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Resheet (First Fruits)

Leviticus 23: 9-14

Resheet DIG: What day was the resurrection of Messiah on? Do you think that happened by chance? Why? Why not? Describe the various aspects of your favorite religious festival. What do you see as its purpose? Where does the Bible actually describe the resurrection?

REFLECT: Do you give proper thanksgiving and honor to your bountiful King before enjoying His generous provisions? Why? Why not? If not, when can you start? What do you see as the purpose of your favorite religious festival? What does it teach you about your faith?

The Feast of First Fruits was fulfilled by the resurrection of Messiah to life.



During **the seven days** that **the Israelites** ate **unleavened bread** (to see link click [Dz - Hag ha'Matzot](#)), a **sheaf** (Hebrew: *omer*) of the first **grain harvested** was brought to **ADONAI**. This must have brought a new element of excitement into the week's observance; instead of looking back to **their** deliverance from bondage, **the people** now looked forward in confidence and with gratitude to a full **harvest** to follow.⁴³⁵ Since it comes on the heels of the major **festival** of **Passover/Unleavened Bread**, **Resheet** is often overlooked. We shall see, however, that this biblical **holy day** observance should be one of the most important of all **the festivals** for Messianic Jews and Gentiles (see a video presentation of **Resheet** by clicking [here](#)).

However minor it is as a festival, **the Omer** has major Messianic implications. On the same day that **the Master** was tried before the priests and judges of the Great Sanhedrin (see the commentary on **The Life of Christ Lg - The Great Sanhedrin**), its members were sent out to a **barley** field not far from Jerusalem. On the same day our **Lord** was bound and crucified, the members of the Great Sanhedrin bound up the standing **barley** into bundles while it was still attached to the ground so that it could be easier to reap.

After the sun had set and the Sabbath was over, just hours before **the Master** rose from **His** tomb, **the barley** was reaped and collected into **baskets** (see **The Jewish Observance** below). That night **the baskets** of **grain** were carried to **Jerusalem**. They were delivered to the priesthood in the Temple. **The baskets** contained more than enough **grain** to make up a full **sheaf's** worth: enough to fulfill the mandate of **Leviticus**, "**Tell the people of Isra'el, 'After you enter the Land I am giving you and harvest its ripe crops, you are to bring an omer of the firstfruits of your harvest to the priest' (Leviticus 23:10).'**"

According to **the Torah**, no **grain** or produce from the new year's crops could be used or eaten until the first **omer of grain** was harvested and brought to **the Temple**. **Barley** is the first crop to ripen in **Isra'el**, so **the omer** was always a **barley sheaf**. The commandment of **the barley omer** served to remind **Isra'el** that **the Land** and its produce belonged first to **God**. The produce of **the Land** could not be enjoyed until **God** had received **His** due. Until **the barley omer** was harvested and offered at **the Temple**, the rest of the crops were not deemed kosher. So it was that very night, while **the Master** still lay in the tomb, that **the priests in the Temple** threshed, roasted and ground **the barley omer** into flour. All night **they** prepared it. Then, while our **Lord** passed those silent hours before **His** awakening, **the priests** refined the freshly milled flour by sifting it through thirteen sieves.

Before **the flour** was ready for the bronze altar in the Temple courtyard, the women had already discovered the empty tomb and reported it to the apostles. And while the apostles were trying to imagine what had become of **the Master's** body, **the priesthood** was busy mixing **the barley flour** with oil and frankincense to make it into a **bread** offering. As Mary Magdalene encountered the risen **Messiah** in the garden, **the High Priest** was waving the dough before **ADONAI** as a wave offering. Then **He** offered a memorial portion on the bronze altar. The remainder of the dough was baked into **loaves of unleavened bread** to be **waved** before **the LORD**, then shared among the priesthood.

The meaning of this **holy day** is understood in its name **Resheet**, which literally means *the beginning* of the spring **harvest**. It speaks of the earliest **harvest** that takes place in

Isra'el, the barley harvest. Like the fall **holy day** of **Sukkot (Booths)**, this festival emphasizes the agrarian culture of the ancient Middle East.

The blessing of **the Land** was linked to this festival. **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 omer of the First Fruits of your harvest (Hebrew: *Resheet Ketzirchem*) to the priest (23:9-10). The First Fruits of the Land were to be offered to the LORD, then they could use the rest. This is the principle of tithing (see the commentary on [The Life of Christ Do - When You Give to the Needy, Do Not Do It to be Honored by Others: seven principles of scriptural giving](#)). ADONAI was symbolically offering His First Fruit of Yeshua when He was resurrected, and thus, the people were to do the same with their barley harvest. This was not obvious in this verse, but there were many hints in the next three verses.**

The **first omer** was brought to the gate of the Tabernacle where **the high priest** was to **wave** the newly ripened **barley** grain before **the LORD** before the Sanctuary. **He is to wave the omer before ADONAI, so that you will be accepted; the priest is to wave it on the day after the Shabbat (23:11). The Oral Law** (see the commentary on [The Life of Christ Ei - The Oral Law](#)) **actually tells us how it was done. The high priest would place his two hands under the gift, then take it to the bronze altar. He elevated it up and down, north and south, then sideways, east and west. All this was done with joy and singing and the blowing of the shofar.** This is a great illustration of **Yeshua**, coming down from above, then being raised up out of the grave and spreading **His Gospel** to the four corners of the earth.

On the day that you wave the omer, you are to offer a male lamb without defect, in its first year, as a burnt offering for ADONAI (see [Ai - The Burnt Offering](#)). This reminded some rabbinical commentators of the Passover lamb. The words are similar. Both had to be a **male lamb without defect**; both had to be **one year old**. It was a great time of rejoicing. **The people** were to give double **their grain offerings. Its grain offering is to be one gallon of fine flour mixed with olive oil (twice the usual amount, perhaps to emphasize the importance of grain in this celebration), an offering made by fire on the bronze altar to ADONAI as a fragrant aroma; its drink offering is to be of wine, one quart (23:12-13). The sages would ask, "Why is there a double quantity of grain? Why is there lamb offered without blemish like Passover? Why is a drink offering made at this time?"**⁴³⁶ All these things point to our Great **Messiah**, but the Great Sanhedrin had declared that **Yeshua** was **demon possessed** (see [The Life of Christ Ek - It is only by Beelzebub, the Prince of Demons, That This](#)

Fellow Drives Out Demons), so **the Jews** missed the whole point of **the festival**.

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 (23:14). Thankfulness is one of the first emotions to vanish; this requirement made sure **the Israelites** gave proper thanksgiving and honor to **their** bountiful **King** before enjoying **His** generous provisions (**Deut 26:10-11; Proverbs 3:9-10**).⁴³⁷

Pesach, Hag ha'Matzot, and Resheet came rapidly, three **days** in a row; Friday, Saturday (**Shabbat**), and Sunday. All three point to **Yeshua Messiah**. **Pesach points to the death of the Lamb of God; Hag ha'Matzot points to the sinlessness of His sacrifice, and Resheet points Messiah as being the First Fruits of those who would be raised from the dead.** The **Feast of the Passover** would last one **day**, and it was followed immediately by the **Feast of Unleavened Bread**. By B'rit Chadashah times, **Pesach** and the first day of **Hag ha'Matzot** had become the same in accordance with the Pharisaic view.⁴³⁸ **On the fifteenth day of the same month is the Festival of Matzot** (another name for **Pesach**). **For seven days you are to eat matzah (Leviticus 23:6).**

Here is what **the seven-day festival** every **Nisan** looks like:

Pesach (or the Festival of Matzot)	Day 1 Shabbat
Hag ha'Matzot (Unleavened Bread)	Day 2 Shabbat
Resheet (First Fruits)	Day 3 Shabbat
	Day 4
	Day 5
	Day 6
	Day 7 Shabbat

On the first day of Pesach you are to have a holy convocation; don't do any kind of ordinary work. Bring an offering made by fire (on the bronze altar) to ADONAI for seven days. The additional sacrifices are described in **Numbers 28:17-25** (see the commentary on **Numbers Fg - The Hag ha'Matzot Offering**). **On the seventh day is a holy convocation; do not do any kind of ordinary work (Lev 23:7-8).** It was to be

treated as a **Sabbath** day. On **the first** and **seventh day** of **the festival**, **work** was forbidden. The community celebrated together. On the intervening days, however, **ordinary work** could be carried on, if necessary, but the celebration continued.

The Biblical Practice: It was a one-day festival and because it was the first **harvest** of the spring, it was a perfect time to make a **grain offering** to **ADONAI**. On this occasion, **the First Fruits** of **the barley harvest** was to be offered and an **omer** would be offered **the day** after **the Passover**. It was to be observed as an acknowledgment of **God's** bounty and that **the** whole **harvest** belonged to **Him** and not to mankind. This **feast** marked the beginning of the two-month spring **harvest**.

The Jewish Observance: During the Second Temple period (from 515 BC when the Temple was completed until it was destroyed by the Romans in 70 AD), on **the fourteenth of Nisan**, which was **the day** before **Passover**, the spot where **the** first **omer** was to be reaped was marked out by a special delegation from the Great **Sanhedrin**. In the late afternoon while **the Passover** lambs were being slaughtered at the Temple, **the high priest** and his entourage would slip away, travel over the Kidron Valley bridge and up the side of the Mount of Olives. They would then tie up three shocks of **barley**. Afterwards, they would go back to **the Temple** before sundown. It was still **the day** of preparation.

As the sun set on Thursday the fourteenth, **the Jewish day** turned into Friday, **the fifteenth of Nisan**. Everyone celebrated **Pesach** with **unleavened bread** from **the barley harvest** of the previous year.

Then came **the Sabbath** on **the sixteenth of Nisan**, and everyone rested.

When the sun set on **the Sabbath**, by the Jewish reckoning of time, Saturday turned into Sunday, **the seventeenth of Nisan**. Then **the high priest** and the members of the Sanhedrin were joined by thousands of **people** as they walked over the Kidron Valley bridge at night and up the side of the Mount of Olives where the three shocks of **barley** had been tied up **the day** before **Passover**. Because **the Sabbath** was over, they could **harvest the barley** that would be presented the next morning in the Temple. **The high priest** would ask five questions. First he would ask, "Has the sun gone down?" And the crowd would answer, "Yes, the sun has gone down!" Secondly, he would ask, "Will you **harvest the barley**?" And they would answer, "Yes, we will **harvest the barley**!" Thirdly, **the high priest** would ask, "With these sickles?" And the crowd would answer, "Yes, with these sickles!" Fourthly, he would ask, "In these baskets?" And they would answer, "Yes, in these baskets!" And lastly, **the high priest** would ask, "Shall I **harvest**?" And the thousands in the crowd would chant, "Yes, **harvest**!" When the answer was "yes" to all five questions asked three times over,

they cut one **omer** of grain from the ground that had already been marked out.

Then the three shocks of **barley** were **harvested** and put into three baskets to be carried back to the Temple with singing the Hallel psalms, music and dance. Then it was threshed with canes, as opposed to ox powered sledges, to preserve **the barley** heads. **The barley** was then roasted in a flame and winnowed in the wind to remove the chaff. **The barley** was then milled and sifted until it was very fine. **According to the Talmud the inspectors should be able to stick their hands into the barley flour without any flour sticking to the hands when they were removed (Menahot 8:2).**



The next morning **the high priest**, as the mediator between **God** and **the people**, would **wave** this baked **unleavened bread** before **the LORD** at the Nicanor Gate in the Court of the **Women**. He would **wave it** from side to side in all four directions with arms outstretched. By doing so, the whole crowd would be acknowledging **God's** provision and sovereignty over all the earth. Faith was a necessary component of this **festival**. If **the offering** was acceptable to **YHVH**, it would be **the firstfruits of more to come**. **Their** crops would not be destroyed by flooding, disease or drought. This was the way the feast was observed while **the Temple** was standing.

The high priest would celebrate the feast of **First Fruits** for the whole nation; but each individual family would also celebrate since **Isra'el** was a farming community dependent on the land to produce its wealth. **Isra'el's** farming families would prepare for the yearly **First Fruits** celebration at the same time they were preparing for **Passover**. When families came to Jerusalem they were prepared to celebrate three **festival days**, **Pesach (Passover)**, **Hag ha-Matzah (Unleavened Bread)**, and **Resheet (First Fruits)**; since **they** were celebrated for **seven days**, from the fifteenth through the twenty-first **of Nisan**. First, the family would set aside a portion of the crop to be marked for **First Fruits** by tying a cord around the area

to be **harvested** for the annual pilgrimage to Jerusalem. When the crop was **harvested** and baked, the family would take it along, with their lambs, to Yerushalayim to celebrate **the feasts**.

The modern Jewish observance of **Rasheet** is not very complex. In the Temple period it involved **offerings**, processions and praise services; the contemporary celebration consists primarily of prayers and blessings from a Jewish prayer book. These helped **people** reflect on the symbolic meaning of **the day**, counting **the days** from **the barley harvest** to the wheat **harvest** of **Shavu'ot**, the next **holy day**. However, after the Temple was destroyed in 70 AD, and during the resulting dispersion, it was no longer observed that way. In fact, during the long period of the dispersion, Gentile law forbade Jews to own land, and so they could no longer be farmers. So, this **feast** was largely ignored. But, the second "**First Fruits**," or **Shavu'ot** (see **Ec - Hag Shavu'ot**), has gained significance because the text of **Leviticus** instructs us to count off seven full weeks from **Pesach** until the fiftieth **day** is reached.

On the first Sunday after **Passover**, Messianic believers begin to count **the days** to **Shavu'ot**. They begin with the reading of the traditional blessing: *Baruch atah Adonai Elohenu melek ha-olam, asher kidshanu b'mitzvohtav v'tizi-vanu al Sfirat ha-omer* (Blessed are You, LORD our God, King of the universe, who has set us apart by your commandments and has commanded us concerning the counting of **the omer**). This blessing is read every evening for the next forty-nine **days** with an adjustment made according to the number of **days** that have been counted. For example: *Ha-yom, yom echad l'omer* (Today is the first **day** of **the omer**). The next **day** would be the second **day**, then the third, and so on until the forty-ninth **day** is reached. The fiftieth **day** marks the next major **holy day** on the biblical calendar, **Shavu'ot**. In essence then, **Resheet** is a countdown in anticipation of the next great work of **ADONAI** at **Shavu'ot**.⁴³⁹

The Messianic Significance: After Shabbat, as the next day was dawning, Miryam of Maddala 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 (to show us that the tomb was empty) 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 cross. He is not here, because he has been raised - just as He said (Matthew 28:1-6a). YHVH offered His First Fruit which marked the most significant time in His eternal calendar. The resurrection is that one event that separates biblical truth from all other religions. Other

world leaders are still in their tombs, but we worship a living **God**.⁴⁴⁰

Thus, the fulfillment of **the Feast of Firstfruits** can be seen in the resurrection of **Messiah**. It is a **harvest festival** and **the barley** loaves are **waved** before **ADONAI**. Think of it! The **grain** that had come from the earth was then being lifted up high for all **Isra'el** to see! **Yeshua Himself** alluded to **His** resurrection in similar terms when **He** said: **The hour has come for the Son of Man to be glorified. Very truly I tell you, unless a kernel of wheat falls to the ground and dies, it remains only a single seed. But if it dies, it produces many seeds . . . and as for Me, when I am lifted up from the earth, I will draw all people to Myself (John 12:23-24, 32)**. The resurrection of **Yeshua** from the dead is perfectly symbolized in **the wave offering** of **First Fruits**. **He** rose on the third **day**. So we can see the sovereign hand of **God** in regard to the timing of **Resheet**. It was imperative for **Messiah** to die exactly on **the Passover** in order to fulfill the prophecies, and for **Him** to be risen from the dead on **First Fruits**.

The fulfillment of **First Fruits** can also be clearly seen in the B'rit Chadashah. **Paul** states: **But Messiah has indeed been raised from the dead, the first fruits of those who have fallen asleep** (see the commentary on **First Corinthians Dt - Messiah: The Firstfruits of Those Who Have Fallen Asleep**). The resurrection of **Messiah** guarantees a future resurrection of all who die in the faith, just as the **omer** of **First Fruits** guaranteed a harvest to come. In fact, the entirety of **First Corinthians 15** draws upon that agricultural setting to make the point: a seed may be buried in the ground, but in due season, it will shoot forth in a more glorious body (**Revelation 1:5**).

So **First Fruits** was fulfilled by the resurrection of **Messiah**. But there were others who were resurrected before **Yeshua**, both in the TaNaKh and the B'rit Chadashah, how is **He the First Fruits**? There are two types of resurrections. The first type is merely a restoration back to natural life, which means they would die again later. But the second type of resurrection is true resurrection to immortality and no longer subject to death. That's the kind of resurrection **Yeshua** experienced. **Messiah** rose to eternal life and because **He is the firstfruits of more to come**, and as believers, we are the *more to come*. We will die, only to rise to eternal life. As **John** said: **I write these things to you who believe in the name of the Son of God so that you may know that you have eternal life** (see **The Life of Christ Ms - The Eternal Security of the Believer**).

*Dear Heavenly Father, **The Feast of First Fruits** is such a joyful time, looking forward to what **You** will do in harvesting of souls. As believers, we look forward to what **You** will do for us in the future! Instead of looking back to our deliverance from sin's bondage, those*

who love **You** can look forward in confidence and gratitude to a wonderful eternal life of peace and joy with **You** in heaven forever! **Behold, the dwelling of God is among men, and He shall tabernacle among them. They shall be His people, and God Himself shall be among them and be their God. He shall wipe away every tear from their eyes, and death shall be no more. Nor shall there be mourning or crying or pain any longer, for the former things have passed away (Revelation 21:3-4).**

One **day** a week it is a joy to set aside time to rest from our normal work and to worship **You**. May we include in that **day**: Praise for sin's penalty paid (**John 1:29** and **Second Corinthians 5:21**), for your indwelling presence in us now (**John 14:21-23**), and for our future joy . . . spending eternity with **You** in **Your** glorious Kingdom! **You** are an Awesomely Wonderful **Father** and I can't wait to be with **You**, praising you for all eternity! In **Yeshua's** holy name and power of **His** resurrection. Amen

The Feast of Passover was fulfilled by the death of Messiah, the Feast of Unleavened Bread was fulfilled by the sinlessness of His sacrifice, and the Feast of First Fruits was fulfilled by the resurrection of Messiah.

A Practical Guide for Believers in Messiah: Having discovered the theme of **Resheet** (resurrection), believers in **Messiah** should appreciate the importance of the **holy day**. In fact, there is irony here. The believers of the early Church, especially the Roman Church of the fourth century, began to lose touch with the Jewish understanding of the faith. However, the Church wanted to maintain a celebration of the resurrection of **Messiah**.

As a result, the Council of Nicea (325 AD) established, among other edicts, that Christians would not be allowed to commemorate **the Passover**, but would observe the resurrection on a new holiday called Easter. Accordingly, Easter would be observed on the Sunday after the Spring Equinox. So today many Christians have forgotten the intimate connection between the resurrection and the Jewish **holy days**.

It makes one wonder if it would have been simpler and clearer to continue to celebrate the great works of **God** at **His appointed times (Leviticus 23:4)**. Is it any wonder that the Church historically has had such little awareness of its own Jewish heritage? In these latter days, it is wonderful to see so many believers, Jews and Gentiles, desiring to understand the original context of their faith. **Resheet** can be a beautiful celebration to point to the risen Savior or the world, **Yeshua ha'Mashiach!**

In practical terms, a Messianic celebration of **First Fruits** can celebrate **the waving of the omer** after sundown. Jewish tradition today is fairly simple, and consists primarily of

counting the days and changing the appropriate blessings. Messianic believers should have no problem incorporating them into their observance.

*Barukh atah **ADONAI Elohenu** melekh ha-olam, asher kidshanu b'mitzvohtav l'goyeem v'natan-lanu **Yeshua** m'sheekhaynu ha-or la-olam.*

Blessed are **You, Lord our God, King** of the universe, who has sanctified us by **Your** commandments and commanded us to be a light to the nations and has given us **Yeshua** our **Messiah**, the light of the world.

*Barukh atah **ADONAI Elohenu** melekh ha-olam, boray p'ree ha-gahfen.*

Blessed are **You, Lord our God, King** of the universe, **Creator** of the fruit of the vine.

*Barukh atah **ADONAI Elohenu** melekh ha-olam, ha-motzi lechem min haaretz.*

Blessed are **You, Lord our God, King** of the universe, **Who** brings forth **bread** from the earth.

You may want to say the blessings over bundles of **barley** or a cup of grain, lifting them up to illustrate the truth of this **holy day**. An appropriate time to recount these blessings is just before the holiday dinner. In additional blessings over the cup of grain, other elements of a Messianic **First Fruits** service might include worship music and a scriptural message regarding the centrality of resurrection to our faith in **Yeshua**.

He is risen indeed!⁴⁴¹