

Yom HaBikurim God's Plan or a Coincidence?

by
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In the covenant given through Moses, God commanded the Israelites that when they came into the land God had given them, they were to sacrifice a sheaf of their *Bikurim*¹ -- their first fruits of the harvest -- as a wave offering:

“And the Lord spoke to Moses, saying, “Speak to the children of Israel, and say to them: ‘When you come into the land which I give to you, and reap its harvest, then you shall bring a sheaf of its firstfruits of your harvest to the priest.’”” (Leviticus 23:9-10)

This was to be done on “the day after the Sabbath”, and was to be accompanied by a burnt offering of an unblemished male lamb:

“He shall wave the sheaf before the Lord, to be accepted on your behalf; on the day after the Sabbath the priest shall wave it. And you shall offer on that day, when you wave the sheaf, a male lamb of the first year, without blemish, as a burnt offering to the Lord.” (Leviticus 23:11-12)

Then, in the New Covenant Scriptures, we read:

“But now Messiah is risen from the dead, and has become the firstfruits of those who have fallen asleep. For since by man came death, by man also came the resurrection of the dead. For as in Adam all die, even so in Messiah all shall be made alive. But each one in his own order: Messiah the firstfruits, afterward those who are Messiah's at His coming.” (1 Corinthians 15:20-23)

Are the references to “firstfruits” in both the New and Old Covenants coincidental, or are they God's intricate plan for relating events across the span of centuries? Did God, in His wisdom, plan for Yeshua's resurrection to occur on *Yom HaBikurim*? Let us explore further.

Notice that the *Bikurim* {firstfruits} offering of Leviticus 23:10 is positioned in the Scriptures after the commandment to observe the Feast of Unleavened Bread (Exodus 23: 4-8), and prior to the commandment to observe the firstfruits offering known as “The Feast of Weeks”, “*Shavuot*”, or “Pentecost” (Exodus 23:15-22). Because these two firstfruits offerings are separated by a fixed number of days (50), they may be viewed as the two ends of a single feast season rather than as two independent feasts.²

¹ *Bikurim* is the Hebrew word for “firstfruits.”

² Rabbinical authority recognizes the first wave offering as the day to begin counting 50 days to *Shavuot*. It is referred to as “day one of counting the *omer*” and is not considered to be a separate feast. Note that the two firstfruits wave offerings are different in nature. At the beginning of the 50 day period, the

The key to placing the Firstfruits season on a timeline, is choosing the “Sabbath” that is intended in Exodus 23:11:

“He shall wave the sheaf before the Lord, to be accepted on your behalf; on the day after **the Sabbath** the priest shall wave it.”

There are four “Sabbaths” in close proximity to the Feast of Unleavened Bread; they are:

- ! The first day of the Feast of Unleavened Bread (Leviticus 23:7)
- ! The last day of the Feast of Unleavened Bread (Leviticus 23:8)
- ! The weekly Sabbath which falls during the seven days of Unleavened Bread
- ! The weekly Sabbath which follows the last day of the Feast of Unleavened Bread

“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 the Lord.” (Leviticus 23:15-16)

The Rabbinical Jewish community of today (as did the Pharisees) count from the first Sabbath on the above list – the first day of Unleavened Bread; this is known as “counting the *omer*.”³ This results in Shavuot falling on the same day of the Jewish calendar each year, but does not cause it to always fall on a “day after the seventh Sabbath.” Many Messianic Jewish communities (including Ohev Yisrael) follow the Sadducean practice of counting from the third Sabbath on the list – the weekly Sabbath that falls during the Feast of Unleavened Bread. We choose this way of counting so as also to comply with the additional requirement of Leviticus 23:15-16, that the fifty-day count ends on the day after a weekly Sabbath (For this to happen, the count must also have begun the day after a weekly Sabbath). By employing this method of counting, day 1 of the omer is always on *Yom HaBikurim* but, because *Yom HaBikurim* is defined relative to a weekly Sabbath, neither it nor *Shavuot* (which is defined relative to it) fall on the same calendar date of each year.⁴

I cannot now fully unpack the significance of this way of counting the *omer*, but merely tantalize you by the thought that so many occurrences are prophetically tied to *Yom HaBikurim* – Yeshua’s own resurrection being the firstfruit of all of us who would follow, and the *Shavuot*

offering is a sheaf of grain. At the end of the period (*Shavuot*), the offering is two baked loaves made with flour and leaven (processed grain).

³ An “*omer*” is a measure of barley.

⁴ According to Rabbinical teaching, *Bikurim* (day 1 of counting the omer) is always on *Nisan* 16, and *Shavuot* is always on *Sivan* 6. This can be verified by perusing the calendar pages of Arthur Spier, The Comprehensive Hebrew Calendar, 3rd revised ed., pp. 1-22, (Jerusalem / New York: Feldheim Publishers, 1986).

harvest (Pentecost) being the first time the *Ruach HaKodesh* made His appearance to indwell all men – another first fruit.

So I return to my original question: “Is *Yom HaBikurim* and all surrounding it God’s plan or a coincidence?” You decide!

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