

Yahweh, the Almighty God of Israel, is with us
"Cry aloud, spare not, lift up thy voice like a trumpet,
and shew my people their transgression,
and the house of Jacob their sins." Isaiah 58:1

Jehovah's Feast Days

Study Prayerfully & Study Carefully

The Feast of First Fruits

Pentecost

Readings:

Deuteronomy 26, Leviticus 23: 15-21, Exodus 23:14-19

1. Introduction

The **Feast of Pentecost** was originally called the **Feast of Harvest** or the **Feast of Firstfruits**. This harvest feast occurs 50 days after the waving of the sheaf during the Passover week. It also coincides with the start of the wheat harvest in Israel.

Feast Seasons

Yahweh's command concerning His **three** feast seasons are as follows:

Exodus 23: 14: "**Three times** thou shalt keep a feast unto me in the year.

15: Thou shalt keep the **feast of unleavened bread**: (thou shalt eat unleavened bread seven days, as I commanded thee, in the time appointed of the month Abib; for in it thou camest out from Egypt: and none shall appear before me empty:)

16: And the **feast of harvest, the firstfruits of thy labours**, which thou hast sown in the field: and the **feast of ingathering**, which is in the end of the year, when thou hast gathered in thy labours out of the field.

17: Three times in the year all thy males shall appear before the Lord GOD."

Two Wave Loaves

Besides the sacrifice of certain animals, **two loaves of leavened bread** were offered to God at the **Feast of Firstfruits**. These represented the first fruits of the wheat harvest from the field. On a higher level the loaves of bread represent **purified believers** in whom the *leaven of sin* has been totally de-activated. They are now **holy people**, dedicated solely for priestly use. Sacrificed animals, most Christians know, represent Jesus the Messiah; but finely ground flour, fruit and incense represent the holiness and prayers of the people of the Most High.

Leviticus 23: 17: "Ye shall bring out of your habitations two wave loaves of two tenth deals: they shall be of fine

flour; they shall be baked with leaven; they are the **firstfruits** unto the LORD.

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

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

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

A Basket of Fruit

In addition to the young bullock, the rams, the lambs and the loaves, during the harvest season individual Israelites were required to bring a ‘**basket of fruit**’ to the Most High: and they were commanded to enact the following drama.

Deuteronomy 26: 1: “And it shall be, when thou art come in unto the land which the LORD thy God giveth thee for an inheritance, and possessest it, and dwellest therein;
2: That thou shalt take of **the first of all the fruit of the earth**, which thou shalt bring of thy land that the LORD thy God giveth thee, and shalt put it in a basket, and shalt go unto the place which the LORD thy God shall choose to place his name there.
3: And thou shalt go unto the priest that shall be in those days, and say unto him, I profess this day unto the LORD thy God, that I am come unto the country which the LORD sware unto our fathers for to give us.
4: And the priest shall take the basket out of thine hand, and set it down before the altar of the LORD thy God.
5: And thou shalt speak and say before the LORD thy God, **A Syrian ready to perish was my father, and he went down into Egypt, and sojourned there with a few, and became there a nation, great, mighty, and populous:**
6: **And the Egyptians evil entreated us, and afflicted us, and laid upon us hard bondage:**
7: **And when we cried unto the LORD God of our fathers, the LORD heard our voice, and looked on our affliction, and our labour, and our oppression:**
8: **And the LORD brought us forth out of Egypt with a mighty hand, and with an outstretched arm, and with great terribleness, and with signs, and with wonders:**
9: **And he hath brought us into this place, and hath given us this land, even a land that floweth with milk and honey.**
10: **And now, behold, I have brought the firstfruits of the land, which thou, O LORD, hast given me.** And thou shalt set it before the LORD thy God, and worship before the LORD thy God:
11: And thou shalt rejoice in every good thing which the LORD thy God hath given unto thee, and unto thine house, thou, and the Levite, and the stranger that is among you.”

The basket of fruit was symbolic of the **spiritual fruit Israel’s God** would produce in the lives of His people after He had rescued them from the slavery of sin. More about this fact later.

Without delay

There are a few points concerning firstfruits that we should note. They are mentioned in the following commands:

Exodus 22: 29: “Thou shalt **not delay** to offer the first of thy ripe fruits, and of thy liquors: the firstborn of thy sons shalt thou give unto me.”

The Best

Numbers 18: 12: “All the **best** of the oil, and all the **best** of the wine, and of the wheat, the **firstfruits** of them which they shall offer unto the LORD, them have I given thee.”

2. Blessing/Cursing

At their highest level, and we are not meaning the symbolic level of animal sacrifices and the waving of loaves of bread, the **laws of the Most High are living, active and eternal laws**. Like the laws of thermodynamics or the law of gravity, they are in operation at this very moment and the better we understand and obey them the better it will be for us. In short, **IF you do what the Almighty says, you will be blessed. But break His commands and they will break you**. This fact is detailed in (Deuteronomy chapter 28). I will quote a few verses concerning the results of obedience and disobedience.

Obedience

Deuteronomy 28: 1: “And it shall come to pass, if thou shalt hearken diligently unto the voice of the LORD thy God, to observe and to do all his commandments which I command thee this day, that the LORD thy God will set thee on high above all nations of the earth:
2: And all these blessings shall come on thee, and overtake thee, if thou shalt hearken unto the voice of the LORD thy God.
3: Blessed shalt thou be in the city, and blessed shalt thou be in the field.
4: Blessed shall be the **fruit of thy body**, and the **fruit of thy ground**, and the **fruit of thy cattle**, the increase of thy kine, and the flocks of thy sheep.
5: Blessed shall be thy **basket** and thy store.”

Disobedience

Deuteronomy 28: 15: “But it shall come to pass, if thou wilt not hearken unto the voice of the LORD thy God, to observe to do all his commandments and his statutes which I command thee this day; that all these curses shall come upon thee, and overtake thee:
16: Cursed shalt thou be in the city, and cursed shalt thou be in the field.
17: Cursed shall be thy basket and thy store.
18: Cursed shall be the fruit of thy body, and the fruit of thy land, the increase of thy kine, and the flocks of thy sheep.”

3. Spiritual Priorities

How important is all this to us living in this century? Does it really make any difference to the quality of one's spiritual life, or the welfare of this small congregation, whether we keep these **Feasts of Jehovah** or not? After all, most of us don't make our living at agriculture. We don't grow wheat or keep sheep. We don't keep cattle for milk: neither do many of us keep bees for honey.

How does this feast of firstfruits affect us? The answer is: **these low-level laws all have high-level spiritual meaning**.

- We are the soil. We were made from the dust of the earth.
- Sacred spiritual truths (the Word of God) have been sowed in our minds.
- The Holy Spirit is tending each one of us - **with our permission** - like a gardener tends his plot or a shepherd his flock.
- **Yahweh expects us to be producing sacred fruit in thought, word and deed.**
This is the purpose of our salvation.

Those ancient commands may not concern us at their **low agricultural level**: but most certainly they do at their **high spiritual level**. We are expected to bring forth '**fruit of the Holy Spirit**.' Failure to do so will be catastrophic. Consider this parable:

Luke 13: 6: *“He spake also this parable; A certain man had a fig tree planted in his vineyard; and he came and sought fruit thereon, and found none.
7: Then said he unto the dresser of his vineyard, Behold, these **three years I come seeking fruit on this fig tree, and find none: cut it down; why cumbereth it the ground?**
8: And he answering said unto him, Lord, let it alone this year also, till I shall dig about it, and dung it:
9: **And if it bear fruit, well: and if not, then after that thou shalt cut it down.”***

The meaning of this story is obvious. It needs little or no explanation. A vital clue to the importance of offering the **best** to God is found in what, at first glance, appears to be a misplaced instruction.

Exodus 23: 19: *“The **first of the firstfruits** of thy land thou shalt bring into the house of the LORD thy God. Thou shalt not seethe a kid in his mother's milk.”*

What has this last sentence about cooking a kid in its mother's milk to do with firstfruits? The answer, we suspect, is: offering the **first of the firstfruits** is as vital to spiritual growth as milk is to a new-born kid. Withholding the best from Yahweh is tantamount to seething a kid in its mother's milk. In other words, consuming the very thing (the milk) which was intended to make the kid grow. Withholding the firstfruits from God, in other words, is fatal. It will kill you in the end. I would say with the wise man:

Proverbs 3: 9: *“**Honour the LORD with thy substance, and with the firstfruits of all thine increase:**”*

4. High Level Firstfruits

As I stated before, firstfruits come at several levels: farm produce, living beings (believers) and the holy thoughts, words and actions of those believers.

- **Yahweh’s only begotten Son is a first fruit; the fruit of His own body.**
Colossians 1: 15: *“Who is the image of the invisible God, the **firstborn** of every creature.”*
1 Corinthians 15: 20: *“But now is Christ risen from the dead and become the **firstfruits** of them that slept.”*
- **Yahweh’s people are also firstfruits; the first to be saved from sin.**
Jeremiah 2: 3: *“Israel was holiness unto the LORD, and the **firstfruits** of His increase: all that devour him shall offend; evil shall come upon them, saith the LORD.”*
- **The 144000 priests or prophets of God.** Not so much first in sequence; but first - (**best**) in quality. **They are absolutely faultless.**
Revelation 14: 4: ... *“These are they which follow the Lamb whithersoever he goeth. These were redeemed from among men being the **firstfruits** unto God and to the Lamb.”*
- **Epaenetus**
Romans 16: 5: *“...Salute my welbeloved Epaenetus who is the **firstfruits** of Achaia unto Christ.”*
- **Individual Believers:**
Romans 8: 21: *“Because the creature itself also shall be delivered from the bondage of corruption into the glorious liberty of the children of God.
22: For we know that the whole creation groaneth and travaileth in pain together until now.
23: And not only they, but ourselves also, which have **the firstfruits of the Spirit**, even we ourselves groan within ourselves, waiting for the adoption, to wit, the redemption of our body.”*
James 1: 17: *“Every good gift and every perfect gift is from above, and cometh down from the Father of lights, with whom is no variableness, neither shadow of turning.
18: Of his own will begat he us with the word of truth, that **we should be a kind of firstfruits of his creatures.**”*
- **Potential** (Baal-shalisha a third part)

2 Kings 4: 42: *“And there came a man from Baal-shalisha, and brought the man of God bread of the **firstfruits**, twenty loaves of barley, and full ears of corn in the husk thereof. And he said, Give unto the people, that they may eat.”*
Note how that this man's tithe provided food for many souls.

5. Spiritual Fruit

To produce a crop one must sow seed. Pause a while and consider that basic agricultural fact. Without sowing there can be no harvest. It is exactly the same in the spiritual realm.

Sowing

Proverbs 3: 9: *“Honour the Lord with thy substance and with the **firstfruits** of all thine increase. So shall thy barns be filled with plenty and thy presses shall burst out with new wine.”*

Galatians 6: 7: *“Be not deceived; **God is not mocked; for whatsoever a man soweth that shall he also reap.***

8: For he that soweth to his flesh shall of the flesh reap corruption; ... ”

Sowing to the flesh is not just committing blatant sin. Sowing to the flesh means sowing in the spirit of error and self-interest. This includes:

- **Pride:** The first and most dangerous sin.
- **Greed.**
- **Jealousy**, envy and secret hate.
- **Misjudgement.**
- **An unforgiving heart** etc.

These seeds produce a harvest - nothing but heartache.

Sowing to the Spirit

Galatians 6: 8: ... *“But he that soweth to the Spirit shall of the Spirit reap life everlasting.”*

Galatians 5: 22: *“**But the fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, longsuffering, gentleness, goodness, faith,***

*23: **Meekness, temperance: against such there is no law.***

24: And they that are Christ's have crucified the flesh with the affections and lusts.

25: If we live in the Spirit, let us also walk in the Spirit. 26: Let us not be desirous of vain glory, provoking one another, envying one another.”

I would add to this list, qualities such as: **mercy, tender-heartedness, kindness, generosity, hospitality, compassion, good judgment, self-sacrifice, a sense of humour** and the **desire for reconciliation etc.** If you produce such fruit the Most high will be your friend.

Matthew 7: 15: *“Beware of false prophets, which come to you in sheep's clothing, but inwardly they are ravening wolves.*

*16: **Ye shall know them by their fruits.** Do men gather grapes of thorns, or figs of thistles?*

17: Even so every good tree bringeth forth good fruit; but a corrupt tree bringeth forth evil fruit.

18: A good tree cannot bring forth evil fruit, neither can a corrupt tree bring forth good fruit.

19: Every tree that bringeth not forth good fruit is hewn down, and cast into the fire.

*20: Wherefore **by their fruits** ye shall know them.”*

The **Feast of Firstfruits** (Pentecost) is primarily about **spiritual fruit**. I tell you our very lives depend upon the kind of fruit we are producing. Just as we do not expect young children to produce offspring, or young fruit trees to produce fruit, in exactly the same way Yahweh gives us time to produce **spiritual fruit in our lives**.

Remember:

- We are a kind of firstfruits - all of us.
- He is looking for the fruit of the Holy Spirit in our lives. If he finds no good, spiritual fruit, it could end in being hewn down and cast into the fire!
- We are commanded to put Him **first** and to bring Him the **best**.
- We are recognised by others, believers and unbelievers, by our words and actions. We are known by our fruits.

The **basket on this table** here represents our tiny group. It contains a variety of the best fruit we could find in the locality. Just as these fruits are all different, so too are we different from each other. But you are here, part of this symbolic **basket of fruit**. By the blood of the Saviour you were brought out of Egypt, out of sin. Why? The answer is - **to produce the fruit of the Holy Spirit**.

In the light of these facts let all of us examine ourselves and ask ourselves the question: **Am I producing good fruit or evil fruit?** That is the question we must address today - on the **Feast of Firstfruits**.

AMEN!

In the Son's Name — For the Father's glory.

Elder: Max W. Mader

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