

When Did The Resurrection of Yeshua (Jesus) Occur?

By Messianic Rabbi Scott Sekulow

What day should we celebrate the Resurrection of Yeshua of Nazareth? This has been a question that has plagued the Church for thousands of years. It must be noted the disciples made no mention of marking the birth or resurrection of Yeshua as Feast Days for the early followers. However that does not mean we should not celebrate these events.

In Judaism, the Jewish people added the Feasts of Purim and Hanukkah as a memorial of God's intervention on their behalf. We see this mentioned in John 10:22-23 *"Then came Hanukkah in Yerushalayim. It was winter, and Yeshua was walking around inside the Temple area, in Shlomo's Colonnade."*

It was not until the second century when the debate began concerning the date to celebrate the resurrection. In 425 AD, the Nicaea Council convened and settled the debate; instead of following the Jewish calendar, the first Sunday following the Spring Equinox was fixed. However, there were several fallacies concerning this decision.

The real question we need to ask is "Do we know when Yeshua rose?" We know the day of the week, but what date does it correspond to? We do not celebrate our birthdays on the day of the week we were born, but rather, the date. The same can be said for other holidays like the Fourth of July.

With this in mind, how did the first Believers determine when to celebrate the Feasts? The answer is found in the Torah.

God commanded the Israelites to celebrate seven Feasts: Passover and the Feast of Unleavened Bread, Feast of First Fruits, Feast of Latter Fruits, Yom Teruah (The Day of the sounding of the Shofar), Yom Kippur (The Day of Atonement), Sukkoth (Feast of Tabernacles) and Shabbat.

All of these Feasts correspond to a fixed date (versus a day) on the calendar. Even Shabbat is every seven days. The only reason why the Resurrection is celebrated on the first Sunday after the Spring Equinox is Constantine's hatred of the Jewish people, as you can read from his statements considering the celebration of the Resurrection *"It appeared an unworthy thing that in the celebration of this most holy feast we should follow the practice of the Jews...For we have it in our power, if we abandon their custom, to prolong the due observance of this ordinance to future ages by a truer order...For their boast is absurd indeed, that it is not in our power without instruction from them to observe these things....Being altogether ignorant of the true adjustment of this question, they sometimes celebrate Passover twice in the same year."* Until this time the celebration of the Resurrection was celebrated in conjunction with the Jewish Feast of Passover.

Are you confused yet? For almost 1600 years, Believers have been celebrating the Resurrection on a date it definitely did not happen on. Does scripture reveal a date to us?

The Brit Chadasha (Renewed Covenant) reveals the true date of the Resurrection. Everyone agrees Yeshua rose on the first day of the week. We have to remember that a new day begins at sunset, not sunrise. Therefore, the first day of the week began at sunset on Saturday.

To determine the correct date of the resurrection, we need to reconstruct the events of the week leading up to Passover. According to John 12:1-2, we can determine the date Yeshua entered Jerusalem.

“Six days before Pesach, Yeshua came to Beit-Anyah, where El`azar lived, the man Yeshua had raised from the dead; so they gave a dinner there in his honor.”

John 12:12 tells us the next day Yeshua made His triumphant entry into Jerusalem which would have been the 10th day of Hebrew month of Nisan. This date is very important as it is the day the lambs that are to be sacrificed are brought into the Temple so they can be inspected over the course of the next four days.

Yeshua fulfilled the prescribed time outlined in the Torah in order to be the ultimate Passover Lamb. Reading from scripture, we see He was inspected by the High Priests during these four days. On the 14th day of Nisan he was crucified and His blood was shed for all of our sins.

He was put in the tomb before sunset on the 14th (Thursday) – day one. He remained in the tomb all day on the 15th (Friday) – day two. He rose at sunset (the end of Shabbat) on the 16th (Saturday) – day three. By the actual day of Sunday, Yeshua had already risen.

Therefore, we can determine Yeshua’s resurrection occurred on the 16th day of Nisan, which happened to correspond to another Jewish Feast called the Feast of First Fruits.

Now, you might be saying to yourself “I thought the Jewish Shabbat was from Friday Night at sunset until Saturday night at sunset. ” How can a Thursday be a Shabbat? The answer is simple. Several Jewish Holidays have what is called a High Shabbat. John 19:31 *“It was Preparation Day, and the Judeans did not want the bodies to remain on the stake on Shabbat, since it was an especially important Shabbat. So they asked Pilate to have the legs broken and the bodies removed”* This means the day the Feast starts and/or ends is considered a “Shabbat” – a special day in which no work is to be done. These Sabbaths can fall on any day of the week.

Yeshua fulfilled the Feast of Passover with His Death. He fulfilled the Feast of First Fruits with His Resurrection. In fact, Paul calls Him the First Fruits in 1 Corinthians 15:20:

*“But the fact is that the Messiah has been raised from the dead, the **First Fruits** of those who have died.”*

Why would Paul have used such a term unless Yeshua rose on the Feast of First Fruits - the third day after Passover. But wait there’s more....

Leviticus 15:15-16 tells us *"From the day after the day of rest that is, from the day you bring the sheaf for waving you are to count seven full weeks, until the day after the seventh week; you are to count fifty days; and then you are to present a new grain offering to ADONAI."* So the Feast the Church calls Pentecost is in fact another Jewish Feast, the Feast of Latter Fruits.

So how did Yeshua fulfill the Feast of Latter Fruits? With the indwelling of the Ruach HaKodesh (Holy Spirit). This occurred on the same day that God gave the Torah to the Israelites. There are many similarities between the giving of the Torah and the giving of the Holy Spirit.

Yeshua brought the Jewish Feasts of Passover, First Fruits and Latter Fruits to their fullness with His Death, Resurrection and infilling of the Ruach HaKodesh . As I shared in the last issue, Yeshua also fulfilled the Feast of Tabernacles with his Birth. (To read the article "How Does The Messianic Community Celebrate Christmas" please visit our website rabbiscott.com and click on FAQ's)

Yeshua fulfills the Feast of Yom Kippur since He is our blood atonement and many believe He will return at Yom Teruah as it says in I Corinthians 15:52 *"It will take but a moment, the blink of an eye, at the final shofar. For the shofar will sound, and the dead will be raised to live forever, and we too will be changed."* We also find our rest (Shabbat) in Yeshua.

As we remember the Resurrection of our Messiah this year, I encourage you to seek out the Jewish roots of your faith and my prayer is they will draw you closer to the God of Abraham, Isaac and Jacob.

If you would like to experience a Messianic Resurrection service then join us at Congregation Beth Adonai on the Feast of First Fruits Saturday, April 11th at 11:00 AM. For more information visit our website at bethadonai.com.

Rabbi Scott Sekulow, Host of the Messianic Hour, along with his wife Judy is heard on WNIV and WGKA every Saturday from 4 to 5 pm. Rabbi Scott is the Senior Rabbi of Congregation Beth Adonai in Tucker, GA. You can contact Rabbi Scott at scott@rabbiscott.com.

Verses from the Complete Jewish Bible