

The following is taken from a lesson given by Don Batchelder on Dec, 27, 1998

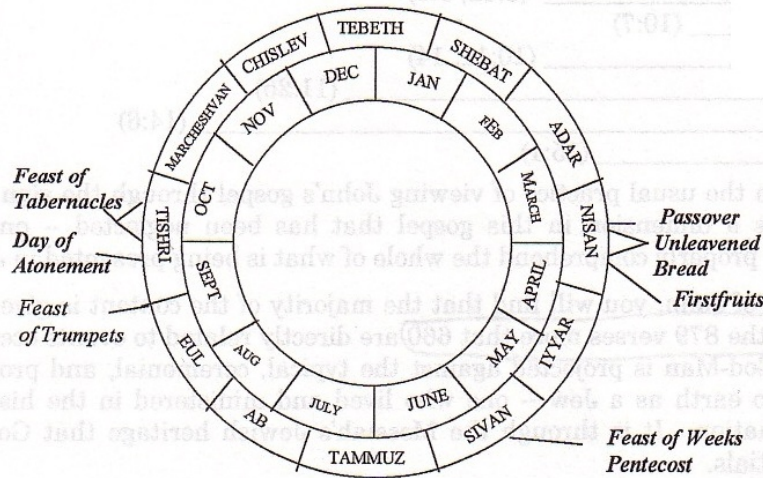
See Endnote for more info on Jewish calendar.¹

REVIEW OF THE FEASTS

1. Attendance at the feasts was commanded by God. (cf. Deut. 16:16-17)
 - All males were to appear before the Lord at least a t Passover, Pentecost, and Tabernacles
 - They were not to come empty-handed
 - Every man was to bring what he was able to give according to the blessing of God in his life.
2. The feasts were multi-faceted in meaning
 - Historical
 - Agricultural
 - Sacrificial
 - Prophetical
3. Israel was given seven feasts by Biblical decree.

The first three, Passover or *Pesach* celebrates the exodus from Egypt (Lev. 23:5), Unleavened Bread (Lev. 23:6), and Firstfruits (Lev. 23:10) all fell within days of one another in the month of Nisan (April). Nisan was the first month of the Jewish religious year. The cycle began with Passover, which was observed on the evening of the fourteenth. Unleavened Bread was celebrated on the fifteenth. Firstfruits were offered on the day after the Sabbath that followed the Passover.

Fifty days were counted from Firstfruits to the Feast of Weeks (Pentacost or *Shabuoth* which is identified as the time of the giving of the Torah on Sinai) (Lev. 23:16) fell in the month Sivan (June). Trumpets (Lev. 23:24), the Day of Atonement (Lev. 23:27), and Tabernacles or *Sukkot* celebrated the wilderness wanderings (Lev. 23:34) and closed out the national religious celebrations in Tishri (October). Sukkot is inaugurated by Rosh Hashanah, the New Year, and concludes with Yom Kippur, the Day of Atonement. From Rosh Hashanah (Trumpets) to the close of Tabernacles spanned a period of twenty-two days.



Here are the first 4 feasts:

1. Spring feasts
 - a. **Passover** – Exodus 6:6-8
 - b. **Unleavened bread** – Exodus 13:3-10.
 - c. **Firstfruits** – Lev 23:10, Commentary from a previous lesson: “...God’s plan of redemption rests on 3 very secure points of foundation. First, redemption rests upon the incarnation, innocence, humiliation and sacrifice of Jesus Christ. This is pictured by the Feast of the Passover Lamb. Second, redemption rests upon the purity of Jesus Christ. This is pictured by the Feast of Unleavened Bread. Third, redemption rests upon the resurrection of Jesus Christ. This is pictured by the Feast of Firstfruits. The Feast of Firstfruits consummates the beginning of the harvest cycle in Israel...”¹ Here’s a look at the month of Nisan.

N I S A N ¹						
1	2	3	4	5	6	7
8	9	10 Select Lamb	11 Watch	12 over	13 it.	14 Passover
15 Feast	16 of First- fruits	17 Un-	18 leaven	19 ed	20 Bread	21 ² ----->
22	23	24	25	26	27	28
29	30					

2. 50 days later.
 - a. **Feasts of weeks – Pentecost.** Exodus 23:16; 34:22. 50 days after the observance of the firstfruits but mutually inclusive with the spring feasts. It marked a celebration of the main harvest – of wheat. They were also to offer loaves of bread to show the completeness of the harvest – enough to bake bread. We’ll break off here and look at the fall feasts at a later time.

¹ From my lesson Celebrating Jehovah’s Feasts - the Feast of Firstfruits.

² Exod 12:17-20

At this point I wish to make application of these feasts to the Person and the Redemptive Plan: Jesus Christ and His Redemptive work. For this, I wish to insert excerpts from a previous lesson taught back in 1998... God's redemption for Israel not only pointed to their delivery from Egypt but also to their dependence on Him for their very existence. Whereas before they depended on economic prosperity of Egypt, not directly on the LORD, now they were to be reminded that their very existence depended on Him.³ God had promised to care for the Israelites if they would fear Him;

Leviticus 26:4-6 **Then I will give you rain in due season, and the land shall yield her increase, and the trees of the field shall yield their fruit. [5] And your threshing shall reach unto the vintage, and the vintage shall reach unto the sowing time: and ye shall eat your bread to the full, and dwell in your land safely. [6] And I will give peace in the land, and ye shall lie down, and none shall make you afraid: and I will rid evil beasts out of the land, neither shall the sword go through your land.**

The Feast of Firstfruits was especially a celebration of Jehovah's sovereignty not only over His people but over the very seasons and the fruitfulness of their land. God's redemption not only delivered His people from Egypt but it brought them into a very special relationship - that of complete dependence on His blessing in their lives. Their only condition for these blessings was that they were to fear and obey Him.

The season of Firstfruits taught another lesson - it was a transition from the dormancy - the death of winter to the vitality - the life of springtime. The very first grain to be harvested was barley. Rabbinical tradition commands that barley be planted 70 days before the harvest of the Firstfruits. That would make the planting of the barley during the winter month of Shevat (our January/February). Rabbinical Israelite observance taught the dependence upon Jehovah for a successful Firstfruit harvest by insisting on no intervention by anyone during the growing of the barley. A special place was designated for growing the barley that was to be harvested for the Temple ceremony. It was called by Jeremiah the valley of dead bodies and of ashes (Jer 31:40). This was located east of Jerusalem across the Kidron brook at the foot of the mount of Olives. There was to be no watering or fertilization by anyone - the rains from Jehovah would prosper the crop.

Leviticus 23:14 **'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. (NAS)**

This was a time of God's people reliance upon Him. No one was to partake of the new crop until the waving of the first barley crop was observed. In fact, the first of all of Israel's seven major crops belonged to Jehovah;

³ From here we pick up my previous lesson [Celebrating Jehovah's Feasts](#).

Deut. 18:4 The Firstfruit also of thy corn, of thy wine, and of thine oil, and the first of the fleece of thy sheep, shalt thou give him.

The firstborn of every living creature was His; (Exodus 22:29-30) **"You shall not delay the offering from your harvest and your vintage. The first-born of your sons you shall give to Me. [30] "You shall do the same with your oxen and with your sheep. It shall be with its mother seven days; on the eighth day you shall give it to Me.)"**⁴

The Observance of Firstfruits at the Time of Christ.

Actually, the observance began at sundown on the 15th, which was really the 16th by Jewish law. After the death of Jesus Christ there were two processions - one very noisy and the other very quiet. The quiet procession was that of a small band of mourners carrying "...the body of the Savior from the cross to the rock-hewn tomb wherein no man had yet been laid. While one turned into 'the garden' (John 20:15), perhaps to one side, the other emerged, amidst loud demonstrations, in a field across Kedron, which had been marked out for the purpose."⁵

The other procession was led by a delegation from the Sanhedrin accompanied by a noisy crowd down the Temple slope across the brook Kidron to a specially designated area where barley had been planted 70 days earlier. Earlier, bundles of barley had been carefully selected from this crop and wrapped with cords. With sickles in hand, three designated reapers positioned themselves, ready to begin the ceremony of reaping the Firstfruits. A hush would have come over the crowd as the ceremony was about to begin. Then three questions would be asked - to be answered in the affirmative by the crowd - "Has the sun set?" (Yes!) "With this sickle?" (Yes!) "Into this basket?" (Yes!). Having received the affirmative answers, the priests would have asked the same three questions as a final verification. The marked sheaves would have then been reaped until one ephah of barley, approximately $\frac{2}{3}$ bushel was harvested.

This crop was then brought back to the Temple and threshed by hand - not with oxen and sleds. The corns of barley were then parched over flame to loosen the hulls and winnowed in the wind. The remaining barley was ground and sifted until when a Temple inspector could plunge his hands into the flour and remove them without any flour adhering to his hands. This was done throughout the evening of the 16th (remember the Jewish accounting of the day).

On the morning of the 16th of Nisan the Firstfruits were presented to the Lord. About $\frac{3}{4}$ of a pint of olive oil was mixed with 5 pints of the flour along with a small amount of frankincense. This mixture became the Firstfruits offering. The priest waved it before

⁴ This is probably where the rabbinical rule that the Passover lamb was to be selected from one that was no younger than 8 days to no more than one year.

⁵ From Edersheim The Temple, page 203.

the Lord⁶ and burned a small amount upon the altar. The rest of this offering was given to the Levites.

To the Jew this was a very significant service as it marked the beginning of the harvest season and the beginning of the eating of this year's crops. This feast also marked the beginning of a very important counting of seven complete weeks (50 days) until the observance of the next Feast - the Feast of Weeks. It is important to note that to the Jew this was a national collective sigh of relief because the offering of the Firstfruits meant that Jehovah had accepted Israel's national pledge to Himself and that He would, again, provide for their national needs. Thus began the season of harvest and enjoyment of God's provision for Israel.

New Testament Application of the Feast of Firstfruits.

The presentation of Jesus Christ as firstborn (Luke 2:22-38). It is important to take note that the Feast of Firstfruits was also tied in with the obligation of every family to present their firstborn to the Lord (Num 18:16). When Joseph and Mary fulfilled this obligation two wonderful things happened while they were at the temple. First, a man, Simeon, upon whom the Holy Spirit dwelt declared that Jesus was the Christ (Luke 2:27-32)

[29] "Sovereign Lord, as you have promised, you now dismiss your servant in peace. For my eyes have seen your salvation, [31] which you have prepared in the sight of all people, [32] a light for revelation to the Gentiles and for glory to your people Israel."

Then a woman who was a prophetess, Anna, declared to all those around her who were looking for the redeemer that this child was that very person. From His very infancy Jesus Christ was declared to be the Redeemer. To this end He moved from His childhood - Jesus the Firstborn of God was to become the redeemer, the Firstfruits of those who sleep (1 Cor 15:20).

The presentation of Jesus Christ as Firstfruits (1 Cor 15:20-23).

1 Cor. 15:20-23 But now is Christ risen from the dead, and become the firstfruits of them that slept. [21] For since by man came death, by man came also the resurrection of the dead. [22] For as in Adam all die, even so in Christ shall all be made alive. [23] But every man in his own order: Christ the firstfruits; afterward they that are Christ's at his coming.

The concept of the harvest should not be dismissed when trying to understand Firstfruits. This was a very important season for the Jew for it marked the beginning of their very survival for another year. Bruce Scott in his book [The Feasts of Israel](#) connects this feast with the observance of "Shavuot" the Feast of Weeks. And rightly

⁶ A ceremony involving a back and forth movement by the priest before the Altar.

so, for they are mutually inclusive. The Feast of Weeks is designated by counting 50 days from the waving and presentation of the first reaping of the barley.

Jesus Christ has fulfilled His purpose by becoming the Redeemer of all men. He died for the sins of all, but on the third day He was raised from the dead to become the Firstfruits of all who would put their trust in Him. Thus the circle of Redemption is completed - it was through Adam that all died - the winter of sin was bound up in his original sin. But God has determined that there will be a springtime of redemption where Jesus would be the first crop of the resurrected ones - to be surely followed by the millions who will be resurrected in that day when He returns for them. "Every man in his order..." refers to the season of redemption. If it is one thing we can learn from goodness of God it is that He guarantees that the seasons will follow each other (Deut 28:12). So it is with the resurrection of Christ. His resurrection not only demonstrated that God had accepted Christ's sacrifice but also guaranteed that others would follow - this was the guarantee that Israel counted on when the feast of Firstfruits was observed - not only would the mixture of barley flour and olive oil with frankincense from the new year's crop be observed but all Israel could count on the waving of the loaves of wheat as observed in the Shavuot, and thus the rest of Israel's harvest.

A curious encounter in the garden (John 20:15-17). "Jesus saith unto her, Woman, why weepest thou? whom seekest thou? She, supposing him to be the gardener, saith unto him, Sir, if thou have borne him hence, tell me where thou hast laid him, and I will take him away. [16] Jesus saith unto her, Mary. She turned herself, and saith unto him, Rabboni; which is to say, Master. [17] Jesus saith unto her, Touch me not; for I am not yet ascended to my Father: but go to my brethren, and say unto them, I ascend unto my Father, and your Father; and to my God, and your God."

There are many lessons to be drawn from this encounter - however, the one I wish to emphasize is this one. A question - why was Jesus so concerned that Mary not touch Him because He had not yet ascended to the Father? The answer is brought out by John Ritchie in his book Feasts of Jehovah;

"The Lord Jesus honoured the day of the killing of the paschal lamb, by presenting Himself to God in death, 'a Lamb without blemish and without spot.' He honoured the day of the waving of the sheaf of first-fruits, by presenting Himself to God as the First-born from among the dead. Israel's priest no doubt waved the sheaf in empty form, before a rent veil in the temple at Jerusalem, but outside the city's gates, God had reaped the Great Wave-sheaf from Joseph's tomb early that same morning. The Substance had come, the shadow had passed away."⁷

The strong suggestion in our passage here is that He had not yet presented Himself to the Father as *the* Wave-Offering, the Firstfruits of millions to yet come.

The wonderful harvest of redemption is so beautifully presented in this feast. The

⁷ Feasts of Jehovah, by John Ritchie, Page 41.

marvelous fact is that you and I are looking forward not only to the fulfillment of our salvation by the sacrifice of the Paschal Lamb, Jesus Christ, but also, He is our Firstfruits guaranteeing our salvation from this sinful world at the Rapture.

We'll continue next time with this wonderful outline (if I can put it this way) of God's Plan of Redemption as presented in the Jewish Feasts.

Next time: the Feast of Shavuot – the feast of Pentecost. The Great harvest!

1. Endnote follows:

The following list of the Jewish calendar is based on the *Festive cycle* as established in Exod 12:2; 13:4.

I.-- NISAN (knee-sawn)

Spring Equinox, end of march or beginning of April

Days

- 1 New Moon.
- 14 Exod 12:2; 13:4; Deut 16:1, 2. The preparation for the Passover and the Paschal Sacrifice.
- 15 First day of the Feast of Unleavened bread.
- 16 Lev 23:10, 11. Waving of the first ripe Omer (Firstfruits).
- 21 Close of Passover.

II.-- IYAR (ee-arrh)

Days

- 1 New Moon.
- 15 'Second' or 'Little' Passover.
- 18 Lag-le-Omer, or the 33rd day in Omer, *i.e.* from the presentation of the first ripe sheaf offered on the second day of the Passover, or 15th of Nisan.

III. --- SIVAN (sieve-an)

Days

- 1. New Moon.
- 6 Lev 16:15, 16. Deut 16:3, 4; Exod 16:9-12. Feast of Pentecost, or of Weeks -- 7 weeks, or 50 days after the beginning of the Passover, when the two loaves of the first ripe wheat were 'waved.'

IV. --- TAMMUZ (taa-mooz)

Days

- 1. New Moon.

V. --- AV (aahhv)

Days

1. New Moon

VI. --- ELUL (el-ool)

Days

1. New Moon

VII. --- TISHRI (tishr're)
Beginning of Civil Year

Days

- 1 Lev 23:24; Num 29:1. New Year's Feast. Day one = The Feast of Trumpets, the only feast that is observed on the first day of the month.
- 2 Continuation of New Year's Feast.
- 10 Lev 23:26-32. Day of Atonement; Great Fast.
- 15 Lev 23:33-43. Commencement of Feast of Tabernacles.
- 21 Conclusion of Feast of Tabernacles.