TABLE OF CONTENTS

TABLE OF CONTENTS ................................................................. iii
INTRODUCTION ................................................................. 1
THE PROCEDURE .............................................................. 2
THE CHURCH IGNORANT ....................................................... 3
YESHUA AS THE FIRST SHEAF .............................................. 5
    Other Uses of First Sheaf in Scripture ................................. 6
THE TECHNICAL PROBLEM ..................................................... 8
THE TALMUD—CAN WE TRUST IT? ........................................... 12
CONCLUSION ........................................................................ 14
INTRODUCTION

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

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 sheaf (aka first fruits; barley grain) of your harvest to the (High) Priest.’”

Lev. 23:11: ‘He shall wave (ףףע elevate) the sheaf (לךפר omel) 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 of barley grain), 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 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.’

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 year old 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) and Blood of Life, filled with the Oil of the Holy Spirit. Just as the Hebrews couldn’t eat of the new grain until this ceremony was done (v. 14), so too, we could not eat of the Bread of Life until He had been crushed and risen from the ground (grave) and presented Himself to His Father as the First Fruits (First Sheaf) to rise from the dead (1st Cor. 15:20, 23). Then we became acceptable to God the Father (Lev. 23:11) and could eat of the Bread of Life. As we surrender and dedicate ourselves to Yeshua, He crushes us that His glory within us (the Holy Spirit) might flow out and touch others.

1 Although the Hebrew word נף (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 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 נף (‘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.’


4 Ibid. A hin of wine weighs about six pints (three quarts or three liters).
THE PROCEDURE

On the Sunday of Passover week, known as First Sheaf (and First Fruits), the High Priest would be presented with an omer of finely crushed barley (about two pounds). 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) and elevate it before Yahveh, which symbolized dedication of not only the spring harvest, but also the summer and autumn harvests as well, for this was the first fruits/grain to come forth from the ground.

3. Then he would bless Yahveh and acknowledge that:
   1. Yahveh had brought the Hebrews into Israel, as He had promised the Fathers, and
   2. He had made them as many as the stars of the heavens and
   3. He had provided food for them, the grain being symbolic of all to come.

4. Then he would cast the handful of grain and incense upon the fire of the bronze Altar of Sacrifice, thus dedicating it and all to follow to Yahveh, and so Israel was acceptable to God.

The elevating of the offering up to God of the first sheaf in Hebrew is omer raysheet פנים ובנים. It literally means the first omer. It’s from this term, omer, and the offering of it up to Yahveh, that 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; Feast of Weeks). The Hebrew for Leviticus 23:15, the verse 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/from 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, the annual summer holy Sabbath thanking God for the summer crop/s. The High Priest, in his blessing Yahveh, thanked Yahveh for His faithfulness in keeping His Word to Fathers Abraham, Isaac and Jacob concerning their sons and the giving of the Land of Israel to them and that Yahveh would be their God forever. The promises are 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.’

Now, Israel was eating the ‘fruit’ of the Land that Yahveh had given them, a Land flowing with milk and honey (Dt. 6:3; 11:9). The grain used for First Sheaf would be barley because it ripens four to six weeks before the summer wheat harvest (which would be offered on Shavu’ot and is usually in early June). First Sheaf is usually in April.
The elevation offering of the first harvest pictured it and the other harvests (summer and fall) that were to follow. They would all be dedicated or holy because the first was offered up to God. This made Israel acceptable to Yahveh. Without God they wouldn’t have been there. He was to be given the first of the grain.

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 (the oil), 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, ascending to God the Father 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, pictures Yeshua as our High Priest, thanking His Father for giving Israel their promised Messiah, their Savior and their King, the pure grain/Bread of Heaven, which will sustain them for eternity.

4. The priests would eat the grain that was not thrown onto the fire of the Altar. This pictured the body of Yeshua being given to His priests as food for us (Jn. 6:53; Heb. 13:10).

God was faithful to His Word. He has provided everything Israel needs—from literal food to the Bread (Matza) of Life—Messiah Yeshua.

THE CHURCH IGNORANT

When the Bishop of Rome in 120 AD severed himself and all those Christians under his influence (primarily in Rome and Greece) from walking out their faith in Christ through all Mosaic Law that applied to them, and brought in pagan days and ways to replace it (e.g. Sunday and Easter), all the Gentile and Jewish believers of Asia Minor (modern Turkey) and all points east (e.g. Israel and Syria) continued to keep the 7th day Sabbath and Passover, etc. There was much turmoil in Christianity over that. Rome had intentionally rebelled against God’s Word and His Ways. First Sheaf is one such Way. John 20:16 records the encounter between Miryam (Mary) and her risen Savior: Yeshua said to her, ‘Miryam!’ She turned and said to Him in Hebrew, ‘Rabboni!’ (which means, ‘my beloved Rabbi’).

The reason why this sentence is in Scripture is because God wants us to understand that Yeshua’s first appearance after His resurrection has to do with Him keeping the ceremony of First Fruits (First Sheaf). His fulfilling of it doesn’t mean it has been done away with. On the contrary, now when we celebrate it, and celebrate it we must because God says the Feasts of Israel are forever (Ex. 12:24; Lev. 23:14, etc.), we know this ceremony thanks God for providing food for His people Israel in both the natural and spiritual realm.

First Sheaf was the Sunday of Passover week and Yeshua was in process of fulfilling it. That’s why He tells Miryam, in the very next verse, not to cling to Him:

“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 had not yet ascended to the Father, but obviously, He has already been resurrected. He said that to Miryam because He was about to ascend to His Father and thank Him for being faithful to Israel, paralleling the earthly ceremony of First Fruits. As the High Priest in Jerusalem was offering up the first grain to rise from the Earth, barley grain, so the heavenly High Priest, Yeshua, was appearing before His Father as the First Fruits to rise from the dead, from the Earth/ground (1st Cor. 15:20, 23). This was a reason why the earthly ceremony was established—to point to the heavenly reality. They are both valid for picturing
what God has done for Israel. Now that Messiah has come, when we enter into the Frist Fruits we have both understandings of what they mean for us as believers. They are both significant, the earthly meant to continue until the New Heavens and New Jerusalem are established (Ezk. 40–48; Mt. 5:18; Rev. 21:1ff.).

Many followers of Jesus claim that He rose on Sunday, and because of that, Christianity has Sunday assembly or a ‘Sunday Sabbath,’ as some like to call it, but there’s nothing in the New Testament that even remotely states that Sunday has replaced God’s 7th day Sabbath because of the resurrection.

Yeshua is first seen on this Sunday of First Fruits, which is why God set it up this way, for Yeshua ascends as the First Sheaf (Fruits) of all the Harvest of God’s resurrected people to come. This does not sanctify all Sundays during the year, as interestingly enough, First Fruits is not even an annual holy Sabbath (like the first and seventh days of the Feast of Unleavened Bread, for instance; Lev. 23:6-8). In other words, even with Yeshua rising on Sunday there is nothing in the New Testament that says because of His resurrection, Sunday is now the new weekly 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 Week (Gen. 2:3).

If Sunday had replaced the seventh day Sabbath we would expect to find numerous passages in the New Testament attesting to this, not just two proof text verses. These two ‘proof texts’ are used to justify the removal of the Sabbath, but this is only a further instance of misguided theologians trying to justify the reason for Sunday replacing God’s 7th day Sabbath. In other words, Christian theologians were born into this (Roman) tradition and ‘think it Gospel,’ and so they try and explain what they grew up in, but if God wanted the idea of the resurrection replacing His Sabbath He would have said so in the New Testament, in clear and simple terms in many places. After all, the Sabbath had been kept by Israel for 1,500 years.

Yeshua’s first appearance and ascension on the Sunday of Passover Week gives no biblical warrant for Sunday observance over Sabbath, as that Sunday was placed within the Feast of Unleavened Bread for the express purpose of both offering the first grain of spring to God in thanksgiving, and having a day when Yeshua would complement the earthly reality as the first to rise from the Earth as the New Creation.

As the offering of the first fruits (barley grain) to the Father meant that the harvests to come (summer and fall) would also be acceptable to God, so Yeshua’s appearance before the Father as the First Fruits to rise from the dead meant that all who follow Him are acceptable to the Father. Yeshua ascended to the Father on First Fruits, and was raised from the dead on that Sunday, the first day of the week, paralleling the first day of Creation Week. In other words, as God began His creation on the first day of Creation Week, He also began His New Creation on the first day of the week, with Yeshua being raised from the dead, the first of the New Creation (the glorified God-Man), so that Yeshua would have preeminence in all things:

“And He is the Head of the Body, the Church, who is the Beginning, the Firstborn from the dead, that in all things He may have the preeminence.” (Colossians 1:18)

“But now Christ is risen from the dead, and has become the First Fruits of those who have fallen asleep…But each one in his own order: Christ the First Fruits, afterward those who are Christ’s at His coming.” (1st Corinthians 15:20, 23)

Yeshua is first seen alive on First Fruits, but no one sees Him resurrect on Sunday, and there is no authoritative Scripture to support a Sunday resurrection, and so I used to think that He rose late on the 7th day Sabbath, as He is Lord of the Sabbath (Mark 2:28), but as I’ve just brought out, Yeshua, as the First Fruits to rise from the dead, rose from the dead on the first day of the biblical week (i.e. any time from Saturday night at dark, after the Sabbath ended, to Sunday while it was still dark; Jn. 20:1), which during Passover Week is First Fruits. Obviously, then, there’s no need for either a weekly Sunday assembly that has replaced the Lord’s holy 7th day Sabbath and no need for (pagan) Easter or ‘Resurrection Day’ (as many

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5 The texts after the resurrection that speak of the first day of the week (i.e. Sunday) are Acts 20:7 and First Corinthians 16:2. See The Feasts of Israel as Time Markers After the Resurrection, pp. 20-25; 10-20.

6 See The Resurrection and Mark 16:9.
call it, wanting to try and steer clear of the paganism that is Easter). Easter Sunday and Resurrection Day are always celebrated on the same Sunday because Resurrection Day is just another name for Easter Sunday, but the point is that most of the time they aren’t celebrated on the Sunday when Yeshua rose from the dead because the calculations for Easter Sunday are different from First Fruits. The Lord wants His people to keep His Ways, not Rome’s Ways.

**Yeshua as the 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 in glory.* 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.’ (1st Cor. 15:22-23)

Passover, the Feast of Unleavened Bread and First Fruits picture the death, burial, resurrection and first ascension of Yeshua. As the Lamb of God He dies on Passover, the first day of *Matza* (Unleavened Bread; 15 *Aviv*), the day when the firstborn of Egypt died in order for Israel, God’s Firstborn Son (Ex. 4:22), to be released from Egyptian slavery (Exodus 12:12f.; Num. 33:3). At Yeshua’s crucifixion the sky reverted *into a nighttime scene of darkness,* even though it was noon, most likely because God wasn’t pleased with His Son’s treatment, and Egypt’s firstborn died in the darkness at midnight (Ex. 12:29-30):

‘It was now about the sixth hour (noon) and *darkness* fell over the whole land until the ninth hour.’ (Yeshua dies at 3:00 PM; Luke 23:44; cf. Mt. 27:45-56; Mk. 15:33-34)

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 they were set free from slavery to Satan. Yeshua dies on the day Israel was set free from Egypt:

‘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) the Sons of Israel started out boldly in the sight of all the Egyptians.’ (Num. 33:1-3)

“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

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7 Passover is calculated from the first new moon on or after the Vernal (Spring) Equinox. From that new moon, which is the first day of the biblical month and also the first day of the biblical New Year, one counts 15 days until the night when the Passover meal is eaten, which also begins the seven day Feast of Unleavened Bread. Generally, the Sunday of Passover Week is First Sheaf/Fruits (but, as in 2019, First Sheaf fell on the Sunday immediately after the last day of the Feast of Unleavened Bread).

On the other hand, Easter or Resurrection Day are both calculated this way: after the Vernal Equinox the first full moon becomes the marker from which the following Sunday becomes Easter Sunday. In practical terms Easter and the Sunday for First Sheaf sometimes coincide, but they can be off by a week or two, or even a full month.

8 See *Salvation—The Promise!*

9 The 15 of the month is the first day of the Feast of Unleavened Bread.

10 The *next day after the Passover* refers to the day the Passover lambs were slain in Egypt (14 *Aviv*).
throughout your generations as an everlasting ordinance!’” (Ex. 12:17)

On the same day that Yeshua cries out, “It is finished” (the redemption/salvation of Israel; Jn 19:31), God brought Israel out of Egyptian slavery 1,470 years earlier. Both times Israel was redeemed through the sacrifice of the Passover Lamb. This day is the first day of the Feast of Matza, an annual Sabbath, 15 Aviv (Nisan in Judaism’s calendar).

As the New Harvest, the first of many, Yeshua 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. 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 your 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 took a handful of the finely ground barley mixed with olive oil, placed some incense upon it and tossed it upon the Altar to go up in smoke to Yahveh. At about that time Miryam, 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 Father, and to My God and your God.’”

This ascension 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 the Father and the Holy Spirit came the Word, the Son, the Light of the world, slain from before the Foundation of Creation (Rev. 13:8).12

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 the same 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 describes the Holy Spirit within us, our pledge from God the Father 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)

Paul uses first fruits as a general concept of something that comes first, and not a direct reference to the ceremony of First Fruits. James13 gives yet another meaning for the phrase:

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11 Many theologians believe that it was the year 1440 BC when Israel left Egypt. Adding 30 years to that, when Yeshua was crucified, makes a total of 1,470 years.

12 See Yeshua—God the Son for how Yeshua is both deity and God the Son.

13 The Hebrew name of James should have been translated into English as Jacob, but because of anti-Semitism in the ancient Roman Catholic Church, a foreign, a 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 be called Jacob in English Bibles.
James (Jacob) 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 who believed in Yeshua (Acts 12:17; 15:13; 21:18; Gal. 1:19; 2:9). He’s saying he considers the believers who have come to Yeshua in his lifetime as the first fruits of the heavenly Harvest, coming immediately after Yeshua, which might align itself symbolically with the ‘summer’ harvest.

In Rev. 14:1f., the 144,000 Israelis 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.’ (Revelation 14:4)

That these 144,000 refer to the natural Seed of Abraham, Isaac and Jacob has 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)

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 Tabernacles:

‘After these things I looked, and behold, a great multitude which no one could count, from every nation and all tribes, 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, 33-44)

You and I are more like the End Time Harvest (than the ‘us’ or ‘we’ in James 1:18). Our ‘time’ or picture is in the autumn of salvation history, and yet, we are also ‘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 Shofar14 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!’ So terrible was the sight that Moses said, ‘I am afraid and trembling,’ but you have come to Mount Zion and to the City of the Living God, the heavenly Jerusalem and to tens of thousands 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, for He is truly the Father’s Firstborn Son (Ps. 2:7; Jn. 1:18). The concept is 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

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14 In the Hebrew text the word is shofar (ram’s horn), not trumpet. It’s the heavenly Shofar.
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 בַּחַר (to choose).  

Finally, there is the general conceptual framework of ‘first fruits’ taken to be a person or a family outside of Israel who 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 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)

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 elevated a handful of finely crushed barley grain from the spring crop. It symbolized Israel’s recognition that Yahveh, the Owner of the Land, had provided food for His people Israel and that the first portion of it would go to Him, making the rest of the spring crop, and the summer and fall crops that followed, holy. First Sheaf always falls on a Sunday, the day after the seventh day Sabbath in Passover Week (the Feast of Unleavened Bread Week), in counter-distinction to what the Pharisees thought, and what the Rabbis and Messianics practice today. The Rabbis, writing more than a hundred years after the destruction of the Temple (70 AD), said that the priests (Sadducees) followed their rabbinic way of thinking on religious matter, but those Rabbis revised history to suit their agenda. The Sadducees understood that the Sunday after the seventh day Sabbath in the Feast of Unleavened Bread was ‘the day after the Sabbath’ that Lev. 23:11 speaks of to be First Sheaf:

“He shall elevate the sheaf before Yahveh, to be accepted on your behalf, on the day after the Sabbath the (High) Priest shall elevate it.” (Lev. 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 (which comes after every Friday).  

The Pharisees believed that ‘the day after the Sabbath’ (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 by Judaism because the Rabbis are the spiritual descendants of the Pharisees, who ousted the Sadducean priests as the leaders of the people (because there was no Temple for the priests to conduct their God ordained work; in other words, the Levitical Priests were out of a job and fell into obscurity). With the Pharisaic/Rabbinic belief that ‘the day after the Sabbath’ referred to the annual Sabbath of 15 Aviv.

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16 Passover and the Feast of Unleavened Bread are used interchangeably in Scripture (Lk. 22:1, 7; Mt. 26:17; Mk. 14:1).

17 The Mishna–Talmud was written by the Rabbis after the destruction of the Second Temple and places the Pharisaic view of when First Fruits should be, and therefore, 50 days later when Shavu’ot would be, as the practice of the Second Temple. Many other things were similarly ‘revised.’ See, The Talmud—Can We Trust It? p. 12f.

18 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 because one of the annual Sabbaths coincides with the 7th day Sabbath.
(today called 15 Nisan), 50 days after that is always 6 Sivan. That’s when Orthodox Judaism (and Messianic congregations) celebrate Shavu’ot (Pentecost; the Feast of Weeks; Ex. 34:22; Num. 28:26; Dt. 16:10, 16).

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 would always commence the day after the first annual Sabbath of Matza (16 Aviv/Nisan), as the Pharisaic Rabbis teach, then Shavu’ot always fall on 6 Sivan, which it does for them, but neither of these dates (16 Aviv and 6 Sivan) are ever mentioned by Yahweh nor anyone else in Scripture for First Sheaf and Feast of Weeks, respectively. That’s because the dates for First Sheaf and Shavu’ot are ‘floating dates,’ meaning that they 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 meal is eaten on.

Yahweh gives the dates for all the other Feasts (Lev. 23), but He never gives a date for either First Sheaf or Shavu’ot. This is the key to understanding that the Sadducees were right, and that the Pharisees, Rabbis and Messianics are wrong. 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/count 50 days 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 Yahweh.’ (Lev. 23:15-16)

Easy, right? You might say it seems pretty clear: ‘the day after the seventh (day weekly) 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 mean 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 understanding doesn’t have any biblical validity, nor make any sense, because it would have been very easy for God to give the dates for both days. This is why we know that the Pharisees were wrong.

Just like your birthday, which is always the same date every year, but falls on a different day of the week every year (e.g., Monday or Tuesday, etc.), 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 most 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 falls on. 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; the day after the (7th day) Sabbath of Passover Week.

1. The Passover sacrifice of the lamb happens about sunset on 14 Aviv. What is the Passover? The Passover is not a day per se, but most often in Scripture Passover refers to the sacrifice of the Passover lamb, around sunset on 14 Aviv.¹⁹

2. 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

¹⁹ 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 because there were about 100,000 lambs that needed to be sacrificed. That’s why the earlier time than if each household did it by their homes, as was done in Egypt.
of Matza, beginning in dark (cf. Gen. 1:1-5f., for darkness being when the biblical days begins).  

3. About 8:00 PM the lamb would be eaten during the Passover ceremonial meal (Ex. 12:1f.), on the first day of Matza. 

4. At dawn it will still be the first day of Matza, 15 Aviv. When darkness comes it will begin 16 Aviv; the second day of Matza. The daylight of 16 Aviv is when the ancient Pharisees and modern Rabbis believe the First Sheaf would have been offered up to God.

The Sadducees, who became a sect after the Babylonian captivity, were mostly made up of the priests, who had been ordained by God to teach Israel, and they were in charge of the Temple. Therefore, when Israel would celebrate the Feasts was up to their understanding. They taught ‘the day after the Sabbath’ was the day after the seventh day weekly Sabbath,21 and on the next day, Sunday, the High Priest would offer the First Sheaf (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 seventh 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, 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 (or the Passover meal was eaten; 14 and 15 Aviv respectively):

1. If 14 Aviv, the Passover, when the sacrifice of the lamb took place, fell on a Sunday at sunset22 then the Feast of Unleavened Bread, 15 Aviv, would begin at darkness that night and the lamb would be eaten 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 sunset then the Feast of Unleavened Bread, 15 Aviv, would begin at darkness Monday night and the lamb would be eaten on 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. Simply put:

   1. If the Passover meal is eaten on Tues nite (15 Aviv), First Sheaf is on Sunday, 19 Aviv.
   2. If the Passover meal is eaten on Wed nite (15 Aviv), First Sheaf is on Sunday, 18 Aviv.
   3. If the Passover meal is eaten on Thurs nite (15 Aviv), First Sheaf is on Sunday, 17 Aviv.
   4. If the Passover meal is eaten on Friday nite (15 Aviv), First Sheaf is on Sunday, 16 Aviv.23

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20 See When Does The Sabbath Begin?
21 Friday night dark until Saturday night dark is the biblical Sabbath, not sunset Friday night to sunset Saturday.
22 I have used sunset as the time when the lambs would have been sacrificed, believing that this would be the approximate time when Israel 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 at sunset or dusk.
23 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 Sunday would also be ‘the day after the weekly seventh day Sabbath’ (Sadducee). 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
5. If the Passover meal is eaten on Saturday nite (15 Aviv), First Sheaf is on Sunday, 22 Aviv.\(^{24}\)

In 2015 First Sheaf fell outside/at the end of 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 (April 4, 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, April 11, 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.\(^{25}\)

would account for the Scriptures stating that Israel kept the Passover (sacrifice) 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 they ate of the Passover meal, the first day of Matza; 16 Aviv)...and the Manna ceased the day after they had eaten of the produce of the land (Monday, 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 two days later on Sunday, for 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).

Some proponents of the Pharisaic-Rabbinic concept is right, but all it proves is that the Passover lamb was slain on Friday at sunset and Israel eat the meal on Friday night (Sabbath evening). That year the Pharisaic interpretation coincided with the the Sadducean understanding. 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, yet He gave the dates for all the other feasts. The Rabbis are wrong.

\(^{24}\) If the Passover meal is eaten on Saturday nite, the Feast of Unleavened Bread, 15 Aviv, begins at darkness on Saturday night and First Sheaf would be eight days later, after the weekly 7th day Sabbath in Unleavened Bread. That weekly 7th day Sabbath would also be the last day of the Feast of Unleavened Bread—the seventh day of the Feast of Unleavened Bread). This is the only time when First Sheaf falls outside the seven days of the Feast of Unleavened Bread. One has to wait a week until the weekly 7th day Sabbath comes within the Feast of Unleavened, and so, First Sheaf actually takes place the day after the Feast ends, on Sunday, which means that First Sheaf is 22 Aviv.

Some Christians teach that First Sheaf should be offered on the Sunday that coincides with the first day of the Feast of Unleavened Bread, but this cannot be because the day before, the weekly 7th day Sabbath, does not fall within Passover/Feast of Unleavened Bread Week. Those Christians don’t want First Sheaf to fall after the Feast of Unleavened Bread is over, and so they disregard Scripture, which says First Fruits must be the day after the weekly 7th day Sabbath within Passover Week. Their teaching is both biblically wrong, as First Sheaf must take place after the weekly Sabbath within Passover Week, and theologically wrong. Yeshua makes us acceptable to God when He ascended, not on the day He was sacrificed. That year the Passover meal (15 Aviv), was eaten on a Wednesday night, and He was crucified on a Thursday (still 15 Aviv). Two days later the weekly 7th day Sabbath within Passover Week came, and the next day, First Sheaf, is when He rose from the dead. First Sheaf is when we became acceptable to God the Father, not the day of His sacrifice. In other words, those who trample over God’s instruction in Leviticus as to when First Sheaf should be (the day after the weekly Sabbath within Passover Week, symbolically have the death, resurrection and ascension occurring on the same day (Sunday, 15 Aviv).

God, though, does not make any provision nor exception in Scripture for the Passover meal being eaten on Saturday nite, saying that First Sheaf should then be on the next day, Sunday, which would coincide with the first day of the Feast of Matza, symbolically the death of Messiah Yeshua. He speaks of it being after the 7th day Sabbath of Passover Week: “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).

There isn’t any biblical reason why First Sheaf cannot be 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 annual Sabbath of the Feast itself, closing out the Feast. The Feast of Matza would end on Saturday night at dark and the next day, Sunday, would be the day after the 7th day Sabbath in Passover Week, 22 Aviv, when First Sheaf would take place. Israel came out of Egypt the day when the lamb was eaten (15 Aviv), and we came out of the Darkness of Satan’s Kingdom when Yeshua died, but we only became acceptable to God when Yeshua ascended, the day after the weekly 7th day Sabbath of Passover Week, which that year would have been 18 Aviv.
Depending on what week nite the Passover meal is eaten determines the actual Sunday date for First Sheaf in Tabernacle and Temple times. Consequently, Shavu’ot 50 days later, will always have a different date every year, too. Because of this ‘floating date’ God couldn’t give dates for either First Sheaf or Shavu’ot. This reveals that the ‘day after the Sabbath’ (Lev. 23:11, 15-16) is the day after the weekly 7th day Sabbath in Passover Week.

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, contrary to every other feast in Leviticus. God couldn’t give the dates for First Sheaf and Shavu’ot because they’re ‘floating dates,’ changing every year. That’s how we know the ancient Sadducees were right about the Sabbath in question and the Pharisees were wrong.

Some Christians who keep the Feasts 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 falls on the Sunday the after the Feast ends that year.

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 Levitical Priests. Things like when First Sheaf, and therefore, Shavu’ot occurred, 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,’ states that the Talmudic writings which refer to the Second Temple period are,

“Sayings and stories...made up and attributed to prior times or authorities.”

Neusner says that historical facts didn’t get in the way of (the Rabbis) rewriting what actually had transpired during the Second Temple period after the Second Temple was destroyed, and that there was no one around ‘to argue with’ the Pharisees who could stop them from this:

“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.”

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:

25 The Passover meal also fell on a Saturday nite, April 20, 2019.
29 Ibid., pp. 41-42.
“Scholars, mostly Jewish, but also non-Jewish, have been using Rabbinic sources for historical study for well over a century. These studies...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...to the much repeated critique...Can we believe Rabbinic attributions for purposes of dating a tradition? Why should we believe what any given tradition reports? and so forth...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.”

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 AD 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.”

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.”

What this means 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 who 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 and Yeshua celebrated First Sheaf and Shavu’ot according to the Sadducean dating. Their concept is the biblical model. In the days of Messiah Yeshua First Sheaf and Shavu’ot were always on Sundays. This means that Shavu’ot of Acts Two 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.

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 Messianic believers who blindly follow the Rabbis and their calendar. The Lord warned us not to follow Pharisaic teaching when He said to His 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 the Sadducees.” (Mt. 16:6, 11-12)

33 See Pentecost—Shavu’ot, for why God chose it to immerse Israel in the Holy Spirit.
CONCLUSION

First Sheaf is the day when a handful of the new spring barley crop would be offered up to God in thanksgiving, by the High Priest of Israel, for all the spring crops (and the coming summer and fall harvest). The High Priest would offer up finely ground barley grain, with oil and incense, in a quantity known as the *omer* (about a dry 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 had wandered over, and which God had promised to them and their descendents. The High Priest would thank Yahveh for all the people of Israel, and for supplying Israel with food, symbolized in the offering up of the First Sheaf. Israel could not eat of the new grain until the High Priest had offered up the *omer*. Then Israel became acceptable to God, and it was only after Yeshua ascended to God the Father that His followers became acceptable to the Father.

Christians have no understanding of this, nor of course, practice 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, glorified (1st Corinthians 15:12-24f.). It is this ceremony that the Church should be celebrating in honor of Messiah’s resurrection, not Easter Sunday nor ‘Resurrection Day,’ which most often doesn’t even fall on the correct day of the resurrection nor does it have anything to do with the resurrection, because the Church doesn’t use the biblical calendar. Jesus is called the (Passover) Lamb of God (Jn. 1:29), not the chocolate Easter bunny of God.

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 the 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 therefore, always produces 6 *Sivan* for *Shavu’ot*. This is wrong because God never gives those dates because they’re ‘floating dates’ changing every year. That’s how we know the ancient Sadducees were right and the Pharisees (Rabbis and Messianics today) are wrong for their dating of First Sheaf and *Shavu’ot*.

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 Rabbis literally rewrote history according to how they wanted it to be, and in that, almost two millennia of Jews, and some Christians and Messianics who follow the Rabbis today, have been deceived and celebrate First Sheaf and *Shavuot* on the wrong dates.

First Sheaf is always on the Sunday of Passover Week, unless the Passover meal is on a Saturday night. Then First Sheaf falls on the Sunday after the last day of the Feast, which is the 7th day Sabbath and also the 2nd annual Sabbath of the Feast of Unleavened Bread.

First Sheaf is not a holy day (unless it coincides with the seventh day annual Sabbath of the Feast of Unleavened Bread. 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 to Israel, and unto the Son who has made us acceptable in His Father’s eye. Glory to the Passover Lamb who was slain and lives forever!  

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34 Revised on Sunday, April 12, 2020.