

TOWARDS SHAVUOT: FROM FIRST HARVEST TO FIRST FRUITS

In this brief exposé, I want to speak to a number of issues that unambiguously address events and actions that are linked to the counting of the Omer and the festival referred to as Shavuot – the Feast of Weeks. In the midst of looking at these matters, we will also examine Yeshua’s words in Mattityahu 24:36; that *no man knows the day or the hour* and try to unravel the meaning of these words in the Hebraic context of Shavuot and not as most people think, *Yom Te’ruah* – the Feast of Trumpets.

Centuries of Christian and more recently, Messianic/Ephraimite theologians, scholars, students of the Bible, and religious prognosticators, still saturated in Byzantine Christian theology (dating to the early fourth century) are either sidestepping most of the points that we are going to look at in this article, because they simply are being prevented from seeing the explanations or, in more cases than not, are studying the issues within the context of a wrong theological framework using the teachings of early Christianity as a basis for their knowledge.

A prime example of using Byzantine Christian theology to understand the words of Yeshua can be appreciated, especially most recently, is in what I might call the “*The Great Disappointment II*” – May 21, 2011. For so many, it proved itself to be an exercise in futility. Sadly, the faith of many now falters on the brink of hopelessness; shattered and broken people, all because they trusted in the word of a man who is himself a product of the Jesus of Christianity and not the Yeshua of the Torah. Regardless, we need to be kind, give grace and show mercy in the Name of YHWH and continue to show the world the Torah of truth, which is understood through the Law, the Prophets, and the Writings.

Regarding Yeshua’s words in Mattityahu 24:36, I wish to say with all openness that I think perchance we have all missed the true Hebraic meaning of what he was driving at. Why is this the case? I think it comes down to this: tolerances for nearly two thousand years of Catholic/Christian understanding of New Testament mainstream biblical theology. It has woefully intertwined itself into not only Christian teachings but also Messianic/Ephraimite faith, and it should come as no surprise to anyone, that all of us are in fact, lost in a maze of misunderstandings of the teachings of Yeshua, Sha’ul (Paul) and others like them from that same period in Jewish history; missing the mark of a contextual Hebraic understanding of the written traditions that we have access to in our generation. Indeed, let us not deceive ourselves. We are all affected on some level, deprived of a true comprehension of the passed-down versions of the biblical manuscripts, in their proper contexts. Sorrowfully, our long divinely appointed exile among the goyim has certainly affected the way we think and understand the Torah, the Prophets, the Writings, and the Brit haChadasha.

Regardless of our present condition, I nonetheless encourage every one of you to continue in your Hebraic-context biblical studies and learning and further, I say that none of us – you or I – should stop in our pursuit of this striving for rightly understanding written biblical truth. I honestly hold out hope that in our regular cerebral skirmishes with the biblical texts, that collectively we will eventually be able to adjust misinterpretations and turn them into more accurate interpretations, especially as YHWH gives us time to repent and become extricated from our slavery to all forms of man-made faith and religious ideologies that distort divine truth. Let none of us forget this: Yeshua grew up and lived in a Second-Temple Period Judaic culture; a culture that obstructed the written Torah texts through the rabbinic Oral Law of the day. Later, the new leaders of the pagan “Church of Rome,” which had already moved its headquarters from Rome to Constantinople – today’s Istanbul, Turkey, in the early 300s, again obstructed the philosophy of true faith. From Constantinople, a false gospel of man-made religious ideologies spread out to the rest of the world via the Byzantines, who became quite adept at obfuscating the Torah, the Prophets, and the Writings of the Tanakh and the Brit haChadasha.

All of this said, I want to return to the Holy Torah of Moses and in its context, have a look at the counting of the Omer, the first cutting and harvest of Shavuot, and Yeshua’s words from Mattityahu 24:36, as they more likely have a connection to the Torah-mandated festival referred to as *Shavuot* – the Feast of Weeks (Exodus 34:22) and not, as most believe, to the first day of the seventh month – the Feast of Trumpets (Leviticus 23:23-25) or as some say, “*Rosh HaShanah*.” However, in good conscience, I must admit that for over a decade I too believed that Yeshua’s “*No man knows the day or the hour*” was connected to the fall Feast of Trumpets. Only recently, have I begun moving away from this idea and focusing on something that I think makes more sense in my mind. We will look at all this in our upcoming study.

Before I begin the analysis I want to stress something very, very important. My intention is NOT, I repeat NOT to create yet another Ephraimite/Messianic calendar controversy! Do you fully understand what I have said? My only intention is to advance biblical knowledge and Torah scholarship on a matter that I think might be of interest to all of us. My style of writing is such that I often express myself with great passion in what I find in my research. Nonetheless, do not interpret my passion for the knowledge of this subject as being critical of dissenting opinions; or being dogmatic and unbending in such a way that you might interpret my approach as, “*My way or the highway*.” Consider my analysis of the subject matter on the following pages as something that should be proven from the written texts as you see them for yourself, not just accepted because I said so. In other words, you should diligently study and process what I am going to give you and with the knowledge that you gain, determine the truth for yourself.

Towards Shavuot: counting of the Omer

At least since the days of Jewish historian Flavius Josephus ben Mattityahu (“Josephus”), the counting of the Omer - an integral part of a “preamble” to the festival of Shavuot - Jews from all over the world have been counting fifty days in the context of a Torah-mandated seven weeks between Passover and Shavuot. This period of time is referred to as the counting of the days of the Omer, which is specified in the Torah (Leviticus 23:15-16) and is supposed to end precisely when *Torat Moshe* (the Torah of Moses) was given to all Israel at Mount Sinai (Exodus 19-20). Theoretically, the fifty days counting of the Omer is supposed to terminate on day six –seven of the Hebrew month Sivan, which usually falls in our May/June timeframe, according to the secular calendar that is in global use today. The biblical text of Leviticus 23:15-16 reads as follows:

You shall also count for yourselves from the day after the Sabbath, from the day when you brought in the sheaf of the wave offering; there shall be seven complete Sabbaths. You shall count fifty days to the day after the seventh Sabbath; then you shall present a new grain offering to YHWH.

According to the quoted biblical text, the counting of the Omer, which concludes with the one-day festival of Shavuot, is supposed to begin after two important conditions are met:

1. The Wave Sheaf offering has to be made **the day after the Sabbath**
2. The counting of the Omer begins **after there has been a certain quantity of grain waved to YHWH** as part of a national *mincha* or grain offering

Of course, there is no shortage of argumentation between theologians, scholars, and students of the Bible, whether in physical print or through the medium of electronic cyberspace, as to exactly what all of this means. In other words, what constitutes a “*wave sheaf offering*”? And what does, “*the day after the Sabbath*” mean? Further, the Jewish Orthodox, long ago, already determined through the *Halacha* of the Oral Law what everything means and so, for them, there is no reason to argue. For them, “*the day after the Sabbath*” means the sixteenth of Aviv (the day after Passover) and the counting of the Omer begins on that same day along with an Omer of barley; what is called in Hebrew *Raisheet K'tzir* or the “first cutting” or “first harvest” offering (not “*bikkurim*” or “first fruits” as the English translators like to call it. *Bikkurim* is actually the term used specifically for Shavuot on the fiftieth day of the Omer).

For the Messianic/Ephraimites, these questions still remain stuck in the realm of argumentation. In other words, the answers are not so clear and many are still arguing about when to start the count of the Omer and when is *Shavuot*. Some say this while others say that. My response? It is okay for now because we are all in a learning curve and there is still plenty of room open for discussion. Further, I think that Yeshua’s predictive words in Mattityahu 24:36 that, “*No man knows the day or the hour,*” is able to throw some light on this subject between the start of the counting of the Omer and the end of the harvest at Shavuot. To start, let us begin with Deuteronomy 16:9 -

*You shall count seven weeks to yourself; you shall begin to count seven Sabbaths **from the time you begin to put the sickle to the standing grain.***

To me, it makes sense that this commandment of Deuteronomy 16:9 may be the “starting gun” for Yeshua’s phrase, “*the day and hour that no man knows.*” Why? Because the authority of our Father in Heaven controls the Land of Israel’s heating and cooling days, former rains and latter rains; in general, the weather and everything else that is related to a good increase in the Land of Israel. In the forty-nine days and seven Sabbaths that follow putting the sickle to the standing grain (Deuteronomy 16:9), farmers all over ancient Israel were to complete their local harvests. But remember, Israel is a Land of numerous climactic zones and each farmer’s cutting could not be predicted or known ahead of time. They could only harvest when the grain permitted it. The farmers of ancient Israel simply could not know the day or the hour of THEIR HARVEST, which I think is the key here; neither could Yeshua. Certainly, no farmer could know precisely when to put the sickle to a field of his own standing grain until that moment of certainty came. Then, at the right hour, a farmer could say, “*Now, is the time. I will begin my harvest so that I have food to eat in the coming year and I have a part of my cutting to bring to the Temple on Shavuot, since **I am commanded to not come empty-handed!***” (Deuteronomy 16:16). However, I am getting ahead of myself.

In short, I want to explain what I think the actual harvest was and what the Omer count is based on; something that many of us have missed all along, probably due to our “thick-headedness,” long exile, and clouded judgment, as we continue to advocate and immerse in man-made religion and to promote adherence to the authority of Pharisaic and Babylonian Rabbinic learning and influence. So long as we continue in these practices, our eyes will likely remain blinded to truth.

The Wave Sheaf Offering

Ancient Jewish historian Flavius Josephus writes in his compilation of Israelite history - Antiquities, Book 3, Chapter 10, Section 5 (Ant. 3.10.5), the following:

*The feast of unleavened bread succeeds that of the Passover, and falls on the fifteenth day of the month, and continues seven days, wherein they feed on unleavened bread...**But on the second day of unleavened bread, which is the sixteenth day of the month, they first partake of the fruits of the earth, for before that day they do not touch them.** And while they suppose it proper to honor God, from whom they obtain this plentiful provision, in the first place, **they offer the first fruits of their barley,** and that in the manner following: They take a handful of the ears, and dry them, then beat them small, and purge the barley from the bran; they then bring one tenth deal to the altar, to God; and, casting one handful of it upon the fire, they leave the rest for the use of the priest; **and after this it is that they may publicly or privately reap their harvest.** They also at this participation of the firstfruits of the earth, sacrifice a lamb, as a burnt offering to God.*

Josephus, a faithful “Orthodox Jew” to the Pharisaic practice of his day, tells us that a wave sheaf (*Hebrew: Omer*) offering of barley (*Hebrew: Se'orah*) was offered to YHWH on the sixteenth of the month (of Aviv). For more specifics, we must turn to the Babylonian Talmud, Menachot 65a, which reads as follows:

WHAT WAS THE PROCEDURE? THE MESSENGERS OF THE BETH DIN USED TO GO OUT ON THE DAY BEFORE THE FESTIVAL AND TIE THE UNREAPED CORN IN BUNCHES TO MAKE IT THE EASIER TO REAP. ALL THE INHABITANTS OF THE TOWNS NEAR BY ASSEMBLED THERE, SO THAT IT MIGHT BE REAPED WITH MUCH DISPLAY. AS SOON AS IT BECAME DARK HE CALLED OUT, ‘**HAS THE SUN SET?**’ AND THEY ANSWERED. ‘YES.’ HAS THE SUN SET?’ AND THEY ANSWERED, ‘YES.’ WITH THIS SICKLE’ AND THEY ANSWERED, ‘YES’. ‘**WITH THIS SICKLE?**’ AND THEY ANSWERED, YES’. ‘**INTO THIS BASKET?**’ AND THEY ANSWERED, ‘YES’. INTO THIS BASKET?’ AND THEY ANSWERED. ‘YES’. ON THE SABBATH HE CALLED OUT FURTHER, ON THIS SABBATH?’ AND THEY ANSWERED. ‘YES’. ‘**ON THIS SABBATH?**’ AND THEY ANSWERED. ‘YES’. ‘**SHALL I REAP?**’ AND THEY ANSWERED, REAP’. ‘SHALL I REAP?’ AND THEY ANSWERED, ‘REAP’. HE REPEATED EVERY MATTER THREE TIMES, AND THEY ANSWERED, ‘YES.’ ‘YES.’ ‘YES’. AND WHY WAS ALL THIS? BECAUSE OF THE BOETHUSIANS WHO MAINTAINED THAT THE REAPING OF THE ‘OMER WAS NOT TO TAKE PLACE AT THE CONCLUSION OF THE [FIRST DAY OF THE] FESTIVAL.

On this matter of great ceremonial pageantry and excitement, let us now have a look at Leviticus 23 and step through verses 10-13. As I work my way through the text, I will be replacing “LORD” with YHWH and in some places, clarifying the English translation with what I understand to be a more faithful rendering of the text in Hebrew:

Verses 9-10:

*Then YHWH spoke to Moses, saying, Speak to the sons of Israel, and say to them, When you enter the land which I am going to give to you and **harvest its harvest**, then you shall bring in **the Omer** of the **Raisheet K'tzirchem** (first cutting or first harvest) of your harvest to the Kohen (priest).*

Here, we learn from the Torah, in pretty straightforward language, that from the moment national Israel enters the Land and begins its **harvest of the harvest** (*Hebrew: K'tzir*, when the sickle touches the standing grain – Deuteronomy 16:9), that the Kohen is to take a certain measurement of that grain (not the stalks, but the grain from the stalks) and offer it collectively on behalf of the nation, to YHWH, for their good; for their acceptance. This national, collective offering is described as **the Omer** (the “Sheaf”) - the Land’s first cutting (*Hebrew: Raisheet K'tzir – first harvest*; not “*bikkurim*” as the English translators like to call it. *Bikkurim* is actually the term used specifically for Shavuot on the fiftieth day of the Omer). This collective, national first cutting belongs to YHWH. It is given to Him. The Kohen then sanctifies and blesses YHWH for the new growth of grain and YHWH in turn blesses the people and provides them with their sustenance for the coming year.

Verse 11:

*And he (the Kohen) shall wave the Omer (sheaf) before YHWH for you to be accepted; **on the day after the Sabbath** the Kohen shall wave it.*

Verses 12 -13:

*Now on the day when you (a collective offering done by the Kohen) wave the Omer, you shall offer a male lamb one year old without defect for a burnt offering to YHWH. Its grain offering shall then be two-tenths of an **ephah of fine flour** mixed with oil, an offering by fire to YHWH for a soothing aroma, with its libation, a fourth of a hin of wine.*

Here, the Torah specifies that when the Kohen waves the Omer of the new growth of the Land, a specific burnt offering should also be added along with a very specific “two-tenths” of an **ephah of fine flour** mixed with oil.

Verse 14:

*Until this same day, until you have brought in the offering of your Elohim, you shall eat neither bread nor roasted grain nor new growth. **It is to be a perpetual statute throughout your generations in all your dwelling places.***

Here, the Torah is once again straightforward; we are not allowed to eat of the new growth until we have made this offering – the offering of the Omer - and this applies to all of us, in our generations, in our dwelling places, here in the Land, or so I understand it, meaning I don't think this command applies to those living outside of the Land, since the context is about coming into the Land (v.10).

Now, let us focus on the part of the commandment in verse 13 that is relevant to our study here:

*Its **grain offering** (Hebrew: **mincha**) shall then be two-tenths of an ephah of **fine flour** (Hebrew: **Solet**) mixed with oil...*

The Hebrew text specifically tells us that this national offering of *Raisheet K'tzir* (first harvest), which occurs the day after the Sabbath (we'll look at this shortly) is supposed to be accompanied with **mincha** (a grain offering) and this grain offering is specifically declared to be **solet**, which is translated into English as “**fine flour.**” This being said about the details of the “first cutting” or “first harvest,” let us once again look at what the Pharisees were doing, according to Flavius Josephus:

*...they offer the bikkurim (Raisheet K'tzir – “first harvest”) **of their barley...***

So, the question that really needs to be asked is this: Is **solet, barley**? The answer is No. **Solet is not barley** because solet is always finely crushed wheat (I will explain this in a moment) and barley is *se'orah*, which is *solet's* antonym; that is, rough and coarse. **Solet** is from the Hebrew word **Samech Lamed Tav**, but in Modern Hebrew it is spelled **Samech Vav Lamed Tav**.

Defining the Terminology for Wheat and Barley

Let us have a look at Hebrew scripture and identify the words that are connected to wheat: **Solet and Chitah**. First, let us look at solet:

2 Kings 7:1. *Then Elisha said, "Listen to the word of YHWH; thus says YHWH, 'Tomorrow about this time a measure of **fine flour (solet)** shall be sold for a shekel, and two measures of **barley (se'orah)** for a shekel, in the gate of Samaria.'"*

2 Kings 7:16. *So the people went out and plundered the camp of the Arameans. Then a measure of **fine flour (solet)** was sold for a shekel and two measures of **barley (se'orah)** for a shekel, according to the word of YHWH.*

Ezekiel 16:13. *Thus you were adorned with gold and silver, and your dress was of fine linen, silk, and embroidered cloth. You ate **fine flour (solet)**, honey, and oil; so you were exceedingly beautiful and advanced to royalty.*

Ezekiel 16:19. *Also My bread which I gave you, **fine flour (solet)**, oil, and honey with which I fed you, you would offer before them for a soothing aroma; so it happened...."*

So, what exactly is "solet"? (We will address *se'orah* shortly.) Solet is what we would call today **semolina**. English translators use the phrase, "**fine flour.**" In the Septuagint (LXX), *solet* is *semidalis* and in the Latin Vulgate, *solet* is *simila*, both terms referring to finely ground wheat flour, not barley. Solet is essentially what we would call "cream of wheat." During wheat milling, the bran, germ and endosperm are separated and the endosperm breaks into grains of about 0.25mm - 0.75mm in diameter. These grains are further processed to produce fine wheat flour, also called "choice flour" in the Bible. Essentially, this is the best of the best when it comes to the processing and breaking apart of the wheat kernel.

From the passages above, you can clearly see that **solet** and **se'orah** (wheat and barley) are two different varieties of flour. In other words, solet is not *se'orah* and *se'orah* is not solet. They are different; and rightly, they should be.

Since solet is the fine flour of the processed wheat grain, then what is the general term for "wheat" in Hebrew? The biblical term is **Chitah** – **Chet Tet Heh**. Below are some passages that specifically refer to **chitah** or wheat, in general:

2 Samuel 17:28. *Now when David had come to Mahanaim, Shobi the son of Nahash from Rabbah of the sons of Ammon, Machir the son of Ammiel from Lo-debar, and Barzillai the Gileadite from Rogelim, brought beds, basins, pottery, **wheat (chitah)**, barley (*se'orah*), flour (*kemach*), parched grain, beans, lentils, parched seeds....*

Deuteronomy 8:8. *a land of **wheat (chitah)** and barley, of vines and fig trees and pomegranates, a land of olive oil and honey....*

Isaiah 28:24-25. Does the farmer plow continually to plant seed? Does he continually turn and harrow the ground? Does he not level its surface, and sow dill and scatter cumin, and plant **wheat (chitah)** in rows, barley in its place, and rye within its area?

Joel 1:11. Be ashamed, O farmers, wail, O vinedressers, for the **wheat (chitah)** and the barley; because the harvest of the field is destroyed.

Chitah is wheat, in Hebrew. *Solet* is the *chitah* that has been broken up, ground up, and processed into fine flour. But don't take my word for it. Try this experiment at home: grind *se'orah* (barley) into a "cream of barley" type of meal and judge its texture. Do the same with *chitah (wheat)*. Grind it into solet and check its texture; doing this will show you that crushed barley cannot be fine, choice flour. Solet is choice and creamy; barley is rough and coarse. It is this flour – the solet – that is always offered to or is used in the service and worship of YHWH in the biblical texts (cf. Numbers 6:15, 7:13, 8:8). Let us take a look:

Exodus 29:1-2. Now this is what you shall do to them to consecrate them to minister as kohanim to Me: take one young bull and two rams without blemish, and unleavened bread and unleavened cakes mixed with oil, and unleavened wafers spread with oil; you shall make them of **fine wheat flour (solet chitim)**.

Leviticus 2:1. Now when anyone presents a grain offering as an offering to YHWH, his offering shall be of **fine flour (solet)**, and he shall pour oil on it and put frankincense on it.

In the Law, the Prophets, and the Writings, there are many references to the *solet* (fine flour) of *chitah* its use and service to YHWH. Now, in Hebrew, there is yet another more general word for flour. This is **Kemach – Kuf Mem Chet**. *Kemach* can mean any kind of flour – wheat, barley, rye, spelt; whatever you wish. Here are a few biblical references to *kemach* in Hebrew scripture:

Judges 6:19. Then Gideon went in and prepared a kid and unleavened bread from an ephah of **flour (kemach)**....

Isaiah 47:2. "Take the millstones and grind **meal (kemach)**."

Hosea 8:7. For they sow the wind, and they reap the whirlwind. The standing grain has no heads; it yields no **grain (kemach)**.

If *kemach* is attached to the Hebrew word *solet*, then it specifically refers to **fine wheat flour**. If *kemach* is attached to *se'orah* then it refers to barley flour, so forth and so on. Here are a couple of examples from Hebrew scripture:

Numbers 5:15. ...the man shall then bring his wife to the priest, and shall bring as an offering for her one-tenth of an ephah of **barley meal (kemach se'orah)**....

Genesis 18:6. So Abraham hurried into the tent to Sarah, and said, "Quickly, prepare three measures of **fine flour (kemach solet)**, knead it, and make bread cakes."

In Genesis 18:6 and true to the biblical use of *solet*, Abraham offered the messengers of YHWH bread cakes made from **solet** (fine flour of wheat) not from the **flour of se'orah** (barley). Abraham offered the finest of his food – baked cakes from fine wheat flour - to these messengers of YHWH and rightly so, since they were sent to him in the name of YHWH. By the way, the Unleavened Bread of *Passover matza* is made from *solet*, not *se'orah* (barley). Further, *Passover matza* can be made from the previous year's crop of *chitah*, as there is nothing in scripture that commands us to eat *Passover matza* only from the growth of new wheat. In summary, we therefore have these terms and their biblical definitions:

1. **Chitah** – Wheat
2. **Solet** – Wheat kernels ground up to make fine flour
3. **Se'orah** – Barley kernels
4. **Kemach** – Any kind of flour, specified if necessary in the biblical texts

Grain Offerings (Mincha) to YHWH

When in the service or worship of YHWH (Numbers 6:15, 7:13, 8:8; Exodus 29:2), there is no case that I am aware of, except *Bamidbar* (Numbers) 5:15, where *se'orah* (barley) is chosen over *chitah* (wheat) as the ordinance that stipulates how we are to come before YHWH when presenting a grain offering. We will address Numbers 5:15 shortly. If I have missed something, somewhere (other than my knowledge of Numbers 5), then I am open to correction by anyone that can read Hebrew and will happily recant if in fact I have made a rash finding in my teaching of this matter. This being said, let us once again, let us look at Leviticus 2:1

*Leviticus 2:1. Now when anyone presents a **mincha** (grain) as an offering to YHWH, his offering shall be of **fine flour (solet)**, and he shall pour oil on it and put frankincense on it.*

Now, according to Leviticus 23:12-13 we have this biblical statement of detail:

*Now on the day when you wave the **Omer (sheaf)**, you shall offer a male lamb one year old without defect for a burnt offering to YHWH. His (the offerer's) grain (**mincha**) shall then be two-tenths of an **ephah of fine flour (solet)** mixed with oil, an offering by fire to YHWH for a soothing aroma....*

In Leviticus 2:1 the Divine Will is to receive from us **solet** whenever we perform **mincha** or a **grain offering to YHWH**. Now, look at Leviticus 23:12-13, and notice that the *Raisheet K'tzir* (first cutting) of an Omer offering is called **mincha** or a grain offering. Thus, putting the two biblical references together and knowing that YHWH wants **fine flour (solet)** from us when we offer **mincha** (a grain offering), I find it suspicious that Pharisaic/Rabbinic Judaism continues on this path to promote and teach that the Shavuot count of the Omer to YHWH must come from **se'orah** or barley and not from **solet chitim** or fine wheat flour. Once again, exactly as Flavius Josephus mentions (*Antiquities* 3.10.5):

...in the first place, they offer the first fruits (Raisheet K'tzir) of their barley

A long time ago, Pharisaic/Rabbinic Judaism established a precedent that the fifty-day/seven-week counting of the Omer leading to Shavuot, starts with barley. Today's Messianics and Ephraimites (the returning house of Israel believers) follow the same Pharisaic practice that appears to be not in accordance with the revealed Will of YHWH.

Now, please understand that I am no holier than you; I too believed and taught that the count of the Omer starts with an **Omer of barley** but these days, I am leaning more heavily to an **Omer of solet**, which is why I have taken the time to share my studies with you. The more that I look at these things, the more I become convinced that we need to reconsider our ways and stop trailing in the unruly path of Pharisaic/Rabbinic Judaism and in its tenets of agitation against the Name YHWH, which is all based on Rabbinic oral tradition and authority.

Observations from the Talmud and Mishnah

This idea that barley (*se'orah*) may in fact, be the wrong offering for the start of the count of the Omer is actually nothing new. In other words, this isn't a "new revelation"; not at all. It was in point, argued long ago that wheat (*solet*) may be the offering that YHWH wants and this idea has actually been around for quite some time. Consider this recorded dispute from the period of the Talmud, dated to the late 200's/early 300's:

Menachot 84a ...Rabbah raised the following objection: The verse, And if thou bring a meal-offering of first-fruits refers to the meal-offering of the 'Omer. Of what was it offered? Of barley. You say 'of barley'; but perhaps it is not so but rather of wheat!

Now, if you have the Talmud, please go ahead and read the whole *daf* or Talmudic page in its context. It is actually quite enlightening, if you ask me. All that I have done here is to present the core of an old argument from Menachot 84a. However, what can we learn from this? I think, that at least in the period of the compilation of the Talmud, there was a dialogue that the Omer, which starts the count to Shavuot, was supposed to be taken from wheat (*solet*) and not barley (*se'orah*). All that I can tell you is this: at some point in the halachic history of Israel, something changed and Judaism adopted barley as the offering to YHWH and not wheat. I have no idea when it changed or why; only that it changed from the giving of the Torah in the days of Moshe. However, there is this very interesting piece of information that is culled from the quoted Mishnah in Menachot 85a of the Talmud:

ALL [OFFERINGS] MUST BE OFFERED FROM THE CHOICEST PRODUCE etc. ...HOW WAS IT TESTED? THE TEMPLE-TREASURER USED TO THRUST HIS HAND INTO IT; IF SOME DUST CAME UP IN [HIS HAND] IT WAS INVALID, UNTIL IT WAS SIFTED [ONCE MORE]. IF IT HAD BECOME MAGOTTY IT IS INVALID.

The Gemara (commentary) on this Mishnah is as follows:

*...It was taught: Abba Saul said, **The 'Omer-offering was usually brought from the [produce of the] valley of Beth Makleh** which was an area that produced three se'ahs; it lay in the south facing the south and the sun rose upon it and the sun set upon it. Half of it was broken up while the other half was sown, and [in the following year] half of it was broken up and the other half was sown.*

Where is **Beth Makleh**? It is identified in the Jewish sources (*Tosefta Menachot 10.2; 10.3*) as **Nahal Kidron**; that is, the Kidron Valley. **Beth Makleh** was referred to in Second Temple times as the "*Field of Wheat*" and it was near Jerusalem and the Temple.

This information is very significant because it identifies the fact that the grain offering of the Omer came from an area of Jerusalem known in antiquity to produce excellent wheat kernels, from which solet or fine flour was made. Obviously, this was important because the religious leaders and teachers of the First (and presumably the Second) Temple periods knew without question that the *Lechem haPanim* – the "showbread" for the Temple was supposed to be baked from **solet chitim** (fine flour) and not *se'orah* (barley). Again, here is the commandment as specified in Leviticus 24:5-8:

*Then you shall take **fine flour (solet)** and **bake twelve cakes with it**; two-tenths of an ephah shall be in each cake. And **you shall set them in two rows, six to a row, on the pure gold table before YHWH**. And you shall put pure frankincense on each row, that it may be a memorial portion for the bread, even an offering by fire to YHWH. Every Sabbath day he shall set it in order before YHWH continually; it is an everlasting covenant for the sons of Israel.*

The ***Lechem haPanim*** – "showbread" was always supposed to rest in the Holy Place, in the face of YHWH as a reminder of His love, covenant, and commitment to the sons of Israel. This baked bread made of solet – fine flour - was to symbolically represent the redeemed twelve tribes "*Israel of Elohim*," even as Sha'ul (Paul) understood the idea in Galatians 6:16, saying:

*...And those who will walk by this rule, peace and mercy be upon them, and upon **the Israel of Elohim**.*

We, the *Israel of Elohim*; those who choose to walk in the renewal of covenant, in the Torah of Moshe, are representations of the *Lechem haPanim* – the "showbread" that was always in the Holy Place before the face of YHWH. In a very real sense, we are the redeemed of Israel – the symbolic **solet** of the "grain" from the fields that have been harvested as wheat is harvested. This being said let us now have a closer look at *se'orah* or what barley represents.

Barley – Food for People; Food for Animals

Among the Hebrews and long since the days of our illustrious beginnings, *se'orah* was considered a staple food for our daily sustenance. Barley was the food of animals as well as the food of people. In fact, there was nothing wrong with eating barley, ever; it was an essential food of all Israel going back a very long time in our history. The point that I am making is not that barley is bad or inferior; on the contrary, it is good, solid, healthy food but clearly in scripture, it was not used to honor and thank YHWH in Temple service. The only case that I know of, where barley is used in a ceremony of the Temple, is Numbers 5:15, which I will address in a moment. However, barley does have its teaching role in scripture and in fact, references to plain 'ol barley are abundant:

Judges 7:13-14. *Behold, I had a dream; a loaf of barley bread (Lechem Se'orah) was tumbling into the camp of Midian, and it came to the tent and struck it so that it fell, and turned it upside down so that the tent lay flat."*

1 Kings 4:27-28. *And those deputies provided for King Solomon and all who came to King Solomon's table, each in his month; they left nothing lacking. They also brought **barley (se'orah)** and straw for the horses and swift steeds to the place where it should be, each according to his charge.*

2 Chronicles 2:15 (Hebrew: v. 14). *Now then, let my Master send to his servants wheat (chitim) and **barley (se'orim)**, oil and wine, of which he has spoken.*

Not only was barley a food of our physical sustenance in ancient Israel but it also served to educate Israel in a spiritual lesson about the flesh or animal nature of man, which is supposed to be held in subjection to the Word of YHWH. Remarkably, since we are talking about man's animal nature, here is a fact that might interest you: the ancient Roman gladiators were called *hordearii* ("barley eaters"). Why so? Of course, gladiators were men of brute strength. But in order to survive, they had to act like animals on many levels in the gladiatorial games; almost always, a fight to the death.

The principle of *se'orah* (barley) and its connection to the flesh may be evident in the narrative of Luke 13:32, when Yeshua calls Herod Antipas, "*that fox.*" There was a recorded rabbinic dialog from the period, telling us that barley has the appearance of a foxtail, as it looks hairy (*Hebrew: sea'are = "hairy"*). Interestingly *sea'are (hairy) – Sin Ayin Resh* – is related to *se'orah – Sin Ayin Resh Heh (barley)*. Should it surprise us that Yeshua would call Herod Antipas a fox? Perhaps Yeshua had something more in mind? It is certainly a probability. But consider this: Antipas was spiritually associated to Ya'acov's brother Esau who WAS called a "hairy" man – *Sin Resh Ayin* (Genesis 25:25). Antipas, as a member of the Idumean/Edomite Herodian dynasty, was not only a man of the flesh like Esau, but he was also crafty and perhaps we could say "hairy" like *se'orah - barley (Sin Resh Ayin Heh)*, resembling the guile of a fox. At least it is something to think about. Below is my summary of what each grain symbolizes:

1. **Barley** foreshadows the flesh; man's innate desire to do things "my way" according to the dictates of his animal nature, his man-made religious philosophy and ideology. This is seen in the coarse nature of the barley seed, and particularly in its hard bran coating. It is tough, like the human resolve.
2. **Wheat** foreshadows man's redeemed nature that wants to please his Creator and to do what his regenerated soul would want to do according to the Spirit of YHWH. This is seen in the fact that the wheat kernel contains a thinner layer of tough bran, easily supple.

A gift to YHWH, in the form of a grain offering (Leviticus 2:1) was always presented with *solet* (crushed wheat); **fine flour** that symbolizes redemption; a new nature; humility; submitting to YHWH's Will; characteristics of our new redeemed nature. Conversely, *se'orah* (barley) signifies actions of the flesh; being crafty and clever; in looking for clever loopholes to get around the instructions of YHWH; explaining away divine directives and making innovations in the Law. This is what Yeshua said about the nature of the *P'rushim* (Pharisees) of his day in Mark 7:1-13, after quoting a scathing word from Isaiah 29:13 -

You nicely set aside the commandment of Elohim in order to keep your tradition. (Mark 7:9)

Barley and the *Sotah* (Woman Suspected of Adultery)

The case where *se'orah* (barley) IS used in ancient Temple service and in the face of YHWH, is in the instruction of the *sotah*; that is, the married woman that is suspected of committing adultery in *Bamidbar* (Numbers) chapter 5:11-31. Specifically, we learn that the *mincha* or grain offering for the *sotah* (the woman who is standing before YHWH in the Temple, facing charges of adultery) is barley, and NOT wheat. Have a look here:

Numbers 5:15. ...The man shall then bring his wife to the priest, and shall bring as an offering for her one-tenth of an ephah of barley meal (kemach se'orah); he shall not pour oil on it, nor put frankincense on it, for it is a grain offering (mincha) of jealousy, a grain offering (mincha) of a remembrance to make iniquity known.

The Hebrew in the last phrase of this passage - **a remembrance to make iniquity known** - is interesting (this clarification does not appear to be seen in English) because in the passage, the root *Zayin Resh Kaf* starts as a noun (*zikaron*) and then changes to a verb (*mazkeret*) in *binyan hifil* (causative), telling us that **this barley grain offering was used to bring the sin of the woman into the light**; to make it known; to cause YHWH to remember it. The woman - the *sotah*- was to stand in the face of YHWH and his Kohen with barley because barley represents the flesh that does things "my way" - the animal nature; that which causes us no shortage of grief as it regularly taunts us in our daily physical life to violate divine commandments and choose the wrong things. Once again, to show you the mind of the rabbis in the compilation of the Talmud of Judaism, there is an elaboration on this train of thought culled from the Mishnah within the Talmud of *Sotah* 14a:

...RABBAN GAMALIEL SAYS: AS **HER ACTIONS WERE THE ACTIONS OF AN ANIMAL**, SO HER OFFERING [CONSISTED OF] ANIMAL'S FODDER.

Compare this interesting rabbinic thought to the symbolism of what fine flour (*solet*) represents, as it is offered to YHWH as *Raisheet K'tzir*, the "first cutting" or "first harvest" of Israel's grain fields. Conversely, the *sotah's se'orah* (barley) offering appears to symbolize the animal nature of the woman and not something that is offered in thanks to YHWH for giving us the produce of the Land. Now, once again, let us return to the stated reason for why *se'orah* was used in the ceremony of the *sotah* in Numbers 5:15:

...For it is a grain offering (*mincha*) of jealousy, a grain offering (*mincha*) of **a remembrance to make iniquity known**.

Some people will of course, say that the seven weeks of *Shavuot* – the Feast of Weeks – is metaphorically taking us from the waving of an Omer of Barley at *Pesach* (Passover) to the waving of the two loaves of bread baked as *bikkurim* seven weeks later; that in Yeshua, our Kinsman Redeemer in his first coming, we are purchased and ostensibly "waved" before YHWH as the *first cutting* or *Raisheet K'tzir of se'orah (barley)* and then with his second coming, ostensibly presented as a "wave offering" of **solet baked bikkurim** – two wheat loaves. Not so long ago, I believed this symbolism might have merit. In fact, at first, the comparison sounds reasonable. However, if we don't study what the scriptures say in Hebrew and we allow ourselves to be convinced by the logic of "brother Judah's" Oral Law, to follow Pharisaic customs, then we subject ourselves to unwanted errors. I think we should really stop to reflect on all of this. Perhaps we are confusing the barley-to-wheat metaphor with the scriptural actuality of wheat-to-wheat and essentially hoping to preserve the doctrines of the east - Babylonian Judaism and *its* Oral Law. Perhaps we should consider starting the fifty-day Omer count – the *Raisheet K'tzir* "first cutting" with a grain offering of **solet**, just as Hebrew scripture teaches and require that all subsequent metaphors line up suitably. Allow me to express my thoughts of this in a different way.

By continuing to offer an Omer of *se'orah* (barley) to YHWH at the beginning of the count of the Omer, are we perhaps unknowingly agreeing to collectively give YHWH something man-made? Something inferior; something that remembers the flesh? Something that says to Him, "You get from us *second best*" – *se'orah (animal food)* and not fine, expensive flour, so-to-speak? Maybe we just have to think through our collective metaphors more than we have.

Concerning my thoughts on Numbers 5:15, I want us to preserve the *p'shat* – simple meaning of scripture: that the *se'orah mincha* (barley grain offering) for the ceremony of the *sotah* was, "**a remembrance to make iniquity known,**" for an individual, not a collective body. Thus, any metaphors that we derive from this text and apply to Yeshua and the body of Messiah, the metaphor should support the simple meaning of Numbers 5:15 in its context. The simple meaning of Numbers 5:15 is a woman suspected of adultery by her husband and that the Kohen stands her in the presence of YHWH to make the barley offering "**a remembrance to make iniquity known.**"

Following this through metaphorically; this ceremony of the *sotah* is not about a *first cutting* of barley from the grain fields in Eretz Israel, to thank YHWH for our daily sustenance. But even if someone wants to stretch the *sotah* metaphor to apply to Yeshua (the “husband”) and his body (the “adulterous wife”), then individually the symbolism adopts a curse because Torah has already proven us whores, every one of us. So, I suppose in this sense of the imagery, that our curse is taken on by Yeshua, I can see how a barley offering would make sense with Yeshua’s death for our body-collective sins of a woman suspected of adultery and proven to be such a woman. But then, if we follow this metaphor through, it eventually breaks down and becomes very blurred. How so, you ask? I think because the grain offering of the Omer is about our collective acceptance of a blessing from YHWH for our food supply coming from the grain fields of Eretz Israel. The offering of the *sotah* is about an individual woman receiving a curse for her suspected adultery and these are two very different models. But even going beyond this, it is Yeshua’s resurrection that gives life to death, since this was Yeshua’s lesson in John 12:24, using wheat as the symbol:

Truly, truly, I say to you, unless a grain of wheat falls into the earth and dies, it remains by itself alone; but if it dies, it bears much fruit.

I see no indication in the death narrative and above declaration of Yeshua that he is waving anything before the Father; however, the waving action makes more sense in his resurrection, as I see things. Resurrection represents life and redemption and thus, if we assume that he is waving us before the Father, an Omer of barley would not be the proper symbolism; wheat and specifically solet would fit the motif of Leviticus 2:1 much better, and would make Paul’s statement that much more powerful, saying that Yeshua was the “*first cutting*” or “*first harvest*” from the dead (1 Corinthians 15:20-23). To say that Yeshua, in his resurrection, collectively waved us before the Father as an Omer of barley, it essentially says, “*You - YHWH (our husband) still have a right to call us whores,*” when clearly, our status changed from death to life. Individually and collectively, we died with Mashiach; were buried with Mashiach, were raised from the dead in Mashiach. Therefore, if there is a waving motif going on (in a spiritual sense), I would see it as giving thanks to YHWH for providing us our food, our sustenance in the Torah, because our food comes from His Word – the Torah, which is never likened to barley, only wheat (Mattityahu 13:23 – parable of the sower and the seed, where wheat is the subject in the overall context of the story). This change of status from an animal (barley) to a man (wheat) is what YHWH showed Kefa (Peter) in his vision of Acts 10:15 and 10:28. In Yeshua, the *Raisheet K’tzir* “*first cutting*” (1 Corinthians 15:23), appears as an offering of expensive **choice flour** (*solet*), not bargain-basement **coarse flour** (*se’orah*). Certainly, we died in Mashiach but conversely; we also were raised up with his life. No wonder the divine commandment of the Torah specifies that beginning with the *Reshnonit K’tzir* (*first cutting*) at the count of the Omer, it should be accompanied with the fine flour of **solet** as it is written:

Leviticus 23:12-13. *His (the one doing the waving of the mincha) grain offering (mincha) shall then be two-tenths of an ephah of solet (fine flour) mixed with oil, an offering by fire to YHWH for a soothing aroma, with its libation, a fourth of a hin of wine.*

Waving the First Cutting and Counting the Omer

Once again, from the ancient sources of Rabbinic Judaism, it appears that the teachers of those days understood something in the foreshadowing of what YHWH really saw in this first cutting (*Reshnonit K'tzir*) – the offering of the Omer. Have a look here:

Menachot 85a ...It was then reaped, bound into sheaves, threshed, winnowed, cleansed, ground, and sifted, and then brought to the Temple-treasurer. **The Temple-treasurer would thrust his hand into it; if some dust came up in his hand he would say to him [who brought it]. 'Go and sift it a second time' — In the name of R. Nathan it is said, The Temple-treasurer used to smear his hand with oil and thrust it into the flour until he had brought up all the dust.**

This tradition looks like something that Yeshua, the *Kohen Gadol* (high priest) of the Order of Melchitzedeq would accomplish in his resurrection, as he is standing in the face of YHWH (*the Sar haPanim* – Prince of the Face), symbolically putting his hand into the **fine flour** (*solet*) of our collective, national Omer offering – our bodies – the body of Mashiach (Romans 12:1).

This ceremony of ancient days impresses me that we should act like *chitah* – wheat, which after its crushing into fine flour (*solet*), comes up in the Kohen's hand (Yeshua's hand) pure like "dust"; the "dust" of choice flour! However, as already said, it is problematic to think that we are being waved as a nation of *Raisheet K'tzir* "first cutting" *se'orah* (barley). So why do we think this way? Why do we always starting the fifty-day count of the Omer with an **Omer of barley**? Maybe Pharisaic Tradition is influencing us? It is possible.

Further, as I alluded to beforehand, switching from wheat to barley may have been a deliberate attempt to obfuscate the teaching and the work of Yeshua, because we know that the Pharisees of his day were not real happy with his ideas. We are clean, pure, holy, righteous and redeemed in the sight of YHWH. This is the good news of redemption and it is this which supports the teaching that Yeshua did in Mattityahu (Matthew) chapter 13, when he taught the parable of the sower and the seed, which is all about a harvest of wheat, not barley (in the full context of 13:1-23). Let us have a look.

Mattityahu 13:1-9. Behold, the sower went out to sow; and as he sowed, some seeds fell beside the road, and the birds came and ate them up. And others fell upon the rocky places, where they did not have much soil; and immediately they sprang up, because they had no depth of soil. But when the sun had risen, they were scorched; and because they had no root, they withered away. And others fell among the thorns, and the thorns came up and choked them out. And others fell on the good soil, and yielded a crop, some a hundredfold, some sixty, and some thirty. He who has ears, let him hear.

Following this teaching about sowing seeds (the actual type of seed is not specified here, at this point), Yeshua then goes on to talk about the mysteries of the kingdom of Elohim and then goes on to quote the words of *Yeshayahu* (Isaiah) 6:9-10, which speaks of man's hardness of heart as he boastfully presses his flesh nature up against YHWH's Spirit and essentially bullies YHWH, saying to Him, "No thank you. I don't want your commandments. I have my own ways of doing things" and as a result, YHWH blinds the man's eyes, dulls his senses, and causes him to not hear the Word of YHWH so that he can change!

In his next series of statements in Mattityahu 13:18-23, Yeshua then goes on to identify the "players," of the parable, and this is where it gets very interesting. The type of **SEED** (still not specifically identified) is said to be the WORD of YHWH. So, this brings up a question, **what type of seed is the WORD of YHWH identified with?** Barley? No! Have a close look at verses 24-30, as this gives us the answer. The **SEED** is the **WORD of YHWH** and the **SEED** is *chitah* (**wheat**) –in the Land of Israel. Ah! This makes sense as to why *se'orah* (barley) is not returned to YHWH or waved as an Omer in the *Raisheet K'tzir* (first cutting) grain offering. For confirmation, consider this from Isaiah 55:10-11:

*For as the rain and the snow come down from heaven, and do not return here without watering the Land, and making it bear and sprout, and furnishing **seed** to the sower and bread to the eater; **so shall My WORD** be which goes forth from My mouth; **it shall not return to Me empty**, without accomplishing what I desire, and without succeeding in the matter for which I sent it.*

Verses 29-30 then answer the question of the *talmidim* (disciples) of Yeshua, who are visibly perturbed that an enemy has come into the man's **field of wheat** (not barley) and has sown a prolific weed (darnel or a tare that looks like wheat). So, they ask the following question:

"Do you want us, then, to go and gather them up?"

This question shows us that the parable of the sower and the seed is taking place during the fifty-days of the count of the Omer. Yeshua responds with the following words:

*No; lest while you are gathering up the tares, you may root up the **wheat** with them. Allow both to grow together **until the harvest**; and **in the time of the harvest** I will say to the reapers, "First gather up the tares and bind them in bundles to burn them up; but gather the **wheat** into my barn."*

Clearly, this teaching from Mattityahu 13 is about the fifty-day/seven Sabbaths Shavuot harvest period, which starts its counting **after the sickle is put to the standing grain**, as it is written in Deuteronomy 16:9 –10, saying:

*You shall count seven weeks for yourself; you shall begin to count seven **weeks from the time you begin to put the sickle to the standing grain**. Then you shall celebrate the Feast of Weeks (Shavuot) to YHWH your Elohim with a tribute of a freewill offering of your hand, which you shall give just as YHWH your Elohim blesses you.*

Again, returning to a Talmudic argument that surfaced on this matter a long time ago, we learn in tractate Menachot 84a that there was (at least at the time between c. 270 – c. 330) an argument put forth about whether the Omer of the first harvest should be wheat or barley:

Rabbah says...And if thou bring a meal offering of first fruits refers to the meal offering of the 'Omer. Of what was it offered? Of barley. You say 'of barley'; but perhaps it is not so but rather of wheat!

“**Rabbah**” is credited with presenting the statement. This man was *Rabbah bar Nachmani*, known as an *amora* who lived in Babylonia during the late 200s and early 300s. He brought forth opinions on a number of matters such as this one on the Omer offering and whether it should be wheat instead of barley as recorded in Menachot 84a. Nearly three hundred years before Rabbah, we can read the authoritative opinion of Mashiach Yeshua ben Yosef in Mattityahu 13 and what he thought about Shavuot, the Omer, and the period of the harvest.

The parable of Yeshua in Mattityahu 13:1-30 is clearly a lesson that teaches that the **seed is the Word** and the **Word is wheat**, and the **wheat is the mincha** (grain offering) *Raisheet K'tzir* “first cutting” of Weeks (*Shavuot*). This is all according to Numbers 28:26, which commences the count of the Omer according to Deuteronomy 16:9, ending seven weeks later, on the fiftieth day, on what is called *Shavuot*. Again (forgive my repetition), *chitah* **and not se'orah** is at the core of Yeshua's parable about the sower and the seed. Further evidence that the *Raisheet K'tzir* (first harvest) is about wheat and not barley is also understood from Leviticus chapter 2.

Vayikrah (Leviticus) chapter 2 is all about **grain offerings**, in Hebrew – **mincha**, hence the name of the Babylonian tractate *Menachot*. For the sake of a little repetition, I want you to carefully pay attention to the Hebrew terminology that is being used in Leviticus 2 and further, I do not think that any English text will bring this out to our benefit; in Hebrew, it is much clearer. Here is Leviticus chapter 2:1 –

*Now when anyone presents **mincha** (a **grain offering**) as an offering to YHWH, his offering shall be of **fine flour (solet)**....*

As we have already gone over this, the term “fine flour” or “choice flour” if you prefer this term better, is **solet** in Hebrew. **Solet does not come from se'orah or barley**. Solet comes from the crushing process of *chitah*, which is wheat. For all *mincha*; that is, from all grain offerings to YHWH, **solet** is given as the flour of choice in the divine commandment. But in the context of Leviticus 2, something else emerges and again, I think it may only be understood in Hebrew and not in English. Let us have a look at Leviticus 2:14 in English:

*Also if you bring a grain offering of **early-ripened things** to YHWH, you shall bring fresh heads of grain roasted in the fire, grits of new growth, for the grain offering of your **early-ripened things**.*

The English says that the grain offering - the *mincha*, refers to “early ripened things.” The Jewish Publication Society (JPS) text says, “new ears.” The Stone Edition Chumash says, “ripe ears.” The Hebrew text says, “Aviv.” Does this surprise you? What this appears to be saying in the context of Leviticus 2, is that if you bring a *mincha* of Aviv, it must be roasted in fire. Wait just a moment, here. Did you catch this? This “Aviv offering” in Leviticus 2:14 is referred to specifically as *mincha* and remember, the flour for the *mincha* in Leviticus 2:1 **must be solet (wheat)**, not *se’orah* (barley). I cannot see any indication in the text that the *mincha* of Leviticus 2:14 is referring to *se’orah* (barley). However, I can see where it might be interpreted as such from Exodus 9:31, which we will look at in a moment. The context of Leviticus 2:1 is about *mincha* – **a grain offering and grain offerings are required from solet**, which is made from wheat. Now, let us look at what is written in Exodus 9:31 concerning *se’orah*:

*Now the flax and the barley were ruined, for the **barley was Aviv** and the flax was in bud. But the wheat and the spelt were not ruined, for they ripen late.*

What I see by comparing Leviticus 2:1 with 2:14 and then comparing those statements with Exodus 9:31, is that *se’orah* (barley) and *chitah* (wheat) can both go through a growth stage of Aviv. **I do not see that ONLY BARLEY can be Aviv.** Rather, it appears that **WHEAT can also be Aviv** but it is not spelled out as such in Exodus 9:31. However, because wheat is at the core of the established grain offerings, the context of Leviticus 2 supports this idea that wheat can also be Aviv. *Mincha* - grain offerings do not come from *se’orah* (barley), at least if I am reading Leviticus 2:1 correctly. If I am spot-on about this matter, then it has a new level of importance that we cannot ignore. According to Exodus 9:31, barley ripens first (which is proven true by the sheer fact that we can physically see it with our eyes every year). Following barley, wheat then ripens to Aviv about four weeks later. Essentially, *se’orah* and *chitah* both ripen to Aviv at around the same time in Eretz Israel, generally within a month of each other.

In any case, the first of the months of the year according to Exodus 12:1, 13:4, 23:15, 34:18; Deuteronomy 16:1 appear to all be based on the emergence of **Aviv wheat and Aviv barley**. When these grasses produce kernels that are in the stage of Aviv, then scripture tells us that we are **IN THE CHODESH/RENEWAL (Moon/Month) OF AVIV** or “springtime.” This is at the precise time when we came out of Egypt so long ago. Identifying the presence of Aviv barley determines the new month and the New Year for us because barley is the **first** to ripen in Israel and by the last day of the twelfth month, we simply have to know if the *t’kufah* – the annual cycle of the previous twelve months needs to be reset to the beginning of the year (month one, day one) OR if we need to go on to add an intercalated additional month (month thirteen, day one). Again, if the barley is Aviv by the end of the twelfth cycle of the biblical Hebrew calendar, then this will tell us that we are approaching the *chodesh* of Exodus 12:1. As I see things, this is the only purpose for doing an Aviv barley search, at least as far as I understand things: to determine if we can reset the biblical calendar back to month one, day one OR if we need to add a thirteenth month AND THEN reset back to month one, day one AFTER the thirteenth month concludes.

Once we know where we are in any given calendar year, then why look back to *se'orah* or barley to determine anything more? It really is not necessary and once we are past the physical identification and observance of Aviv barley in the twelfth month, our next objective should be to move into the realm of looking for Aviv wheat, **so that we can know when to put the sickle to the standing grain and start the count of the Omer** (Deuteronomy 16:9). Once we can determine that we have Aviv wheat, then we should put the sickle to the standing grain beginning with the very next "Sunday" - on the, "*day after the Sabbath*" This is what scripture tells us in Leviticus 2:15 -

You shall also count for yourselves from the day after the Sabbath, from the day when you brought in the Omer (sheaf) of the wave offering; there shall be seven complete Sabbaths.

It appears to me that if we were to follow this practice as scripture defines it, then the meaning of *Mimochorat haShabbat*" (*The day after the Sabbath*) has no more ambiguity. If we follow the principle that *solet chitah* is both the *Raisheet K'tzir* "first cutting" and is offered on the day after the weekly Sabbath, when the agricultural conditions are ready to allow us to put the sickle to the standing grain, then the controversy of when to start the counting of the Omer goes away, completely. It becomes a moot point and is no longer an issue of debate. Once we untether the count of the Omer to the Pharisaic sixteenth day of the month of the Aviv (as the Pharisees/Rabbis teach even now), then we can all relax and together collectively, enjoy counting the next forty-nine days of the seven Sabbaths of the harvest until Shavuot. In this, we can then know clearly that the Omer of our wheat will be waved on the "*Day after the Sabbath of creation*" in Leviticus 23:15 or if you will, the day after the weekly seventh-day Sabbath. This fulfills the Torah of forty-nine days within the context of seven Sabbaths, precisely. Before we move on to our next subject, allow me to first offer you this model of thought, which I admit, is purely hypothetical, but it will serve to uphold my point.

Let us say that we perform an Aviv barley search in the middle of the twelfth biblical month of Israel. Let us say that we find Aviv barley. So, this would mean that in two weeks time, at the next *Rosh Chodesh* (renewal of the moon), we could then comfortably declare the date to be the first day of the first month of the New Year (Exodus 12:2). Then, two weeks later, it is time for the observance of Passover and Unleavened Bread.

With the declaration of Aviv barley behind us, we also would know that our wheat fields are also advancing towards the stage of Aviv, ripening to their Aviv roughly in the next four or five weeks that follows Aviv barley. Hypothetically, this means that from about the middle of the twelfth month to the middle of the new first month, four weeks will have gone by. In that timeframe, Aviv wheat could easily be ready for its first cutting - *Raisheet K'tzir*. Ostensibly, this means we could fulfill Deuteronomy 16:9 at about the time of Unleavened Bread and thus, there would be no need to offer barley to YHWH. Ostensibly, we would have an Omer of *solet wheat (solet chitim)* ready to offer in fulfillment of Leviticus 2:1 and 23:13-14.

Of course, if in a particular year, the barley is not Aviv by the middle of the twelfth month, we will also know that the ripening of Aviv wheat will be pushed back that much further, meaning that the counting of the Omer would have to be put off well beyond the week of Unleavened Bread, until wheat was in fact, ready for its *first cutting*. Well then, there is nothing that we can do about this matter because we are not in control of the weather or the climatic conditions; only YHWH holds this authority. The point I'm making is this: we cut the wheat when the wheat says, "*I can now be cut.*" When we get the "green light" from the wheat, then we can cut according to Deuteronomy 16:9, even if it is some time after Passover and Unleavened Bread. In scripture, there is no divine commandment that we must eat unleavened bread from the NEW GROWTH of our fields. The divine commandment only specifies that we cannot consume OLD CHAMETZ (previous sourdough starter). In other words, every year at the start of the week of Unleavened Bread, we must remove any previous sourdough starter (Hebrew: *se'or*), which is the source of chametz and further, we can even eat the last year's grain, so long as it is not subjected to becoming leavened. As far as eating the new growth of our fields of grain during the week of Unleavened Bread, this too is permissible so long as its *first cutting* (*Raisheet K'tzir*) has been fulfilled. However, until that *first cutting* is done according to Deuteronomy 16:9, we cannot eat of any new growth from our fields; we must eat only the old growth. In summary, observing the Festival of Unleavened Bread is not in any way, dependent on the growth status of our grain fields and thus, there is no reason to force a connection between the counting of the Omer and the "*Day after the Shabbat*" commandment of Leviticus 2:15, which according to rabbinic Judaism means the day after the first day of Unleavened Bread.

From the *first cutting* of wheat on the "*Day after the Sabbath*" (regardless of when it comes to our national attention), we then should count forty-nine days within the context of seven Sabbaths and on day fifty, we should all individually be prepared to bring to Jerusalem our two loaves of *solet chitim* (fine wheat flour) baked bread as our personal, individual offering to YHWH. This is Shavuot!

Doing things this way would certainly show all of us the true meaning of **Deuteronomy 11:13-14** that YHWH will bring our rains in their proper times and with the rains coming in their proper times, we will then be able to offer an Omer of wheat at the right time, as YHWH makes it possible for us. This demonstrates to me that our calendar is dependent on YHWH and not on our clever ways of pre-determining things based on what is convenient to us, rather than on keeping faithful to the covenant. Again, my thoughts here are for community discussion and again, I am not attempting to be divisive or to create a new calendar though, I admit the potential is there to perpetuate something that I'm trying to avoid. The bottom line: let us all pursue clarity of vision in understanding the scriptural texts and when we have closure on the matter, then we should make the relevant changes as we have clear information. I will leave this in your hands.

Why Judaism's Annual Fixation on Offering of an Omer of Barley?

If you carefully read through the Talmud, the Mishnah, the Tosefta and Jewish Oral Law, you will find something unmistakable in those teachings. I am referring to something that the redactors of the Jewish Oral Law hate more than anything else in the world; they hate unsolved theology. To them, these "holes" are conundrums and they need to have answers! I can see this very clearly when I read through the Jewish sources. The ancient scholars were totally committed to plugging up holes and explaining EVERYTHING. Even if something did not make sense, then they would tweak scripture to force it make some sense. In the course of doing this however, they created more problems. In other words, the ancient Jewish teachers of the Oral Law worked diligently in weaving together anything that could give closure and meaning to what couldn't be understood. By this, they began forcing the biblical texts to say what they wanted it to say!

Most of us are not like this – bending the Word of Elohim; though there are some who definitely do this and I try to steer clear of them. If something is not understood, we should of course, try to understand it as best as we can. But if we simply keep running into brick walls, then maybe its time to put our study of the subject aside and wait for another day when perchance we can get more closure, clarification and understanding. Not so in rabbinic Judaism. Everything has to have an answer, now. And this may be the reason why the date of Shavuot could not be left "hanging" out there. For the Pharisees and Rabbi-teachers of ancient (and modern) Judaism, the giving of the Torah from Sinai always has to fall on Sivan 6-7, every year, and that's that. For these teachers, it is tradition that drives the date of Sivan 6-7. With this date known, then "backtiming" fifty-days in the context of seven-"weeks" (not seven "Sabbaths") gives them a starting point for the count of the Omer. With Judaism, the Oral Law keeps all theology neat and tidy, which is the way the rabbinic leaders like it.

It seems to me that YHWH has left the timing of the forty-nine day harvest and its culmination on Shavuot open for a divine reason and does not let us connect it to the chronology that is seen in Exodus 19:1-2. **It seems to me that He wants us to instead, connect Shavuot to Deuteronomy 16:9 in the Land of Israel**, which may or may not coincide with Exodus 19:1-2 every year. This is just my observation. However, as I said, Rabbinic Judaism doesn't like open-ended theology and therefore says, *"We have to place Shavuot on Sivan 6-7."* YHWH says, *"This festival will remain a mystery to you!"* Our brother Judah, unhappy with this kind of retort, then forces a link between the Omer count and the day after the start of Unleavened Bread – the sixteenth of Aviv. What follows is mental gymnastics and gyrations to make everything fit so that there are precisely seven "weeks" and not seven "Sabbaths" to fulfill the commandment as it is written in Leviticus 2:15. Essentially this is what Josephus said:

...But on the second day of unleavened bread, which is the sixteenth day of the month, they first partake of the fruits of the earth, for before that day they do not touch them...they offer the first fruits of their barley, and that in the manner following. (Antiquities 3.10.5)

The returning exiled House of Israel appears to now be waking up from its long, protracted exile. As the Messianic/Ephraimite movement is in the process of becoming “born again” to its renewed covenant destiny, the movement is also experiencing some rather intense growing pains. Many are turning in prayer to YHWH for clarification while others are doing some very creative and exhaustive twisting of texts resulting in some rather strange interpretations on numerous subjects. Others, not so bold with their own ideas, are turning to man-made religion; even that belonging to brother Judah – we’ll call him “the Orthodox Jew.” Herein lies the problem because Judah has been faithful to the covenant of the Torah in a certain respect and yet unfaithful in another respect to the covenant and we need to be careful and thoughtful with the source material that we draw from. Nonetheless, some among the unsuspecting of Ephraim do not consider this and rush headlong into the teaching traditions, doctrines, and errors of brother Judah’s theology and practices, hoping that brother Judah will have all the answers that they need to help clear up biblical confusions. From my perspective, brother Judah indeed, does have SOME answers but not always the better answers and Ephraim needs to stop chasing after the wind of Judah, hoping against hope for their love and acceptance. YHWH wants to establish a New (Renewed) Covenant (Jeremiah 31:31) with both houses of Israel. This is good but when we chase after Judah’s entrenched Babylonian ideas, we often can impede our own growth in the New (Renewed) Covenant. If you ask me, I think we need to be Judah’s example to faith, not Judah, our example of faith. This will take a lot of strength and resolve to stand up to such pressure.

From this point forward, we then move into what I think Yeshua meant in Mattityahu 24:36:

But of that day and hour no one knows, not even the angels of heaven, nor the Son, but the Father alone.

No Man Knows the Day or the Hour

Between the interval that wheat becomes Aviv and the sickle is put the standing grain (Deuteronomy 16:9) on the day after the Sabbath (Leviticus 23:15), we then have forty-nine days (minus the required Sabbath “no work” days) in the context of seven weekly Sabbaths, **to complete the harvest that concludes on Shavuot**. And again, let me remind you, there are numerous agricultural climatic zones in Eretz Israel. The wheat fields will not all ripen at the same time, period. It never happens this way. Israel’s farmers in the ancient days harvested their wheat fields when the grain permitted the action of harvesting and the same thing is true today. For some farmers, their harvest could come immediately after the national *Raisheet K’tzir* “first cutting” offering likely coming from the wheat that was growing at Jerusalem’s *Beit Makleh* (Kidron Valley). For other farmers they simply had to wait for their fields to ripen and in some cases, really wait, maybe two or three weeks longer! It depends on where their fields are located in the Land and it depends on other factors beyond the control of the farmer: heating and cooling days, rain or a lack thereof, soil conditions, etc. Think about it for a moment.

This kind of uncertainty and the accompanying waiting period could lead some to become idle and perhaps spiritually lethargic during the waiting process. I think this is what Yeshua was addressing in his famous statement; that no man could know the day or the hour, because the context of Yeshua's words are generally sidestepped (*such as Matthew 24:40-41*), as many people are prone to zoom in on one statement in the biblical texts and make an issue of it. Nonetheless, one thing appears quite clear to me. Shavuot and the counting of the Omer are not dependent on the exact timing and placement of Passover and Unleavened Bread. Rather, Shavuot and the counting of the Omer simply overlay the timing of Passover and Unleavened Bread. Truthfully, the three commanded festivals of the Torah – the *Shalosh Regalim*, are thematically related to one another but not chronologically dependent on one another.

1. Pesach/Unleavened Bread
2. Shavuot
3. Sukkot

Exodus 34:18, 22-23 and Exodus 23:14-17 all clearly spell out for us, the Will of YHWH, at least for us nationally:

*...You shall **observe Hag haMatzot** (the Feast of Unleavened Bread). For seven days you are to eat unleavened bread...and you shall **celebrate Shavuot** (Feast of Weeks) that is, the Bikkurim (first fruits of the wheat harvest), **and Sukkot** (the Feast of Ingathering) at the turn of the year. Three times a year all your males are to appear before YHWH your Elohim, the Elohim of Israel.*

In researching this, it seems to me that **we can know** with absolute certainty when the following events are scheduled to take place in our annual cycles of observances to YHWH:

1. **Shabbat** - the seventh day of each week
2. **Vayikchu L'chem Ish Seh** (they will take a lamb) - the tenth of each Aviv
3. **Pesach**, the fourteenth of each Aviv
4. **Hag haMatzot** (first day) - the fifteenth of each Aviv
5. **Hag haMatzot** (last day) - the twenty-first of each Aviv
6. **Shavuot** – fifty days / seven Sabbaths after the sickle cuts the standing grain
7. **Yom Te'ruah** (Feast of Trumpets) - the first of the seventh month
8. **Yom Kippur** (Day of Atonement) - the tenth of the seventh month
9. **Sukkot** (Tabernacles) - first day, the fifteenth of the seventh month
10. **Sukkot** (Tabernacles) - last day, the twenty-first of the seventh month
11. **Shemeni Etzeret**, - the twenty-second of the seventh month

This list of **knowable observances** contains one event that I believe **we cannot know**: the day and the hour when all individual fields are ready for their first cutting and the subsequent harvest. If we were farmers of ancient Israel, we would quite literally have to watch and wait and go to work in our fields when the fields allow us to do the work. Curiously, this idea of watching and waiting is woven into the fabric of the teachings of Yeshua.

However, as I need to once again say in repetition, it seems to me that only YHWH **knows** when the fields of the Land of Israel individually can be harvested during the period that is referred to as the *fifty days/seven Sabbaths phase*. This stage of individual farmers cutting their grain in Israel (after the national offering has been done in Jerusalem) relies totally on YHWH's agricultural conditions: heating days, cooling days, the amount of rainfall or lack thereof, seed and soil conditions; elements that are not controlled by us, yet in another sense of the word, ordered by our willingness to obey the Torah (Deuteronomy 11:13-17). However, when the time is right and YHWH allows each farmer to harvest his field, that farmer must be ready for the call to go out and work the field or fields that have been put into his power. For each individual farmer, this will begin with our putting the sickle to the standing grain of the field that we have been called to take care of, to guard and produce fruit for the true landowner (Mattityahu 21:43-46).

An allegory can most certainly be drawn from this real-life example of harvesting in Eretz Israel and Yeshua knew it. This harvesting is likened to our actions of sowing the seeds of the Torah into our real-life world. Not only are we the seed of the Torah but we are also the sowers of the seed of the Torah. It is during the harvest period between Deuteronomy 16:9 and Leviticus 23:16-17 that we learn our most intensive spiritual lessons of service to YHWH, love for one-another, and so many other teachings too numerous to elaborate on here. Suffice it to say, the forty-nine day/seven Sabbaths motif between the first cutting and offering of the Omer of wheat and the day of Shavuot, this timeframe is a spiritual awareness period for each of us. Perhaps this may be what Sha'ul was getting at when he said in Galatians 2:7-8 –

Do not be deceived, Elohim is not mocked; for whatever a man sows, this he will also reap. For the one who sows to his own flesh shall from the flesh reap corruption, but the one who sows to the Spirit shall from the Spirit reap eternal life.

I think it is a truism that we can become our own worst enemy even as the story unfolds in the narrative of Mattityahu 13:24-25, with the doctrine of the sower and the seed -

*Yeshua presented another parable to them, saying, "The kingdom of heaven may be compared to a man who sowed good seed in his field. But while men were sleeping, **his enemy came and sowed tares also among the wheat**, and went away...And the slaves of the landowner came and said to him, 'Sir, did you not sow good seed in your field? How then does it have tares?' 'And he said to them, '**An enemy has done this!**'"*

Nationally in ancient Israel, the “starting gun” to permit us to harvest our own fields was based on the actions of the Kohen on the day of Israel’s collective first cutting, as referenced in Deuteronomy 16:9. After this national requirement was met, only then could the individual farmers of all Israel begin working their own fields, harvesting their harvests in preparation for each man’s upcoming pilgrimage to Jerusalem on Shavuot. On day fifty, which will be the day following the seventh weekly Sabbath (Leviticus 23:15) since first putting the sickle to the standing grain (Deuteronomy 16:9), the males of all Israel are expected to be in Jerusalem – to come to the place where YHWH has chosen to put His Name (Deuteronomy 12:5). Further, **the men must not come empty-handed!** They must come with their own harvested *chitah* in hand, enough for two loaves of freshly baked wheat bread, made out of the choice or fine flour of *solet chitim* (wheat flour) from their own field, plus adding a certain number of specific animals for sacrifice (Leviticus 23:15-22). They must bring all of this to Jerusalem and celebrate the festival! This is what I understand Shavuot to be.

Following the motif of this harvest reality, there is an allegory; that with the first coming of Yeshua and his resurrection, he indeed “waved” us before the Father as a national *mincha* – wheat grain offering, to thank YHWH for giving us to all Israel as food because we are the Word that is being sown, at least spiritually. Thus, at Unleavened Bread each year, the old sourdough starter is thrown off and we eat the pure bread of the Torah. After the festival of Unleavened Bread, we then go back to eating leavened bread and the cycle repeats itself every year. This was the symbolism that Sha’ul gave to us when he said:

Clean out the old leaven, that you may be a new lump, just as you are in fact unleavened. For Messiah our Pesach also has been offered. Let us therefore celebrate the feast, not with old leaven, nor with the leaven of malice and wickedness, but with the unleavened bread of sincerity and truth. (1 Corinthians 5:7-8)

True to the harvest allegory, we are currently performing a rehearsal of the forty-nine day/seven Sabbaths period, every year, since our national “waving” at the resurrection of Yeshua. With the second coming of Yeshua, we will go out to meet the Mashiach, but not with a national, collective offering, since that was already completed when Mashiach waved us before the Father. Rather, we come to the Mashiach with the fruits of our own individual labors, from the harvest fields that he gave us to work in. This is likely the basis of Yeshua’s parable of the talents (Mattityahu 25:1-30). Spiritually, we’re somewhat like tenant farmers working YHWH’s fields for the return (these are the ministries and callings that each of us has). Every year, the forty-nine day/seven Sabbaths symbolism is a rehearsal to remind us to be faithful servants; to do what we have been called to do in working, watching and waiting and going about the business that our Father, i.e., the “Landowner” has entrusted to us with in His wheat fields of Eretz Israel. To better understand this, have a look at Yeshua’s words here:

*Yochanan (John) 4:34-38. My food is to do the will of Him who sent me, and to accomplish His work. Do you not say, 'There are yet four months, and then comes the harvest'? **Behold, I say to you, lift up your eyes, and look on the fields, that they are white for harvest.** Already he who reaps is receiving wages, and is gathering fruit for life eternal; that he who sows and he who reaps may rejoice together. For in this case the saying is true, 'One sows, and another reaps.' I sent you to reap that for which you have not labored; others have labored, and you have entered into their labor.*

True to the allegories that Yeshua taught about tenant farmers in the Land (Mattityahu 21:33 and 25:14), servants who abuse other servants, gardeners, slaves, a householder that goes on a journey and returns when he is least expected, the thief in the night; the ten virgins and their oil lamps; **all of these stories are connected to the harvest period that leads up to Shavuot**, at least figuratively; that of the forty-nine day/seven Sabbaths motif starting with the counting of the Omer of wheat (not barley) and concluding with Shavuot (when we are to bring our two loaves of fine wheat bread to the house of YHWH. In a day yet-future to our own, we will come to Jerusalem for Shavuot, to go out and meet the Mashiach when he comes to stand on the Mount of Olives (Zechariah 14); to receive the Renewed Covenant (Jeremiah 31:31) in all its fullness. On that day, and it is just one day – when the tares will be gathered up and burned and the wheat will be gathered into the barn of the Mashiach, we must be preparing; we must be in our proper wedding attire; we must be ready to receive our King on Shavuot. Again, when the Mashiach appears (Mattityahu 26:64; Zechariah 14:4), it will be a national house cleaning (Mattityahu 24:40-41 and Mattityahu 13:30) and it will involve a one-day event of removing the tares and storing the wheat into YHWH's barn. Let us be wheat, not tares!

Following all of this, we will then go on to physically establish the Kingdom of Elohim on the Land – Eretz Israel and fulfill the **feasts of the fall** – *Yom Te'ruah, Yom Kippur, and Sukkot*, which is the feast of the ingathering of all Israel from the four corners of the earth (Acts 1:6-8; Luke 13:29). But first, the Renewed Covenant has to be completely realized and internalized for both houses of Israel, not just one house (Jeremiah 31:31) and I think this reality will manifest itself on *Shavuot*, not on *Yom Te'ruah* (the first day of the seventh month – Leviticus 23:24. Indeed, everything about the End of Days, the Judgment, the Harvest, the Wheat and the Tares, the Kingdom of Heaven; the Ten Virgins; all of this substance that Yeshua taught appears to revolve around Deuteronomy 16:9 and the subsequent period of the forty-nine days/seven Sabbaths that leads into the final one-day separation of the wheat and the tares in the Land; truly for each man to faithfully accomplish the work that YHWH has given each of us to do - a day and hour that no man knows except to do the work and prepare for the coming King, the Owner of the Land, the Householder, on SHAVUOT. I think the symbolism is that our work is being inspected during this period of time and if we become lazy, slothful, wicked servants, then we'll fail the inspection. This is part of the day and hour that no man knows; that the Spirit of the Mashiach – the inspector comes to each of us in this timeframe; watching us to see what we're doing and if we are about our Father's business or just doing nothing or being busybodies; that our oil lamps are either full or empty; that our fields are either cut or uncut; that we are wearing our wedding garments or not.

Oh, I think the Mashiach will physically come, but not on *Yom Te'ruah* (the Feast of Trumpets) as I used to believe. Let us consider revising our theology for Shavuot; that this festival will trigger the events that will bring us our Bridegroom, our King just as the parable of the Ten Virgins (Mattityahu 25) shows us. You should know that the theme of the story of the Ten Virgins is no surprise to ancient Judaism; not at all. The theme of the Ten Virgins is directly linked to the festival of Shavuot because it is on Shavuot when observant Jews all over the world stay up all night, studying Torah, attending lectures, waiting for the arrival of the Mashiach! We Jews know this, especially here in Eretz Israel, when all-night Jerusalem lectures abound, every year, on Shavuot! It is a night of waiting up for the coming King! No wonder Yeshua's story of the Ten Virgins (Matt. 25) comes immediately on the heels of the narratives of Mattityahu 24, least of which is Yeshua's statement, "*No Man Knows the Day or the Hour.*" After Shavuot, all of the wheat that has been gathered into the storage barn of the Mashiach (metaphorically we are the wheat, not the tares, if we are in Mashiach), we will then go out to crown our King at the fall festivals in Jerusalem.

Shavuot has always been understood to be the DOOR that leads to SUMMER in Eretz Israel; all the more reason why Yeshua would say the following:

Mattityahu 24:32-33. *Now learn the parable from the fig tree: when its branch has already become tender, and puts forth its leaves, you know that summer is near; even so you too, when you see all these things, recognize that He is near, right at the door.*

Every year in Eretz Israel, in the very early spring, before Passover, our fig trees produce what I might call "*pre-figs*" for lack of a better term. These appear as little budding figs. Interestingly, over the weeks that come towards Passover and little beyond, the fig tree drops these tiny little "*pre-figs*" to the ground. They go away and are replaced with the real fruit that will grow plump and tender in their place and just after the Omer with the count of fifty-days/seven Sabbaths, the fig trees will usually yield a crop of beautiful, delicious figs! So, here we can see Yeshua foretelling us that when we see this event happen, know that His coming is in fact, right at the door – a theme of Shavuot. All we have to do is to look at the fig trees of Israel, which produce beautiful right at the "door," or if you will, at the "gate" of summer, which is a common metaphor that refers to the gate or door of the Torah, which was given to us at the time of Shavuot. Remarkably, go ahead and read what Yeshua says about gates and doors in Mattityahu 7:13-14, which is a narrative about the written Law. Gates and doors are often symbols to describe what the Torah of Moses is all about and we can see this just seven verses later in Mattityahu 7:22-23 when Yeshua says:

Many will say to me on that day, "Master, Master, did we not prophesy in your name, and in your name cast out demons, and in your name perform many miracles?" And then I will declare to them, 'I never knew you; DEPART FROM ME, YOU WHO PRACTICE LAWLESSNESS.'

The festival of Shavuot stands at the portal of summer in the Land of Israel hence, it is a one-day house-cleaning; day of reckoning and day of separating out pure wheat from "*wheat wannabees*", as Yeshua taught in Mattityahu 13:30 -

...Allow both to grow together until the harvest; and in the time of the harvest I will say to the reapers, "First gather up the tares and bind them in bundles to burn them up; but gather the wheat into my barn."

Immediately following Yeshua's discourse on the End of Days and Shavuot in Mattityahu 24:32-33, he then makes a couple of additional comments about the eternal Torah and that it will never, ever go away. Then he says in verse 36:

...But of that day and hour no one knows, not even the angels of heaven, nor the Son, but the Father alone.

Mattityahu chapters twenty-four and twenty-five are said all IN THE CONTEXT of Shavuot and that one-day, End of Days Harvest.

Baruch HaShem YHWH.

Anomaly of Luke 6:1-5

Briefly, let us talk about one more thing: Luke 6:1. I think it is important to show what I think is happening here and how it relates to Yeshua's teaching about wheat and not barley. Beginning at verse 1:

*Now it came about **that on a certain Sabbath** he was passing through some grain fields; and his disciples were picking and eating the heads of grain, **rubbing them in their hands**.*

I want to draw your attention to four ideas that I believe are essential to the understanding of the above verse: **1) A certain Sabbath, 2) Picking grain, 3) Eating grain, 4) Rubbing grain.**

The King James Version of the Bible tells us that this event is occurring on a "*certain Sabbath*," which is described as the "*second Sabbath after the first*":

*Now it happened on **the second Sabbath after the first** that He went through the grain fields.*

The underlying Greek of merely says, "*the second-first Sabbath*," the rest is just editorial interpretation. Over the years, this has spawned plenty of opinions, some scholarly and some not so scholarly but certainly, there have been no definitive answers given by commentators and translators alike. Why would some New Testament manuscripts isolate the term, "**a certain Sabbath**," while others say, "*the second-first Sabbath*"? I would like to propose an opinion that seems to fit well within the context of Pharisaic Judaism's Omer count of ancient days. Luke 6:1 seems to cast its shadow on a very interesting way to identify two back-to-back Sabbaths according to the Pharisaic counting of the Omer. Let us return to the narrative and have a closer look:

*Now it came about **that on a certain Sabbath** he (Yeshua) was passing through some grain fields; and his disciples were picking and eating the heads of grain, rubbing them in their hands.*

The Greek of Luke 6:1 says the “*second-first Sabbath*,” and uses a rather obscure term, “*deuteroprōtō*,” which only appears in this one place of the New Testament and never appears again anywhere else. However, taken in the context of Pharisaic Judaism’s timeworn interpretation of Leviticus 23:15, “*mimochorat haShabbat*” (*the day after the Sabbath*), the Greek of Luke 6:1 seems to be pointing us to two (2) back-to-back Sabbaths. As I see things in Pharisaic context, the first Sabbath would have been the 15th of the month or if you will, the festival Sabbath of the first day of Unleavened Bread. The second Sabbath would have been what we would call today, “Saturday” or “the seventh day” weekly creation Sabbath. In short, Luke 6:1’s reference to the “*second-first Sabbath*” would coincide not just with the regular weekly Sabbath (the first of the seven Sabbaths of Shavuot) but also it would have been the 16th of the month – the very time when the “*first harvest*” (*Raisheet K’tzir*) of the barley was cut and offered in the Temple at sunset, that evening.

If I am correct, then the timeframe for this event in Luke 6:1-5 appears to be at the very start of the fifty-day count of the Pharisaic Omer, but just BEFORE the Pharisees had even offered their traditional national Omer of barley in the Temple. Each year at this time, the Pharisees made it a point to go out into a nearby Jerusalem grain field, likely in *Beit Makleh* (the Kidron Valley, also called the “*field of wheat*”) and in full public view, cut an Omer of barley, bring it to the Temple, and have it waved before YHWH so that the count of the Omer could start that very evening. If this happened to be a weeknight, there would be three men in the field with three baskets and three sickles doing this ceremony. If this happened to be an Erev Shabbat (what we would call “Friday night”), then according to the rabbinic source (Menachot 63b), the same would happen, still with plenty of spectacle. As already expressed, there was a lot of pageantry in this one event. The Rabbinic source at Menachot 65a puts it this way:

THE MESSENGERS OF THE BETH DIN USED TO GO OUT ON THE DAY BEFORE THE FESTIVAL AND TIE THE UNREAPED CORN IN BUNCHES TO MAKE IT THE EASIER TO REAP. ALL THE INHABITANTS OF THE TOWNS NEAR BY ASSEMBLED THERE, SO THAT IT MIGHT BE REAPED WITH MUCH DISPLAY. AS SOON AS IT BECAME DARK HE CALLED OUT, ‘HAS THE SUN SET?’ AND THEY ANSWERED. ‘YES.’ HAS THE SUN SET?’ AND THEY ANSWERED, ‘YES.’ WITH THIS SICKLE’ AND THEY ANSWERED, ‘YES’. ‘WITH THIS SICKLE?’ AND THEY ANSWERED, YES’. ‘INTO THIS BASKET?’ AND THEY ANSWERED, ‘YES’. INTO THIS BASKET?’ AND THEY ANSWERED. ‘YES’.

ON THE SABBATH HE CALLED OUT FURTHER, ON THIS SABBATH?’ AND THEY ANSWERED. ‘YES’. ‘ON THIS SABBATH?’ AND THEY ANSWERED. ‘YES’. ‘SHALL I REAP?’ AND THEY ANSWERED, REAP’. ‘SHALL I REAP?’ AND THEY ANSWERED, ‘REAP’. HE REPEATED EVERY MATTER THREE TIMES, AND THEY ANSWERED, ‘YES.’ ‘YES.’ ‘YES’. AND WHY WAS ALL THIS? BECAUSE OF THE BOETHUSIANS WHO MAINTAINED THAT THE REAPING OF THE ‘OMER WAS NOT TO TAKE PLACE AT THE CONCLUSION OF THE [FIRST DAY OF THE] FESTIVAL.

Let us now have a look at Luke 6:1 for more context:

Now it came about that on a certain Sabbath *he (Yeshua) was passing through some grain fields; and his disciples **were picking** and **eating the heads of grain**, rubbing them in their hands.*

Yeshua and his disciples are unmistakably going through a field of grain and they are openly doing three actions:

1. Picking the grain
2. Eating the grain.
3. Rubbing the grain.

We will speak about the third action, “*rubbing the grain*” shortly. For now, follow me to understand the first two actions – picking and eating. Plucking the grain would normally not be a problem in Yeshua’s day because according to Deuteronomy 23:25, one could pick grain from his neighbor’s fields and eat, if he was hungry, and it would never be interpreted as stealing. As for rubbing the grain, which is the other half of the action that follows, this was in fact, a huge issue ONLY as it would have related to this “***certain Sabbath,***” which was quite likely the 16th of the month and the “*day after the (festival) Sabbath*” of Unleavened Bread. According to the understanding of the Torah at Leviticus 23:14 -

*Until this same day, **until you have brought in the offering** of your Elohim, **you shall eat neither bread nor roasted grain nor new growth.***

Again, have a look at what Yeshua and his disciples are doing:

Now it came about that on a certain Sabbath *he (Yeshua) was passing through some grain fields; and his disciples **were picking** and **eating the heads of grain**, rubbing them in their hands.*

With their eye on these actions (again, we’ll look at the “grain rubbing” issue in a moment), the Pharisees ask Yeshua a very pointed question:

English: “*Why do you do what is not lawful on **the Sabbath?**”*

Now actually, in Greek, it gives us the transgression in the plural, which tells me that this is referring to both a festival Sabbath and a seventh-day creation Sabbath:

Greek: “*Why do you do what is not lawful on **the Sabbaths?**”*

The term “***the Sabbaths***” in the Greek text supports the idea that there are two back-to-back Sabbaths in this story. Further, these are all indicators that are telling us something else very important and we don’t want to miss a thing in the narrative!

1. It appears to be the 16th of the month; right after the close of the 15th of the month as the sun is setting - the conclusion of the first day of the Feast of Unleavened Bread.
2. The timeframe is what we would call a “*Friday early evening*,” immediately following the sunset that ends the first day of Unleavened Bread, which began twenty-four hours earlier on what we would call, “*Thursday evening*.”
3. The first cutting (first harvest) of the Omer is ceremonially just getting started with the gathering of the Pharisees and all the people in one of Jerusalem’s nearby grain fields, probably *Beit Makleh* – the Kidron Valley.
4. Where is Yeshua at this time? He is nearby with his disciples, walking through a grain field, chewing on some dinner with his disciples, eating grains of new growth BEFORE the official start of the Pharisaic counting of the Omer; he and his disciples are cutting and eating, right in front of the eyes of the religious leaders and in fact, in front of everyone who is gathered there!

Again, for the sake of repetition, the written Law of Moses says the following in Leviticus 23:14 –

*Until this same day, **until you have brought in the offering of your Elohim, you shall eat neither bread nor roasted grain nor new growth.** It is to be a perpetual statute throughout your generations in all your dwelling places.*

Again, Josephus said that in his days, the Pharisees offered to God an Omer of barley on the sixteenth of Aviv:

But on the second day of unleavened bread, which is the sixteenth day of the month, they first partake of the fruits of the earth, for before that day they do not touch them. And while they suppose it proper to honor God, from whom they obtain this plentiful provision, in the first place, ***they offer the first fruits of their barley*** (Antiquities 3.10.5)

Now, this is where the Luke 6:1 narrative really gets interesting! Let’s read on together:

Now it came about that on a certain Sabbath *he (Yeshua) was passing through some grain fields; and his disciples were picking and eating the heads of grain, **rubbing them in their hands.***

Why would Yeshua and his disciples be *rubbing* these grains in their hands? If this narrative was NOT about the “first cutting” of the Omer of barley (in other words if this narrative involved any other time of the year), I would likely conclude that Yeshua was making a point that the Pharisaic Oral Law was invalid in regards to its teaching about the thirty-nine categories of *Melachot* (regular work). Believe me, it is all very, very complicated and I will not bore you with the details. However, rubbing, like harvesting, or squeezing is a totally prohibited activity on Shabbat.

Nonetheless, in carefully looking at this whole narrative in Luke 6:1-5 and pondering on it a lot, I remain unconvinced that Yeshua is trying to make a public point about the thirty-nine categories of rabbinic Oral Law. I mean, it is possible but I am just not totally willing to commit to that line of reasoning at this point. What I am considering is something far, far greater in extent.

First, let's look at where Yeshua and his disciples are at physically; they are in a grain field but, what kind of grain field and why are they IN that particular grain field for the arrangement of the story, so that the Pharisees could see him and his disciples in full view? It looks to me as if Yeshua is purposely in that location with a clear intention of provoking the nearby religious leaders to respond to him. It does not appear to me that Yeshua was just on some road or path through a grain field. No. He appears to be off the path and in literally in the midst of a grain field. I think Yeshua was preparing to drive home a point that was so unmistakable; so clear, that the religious leaders knew beyond any doubt what he was doing and they were certainly not happy.

Second, the timeframe appears to be just getting started with their Omer ceremony **in a field of se'orah (barley)**. Yeshua however, appears to be **in a nearby field of chitah (wheat)**. In the Greek of Luke 6:1, the term *stachus* (literally "ears, stalks") my research indicates that this word can refer to any kind of plant that produces stalks or ears (such as corn, barley) but that in the Brit haChadasha, it ALWAYS refers to *chitah* (wheat). This of course, raises the tone of the story that much more! If in fact, Yeshua is in a field of *chitah* (wheat) with his disciples, not only picking the grains of wheat but also "**RUBBING**" them in the hands, then this has tremendous implications.

Turn again to the words of the rabbis in the Babylonian Talmud, tractate Menachot 76a:

ALL MEAL-OFFERINGS (grain offerings) REQUIRE TO BE RUBBED THREE HUNDRED TIMES AND BEATEN FIVE HUNDRED TIMES. THE RUBBING AND THE BEATING APPLY TO THE GRAINS OF WHEAT.

Ah! Now we have some potential context for Yeshua's actions. Rubbing grain in the hands is done to remove the outer covering of the seed and this applies to *chitah* (wheat). What would be the purpose of doing this? I suggest that he is doing this to satisfy a portion of the commandment of Leviticus 2:12-13 –

Now on the day when you wave the Omer...its mincha (grain offering) shall then be two-tenths of an ephah of solet (choice flour) mixed with oil...

It is possible that Yeshua is teaching his disciples to rub the grain in such a way so as to crush it into *solet* – fine flour, because *solet* only comes from *chitah* (wheat) and not *se'orah* (barley). If I am correct in this prospect then all that would be left to do is for Yeshua to bring an Omer of the *solet* to the Kohen at the Temple along with the required offering and all would be in order. However, there is a little twist in this whole narrative and we learn of it in the following verses:

Yeshua responds to the Pharisaic inquisition: *Have you not even read what David did when he was hungry, he and those who were with him, how he entered the house of Elohim, and took and ate the lechem haPanim (consecrated bread) which is not lawful for any to eat except the priests alone, and gave it to his companions? (Luke 6:3-4)*

The *lechem haPanim* is what the English translators call the “showbread.” This “showbread” – the consecrated bread is made from *solet* – *chitah* wheat:

Leviticus 24:5-6. *Then you shall take fine flour (solet) and bake twelve cakes with it; two-tenths of an ephah shall be in each cake. And you shall set them in two rows, six to a row, on the pure gold table before YHWH.*

Luke 6:1-4 confirms that when Yeshua had this confrontation with the Pharisees, it was **1)** the time of the wheat harvest in Israel and **2)** the event was taking place adjoining the first day into the Pharisaic count of the Omer. Further, it’s probably dinnertime and Yeshua and his disciples are hungry but it is the beginning of the weekly Shabbat. So, Yeshua, a teacher of great wisdom as he was, opens his Bible (the one in his mind) to Leviticus 23:13, 1 Samuel 21:1-6 and Leviticus 24:9 and instructs the religious leaders that it is okay to not only rub the wheat grains in the hands to make *solet* but also, it is okay to eat some of the *solet* to satisfy hunger for the sake of YHWH’s mercy and kindness. Remember, *Lechem haPanim* is made from **wheat milled to solet**, not se’orah (barley). But this is not the end of the story.

When Yeshua responds to the religious leaders about David and his men eating from the *lechem haPanim*, which was only for the *Kohanim* (priests) of Elohim, I think a number of things could be deduced from that story.

1. The Levitical priesthood was set up as a result of the sin of the golden calf, and perhaps Yeshua is demonstrating the end of the domination of the Levitical priesthood in favor of the priesthood of all Israel, which is the original form of worship and closeness to YHWH.
2. The story about David and his fellows eating the showbread is in the context of David running from Sha’ul, who is persecuting him. Remember, Sha’ul was chosen to be king over all Israel, but when he disobeyed and didn't follow YHWH's instructions fully, YHWH chose David instead. The Pharisees are likened unto Sha’ul (the wicked king) since they did not (and still today do not) obey fully the instructions of YHWH. In thinking that they were serving YHWH, they persecuted the living Torah – Yeshua, the Son of David. Incidentally, I think it is no accident that it was Sha’ul (Paul) the Pharisee that was initially persecuting Yeshua by persecuting the brethren, and that he was transformed to becoming “David.”

In any case, what we do know without a doubt is the declaration of 1 Chronicles 18:14-17 and **2 Samuel 8:18**; that the sons of David were called *Kohanim* in scripture and that all Israel are called *Kohanim* of a divine kingdom order in **Exodus 19:5**. As a result, it would explain Yeshua’s theological response to the religious leaders, essentially telling them that by rubbing the grains of wheat, principally “crushing them” into *solet*, that he and his disciples were in a

position to offer the *solet chitim* (the fine flour of wheat) and begin the count of the true Omer that very evening, with crushed wheat and not with barley as the Pharisees were necessitating. The Pharisees had no authority to change the teaching of the Torah; that of offering to YHWH barley instead of the grain offerings of *solet*. As for fulfilling the rest of the required offerings that are associated with *solet*, it is possible that they still could have been offered in the Temple on the “*day after the Sabbath*,” and thus, Yeshua would not have violated anything that the written Torah demanded in Leviticus 23:12-13. There is nothing in the *Brit haChadasha* narratives that would specify something specific of this nature, and so in a sense, I am somewhat forced to making an assumption.

Finally, in the Luke 6:1-5 narrative, what is interesting in verse 5, is that Yeshua boldly says to the religious leaders, “*The Son of Man is Master (Adonai) of the Sabbath*,” which more likely could be a misunderstood statement lost in translation from Hebrew to Greek meaning, “*The Mashiach is Adonai Tzvaot*,” referring to *Adonai*, the Master of the hosts = the descendants of Israel who are a true “*kingdom of kohanim* (Exodus 19:6). This would imply exactly what Mattityahu 12:6 says in that ***Adonay*** is the vessel, the conduit, the presence of the Name YHWH, as all Jewish prayer books that follow the mystical traditions of Jewish thought, confirm in Hebrew. Just look at any Jewish mystical prayer book and you will see the Name *YHWH* “filled-in” with the letters *ADNY* (*Adonai*). This may very well be the basis for the later action that is recorded in Yeshua’s resurrection story:

And it came about that when he had reclined at the table with them, he took the bread and blessed (YHWH), and breaking it, he began giving to them. And their eyes were opened and they recognized him; and he vanished from their sight. (Luke 24:30-31)

Closing thoughts

In whatever way that we wish to understand all of these matters in this critique, I think the points that really stand out are as follows:

1. That we should discuss and re-consider the count of the Omer based on an offering of wheat and not barley
2. That we might want to re-evaluate the importance of the first cutting (the *Raisheet K'tzir*) of wheat as the indicator that sets the date for Shavuot
3. That *se'orah* (barley) is merely a display in time to help us identify precisely when the New Year is upon us and when to set the date for Passover
4. That the count of the Omer and *Raisheet K'tzir* (first harvest) offering is not dependent on when Passover/Unleavened Bread falls. Rather, it overlaps with Passover but is not tethered to it
5. That Yeshua did not support an Omer of barley as an offering to YHWH but that he appears to support the offering of an Omer of *solet*.

6. That Yeshua did not observe the Pharisaic interpretation of Leviticus 23:15 – the “*Day after the Sabbath*” as being the sixteenth of Aviv. He seems to have reinforced the interpretation that the count of the Omer is tethered to when *chitah* – wheat is ready for its first cutting, which can fall anytime before, near, or after the spring festival of Pesach/Unleavened Bread and thus, we should count the days of the harvest (the Omer) beginning with the “*Day after the seventh-day creation Sabbath.*”
7. That the second coming of Mashiach will occur specifically on *Shavuot*, which is at the beginning of summer and not on the Feast of Trumpets at the end of summer and the beginning of fall.
8. That when the *Brit haChadasha* (New Testament) speaks of the “*harvest,*” it is specifically referring to the forty-nine days/seven Sabbaths period that starts with the counting of the Omer of wheat and concludes on day fifty, which is called *Shavuot* at the place where YHWH has chosen to place His Name.
9. That Torah is not about nit picking at a commandment at the expense of love, one for another.
10. The divine instructions are very broad in scope as they address matters of the heart as they relate to the spirit of justice, mercy, and faithfulness (Matthew 23:23).

This paper, typed with my own hands (Avi ben Mordechai) is merely MY OPINION on the issues. Again, I have no intention to add yet ANOTHER CALENDAR to the plethora of religious calendars that we already have floating around “*out there,*” nor is it my intention to be confrontational or dogmatic. I have merely attempted to give you my thoughts on some ideas that I am personally working through in my own life. I hope that you will give me the freedom to work out my own salvation with fear and trembling as much as I desire to give you the freedom to work out your salvation with fear and trembling. Nonetheless...I hope that this study has helped you.

Shalom from Jerusalem

Avi ben Mordechai