

FIRST SHEAF

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A special ceremony is mentioned in Leviticus 23:10-14 that acknowledges Yahveh for what He had given and would give to Israel: the coming year's harvest (food to sustain life) and the Promised Land; a land flowing with milk and honey—a land of abundance:

Lev. 23:10: “Speak to the Sons of Israel and say to them, ‘When you enter the Land which I am going to give to you and reap its harvest, *then* you shall bring in the sheaf of the first fruits (barley grain) of your harvest to the (High) Priest.’”

Lev. 23:11: ‘He shall wave (הִנִּיף *nuf*)¹ the sheaf (עֹמֶר *omer*)² before Yahveh for you to be accepted. On the day *after the Sabbath* the Priest shall wave (elevate) it.’

Lev. 23:12: ‘Now on the day when you wave (elevate) the sheaf (*omer*), you must offer a male lamb one year old without defect for a burnt offering to Yahveh.’

Lev. 23:13: ‘Its grain offering shall then be two-tenths of an *ephah*³ of fine flour mixed with oil, an offering by fire to Yahveh for a soothing aroma, with its drink offering, a fourth of a *hin* of wine.’⁴

Lev. 23:14: ‘Until this same day, until you have brought in the offering of your God, you shall eat neither (new) bread, nor roasted grain, nor new growth. It is to be a perpetual statute throughout your generations in all your dwelling places.’

The male lamb offered to Yahveh in v. 12 pictured Yeshua dying in the prime of His life (at age 33), offering Himself up to His Father for us. The burnt offering (v. 12) is a picture of total surrender and dedication to Yahveh, which of course, Yeshua exemplifies. Both the flour and oil of v. 13, and the wine, were once part of things that needed to be *crushed* in order to be transformed for Israel to eat. The fine flour was crushed from whole kernels. the oil for olives, and the wine from grapes. These all picture Yeshua being crushed or crucified that we might be able to eat of Him as the *Matza* (Unleavened Bread)

¹ Although the Hebrew word הִנִּיף (*nuf*) has generally been translated as ‘wave,’ as in ‘wave offering, for Lev. 23:11-12, Milgrom presents “significant evidence to translate it as ‘elevate.’” Jacob Milgrom, *The Anchor Bible: Leviticus 1-16* (New York, Doubleday, 2001), pp. 461-473 (see Herb Solinsky, *Treatise on the Biblical Calendar* [at <http://www.biblicalcalendar.org/>—second edition, April 3, 2009], p. 259.)

Also, Ludwig Koehler, Walter Baumgartner, and J. J. Stamm, authors; M. Richardson, translator, *The Hebrew-Aramaic Lexicon of the Old Testament* (Accordance Bible Software; Altamonte Springs, FL: OakTree Software, 2011), 2001, 2.682, has ‘elevate’ as one of its secondary meanings for הִנִּיף (‘to bring in something while holding it up’), and R. L. Harris, editor; Gleason Archer, Jr. and Bruce Waltke, associate editors, *Theological Wordbook of the Old Testament*, vol. II (Chicago: Moody Press, 1980), p. 565, has *elevate* (i.e. ‘lift’) as part of a secondary meaning: ‘lift, wave, shake, wield.’

² C. F. Keil and F. Delitzsch, *Commentary On The Old Testament*, vol. 1: *The Pentateuch* (Peabody, MA: Hendrickson Publishers, 2001), p. 368. About five pints (about two pounds or one kilo).

³ W. H. Bellinger, Jr., *New International Biblical Commentary: Leviticus, Numbers* (Peabody, MA: Hendrickson Publishers, Inc., 2001), p. 122. An *ephah* was a dry measure of weight of about 20 quarts (20 liters). Two-tenths of an *ephah* would be about four quarts or four liters.

⁴ *Ibid.* A *hin* of wine weighed about six pints (three quarts or three liters).

and Blood of Life, filled with the Oil of the Holy Spirit. As we surrender and dedicate ourselves to Him, He crushes us that His glory within us (the Holy Spirit) might flow out and touch others.

THE PROCEDURE

On the Sunday of Passover week, known as First Sheaf, the High Priest would be presented with an *omer* of finely crushed barley. He would,

1. scoop up a handful of the grain mixed with olive oil,
2. place some incense on it (symbolic of the prayers of the High Priest for Israel) elevate it before Yahveh (a symbol of dedication, this first part of the crop representing all the harvests)
3. bless Yahveh and acknowledge that:
 1. He had brought the Hebrews into Israel as He had promised the Fathers,
 2. had made them as many as the stars of the heavens and
 3. had provided food for them, the symbol of which was in his hand.
4. Then he would cast the handful of grain and incense upon the fire of the bronze Altar of Sacrifice.

With the first sheaf being dedicated to God it made the rest of the harvest(s) acceptable to Israel for their use, and Israel acceptable before God. The elevating of the offering up to God of the first sheaf in Hebrew is *omer raysheet עֹמֶר רֵאשִׁית*. It literally means the first *omer*. It's from this term, *omer*, and what was done with it, being offered up to Yahveh, that would set in motion what is called 'the counting of the *omer*.' From the day the barley flour was offered, Israel counted 50 days to the next feast, *Shavu'ot* (Pentecost). The Hebrew for Leviticus 23:15, the verse right after the *omer* is elevated, reads:

'Then you are to count from *the day after the Sabbath*, the day you brought the *omer* (sheaf) elevation offering, seven Sabbaths.'

This is where we get the phrase, 'the counting of the *omer*.' The relationship of the *omer* to *Shavu'ot* is that on the day the first sheaf (*omer*) is elevated before Yahveh, the High Priest would count 50 days inclusive, and that 50th day, another Sunday, would be *Shavu'ot*, an annual holy Sabbath.

The High Priest, in his blessing Yahveh, would thank Yahveh for His faithfulness in keeping His Word to Fathers Abraham, Isaac and Jacob, in that they would multiply like the stars of the heavens and their Seed would be given the Land of Israel and their Seed would have Yahveh as their God forever. The promise is seen in Genesis:

Gen. 15:5, 7: "And He took him outside and said, 'Now look toward the Heavens and count the stars, if you are able to count them.' And He said to him, 'So shall your descendants be...and He said to him, 'I am Yahveh who brought you out of Ur of the Chaldeans, to give you this Land to possess it.'"

Gen. 17:2, 4: 'I will establish My Covenant between Me and you and I will multiply you exceedingly...As for Me, behold, My Covenant is with you and you will be the Father of a multitude of nations.'

Gen. 17:7-8: 'I will establish My Covenant between Me and you and your descendants after you throughout their generations for an everlasting Covenant, to be God to you and

to your descendants after you. I will give to you and to your descendants after you, the land of your sojournings, all the land of Canaan, for an everlasting possession and I will be *their* God.’

On First Sheaf, the High Priest, a physical descendant of Abraham, Isaac, Jacob and Levi, who represented all the Jewish people, thanked Yahveh for keeping His Word. Here, they were eating of the ‘fruit’ of the Land that Yahveh had given them. The High Priest, elevating the fine flour, pictured Israel’s thankfulness and praise to Yahveh for giving them a Land flowing with milk and honey (Dt. 6:3; 11:9, et al.).

The grain used for First Sheaf would be barley, as it ripens four to six weeks before the wheat harvest, (which would be offered on *Shavu’ot*, which is in early June). First Sheaf would be in April.

The elevation offering of the first harvest pictured it and all the other harvests (summer and fall) that were to follow. They would all be dedicated or holy because the first was. This would make Israel acceptable to Yahveh. Without Him they wouldn’t have been there. He was to get the first and the best.

1. The elevating by the High Priest of the finely crushed barley grain mixed with olive oil, the first sheaf, with a handful thrown onto the Altar fire, pictured Yeshua, filled with the Holy Spirit, ascending to Papa God.
2. The incense on that handful of flour that was thrown into the fire pictures the prayers of Yeshua, as our High Priest, for His people Israel, engulfed in the Flames of the Holy Spirit (the flames of the bronze Altar of Sacrifice).
3. The High Priest, thanking Yahveh for the harvest and His faithfulness to His promises for Israel, pictured Yeshua as our High Priest, thanking His Father for giving unto Israel their promised Messiah, their Savior, their King, the pure grain/bread of Heaven.
4. The grain that was not thrown onto the fire of the Altar, the priests would eat. This pictured the body of Yeshua being given to His priests as food for us (Jn. 6:53).

Yahveh has been found faithful to His Word. He has provided everything that Israel needs—from literal food to the Bread (*Matza*) of Life—Messiah Yeshua.

THE CHURCH IGNORANT

When the Church severed its relationship, both with the Jews who believed in Jesus and the Jews who didn’t, and because they also threw the Law of Moses out (about 115 AD), they placed themselves in a position of ignorance in relation to many of the basic tenets of the Word of God. First Sheaf is one such tenet. John 20:16 records that Miryam (Mary) encountered the risen Savior:

“Yeshua said to her, ‘Miryam!’ She turned and said to Him in Hebrew, ‘Rabboni!’” (which is an even more respectful way of calling Yeshua, ‘Rabbi,’ something like, ‘my great Rabbi’).

The reason why these sentences are in Scripture is because God wants us to understand that Yeshua’s *first appearance* has to do with *the fulfillment of First Sheaf*. First Sheaf was that Sunday of Passover week and Yeshua was in process of fulfilling it. That’s why Yeshua, in the very next verse, tells Mary not to cling to Him:

“Yeshua said to her, ‘Don’t cling to Me, for *I have not yet ascended* to the Father, but go to My brethren and say to them, ‘I ascend to My Father and your Father, and My God and

your God'” (Jn. 20:17).

Yeshua says to Miryam, ‘Don’t cling to Me, for I have not yet ascended’ because He was about to fulfill the ceremony of First Sheaf in Heaven, in the Presence of His Father. Here we see the earthly reality paralleling the heavenly, as the High Priest on Earth was offering up the grain, so the heavenly High Priest, Yeshua, was offering Himself up in fulfillment of the first to rise from the dead. Yeshua’s fulfilling it doesn’t mean that the earthly is negated, only that the heavenly has been revealed, and now, fulfilled. That was the reason why the earthly was established in the first place (to point to the eventual heavenly reality). They are both valid for picturing what God has done (or will do) for Israel. Now, after Messiah has come, when we enter into the Feasts, we have both understandings, of what they mean for us as believers in their earthly and heavenly realities. They are both significant, the earthly meant to continue until the new Heavens and new Jerusalem are established (see Ezk. 40–48; Rev. 21:1ff.).

Notice also that Yeshua has *not yet* ascended, but *obviously*, He has *already* been resurrected. Many followers of Jesus claim that He rose on Sunday, and because of that, Christianity has Sunday assembly, or a ‘Sunday Sabbath,’ but no authoritative cite in the New Testament states that He rose on Sunday.⁵ Also, there’s nothing in the New Testament that says that *because* Yeshua rose on Sunday, the 7th day Sabbath has given way to Sunday.

Yeshua is first seen on this Sunday of First Sheaf, which is why God set it up this way, for Yeshua ascends as the First Sheaf of all the Harvest (of people) to come. This does not sanctify all Sundays, as interestingly enough, First Sheaf is not a holy day (an annual Sabbath). Yeshua’s first appearance on Sunday gives no warrant for Sunday observance over Sabbath, as this Sunday was placed within the Feasts of Israel for the specific purpose of both offering the first grain to Yahveh and establishing a time when Yeshua would complement the earthly reality.

Yeshua’s appearance before the Father pictured Yeshua being the First Sheaf from the resurrection of the dead (the Earth/ground). He would be holy unto Yahveh *and make all that follow Him acceptable* before Yahveh. Yeshua ascended to the Father on First Sheaf, and may not have been raised from the dead on Sunday, but on the 7th day Sabbath before it.

Yeshua is first seen alive on First Sheaf, but *no one sees Him resurrect* on Sunday, and there is no authoritative Scripture to support a Sunday resurrection, and therefore, Sunday assembly over Sabbath assembly, or the doing away with of the Sabbath because of an alleged Sunday resurrection. Yet, even if Yeshua rose on Sunday, there is nothing in the New Testament that says *because of this*, Sunday is now the day of assembly, or that Sunday is the new Sabbath, or that Sunday is holy and blessed as the 7th day Sabbath was in Creation (Gen. 2:3). If Sunday has replaced the seventh day Sabbath we would expect to find volumes written on this, not just a (proof text) verse, here or there. These ‘proof texts’ are used to validate the removal of the Sabbath, but these are only further instances of theologians and people misinterpreting Scripture in ignorance. According to Mt. 28:1 the tomb was empty on Saturday night. It reads, ‘Now after the Sabbath, in the dawning towards the first of the week...’

The word for ‘Now’ is *ohp’seh* and means, ‘late, put for the first watch of evening...after the close of the Sabbath.’⁶ Also, ‘usually between sunset and darkness.’⁷ Thayer’s *Greek-English Lexicon of the New Tes-*

⁵ For the only place that seems to say that Yeshua rose on Sunday, see *Mark 16:9 and the Resurrection* at <http://seedofabraham.net/The-Resurrection-and-Mk.-16.9.pdf>.

⁶ Wesley J. Perschbacher, editor, *The New Analytical Greek Lexicon* (Peabody, MA: Hendrickson Publications, 1990), p. 301.

⁷ Walter Bauer, augmented by William F. Arndt, F. W. Gingrich and Frederick Danker, *A Greek-English Lexicon of the New Testament and Other Early Christian Literature* (London: The University of Chicago Press, 1979), p. 746, ‘ὄψέ’.

tament is even more specific, citing both our verse and explaining that it means that the 7th day Sabbath had just passed, that is to say, *it was Saturday night at dark* when the women came to the tomb and found it empty. It states that *oph'seh* is,

“An ‘adverb of time, *after a long time, long after, late*; a. especially *late in the day...i.e. at evening...opse sabbatōn, the sabbath having just passed, after the sabbath, i.e., at the early dawn of the first day of the week...an interpretation absolutely demanded by the added specification te epifoskous...Matt. 28:1 cf. Mark 16:1*’⁸

This means that it was Saturday night at dark when the women came to the tomb (cf. Mk. 16:1). In biblical terms, the day begins at dark (Gen. 1:5). In Hebrew, ‘Sunday’ is known as the first day of the week, *which begins Saturday night at dark*, and He was already risen. Adding to this is the phrase, ‘In the dawning towards the first of the week,’ which, ‘dawning,’ does *not* necessarily refer to sunlight as in daybreak, for another Greek word *or'thros* would have been used for that which means ‘daybreak’ or ‘dawn.’ The Greek word in Matt. 28:1 is *epifos'kussay*, which means, ‘to dawn; hence, used of the reckoned *commencement of the day*; to be near commencing.’⁹ What Matthew is telling us is that the Sabbath had ended and the first day of the week was beginning when Miryam went to the tomb in the darkness of the evening, Saturday night. Also of interest is what the angel says to Miryam about Yeshua, ‘He is not here for He *has risen* as He said’ (Mt. 28:6). In other words, the angel doesn’t give the time nor the day when Yeshua rose. It could have been minutes before or several hours before.

From Matthew’s account, it seems that Yeshua rose from the grave some time on the 7th day Sabbath. Whatever time it was that Mary got to the tomb, whether Saturday night or Sunday morning, the announcement is basically the same: He has risen. Because there is nothing in Scripture that speaks of the day nor the hour when Yeshua actually rose, it’s Scripturally impossible to use Sunday as the day of His resurrection, and also, to speak of it as replacing the 7th day Sabbath as a day of holiness, or as the day of assembly.

YESHUA AS FIRST SHEAF

For Yeshua to be resurrected was no great miracle. He gave life to Lazarus and others who had died. The real miracle is that *He prefigures our resurrection and ascension*. We shall be like Him, glorified, to the glory of God our Father. 1st Cor. 15:22-23 reads,

‘For as in Adam all die, so also in Messiah all will be made alive, but each in his own order: Messiah the First Fruits (Sheaf/Omer), after that those who are Messiah’s at His coming.’

We, like the summer and autumn harvests, will also be resurrected to new life in our time. The first three feasts, falling in the springtime, were given to Israel to speak of something past, present and future; of the earthly and the heavenly. They are a yearly reminder of where Israel had come from, Who had brought them to where they were, and what Messiah would do for them. They also picture the death, burial, resurrection and ascension of Yeshua. As the Lamb of God He dies on the first day of *Matza* (15 Aviv), the

late...specif. to the period between late afternoon and darkness, late in the day, evening i.e. in the evening...marker of a point of time subsequent to another point of time, after.’

⁸ Joseph Thayer, *Thayer’s Greek-English Lexicon of the New Testament* (Accordance Bible Software; Altamonte Springs, FL: OakTree Software, 2011), n.p. ‘ὀψέ.’

⁹ Perschbacher, *The New Analytical Greek Lexicon*, p. 168.

same day that the firstborn of Egypt died, in order for Israel, God's firstborn Son (Ex. 4:22) to be released from Egyptian slavery (Ex. 12:12f., Num. 33:3). At Yeshua's crucifixion the sky reverted into a *nighttime scene of darkness*, even though it was noon, because Egypt's firstborn died in the darkness at midnight:

'It was now about the sixth hour (12 in the afternoon) and *darkness* fell over the whole land until the ninth hour' (3:00 PM when Yeshua dies; Luke 23:44; cf. Mt. 27:45-56; Mk. 15:33-34; cf. Ex. 12:29-30).

As the Grain of Heaven He falls into the Earth on the first day of *Matza*. This is 15 *Aviv*. This is the day when Israel was set free from Egyptian slavery and the day when you were set free from slavery to Satan. It's Yeshua's death that coincides with when Israel left Egypt. Num. 33:1-3 states:

'These are the journeys of the Sons of Israel by which they came out from the land of Egypt by their armies under the leadership of Moses and Aaron. Moses recorded their starting places according to their journeys by the command of Yahveh and these are their journeys according to their starting places. They journeyed from Rameses in the first month, *on the fifteenth day of the first month* (on the next *day* after the Passover)¹⁰ the Sons of Israel started out boldly in the sight of all the Egyptians.'

Exodus 12:17: "So you shall observe the Feast of Unleavened Bread, for *on this same day* I will have brought your armies out of the land of Egypt. Therefore, you shall observe this day throughout your generations as an everlasting ordinance."

This *day* is the first day of the Feast of *Matza*, an annual Sabbath, 15 *Aviv*. It's this day that God brought Israel out of Egyptian slavery (He redeems or saved Her), and on this day Yeshua cried out, 'It is finished!' (Jn. 19:31), which refers to the finished work of redemption through the sacrifice of the Passover Lamb of God, which takes us out of Satan's Kingdom.

Yeshua was most likely resurrected on the 7th day Sabbath between 3:00 and 6:00 PM because the weekly Sabbath is the holiest day of all. Three in the afternoon is when He died. About six in the evening is when He is was placed in the tomb (the heart of the Earth). On the Sabbath, somewhere between three and six in the afternoon, Yeshua was most likely resurrected.

As the New Harvest, the first of many, He *ascends* at the exact time that the High Priest was thanking God and elevating the new barley grain before Yahveh: the first sheaf elevation offering confirming that all Israel would be acceptable to Yahveh, which speaks of us. He told Miryam not to cling to Him because He was going to appear before His Father as the heavenly First Sheaf. The High Priest might have said on that day:

'Thank You, Yahveh, for your love and compassion toward us. You are faithful and true! You promised our Fathers, Abraham, Isaac and Jacob, that their Seed would be as many as the stars and that they would be given this Land, and You have kept Your promise. Here we are, their Seed, in the Land that you promised to give them, and now, here is the first portion (first sheaf/omer) of the Land, in thanksgiving to You.'

With that, the High Priest would take a handful of the finely ground barley mixed with olive oil, place some incense upon it and toss it upon the Altar to go up in smoke to Yahveh. *At about that time* Miryam, who had been speaking with Yeshua, left him and he ascended to his Father as the First Sheaf to rise from the dead:

John 20:17: "Yeshua said to her, 'Do not cling to Me, for I have *not yet ascended* to My Father, but go to My brethren and say to them, 'I am ascending to My Father and your

¹⁰ The *next day after the Passover* refers to the day the Passover lambs were slain in Egypt (14 *Aviv*).

Father, and to My God and your God.’”

This ascension (obviously *after* His resurrection from the dead) is Yeshua fulfilling the picture of the First Sheaf on the *first day* of the week...He is a new creature...the God-Man *glorified*. It parallels the *first day* of Creation when God spoke and said, ‘Let there be Light!’ (Gen. 1:3) and from within the eternal depths of Yahveh came His Word, His Son, the Light of the world, slain from before the Foundation of creation (Rev. 13:8).

Other Uses of First Sheaf in Scripture

There are a number of times in the New Covenant that the term ‘first sheaf’ (or ‘first fruits,’ which has an identical meaning) are used. The Apostle Paul uses the term to apply to Yeshua as the first to be raised from the dead, and that, in fact, Yeshua had been raised from the dead (1st Cor. 15:20, 23). Another use of the term is seen when Paul uses it to describe the Holy Spirit within us, our promise or pledge from Yahveh that He will do for us as He has promised (glorification on the Day of Judgment):

‘And not only this, but also we ourselves having the *first fruits* of the Spirit, even we ourselves groan within ourselves waiting eagerly for our adoption as sons, the redemption of our body’ (Rom. 8:23).

Here, Paul uses *first fruits* as a general concept of something that comes first, and not a direct reference to the ceremony. It’s also how we experientially come to know our God, by His Spirit. James¹¹ gives us yet another use of the phrase:

‘In the exercise of His will He brought us forth by the word of Truth, so that we would be a kind of *first fruits* among His creatures’ (James 1:18).

Jacob (James) is the half-brother of Yeshua and the Prince (*nasi* from the Hebrew, sometimes erroneously translated as ‘president’) of the Assembly of all the Jews in Jerusalem that believed in Yeshua (Acts 12:17; 15:13; 21:18; Gal. 1:19; 2:9). He’s saying that he considers the believers who have come to Yeshua in his lifetime as the *first fruits* of the heavenly Harvest, which might align itself symbolically with the ‘summer’ harvest.

Israel is seen as the firstborn son of Yahveh (Ex. 4:22), and so, from Israel comes a *first fruits* who have believed on the Messiah of Israel. In Rev. 14:1f., the 144,000 are also seen as first fruits:

‘These are the ones who have not been defiled with women, for they have kept themselves chaste. These are the ones who follow the Lamb wherever He goes. These have been purchased (redeemed) from among men as *first fruits* to God and to the Lamb’ (Rev. 14:4).

That these refer to the natural Seed of Abraham, Isaac and Jacob seems to have support from this verse:

‘And I heard the number of those who were sealed, one hundred and forty-four thousand sealed from every Tribe of the Sons of Israel’ (Rev. 7:4).

From Rev. 7:9 we see that Gentiles who love the Lord are also present. It’s interesting that they have palm branches in their hands, as this is peculiar to the last great harvest feast, *Sukote*, the Feast of Taber-

¹¹ The Hebrew name of James should have been translated into English as Jacob, but because of anti-Semitism among many past and present theologians, a foreign, non-Jewish sounding name was used (from the Latin; i.e. James). It’s interesting that John 4:6 speaks of Jacob’s well, and not James’ well, affirming that the half brother of Yeshua should have been called Jacob.

nacles (Lev. 23:33-44):

‘After these things I looked, and behold, a great multitude which no one could count, from every nation and all tribes and peoples and tongues standing before the Throne and before the Lamb, clothed in white robes and palm branches were in their hands’ (Rev. 7:9).

‘And you shall take for yourselves on the first day the fruit of beautiful trees, branches of palm trees, the boughs of leafy trees, and willows of the brook, and you must rejoice before Yahveh your God for seven days.’ (Leviticus 23:40)

You and I are more like the End Time Harvest (than the ‘us’ or ‘we’ in Jacob 1:18). Our ‘time’ or picture is in the fall or autumn of salvation history, and yet, we are all ‘firstborn sons of God:

“For you have not come to a Mountain that can be touched and to a blazing Fire and to Darkness, gloom and whirlwind and to the blast of a Shofar and the sound of Words, which sound was such that those who heard begged that no further word be spoken to them. For they could not bear the command, ‘If even a beast touches the Mountain, it must be stoned.’ And so terrible was the sight that Moses said, ‘I am full of fear and trembling,’ but you have come to Mount Zion and to the City of the Living God, the heavenly Jerusalem and to myriads of angels, to the General Assembly and Congregation of the *Firstborn* who are enrolled in Heaven, and to God, the Judge of all, and to the spirits of the righteous made perfect and to Yeshua, the Mediator of a New Covenant, and to the sprinkled Blood, which speaks better than the blood of Abel” (Heb. 12:18-24).

The Congregation of the Firstborn is a throwback to Yahveh calling Israel His firstborn Son and Yeshua, too, is truly the Father’s Firstborn Son (Ps. 2:7; Jn. 1:18). The concept is also seen in Yeshua speaking of His followers as being ‘chosen’...

‘You did not *choose* Me, but I *chose* you and appointed you that you would go and bear fruit and that your fruit would remain so that whatever you ask of the Father in My Name He may give to you’ (Jn. 15:16).

Both times that Yeshua mentions *choose* and *chose*, the Greek parallels the Hebrew for *the chosen people* and here it speaks of Yeshua *choosing* them. Of course, Yeshua wasn’t speaking Greek, but Hebrew, and so the words He used would have come from the Hebrew *bachar* בָּחַר (to choose).¹²

Finally, there is the general conceptual framework of ‘first fruits’ taken to be a person or a family outside of Israel that was the first to respond to the Message of Life in Yeshua the Messiah:

‘Likewise, greet the assembly that is in their house. Salute my well beloved Epaenetus who is the *first fruits* of Achaia unto Christ’ (Rom. 16:5).

‘Now, I urge you, brethren (you know the household of Stephanas, that they were the *first fruits* of Achaia and that they have devoted themselves for ministry to the saints)’ (1st Cor. 16:15).

¹² Thayer, *Thayer’s Greek–English Lexicon of the New Testament*, n.p. ‘ἐκλέγομαι...the Septuagint for *bahar*; to pick out, choose; in the N.T...to pick or choose out for oneself...one from among many (of Jesus choosing his disciples), John 6:70; 13:18; 15:16; Acts 1:2.’

THE TECHNICAL PROBLEM

In the seven day Feast of *Matza* (Unleavened Bread) there would naturally always be a Sunday. On this Sunday the High Priest would elevate finely crushed grain from the spring barley crop. It symbolized Israel's recognition that Yahveh, the Owner of the Land, had provided sustenance (food) for His people Israel and that the first portion of it would be holy unto Him, with all the rest of the spring crop, and the summer and fall crops being holy for Israel because of the ceremony. First Sheaf always fall on a Sunday, the day after the seventh day Sabbath in Passover (the Feast of Unleavened Bread) week, in counter-distinction to what the Pharisees thought, and what the Rabbis some believers practice today, contrary to what they would tell us was the way the Temple operated during the Second Temple period.¹³

The Sadducees followed the understanding that the Sunday after the seventh day Sabbath of the Feast of Unleavened Bread was 'the day after the Sabbath' that Lev. 23:11 spoke of:

"He shall elevate the sheaf before Yahveh, to be accepted on your behalf, *on the day after the Sabbath* the priest shall elevate it." (Leviticus 23:11)

In the seven day Feast of *Matza* there are (usually) three Sabbaths: the first and seventh days of the Feast of Unleavened Bread (which are annual or yearly Sabbaths) and the seventh day Sabbath (that comes after every Friday).¹⁴

The Pharisees believed that 'the day after the Sabbath' in Lev. 23:11 referred to the day after the first annual Sabbath of Unleavened Bread, which is always 16 *Aviv*. This position is untenable, but has been adopted in Judaism since the destruction of the Temple because the Rabbis are the spiritual descendants of the Pharisees, who ousted the Sadducean priests as the leaders of the people. With their belief that 'the day after the Sabbath' refers to annual Sabbath of 15 *Aviv* (today called 15 *Nisan*), 50 days after that is always 6 *Sivan*. That's when Orthodox Judaism (and most so-called Messianic congregations) celebrate *Shavu'ot* (Pentecost).

The problem with the Pharisaic interpretation is seen in that both First Sheaf and the Feast that is marked 50 days later, *Shavu'ot*, are *never given any date in Scripture*. If the counting of the 50 days should always commence the day after the first day Sabbath of *Matza* (16 *Aviv/Nisan*), as the Pharisaic Rabbis teach, then *Shavu'ot* would always fall on 6 *Sivan*, which it does for them, but neither of these dates (16 *Aviv* and 6 *Sivan*) are ever mentioned by Yahveh, or anyone else in Scripture. That's because the dates for First Sheaf and *Shavu'ot* are 'floating dates' and *change every year* due to the Passover meal (15 *Aviv*) coming on different nights each year (e.g. Monday night, Tuesday night, and Wednesday night, etc.). In other words, the dates for the two days (First Sheaf and *Shavu'ot*) *cannot* be given, and this is the reason why God says to count 50 days after the first 7th day Sabbath of Passover week. First Sheaf, and consequently *Shavu'ot*, 50 days later, always change dates from year to year, depending on what **day** of the week the Passover ceremonial meal is on.

Yahveh speaks of the dates for *all the other Feasts* (Lev. 23), but never gives a date for either First Sheaf

¹³ The Mishna-Talmud was written by the Rabbis after the destruction of the Second Temple period and places their Pharisaic view for when First Sheaf would be, and therefore, when *Shavu'ot* would be, as the practice of the Second Temple period. Many other things were similarly 'revised.' See, *The Talmud—Can We Trust It?*, which follows this section and will elaborate on why the Talmud is not trustworthy in terms of Second Temple practice.

¹⁴ If either the first day or the last day of the Feast of Unleavened Bread coincides with the seventh day Sabbath then, for all practical purposes, there are only two Sabbaths; one of the annual Sabbaths coinciding with the 7th day Sabbath.

or *Shavu'ot*. This is the key to understanding that the Sadducees were right, and that the Pharisees, Rabbis and Messianics are wrong. The weekly seventh day Sabbath within the Feast of *Matza* can be the 15th, 16th, 17th, and 18th, etc., of the month of *Aviv*, and therefore, the *date* for First Sheaf, the day *after* the weekly 7th day Sabbath, *is always changing from year to year*. With it being the 16th, 17th, 18th, 19th, etc., of *Aviv*, the *date* for *Shavuot* 50 days later, can be the 6th, 7th, 8th, and 9th, etc. of the third Jewish month (*Sivan*).

The Scripture for *Shavu'ot* (literally 'sevens' or 'weeks,' which refers to the seven weeks [49 days plus one, as it's an inclusive count, meaning that First Sheaf is counted as day one] that one must wait to celebrate it) states:

'You shall also count for yourselves *from the day after the Sabbath*, from the day when you brought in the Sheaf of the elevation offering. There shall be seven complete Sabbaths. You shall count fifty days to the day after the seventh Sabbath. Then you shall present a new grain offering to Yahveh' (Lev. 23:15-16).

Easy, right? You might say it seems pretty clear to you: 'the day *after* the *seventh Sabbath* is obviously always going to be a Sunday, and seven *complete Sabbaths* seems pretty clear too, but the way that it's worded in English doesn't take into account that the Hebrew word for 'Sabbath' can also be used of a 'week,' (a full seven day period), and not necessarily just the 7th day Sabbath. This is the way the Pharisees and modern Judaism take it: 'seven complete weeks' and 'the day after the seventh week.' This has some support from the definitions of Sabbath, but it doesn't have any biblical validity, nor make any sense, as it would have been very easy for God to give the dates for both days. In that He didn't, we know that the Pharisees were wrong.

Just like your birthday, which is always the same *date* every year, but can fall on a different *day* of the week every year, so too, with the Passover meal. It's always 15 *Aviv*, but 15 *Aviv* can fall on a Monday night or a Tuesday night, etc. Now, First Sheaf, biblically, will always be the Sunday of Passover Week, but its date, 16 *Aviv* or 17 *Aviv*, etc., will change from year to year, depending on what day (Sunday, Monday, and Tuesday, etc.) the Passover meal is. *That's why God couldn't give a date for either First Sheaf or Shavu'ot—every year the dates change*, and this reveals that the Sadducees had the correct interpretation for Lev. 23:11, 15-16.

1. The Passover sacrifice of the lamb happens as the sun is going down on 14 *Aviv*. What is the Passover? The Passover is not 'a day' *per se*, but most often in Scripture refers to the sacrifice of the Passover lamb around 5:00 PM on 14 *Aviv*.¹⁵
2. A few hours later at dark, the biblical day changes to 15 *Aviv*, the beginning of the first day of the Feast of Unleavened Bread (an annual Sabbath no matter what day of the week it falls on). This is the first day of the Feast of *Matza*, beginning in dark (cf. Gen. 1:1-5f., for darkness as when the biblical days begins).
3. About 8:00 PM the lamb will be eaten during the Passover ceremonial meal (Ex. 12:1f.), on the first day of *Matza*, in the evening.
4. At dawn it will still be 15 *Aviv*. When darkness comes 12 hours later it will begin 16 *Aviv*; this is the second day of *Matza*. The daylight of 16 *Aviv* is when the ancient Pharisees and modern Rabbis believe that the First Sheaf would have been offered up to God.

¹⁵ Ex. 12:21, 27; Luke 22:7-8, 11, 13, 15; Mk. 14:12, 14; Mt. 26:17-19. In the days of Yeshua the Passover lambs would be sacrificed beginning about 2:00 PM at the Temple, having to sacrifice about 100,000 lambs or more before dark. That's why they began earlier than if each household did it on their premises, as was done in Egypt.

The Sadducees, who were ordained by God to teach Israel, and were in charge of the Tabernacle and then the Temple, and therefore, *when* Israel would celebrate the Feasts, would wait until the day after the seventh day Sabbath,¹⁶ and on the next day, Sunday, the High Priest would offer the First Sheaf or quantity of barley grain known as the *omer*. This is biblically correct.

Aviv 21, the seventh day of the Feast of Unleavened Bread, is also an annual Sabbath (the Feast of *Matza* is from 15 to 21 *Aviv*, seven days). The community comes together for the holy assemblies on the first and last days of the Feast of Unleavened Bread (Ex. 12:16).

If the counting for the *omer* began on the day after the Sabbath of Unleavened Bread, as the Pharisees and modern Judaism contend, First Sheaf would always be on 16 *Aviv* and *Shavu'ot* would always be on 6 *Sivan*. Two days, two dates, very simple, *but we never see them in Scripture*, yet God gives us the dates for all the other Feasts. Unless one is ready to say that God forgot to give the dates, or that He's intentionally trying to be deceptive, both of which are nonsensical and not like our God, one is left with the fact that God didn't give the dates because the dates for both days change every year, depending on what *day* of the week the Passover lamb was slain:

1. If 14 *Aviv*, the Passover, when the sacrifice of the lamb took place, fell on a **Sunday** at 5:00 PM then the Feast of Unleavened Bread, 15 *Aviv*, would begin at darkness and the lamb would be eaten around 8:00 PM Sunday night. The date for the following Sunday, the day *after* the seventh day (weekly) Sabbath, would be **21 Aviv**. This would be both First Sheaf and the concluding seventh day Sabbath of the Feast of Unleavened Bread, the *last day of the Feast of Unleavened Bread*.
2. If 14 *Aviv*, the Passover, when the sacrifice of the lamb took place, fell on a **Monday** at 5:00 PM then the Feast of Unleavened Bread, 15 *Aviv*, would begin at darkness and the lamb would be eaten around 8:00 PM Monday night. The date for the following Sunday, the day *after* the seventh day (weekly) Sabbath would be **20 Aviv**. This would be First Sheaf that year.
3. If 14 *Aviv*, the Passover, when the sacrifice of the lamb took place, fell on a **Tuesday** at 5:00 PM then the Feast of Unleavened Bread, 15 *Aviv*, would begin at darkness and the lamb would be eaten around 8:00 PM Tuesday night. The date for the following Sunday, the day *after* the seventh day (weekly) Sabbath would be **19 Aviv**. This would be First Sheaf that year.
4. If 14 *Aviv*, the Passover, when the sacrifice of the lamb took place, fell on a **Wednesday** at 5:00 PM then the Feast of Unleavened Bread, 15 *Aviv*, would begin at darkness, and the lamb would be eaten around 8:00 PM Wednesday night. The date for the following Sunday, the day *after* the seventh day (weekly) Sabbath would be **18 Aviv**. This would be First Sheaf.
5. If 14 *Aviv*, the Passover, when the sacrifice of the lamb took place, fell on a **Thursday** at 5:00 PM then the Feast of Unleavened Bread, 15 *Aviv*, would begin at darkness and the lamb would be eaten around 8:00 PM Thursday night. The date for the following Sunday, the day *after* the seventh day (weekly) Sabbath, would be **17 Aviv**. This would be First Sheaf that year.
6. If 14 *Aviv*, the Passover, when the sacrifice of the lamb took place, fell on a **Friday** at 5:00 PM then the Feast of Unleavened Bread, 15 *Aviv*, would begin at darkness and the lamb would be eaten around 8:00 PM Friday night. The date for the following Sunday, the day *after* the seventh day (weekly) Sabbath, would be **16 Aviv**. This would be First Sheaf that year.
 - a. A Friday night Passover meal is the only time when the two different interpretations, of the Sadducees and the Pharisees, dovetail. 16 *Aviv* (Pharisee) would be that Sunday, and that Sun-

¹⁶ Friday night dark until Saturday night dark is the biblical Sabbath, not sunset to sunset.

day would also be ‘the day *after* the seventh day Sabbath’ (Sadducee).

- b. It seems that Joshua, when he brought the Sons of Israel into the Promised Land, celebrated that first Passover meal in Canaan on a Friday night, with First Sheaf on Sunday. This would account for the Scriptures stating that Israel kept the Passover on the 14th day and that they ‘ate of the produce of the land on the day after the Passover’ (i.e. the day after the first day of *Matza*; 16 *Aviv*)...and the Manna ceased the day after they had eaten of the produce of the land (17 *Aviv*; Joshua 5:10-12). For Israel to eat of the produce of the land on the day after 16 *Aviv* means that the Passover meal was eaten on Friday night and First Sheaf was offered up on Sunday because it states that one wasn’t to eat of the new barley crop until the first sheaf had been dedicated to Yahveh (Lev. 23:10-14).
 - c. Some proponents of the Pharisaic interpretation point to Joshua 5:10-12 to try and prove that the Pharisaic-Rabbinic concept is right, but all it proves is that the Passover lamb was slain on Friday afternoon and Israel eat the meal on Friday night (Sabbath evening). That year the Pharisaic interpretation coincided with the biblical reality and the Sadducean understanding.
 - d. If the Passover Meal is on any other night (other than Friday night) the two concepts separate. Only a Friday night Passover meal brings the two concepts together, but the main point is that God didn’t give the dates for either First Sheaf or *Shavu’ot* when He gave all the other dates.
7. If 14 *Aviv*, the Passover, when the sacrifice of the lamb took place, fell on the **weekly 7th day Sabbath** at 5:00 PM then the Feast of Unleavened Bread, 15 *Aviv*, would begin at darkness on Saturday night and the lamb would be eaten around 8:00 PM. First Sheaf would be *eight days later, after the next weekly 7th day Sabbath* (which would also be the last day of the Feast of Unleavened Bread). This is the only scenario when First Sheaf falls outside the seven days of the Feast of Unleavened Bread.
- a. When the Feast of *Matza* begins on a Saturday night, the ‘day after the Sabbath’ that First Sheaf must fall on has to wait a full week, until the seventh day Sabbath within the Feast of *Matza* comes around. One has to wait a week until the weekly 7th day Sabbath comes *within* the Feast of Unleavened. This 7th day weekly Sabbath would also be the last day of the Feast of Unleavened Bread (also an annual Sabbath), and so, the ceremony of First Sheaf would actually take place the day after this, on Sunday, which means that First Sheaf would fall outside the Feast of Unleavened Bread, on 22 *Aviv*.
 - b. Some might say that it should be offered on that first Sunday, 15 *Aviv*, so that it can take place *within* the Feast of Unleavened Bread, but nowhere in Scripture does it say that First Sheaf must take place within the Feast of Unleavened Bread. (The seventh day weekly Sabbath, when the lamb would have been sacrificed at 5:00 PM¹⁷ cannot be considered as it is not the 7th day Sabbath *within* the Feast of *Matza*.)
 - c. I used to think that First Sheaf should come within the framework of the Feast of Unleavened Bread, and so I opted for First Sheaf being observed on that Sunday, 15 *Aviv*, but God does not make any provision or exception for the Passover sacrifice being on Saturday 14 *Aviv*, saying that First Sheaf should then be on the next day, Sunday, the first day of the Feast of *Matza*,

¹⁷ I have used 5:00 PM as the time when the lambs would have been sacrificed, believing that this would be the approximate time that they would have sacrificed them at the First Passover in Egypt. The Scriptures say that the sacrifice is to take place ‘between the two evenings’ and this is generally seen as dusk. This has been variously interpreted, and in Yeshua’s day, because of the vast number of lambs that were taken to the Temple to be sacrificed for the Passover, it started about 2:00 PM.

an annual Sabbath. He speaks of it being after the 7th day Sabbath of Passover week:

- (1) “He shall wave the sheaf before Yahveh, to be accepted on your behalf; on the day *after* the *Sabbath* the High Priest shall wave it...And you shall count for yourselves from the day *after* the *Sabbath*, from the day that you brought the *sheaf* of the wave offering, seven Sabbaths shall be completed. Count fifty days to the day *after* the seventh Sabbath. Then you shall offer a new grain offering to Yahveh.” (Leviticus 23:11, 15-16)
- d. It also makes biblical and theological sense that First Sheaf cannot be the 7th day Sabbath *before* the the Passover/Feast of Unleavened Bread. That’s because it was only after the eating of the sacrificed lamb, on 15 *Aviv*, that Israel was set free from Egyptian slavery to offer themselves and their crops to God, symbolized in First Sheaf (the offering up of the spring barley grain).
- e. Also, there doesn’t seem to be any biblical reason why First Sheaf can’t be done on the Sunday after the last day of the Feast of Unleavened Bread. The last day of the Feast would be both the seventh day weekly Sabbath and the seventh day annual Sabbath of the Feast itself. The Feast of *Matza* would end on Saturday night at dark and the next day, Sunday, would be 22 *Aviv*, when First Sheaf would take place.

In 2015, First Sheaf fell outside the Feast of Unleavened Bread. First Sheaf was on Sunday, the day after the Feast of Unleavened Bread ended. This happened because the Passover ceremonial meal was on Saturday night (4 April 2015). This meant that the 7th day Sabbath of Passover week was the last day of the Feast and that First Sheaf would be one day after The Feast of Unleavened Bread ended on Saturday night, 11 April, 2015. First Sheaf is always the day *after* the weekly 7th day Sabbath within Passover week, except when the Passover meal falls on a Saturday night.

Depending on what week day 14 *Aviv* came on (the day when the lamb would be sacrificed), would determine the actual Sunday *date* for the First Sheaf ceremony in Tabernacle and Temple times. Consequently, *Shavu’ot* 50 days later, would always have a different date every year, too. Because of this ‘floating date,’ God couldn’t give the dates for either First Sheaf or *Shavu’ot*, and this reveals that the ‘day after the Sabbath’ (Lev. 23:11, 15-16) was (and is) the day after the weekly 7th day Sabbath in Passover Week (except when the Passover meal is on a Saturday night).

First Sheaf *cannot* be the day after the first annual Sabbath of Unleavened Bread, as the Rabbis and Messianics claim. If it was, First Sheaf would *always* be on 16 *Aviv/Nisan*, and 50 days later *Shavu’ot* would *always* be 6 Sivan. These two days, though, are *not* dated in Leviticus 23, *but every other feast that God speaks of is!* God couldn’t give those dates (First Sheaf and *Shavu’ot*) because every year they change. That’s how we know that the ancient Sadducees were right about the Sabbath in question being the weekly 7th day Sabbath during Passover week, and *not* the first annual Sabbath of the Feast of Unleavened Bread (16 *Aviv/Nisan*), as the Pharisees thought, and as the Rabbis and Messianics teach today.

Some might think that First Sheaf should always fall within the week of the Feast of Unleavened Bread, but obviously, when the Passover meal is on a Saturday night it cannot happen. The only 7th day Sabbath during that week of Unleavened Bread is the last day of the Feast of Unleavened Bread. Hence, the reason why First Sheaf would fall on that Sunday after the Feast ended.

Whenever the Passover meal is on a Saturday night, First Sheaf will always fall on Sunday, one day after the Feast of Unleavened Bread ends. Because of this, the 50 day counting of the *omer* doesn’t begin until the Sunday after the Feast of *Matza* ends, and this is how it can be ‘later’ than others who either don’t go by the new moon sighting as the first day of the month, or who have some other reason for not keeping First Sheaf the day after the 7th day Sabbath of Passover week.

THE TALMUD—CAN WE TRUST IT?

Most scholars today, both Jewish and non-Jewish, agree that Second Temple practices were in the hands of the priests. Things like when First Sheaf, and therefore, *Shavu'ot*, would have been, followed the Sadducean concept, and not that of the Pharisees. This disagrees with the Talmud, but Jacob Neusner, 'an internationally recognized authority on the Talmud and a conservative Jewish scholar'¹⁸ states that the Talmudic writings that refer to the Second Temple period are, 'Sayings and stories ...*made up* and attributed to prior times or authorities.'¹⁹

Neusner presents that historical facts didn't get in the way of *rewriting* what actually had transpired during the Second Temple period after the Second Temple was destroyed, and there was no one around to argue with the Pharisees:

'Ample evidence in virtually every document of rabbinic literature sustains the proposition that it was quite common for sages to make up sayings and stories and attribute the sayings to, or tell stories about, other prior authorities. *Considerations of historical fact did not impede the search for religious truth: the norms of belief and behavior.* That is why, if all we want are historical facts, we *cannot* believe everything we read except as evidence of *what was in the mind of the person who wrote up the passage*: opinion held at the time of the closure of a document.'²⁰

David Kraemer, a Jewish professor at the Jewish Theological Seminary of America in New York City, wrote that it is *impossible* to determine from the Talmud what actually went on during the Second Temple period:²¹

"Scholars, mostly Jewish, but also non-Jewish, have been using Rabbinic sources for historical study for well over a century. These studies—one 'History of the Jews in the Talmudic Period' or another—have been, almost without exception, what Jacob Neusner terms 'gullible.' They have assumed, in other words, that the Rabbinic record can, more or less, be taken at its word and that, once one has determined the 'original version' of a teaching and discounted obvious fabulous material" (meaning gross exaggerations of the Rabbis), "one may accept that teaching as historically reliable."

"By this stage in the development of Judaic scholarship, *the folly of these earlier habits is broadly recognized.* Neusner and others have pointed to a variety of crucial and even fatal flaws in the approach just described, and there is hardly a scholar writing today about the history of Jews in late antiquity who does not at least pay lip service (though often no more than lip service!) to the much repeated critique. But even the critical questions that have been articulated—Can we believe Rabbinic attributions for purposes of dating a tradition? Why should we believe what any given tradition reports? and so forth—*do not capture the full scope of the problem of using such records for writing history.* In the following pages, I will describe the obstacles that would have to be overcome

¹⁸ Herb Solinsky, *The Hail Plague and the First Biblical Month*. It is a sixty-one page treatise found at <http://sevendayweek.com/articles/fi.pdf>, p. 41.

¹⁹ Ibid. Jacob Neusner, *Rabbinic Literature & the New Testament* (Valley Forge, PA: Trinity Press International, 1994), p. 13.

²⁰ Ibid. Neusner, *Rabbinic Literature & the New Testament*, p. 68.

²¹ Ibid., pp. 41-42.

before we could be sure that a Rabbinic record contains historically reliable evidence. I will conclude that *these obstacles are effectively insurmountable*, and that most sorts of political, social, or religious histories *cannot be constructed on the basis of Rabbinic testimony*.”²²

William Green writes that the Feast dates were in the hands of the Aaronic Priesthood, not the Pharisees:

“*Before the fall of the Jerusalem temple in A.D. 70, the priests proclaimed the sacred times of the year. In the aftermath of the temple’s destruction, the new rabbinic movement appropriated that priestly task to itself.*”²³

Neusner affirms Green and declares:

“The Pharisees before 70 *did not* control the Temple and *did not* make laws to govern its cult [the Levitical priesthood]. But afterward, they made plans for the conduct of the Temple when it would be restored.”²⁴

What this means for us is that what the Talmud says about First Sheaf taking place on 16 Aviv is not to be taken as historical or factual. It’s the product of deceitful Rabbinic minds that rewrote the history and practices of the Second Temple period to suit their teachings and religious practices. The Sadducean priests controlled the Temple in the days of the Apostles. Their concept of when First Sheaf, and therefore, *Shavu’ot*, would come, is the biblical model. In the days of Messiah Yeshua they were on Sundays. *Shavu’ot* of Acts 2 happened on a Sunday. The Apostles of the Lord were drenched in the Holy Spirit on the annual Jewish feast of *Shavu’ot*, also known as Pentecost.²⁵

Today, Judaism, which is a direct offshoot of the Pharisees, is wrong on their dating for First Sheaf and *Shavu’ot*, and so, too, are all the so-called Messianic believers who follow the Rabbis and their calendar. The Lord warned us not to follow Pharisaic teaching when He said to the Apostles:

“‘Take heed and beware of the leaven of the Pharisees and the Sadducees.’ How is it you do not understand that I did not speak to you concerning bread?!—but to beware of the leaven of the Pharisees and Sadducees. Then they understood that He did not tell them to beware of the leaven of bread, *but of the teachings of the Pharisees and Sadducees*” (Mt. 16:6, 11-12).

First Sheaf recognizes God’s provision for Israel in the land that He promised to Abraham, Isaac and Jacob. The ultimate provision, Yeshua, alive from the dead, appeared before His Father, as the First Sheaf to rise from the dead, acknowledging God’s promise of a Savior for Israel.

First Sheaf is not a holy day (unless it coincides with the seventh day Sabbath of the Feast of Unleavened Bread, as on page 11, point 1). It should, though, now that we know the significance of it, be celebrated as a time of feasting and thanksgiving unto the Father for keeping His promise of sending provision for forgiveness of sin and eternal life in His Son, Yeshua, and Yeshua’s ascending to the Father as the first to rise from the dead.

²² Ibid., p. 42. David Kraemer, *Rabbinic Sources for Historical Study, Judaism in Late Antiquity*, part 3, volume 1, (edited by Jacob Neusner and Alan J. Avery-Peck. Leiden: Brill, 1999), p. 201.

²³ Ibid. William Scott Green, *Storytelling and Holy Man, Take Judaism, for Example* (edited by Jacob Neusner. Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 1983), pp. 35-36.

²⁴ Ibid. Jacob Neusner, *In Search of Talmudic Biography* (Chico, CA: Scholars Press, 1984), p. 81.

²⁵ For why the Lord chose this day to immerse His Jewish followers in the promised Holy Spirit, see *Pentecost* at <http://seedofabraham.net/Pentecost.pdf>.

CONCLUSION

First Sheaf is the day when the new spring barley crop would be offered up to God in thanksgiving for all the spring crops (and the coming summer and fall crops). The High Priest would offer up finely ground barley grain, with oil and incense in a quantity known as the omer (about a quart or liter). He would offer a prayer to Yahveh, thanking Him for all that God had done for Israel, in bringing her into the land of Canaan, the land that Abraham, Isaac and Jacob wandered over, and which God had promised them and their descendents. The High Priest would thank Yahveh for all the descendents of the Fathers, and for supplying all of Israel with food, symbolized in the offering up of the First Sheaf.

The Church has no understanding of this, nor of course, practices it, but First Sheaf, as Paul the Apostle clearly states, refers to Messiah Yeshua as the first of the dead to rise, never to die again (1st Corinthians 15:12-24f.). It is this ceremony that the Church should be celebrating in honor of Messiah's resurrection, not Easter or 'Resurrection Sunday,' which most often doesn't fall on the correct day of the resurrection because the Church doesn't use the biblical calendar.

The problem with the Pharisaic/Rabbinic interpretation of *when* First Sheaf, and therefore, *Shavu'ot* 50 days later, would be celebrated centers around their poor interpretation of which Sabbath God meant when He said, the day after the Sabbath is when First Sheaf is to be offered. The Pharisees and Rabbis interpret that Sabbath to be the first annual Sabbath of the Feast of Unleavened Bread, which is always 16 Aviv, and always produces a 6 *Sivan Shavu'ot*. This is wrong because God never gives those dates. One has to ask 'Why not? Why didn't He plainly declare those dates for those two days?' The answer is because every year the Passover meal is on a different night, meaning that 15 Aviv can come on Monday night, or Tuesday night, etc., and the following Sunday, First Sheaf, will be either 17, 18, 19, etc., Aviv, with *Shavu'ot* being anywhere from 6 to 13 *Sivan*. That's how we know that the ancient Sadducees were right and the Pharisees (Rabbis and Messianics today) are wrong. God couldn't give the dates because they are 'floating dates,' changing every year.

Seeking to justify the keeping of the Pharisaic/Rabbinic concept, many turn to the Talmud, but the Talmud is not an honest broker in this area. What is in the Talmud concerning Second Temple practices is not what actually transpired in Second Temple times. The Pharisees literally rewrote history according to how they wanted it to be, and in that, almost two millennia of Jews, and some Christians (Messianics) who follow them today, have been deceived.

First Sheaf is always on the Sunday of Passover week, unless the Passover meal is on a Friday night. Then First Sheaf falls on the day after the seven day Feast of Unleavened Bread, which is also a Sunday. This is the only time when First Sheaf would fall outside the Feast of Unleavened Bread.

First Sheaf is a time of celebrating all that the Father has given us in His Son; everything from eternal life and the Holy Spirit to life abundant on this Earth, and especially Yeshua's resurrection and glorification. Glory to the Passover Lamb who was slain and lives forever!²⁶

²⁶ Revised on 15 April 2017.