



MBS116

A MESSIANIC BIBLE STUDY FROM ARIEL MINISTRIES



THE FEAST OF HAG HABIKKURIM (FIRST FRUITS)



By Dr. Arnold G. Fruchtenbaum



ariel.org

THE FEAST OF HAG HABIKKURIM (FIRST FRUITS)**By Dr. Arnold Fruchtenbaum****TABLE OF CONTENTS**

I. INTRODUCTION	3
A. The Names	3
1. Hag Habikkurim	3
2. Reishit Ketzirchem	3
3. Yom Habikkurim	3
4. Sefirat Haomer	3
B. The Date.....	4
1. The Sadducean View	4
2. The Pharisaic View	4
3. The Biblical View	4
C. The Biblical Practice.....	4
D. The Jewish Observance	5
1. During the Second Temple Period.....	5
2. After A.D. 70	5
3. In Modern Israel	6
II. THE FEAST OF FIRST-FRUITS IN THE OLD TESTAMENT	6
A. Leviticus 23:9-14	6
B. Numbers 28:26-31	7
III. THE MESSIANIC IMPLICATIONS.....	8
A. The Fulfillment	8
B. The Date of the Resurrection.....	9

© 1985, 2005 Ariel Ministries. All rights reserved.

No part of this manuscript may be reproduced in any form, except in brief quotation in a review or professional work, without written permission from the publishers. Cover illustration by Olivier Melnick.

Email: Homeoffice@ariel.org • www.ariel.org

*Seven days shall ye
eat unleavened bread;
even the first day
ye shall put away
leaven out of
your houses.
Exodus 12:15*



The Feast of First-fruits is the third holy season on the Jewish calendar and will be studied in three main categories: the introduction, the Feast of First-fruits in the Old Testament, and the messianic implications.

I. INTRODUCTION

There are four aspects by way of introduction: the names, the date, the biblical practice, and the Jewish observance.

A. The Names

1. Hag Habikkurim

The first name is *Hag Habikkurim*, which means the “Feast of First-fruits.” This is a derived name because this is when the first-fruits were offered.

2. Reishit Ketzirchem

The second name is *Reishit Ketzirchem*, which means the “Feast of Your Harvest.” This is one of the biblical names found in Leviticus 23:10.

3. Yom Habikkurim

The third name is *Yom Habikkurim*, which means the “Day of the First-fruits.” This is a biblical name found in Numbers 28:26.

4. Sefirat Haomer

The fourth name is *Sefirat Haomer*, which means the “Counting of the Omer.” The omer is the sheaf, and the counting of the omer or the counting of the sheaf would begin on this day and continue for forty-nine days until the Feast of Weeks or the Feast of Pentecost.

B. The Date

The date of this feast was a major point of conflict between Sadducees and Pharisees. The key issue was what was meant by the Sabbath mentioned in conjunction with the Feast of First-fruits as stated in Leviticus 23:11: *and he shall wave the sheaf before Jehovah, to be accepted for you: on the morrow after the sabbath the priest shall wave it.*

1. The Sadducean View

According to the Sadducees, the Sabbath was Saturday or the seventh day of the week. Thus, *the morrow after the sabbath* was Sunday or the first day of the week. The Feast of First-fruits would therefore be on the first Sunday after the Passover.

2. The Pharisaic View

The Pharisees interpreted the Sabbath to be the day of Passover itself, regardless on which day of the week it happened to fall. This would make “the morrow after the Sabbath” the day after Passover, therefore, it was the same as the first day of the Feast of Unleavened Bread.

3. The Biblical View

The Sadducees based their view on what the biblical text actually said, while the Pharisees based their view on rabbinic tradition. In this case, the Sadducees were correct for this would be the normal meaning of Sabbath. So the Sabbath of Leviticus 23:11 is Saturday and the morrow after the Sabbath is Sunday.

C. The Biblical Practice

Concerning the biblical practice, six things should be noted. First, it was to be observed for one day only.

The second thing to note is that it was a day of first-fruits. On this occasion, the first-fruits of the barely and the grain harvests were to be offered, which would be a sheaf of the first grain.

The third thing to note is that it was to be a one-sheaf offering. The priest would hold the sheaf in outstretched arms while moving it from side to side. A handful of the sheaf was burned on the altar and the rest was eaten by the priest, who could not partake of it until after the ceremony itself had been performed.

The fourth thing to note is that it was to be offered on the day after the Sabbath. This would mean that it would be the sixteenth day of *Nisan* if the sabbath were Passover in accordance with the Pharisaic view. But if it referred to Sunday in accordance with the Sadducean view, then it could have been anytime within the first seven days after the Passover. For example, if Passover occurred on Friday, the Feast of First-fruits would be observed on Sunday, but if Passover occurred on Monday, then it would be observed the following Sunday, almost a

week later. Again, this is the true meaning of the text: the first-fruits were always offered on the first Sunday after the Feast of Passover. For that reason, Moses gave no specific day of the month for this feast to be observed as he did for all the others. Since this had to be on a Sunday, no definite day of the month could be assigned to it.

The fifth thing to note is that it was to be observed as an acknowledgement of God's bounty, because the whole harvest belongs to God, not to man.

And the sixth thing to note is that this feast marked the beginning of the two-month spring harvest.

D. The Jewish Observance

The Jewish observance of the Feast of First-fruits will be discussed in three divisions: during the Second Temple Period, after 70 A.D., and in modern Israel.

1. During the Second Temple Period

The Second Temple Period covered the years from the completion of the Temple in 515 B.C., until the destruction of the Temple in A.D. 70. During the Second Temple Period, on the fourteenth day of the first month, which was the day before the first night of the Passover, the spot where the first sheaf was to be reaped was marked out by a special delegation from the Sanhedrin. They tied the grain into bundles while it was still standing in the field. Then, just as the sun was beginning to set on the evening of the fifteenth day of Nisan, three men set out for the field. Although it was still Passover day, each man carried a sickle and a basket.

The ceremony would then begin with the three men asking the bystanders five questions: "Has the sun gone down?" "With this sickle?" "Into this basket?" "On this Sabbath?" "Shall I reap?" Each question was asked three times.

When the answer to all five questions was "yes," they cut one *ephah* of the grain from the ground that had already been marked out the day before. The ears were brought into the Temple Compound and threshed with cane and wood stalks. The grain was then parched in pans with holes so that each grain could be touched by fire. Next, it was exposed to the wind and then ground on the barley mill. On the sixteenth day of Nisan, one omer or 5.1 pints, was offered in the Temple.

2. After A.D. 70

After the Temple was destroyed in A.D. 70 and during the Dispersion, the feasts could no longer be observed in the same way. In fact, during the long period of the Dispersion, Gentile law forbade Jews to own land. Since they could no longer be farmers, this feast was largely ignored.

3. In Modern Israel

The Jewish observance changed again with the reestablishment of the Jewish State, when Jews once again became farmers. The farming settlements, known as *kibbutzim*, began making some new innovations in the observance of the Feast of First-fruits. Now *kibbutzniks*, the Jewish farmers working in the kibbutz, go out to the barley fields carrying scythes and cut the ears of grain. Following the men are the women who bind the cut barley into sheaves and then carry it on carts decorated with fresh flowers. This is followed by dancing in the fields where the grain was grown. After lighting torches at nightfall, there is a special procession to the kibbutz dining hall where the sheaves are heaped in stacks in the center as a symbolic offering. The observance concludes with an evening of singing of both old and new songs.

II. THE FEAST OF FIRST-FRUITS IN THE OLD TESTAMENT

The Feast of First-fruits is mentioned in just two main passages of the Old Testament: Leviticus 23:9-14 and Numbers 28:26-31.

A. Leviticus 23:9-14

The Feast of First-fruits is introduced by the Word of Jehovah in verse 9: *And Jehovah spoke unto Moses saying*

The timing of the feast is given in verse 10: *Speak unto the children of Israel, and say unto them, When ye are come into the land which I give unto you, and shall reap the harvest thereof, then ye shall bring the sheaf of the first-fruits of your harvest unto the priest.*

It is to be observed after they have settled into the land, because only then will they be able to begin growing things for the first-fruits. When they have settled and reaped the harvest, which in this case is the spring harvest, then they have to give the offering.

The duty of the priest is given in verse 11: *and he shall wave the sheaf before Jehovah, to be accepted for you: on the morrow after the sabbath the priest shall wave it.*

The procedure was to wave the sheaf from side to side in outstretched arms. The priest was the mediator who made it acceptable to God.

Furthermore, the verse states the day of the week when this was to be offered *on the morrow after the sabbath the priest shall wave it.* The Pharisees claimed that this referred to the day after the Passover meal regardless on which day of the week it might fall. The Sadducees taught that the Sabbath was always Saturday. Here, the Sadducees were biblically correct. The sheaf of grain was to be offered on the first Sunday after the Feast of Passover. If the Passover fell on a Friday, two days later would be the Feast of First-fruits. But if the Feast of Passover fell on a Monday, then almost a full week could go by before the Feast of First-

fruits was observed.

Verses 12-13 list the accompanying sacrifices to be offered on this day. There were three different types of offerings. The first offering was the burnt-offering in verse 12: *And in the day when ye wave the sheaf, ye shall offer a he-lamb without blemish a year old for a burnt-offering unto Jehovah.*

The second offering was a meal-offering in verse 13a: *And the meal-offering shall be two tenth parts of an ephah of fine flour mingled with oil, an offering made by fire unto Jehovah for a sweet savor.*

The third offering was the drink-offering in verse 13b: *and the drink-offering thereof shall be of wine, the fourth part of a hin.*

A specific law and command were given in verse 14: *And ye shall eat neither bread, nor parched grain, nor fresh ears, until this selfsame day, until ye have brought the oblation of your God: it is a statute for ever throughout your generations in all your dwellings.*

Verse 14a spells out a specific law: a prohibition against eating any grain *until this selfsame day*, the day of the first-fruits. The prohibition against eating bread, grain, or fresh ears is removed only when the oblation had been offered to God. The command of the feast is given in verse 14b: *it is a statute for ever throughout your generations in all your dwellings.*

B. Numbers 28:26-31

The second passage on the Feast of First-fruits is Numbers 28:26-31, which emphasizes the special sacrifices on this feast. This passage speaks of three things. First, the day of the feast is described in verse 26: *Also in the day of the first-fruits, when ye offer a new meal-offering unto Jehovah in your feast of weeks, ye shall have a holy convocation; ye shall do no servile work.*

The Feast of First-fruits was to a holy convocation, which is like a Sabbath; it was to be a day of rest.

Secondly, there were to be three offerings for this occasion in verses 27-30. The first offering was the burnt-offering in verse 27: *but ye shall offer a burnt-offering, for a sweet savor unto Jehovah: two young bullocks, one ram, seven he-lambs a year old.*

The second offering was the meal-offering in verses 28-29: *and their meal-offering fine flour mingled with oil, three tenth parts for each bullock, two tenth parts for the one ram, 29a tenth part for every lamb of the seven lambs.*

And the third offering was the sin-offering in verse 30: *one he-goat, to make atonement for you.*

The third part of the passage concerns additional offerings verse 31: *Besides the continual burnt-offering, and the meal-offering thereof, ye shall offer*

them (they shall be unto you without blemish), and their drink-offerings.

These offerings were not to be in place of the regular daily offerings, but in addition to them.

III. THE MESSIANIC IMPLICATIONS

The messianic implications will be dealt with in two areas: the fulfillment and the date of the Resurrection.

A. The Fulfillment

The fulfillment of the Feast of First-fruits is spelled out in I Corinthians 15:20-23. The fulfillment of the Feast of First-fruits by the Resurrection of the Messiah is pointed out that in verse 20: *But now has Christ been raised from the dead, the first-fruits of them that are asleep.* The Passover was fulfilled by the death of the Messiah; the Feast of Unleavened Bread by the sinlessness of His blood sacrifice; and, the Feast of First-fruits was fulfilled by the Resurrection of Yeshua (Jesus).

The question this verse raises is, “Since other people were resurrected before Yeshua, both in the Old Testament and the New Testament, how is He the first-fruits?” The answer is that there are two types of resurrections. The first type is merely a restoration back to natural life. This means that one would die again later; those who were raised before the Resurrection of Jesus all died again. The second type of resurrection is true resurrection life when “mortality puts on immortality and corruption puts on incorruption” and one is no longer subject to death (I Cor. 15:53-54). While others have undergone the first type of resurrection in which they were restored back to natural life, the second type of resurrection has only been experienced by Yeshua. Therefore, He is the first-fruits of that second type of resurrection. The term the first-fruits means “the first of more to come.” Since He was the first-fruits, this means there will be “more to come” later. Believers, should they die before the Rapture, will also be resurrected as He was; they are “the more to come.”

Paul presented the logical argument in verse 21: *For since by man came death, by man came also the resurrection of the dead.*

The expression *by man came death* refers to Adam; *by man came also the resurrection of the dead* refers to Jesus. This verse gives one reason for the Incarnation: in order to provide life for all, He had to be able to die and then be resurrected after death.

Verse 22 gives a comparison: *For as in Adam all die, so also in Christ shall all be made alive.*

This is why He is the first-fruits. The word all includes both believers and unbelievers who will some day be resurrected, although not for the same destiny.

In verse 23, he points out the order: *But each in his own order: Christ the*

first-fruits; then they that are Christ's, at his coming

The Greek word used here for order is *tagma*, which means “a military procession.” In a military procession there is order: the infantry, the cavalry, the battering rams. Each of these things has a certain place in the procession.

Likewise, not all believers are resurrected at the same time, but in stages. The first stage of the Resurrection was Yeshua, who was the first-fruits of the First Resurrection. The second stage will be the Church saints, who will be resurrected at the Rapture before the Tribulation. The final stage is Old Testament saints and Tribulation saints, who will be resurrected after the Second Coming at the end of the Tribulation. So, the Feast of First-fruits was fulfilled by the Resurrection of Yeshua.

B. The Date of the Resurrection

Jesus was not resurrected on the proper day in accordance with the Pharisees, because the Pharisees made the first night of Passover to be the fifteenth day of Nisan, thereby making the first night of Passover the same as the first day of Unleavened Bread. Had the Pharisees done what the Sadducees did in making a distinction between Passover and the first day of the Feast of Unleavened Bread, then the Messiah would have been resurrected in accordance with the Pharisees, which in turn would have been in accordance with biblical law.

The fifteenth day of Nisan that year, A.D. 30, was from Thursday evening until Friday evening; this is the first day of His death and burial.

The sixteenth day of Nisan was from Friday evening until Saturday evening; this is the second day of His death and burial.

The seventeenth day of Nisan was from Saturday evening until Sunday evening; this is the third day of His death and burial and also the day of His Resurrection. Yeshua was resurrected on the seventeenth day of Nisan, not in accordance with the Pharisaic system, but in accordance with the Mosaic system. In this case, the Sadducees agreed with Moses.

The first Sunday after Passover in the year A.D. 30 fell on the seventeenth day of Nisan. Jesus was resurrected on the first Sunday after Passover in keeping with the Sadducean interpretation, but more importantly, in keeping with the Mosaic command. So the first-fruits were offered on a Sunday, and it is no accident that the Messiah's Resurrection, which fulfilled the Feast of First-fruits, also occurred on a Sunday.✠

NOTES

**IF YOU ENJOYED THIS
BIBLE STUDY,
DR. FRUCHTENBAUM
RECOMMENDS:**

*MBS062, 114, 115, 117, 118,
119, 120, 122, 177, 178 and
our series on Israelology.*

