

CHAPTER 5

The Festival of First Fruits (*Bikkurim*)

The fifteenth of Nisan begins *Hag HaMatzah* (the Feast of Unleavened Bread), which is a high sabbath, a *shabbaton*. It is a seven day feast to the L-rd. The day following the sabbath during Passover is called the Feast of First Fruits (Leviticus [Vayikra] 23:10-11).

The Feast of First Fruits can be found in Leviticus (*Vayikra*) 23:9-14, as it is written:

Then the Lord spoke to Moses, saying, "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 firstfruits of your harvest to the priest. And he shall wave the sheaf before the Lord for you to be accepted; on the day after the sabbath the priest shall wave it. Now on the day when you wave the sheaf you shall offer a male lamb one year old without defect for a burnt offering to the Lord. Its grain offering shall then be two tenths of an ephah of fine flour mixed with oil an offering by fire to the Lord for a soothing aroma, with its libation, a fourth of a hin of wine. Until this same day, until you have brought in the offering of your God, you shall eat neither bread nor roasted grain nor new growth. It is to be a perpetual statute throughout your generations in all your dwelling places' " (Leviticus [Vayikra] 23:9-14 NAS).

Understanding the Festival Ceremony

The observance was carried out in this manner, when the standing ripe harvest of barley and wheat was ready to be reaped. The celebrant would take one sheaf from the standing harvest and bring it to the priest. The lone sheaf was called "the sheaf of the first fruits." The priest was then to take this one sheaf and wave it before the L-rd in His house. This was to be done "the day after the sabbath." Prescribed offerings were also to be presented along with the sheaf.

The Sheaf of First Fruits in the Bible

G-d commanded the people to bring a sheaf of the harvest (Leviticus [Vayikra] 23:10). The Hebrew word for "sheaf" is *omer*. An *omer* is defined as "a measure of dry things, containing a tenth part of an ephah." The definition of an *omer* being a tenth part

of an ephah is found in Exodus (*Shemot*) 16:36. An ephah contains 10 *omers* of grain. Remember, three times a year G-d commanded the people to come to Jerusalem (*Yerushalayim*) to celebrate the festivals of Passover (*Pesach*), Pentecost (*Shavuot*), and Tabernacles (*Sukkot*). All three of these festivals are agricultural harvest festivals. Passover (*Pesach*) is the barley harvest. Pentecost (*Shavuot*) is the wheat harvest. Both of these festivals are first fruits harvests before the final harvest that was to come at the end of the year during the festival of Tabernacles (*Sukkot*), which is the fruit harvest.

The harvest represents all who would put their faith, trust, and confidence (*emunah*) in the Messiah *Yeshua* (Matthew [*Mattityahu*] 13:39; Mark 4:26-29; Luke 10:1-12; Revelation 14:14-16). So, the sheaf is the first of the first fruits. Since a sheaf in the Bible is used to typify a person or persons (Genesis [*Bereishit*] 37:5-11), a sheaf spiritually represents people who accept the Messiah into their hearts.

The nation of Israel was familiar with the concept of first fruits or the firstborn. The first fruits were always the choicest, the foremost, the first, the best, the preeminent of all that was to follow. They were holy to the L-rd. The concept of first fruits or firstborn is a major theme in the Bible. This can be seen by the following Scriptures: Exodus (*Shemot*) 23:16,19; 34:26; Leviticus (*Vayikra*) 2:12,14; 23:20; Numbers (*Bamidbar*) 18:12-15,26; Deuteronomy (*Devarim*) 18:1-5; 26:2-4,10; 2 Chronicles 31:5; Nehemiah 10:35-39; Proverbs (*Mishlai*) 3:9; Jeremiah (*Yermiyahu*) 2:3; Ezekiel (*Yechezekel*) 44:30; 48:14; Malachi 3:8-14; Hebrews 6:20; 7:1-8.

Everything on the earth, both man and beast, was to be presented before the L-rd as first fruits to Him.

1. **The firstborn of both man and beast were sanctified (made holy) and presented to the L-rd** (Exodus [*Shemot*] 13:2; 22:29).
2. **The first fruits of all the earth were presented to the L-rd at His altar in praise and thanksgiving** (Deuteronomy [*Devarim*] 26:1-11).

The Seventeenth of Nisan -- Resurrection and Salvation

The theme of the festival of First Fruits is resurrection and salvation. There are several important events that happened on this day in the Bible.

1. **Noah's (*Noach*) ark rests on Mount Ararat** (Genesis 8:4).
2. **Israel crosses the Red Sea** (Exodus [*Shemot*] 3:18; 5:3, 14).
3. **Israel eats the first fruits of the Promised Land** (Joshua 5:10-12). The manna that G-d gave from Heaven during the days in the wilderness ceased the sixteenth day of Nisan after the people ate of the old corn of the land. The day following was the seventeenth of Nisan, the day when the children of Israel ate the first fruits of the Promised Land.

4. **Haman is defeated** (Esther 3:1-6). In the Book of Esther, Haman plotted to kill all the Jews in Persia and Media. Haman had ten sons (Esther 9:12). By this, we can see that Haman is a type of the false Messiah (antichrist). A decree was sent out on the thirteenth of Nisan that all the Jews would be killed (Esther 3:12). Upon hearing this news, Esther proclaims a three-day fast, which would be Nisan 14-16 (Esther 4:16). On the sixteenth of Nisan, Esther risked her life when she came to King Ahasuerus. The king asked her, in effect, "Tell me, what do you want?" Esther said, "If it please the king, may the king and Haman come this day to the banquet that I have prepared for him" (Esther 5:4 NAS). This was the sixteenth day of Nisan. At the banquet, the king again asked Esther what she wanted, and she asked the king to come to another banquet to be held the next day, the seventeenth of Nisan. On this day, Haman (a type of the false Messiah or antichrist, as well as of satan [*Ha satan*]) is hanged.
5. **The resurrection of *Yeshua*, the Messiah** (John 12:24; 1 Corinthians 15:16-20). *Yeshua* celebrated the festival of First Fruits by offering Himself as the first fruits to all future generations (Matthew [*Mattityahu*] 27:52-53).

***Yeshua* Is the First Fruits of the Barley Harvest**

1. ***Yeshua* is the firstborn of Miryam** (Mary) (Matthew 1:23-25).
2. ***Yeshua* is the first-begotten of G-d the Father** (Hebrews 1:6).
3. ***Yeshua* is the firstborn of every creature** (Colossians 1:15).
4. ***Yeshua* is the first-begotten from the dead** (Revelation 1:5).
5. ***Yeshua* is the firstborn of many brethren** (Romans 8:29).
6. ***Yeshua* is the first fruits of the resurrected ones** (1 Corinthians 15:20,23).
7. ***Yeshua* is the beginning of the creation of G-d** (Revelation 3:14).
8. ***Yeshua* is the preeminent One** (Colossians 1:18).

Yeshua is indeed the Most Holy One of G-d and is sanctified by the Father. *Yeshua* is the first, the choicest, the preeminent One. He is both the firstborn of G-d and the first fruits unto G-d. *Yeshua* is the sheaf of the first fruits.

First Fruits Is Prophetic of the Resurrection of the Messiah

The festival of the sheaf of the first fruits is prophetic of the resurrection of *Yeshua*. *Yeshua* prophesied that He would rise three days and nights after He was slain on the tree

(Matthew [*Mattityahu* 12:38-40; 16:21; Luke 24:44-46). This was foreshadowed to happen in the *Tanach* (Old Testament) by type and shadow (Genesis [*Bereishit*] 22:1-6; Exodus [*Shemot*] 3:18; 5:3; 8:27; Esther 4:15-17; Jonah 1:7; 2:1-2).

Since *Yeshua* was slain on the tree on the day of Passover (*Pesach*), the fourteenth of Nisan, and He arose from the grave three days and nights after He was slain, *Yeshua* arose from the grave on the seventeenth of Nisan, the day of the festival of First Fruits. In fact, *Yeshua* is called the first fruits of those who rise from the dead.

But now Christ has been raised from the dead, the first fruits of those who are asleep. For since by a man came death, by a man also came the resurrection of the dead. For as in Adam all die, so also in Christ all shall be made alive. But each in his own order: Christ the firstfruits, after that those who are Christs' at His coming (1 Corinthians 15:20-23 NAS).

It was prophesied that *Yeshua*, the Messiah, would be buried in the tomb of the rich (Isaiah [*Yeshayahu*] 53:9; Matthew [*Mattityahu*] 27:57; Luke 23:51). Why was *Yeshua* placed in the tomb of Joseph of Arimathea? Arimathea was another name for Ramah, where Samuel dwelt. It is five miles north of Jerusalem (*Yerushalayim*). In fact, this place is still called Ramah today. In ancient times, it was customary for Jews to be buried in Jerusalem (*Yerushalayim*). In fact, this practice is still done today because it is a traditional belief in Judaism that the resurrection of the dead will take place in Jerusalem (*Yerushalayim*) first.

In the Book of Genesis (*Bereishit*), Joseph (*Yosef*) the son of Jacob (*Ya'akov*), made the children of Israel take a vow that when they went to the Promised Land, they would carry his bones with them (Genesis [*Bereishit*] 50:24-26). Ramah was a term that represented idolatry. Two countries were called the seat of idolatry in the ancient world: Babylon and Egypt. Joseph (*Yosef*), the son of Jacob (*Ya'akov*), was also known as Joseph of Ramah. Moses (*Moshe*) took the bones of Joseph (*Yosef*) with him when he and the children of Israel journeyed to Succoth (Exodus [*Shemot*] 13:19-20). Therefore, Joseph's (*Yosef*) tomb in Egypt was empty. The empty tomb of Joseph (*Yosef*) of Arimathea (Ramah), which stood for wickedness, was a fulfillment of Isaiah (*Yeshayahu*) 53:9.

Joseph (*Yosef*) was a type of the role of *Yeshua* during His first coming when He came to fulfill the role of the suffering Messiah known as *Messiah ben Joseph*. The bones of Joseph (*Yosef*) were carried to Succoth. Succoth is a type of the Messianic age also known as the Millennium. This is also a picture of *Yeshua* being both *Messiah ben Joseph* and *Messiah ben David* -- as *Yeshua* who suffered during His first coming to earth will be King during His second coming to earth.

The Spiritual Understanding of First Fruits

Spiritual Application (Halacha). A sheaf in the Bible is used to typify a person or persons (Genesis [*Bereishit*] 37:5-11). *Yeshua* will return to earth (*Zechariah 14:4*) during His second coming as King over all the earth. He also will bring the sheaves (the believers in *Yeshua* as the Messiah) with Him (Psalm (*Tehillim*) 126; Jeremiah (*Yermiyahu*) 31:9-14; Joel 3:11-13; Zechariah 14:3-5; Matthew [*Mattityahu*] 13:37-39; Mark 4:26-29; Hebrews 12:1; Jude 14; Revelation 1:7).

The 144,000 Jewish witnesses who witness of *Yeshua* during the *Chevlai shel Mashiach*, the birthpangs of the Messiah (also known as the tribulation) are first fruits to G-d during the tribulation (Revelation 14:1-4).

Let's look at some Scriptures in the Bible concerning first fruits.

1. **The natural is before the spiritual** (1 Corinthians 15:46).
2. **Israel was G-d's firstborn** (Exodus [*Shemot*] 4:22). But, the first will be last and the last will be first (Mark 10:31). Therefore, the Gentiles (the *goyim*) became the first to receive the Messiah (as a corporate people; there are many non-Jews who do not) (Isaiah [*Yeshayahu*] 60:1-3; 62:1-3; Acts 15:14-16). At the end of this present age, the Jews as a corporate people will accept *Yeshua* as Messiah as well.
3. **The gospel (*basar*) was preached to the Jew first and then to the non-Jews** (Romans 1:16; 2:9-10; Matthew [*Mattityahu*] 10:5-6; 15:21-28; Acts 1:8).
4. **We are called to seek first the Kingdom of G-d** (Matthew [*Mattityahu*] 6:33).
5. ***Yeshua* was the first to rise from the dead** (Acts 26:23).
6. **The early believers were a kind of first fruits** (James [*Ya'akov*] 1:17-18).
7. **Those who arose from the dead with *Yeshua* during His resurrection became the first fruits of all those who would rise from the dead** (Matthew [*Mattityahu*] 27:52-53; Ephesians 4:8; 1 Thessalonians 4:13-18).
8. ***Yeshua* first loved us, and He is to be our first love** (1 John [*Yochanan*] 4:9; Revelation 2:4).
9. ***Yeshua* is the first (*Aleph*) and the last (*Tav*)** (Revelation 1:8,11,17; 22:13; Isaiah [*Yeshayahu*] 41:4; 44:6; 48:12).