the mountain when he sees the idolatry of the people. (Ex 32:19)
- Tammuz 18 (*Yom Shishi*, יום ששי, *erev Shabbat*)
The Sages teach that Moses went back up the mountain on the 18th of Tammuz, and remained there for another 40 days. Deut 9:18 may support this teaching. (Cf. also t.*Bava Kama* 82a).
- Av 29 - Wednesday (Wednesday, *Yom Revi'i*, יום רביעי)
The Sages further teach that Moses descended from the mountain on the 29th of Av and returned a third time on the 30th of Av for yet another 40 days.
- Tishrei 10 - Day of Atonement - Monday (*Yom Sheini*, יום שני)
The Sages say that Moses descended for the final time on Yom Kippur, placing the second tablets in a special box. They were later transferred to the Ark of the Covenant.

Chronology of the Death, Resurrection, Ascension of Yeshua and the pouring out of the Ruach HaKodesh (Holy Spirit) on Shavuot

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(These are only suggestive. I recognize the many problems in constructing any kind of chronology for Yeshua's crucifixion, resurrection, and ascension.)

- **Nisan 14**
Yeshua eats the Pesach with His disciples at the closing of the day; goes to the Mount of Olives to pray after the Seder (it is now Nisan 15); is arrested, spends the night before the High Priests, and other judges.
- **Nisan 15** (morning; this is the Festival Shabbat as well as the preparation day for the weekly Shabbat)
Taken before Pilate; crucified at 9:00 am; darkness from 12:00 noon to 3:00 pm; Yeshua's body laid in the tomb in the evening, most likely before 6:00 pm.
- **Nisan 16** - Shabbat - 1st omer (a special Shabbat since the first sheaf of the barley was harvested on the Shabbat and waved in the Temple)
- **Nisan 17** - *Yom Rishon* (יום ראשון, Sunday) - 2nd omer - Yeshua is alive; meets the two disciples on the road to Emmaus (Lk 24:21, "it is the third day since all of things happened")
- **Nisan 18** - Monday, 3rd omer
- **Nisan 19-Iyar 28**, 4th-43rd omer = 40 days (Iyar 28 is a weekly Shabbat)
Yeshua shows Himself to many people, and teaches His disciples during the 40 days of His post-resurrection life in the Land (Acts 1:3).
- **Iyar 29** - 44th omer (*Yom Rishon*, יום ראשון, just after the Shabbat had ended, thus evening time)
Yeshua ascends to the Father. He and His disciples were observing Shabbat in Jerusalem, and had walked across the Kidron Valley to the Mt. of Olives. The ascension occurs after the Shabbat had ended, just after sunset, thus the beginning of first day of the week. This is the only explanation for why Luke would include the otherwise superfluous phrase "a Sabbath day's journey" in Acts 1:12, to emphasize that walking to the Mt. of Olives on the Shabbat was not contrary to the prevailing halachah observed in Jerusalem. The appearance of angels [two men in white] asking why they continued to gaze into the sky corresponds to the angels at the tomb following the resurrection. The timing is the same: both occurred at the beginning of *Yom Rishon*.
- **Sivan 1-5**, 45th - 49th omer
The disciples stay in Jerusalem, anticipating and preparing for the coming of Shavuot. They choose Matthias to replace Judas as one of the Twelve. (Acts 1:15-26)
- **Sivan 6** (Friday, *Yom Shishi*, יום שישי)
Shavuot arrives; disciples are congregated in Jerusalem to celebrate according to the Torah; the Ruach is poured out in the special "harvesting" mission, to gather in peoples of every nation that all the families of the earth might be blessed through the seed of Abraham, Yeshua (cf. Gen 12:1-3; Gal 3:8, 16).