THE WAVE SHEAF ORDINANCE

by

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A passage of Scripture which is rarely discussed among commandment keepers, although pertinent to establishing the Feast of Weeks (Pentecost), is Leviticus 23:9-21. Let us read that passage carefully and determine for ourselves why it figures so prominently within the corpus of instructions concerning the feasts of Yahweh.

And Yahweh spake unto Moses, saying,

"Speak unto the children of Israel, and say unto them, 'When ye be come into the land which I give unto you, and shall reap the harvest thereof, then ye shall bring a sheaf of the firstfruits of your harvest unto the priest:

And he shall wave the sheaf before Yahweh, to be accepted for you: on the morrow after the sabbath the priest shall wave it.

And ye shall offer that day when ye wave the sheaf an he lamb without blemish of the first year for a burnt offering unto Yahweh.

And the meat offering thereof shall be two tenth deals of fine flour mingled with oil, an offering made by fire unto Yahweh for a sweet savour: and the drink offering thereof shall be of wine, the fourth part of an hin.

And ye shall eat neither bread, nor parched corn, nor green ears, until the selfsame day that ye have brought an offering unto your Elohim: it shall be a statute for ever throughout your generations in all your dwellings.

And ye shall count unto you from the morrow after the sabbath, from the day that ye brought the sheaf of the wave offering; seven sabbaths shall be complete:

Even unto the morrow after the seventh sabbath shall ye number fifty days; and ye shall offer a new meat offering unto Yahweh.

Ye shall bring out of your habitations two wave loaves of two tenth deals: they shall be of fine flour; they shall be baken with leaven; they are the firstfruits unto Yahweh.

And ye shall offer with the bread seven lambs without blemish of the first year, and one young bullock, and two rams: they shall be for a burnt offering unto Yahweh, with their meat offering, and their drink offerings, even an offering made by fire, of sweet savour unto Yahweh.

Then ye shall sacrifice one kid of the goats for a sin offering, and two lambs of the first year for a sacrifice of peace offerings.

And the priest shall wave them with the bread of the firstfruits for a wave offering before Yahweh, with the two lambs: they shall be holy to Yahweh for the priest.

And ye shall proclaim on the selfsame day, that it may be an holy convocation unto you: ye shall do no servile work therein: It shall be a statute for ever in all your dwellings throughout your generations.

Now let us ask ourselves some important questions regarding the passage. In this way we will be able to comprehend more completely the intention of Almighty Yahweh for inserting it.

*How important is the understanding of the wave sheaf ordinance?* It is the only method for counting toward the Feast of Weeks. The Greek word for the Feast of Weeks is Pentecost, meaning to count 50 days.
What is its meaning? Under the agrarian system of ancient Israel, it meant the thanksgiving for the first fruit of the harvest. Under the New Testament or covenant, it indicates the firstfruit harvest of the people of this earth. Remember, Yahshua the Messiah is the firstfruit of those to be resurrected, 1 Cor. 15:20, 23.

How was it observed? The first ripe sheaf of grain was cut and waved before Almighty Yahweh in thanksgiving for the new harvest. In the New Testament age, Yahweh's ministers preach a sermon in which we remember the resurrection of Yahshua the Messiah, the firstfruit of the harvest of this earth.

Who is to observe this wave sheaf ordinance? It is to be observed by all Israelites (presently overcomers, Galatians 6:15-16), Leviticus 23:10.

Why is this wave sheaf ordinance to be observed? It is to be kept in remembrance of the one wave sheaf representing Yahshua the Messiah. He was the beginning of the human harvest of the earth, pointing toward those first ones to be resurrected through the life-giving power of Almighty Yahweh. These are the firstfruits described in Revelation 14:1-5.

Is this a commanded observance? The obvious answer is yes, although it is not an annual Sabbath.

Is this observance a permanent institution or ordinance? Almighty Yahweh wants us to understand that it is indeed permanent. He said, "It shall be a statute forever throughout your generations, in all your dwellings," Leviticus 23:14.

The relationship between the firstfruits offering counting toward the Feast of Weeks, and the resurrection of Yahshua the Messiah is unmistakable. Yahshua was resurrected in the end of the Sabbath, Matthew 28:1. He was the firstfruit of the resurrection of the human race to be given the status of being born again into the family of Yahweh. We read throughout the books of the evangelists, especially in the book and the epistles of John, that it is through Yahshua the Messiah and in His Name that the Holy Spirit is given, John 14:26 and 1 John 4:13-17.

Notice that when the firstfruit wave sheaf offering is brought to the priest and he waves it before Yahweh, He will accept it for His people. Yahshua the Messiah symbolically was accepted for us, as He ascended to Almighty Yahweh where He sits today at the right hand of Yahweh.

The restriction is included that new grain (either bread, parched corn, or green ears) is not to be eaten until we have given thanks for the firstfruits to Almighty Yahweh. This means that Yahshua the Messiah precedes, is the firstborn among, many brethren. The subsequent two additional resurrections could not occur until the resurrection of Yahshua the Messiah who was the firstfruit of all who slept. Only after Yahshua the Messiah had experienced this resurrection from the dead could His assembly participate in the spiritual harvest.

Notice again how important it is to COUNT SEVEN COMPLETE WEEKS toward Pentecost, from the very day the wave sheaf offering is brought to the temple of Yahweh. A complete week begins with the first day and terminates with the seventh day, which is the scriptural Sabbath. Just as we read in a preceding passage, we must terminate our count on a weekly Sabbath. The following day, which is the 50th day, is the annual holy day when our Heavenly Father wants His people to gather for a holy convocation.

The only correct way to count 50 days and still end on the first day of the week is to begin the count on the day following the Sabbath. The Sabbath used to begin our count is either on Passover or during the Days of Unleavened Bread. We will then complete 49 days or seven full weeks, ending with a weekly seventh-day Sabbath. The following day is Pentecost, the first day of the week, the 50th day.

Observe how the wave sheaf offering of ripe grain also affects the setting of the Days of Unleavened Bread. It also determines when the Passover Memorial occurs.

"Seven weeks shalt thou number unto thee: begin to number the seven weeks from such time as thou beginnest to put the sickle to the corn," Deuteronomy 16:9. The center column in most Bibles gives the accurate translation, "Begin to number the seven weeks from such a time as thou beginnest to put the sickle to the STANDING GRAIN." This specifies that we may not cut down a sheaf of grain earlier than on this particular day and allow it to dry. This grain must have come to ripeness by itself. It must be standing when the wave sheaf is offered.

Here again we can see the fulfillment in type by Yahshua the Messiah. He was standing, IN THE RESURRECTION, at the beginning of the first day of the week after spending the seventh-day Sabbath as His third day of rest in the tomb.

We are directed to cut the standing grain when it is ripe. We cannot offer the unmatured stalks with no ripe grain on the them.
Should the grain be slightly moist when thrashed, Almighty Yahweh made special provisions in allowing it to be parched, Leviticus 2:14-16. This is the harvest that Almighty Yahweh wishes us to recognize.

In Deuteronomy 16:1 we find a significant instruction. Translated literally from the Hebrew text we read, “Watch for the new moon of green ears...” The new moon (first visible crescent) that appears when the barley (which is the earliest grain crop in Israel) has formed green heads, is the month of green ears or Abib. This is the firstfruit of the land each year. We must watch for these green ears because we need ripe grain two weeks later to comply with the offering of the wave sheaf.

In the month of Abib we are instructed to number or count the days toward the Feast of Unleavened Bread and Pentecost. If there are no green ears of barley on the stalk, we cannot begin to number the days of Passover since it will not be the month of Abib. Exodus 12:2 says, “This month shall be unto you the beginning of months, it shall be the first month of the year to you.”

When Israel was approaching the Passover in Egypt, the early grain harvest of barley was almost ripe. This is explained in Exodus 9:31-32. “And the flax and the barley was smitten: for the barley was in the ear, and the flax was boiled. But the wheat and the rye were not smitten: for they were not grown up.” Therefore the month in which we are directed to keep the Passover is the month of Abib, “green ears.”

Have you noticed how much visual observation is connected with the keeping the feasts of Yahweh? First of all, we must observe the time when green ears of grain appear on the stalks. Then we must look to the heavens and watch for the first new crescent of the spring moon to appear. This is something each Israelite can do for HIMSELF and be accurate in observing the feast of Yahweh. There are never told how we are to institute the first month in the land except in Deuteronomy. This is a sign based upon the reaping firstfruits of the harvest. Israel and tied firmly to the first new crescent of the moon.

The wave sheaf (firstfruits of harvest) was to be waved at a specific time and on a certain day. This is another significant aspect of watching for the grain to be ripe. If there is no ripe grain there can be no wave sheaf or firstfruits of the new harvest offering to Yahweh. Consequently, we would not be in the first month of the new year.

The children of Israel were constantly reminded of the importance of this month over any other. They came out of Egypt, bondage, the first month of the year and it was important for them to remember it as a memorial forever. They were told emphatically never to forget it.

The Jews, however, have instituted a system to establish the annual holy days different from what the Bible directs. The Jews set their holy days according to a calculated moon. They have instituted the system of unscriptural calculation in the hope that all of the Jewish people around the world would be more unified in observing the holy days. Conceivably this would have been beneficial for the Diaspora before rapid communication was possible. Although they have supplanted the biblical visual setting of the holy days with a method based on calculation, they have paradoxically not been able to unite all of their brethren around the world. The Karaites continue to observe the barley harvest and the visible new moon to set their holy days.

Where did setting the months by the vernal equinox originate? Genesis 1:14 declared that the heavenly bodies (sun, moon, and stars) were placed there “for signs, and for seasons, and for days, and years.” Most people consider the word “seasons” to mean the four seasons of the year: spring, summer, fall, and winter. However, the word “seasons,” as translated in Genesis 1:14, in Hebrew is moedim. Moedim means appointed times. It has nothing to do with the climate of the various seasons. Rather, it specifies the sacred seasons of Yahweh. The word moedim in Genesis 1:14 would have been better rendered “appointed times” or “sacred seasons.”

Edicts of Constantine

Setting the holy days by the vernal equinox was begun by Constantine, who was irritated that the Messianic believers continued to be regulated by the “Jewish” Passover. Furthermore, he discovered that various groups were occasionally observing the memorial of the Savior’s death in different months of the year. Since he placed heavy emphasis upon the Easter celebration, it was his intention to supplant the observance of the Savior’s memorial on Passover day with the celebration of His supposed resurrection on Easter Sunday.

Constantine concluded that in order to unite all of his people in observance of Easter, he should establish the resurrection day by an edict (law). This edict commanded that Easter be observed on the first Sunday after the full moon following the vernal equinox. In this way it could always
be calculated. Apparently he disliked the way the Israelites were watching for the new moon, waiting for the ripening grain to appear, and then counting the days of the Passover memorial. Isn’t it strange that some years Easter (which is said to symbolize the resurrection) is observed a month before the Passover memorial, which is on the day He died?

To please his wife, who belonged to a pagan group that was keeping the first day of the week, Constantine also sent forth a command for all Messianic believers to stop observing the seventh-day Sabbath. In this way he hoped to establish a “universal church” and keep the first day of the week instead of the scriptural Sabbath. Those who continued to observe the scriptural Sabbath and holy days were designated as heretics in various ancient ecclesiastical histories.

Constantine was not baptized into the Roman Catholic Church until he was on his deathbed. Nevertheless, his regal authority made him the champion of the Roman Catholic Church, or as some have put it, the father of Roman Catholicism. Ironically, the heretics who were put to death were executed for obeying Yahweh. They refused to accept humanly devised rules and laws which were at variance with the scriptural commandments.

Today there are still some groups of commandment keepers who submit to the edict of Constantine as their method of setting the holy days of Leviticus 23. They use the NEW MOON NEAREST the vernal equinox, which can be up to 14 days before the equinox. However, we must understand that using the vernal equinox is not scripturally commanded, but is merely a possible guide. We are told specifically in the Word to watch for the new moon of green ears and then keep the Passover unto Yahweh, along with the firstfruits thanksgiving ordinance of the new harvest.

The Intercalary Month

In certain years an addition of an intercalary, or added, month is necessary to keep the scriptural calendar in harmony with the agricultural season. After a number of years of careful watching, it has become obvious that a supernormal phenomenon takes place whenever the 13th month of the year is to be added. Spring is late that year. For example, this year spring is right on time to coincide with Yahweh’s sacred season. Last year (1978) the harvest season in Israel was late, as was the arrival of spring here in the United States. Interestingly, this was the year for the intercalary (13th) month to be added to scriptural calendar.

Actually, the Bible does not specify that a year shall have 13 months, but neither does it specify that a year shall have 12 months. Such assumption is in error. We are told to watch and observe. This commandment in the Word of Yahweh cuts us loose from man-made rules and regulations. We cannot rely upon the U.S. Naval Observatory, or British Observatory regulations, nor on the Farmer’s Almanac. To do this would be unscriptural. The little horn of Daniel 7:25 is the one who devised such man-made systems thinking to change times and the law. We must be in total harmony with the Bible and keep the commandments of Yahweh.

The wave sheaf ordinance actually sheds light on understanding the New Testament sequence of days in Yahshua’s last week. We are therefore enlightened about when His last supper, death, and resurrection occurred. Yahshua the Messiah was Yahweh’s true Passover Lamb. He also became our wave sheaf offering when He ascended and was accepted by the Heavenly Father. He was without blemish. Therefore, He could not be touched (partaken of), like the ripe grain has been prohibited until the thanksgiving sheaf was offered, John 20:17.

Miriam mistook Yahshua the Messiah to be the gardener. Could the reason for this mistaken identity have been that Yahshua the Messiah was carrying a sheaf of grain (the last one to be cut under the sacrificial law)? As we read John chapter 20 again, it becomes obvious that Yahshua the Messiah carried out this mission as our High Priest. He fulfilled the last wave sheaf offering and then presented Himself to Almighty Yahweh in heaven on the first day of the week, known as the time the wave sheaf was offered. It is on this day that we must begin our count toward the completion of seven full weeks and our observance of Pentecost (the Feast of Weeks—Shavuoth), occurring on the fiftieth day after the resurrection. Actually, it is Yahshua’s resurrection, ascension into the heavens, and His acceptance by Yahweh that paved the way for the outpouring of the Holy Spirit on the Pentecost of Acts chapter 2.

It is our prayer that all True Worshipers will search the Scriptures more thoroughly as modern, noble Bereans. Those who do will find an amazing harmony in the Word. The various observances and doctrines are interwoven together, forming sound doctrine, a solid framework which will never collapse, even under the most concentrated assault by the adversary.