

July 3-9, 2023

## Acts 1-5

“YE SHALL BE WITNESSES UNTO ME”

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**Summary:** *Acts 1. Jesus ministers for forty days after His resurrection—The kingdom is to be restored to Israel at a later time—The Twelve are to bear witness in Jerusalem, Judæa, Samaria, and the uttermost parts of the earth—Jesus ascends into heaven—Matthias is chosen to fill the vacancy in the Twelve.*

*Acts 2. The Spirit is poured out on the day of Pentecost—Peter testifies of Jesus’ resurrection—He tells how to gain salvation and speaks of the gift of the Holy Ghost—Many believe and are baptized.*

*Acts 3. Peter and John heal a man lame since birth—Peter preaches repentance—He also speaks of the age of restoration preceding the Second Coming—He identifies Christ as the prophet of whom Moses spoke.*

*Acts 4. Peter and John are arrested and brought before the council—Peter testifies that salvation comes because of Christ—The Sadducees strive to silence Peter and John—The Saints glory in the testimony of Jesus—They have all things in common.*

*Acts 5. Ananias and Sapphira lie to the Lord and lose their lives—The Apostles continue the miracles of Jesus—Peter and John are arrested, an angel delivers them from prison, and they testify of Christ—Gamaliel counsels moderation.*

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### Supplemental Jewish and Holy Land Insights

#### What responsibility do I have because of the atonement?

The profound gift of the Holy Ghost was given to provide a witness of the completion of the Savior’s atonement. Being “set at liberty from our bruises” and happy to share our newfound freedom, we need the gift of the Holy Ghost to be witnesses. Fifty days after the second day of the Passover, fifty-three days following when Jesus was crucified; there was a day of Pentecost. It is a holy day for the Jews called Shavuot. The most significant part of the celebration is the receiving of the Torah, the Law of Moses. The day celebrated as receiving the ‘written law’ is the same day as the law was ‘written in our hearts.’

#### What promise does the gift of the Holy Ghost bring to fruition?

This is the glorious fulfillment of the promise: “Behold, the days come, saith

the Lord, that I will make a new covenant with the house of Israel, and with the house of Judah: Not according to the covenant that I made with their fathers in the day that I took them by the hand to bring them out of the land of Egypt; which my covenant they brake, although I was an husband unto them, saith the Lord: But this shall be the covenant that I will make with the house of Israel; After those days, saith the Lord, I will put my law in their inward parts, and write it in their hearts; and will be their God, and they shall be my people. And they shall teach no more every man his neighbour, and every man his brother, saying, Know the Lord: for they shall all know me, from the least of them unto the greatest of them, saith the Lord: for I will forgive their iniquity, and I will remember their sin no more. **(Jeremiah 31:31-34)**

#### How does the Holy Ghost give us newfound freedom?”

The *Torah* and the 'do's and the don'ts of the written law were replaced with the God given gift of choice. Good choices are determined by following the "spirit," a gift given at *Shavuot* after the atonement. "*Shavuot* (Hebrew for "Weeks"), the name of the festival which celebrates the end of the spring barley harvest and the beginning of the summer wheat and fruit harvests. According to rabbinic tradition, *Shavuot* is also the day on which the *Torah* was revealed to the Jewish people on Mount Sinai." "*Shavuot* is the only holiday for which the *Torah* does not give a specific date. The biblical text (Leviticus 23:4) states that Passover should be celebrated on the fifteenth of the first month (*Nisan*). It then says, "From the day after the Sabbath . . . you shall keep count [until] seven full weeks have elapsed . . . you shall count fifty days . . . then you shall bring an offering of new grain to the Lord." What is the meaning of "the day after the Sabbath?" Does the word "Sabbath" mean "Saturday" or does it mean "the day of rest" which can also apply to the festival? The rabbis of the *Talmud* understood it in the latter sense and so *Shavuot* always falls 50 days after the second day of Passover. These 50 days represent the period of the counting of the *Omer*. In English, the festival is often known as Pentecost, from the Greek word which means "the fiftieth day." "The Bible refers to *Shavuot* as *Hag Shavuot* ("The Festival of Weeks," **Exodus 34:22**; **Deuteronomy 16:10**), and *Hag ha-Kazir* ("The Harvest Festival," **Exodus 23:16**). *Shavuot* is also called ("The Day of the First Fruits," **Numbers 28:26**) and is, therefore, the festival which marks the beginning of the summer fruit harvest as well as the beginning of the wheat harvest. According to the **Book of Leviticus (23:17)** two loaves of bread, baked from the first wheat crop, were brought to the sanctuary as part of the festival offering. According to the **Book of Deuteronomy (16:9)**, *Shavuot* is a holiday on which the

entire community is to rejoice "at the place where the Lord your God will choose to establish His name (Jerusalem). The observance of *Shavuot* also included a "freewill" offering in proportion to one's ability to contribute." "Seven weeks after the Exodus from Egypt a horde of slaves stood before Mount Sinai and freely accepted the spiritual and moral teachings which gave meaning and depth to their new-found freedom." (**Encyclopedia Judaica Jr.**)

### **What can the Holy Ghost do for me?**

The imagery of receiving the *Torah* from above on *Shavuot* (Jewish Pentecost), leads to understanding the New Testament Day of Pentecost, when the Holy Ghost descended. The Holy Ghost descended so that the Savior could ascend. Likewise, we must have the Holy Ghost descend on us so that we can ascend to our Savior, who will bring us to His and our Father in Heaven. "He "witnesses of the Father and the Son" (**2 Nephi 31:18**) and reveals and teaches "the truth of all things" (**Moroni 10:5**). We can receive a sure testimony of Heavenly Father and Jesus Christ only by the power of the Holy Ghost. His communication to our spirit carries far more certainty than any communication we can receive through our natural senses."

(<https://www.churchofjesuschrist.org/study/manual/gospel-topics/holy-ghost?lang=eng>)

### **How much of 'healing' is by the 'gift of the spirit?'**

". . . they should see with their eyes, and hear with their ears, and should understand with their heart, and should be converted, and I should heal them.

(**Matthew 15:13**) The Savior's healing power was given to his apostles as they learned to work in his name. Healing was part of the person becoming whole, physically, emotionally, and spiritually.

The great Jewish Rabbi, Maimonides, felt that healing had to be holistic. He was a

physician as well as a doctor. “He abhorred the thought of using Torah learning as a means of support. This was a serious point of contention between him and the *geonim* (well-respected scholars) of the religious establishment, and he turned to the profession of medicine. Jews and Muslims were among his patients. His ideas on medicine were advanced and sympathetic: he rejected the use of magic and charms in healing and added that the doctor must know the whole patient in order to diagnose properly.” (**Encyclopedia Judaica Jr.**)

### **Who is in charge?**

There is another image that may help us understand the Savior’s power, entrusted to his apostles through the priesthood and gift of the Holy Ghost. It is the comparison

of Aaron to Moses. “Aaron was clearly given a lesser role than Moses. Aaron experienced revelations from God and, being an eloquent speaker, acted as prophet and miracle- worker before Pharaoh in the matter of the Plagues of Egypt. However, it is significant that even where he plays an active role in performing the miracles, it is not a result of his own ability or initiative, but solely by divine command given through Moses.” (**Encyclopedia Judaica Jr.**) In that sense, concentration on the highest power, that of the Lord, helps us consecrate everything to and for Him. Healings, blessings, repeated guidance through the gift of the Holy Ghost are manifestations, witnesses of the Lord’s great gift of atonement. We are witnesses!