

A Short Explanation of Yom HaBikkurim

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Today, we find ourselves assembled on *Yom HaBikkurim* or “the day of Firstfruits.” *Bikkurim* is closely associated in the Bible with Passover, the seven-day Feast of Unleavened Bread, and another firstfruits day, the spring harvest celebration of *Shavuot*. *Bikkurim* is described and commanded in Leviticus 23:5-16 this way:

"In the first month, on the fourteenth day of the month, between sundown and complete darkness, comes *Pesach* for *ADONAI*. On the fifteenth day of the same month is the festival of *matzah*; for seven days you are to eat *matzah*. On the first day you are to have a holy convocation; don't do any kind of ordinary work. Bring an offering made by fire to *ADONAI* for seven days. On the seventh day is a holy convocation; do not do any kind of ordinary work.' *ADONAI* said to Moshe, "Tell the people of Isra'el, 'After you enter the land I am giving you and harvest its ripe crops, you are to bring a sheaf of the firstfruits of your harvest to the *cohen*. He is to wave the sheaf before *ADONAI*, so that you will be accepted; the *cohen* is to wave it on the day after the *Shabbat*. On the day that you wave the sheaf, you are to offer a male lamb without defect, in its first year, as a burnt offering for *ADONAI*. Its grain offering is to be one gallon of fine flour mixed with olive oil, an offering made by fire to *ADONAI* as a fragrant aroma; its drink offering is to be of wine, one quart. You are not to eat bread, dried grain or fresh grain until the day you bring the offering for your God; this is a permanent regulation through all your generations, no matter where you live. From the day after the day of rest- that is, from the day you bring the sheaf for waving- you are to count seven full weeks, until the day after the seventh week; you are to count fifty days; and then you are to present a new grain offering to *ADONAI*."

We no longer have the Temple in which we can bring our “firstfruit” offering, but the day of *Bikkurim* has far from lost its significance. First, it is likely that it is the very day that Yeshua was resurrected from the dead following His crucifixion. Second, it is the day from which we begin “counting the *omer*” to *Shavuot*, when the Holy Spirit first made Himself available to all on earth who would receive Him.

We are holding this service in the late afternoon hours in order to capture both *Yom HaBikkurim* and the seventh day of Unleavened Bread in a single holy convocation. I will not go into this at length right now, but don't be confused by there being a different method of counting the *omer* that is widely used by Judaism today. The dispute as to the correct way to count began with the Pharisees and Sadducees and we, at Ohev Yisrael, use the Sadducean count because it more closely conforms to Scripture. With the other method, 50 days does not always include seven weekly Sabbaths whereas, with the Sadducean method, it does. Not only that, but with the Sadducean method of counting, *Yom HaBikkurim* always falls on the first day of the week, which is consistent with when (according to Scripture) Yeshua was resurrected from the tomb. We read in Matthew 28:1-10:

"After *Shabbat*, as the next day was dawning, Miryam of Magdala and the other Miryam went to see the grave. Suddenly there was a violent earthquake, for an angel of *ADONAI* came down from heaven, rolled away the stone and sat on it.

His appearance was like lightning, and his clothes were as white as snow. The guards were so terrified at him that they trembled and became like dead men. But the angel said to the women, "Don't be afraid. I know you are looking for Yeshua, who was executed on the stake. He is not here, because he has been raised- just as he said! Come and look at the place where he lay.

Then go quickly and tell the *talmidim*, 'He has been raised from the dead, and now he is going to the Galil ahead of you. You will see him there.' Now I have told you." So they left the tomb quickly, frightened yet filled with joy; and they ran to give the news to his *talmidim*. Suddenly Yeshua met them and said, "*Shalom!*" They came up and took hold of his feet as they fell down in front of him. Then Yeshua said to them, 'Don't be afraid! Go and tell my brothers to go to the Galil, and they will see me there.'"

This is the account of Yeshua's resurrection, but what has it to do with Firstfruits other than that He was resurrected on the first day of the week? 1 Corinthians 15:20-23 shows that Yeshua is the firstfruits of our own hoped-for resurrection – the resurrection of all who are born again in Him:

"But the fact is that the Messiah *has* been raised from the dead, the firstfruits of those who have died. For since death came through a man, also the resurrection of the dead has come through a man. For just as in connection with Adam all die, so in connection with the Messiah all will be made alive. But each in his own order: the Messiah is the firstfruits; then those who belong to the Messiah, at the time of his coming;"

Also, in Romans 8:22-23, we read:

"We know that until now, the whole creation has been groaning as with the pains of childbirth; and not only it, but we ourselves, who have the firstfruits of the Spirit, groan inwardly as we continue waiting eagerly to be made sons- that is, to have our whole bodies redeemed and set free."

So today, *Yom HaBikkurim*, is "resurrection day" and "day one" of our fifty-day "count of the *omer*" to *Shavuot*. This year let us not only reflect on Yeshua's firstfruits, but also on our own for if we "have the firstfruits of the Spirit," we have things of value to impart to the world, which are our visible lives modeled after Yeshua's. So, just as we commemorate Yeshua's resurrection today, let us also have faith for our own, when God will one day receive us in and say to us: "Well done, good and faithful servants."