

The Omer - the sheaf

The message I have today is rather brief but it is relevant to the spiritual season we are in. The season is what is called “the counting of the Omer.

As I was looking at the ICEJ calendar the other day I realised that we were in the days of the Omer or Sheaf, today is the 14th day of the Omer. Last Sabbath during our fellowship, Ron mentioned the waving of the Sheaf by the Priest in the Temple, so I decided to look into this appointed time and learn more about it.

The Omer is the command to bring the first sheaf of the harvest to the Temple - sometimes it is called The first Fruits of the barley harvest – It is the verbal counting of each of the 49 days between Passover and Pentecost. We can read about it in Lev.23:10-11 “ when you enter the land I am going to give you and you reap its harvest, bring to the Priest an Omer of the first grain you harvest. He is to wave the sheaf before Adonai so it will be accepted on your behalf, the Priest is to wave it on the day after the Sabbath. This is of great significance to the disciples of Yeshua as at His resurrection, Yeshua became our First Fruit when He presented Himself before the Father.

There is a parallel between the Omer and our Messiah.

I

On the same day that Caiphias, the High Priest at the time of Yeshua and his associates tried Yeshua our Master, disciples of the Sanhedrin went out to a barley field not far from Jerusalem. On the same day that the Romans bound and crucified Yeshua, the disciples of the Sanhedrin bound up the standing barley into bundles while it was still attached to the ground so that it would be easier to reap.

A day later, after the sun had set and the High Sabbath of Unleavened bread was over, just 24 hours before the Master rose from his tomb, they returned to the barley field, reaped it and collected it in 3 baskets, even though it was still yet the weekly Sabbath. That night they carried the baskets of grain to Jerusalem. They delivered the baskets to the Priesthood in the Temple. The baskets contained more than enough grain to constitute a full sheaf's worth – enough to fulfil the mandate of Lev.23:1-4

The harvest ritual of gathering this barley Omer was for a special first fruit offering to the Lord. The Torah prohibited using or eating any grain or produce from the new year's crop until the first Omer of grain to ripen was harvested and brought to the temple. The barley crop ripens first in Israel, so the Omer was always a barley sheaf. The commandment of the barley Omer served to remind Israel that the land and its produce belong first to God. The people of Israel could not enjoy the produce of the land until God had received His due.

On the Lord's second night in the tomb, the Priests in the Temple threshed, roasted and ground the barley Omer into flour. All night they prepared it. , they refined the freshly milled flour by sifting it through various sieves.

That Sabbath day, while Jesus was in the tomb, the Priesthood was busy mixing the barley flour with oil and frankincense to make it into a bread offering. Just hours before the Sabbath was over, while Mary of Magdala and the other women among the disciples still "rested according to the commandment" (Lk 23:56) the High Priest brought the barley flour to the altar and offered a portion of it on the altar as a memorial portion. They baked the remainder of the dough into loaves of unleavened barley bread offering of the Omer, they sacrificed a single lamb as a burnt offering.

By divine design, the rituals of offering the barley Omer in the Temple coincided with the death and resurrection of Yeshua.

The harvest of the barley Omer occurs on the second day of the seven days of Unleavened Bread. It is a mini festival within a festival. It is listed in Lev.23 along with all the appointed times of the Lord.

Beginning on the day that the first Omer of barley was harvested and brought to the Temple, a countdown to the next Biblical Festival began. The Torah commands the Israelites to count off 49 days and then celebrate, on the 50th day, the festival of Shavuot or Pentecost. The day the Omer was brought was "Day 1" of what is called "Counting the Omer". The next day is "Day 2" of the Omer count, the next day "Day 3" of the Omer count, etc...etc...

During the 49 days of the Omer count, the wheat crop ripens. By the end of the Omer count, the crop is ready for harvest and the First Fruits of the wheat crop can be brought to the Temple for Pentecost.

The counting of the days of the Omer is a Biblical commandment . – and honestly, I did not know that. Traditionally, the period of the Omer count is to be a time of spiritual introspection as the counters prepare themselves for Pentecost. Because it begins during Passover and concludes at Pentecost, the counting of the Omer remembers the journey from Egypt to Mount Sinai.

The Messianic implications of the Omer and the subsequent count down are great. According to Matt.28:1, Yeshua rose "after the Sabbath, as it began to dawn toward the first day of the week" which means that the appointed day for harvesting the barley Omer coincides with the resurrection of Yeshua.. In a remarkable display of God's sovereign planning, the Torah set aside the resurrection as a day of first fruits 1,400 years before its occurrence.

The symbolism is strong. Just as the first Omer of barley was brought as a first fruit of the harvest, so was Yeshua's resurrection the first fruit of the resurrection of the saints. just as the first fruit of the barley made all the rest of the harvest fit for harvest, so too the resurrection of Yeshua makes the resurrection of the dead possible.

Because of the resurrection and the connection to Pentecost, the counting of the Omer is important for believers as it creates a countdown which starts at Passover, the time of the giving of the Torah, and ends at Pentecost, the time of the giving of the Holy Spirit. The time in between should be a time of spiritual reflection, purification and growth.

The Master's resurrection makes the counting of the Omer a season of special significance and joy. For His disciples it is a time to remember the resurrected Lord.

It is interesting to notice that after His resurrection Yeshua appeared to some of His disciples during the counting of the Omer.

At the end of the first day of the Omer, that is, at the beginning of the second day, He rose from the dead. On the 2nd day, He appeared to Mary Magdalene and the two disciples on the way to Emmaus. On the 3rd day He appeared to the Apostles in the upper room. On the tenth day of the Omer, He appeared again to the disciples, and this time Thomas was also present and he believed, exclaiming "My Lord and my God". During the counting of the Omer, He appeared to 500 of His disciples and then to James, His half brother He also appeared to 7 of the disciples as they were fishing.

On the 41st day of the Omer He led them to a hill near Bethany and they saw Him ascend to Heaven. Before He ascended, He commanded them not to leave Jerusalem but to wait for the promise of the Father.

They waited and counted the days....on the 50th day, when the day of Pentecost was fully come, they were all together in one place and received the promise: that is, the power of the Holy Spirit to be His witnesses.

God has everything worked out as from the very beginning and we are so grateful that we are part of His plan. Let us wait patiently for Him to come back with power and great glory to take us onto Himself. Let us all cry out with one voice "Come, Lord Yeshua, come"

I am so glad I did this study of the Omer because I did learn a few things and I hope you did also.

Let us pray:

Blessed are you Lord, King of the universe, who has blessed us with His commandments, and has commanded us to count the days of the Omer in preparation to receiving the gift of the Father, the Holy Spirit, on the day of Pentecost. We thank you and we praise you for every good gift that you give us out of your great love and infinite mercy. Amen.