



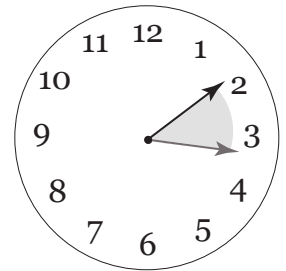
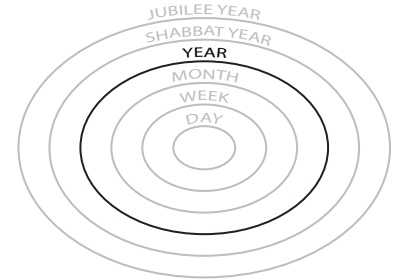
Firstfruits and the Counting from the Omer

I. Introduction

- a. Review
 - i. Annual feasts, fasts and appointed times
 - ii. Pesach (Passover) - evening of the 14th day of the 1st month (Nisan, Aviv)
 - iii. The Feast of Matzah
 1. Begins the day after the Passover (15th)
 2. Lasts for seven days (21st day of 1st month)
 3. 1st and 7th days not shabbats, but holy convocations and no-work days
 4. Primary feature: abstaining from leaven, eating matzah
 5. Annual reminder that Adonai is faithful to bring His people out of bondage and slavery; matzah symbol of freedom from sin
- b. Shavuot
 - i. The next feast on the calendar
 - ii. The problem: there is dispute over what the Scriptures say about when Shavuot is to be observed
 - iii. Connecting season of mo'adiym: counting from the omer
 - iv. Determining when the counting from the omer begins is crucial, because the celebration of Shavuot depends on it
- c. This session: understanding "firstfruits" and studying out when to begin the counting from the omer

II. Firstfruits

- a. The day that begins the counting from the omer commonly called "Firstfruits"—misnomer
- b. Leviticus 23:10, "When you enter the land... and reap its harvest, then you shall bring in the sheaf of the first fruits of your harvest..."
- c. Inclination of Jewish roots-ers and Messianics to link this day to the resurrection of Yeshua
 - i. 1Corinthians 15:20, "But now Messiah has been raised from the dead, the first fruits of those who are asleep."
 - ii. Alleges that Yeshua fulfilled "firstfruits" through his resurrection on that day in that particular year.
- d. Problem with this understanding: nowhere does it say "firstfruits"
 - i. יוֹם הַבִּכּוּרִים, Yom HaBikuriym (Numbers 28:6) Day of the Firstfruits
 1. 'Also on the day of the first fruits, when you present a new grain offering to the LORD in your [Feast of] Weeks (שָׁבֻעוֹתֵיכֶם, *Shavuoteichem*)... have a holy convocation... do no... work.
 2. Clearly speaking of Shavuot
 - ii. Leviticus 23:10: רֵאשִׁית, *reshiyt*—"beginning"
 - iii. Other explicit "firstfruits" offerings—this was not one of them
- e. Yeshua did not fulfill "Firstfruits" by being resurrected on the "day of Firstfruits"—the connection is drawn without consulting the Hebrew



II. The Ancient Dispute

- Leviticus 23:9-16
- In this passage, to what is “shabbat” referring?

THE DAY AFTER THE “SHABBAT”

“SUNDAY”		IS THIS THE SHABBAT?				WEEKLY SHABBAT
		PASSOVER (NISAN 14) Random Day of Week	1st DAY OF MATZAH (NISAN 15)	2nd DAY OF MATZAH PHARISEES (TRAD.)	3rd DAY OF MATZAH	4th DAY OF MATZAH
5th DAY OF MATZAH BOETHUSIANS/ SADDUCEES/ KARAITES	6th DAY OF MATZAH	7th DAY OF MATZAH	FALASHAS (BETA ISRAEL)		IS THIS THE SHABBAT?	
ESSENES		IS THIS THE SHABBAT?				IS THIS THE SHABBAT?

- The Pharisaic View
 - Interprets “shabbat” as the 1st day of Matzah/Passover
 - In Judaism, all holy days are “shabbats”
 - Begin counting on the 2nd day of Matzah, 16th of Nisan/Aviv
 - Each year, day of the week changes, but not calendar date
 - Modern Judaism holds to this view
- Sadducean/Boethusian/Karaite View
 - Interprets “shabbat” as the 7th-day Shabbat during the week of Matzah
 - Begin counting on the “Sunday” during the week of Matzah
 - Each year, the calendar date changes, but not the day of the week
 - Messianics tend to like this view because Yeshua was resurrected on the “Sunday” during the week of Matzah (“Easter” connection)
- Falasha/Beta Israel (Ethiopian Jews) View
 - Interprets “shabbat” as the 7th day of the feast of Matzah
 - If it’s true that all holy days are “shabbats” (as Judaism holds), context makes a stronger case for the 7th day of Matzah
 - Begin counting on the 22nd day of Nisan/Aviv
 - Each year, day of the week changes, but not calendar date
- Essene View
 - Interprets “shabbat” as the 7th-day Shabbat after the week of Matzah
 - Begin counting on the “Sunday” after the week of Matzah
 - Each year, the calendar date changes, but not the day of the week
 - Ancient view; nobody holds this view today

III. Pharisaic and Sadducean View—Contradiction with Scripture

- Leviticus 23:14
- Bread: לֶחֶם, *lechem*
 - Does “bread” include matzah?
 - Exodus 29:2, וְלֶחֶם מִצּוֹת, *v’lechem matzot* (and unleavened bread)
- How to reconcile eating matzah for seven days (v.6) and not eating bread until the sheaf offering (v.14)?

- d. As long as there is an overlap between the week of Matzah and the beginning of the counting from the omer, there is a contradiction
- e. The answer is in figuring out what is meant by “shabbat”

IV. “Shabbat” in Leviticus

- a. Leviticus 23:3 - clearly, the seventh-day
 - i. שַׁבַּת שַׁבָּתוֹן, *shabbat shabaton* - a “stop” for complete rest
 - ii. arguably, a “day” of rest
- b. Leviticus 23:32 - Yom Kippur
 - i. שַׁבַּת שַׁבָּתוֹן, *shabbat shabaton*
 - ii. same as 7th day Shabbat - a “day”
- c. Leviticus 25:1-5
 - i. שַׁבַּת שַׁבָּתוֹן, *shabbat shabaton*
 - ii. same as 7th day Shabbat and Yom Kippur
 - iii. Referring to an entire year
- d. Conclusion: “shabbat” is not a reference to time (i.e. day), but to the quality of time, i.e. stopping, ceasing, resting

V. A Word from Deuteronomy 16

- a. Verses 8-10, “Six days you shall eat matzah, and on the seventh day there shall be a solemn assembly to Adonai your God; you shall do no work on it. You shall count seven weeks for yourself; you shall begin to count seven weeks from the time you begin to put the sickle to the standing grain. Then you shall celebrate the Feast of Shavuot...”
- b. Very clear narrative: 6 days... the seventh day... count seven weeks... Shavuot
- c. Important point: Shavuot = weeks; culmination of the counting
- d. No overlap whatsoever between Matzah and the weeks of counting; a clue for how to interpret Lev 23
- e. Now ready to dissect Lev 23 and understand “shabbat” in context

VI. Determining When to Begin the Counting

- a. Explanation of Leviticus 23 graphic—demonstrates orderly narrative
- b. Verse 15: “seven full weeks”
 - i. weeks = שַׁבָּתוֹת, *shabatot* (or “sabbaths”)
 - ii. NIV, JPS OT, JPS Tanakh (CJB), LXX translate it as “weeks”
 - iii. Conclusion: not unreasonable translation, especially in light of De.16
- c. If שַׁבָּתוֹת, *shabatot* in vs. 15 can be translated “weeks,” why can’t shabbat in verse 11 be translated “week”?
- d. What is a “week”? A period of seven days.
- e. In the context of vss. 6-15, is there any mention of a seven day period?
- f. Could “the day after the Sabbath” be understood as “the day after the week [of Matzah]”?
 - i. What about the Feast of Matzah could characterize it as a “shabbat”?
 - ii. “Shabbat” means “stop” or “cease”
 - iii. Do we “stop” or “cease” from anything during the week of Matzah?
- g. This reckoning agrees with the Falasha view, though arrived at by different understanding (Why don’t others make this connection? IMO, tunnel vision re: every holy day is a “shabbat,” or shabbat being a day)
- f. Solves “overlap” (vs 14); bread from the new grain may be eaten
- h. Harmonizes perfectly with Deuteronomy 16.

- i. Doesn't the Spirit being poured out on Shavuot affect the reckoning?
 - i. Accepted calendar of Yeshua's day: Pharisaic
 - ii. Doesn't the Spirit approve of the Pharisaic reckoning?
 - iii. Couldn't Adonai have chosen to pour out His Spirit on that day, whether their timing was right or not? This was the day when most Jews would be gathered in Jerusalem at the same time, whether it was the right day or not.
 - iv. Next session: Shavuot; giving of Torah did not fall on Shavuot, contrary to traditional Jewish teaching

VII. Spiritual Significance

- a. Non-overlapping narrative
 - i. No confusion in spiritual themes; instead, sequence that makes sense
 - 1. Feast of Matzah: Freedom/Deliverance from sin
 - 2. Seven Counting Weeks: Maturity, growth and harvest
 - ii. עֶמֶר, omer = sheaf
 - iii. From ראשית, *reshiyt*, the beginning of the barley crop (when the sickle is put to the standing grain (De. 16)
 - 1. vs. 11 - waved by the priest on our behalf so that it will be accepted; acceptance of the beginning of the harvest means favor/blessing for the entire harvest (implication for future crops; no danger of losing current crop, etc.)
 - 2. We are asking Adonai to bless and multiply our crops—to bring them to maturity (wheat crop still maturing)
- b. Meaning
 - i. Following a week of “unleavenedness”—a time to purposefully practice sinlessness
 - ii. Counting from the omer: to grow toward maturity in that context
 - iii. After His resurrection, Yeshua remained with the disciples for 40 days—during the omer (Acts 1:3, “...over a period of 40 days and speaking of the things concerning the kingdom of God.”)
 - iv. Another theme: waiting, patience (Acts 1:4, “...He commanded them not to leave Jerusalem, but to wait for what the Father had promised”); we need to wait for the harvest while we grow and mature; not getting ahead of God or lagging behind

VIII. Conclusion

- a. Ancient controversy over the issue
- b. Yeshua does not fulfill “firstfruits,” but fulfills the period of counting by His continuing to impart the kingdom of God to His disciples
- c. Since there is no definitive proof, we cannot condemn the following of alternative calendars
 - i. Should respect local Messianic Jewish community practices
 - ii. After years of studying this, I remain convinced of the After Matzah View, and follow this reckoning with my family (though I remain open to alternate points of view)
- d. Most important of all: clear, easy-to-follow spiritual application