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## Why We Celebrate Shavuot According to the Sadducean Calendar, Not the Pharisaic One

In the first century, there were two primary calendars used by the Jewish people to determine the timing of biblical feast days—one followed by the *Sadducees* (often linked with the Temple priesthood), and the other by the *Pharisees* (the forerunners of Rabbinic Judaism). One of the key differences between these two calendars centered around how to calculate the Feast of Shavuot, also known as the Feast of Weeks or Pentecost.



The Torah commands in Leviticus 23:15–16 that the counting of the Omer—leading up to Shavuot—should begin **“on the day after the Sabbath.”** The Sadducees interpreted this phrase to mean the weekly Sabbath that falls during the Feast of Unleavened Bread. So, they began the count on Sunday, the day after the regular Sabbath, regardless of which date Passover fell on that year.

This meant Shavuot always landed on a Sunday, exactly seven weeks (or 50 days) later.

In contrast, the Pharisees interpreted “Sabbath” to mean the first day of Unleavened Bread, which is also a rest day or “High Sabbath.” As a result, they began counting from the second day of Unleavened Bread (always the 16th of Nisan), leading Shavuot to consistently fall on the same calendar day each year, rather than always falling on the same day of the week.

**But here’s the key issue:** every other feast day God appointed in the Torah is fixed to a specific day of the calendar—Passover on the 14th of Nisan, Yom Teruah on the 1st of Tishrei, Yom Kippur on the 10th of Tishrei, and so on. The only feast that requires a count is Shavuot. If you know the exact date every year, then the count becomes unnecessary. The Pharisaic reckoning essentially cancels the purpose of counting, turning it into a ritual rather than a meaningful journey.

On the other hand, the Sadducean method honors both the command to count and the principle of a moving date that maintains the significance of the process. It mirrors the journey from the Firstfruits offering to the giving of the Torah on Sinai—and later, the outpouring of the Holy Spirit in Acts 2.

Most powerfully, the Sadducean calendar aligns Shavuot with Sunday, the first day of the week—the day Yeshua (Jesus) rose from the dead. This prophetic connection cannot be overstated. Yeshua, the Firstfruits of the resurrection, rose on a Sunday. Fifty days later, on the same day of the week, the Holy Spirit was poured out on the believers in Jerusalem. The Sadducean reckoning preserves this beautiful parallel between the resurrection and the birth of the Spirit-empowered Church.



In short, the Sadducean calendar preserves the Torah’s intent, the integrity of the count, and the prophetic fulfillment in Messiah. That’s why we celebrate Shavuot according to their reckoning—not the fixed-date model of the Pharisees.

Watch “All About Shavuot” here:  
<https://youtu.be/pZzkHdFDYZw>



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