

# DOES SCRIPTURE OR TRADITION START THE OMER COUNT?

As Torah Observant Believers in Yeshua, we adhere to the Aviv (Scriptural) Calendar. We are also committed to teaching and observing the Scriptural Omer Count, with the start date based on the timing of Yeshua's death, resurrection and ascension as they occurred in the year 30 CE and is revealed through the New Covenant Scriptures.

## Omer Count During the Levitical Era

On the day of Bikkurim the Cohen Gadol would wave a sheaf of barley each year, during the Levitical Era, which lasted from Israel's entry into the land until the destruction of the First Temple. On the day after the first weekly Shabbat following Pesach. That practice meant that the observance always fell on a Sunday and more particularly the 18<sup>th</sup> day of Aviv, which aligned perfectly with Vayikra (Leviticus) 23:11. *(The significance of the 'Aviv Calendar is details at the end of this paper).*

## Calendar Changes and Their Impact

In my book 'Calendar Chaos' I cited scientific and cultural sources to explain how the sun receded ten intervals in one day during King Hezekiah's reign (2 Kings 20:8-11). That event altered the number of days in each month from 28 to 29.5 and over the period that followed, the number of days gradually extended from 336 to 360 and to 365.25 days. The outcome of that progressive change meant the day of the week on which Pesach, Matzah and Bikkurim occurred, no longer fell on the same day of the week in each consecutive year. That change required a new method for determining the day of Bikkurim in each subsequent year.

## Developments During the Babylonian Exile

During the 70-year Babylonian Exile, Israel's sages confronted the ongoing changes in the length of the year. Scripture notes these changes, with Dani'el referencing a 360-day year and Ezekei'el 8:14-16 recounting how YHVH rebuked the elders for seeking the location of the spring and autumn equinoxes, which had progressively altered prior to the First Temple's destruction.

## Determining Bikkurim in the First Century

By the first century CE, after returning from exile, Y'udah faced a continuing dilemma in selecting the correct day of the week for Bikkurim which saw the start of the Omer Count. Three sects—the P'rushim (Pharisees), Tz'dukim (Sadducees), and the Qumran Community—each followed their own calendar, leading to disagreements about the timing of Bikkurim.

## Temple Practice and Scriptural Timing

The Tz'dukim as cohanim controlled Temple activities and set the date for the observance of Bikkurim. They adopted the Sunday following the first weekly Shabbat after Pesach, maintaining fidelity to Vayikra 23:15, with that practice reflected in the Gospel of Yochanan (John 5:1-16), when Yeshua was present in Jerusalem for Shavuot in 29 CE. He healed a man on Shabbat then encounters the same man during the Shavuot celebration, which took place the following day - Sunday.

### **Calendar Synchronization in 30 CE**

In 30 CE, the Aviv and Julian Calendars aligned perfectly, a rare occurrence demonstrating the precision of Scripture. Hence, Yeshua's death on Wednesday, the 14<sup>th</sup> of Aviv, fulfilling prophecies, including Dani'el 9:26. In this modern age the most significant calendar match occurred in 2017, when the days of the week on both the Aviv and Gregorian Calendars were in complete harmony.

### **Scriptural Events and their Chronology**

Comparing the days and dates in both the Aviv and Julian Calendars in 30 CE, the first four Mo'adim in Vayikra Chapter 23 aligned precisely. For example, the 10<sup>th</sup> Aviv (1<sup>st</sup> April) was Shabbat Hagadol, the day Yeshua entered Jerusalem on a donkey. The 14<sup>th</sup> of Aviv (5<sup>th</sup> April) fell on Wednesday, marking Pesach and Yeshua's death. The 15<sup>th</sup> of Aviv (6<sup>th</sup> April) was Thursday, the first day of Matzah a holy convocation, with the 16<sup>th</sup> of Aviv (7<sup>th</sup> April) as Friday, when Yeshua remained in the tomb. Then on the 17<sup>th</sup> of Aviv (8<sup>th</sup> April) the weekly Shabbat, which occurred during Matzah saw Yeshua resurrected late that afternoon fulfilling the Sign of Yonah—three days and three nights in the tomb. (See *the Julian Calendar for April 30 CE* below).

### **Chronology of Yeshua's Time in the Tomb**

Yeshua's time in the tomb was: Wednesday night to Thursday morning the first night, Thursday morning to Thursday evening the first day, Thursday evening to Friday morning the second night, Friday morning to Friday evening the second day, Friday evening to Saturday morning the third night, with resurrection occurring late Saturday afternoon before the third day ended.

### **Bikkurim and Yeshua's Ascension**

Miryam's encounter with Yeshua in the garden on Sunday morning, took place as recorded in Yochanan 20:17, where he said:- "*Stop holding onto me, because I haven't yet gone back to the Father.*" Later that afternoon, he appeared to two disciples on the road to Amma'us and then to the others in the Upper Room in the evening (Luke 24:13-39). All these events happened on the 18<sup>th</sup> of Aviv (9<sup>th</sup> April) 30 CE, the day of Bikkurim in that year.

### **Sectarian Complications and Traditional Justifications**

Because the Tz'dukim followed the Aviv Calendar in the first century, Yeshua fulfilled Vayikra 23:15 precisely by the will of his Father. As Torah Observant followers of Yeshua, we question why Bikkurim would be observed on any day other than the 18<sup>th</sup> of Aviv.

The timing adopted by the Tz'dukim represented their best effort to match the commands given in Vayikra Chapter 23, even though the duration of the lunar and solar cycles had changed before and during the Babylonian Exile, the timing of the scripture narrative for the observance of each Mo'ed remained constant until the Second Temple's destruction in 70 CE. After that, the Tz'dukim ceased to exist, so the P'rushim took advantage of the changed situation and began establishing their own method for determining the start of the Omer Count.

Following the Second Temple's destruction, the P'rushim applied their own approach to the Omer Count based on Y'hoshua (Joshua) 5:10-11. But those verses describe how the Israelites ate the produce of the land the day after their first Pesach observance in Eretz Yisra'el, with the narrative in Y'hoshua making no reference the Omer Count. Isra'el gleaned the wild grain on the 16<sup>th</sup> of Aviv and the next day YHVH brought an end to the provision of Mana of Heaven.

Selection of the 16<sup>th</sup> of Aviv as Bikkurim does not align with Vayikra 23:11, which specifies waving the sheaf "*on the day after the weekly Shabbat.*" However, Rabbinic tradition justified their choice of the first day of Matzah as being the day of Bikkurim, by referring to that day as a 'Shabbaton' in spite of there being no scriptural justification for the use of that term. As Pesach falls on the 14<sup>th</sup> of Aviv, the first day of Matzah on the 15<sup>th</sup> of Aviv, becomes a Mikra-Kodesh (holy convocation). There is no scriptural basis for calling that first day of Matzah a Shabbaton.

Further, the Rabbis also renamed the seven days of Matzah as 'days of Pesach' using that language to justify the calling of 15<sup>th</sup> of Aviv a Shabbaton. Hence, for them the 16<sup>th</sup> became the day after the Shabbaton and the start of the Omer Count. However, that reasoning has no basis in Scripture, because in Vayikra 23:5-6 clearly distinguishes Pesach and Matzah as separate Mo'adim. By reclassifying the days of Matzah as a continuation of Pesach was their way of justifying the 16<sup>th</sup> of Nisan (Aviv), as being the start of the Omer Count, which constituted a misuse of Scripture in favour of tradition.

### **Only One Master!**

In 30 CE, Yeshua ascended into the presence of his Father as the Cohen HaGadol (Great High Priest) of the Kingdom of Heaven, thereby fulfilling the New Covenant expression of Bikkurim. By entering his Father's presence, Yeshua received all authority in heaven and on earth and upon his return that same day he confirmed his earlier ratification of the New Covenant. As Talmidim of Yeshua, we fully acknowledge his actions in 30 CE and guided by the Ruach HaKodesh we identify with Yeshua. Hence, we consider the Rabbinical tradition of observing Bikkurim on the 16<sup>th</sup> of Nisan as incorrect.

It is a serious matter to embrace man-made teachings in place of the actions and teachings of Yeshua. If we reject the true relationship between Bikkurim and the weekly Shabbat as stated in Vayikra Chapter 23 and as fulfilled by Yeshua in 30 CE, it would be similar to rejecting Shabbat in favour of Sunday. Either action constitutes a total rejection of Yeshua as our Master.

### **Conclusion**

As Talmidim of Yeshua, we follow the pattern set by our Master and observe Bikkurim on the 18<sup>th</sup> day of Aviv, acknowledging that it was on that day he ascended to the presence of his Father in Heaven. Furthermore, we recognize God's Sovereign Plan is a progressive revelation that has exposed through the New Covenant Scriptures (NT), as the ultimate fulfillment of the Torah.

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## Julian Calendar for April 30 CE (Israel)

April						
Sun	Mon	Tue	Wed	Thu	Fri	Sat
						1 Nisan 10
2 Nisan 11	3 Nisan 12	4 Nisan 13	5 Nisan 14	6 Nisan 15	7 Nisan 16	8 Nisan 17
9 Nisan 18	10 Nisan 19	11 Nisan 20	12 Nisan 21	13 Nisan 22	14 Nisan 23	15 Nisan 24
16 Nisan 25	17 Nisan 26	18 Nisan 27	19 Nisan 28	20 Nisan 29	21 Nisan 30	22 Iyar 1
23 Iyar 2	24 Iyar 3	25 Iyar 4	26 Iyar 5	27 Iyar 6	28 Iyar 7	29 Iyar 8
30 Iyar 9						
Phases of the Moon: 7:☉ 13:☾ 21:☀ 29:☾						

Sourced from - <https://www.timeanddate.com/>

### THE ORIGIN OF THIS AVIV (SCRIPTURAL) CALENDAR

Moshe was told that the month of Aviv was to be the first month of their year, in Sh'mot (Exodus) 12:1-2 - *"YHVH spoke to Moshe and Aharon in the land of Egypt; and said, "You are to begin your calendar with this month; it will be the first month of the year for you.* This instruction was given to Moshe while still in Egypt.

When the barley became Aviv, they still had to determine on which actual day the month would begin. Moshe was told in Sh'mot 12:18 - *"From the evening of the fourteenth day of the first month until the evening of the twenty-first day, you are to eat matzah."* From this verse we can see that the month of Aviv began fourteen days before Pesach. By observing the evening sky, between the setting of the sun and the setting of the moon, Isra'el were able to see the first sliver of the waxing moon close to the western horizon. Then fourteen days later the moon was full moon on the night of Pesach, the night before Isra'el departed from Egypt. Hence, by observing that first sliver of the setting moon, at the time when the barley was turning yellow, Isra'el knew they had reached the beginning of the new year - the month of Aviv. That is how Isra'el while in the Land of Promise, were able to determine the beginning of each new year.

Thanks to the internet, it is now possible for Torah observant people both in the Land and throughout the world, to know exactly when both the barley and the moon have been sighted together. More details are available on our webpage at - [www.messianic.org.nz](http://www.messianic.org.nz) or by emailing us at - [talmidimnz@gmail.com](mailto:talmidimnz@gmail.com)