

The Tabernacle

Feast of Firstfruits

Introduction

- References: Leviticus 23:9-14
- This might be the least studied or emphasized of the main feasts of Israel, likely because it gets heaped into Passover and the Feast of Unleavened Bread.
- Was celebrated on “the morrow after the sabbath” – Leviticus 23:11
 - According to Josephus and other authorities, this was the 16th of Nisan, the day after Passover and the second day of the Feast of Unleavened Bread.
 - There is a minority that insist the sabbath is instead the weekly sabbath that falls in the midst of the Feast of Unleavened Bread.
- This Feast celebrated the bounty of God’s provision.
- It marked the beginning of the grain harvest each Spring
 - The barley harvest was around April and the wheat harvest around May.

Notes on Firstfruits

- The Feast of Firstfruits is but one part of a larger system of firstfruit offerings.
- It is a part of a larger principle that the “firsts”, fruit or born, are God’s – Exodus 13:12-15, Numbers 18:17
- There are special offerings made of the first harvest of the “Seven Species” - Deuteronomy 26:1-11
 - The “Seven Species” are found in Deuteronomy 8:8 and the Jews identify them as: wheat, barley, grapes, figs, pomegranates, olives (for oil), and dates (for date honey, although bee honey may have been meant originally).
 - These were brought in baskets and presented at the Tabernacle/Temple between First Fruits and Pentecost.

The Feast of Firstfruits

- Was to be celebrated after the Israelites arrived in the Promised Land and not while in wilderness journey – Leviticus 23:10
 - Although not directly mentioned, its first observance is in Joshua 5:10-12.
- No grain was harvested or eaten until this feast took place – Leviticus 23:14
- Preparing the Wave Offering (details from Edersheim’s *The Temple*):
 - A portion of a barley field had been specially designated and marked by priests.
 - It was harvested at dusk on the evening before it was offered.
 - One *ephah* (about 20 quarts) total was harvested
 - Because the grain was green, they had to be parched – Leviticus 2:14
 - The barley is made into fine flour, and one *omer* taken for the offering.

- The flour for the offering was mixed with $\frac{3}{4}$ pint of oil and a handful of incense
- The priest waved the meal offering from side to side, then a handful is removed and burned on the Brazen Altar.
- A special burnt offering was made of a lamb with the corresponding meal and drink offerings – Leviticus 23:12-13

Later Developments

- With the destruction of the Temple and the ongoing *Diaspora*, the Jews have no longer been able to properly observe this feast and have downplayed its observance.
- Its study is largely absorbed into either Passover, Pentecost, or the various firstfruits offerings that were brought during those times of harvest (see Deuteronomy 26:1-11)

Truths from the Tabernacle

- Feast of Firstfruits pictures Christ as our Life-giver (John 1:4, 14:6) and Provider (Romans 8:32).
- Paul points to Christ as the “firstfruits” of resurrection – I Corinthians 15:20-23
 - Christ rose first from the dead, a promise and sign that others will do so also – Acts 26:23, Romans 8:11, Colossians 1:18, Revelation 1:5
 - This would be further emphasized if the timing of this feast were the day after the weekly sabbath, the first day of the week. Thus, it would coincide with Christ’s Resurrection.
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