

Pesach (פסח) "Passover"

Torah ~ Ex. 12:21-51; Lev. 23:4-8 | Prophets ~ Josh. 3:5-7, 5:2-6:1, 6:27 | New Covenant ~ Matt. 26:17-27:61; 1 Cor. 15:1-58

The Feast of Firstfruits

Every year on the Feast of Firstfruits, the Priest would wave a sheaf (omer) or measure of "green" barley (the first grain of the year) before the Lord (*Leviticus 23:9-14*). The waving of the sheaf was done in a ceremony that marked the start of the counting of the omer, thereby starting the 50 day countdown to the wheat harvest festival of Shavuot (Pentecost). But when is the Feast of Firstfruits? This question has been an ongoing debate for thousands of years.

When is the Feast of Firstfruits?

In *Leviticus 23:11*, it is not clear whether the verse is referring to the weekly Sabbath or the special Sabbath of the first day Unleavened Bread, Nisan 15th. In Biblical times, the meaning of this verse was hotly debated between the Pharisees and a sect of the Sadducees. The Sadducees understood the "day after the Sabbath" as being Sunday, therefore never having a fixed "date" on the calendar. The Pharisees said the verse refers to the first day of Unleavened Bread (15th), therefore Firstfruits being the day after would always fall on the 16th of Nisan, not on a fixed day of the week.

It is clear in *Joshua 5:10-12* that the Israelites celebrated Firstfruits on the 16th of Nisan. Flavius Josephus, who was a member of the priesthood, wrote that "On the second day of Unleavened Bread, which is the sixteenth day of the month, they first partake of the fruits of the earth." Another First Century Jewish eyewitness reported, "There is also a festival during Unleavened Bread, which succeeds the first day, and this is named the sheaf." Both witnesses agree that Firstfruits was kept in accordance with the reckoning of the Pharisees in the first century.

So the Pharisees prevailed in this disagreement, and as a result modern Judaism still reckons the Sabbath in question as the first day of Unleavened Bread. Thus in modern Jewish observance, Firstfruits always falls on the 16th day of Nisan.

Yeshua's Resurrection

John 19:31 says that Yeshua was crucified on Friday, the 14th of Nisan. *Mark 16:2* says that Yeshua rose from the grave Sunday morning before sunrise on Sunday, the Feast of Firstfruits, the 16th of Nisan. After His resurrection, Yeshua would have went to the Father to present Himself as our Firstfruits (*John 20:17*), while the Priest was presenting the Firstfruits wave offering of the barley harvest. Paul refers to Yeshua as our Firstfruits in *1 Corinthians 15:20-23*.

But Yeshua said in *Matthew 12:40* that "For as Jonas was three days and three nights in the whale's belly; so shall the Son of man be three days and three nights in the heart of the earth". But from the 14th of Nisan to the 16th is only two days. But *Matthew 12:40* does not mean a "full" 3 days or 72 hours. The Jewish way of counting days was that any "portion" of the day was counted as a "full" day. For example, *Esther 4:16*, Esther ask all the Jews to pray and fast for three days before she goes to the King. But in *Esther 5:1* it says she goes to the King "on the third day", not after the third day. Paul speaks of the Yeshua's resurrection in *Acts 10:40* where he says "Him God raised up on the third day".

Hosea 6:1 speaks of resurrection when it says "On the third day He will raise us up". Many great things throughout the Bible happened "ON" the third day (*Genesis 22:4; Exodus 19:11; Numbers 19:12*).

Chronological order of Passion week

- (1.) Wednesday at sunset to Thursday at sunset, Nisan 13th, was the Galilean Jewish preparation day for the Passover.
- (2.) Thursday at sunset, the start of Nisan 14th, Yeshua and the disciples had the traditional Galilean "Last Supper" before the start of the Fast Of The Firstborn (*John 13:1-2*).
- (3.) Friday afternoon, still on Nisan 14th, Yeshua was crucified at the exact time that the lambs was being sacrificed, before the Passover Seder.
- (4.) Friday at sunset (*John 19:31*), the start of Nisan 15th when the Passover Seder was to be eaten, Yeshua (sinless and unleavened) was taken off of the cross and placed in the tomb at the start of Unleavened Bread, fulfilling this Feast.
- (5.) Saturday (Shabbat) during the daylight hours was still Nisan 15th. Yeshua rested in the tomb.
- (6.) Saturday at sunset starts Nisan 16th, the Feast of Firstfruits. Yeshua is still in the tomb.
- (7.) Sunday at sunrise (*Mark 16:2*), still on Nisan 16th (Firstfruits), Yeshua rose from the grave becoming our Firstfruits.