

CHAG BIKKURIM { בִּיכּוּרִים } (Feast of First-fruits)

By Hannah Nesher
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On the first Sunday (Yom Rishon - the first day) after the seventh day Sabbath of Passover, we commemorate a very special day called Chag Bikkurim (Feast of First-fruits).

This highly significant 'mo'ed' (appointed time) of Adonai occasionally coincides with what Christians all over the world are celebrating as *'Resurrection Day'*.



A Catholic nun holds an olive branch during a Palm Sunday procession on the Mount of Olives in Jerusalem . (photo credit: REUTERS)

Between Palm Sunday and Easter Sunday, thousands of Christian worshippers and pilgrims crowd into Jerusalem during 'Holy Week' to commemorate the death and resurrection of Yeshua (Jesus).



<http://igoogledisrael.com/easter-in-israel/>

What is Chag Bikkurim (the Feast of First-fruits) all about; and what could *possibly* be the connection between this Biblical Jewish festival and the very 'Christian' celebration of Easter?

As many Christians around the world celebrate Easter Sunday as 'Resurrection Day' it may not be commonly known that this special time actually comes from the Jewish festival called Bikkurim (First - fruits).

On the first day after the seventh day Sabbath day of Passover, the first -fruits of the harvest were to be brought to the Jewish priest (cohen) as a wave offering before the Lord. The **wave offering** (Hebrew: *tenufah* תנופה) is also called a **sheaf offering** or **omer offering** (*korban omer*).

"Speak unto the children of Israel, and say unto them, 'When you come into the land which I give unto you, and shall reap the harvest thereof, then you shall bring a sheaf of the first-fruits of your harvest unto the priest (cohen):

And he shall wave the sheaf before Adonai, to be accepted for you: on the morrow after the Sabbath the priest shall wave it.'" (Leviticus 23:10-11)



Harvest before the counting of the omer

From this first day after the Sabbath, we are commanded to count seven weeks (Shavuot is the Hebrew word for weeks) until the festival of Shavuot (Pentecost).

"From the day after the Sabbath, the day you brought the sheaf of the wave offering, count off seven full weeks (Shavuot)." (Leviticus 23:15)

This word, Bikkurim, comes from a Hebrew root word, 'B'khor', בָּכֹר meaning 'firstborn' or 'chosen'. All first fruits are holy unto the Lord.

"For if the first- fruit be holy, the lump is also holy: and if the root be holy, so are the branches." (Romans 11:16)

This is why we must be so certain that the root of what we are celebrating is holy; so that the fruit may also be holy.

The first-fruits of our income is also holy (kadosh - set apart) unto the Lord.

“Honor Adonai with thy substance, and with the first-fruits of all your increase.”
(Proverbs 3:9)

God declared to Pharaoh in Egypt that Israel is His 'b'chor' (chosen firstborn) and therefore holy (set apart/kadosh) unto Adonai.

"Then you shall say to Pharaoh, 'Thus says the LORD, "Israel is My son, My firstborn בְּנֵי יִשְׂרָאֵל." (Exodus 4:22)

Yeshua the Messiah is God's firstborn and only son. He is the chosen Lamb of God, slain on Passover, buried, and raised as the *first-fruit* on the third day.

“But in fact Messiah has been raised from the dead ,the first-fruits of those who have fallen asleep.” (1 Corinthians 15:20)

Yeshua is the first-fruits and we who belong to Him by faith are to follow after Him in being raised to life after death.

Can we just imagine - as the wave-sheaf was being cut outside Jerusalem at the end of the Sabbath, Yeshua was resurrected and presenting Himself before the altar in Heaven as the First-fruit of the resurrection!

In the prophetic story of Joseph, he has a dream in which the sheaf represents a person:

“ Behold, we were binding sheaves in the field, and behold, my sheaf arose and stood upright. And behold, your sheaves gathered around it and bowed down to my sheaf.” (Genesis 37:7)



Joseph's dream of grain

As the kohanim were in the Temple, waving the first- fruit of the barley harvest, which is the first crop of life after the 'death' of winter, Yeshua was presented to Adonai. Halleluyah!

Therefore, Chag Bikkurim is the foreshadow of the resurrection of Yeshua who promised He would rise again after three days and nights in the belly of the earth, just as Jonah was brought forth from the belly of the whale (Jonah 2:1-2).

“Then some of the scribes and Pharisees answered him, saying, “Teacher, we wish to see a sign from you.” But he answered them, “An evil and adulterous generation seeks for a sign, but no sign will be given to it except the sign of the prophet Jonah. For just as Jonah was three days

and three nights in the belly of the great fish, so will the Son of Man be three days and three nights in the heart of the earth.” (Matthew 12:38-40)



Yeshua not only experienced resurrection from the dead, He actually claimed to be the resurrection itself – a bold promise that whoever believes in Him will defy even death!

"I am the resurrection and the life. He who believes in me will live, even though he dies; and whoever lives and believes in me will never die. Do you believe in this?" (John 11:25-26)

Indeed - do we believe this? Do we have faith to believe that Yeshua can bring us back to life? The people of Israel wondered if their hope had been completely cut off.

“Son of man, these bones are the whole house of Israel. Behold, they say, ‘Our bones are dried up, and our hope is lost; we are indeed cut off.’ (Ezekiel 37:11)

The Hebrew prophet Ezekiel saw the whole house of Israel in a vision as a valley full of dry bones; but God breathed His life into them and they came back to life! Halleluyah!

“And you shall know that I am the LORD, when I open your graves, and raise you from your graves, O my people. And I will put my Spirit within you, and you shall live, and I will place you in your own land. Then you shall know that I am יהוה; I have spoken, and I will do it, declares the LORD.” (Ezekiel 37:13-14)

The nation of Israel has been physically reborn but still needs a spiritual awakening to know our Messiah. Ezekiel's vision is about the spiritual resurrection that God promises will one day take place in the nation of Israel.



God desires, not only to bring forth resurrection life upon the people of Israel, but also in each one of our lives. We may feel like our hope has been totally cut off; and that all we are left with is a valley of dry bones – but this does not need to be the end of our story.

In God there is always hope. It is not in our own might or strength, but only through the power of the Ruach Hakodesh (Holy Spirit) that restoration can and will happen. (Zechariah 4:6)

Please pray that God will pour out the blessings of His Spirit (Ruach - wind), symbolized by water, upon the spiritually dry and thirsty land of Israel.

May we each experience a personal resurrection and new beginning in our lives at this Passover and Bikkurim season.

About the Author:

Hannah Neshar grew up in an Orthodox Jewish home and received her education in a religious Hebrew school in Canada. During a crisis pregnancy, she came to know Jesus (Yeshua) as her Messiah and Savior. She now lives in Israel with her children and grandchildren, teaching the Jewish roots of the Christian faith.

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