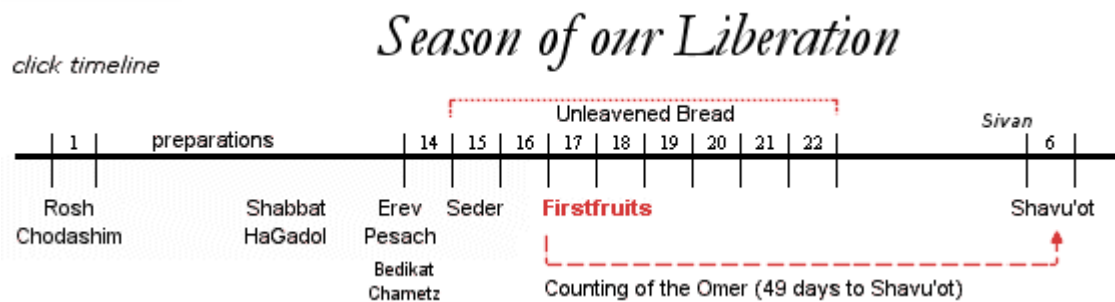




Reishit Katzir -

Messiah as the Beginning of the Harvest



Feast of “Firstfruits”?

The day following the first day of Unleavened Bread is called *Reishit Katzir*, the “beginning of the harvest” (sometimes confusingly called the Feast of Firstfruits). In ancient times, on this day a sheaf (*omer*) of barley (the first grain crop to ripen) was waved before the LORD in a prescribed ceremony to mark the start of the counting of the omer, thereby initiating the forty nine day countdown to the harvest festival of Shavu’ot:



And the LORD spoke to Moses, saying, "Speak to the people of Israel and say to them, ‘When you come into the land that I give you and reap its harvest, you shall bring the sheaf (*omer*) of the first (*reshit*) of your harvest to the priest, and he shall wave the sheaf before the LORD, so that you may be accepted. *On the day after the Sabbath* the priest shall wave it. And on the day when you wave the sheaf, you shall offer a male lamb a year old without blemish as a burnt offering to the LORD.’ (Lev. 23:9-12)

In other words, on this day the priest would wave a sheaf (*omer*) of green barley before the LORD as a symbolic gesture of dedicating the coming harvest to Him.

When was the Wave Sheaf Offering Made?

There is some controversy about precisely when the wave offering (called *tenufat HaOmer*) was performed, since the phrase “the day after the Sabbath” can refer to either:

1. Sunday (or *Yom Rishon*). This was the interpretation of the Sadducees. The Wave Offering would occur on the first Sunday after the regular weekly Sabbath.



- Note:** Some have argued that since the Sadducees controlled the Second Temple worship schedule, the Wave Offering would have occurred on the Sunday following the weekly Sabbath. However, if this were so, it would not help make the case that the Resurrection of Yeshua occurred at this time, since the gospels state that Yeshua was raised *before* the women discovered Him missing from the tomb early on Sunday morning (Matt 28:1; Mark 16:2, Luke 24:1, John 20:1). In other words, the time of the resurrection of Yeshua and the time of the Wave Offering were not coincidental.
2. The day following the “High” Sabbath of the first day of Unleavened Bread (a “High” Sabbath is a day of *shabbaton* (rest) that may occur on any day of the week besides the weekly Sabbath day of Saturday). This is the position of the Pharisees and Orthodox Judaism. The wave offering would occur on Nisan 16, the day following the High Sabbath of the first day of Unleavened Bread (Josh. 5:11).

Chronology of the Death, Burial and Resurrection of Yeshua

Here is a tentative chronology of the events surrounding Yeshua’s death, burial and resurrection (my thanks to my friend Aaron Eby for helping me sort this out):

- Nisan 14 evening - Yeshua's early Seder
- Nisan 14 daytime - Preparation day (Luke 23:54; Mark 15:42). Pesach (Lev. 23:5). Yeshua dies in the afternoon at the same time that the *korban Pesach* (Passover lamb) is sacrificed at the Temple, and is buried before evening (before Passover).
- Nisan 15 evening - High Sabbath begins (the actual Seder night)
- Nisan 15 daytime - High Sabbath
- Nisan 16 evening - Weekly Sabbath begins
- Nisan 16 daytime - Weekly Sabbath, waving of the omer
- Nisan 17 evening - Yeshua raised from the dead at/after havdalah (at least before sunrise). Women purchase spices.
- Nisan 17 daytime - Women bring spices to the tomb early in the morning. Disciples encounter risen Messiah.

To understand this reckoning, you must remember that a Jewish day starts at sundown!

See chart on the following page.



If Jesus sacrificed Himself on Nisan 14 (in the afternoon) and was raised after three days and nights, we have:

Day of week	Day of Nisan	Gregorian Name	Part of the day	Events:	
5 th	14	Wed	night	Yeshua's early seder; Yeshua arrested.	
		Thurs	day	Passover lambs killed; Yeshua crucified; buried.	½ day
6 th	15	Thurs	night	1 st day of Chag haMatzot; High Sabbath of Passover.	1 day
		Fri	day	High Sabbath (continues); Stone of tomb sealed.	
7 th	16	Fri	night	Erev Shabbat; (weekly sabbath)	1 day
		Sat	day	Weekly Sabbath (continues); Waving of the Omer (firstfruits)	
1 st	17	Sat	night	Havdalah Ceremony; Yeshua's resurrection.	½ day
		Sun	day	Women come to tomb; Disciples see Yeshua.	

Total = Three days and nights (Matt 12:40);
Yeshua raised on the third day (Luke 24:45-6).

Yeshua rose from the dead on the 1st day of the week, after being in the tomb three days and three nights. The disciples then encountered the risen Lord on Nisan 17, a Sunday morning (Matt 28:1-10). In short, He was crucified on Nisan 14 and resurrected on Nisan 17 (the corresponding Gregorian dates for these dates vary from year to year).

Mashiach Yeshua our First Fruits

Although not happening coincidentally, the Wave Offering and the Resurrection of Yeshua are linked together prophetically by the Apostle Paul:

הַמָּשִׁיחַ הוּא רֵאשִׁית הַבְּפוּרִים

But in fact Christ has been raised from the dead, the **firstfruits** of those who have fallen asleep. For as by a man came death, by a man has come also the resurrection of the dead. For as in Adam all die, so also in Christ shall all be made alive. But each in his own order: **Christ the firstfruits**, then at his coming those who belong to Christ. (I Cor. 15:20-23)



Here the emissary clearly links the firstfruit offering with the resurrection of Yeshua our Mashiach. Yeshua’s resurrection was like a “wave offering” presented before the Father as the "firstfruits" of the harvest to come! Moreover, Yeshua presented His firstfruits offering to the Father on this day:

The tombs also were opened. And many bodies of the saints who had fallen asleep were raised, and coming out of the tombs after his resurrection they went into the holy city and appeared to many. (Matt. 27:52-53)

Our Lord offered to the Father the “early crops” of what will be an overwhelming harvest at the end of the age (*acharit hayamim*).

Yeshua is the first-begotten of the Father (Heb. 1:6); the Firstborn of Creation (Col. 1:15-6); the first-begotten of the dead (Rev. 1:5) and is the Firstfruits of those who are to be resurrected (1 Cor. 15:20-23). *Baruch HaShem*.

General Themes of the Season

- *Pesach* represents our salvation and deliverance by the sacrifice of the Lamb of God, Yeshua the Mashiach. We are *justified* by trusting in the blood of the Lamb of God.
- *Chag HaMatzot* represents our *sanctification* as we rid ourselves of the old leaven of “Egypt” and die to the carnal nature. In fact, this is represented by the burial of the Mashiach and our identification with His mortification.
- *Reishit Katzir* represents the resurrection of Yeshua our Mashiach and our future glorious state as part of the coming harvest of God at the end of the age.

וְעַתָּה הַקִּיטִיץ הַנּוֹ

הַשֵּׁיטָה הַבְּכוֹרִים



קָם מִן הַמֵּתִים

הוּא קָם מִן הַמֵּתִים

He is risen from the dead.

But now Mashiach has been raised from the dead,
the firstfruits of those who have fallen asleep.

- 1 Cor. 15:20

מִן הַקִּיטִיץ הַבְּכוֹרִים



A Note about Chag Ha-Bikkurim

The Hebrew term *bikkurim* derives from the same root as *bekhor* - firstborn. In the Torah, the general principle that the firstborn of man (and beast) belonged to the LORD is also applied to the first fruits to ripen each agricultural season, beginning with a sheaf of the new barley harvest (*omer*) on *Reishit Katzir*, and culminating in the celebration of Shavu'ot, also called *Chag ha-Bikkurim* — “the first fruits festival,” which represents the birth of the Church!