

# A First Wave Sheaf Offering?

***Though an essential factor in the Spring Holy Days, this particular Offering is no longer performed as it was under the Levitical Ceremonial System of observances. Also, there was a change in practice later on from how it was originally instructed.***

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Specific instructions were given to the emerging nation of Israel regarding the reaping of their first grain harvest of each year. This particular observance had a lot to do with their calendar year, and though not actually formally practiced today, it still has a relevance in establishing the lunar calendar. While it's posed that with Jesus Christ being our True Wave Sheaf,<sup>1</sup> the actual ceremony is seen as no longer incumbent on the Christian community, yet the occasion remains an indirect factor in the Holy Day calendar in use today.

## **What Relevance in this Ceremony?**

We might wonder why we would need this observance in the modern era. The answer has to do with the lunar cycles, which define a lunar calendar. A lunar month is some 29½ days, with 12 lunar months being some 11 days short of a solar year. This requires some means to keep the lunar year in sync with the solar year.

In effect, there needs to be an occasional 'thirteenth month' factored into the lunar calendar in order to keep the two calendar methods generally in season with one another. This extra month is needed on average once in every three years. But, in which years is that 13<sup>th</sup> month to be added?

## **Readiness is Important**

Originally, it was the pending ripeness of the barley that determined when to 'intercalate' a 13<sup>th</sup> month. Under modern calculated calendar determination methods, that isn't the key event employed, but that was one of its original purposes. Priests would assess the ripening grains and determine if they expected them to be of sufficient ripeness suitable

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<sup>1</sup> Jesus Christ was 'waved' before the Father on that Sunday morning after His resurrection. The occasion is described in Daniel 7:13-14 and what was said at that occasion is given in Psalms 110:1. In fact, it was a merging of these two verses that got Christ the condemnation He sought at His trial!

for a Wave Sheaf to be waived about two weeks hence, just days after the Passover. If not assessed to be sufficiently ready, then a thirteenth month would be inserted into their calendar cycle, delaying the start of their new year by another month.

Of course, that would set-back all the other observances of Holy Days throughout the coming year. So, the Wave Sheaf was the first consideration in the Holy Day progression, just as Christ is essential and a specific 'first' in His spiritual harvests.

## **Ceremonial Legitimacy**

Now, another consideration: Why was this ceremony employed every year? It was to illustrate the NEED for a sheaf representing a first fruit of their harvest to be offered 'for them' in order for the remainder of the early harvest to be ceremonially legal and to remind them of the harvest to come. In other words, it represented the need for Christ to first be offered and presented before God the Father 'for us'. With that accomplished, then the remainder of the harvest would be 'good' and be duly acceptable also.

It might also be appropriate here to mention that such grains were to be the product of their own labors. Not wild barley, but a domestically grown crop.<sup>2</sup> We'll get to that!

## **Wave Sheaf Before the Jericho Conquest?**

Where this observance factors into the interests of modern day Holy Day observers is that situation of what is thought to be that very first occasion when such an offering was presented. That occasion in the view of some Bible students is found in Joshua 5:11. It would make little real difference if they did offer one in that year, except that it has possible

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<sup>2</sup> Some observers of Biblical Holy Days monitor the field conditions in Israel for this purpose. Whether that translates into a Wave Sheaf Offering event, I'm not prepared to say.

application to a question. You see, there has been some uncertainty as to when the wave Sheaf was to be offered in certain years. While it was to be on the morrow after the weekly Sabbath,<sup>3</sup> it isn't clear in the minds of some as to which day needs to fall within the seven days of Unleavened Bread: the Sabbath or that 'morrow' immediately following it. Some see Joshua 5:11 as addressing the question.

So, we will consider this underlying question in the rest of this article.

### Wave Sheaf Offering Instructions

Prior to the Exodus, God gave clear instructions to Moses that he was to explain this observance to the people. In Leviticus 23, we find these specifics:

[10] *“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: We should note that this land and its resources had already been given them 40-years before they arrived there! A wave sheaf offering taken from Jericho's field wouldn't be considered or accepted in any of those prior years, not that one was offered or considered to be offered as they weren't yet 'in the land'.*

[11] *“And he shall **wave the sheaf** before the LORD, to be accepted for you: on the morrow after the sabbath the priest shall wave it. Note: Each farmer was to bring a sheaf of his own grain to the priest. It wasn't then a Temple-centered ceremony, presented singly on behalf of the entire aggregate congregation. That idea wasn't begun until after the return from captivity in Babylon.*

[12] *“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 the LORD. No notice has been given of this provision, particularly in the Jericho situation. One of Jericho's lambs would **not** have been acceptable, for this additionally required aspect of the ceremony, based on the instruction in Joshua 6:21. No comment in the book of Joshua or elsewhere alludes to this being complied with either, which the participants would have seen themselves as being equally obligated to*

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<sup>3</sup> Two Jewish sects thought the 'Sabbath' in question was the first Holy Day or the last Holy Day, being annual Sabbaths!

perform. While they could have offered one of their own lambs, the point is that Jericho's lambs would not have been considered acceptable! So, why would their grains be? Eating of it is one thing, but considering it as a sacred offering source is another matter entirely.

### Counting to Pentecost

[15] *“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: Individual farmers were to bring a sheaf of their grain to the priest. In fact, it's this count to a fiftieth day that is dependent upon this offering! There is no other way to determine when Pentecost is.<sup>4</sup> The Wave Sheaf is key! It and Pentecost is NOT a fixed calendar date!*

### Further Clarification

[Ex. 23:16] *“And the feast of harvest, the firstfruits of thy labours, **which thou hast sown** in the field: and the feast of ingathering, which is in the end of the year, when thou hast gathered in thy labours out of the field. It's clear from this instruction that the Wave Sheaf was to be the firstfruits of their ripening crop, one that they had personally grown from seed and actually labored to produce. The importance of it being from their own labors are emphasized twice in this passage!*

### Not Practiced for 40-Years!

In that the children of Israel hadn't planted anything in all the years wandering in the wilderness, it's safe to say that they weren't able to comply with this ceremony, nor were they in the situation where such an offering would have been called for.

So, here we are. The people see Jericho a short way off, looking across their surrounding fields, all ready for harvesting, and wondering if a ceremony was required before they could avail themselves of it. Now let's also recall that the instructions for offering a Wave Sheaf was given some 40-years prior. They had never experienced one, and they

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<sup>4</sup> In the first century, there were three major views as to which Sabbath was meant. One resulted in Sivan 6, another the 'morrow' after a seventh Sabbath (a Sunday) and one resulting in Sivan 12. The first and last of these (from annual Sabbaths) allowed Pentecost to fall on any day of the week.

wouldn't have conceived of offering one except under the explicit instructions given to Moses, (who by this point was no longer with them).

### What Growers?

So, the 'growers', if there were any, would have to have approached Joshua and ask, "Where do we get the sheaves we are told to bring?" Would Joshua have told them to, "Go gather your sheaves from Jericho's fields. Any old offering will do!" Such an approach would be totally disrespectful of what that Holy Offering represented: their Messiah being offered first to be accepted for us. What impression would that have left with those people?

Let's keep in mind, a Wave Sheaf Offering wasn't a Temple-based ceremony at this early date. That tradition didn't become the norm until after the return to Jerusalem from Babylonian exile! So we shouldn't view this action thru the lens of what became the traditional manner centuries later.

### "Explicitly Faithful" to the Word!

So, IF they were being faithful to the instructions given to Moses, they would have had the following prerequisites in mind: 1) Each grain grower was to bring a sheaf of his pending harvest to the priest; 2) their offering would have been from a mature crop which they themselves had planted, and 3) it was to be accompanied with a lamb as a burnt offering with unleavened bread and wine. (v.13) I suppose we could add a fourth consideration, that these were to be 'first-fruits' which pre-requires that the field hadn't been already partially harvested by its Jerechonian owners in advance of the imminent siege! Jericho was in full panic!

Let's also be attentive to the scene where Joshua – off by himself – visited the actual site where the Abrahamic Covenant had been made 430 years prior. At about the time this supposed Wave Sheaf is claimed to have been offered, he'd gone out early in the morning to a location declared to be "Holy Ground". This would have been the morning of the fifteenth, before or at about the time when said supposed Wave Sheaf was being offered! It was there that he encountered a very imposing angel. That exchange would have left a strong impression that he follow every instruction explicitly! He was in the presence of God's direct representative! (Jos. 5:13-15)

### The Situation With Jericho

Further, the people were strictly pre-cautioned to not avail themselves of any of the tempting 'spoils' from Jericho's possessions, particularly those found within the city.

An entourage encircled the city once each of the first six days of Unleavened Bread. And on the seventh day, they encircled the city seven times.

### A Wholly Accursed City

[Joshua 6:16] *"And it came to pass at the seventh time, when the priests blew with the trumpets, Joshua said unto the people, Shout; for the LORD hath given you the city.*

[17] *And the city shall be accursed, even it, and all that are therein, to the LORD: only Rahab the harlot shall live, she and all that are with her in the house, because she hid the messengers that we sent.*

[18] *And ye, in any wise keep yourselves from the accursed thing, lest ye make yourselves accursed, when ye take of the accursed thing, and make the camp of Israel a curse, and trouble it."*

Jericho's possessions (at least those within the city walls) were to be regarded as accursed. Offering Jericho's field grains from fields already disturbed would / should have generated a question at the time. Recognizing the questions, the KJV translators inserted 'old' corn (the word old isn't there) which indicated their support for the position that there was no wave sheaf offered that year! A second reason was that the idea of a Wave Sheaf Offering on the 'morrow after the Passover' was contrary to Jewish practice. Such an offering would NEVER have been made prior to the second day of Unleavened Bread, which was and is the traditional offering occasion among most Jews.

[19] *"But all the silver, and gold, and vessels of brass and iron, are consecrated unto the LORD: they shall come into the treasury of the LORD. They were to keep those metal items that would have survived, being purified by a fire.*

[20] *So the people shouted when the priests blew with the trumpets: and it came to pass, when the people heard the sound of the trumpet, and the people shouted with a great shout, that the wall fell down flat, so that the people went up into the city, every man straight before him, and they took the*

city. This was a hand-to-hand combat and slaughter situation. A very strenuous activity!

[21] “*And they utterly destroyed all that was in the city, both man and woman, young and old, and ox, and sheep, and ass, with the edge of the sword.*” This is what they understood their instruction to involve.

### Josephus’ Analysis

Josephus says nothing about the possibility of a Wave Sheaf Offering that year: His *Antiquities Book 5.1.4* speaks of this very occasion.

Relating this incident by Josephus doesn’t suggest a Wave Sheaf Offering was involved prior to their first eating of local produce. In fact, he wouldn’t even have thought so, as the Jewish Wave Sheaf was traditionally offered on the second Day of Unleavened Bread. One would never have been thought of as having been offered on the first Day of Unleavened Bread and that by all three Jewish persuasions, which is what the ‘morrow after the Passover’ would be understood to mean in his day.

### Manna Ceased Thereafter

Josephus also relates when manna ceased. His account reads: “*...and in that place celebrated the Passover, and had great plenty of all the things which they wanted hitherto; for they reaped the corn of the Canaanites, which was now ripe, and took other things as prey; for then it was that their former food, which was manna, and of which they had eaten forty years, failed them.*” Josephus, then, doesn’t buy into the KJV translators’ idea posed centuries later that it had to be “old” corn.

### They Celebrated ON Passover

So, this is revealing. They HAD access to Canaanite goods, including food stuffs’, before Passover in order to celebrate Passover in the manner that they are described doing. They are described as reaping and eating newly harvested ‘corn’ (barley) before the first day of Unleavened Bread. That would clearly indicate that they were **not** considering any Wave Sheaf Offering as a prerequisite to beginning their harvest of Canaanite grains!

It’s the KJV translators who saw need to justify that the grains were left over from a previous year in deference to Jewish traditions, the earliest of

which being that Wave Sheaf day is no earlier than the second day of Unleavened Bread. Josephus’ comments show he didn’t consider a Wave Sheaf Offering to be a consideration here at all.

Now, if manna ceased on the morrow after the Passover, that would mean that it DID fall the morning of the fourteenth. Otherwise, it would have to have ceased the day before Passover, IF that Passover was a weekly Sabbath as some allege! (No manna fell on Sabbath mornings, tho’ a double portion fell on the morning previous!) The other possibility would have to be that it last fell the next morning, the morning after Passover, the first Day of Unleavened Bread, but that is illogical to the intent of the statements by Josephus. If manna had ceased (fallen for the last time) on the morning OF Passover (the 14<sup>th</sup>), then the eating of Canaan’s foodstuffs would not have been a case of necessity, which also isn’t something alluded to in either account.

### Was it REALLY “Old Corn”?

So, the King James Version translators added “old” corn to their wording of the passage, suggesting it was ‘stored grain’ from a previous year. But that’s contradictory to the instruction that the spoils within the city were accursed. And, of course, they hadn’t entered the city at this point anyway! That was still a week away! And, would a source of that nature have been considered by them as an acceptable Wave Sheaf without some question?

### Distracted by Menu Items

The major consideration employed to give any credence to this Passover-on-a-weekly Sabbath idea is the comparison between Leviticus 23:14 and Joshua 5:11. “*And they did eat...unleavened cakes, and parched corn in the selfsame day*” in the latter v. “*And ye shall eat neither bread, nor parched corn, nor green ears, until the selfsame day that ye have brought an offering unto your God:*” in the former. (In Joshua 5, ‘parched’ isn’t in the original text, so the two aren’t exactly comparable!) From just this cross-comparison, a determination is made that they had to have offered a Wave Sheaf Offering before doing so! This despite all the other considerations presented here. And there are other significant factors, as explained in my “Morrow after the Passover” article. 

## QUESTIONS Regarding a Wave Sheaf at Jericho:

- 1] What is meant by ‘morrow after the Passover’? Was it the daylight part of the 14<sup>th</sup> or of the 15<sup>th</sup>?  
Passover was ended around midnight of the 14<sup>th</sup>.  
IF there had been a Wave Sheaf Offering, it would have been mid-morning of the 15<sup>th</sup>.  
What time is needed to dry the new grains in order to grind the necessary flour?
- 2] On which day did they first eat of the local produce?  
Josephus suggests it was the fourteenth. [Antiquities 5.1.4]
- 3] Did they offer a Wave Sheaf Offering following all the instructions therefor?  
Waving a sheaf of grain;  
Offering a lamb burnt offering;  
Offering with it a fine flour with oil unleavened bread. [Lev.23:12-13]
- 4] Who officiated at this supposed ceremony?
- 5] Why does no Jewish persuasion (except one) consider the first DUB as a Wave Sheaf day?  
That one sect came into being in the fifteenth century!
- 6] Is the requirement of the grain being ‘of seed which they had planted’ irrelevant?
- 7] Was the source field unviolated?  
Would the people of Jericho have thought to bring in ‘almost ripened’ grains ahead of the siege?
- 8] On which day did manna last fall?  
The Passover day being supposed as a weekly Sabbath makes a difference.  
None would have fallen that morning, if it was.  
That would mean that it last fell (a double portion) the morning before – or –  
It fell yet one more time the morning of the 15<sup>th</sup>. (an annual Sabbath)
- 9] Did manna fall on annual Sabbaths?
- 10] Did the children of Israel engage in hand-to-hand combat on a weekly Sabbath?  
If Passover was a weekly Sabbath, then so was the last DUB.
- 11] Were the food items given in Leviticus 23 identical with Joshua 5?  
This alone is the determining consideration that they did offer one.
- 12] Did they have other food items obtained in prior ‘east-of-Jordan’ conquests?  
What did they use to prepare ‘victuals’ for a 3-day campaign prior to crossing the Jordan?  
You can’t do that with manna!  
That crossing of the Jordan was on the tenth.  
This activity would have been on the seventh of that month (also a Sabbath?)
- 13] Why is there absolutely NO suggestion of a Wave Sheaf Offering in the Joshua 5 text?
- 14] Were the children of Israel actually the sticklers for ceremonial performance as we imagine?
- 15] What is the ‘selfsame day’ (the anniversary of what?) Why is this reference overlooked?
- 16] Why did the KJV translators see need to insert “old” corn?  
They recognized a problem with eating of a new crop this early!  
Their determination was that they ate before any Wave Sheaf would have been offered!