

~THE FOURTH ANNUAL MOAD OF YHVH~
Chag HaShavuote [Feast of Weeks]
Chag HaBikkurim [Feast of the Firstfruits]

~INTRODUCTION~

Welcome to our teaching on the fourth of YHVH's annual observances prescribed for his people Israel.

[SLIDE 1]

By way of review, we have passed through the first three annual observances of *Pesach*, *Unleavened Bread*, and the *Omer Rasheet*, having connected them to the *Death*, *Burial* and *Resurrection* of the Messiah. Now we take the next step in YHVH's plan of redemption for mankind hidden within this fourth, harvest related celebration.

~SORTING OUT THE FRUIT~

As detailed in our previous teaching, it is important that we make the distinction between the *Omer Rasheet* wave offering - the third of the first grouping of three observances - and the *Bikkurim* offering which occurs fifty days later, as both are called *first fruits* in English.

We also note that this is the only celebration that is called by two names. Two observances will come together on this one day that:

- (1) will describe the effect brought about as a result of the fulfillment of the first three, and
- (2) will serve as the next legal step necessary for the establishment and expansion of YHVH's Kingdom on earth.

~MAN-MADE TRADITIONS AND ADDITIONS~

[SLIDE 2]

You'll notice that I refer to this feast as *The Return of the First-Born Sons*. Part of my investigation into the fourth appointed time involved questioning the popular ideas regarding this feast in common practice today.

One is the expression: the "counting of the omer". Having searched the Torah, I found there is no such expression; following the *Omer Rasheet* wave offering, we are instructed to count Sabbaths, days, and weeks, but there is no instruction to count *omers*. So where does it come from? This is a rabbinic expression. The problem I have with this expression is that it associates the *Omer* with the counting process between the *Omer Rasheet* and *Shavuote*, and not the resurrection process of the Messiah, who is the *Omer* [please see our teaching titled *The First Three*].

Since our entry into the Hebraic roots/Messianic/Torah observant awakening, I had always heard that *Shavuote* was the memorial of "the giving of the Law from Mount Sinai" - based on the fact that Israel's arrival at the Mount [Exodus 19] and *Shavuote* both fall in the third month. However, the "giving of the Law from Mount Sinai" is nowhere mentioned in the actual instructions regarding this feast. Again, this is standard rabbinic teaching, which though sounding plausible, is actually a man-made tradition

that takes the place of the commandment of God; a religious distraction that draws our attention away from the true focal point of what this feast actually represents. If the rabbis don't understand the meaning of the first three feasts – *the death, burial and resurrection of the Messiah* – why should their explanation of the fourth be accepted?

The historical events associated with the giving of the Law at Mount Sinai do have a place in the feast schedule, but it is not here [please see the teaching on *Yom T'ruah*].

~VOCABULARY~

[SLIDES 3-5]

The following is a list of Hebrew and Greek words that pertain to this study. They will serve as important markers as we track the development of the *bikkurim* and the priesthood.

The large caps represent the transliteration of the Hebrew root letters so that they can be more easily recognized as the root takes on its various forms.

The Greek equivalents of these words appear under the Hebrew, and demonstrate the continuity of thought from the Tanach through the New Covenant writings [Hebrew definitions from *Reuben Alcalay's Complete Hebrew-English dictionary*. Greek definitions from *Vine's Expository Dictionary of Old and New Testament Words*].

KARA, v. = to call

Greek: *Lego, Kaleo*

MEEKRA, n. = convocation, calling together, assembly

Greek: *Klesis* = calling

Greek: *Ekklesia* = assembly (church)

BAHAR, v. = to choose, select, elect

Greek: *Eklego*

NEEVHAR, adj. = chosen, selected, elected

BAHEER, n/adj. = chosen, select, elect

Greek: *Eklektos*

MEEVHAR, n. = the choicest, the elite

Greek: *Ekloge*

BIKKAIR, v. = to prefer, choose, select, to vest with birthright (not used in the Tanach, but listed here to add clarity to the root)

BIKKUR[IM], n. = firstling, first-fruit[s]

Greek: *Aparche*

B'KHOR[AH], n. = first-born/eldest son [daughter]

Greek: *Prototokos*

B'KHURAH, n. = birthright

Greek: *Prototokia*

HEZEER, v. = to separate (root NZR, *Nazarite*)
HEVDEEL, v. = to separate, divide, discern (root BDL)
Greek: *Aphorizo*

KEEDASHE, v. to sanctify, consecrate
Greek: *Hagiazo*

The words *bikkur* and *b'khor* are the central players of this study. Notice that there is only a minor vowel / pronunciation change that distinguishes the agricultural *bikkur* from the familial *b'khor*. This word play will be an important factor as this teaching progresses. In fact, this study commences by first tracking the idea of the *b'khor* with the patriarchs.

The basic idea of the *bikkurim* is simple: it is a smaller, choice group being selected out of a larger group. The agricultural application is the selection of a small premium portion of the first ripenings of a larger harvest [*bikkur*]. In terms of people, it is technically the selection of the first-born son [*b'khor*] out of all the children of the household, but by symbolic extension, a preferred group of people out of a larger group of people.

~THE NATURAL-SPIRITUAL DYNAMIC~

In most of the upcoming graphics, the reader will notice a red line running down the center of the diagram, with one side being labeled the *Natural* and the other the *Spiritual*. There is a **Natural-Spiritual dynamic** at work within the scriptures. Recognizing and understanding the operation of this fundamental structure is essential in order to properly identify and organize biblical phenomenon, especially as it applies to the progression of the covenants [please see our teaching titled *Covenant Mechanics*].

In brief, for the purposes of this study, understand:

- (1) the natural precedes the spiritual
- (2) the spiritual is superior to the natural

[SLIDES 6-8]

Related to this idea of the progression of the *Natural* and the *Spiritual* is the idea of *Structure* and the *Filling of Structure*, in which the *Natural* corresponds to *Structure*, and the *Spiritual* corresponds to the *Filling of Structure*. We also notice that those objects in the *Natural - Structure* state do not have life, and those objects in the *Spiritual - Filling of Structure* state have life. This pattern is seen in Creation, in Adam, in the Tabernacle / Temple, and in Ezekiel 37:1-14.

~THE ARRIVAL OF THE PRIESTHOOD~

As my study progressed from the age of the patriarchs into the period of Moses and Mount Sinai, the strong connection between the first-born sons and the Levitical priesthood became very apparent. At this point, I found it necessary to expand the

scope of my study of the *Bikkurim* to include the priesthood. This unexpected turn of events provoked not only my curiosity, but also frustration, as my simple study of the fourth feast mushroomed into a much more complex investigation of unknown magnitude.

As a lead in to this aspect of the study, I quote the words of the apostle Peter:

I Peter 2:9 *But ye are a **chosen** generation, a **royal priesthood**, an holy nation, a peculiar people; that ye should show forth the praises of him who hath **called** you out of darkness into his marvelous light.*

How is it that Peter, a Galilean fisherman of unknown tribal affiliation, could claim such a position for himself and for the people to whom he is writing [the strangers scattered throughout Asia]? In fact, Peter is claiming the fulfillment of a passage from the Torah:

Exodus 19:5-6 *Now therefore, if ye will obey my voice indeed, and keep my covenant, **then** ye shall be a peculiar treasure unto me above all people: for all the earth is mine. And ye shall be unto me a kingdom of priests, and an holy nation. These are the words which thou shalt speak unto the children of Israel.*

This was YHVH's original goal for his people.

Q: Was this goal realized during the Tanach period?

Q: Through which process do Egyptian slaves and no-name fishermen go in order to become a royal priesthood before the Creator of the universe?

In the pages of the Tanach, when we see someone going about making themselves or others priests, it is associated with the breaking of Torah and the establishment of a false religion:

Judges 17:5 *And the man Micah had an house of gods, and made an ephod, and teraphim, and consecrated one of his sons, who became his priest.*

1 Kings 12:31-32 *And he made an house of high places, and made priests of the lowest of the people, which were not of the sons of Levi. (32)And Jeroboam ordained a feast in the eighth month, on the fifteenth day of the month, like unto the feast that is in Judah, and he offered upon the altar. So did he in Bethel, sacrificing unto the calves that he had made: and he placed in Bethel the priests of the high places which he had made.*

2 Chronicles 13:9-12 *Have ye not cast out the priests of YHVH, the sons of Aaron, and the Levites, and have made you priests after the manner of the nations of other lands, so that whosoever cometh to consecrate himself with a young bullock and seven rams may be a priest of them that are no gods?*

(10) *But as for us, YHVH is our God, and we have not forsaken him; and the priests, which minister unto YHVH, are the sons of Aaron, and the Levites wait upon their business...for we keep the charge of YHVH our God; but ye have*

forsaken him. (12)And, behold, God himself is with us for our captain, and his priests with sounding trumpets to cry alarm against you...

After Judah's seventy year exile in Babylon, when the captives returned to Jerusalem to rebuild the Temple and restore its service, the priests had to validate their priesthood status by demonstrating their genealogy before engaging in ministry:

Ezra 2:61-63, Nehemiah 7:63-65 *And of the children of the **priests**: the children of Habaiah, the children of Koz, the children of Barzillai; which took a wife of the daughters of Barzillai the Gileadite, and was called after their name. (62)These sought their register among those that were **reckoned by genealogy**, but they were not found: therefore were they, as polluted, put **from the priesthood**. (63)And the Tirshatha said unto them, that they should not eat of the most holy things, till there stood up a priest with Urim and with Thummim.*

Peter's claim, therefore, can cause some trouble. Without demonstrating any genealogical connection to Levi, Peter's claim to priesthood could be called "replacement theology" – the replacement of the original Levitical priesthood, authorized in the Torah, with some new group of people who merely claim a royal priesthood status. Or are there two priesthoods?

Notice that it says a "kingdom of priests", not "a kingdom with a priesthood", as if the general citizenry of this kingdom is going to consist of nothing but priests; the average citizen possessing the title, privileges and responsibilities of the priesthood.

THE CALLING AND SELECTION PROCESS TO DETERMINE THE BIKKURIM AND THE PRIESTHOOD AS FORESHADOWED IN THE TANACH AND FULFILLED IN THE NEW COVENANT

Now that the fundamental elements are in place, we can proceed into what I call "The Trail of the *B'khorim*/First-born sons". Starting with the Patriarchs, we will trace the development of the *B'khor*, being mindful of the application of the previously mentioned categories of the Natural and Spiritual, as well as the vocabulary markers.

Children are the product of a marital relationship. One cannot speak about the *B'khorim*/First-born sons without also speaking about the marriage covenants that produced them. Picking up on Paul's teaching in Galatians chapter 4, we will see is that the marital relationships of the Patriarchs are going to be prophetic shadow pictures describing the nature of the marital relationship between YHVH and Israel [for a more detailed study of the Covenants, please see the teaching called *Covenant Mechanics*]. Each marriage is going to give us a slightly different perspective, but they all will share the same basic structure.

FIGURE 9 illustrates the marriages of Abraham and their *B'khorim*

Here we see the side-by-side comparison of one man with two “marriages” and their corresponding offspring. The dysfunctional, short-term marriage of Abram and Hagar, which produced the hostile, persecuting son Ishmael, represents the failed first marriage of YHVH and his bride Israel who never lost her “slave” status. We notice that Isaac is technically the **second-born** son, but he is also the first son born by **supernatural birth** by the once barren but now **fixed bride** Sarah under the **Lasting Marriage**. This is the picture of New Covenant believer who experiences the “Second Birth”, or being born of the Spirit, as Yeshua taught Nicodemus:

John 3:3-10 *Yeshua answered and said unto him, Verily, verily, I say unto thee, Except a man be born again, he cannot see the kingdom of God.*

*Nicodemus saith unto him, How can a man be born when he is old? Can he enter the **second time** into his mother’s womb, and be born?*

Yeshua answered, Verily, verily, I say unto thee, except a man be born of water and of the Spirit, he cannot enter into the kingdom of God. That which is born of the flesh is flesh; and that which is born of the Spirit is spirit.

Marvel not that I said unto thee, Ye must be born again. The wind bloweth where it listeth, and thou hearest the sound thereof, but canst not tell whence it cometh, and whither it goeth: so is every one that is born of the Spirit.

Nicodemus answered and said unto him, How can these things be?

Yeshua answered and said unto him, Art thou a master of Israel, and knowest not these things? [In other words, what I’m teaching you is in the Torah, and should not come as a surprise to you, a Torah teacher.]

Consequently, we see that Isaac – the spiritual son of the second birth – moves into the *b'khor* position to receive the full inheritance from his father, while Ishmael is cast out and receives nothing - as man in his natural state cannot inherit the kingdom of God.

You’ll notice how I placed Saul’s name by Ishmael and Paul’s name by Isaac. The hostility demonstrated from Ishmael towards Isaac will manifest in the New Covenant writings as the hostility the unrepentant Mount Sinai Covenant adherents, who rejected the Messiah, would inflict upon the New Covenant believers. Paul’s transformation is a vital example of the radical change that takes place in a person’s life as a result of their transfer from their natural birth under the first covenant [Mount Sinai under Moses], to their second, spiritual birth under the New Covenant [Jerusalem under Yeshua].

FIGURE 10 illustrates the marriage of Isaac and Rebecca and their *B'khorim*

Here is a slightly different view. Here we see the **Joyful Marriage**, but the bride is in distress. Why is that so? Rebecca – again the once barren but now **fixed bride** - asked the same question, and learned that her distress was the result of an **internal conflict of opposing personalities**, which in the spiritual Paul explains is the warring of the flesh and the Spirit [Romans 7:21-8:13, Galatians 5:16-17]. At the resurrection, when

we receive our spiritual, immortal, flesh-free body, this struggle will be over [I Corinthians 15:44-54].

We also see the sons: Esau the son of the first birth [Natural Man], who lives according to the flesh and lost his birthright and blessing [Hebrews 12:16-17]; and Jacob, the son of the **second birth** [Spiritual Man], who gained the birthright and blessing.

FIGURE 11 illustrates the marriages of Jacob and their *B'khorim*

Here again we see the dual marriages: the defective bride of the very unhappy first marriage [Israel and the Mount Sinai Covenant under Moses] compared to the desired and favored bride of the second joyful marriage [Israel and the Jerusalem New Covenant under Yeshua].

The sons of these two marriages follow the predictable pattern: Reuben the natural man of the first birth born under the unhappy marriage who lives by the lust of his flesh and loses his position and birthright of the first-born; and Joseph who is the first-born son of the second, joyful marriage who lives by the power of the Holy Spirit and gains the position and birthright of the first-born.

FIGURE 12 illustrates the marriages of Elkanah and his *B'khor*

Elkanah had two wives that follow the predictable pattern. The one, Peninnah, had children but also tormented the other, Hannah, who was barren [again the first covenant adherents persecuting the New Covenant believers]. However, we are told that out of her husband's love for her, Hannah was shown favor by receiving the "double portion". Hannah's womb was opened by the hand of YHVH [the "fixed bride"] and Samuel the *b'khor* was brought forth by supernatural intervention.

But Samuel's life is going to take an unusual path – even though he is not a Levite, he is going to be trained in all the ways of the Tabernacle and function in all manner of the priesthood. [Although Samuel's father had settled in *Ramathaim Tzophim* on Mount Ephraim, his family's ancestral inheritance traces back to *Ephrat*, also known as *Bethlehem* [Genesis 35:19, 48:7], in the territory of Judah, the same town of Naomi [Ruth 1:2] and Jesse [I Samuel 17:12], the father of King David. It should also be noted that neither *Ramathaim Tzophim*, nor *Ephrat/Bethlehem* are listed among the forty-eight cities given to the Levites (Numbers 35, Joshua 21)].

Samuel would grow up in righteousness, in contrast to the priests Eli and his sons, who had fallen into total compromise and corruption. So for a season, there will be **two priesthoods functioning side-by-side at the Tabernacle**:

- (1) The non-Levitical [Judean], righteous priesthood filled by Samuel the supernaturally-born son of the favored bride under the joyful marriage, and
- (2) The corrupted Levitical priesthood filled by Eli and his wicked sons.

Samuel is an "outsider" who is inserted into the Priesthood system as a shadow picture of YHVH's future fulfillment of **I Samuel 2:34-35**:

And this shall be a sign unto thee [Eli], that shall come upon thy two sons, on Hophni and Phinehas; in one day they shall die both of them. (35) And I will raise me up a faithful priest, that shall do according to that which is in mine

heart and in my mind: and I will build him a sure house; and he shall walk before mine anointed for ever.

This dual priesthood status will continue until the sudden termination of Eli and his sons in one day in battle with the Philistines in fulfillment of prophecy, at which time, the righteous ministry of Samuel will take over and he will continue on exclusively as the spiritual leader of Israel.

This is the shadow picture of Yeshua's righteous New Covenant ministry and "outsider" priesthood, which, for a season, ran side-by-side with the corrupt Mount Sinai Covenant Levitical priesthood in Jerusalem, until its termination in battle by the Roman Empire in A.D. 70, so that now the only functional priesthood on the earth is the one established by Yeshua in fulfillment of prophecy.

One man having two wives in the Tanach typically speaks to YHVH's two marriage covenants with Israel. Unhappy marriages, defective or nasty brides and dishonorable first-born sons are markers of the first covenant of Mount Sinai. Joyful marriages, fixed and favored brides and virtuous first-born sons born by supernatural intervention are markers for the second or New Covenant. Instances where we see members of the first marriage attacking those of the second are shadow pictures of the hostility first covenant adherents will direct towards New Covenant believers.

We all start out as natural-born Ishmael's and Esau's – slaves to sin and living according to the desires of our fleshly nature - and as such have no inheritance in the Kingdom. But then that wonderful, mysterious day comes upon us when we are born of the Spirit, from above, and we experience that second birth - the one in which we become the children of YHVH and legitimate heirs to the Kingdom under the second, New Covenant.

FIGURE 13 Trading places – summarizes the well established pattern of the **last**-born son taking the place of the **first**, and the **first** being transferred to the **last** position.

It is appropriate that Jacob be the one who "messed up" the blessing of Joseph's sons, Menassah and Ephraim. When Abraham blessed Isaac over Ishmael, it established the precedent, and as such no pattern had yet come into view. Then Jacob himself was blessed by Isaac over Esau – now the second time such an occurrence took place. Then Jacob himself blessed Joseph over Reuben, and by this time he could surely see the pattern and was the only one uniquely qualified to transfer the pattern to his grandchildren.

When Yeshua is teaching Nicodemus about the "second" or spiritual birth, he's not inventing a new concept - he is revealing a truth that was already well defined in the Torah.

~PICKING UP THE TRAIL WITH MOSES AND THE EXODUS~

The “ONE” for the “MANY”

[FIGURE 14]

We have seen in the Patriarchs certain aspects of the *B'khor* revealed. We looked at the marriage covenants that produced them, and how the nature of the covenant related to the nature of the offspring of that covenant. We looked at the positioning for inheritance – and how the first-born son became last and the last/second-born became first.

Now we will consider the *B'khor* as it manifests during the period of the Exodus. We will see that the *B'khor* is a central player in all of YHVH's dealings with Israel.

Exodus 4:21-23 *And YHVH said unto Moses, When thou goest to return into Egypt, see that thou do all those wonders before Pharaoh, which I have put in thine hand: but I will harden his heart, that he shall not let the people go.*

*And thou shalt say unto Pharaoh, Thus saith YHVH, my son, my **B'KHOR** is Israel. And I say unto thee, Let my son go, that he may serve me: and if thou refuse to let him go, behold, I will slay thy son, even thy **B'KHOR**.*

Numbers 33:3-4 *And they departed from Rameses in the first month, on the fifteenth day of the first month; on the morrow after the Passover the children of Israel went out with an high hand in the sight of all the Egyptians. For the Egyptians buried all their **B'KHOR**, which YHVH had smitten among them: upon their gods also YHVH executed judgments.*

Prior to his arrival in Egypt, YHVH revealed to Moses a small “preview” of the dramatic events to come. Here we see the action revolving around none other than the *B'khor*. The death and burial of pharaoh's first-born son to bring about the release of the children of Israel from physical bondage will serve as a shadow picture of the day when the death and burial of YHVH's first-born son will bring about the release of the children of Israel from spiritual bondage.

This “One for the Many” concept is paralleled in Yeshua's life in John 11:49-52. Paul also speaks of this concept in Romans 5:12-19 and II Corinthians 5:14-15.

It would be nice to think that after Israel was released from Egypt, everyone went to the Promised Land and lived “happily ever after”. However, this was not the case. We know that many who came out of Egypt never made it to the Promised Land.

All Israel was called out of the population of Egypt, but a second round of selection would take place in which two distinct groups would emerge out of the population of Israel. The following passages of scripture track the *B'khor* through this two stage process.

~STAGE I: THE CALLING OF ISRAEL OUT OF EGYPT~
THE 10TH PLAGUE - THE PLAGUE OF THE B'KHOR
THE PLAN AND THE WARNING

[FIGURE 15]

Exodus 11:1-10 *And YHVH said unto Moses, Yet will I bring one plague more upon Pharaoh, and upon Egypt; afterwards he will let you go hence: when he shall let you go, he shall surely thrust you out hence altogether.*

(2)Speak now in the ears of the people, and let every man borrow of his neighbor, and every woman of her neighbor, jewels of silver, and jewels of gold.

(3)And YHVH gave the people favor in the sight of the Egyptians. Moreover the man Moses was very great in the land of Egypt, in the sight of Pharaoh's servants, and in the sight of the people.

(4)And Moses said, Thus saith YHVH, About midnight will I go out into the midst of Egypt, (5)and all the B'KHOR in the land of Egypt shall die, from the B'KHOR of Pharaoh that sitteth upon his throne, even unto the B'KHOR of the maidservant that is behind the mill; and all the B'KHOR of beasts. (6)And there shall be a great cry throughout all the land of Egypt, such as there was none like it, nor shall be like it any more. (7)But against any of the children of Israel shall not a dog move his tongue, against man or beast: that ye may know how that YHVH doth put a difference between the Egyptians and Israel.

(8)And all these thy servants shall come down unto me, and bow down themselves unto me, saying, Get thee out, and all the people that follow thee: and after that I will go out. And he went out from Pharaoh in a great anger.

(9)And YHVH said unto Moses, Pharaoh shall not hearken unto you; that my wonders may be multiplied in the land of Egypt. (10)And Moses and Aaron did all these wonders before Pharaoh: and YHVH hardened Pharaoh's heart, so that he would not let the children of Israel go out of his land.

~THE EXECUTION OF THE PLAN~

Exodus 12:12-13, 21-30 *For I will pass through the land of Egypt this night, and will smite all the B'KHOR in the land of Egypt, both man and beast; and against all the gods of Egypt I will execute judgment: I am YHVH. (13)And the blood shall be to you for a token upon the houses where ye are: and when I see the blood, I will pass over you, and the plague shall not be upon you to destroy you, when I smite the land of Egypt...*

...(25)And it shall come to pass, when ye be come to the land which YHVH will give you, according as he hath promised, that ye shall keep this service. (26)And it shall come to pass, when your children shall say unto you, What mean ye by this service? (27)That ye shall say, It is the sacrifice of YHVH's Passover, who passed over the houses of the children of Israel in Egypt, when he smote the Egyptians, and delivered our houses. And the people bowed the head and worshipped.

(28)And the children of Israel went away, and did as YHVH had commanded Moses and Aaron, so did they.

*(29)And it came to pass, that at midnight YHVH smote all the **B'KHOR** in the land of Egypt, from the **B'KHOR** of Pharaoh that sat on his throne unto the **B'KHOR** of the captive that was in the dungeon; and all the **B'KHOR** of cattle. (30)And Pharaoh rose up in the night, he, and all his servants, and all the Egyptians; and there was a great cry in Egypt; for there was not a house where there was not one dead.*

~THE B'KHOR MEMORIAL~

Exodus 13:1-2, 11-16 *And YHVH spake unto Moses, saying, (2)Sanctify unto me all the **B'KHOR**, whatsoever openeth the womb among the children of Israel, both of man and of beast: it is mine...*

*...(11)And it shall be when YHVH shall bring thee into the land of the Canaanites, as he sware unto thee and to thy fathers, and shall give it thee, (12)That thou shalt set apart unto YHVH all that openeth the matrix, and every firstling that cometh of a beast which thou hast; the **males** shall be YHVH's.*

*(13)And every firstling of an ass thou shalt redeem with a lamb; and if thou wilt not redeem it, then thou shalt break his neck: and all the **B'KHOR** of man among thy children shalt thou **redeem**.*

*(14)And it shall be when thy **son** asketh thee in time to come, saying, What is this? that thou shalt say unto him, By strength of hand YHVH brought us out from Egypt, from the house of bondage: (15)And it came to pass, when Pharaoh would hardly let us go, that YHVH slew all the **B'KHOR** in the land of Egypt, both the **B'KHOR** of man, and the **B'KHOR** of beast: therefore I sacrifice to YHVH all that openeth the matrix, being **males**; but all the **B'KHOR** of my children I **redeem**. (16)And it shall be for a token upon thine hand, and for frontlets between thine eyes: for by strength of hand YHVH brought us forth out of Egypt.*

This memorial observance is detailed in **Luke 2:22-39**, in which Joseph and Mary dedicate Yeshua to the Lord, and at the same time fulfill the appropriate sacrifice for Mary's purification after child birth [**Leviticus 12**]. This event would be accompanied by the testimony of two witnesses: Simeon and Anna the prophetess.

~STAGE II: THE SELECTION OF THE B'KHOR AND PRIESTHOOD OUT OF ISRAEL~

Two characteristics stand out regarding the tribe of Levi and their relationship to the role of priest under the Mount Sinai Covenant:

The first is the **extreme loyalty** they exhibited in the midst of the pagan revelry, which had broken out because of Aaron's corruption, during the golden calf incident in Exodus 32. When Moses sent out the call for those who were on the side of YHVH, the Levites rallied to his side, willing to fulfill the command to kill even their own kinsmen.

The second is that to be a priest meant **self-denial**. Prior to their formal calling by YHVH into the priesthood, the Levites were just like any other tribe of Israel. Upon their departure from Egypt, the Levites had no idea they were destined to serve as priests under the high priest at a portable tabernacle which would travel about from place to place until the building of the temple in Jerusalem.

Like their fellow tribesmen, the Levites would have been looking forward to receiving their allotment of land, how they would use it, the careers and commerce in which they would engage. However, when the call of priesthood came upon them, they had to surrender those plans. Having just received their freedom, the Levites suddenly found themselves in the position where they would not receive an inheritance of land, and their future occupation, between the ages of 25 and 50, was now strictly defined by YHVH. They had to give it all up in order to carry the burden of the priesthood.

The following scriptures describe the events surrounding the entry of the Levites into the picture and their connection to the *B'khor*:

Numbers 3:5-16 *And YHVH spake unto Moses, saying, (6)Bring the tribe of Levi near, and present them before Aaron the priest, that they may minister unto him. (7)And they shall keep his charge, and the charge of the whole congregation before the tabernacle of the congregation, to do the service of the tabernacle. (8)And they shall keep all the instruments of the tabernacle of the congregation, and the charge of the children of Israel, to do the service of the tabernacle.*

(9)And thou shalt give the Levites unto Aaron and to his sons: they are wholly given unto him out of the children of Israel. (10)And thou shalt appoint Aaron and his sons, and they shall wait on their priest's office: and the stranger that cometh nigh shall be put to death.

*(11) And YHVH spake unto Moses, saying, (12)And I, behold, I have taken the Levites from among the children of Israel instead of all the **B'KHOR** that openeth the matrix among the children of Israel: therefore the Levites shall be mine; (13)Because all the **B'KHOR** are mine; for on the day that I smote all the **B'KHOR** in the land of Egypt I hallowed unto me all the **B'KHOR** in Israel, both man and beast: mine shall they be: I am YHVH.*

*(14)And YHVH spake unto Moses in the wilderness of Sinai, saying, (15)Number the children of Levi after the house of their fathers, by their families: every **male** from a month old and upward shalt thou number them. (16)And Moses numbered them according to the word of YHVH, as he was commanded.*

Numbers 3:39-51 *All that were numbered of the Levites, which Moses and Aaron numbered at the commandment of YHVH, throughout their families, all the males from a month old and upward, were twenty and two thousand.*

*(40)And YHVH said unto Moses, Number all the **B'KHOR** of the **males** of the children of Israel from a month old and upward, and take the number of their names. (41)And thou shalt take the Levites for me (I am YHVH)*

instead of all the **B'KHOR** among the children of Israel; and the cattle of the Levites instead of all the **B'KHOR** among the cattle of the children of Israel.

(42)And Moses numbered, as YHVH commanded him, all the **B'KHOR** among the children of Israel. (43)And all the **B'KHOR males** by the number of names, from a month old and upward, of those that were numbered of them, were twenty and two thousand two hundred and threescore and thirteen.

(44)And YHVH spake unto Moses, saying, (45)Take the Levites instead of all the **B'KHOR** among the children of Israel, and the cattle of the Levites instead of their cattle; and the Levites shall be mine: I am YHVH. (46)And for those that are to be **redeemed** of the two hundred and threescore and thirteen of the **B'KHOR** of the children of Israel, which are more than the Levites; (47)Thou shalt even take five shekels apiece by the poll, after the shekel of the sanctuary shalt thou take them: (the shekel is twenty gerahs), (48)And thou shalt give the money, wherewith the odd number of them is to be redeemed, unto Aaron and to his sons.

(49)And Moses took the **redemption money** of them that were over and above them that were **redeemed by the Levites**: (50)of the **B'KHOR** of the children of Israel took he the money; a thousand three hundred and threescore and five shekels, after the shekel of the sanctuary: (51)And Moses gave the money of them that were redeemed unto Aaron and to his sons, according to the word of YHVH, as YHVH commanded Moses.

All of YHVH's interactions with Israel, regarding deliverance and redemption, focus on the very narrow and select population of the *B'khor*. The death plague specifically targeted the *B'khor*, and the blood on the doorposts specifically preserved the life of the *B'khor*. Only the *B'khor* of Israel were redeemed by either a Levite or redemption money, and the redemption of only the *B'khor* was to continue as an on-going memorial for future generations.

By way of flashback, which one of Abraham's first-born sons was targeted for death, but then redeemed with the substitutionary sacrifice of the ram? It was Isaac – the *b'khor* born by the power of the Spirit under the Joyful/Enduring Marriage (New Covenant). Ishmael – the natural first-born son born under the first marriage is not included in the redemption scenario.

~THE END OF THE TRAIL~

[FIGURE 16]

In Israel's history, there was a day in which the calling and selection process had come to its completion – culminating in a day in which **three distinct people groups** became clearly defined and established: the mixed multitude, the *B'khor* of Israel, and the Levites. This day is described in Numbers 8 – the day of the ordination of the Levites:

Numbers 8:5-26 And YHVH spake unto Moses, saying, (6)Take the Levites from among the children of Israel, and cleanse them. (7)And thus shalt

thou do unto them, to cleanse them: Sprinkle water of purifying upon them, and let them shave all their flesh, and let them wash their clothes, and so make themselves clean.

(8)Then let them take a young bullock with his meat offering - fine flour mingled with oil - and another young bullock shalt thou take for a sin offering.

(9)And thou shalt bring the Levites before the tabernacle of the congregation: and thou shalt **gather the whole assembly of the children of Israel together**: (10)And thou shalt bring the Levites before YHVH: and the children of Israel shall put their hands upon the Levites: (11)And Aaron shall offer the Levites before YHVH for an offering [**tnuphah**] of the children of Israel, that they may execute the service of YHVH.

(12)And the Levites shall lay their hands upon the heads of the bullocks: and thou shalt offer the one for a sin offering, and the other for a burnt offering, unto YHVH, to make an atonement for the Levites.

(13)And thou shalt set the Levites before Aaron, and before his sons, and offer them for an offering [**tnuphah**] unto YHVH. (14)Thus shalt thou **separate** the Levites from among the children of Israel: and the Levites shall be mine.

(15)And after that shall the Levites go in to do the service of the tabernacle of the congregation: and thou shalt cleanse them, and offer them for an offering [**tnuphah**]. (16)For they are wholly given unto me from among the children of Israel; instead of such as open every womb - the **B'KHOR** of all the children of Israel, have I taken them unto me. (17)For all the **B'KHOR** of the children of Israel are mine, both man and beast: on the day that I smote every **B'KHOR** in the land of Egypt I sanctified them for myself. (18)And I have taken the Levites for all the **B'KHOR** of the children of Israel. (19)And I have given the Levites as a gift to Aaron and to his sons from among the children of Israel, to do the service of the children of Israel in the tabernacle of the congregation, and to make an atonement for the children of Israel: that there be no plague among the children of Israel, when the children of Israel come nigh unto the sanctuary.

(20)And Moses, and Aaron, and all the congregation of the children of Israel, did to the Levites according unto all that YHVH commanded Moses concerning the Levites, so did the children of Israel unto them. (21)And the Levites were purified, and they washed their clothes; and Aaron offered them as an offering [**tnuphah**] before YHVH; and Aaron made an atonement for them to cleanse them. (22)And after that went the Levites in to do their service in the tabernacle of the congregation before Aaron, and before his sons: as YHVH had commanded Moses concerning the Levites, so did they unto them.

(23)And YHVH spake unto Moses, saying, (24)This is it that belongeth unto the Levites: from twenty and five years old and upward they shall go in to wait upon the service of the tabernacle of the congregation: (25)And from the age of fifty years they shall cease waiting upon the service thereof, and shall serve no more: (26)But shall minister with their brethren in the tabernacle of the

congregation, to keep the charge, and shall do no service. Thus shalt thou do unto the Levites touching their charge.

We end up on a day in which all Israel is gathered. We have the *B'khor* of Israel chosen and redeemed from among the greater multitude, and likewise the Levites chosen as the servants given to Aaron the High Priest for the administration of the Mount Sinai Covenant.

All Israel was called out of the greater population of Egypt. Then, out of the greater mixed multitude of Israel, only the select populations of the *B'khor* and Levites were chosen. **Many were called** out of Egypt, very **few were chosen** for either redemption or to draw near in service. This is a day of reckoning:

(1) For the *B'khor*, it is a day when they realize that their redemption has been paid by another person's life (or ransom money).

(2) For the Levite, it is a day when he realizes that he is called as a minister before YHVH under the High Priest, and that his service involves surrendering his own plan for his life.

(3) For the multitude, it is a day when they realize that they have been called out of Egypt, but have not been chosen for redemption nor to draw near in service to YHVH.

At the end of the Tanach period, and into the time of Yeshua's ministry, we find the Levitical priesthood in serious trouble. As YHVH raised up his prophets to confront Israel in her unfaithfulness, a great deal of their rebuke was directed toward her priesthood, which had fallen into terminal corruption and had failed miserably to uphold her sacred commission:

Hosea 4:6-9 *My people are destroyed for lack of knowledge: because thou hast rejected knowledge, I will also reject thee, that **thou shalt be no priest to me**: seeing thou hast forgotten the law of thy God, I will also forget thy children. (7)As they were increased, so they sinned against me: therefore will I change their glory into shame. (8)They eat up the sin of my people, and they set their heart on their iniquity. (9)And there shall be, like people, like priest: and I will punish them for their ways, and reward them their doings.*

Jeremiah 23:1-4 *Woe be unto the shepherds that destroy and scatter the sheep of my pasture saith YHVH. (2)Therefore thus saith YHVH, God of Israel, against the shepherds that feed my people; Ye have scattered my flock, and driven them away, and have not visited them: behold, I will visit upon you the evil of your doings, saith YHVH.*

*(3)And I will gather the remnant of my flock out of all countries whither I have driven them, and will bring them again to their folds; and they shall be fruitful and increase. (4)And **I will set up shepherds over them which shall feed them**: and they shall fear no more, nor be dismayed, neither shall they be lacking, saith YHVH.*

Ezekiel 22:26 *Her priests have violated my law, and have profaned mine holy things: they have put no difference between the holy and profane, neither have they shewed difference between the unclean and the clean, and have hid their eyes from my sabbaths, and I am profaned among them.*

Ezekiel 34:2-10 *Son of man, **prophesy against the shepherds of Israel**, prophesy, and say unto them, Thus saith the Lord YHVH unto the shepherds; Woe be to the shepherds of Israel that do feed themselves! Should not the shepherds feed the flocks?*

(3)Ye eat the fat, and ye clothe you with the wool, ye kill them that are fed: but ye feed not the flock. (4)The diseased have ye not strengthened, neither have ye healed that which was sick, neither have ye bound up that which was broken, neither have ye brought again that which was driven away, neither have ye sought that which was lost; but with force and with cruelty have ye ruled them.

(5)And they were scattered, because there is no shepherd: and they became meat to all the beasts of the field, when they were scattered. (6)My sheep wandered through all the mountains, and upon every high hill: yea, my flock was scattered upon all the face of the earth, and none did search or seek after them.

(7)Therefore, ye shepherds, hear the word of YHVH; (8)As I live, saith the Lord YHVH, surely because my flock became a prey, and my flock became meat to every beast of the field, because there was no shepherd, neither did my shepherds search for my flock, but the shepherds fed themselves, and fed not my flock;

*(9)Therefore, O ye shepherds, hear the word of YHVH; (10)Thus saith the Lord YHVH; Behold, I am against the shepherds; and I will require my flock at their hand, and **cause them to cease from feeding the flock**; neither shall the shepherds feed themselves any more; for **I will deliver my flock from their mouth**, that they may not be meat for them.*

Malachi 2:1-9 *And now, O ye priests, this commandment is for you. (2)If ye will not hear, and if ye will not lay it to heart, to give glory unto my name, saith YHVH of hosts, I will even send a curse upon you, and I will curse your blessings: yea, I have cursed them already, because ye do not lay it to heart.*

(3)Behold, I will corrupt your seed, and spread dung upon your faces, even the dung of your solemn feasts; and shall take you away with it. (4)And ye shall know that I have sent this commandment unto you, that my covenant might be with Levi, saith YHVH of hosts.

(5)My covenant was with him of life and peace; and I gave them to him for the fear wherewith he feared me, and was afraid before my name. (6)The law of truth was in his mouth, and iniquity was not found in his lips: he walked with me in peace and equity, and did turn many away from iniquity. (7)For the

priest's lips should keep knowledge, and they should seek the law at his mouth: for he is the messenger of YHVH of hosts.

(8)But ye are departed out of the way; ye have caused many to stumble at the law; ye have corrupted the covenant of Levi, saith YHVH of hosts.

(9)Therefore have I also made you contemptible and base before all the people, according as ye have not kept my ways, but have been partial in the law.

Why is it that the priesthood has degenerated into such a state of wickedness? As it is with all things in the "Natural" state, the priesthood is prone to corruption, dishonor and is temporary in nature. Because of their lack of obedience and attentiveness to their duties, YHVH declared that there was coming a day when they would lose their position as caretakers of the flock of Israel and be replaced by others.

However, the *Natural* serves the valuable purpose of providing us with the basic structure and shadow picture of good things to come with the advent of the *Spiritual*.

This is the end of the trail in the Tanach, as far as the legal precedent is concerned, regarding Israel, the *B'khor* and the Priesthood. Now the questions are:

1. Will we find this same process and pattern appear in the New Covenant writings?

2. Is this entire process a shadow picture in the Natural that will find its fulfillment in the Spiritual in the New Covenant writings?

As we venture into the territory of the New Covenant, we will be taking with us the following concepts pertaining to the *b'khor* and the *priesthood*:

Regarding the *b'khor*/first-born sons:

-it is the position which *receives the inheritance*

-we see the idea of *the first* moving to *the last* position, and *the last* moving into *the first* position

-out of the *many* who were *called* out of Egypt, they were the *few* who were *chosen* to be *redeemed*

Regarding the *priesthood*:

-out of the *many* who were *called* out of Egypt, the Levites were the *few* who were *chosen* to *draw near* in service to the *high priest*

-it is a position defined by *extreme loyalty* and *self-denial*

These markers will become very important when decoding certain messages we encounter in the teachings of Yeshua.

~THE TRAIL CONTINUES: YESHUA'S MINISTRY~

[SLIDE 17]

Luke 6:12-19 *And it came to pass in those days, that he went out into a mountain to pray, and continued all night in prayer to God. (13)And when it was day, he called unto him his disciples: and of them he chose twelve, whom also he named apostles;*

(14)Simon, (whom he also named Peter,) and Andrew his brother, James and John, Philip and Bartholomew, (15)Matthew and Thomas, James the son of Alphaeus, and Simon called Zelotes,(16)And Judas the brother of James, and Judas Iscariot, which also was the traitor.

(17)And he came down with them, and stood in the plain, and the company of his disciples, and a **great multitude of people** out of all Judaea and Jerusalem, and from the sea coast of Tyre and Sidon, which came to hear him, and to be healed of their diseases; (18)And they that were vexed with unclean spirits: and they were healed. (19)And the whole multitude sought to touch him: for there went virtue out of him, and healed them all.

Three people groups are identified in this passage. Out of the population of the Judea-Galilean-Lebanon region, the great multitude emerges following the Messiah, just as the mixed multitude came out of Egypt following Moses. Out of the great multitude there was a smaller group of followers called disciples, and from out of that group was yet another group of twelve hand-picked to be apostles.

And also like Moses in **Exodus 32:26-29**, in the same circumstances involving the corruption of the religious leadership, Yeshua is going to send out the call to those who would rally to his side. Yeshua is recruiting his priesthood, and the same two criteria of *extreme loyalty* and *self-denial*, which pertained to the Levites under the first covenant, will likewise pertain to those who answer the call under the New Covenant:

Luke 14:25-33 *And there went great multitudes with him: and he turned, and said unto them, (26)If **any man** come to me [the rally call], and hate not his father, and mother, and wife, and children, and brethren, and sisters, yea, and his own life also, he cannot be my disciple [the extreme loyalty]. (27)And whosoever doth not bear his cross, and come after me, cannot be my disciple.*

(28)For which of you, intending to build a tower, sitteth not down first, and **counteth the cost**, whether he have sufficient to finish it? (29)Lest haply, after he hath laid the foundation, and is not able to finish it, all that behold it begin to mock him, (30)Saying, This man began to build, and was not able to finish. (31)Or what king, going to make war against another king, sitteth not down first, and consulteth whether he be able with ten thousand to meet him that cometh against him with twenty thousand? (32)Or else, while the other is yet a great way off, he sendeth an ambassage, and desireth conditions of peace.

(33)So likewise, **whosoever he be of you that forsaketh not all that he hath, he cannot be my disciple** [the self-denial].

Later, speaking to his inner group of apostles at the last supper, Yeshua would tell them:

John 15:16-19 *Ye have not **chosen** me, but I have **chosen** you, and **ordained** you, that ye should go and bring forth fruit, and that your fruit should*

remain: that whatsoever ye shall ask of the Father in my name, he may give it you. (17)These things I command you, that ye love one another.

(18)If the world hate you, ye know that it hated me before it hated you.

*(19)If ye were of the world, the world would love his own: but because ye are not of the world, but I have **chosen** you out of the world, therefore the world hateth you.*

As it was in the days of Moses, the attrition rate will be high for those who would start out following the Messiah, but would later fall away. For some, the Messiah was merely a free meal or quick relief from a debilitating ailment; others followed in hopes of advancing their political ambitions, while others sought after mystical power, or at least to be entertained by one who possessed it. Whatever the foul motive, only the sold-out, die-hard followers of the Messiah would remain standing after a period of exposure to his hard teaching and a standard of living that deprived the flesh, sacrificed the self and trashed ones personal religion [Matthew 13:18-23, 19:16-22, Luke 14:25-33, 23:8, John 6:13-15, 24-26, 59-67, 8:30-59].

From the first calling of his disciples throughout the course of his ministry, Yeshua's messages to the people are going to be laden with the Many-Few/Called-Chosen/First-Last-Reversal vocabulary markers.

Concluding a discussion on who will enter the Kingdom of God and inherit everlasting life, Yeshua stated:

Matthew 19:29-30 *And every one that hath forsaken houses, or brethren, or sisters, or father, or mother, or wife, or children, or lands, for my name's sake, shall receive an hundredfold, and shall **inherit everlasting life**.*
(30)But many that are first shall be last; and the last shall be first.

Here, in the context of who will inherit everlasting life, Yeshua invokes both the self-denial quality associated with the priesthood and the position-reversal terminology associated with the last/second-born son [spiritual] taking the place of the first-born son [natural], and the first being bumped out of the position of birthright/inheritance to the last position.

Next, Yeshua tells the parable of the vineyard workers, and speaks of the conflict that arises when those hired **first** in the day grumble against those hired **last** in the day. Those hired first felt short-changed, as those hired last received favor from the vineyard owner by being bumped up to the front of the line to receive their pay, and then received the same amount for their little work as those who worked much. Yeshua concludes the parable by saying:

Matthew 20:16 *So the last shall be first, and the first last: for many be called, but few chosen.*

Notice how the vineyard owner defends his actions before the disgruntled first workers:

Matthew 20:15 *Is it not lawful for me to do what I will with mine own?*

With his *own* what – his own money or his own *people*? Remember what YHVH says about the *B'khor*:

Numbers 3:13 *Because all the B'KHOR are mine; for on the day that I smote all the B'KHOR in the land of Egypt I hallowed unto me all the B'KHOR in Israel, both man and beast: mine shall they be: I am YHVH.*

YHVH's chosen people, the *B'khor* – the sons of the last/second birth of the Spirit - are those who receive favor and bump the first – the Ishmaels and Esaus - out of their position.

The vocabulary markers again appear in the following passage dealing with those who will enter into the Kingdom of God and those who won't:

Luke 13:23-30 *Then said one unto him, Lord, are there FEW that be saved? And he said unto them, (24)Strive to enter in at the strait gate: for MANY, I say unto you, will seek to enter in, and shall not be able.*

(25)When once the master of the house is risen up, and hath shut to the door, and ye begin to stand without, and to knock at the door, saying, Lord, Lord, open unto us; and he shall answer and say unto you, I know you not whence ye are.

(26)Then shall ye begin to say, We have eaten and drunk in thy presence, and thou hast taught in our streets. (27)But he shall say, I tell you, I know you not whence ye are; depart from me, all ye workers of iniquity. (28)There shall be weeping and gnashing of teeth, when ye shall see Abraham, and Isaac, and Jacob, and all the prophets, in the kingdom of God, and you yourselves thrust out.

(29)And they shall come from the east, and from the west, and from the north, and from the south, and shall sit down in the kingdom of God. (30)And, behold, there are last which shall be first, and there are first which shall be last.

Finally, at the conclusion of the parable of the wedding feast - in which a man is found who is not wearing the appropriate wedding garment – and is bound and cast out to suffer in the outer darkness, Yeshua says:

Matthew 22:14 *For many are called, but few are chosen.*

In these last two examples, we see people striving to enter either the Kingdom of God or the wedding feast – people who believe they belong there – who find they cannot enter. And Yeshua concludes these illustrations with the phrase relating to the *b'khor* / first-born sons and the priesthood. Obviously, if one did not fall into one of those two categories, access was denied.

~STRUCTURE AND THE FILLING OF STRUCTURE~

[SLIDE 18]

The structure of YHVH's kingdom consists of the following elements: first a **Covenant**, then a **High Priesthood** attached to the Covenant, then a **Servant Priesthood** under the headship of the High Priest, and finally an **Offering** which is pleasing to YHVH.

In the *Natural*, this structure was filled by the Covenant of Mount Sinai through Moses, the Aaronic Priesthood, the Levitical Servant Priesthood, and the Bikkurim Offering.

With Yeshua's crucifixion, came the termination of the first marriage by the death of Israel's Husband, and the transfer from the *Natural* to the *Spiritual* was put into effect. The basic structural elements remain the same, but how the structure is going to be filled undergoes a change [for a more detailed explanation of the split covenant, please see the teaching called *Covenant Mechanics*].

In the *Spiritual*, the structure is filled by the **New Covenant** through Yeshua, the **Melkizedek High Priesthood**, the **Apostolic Servant Priesthood**, and the spirit-born *B'khorim*/First-born sons fulfill the Offering position.

The following discussion will follow two courses - the first is devoted to tracking the *B'khor* and the second to tracking the Priesthood as they fulfill these structural requirements in the New Covenant writings.

~I. THE B'KHOR IN THE NEW COVENANT~

Romans 16:5 *Likewise greet the assembly that is in their house. Salute my wellbeloved Epaenetus, who is the **firstfruits** of Achaia unto Messiah.*

I Corinthians 16:15 *I beseech you, brethren, (ye know **the house** of Stephanas, that it is the **firstfruits** of Achaia, and that they have addicted themselves to the ministry of the saints.)*

James 1:18 *Of his own will **begat** he **us** with the word of truth, that **we** should be a kind of **firstfruits** of his creatures [James is writing to the twelve tribes scattered abroad].*

In these three passages referenced above, the writers are using the Greek agriculture-related word *aparche* to describe the New Covenant believers, as individuals or corporately, indicating that they understood the symbolic nature of the *Bikkurim* harvest festival. In James' passage, we also see the reference to the second / spiritual birth.

In the following verses, we will see the vocabulary associated with the first-born son being applied to New Covenant believers:

-first-born sons are *called* and *chosen*

-first-born sons are **redeemed**
-first-born sons receive the **inheritance**

Ephesians 1:3-18 *Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Yeshua Messiah, who hath blessed us with all spiritual blessings in heavenly places in Messiah: (4)According as he hath **chosen** us in him before the foundation of the world...*

*...(7)In whom we have **redemption** through his blood, the forgiveness of sins, according to the riches of his grace...*

*...(11)In whom also we have obtained an **inheritance**, being predestinated according to the purpose of him who worketh all things after the counsel of his own will: (12)That we should be to the praise of his glory, who first trusted in Messiah.*

*...(13)In whom ye also trusted, after that ye heard the word of truth, the gospel of your salvation: in whom also after that ye believed, ye were sealed with that holy Spirit of promise, (14)Which is the earnest of our **inheritance** until the **redemption** of the purchased possession...*

*...(15)Wherefore I also, after I heard of your faith in the Lord Yeshua, and love unto all the saints, (16)Cease not to give thanks for you, making mention of you in my prayers; (17)That the God of our Lord Yeshua Messiah, the Father of glory, may give unto you the spirit of wisdom and revelation in the knowledge of him: (18)The eyes of your understanding being enlightened; that ye may know what is the hope of his **calling**, and what the riches of the glory of his **inheritance** in the saints...*

Hebrews 12:15-24 *Looking diligently lest any man fail of the grace of God; lest any root of bitterness springing up trouble you, and thereby many be defiled; (16)Lest there be any fornicator, or profane person, as **Esau**, who for one morsel of meat sold his **birthright**.*

*(17)For ye know how that afterward, when he would have **inherited** the blessing, he was rejected: for he found no place of repentance, though he sought it carefully with tears.*

(18)For ye are not come unto the mount that might be touched, and that burned with fire, nor unto blackness, and darkness, and tempest, (19)and the sound of a trumpet, and the voice of words; which voice they that heard intreated that the word should not be spoken to them any more: (20)(For they could not endure that which was commanded, And if so much as a beast touch the mountain, it shall be stoned, or thrust through with a dart: (21)And so terrible was the sight, that Moses said, I exceedingly fear and quake:)

*(22)But ye are come unto mount Sion, and unto the city of the living God, the heavenly Jerusalem, and to an innumerable company of angels – (23)to the **general assembly and congregation of the firstborn** - which are written in heaven, and to God the Judge of all, and to the spirits of just men made perfect,*

(24)and to **Yeshua the mediator of the new covenant**, and to the blood of sprinkling, that speaketh better things than that of Abel.

In the following passage [SLIDE 19], Peter refers to the redemption money paid to redeem the first-born sons of the tribes of Israel from **Numbers 3:46-49**, but now he is going to apply it on the *Spiritual* level to the believers in Yeshua :

1 Peter 1:18-19 Forasmuch as ye know that ye were not **redeemed** with corruptible things, as **silver and gold**, from your vain conversation received by tradition from your fathers; (19)But with the precious blood of Messiah, as of a lamb without blemish and without spot:

Backing up to the opening of Peter's letter, we find the first four verses loaded with first-born terminology as it pertains to the scattered, New Covenant pilgrims who have experienced the *second birth*:

1 Peter 1:1-4 Peter, an apostle of Yeshua Messiah, to the strangers scattered throughout Pontus, Galatia, Cappadocia, Asia, and Bithynia,
(2)**Elect** according to the foreknowledge of God the Father, through sanctification of the Spirit, unto obedience and sprinkling of the blood of Yeshua Messiah: Grace unto you, and peace, be multiplied.

(3)**Blessed** be the God and Father of our Lord Yeshua Messiah, which according to his abundant mercy hath **begotten us again** unto a lively hope by the resurrection of Yeshua Messiah from the dead, (4)To an **inheritance** incorruptible, and undefiled, and that fadeth not away, **reserved in heaven** for you...

The *B'khor* vocabulary markers continue into the book of Revelation:

Revelation 17:12-14 And the ten horns which thou sawest are ten kings, which have received no kingdom as yet; but receive power as kings one hour with the beast.

(13)These have one mind, and shall give their power and strength unto the beast. (14)These shall make war with the Lamb, and the Lamb shall overcome them: for he is Lord of lords, and King of kings: and **they** that are with him are **called**, and **chosen**, and faithful.

Revelation 14:4 These are they [speaking of the 144,000] which were not defiled with women; for they are virgins. These are they which follow the Lamb whithersoever he goeth. These were **redeemed from among men**, **firstfruits** unto God and to the Lamb.

Revelation 19:7-9 Let us be glad and rejoice, and give honour to him: for the marriage of the Lamb is come, and his wife hath made herself ready. (8)And to her was granted that she should be arrayed in fine linen, clean and white: for the fine linen is the righteousness of saints.

*(9)And he saith unto me, Write, Blessed are they which are **called** unto the marriage supper of the Lamb. And he saith unto me, These are the true sayings of God.*

The Bikkurim Trail ultimately leads to the Marriage Supper of the Lamb. The Kingdom of God will be populated exclusively with the *Bikkurim* harvest of the *B'khor*/First-born sons of *the Spirit*. There are no second born, third born, or fourth born sons in the Kingdom – redemption and inheritance only fall on those in the first-born position.

~II. THE PRIESTHOOD UNDER THE NEW COVENANT~

Yeshua's hand-picked group of twelve would remain a distinct entity responsible for the establishment and administration of the New Covenant order (more would be added later). They were the core group who walked with Yeshua personally from the beginning, learning the Kingdom of God from the King himself.

When examined from the standpoint of Structure / Filling-of-Structure, a stark contrast between the religious leadership in place in Yeshua's day, and his apostles, becomes apparent. Yeshua describes the religious leaders as a structure:

Matthew 23:27-28 *Woe unto you, scribes and Pharisees, hypocrites! for ye are like unto whited **sepulchres**, which indeed appear beautiful outward, but are within **full** of dead men's bones, and of all uncleanness. (28)Even so ye also outwardly appear righteous unto men, but within ye are full of hypocrisy and iniquity.*

This type of structure cannot serve as Yeshua's servant priesthood, yet of his apostles it is written:

John 20:21-22 *Then said Yeshua to them again, Peace be unto you: as my Father hath sent me, even so send I you. (22)And when he had said this, he **breathed on them**, and saith unto them, Receive ye the Holy Spirit.*

In this action taken by Yeshua the High Priest towards his servant priesthood, we see the same filling of structure as when YHVH breathed his breath into Adam, bringing him from a state of death to life.

The apostles bore a great responsibility and challenge. The shadow picture covenant was deeply engrained in Israel's national life, and had become a **fossilized religion in itself which now competed against the Messiah instead of leading to him**. As such, the transfer to the new order would not be without conflict. Speaking of the apostles, Paul wrote:

Ephesians 2:19-22 *Now therefore ye are no more strangers and foreigners, but fellow citizens with the saints, and of the household of God; (20)And are built upon the **foundation of the apostles and prophets**, Yeshua Messiah himself being the chief corner stone; (21)In whom all the building fitly*

framed together groweth unto an holy temple in the Lord: (22)In whom ye also are builded together for an habitation of God through the Spirit.

So vital was this foundational work of the apostolic priesthood that it is eternally memorialized in the wall surrounding the New Jerusalem:

Revelation 21:14 *And the wall of the city had twelve foundations, and in them the names of the twelve apostles of the Lamb.*

As the following New Covenant writings will demonstrate, this group started acting like and describing themselves as Levites, seemingly to usurp the function of the Levitical priesthood, but in reality fulfilling the shadow picture that is described in the Torah. This is not “replacement theology” - this is “fulfillment theology”.

Regarding the teachers of Israel:

2 Chronicles 17:7-9 *Also in the third year of his reign he [Jehoshaphat] sent to his princes, even to Benhail, and to Obadiah, and to Zechariah, and to Nethaneel, and to Michaiiah, to teach in the cities of Judah.*

(8)And with them Levites, even Shemaiah, and Nethaniah, and Zebadiah, and Asahel, and Shemiramoth, and Jehonathan, and Adonijah, and Tobijah, and Tobadonijah, Levites; and with them Elishama and Jehoram, priests.

(9)And they taught in Judah, and had the book of the law of YHVH with them, and went about throughout all the cities of Judah, and taught the people.

One of the Levitical responsibilities was to teach the people the Word of God. Prior to the coming of the Messiah, the priesthood possessed a limited level of understanding into the Scriptures. To complicate matters, over the years the Word had been mixed with the doctrines and fables of men [Mark 7:1-9], which Yeshua referred to as *leaven* [Matthew 16:6-12].

However, with the coming of the Messiah and the promise of the Holy Spirit, also came a greater understanding into the Word. The information was always there, but the ability to properly decipher the cryptic prophecies and shadow pictures was not. The apostles possessed this understanding, and it was their responsibility to get the word out.

Luke 24:44-45 *And he said unto them, These are the words which I spake unto you, while I was yet with you, that all things must be fulfilled, which were written in the law of Moses, and in the prophets, and in the psalms, concerning me. (45)Then opened he their understanding, that they might understand the scriptures.*

Acts 1:1-3 *The former treatise have I made, O Theophilus, of all that Yeshua began both to do and teach, (2)Until the day in which he was taken up, after that he through the Holy Spirit had given commandments unto the apostles whom he had **chosen**: (3)To whom also he shewed himself alive after his passion*

by many infallible proofs, being seen of them forty days, and speaking of the things pertaining to the kingdom of God.

Ephesians 3:2-9 *If ye have heard of the dispensation of the grace of God which is given me to you-ward: (3)How that by revelation he made known unto me the mystery; (as I wrote afore in few words, (4)Whereby, when ye read, ye may understand my knowledge in the mystery of Messiah) (5)Which in other ages was not made known unto the sons of men, as it is now revealed unto his holy apostles and prophets by the Spirit;*

(6)That the Gentiles should be fellowheirs, and of the same body, and partakers of his promise in Messiah by the gospel: (7)Whereof I was made a minister, according to the gift of the grace of God given unto me by the effectual working of his power. (8)Unto me, who am less than the least of all saints, is this grace given, that I should preach among the Gentiles the unsearchable riches of Messiah; (9)And to make all see what is the fellowship of the mystery, which from the beginning of the world hath been hid in God, who created all things by Yeshua Messiah.

Armed with this superior knowledge, the apostles would generate distinct doctrines in contrast to the limited and corrupted teachings of their day. Starting in Jerusalem, the apostles would start disseminating their doctrine throughout the cities and villages of the Mediterranean:

Acts 2:42 *And they continued steadfastly in the **apostles' doctrine** and fellowship, and in breaking of bread, and in prayers.*

I love the following passage of Scripture. It is the classic showdown between the newly appointed shepherds of Israel and the abusive, corrupt old guard who do not realize that prophecy has been fulfilled and they have been bumped out of their job. The Master of the House is making a big statement here as to who owns the house and who his chosen teachers are:

Acts 5:17-28 *Then the high priest rose up, and all they that were with him, (which is the sect of the Sadducees,) and were filled with indignation, (18)And laid their hands on the apostles, and put them in the common prison. (19)But the angel of the Lord by night opened the prison doors, and brought them forth, and said, (20)Go, **stand and speak in the temple to the people all the words of this life.** (21)And when they heard that, they entered into the temple early in the morning, and taught.*

But the high priest came, and they that were with him, and called the council together, and all the senate of the children of Israel, and sent to the prison to have them brought. (22)But when the officers came, and found them not in the prison, they returned, and told, (23)Saying, The prison truly found we shut with all safety, and the keepers standing without before the doors: but when we had opened, we found no man within. (24)Now when the high priest and the captain

of the temple and the chief priests heard these things, they doubted of them whereunto this would grow.

*(25)Then came one and told them, saying, Behold, the men whom ye put in prison are **standing in the temple, and teaching the people**. (26)Then went the captain with the officers, and brought them without violence: for they feared the people, lest they should have been stoned. (27)And when they had brought them, they set them before the council: and the high priest asked them, (28)Saying, Did not we straitly command you that ye should not teach in this name? and, behold, ye have filled Jerusalem **with your doctrine**, and intend to bring this man's blood upon us.*

In Acts 8, Philip is first preaching to the north in Samaria, then journeys south to join up with the Ethiopian official to explain Isaiah 53. Why Philip? The Ethiopian had just come from worshipping in Jerusalem – were there no priests, men who love to be called rabbis, or sages of Israel to answer his question? After this Philip returned to the north, preaching in all the cities unto Caesarea.

Likewise, Paul's teaching was characterized by the following:

Acts 16:4-5 *And as they went through the cities, they delivered them **the decrees for to keep, that were ordained of the apostles and elders which were at Jerusalem**. (5)And so were the assemblies established in the faith, and increased in number daily.*

In Paul's missionary journeying we see the Jehoshaphat priesthood teaching pattern in effect, but it is no longer limited to the borders of Judah or Israel – here the pattern is expanded, becoming global in keeping with Yeshua's commission to go into all the world.

Regarding the resolution of spiritual controversies:

2 Chronicles 19:8-11 *Moreover in Jerusalem did Jehoshaphat set of the Levites, and of the priests, and of the chief of the fathers of Israel, for the judgment of YHVH, and for controversies, when they returned to Jerusalem.*

(9)And he charged them, saying, Thus shall ye do in the fear of YHVH, faithfully, and with a perfect heart. (10)And what cause soever shall come to you of your brethren that dwell in their cities, between blood and blood, between law and commandment, statutes and judgments, ye shall even warn them that they trespass not against YHVH, and so wrath come upon you, and upon your brethren: this do, and ye shall not trespass.

(11)And, behold, Amariah the chief priest is over you in all matters of YHVH; and Zebadiah the son of Ishmael, the ruler of the house of Judah, for all the king's matters: also the Levites shall be officers before you. Deal courageously, and YHVH shall be with the good.

However, in Acts 15, we see a new ecclesiastical legal system established in Jerusalem - consisting of the apostles and elders - for the resolution of conflicts of faith. Belief in Yeshua was outlawed by Israel's religious leadership. If the ruling council condemned Yeshua to death - how could one of his followers hope to find justice in a courtroom filled with vipers? The same pile of stones they used to kill Stephen was still waiting outside the city walls of Jerusalem for the next New Covenant believer in Yeshua.

Regarding the provision of material necessities for the ministers of the New Covenant, Paul writes:

1 Corinthians 9:1-14 *Am I not an apostle? Am I not free? Have I not seen Yeshua Messiah our Lord? Are not ye my work in the Lord?*

(2)If I be not an apostle unto others, yet doubtless I am to you: for the seal of mine apostleship are ye in the Lord. (3) Mine answer to them that do examine me is this:

(4)Have we not power to eat and to drink? (5)Have we not power to lead about a sister, a wife, as well as other apostles, and as the brethren of the Lord, and Cephas? (6)Or I only and Barnabas, have not we power to forbear working?

*(7)Who goeth a warfare any time at his own charges? Who planteth a vineyard, and eateth not of the fruit thereof? Or who feedeth a flock, and eateth not of the milk of the flock? (8)Say I these things as a man? or saith not the **law** the same also? (9)For **it is written in the law of Moses, Thou shalt not muzzle the mouth of the ox that treadeth out the corn.** Doth God take care for oxen? (10)Or saith he it altogether for our sakes? For our sakes, no doubt, this is written: that he that ploweth should plow in hope; and that he that thresheth in hope should be partaker of his hope.*

(11)If we have sown unto you spiritual things, is it a great thing if we shall reap your carnal things? (12)If others be partakers of this power over you, are not we rather? Nevertheless we have not used this power; but suffer all things, lest we should hinder the gospel of Messiah.

(13)Do ye not know that they which minister about holy things live of the things of the temple? And they which wait at the altar are partakers with the altar? (14)Even so hath the Lord ordained that they which preach the gospel should live of the gospel.

Paul first begins his argument by appealing to common sense. Then, to give his argument a little more weight, he makes reference to the Torah regarding beasts of burden. Finally, however, Paul – a Benjamite - crosses the line and invokes the means by which the Levites were to have their material needs met [**Numbers 18:25-31, Deuteronomy 18:1-8**], to justify how the needs of those who preach the gospel should have their material needs met. In doing so, he is equating the two ministries. It's one thing to equate yourself to an ox, it's another to equate yourself to a Levitical priest. And Paul is not doing this of his own accord – just as YHVH established this provision

for the Levites in the natural covenant, so has Paul stated that Yeshua has established this provision for his workers of the gospel in the spiritual covenant.

Regarding Paul and Barnabas' ordination into the position of apostle:

Romans 1:1-7 *Paul, a servant of Yeshua Messiah, called to be an apostle, separated unto the gospel of God, (2)(Which he had promised afore by his prophets in the holy scriptures), (3)Concerning his Son Yeshua Messiah our Lord...*

*... (5)By whom we have received grace and **apostleship**, for obedience to the faith among all nations, for his name: (6)Among whom are ye also **the called** of Yeshua Messiah. (7)To all that be in Rome, beloved of God, **called to be saints**: Grace to you and peace from God our Father, and the Lord Yeshua Messiah.*

[SLIDE 20]

Act 13:1-5 *Now there were in **the assembly** that was at Antioch certain prophets and teachers; as Barnabas, and Simeon that was called Niger, and Lucius of Cyrene, and Manaen, which had been brought up with Herod the tetrarch, and Saul.*

*(2)As they ministered to the Lord, and fasted, the Holy Spirit said, **Separate** me Barnabas and Saul for the **work** whereunto I have **called** them.*

*(3)And when they had fasted and prayed, and **laid their hands on them**, they sent them away. (4)So they, **being sent forth** by the Holy Spirit, departed unto Seleucia; and from thence they sailed to Cyprus.*

*(5)And when they were at Salamis, they **preached the word of God** in the synagogues of the Jews: and they had also John to their minister.*

This is Saul's and Barnabas' formal selection, separation and ordination into the apostolic ministry. It consisted of four simple elements:

1. The assembly of the believers
2. The calling and separation of Saul and Barnabas for service by the Holy Spirit
3. The laying on of hands
4. The commencement of ministry work

Now compare this process to the process by which the Levites were formally ordained into their priestly office:

Numbers 8:5-26 *And YHVH spake unto Moses, saying, (6)**Take the Levites from among the children of Israel, and cleanse them...***

*...(9)And thou shalt bring the Levites before the tabernacle of the congregation: and thou shalt gather the whole **assembly** of the children of Israel together: (10)And thou shalt bring the Levites before YHVH: and the children of Israel shall **put their hands upon the Levites...***

*...(15)And after that shall the Levites **go in to do the service** of the tabernacle of the congregation...*

And even as sacrifices had to be made to make atonement for the sin of the Levites prior to their service, so too did Saul and Barnabas have their sin atoned for in Yeshua.

Regarding the presentation of offerings:

[SLIDE 21]

Romans 15:15-16 *Nevertheless, brethren, I have written the more boldly unto you in some sort, as putting you in mind, because of the grace that is given to me of God, (16)that I should be the **minister of Yeshua Messiah** to the Gentiles, **ministering the gospel of God**, that the **offering up** of the Gentiles might be acceptable, being sanctified by the Holy Spirit.*

Paul here is taking the basic aspects of Levitical service and applying them to his own ministry:

- (a) Even as the Levites were called out and established by YHVH to be ministers under Aaron the High Priest, so does Paul claim Divine appointment as a minister under Yeshua the High Priest.
- (b) Both Paul and the Levites preached the gospel. When the Levites were properly fulfilling their roles according to the Torah, they were preaching the gospel in its “concealed” form – the gospel “hidden” behind the shadow pictures of the temple service. Paul’s responsibility as an apostle was to preach the gospel in its “revealed” form – that in which the shadow pictures are fulfilled in the life of Yeshua.
- (c) Even as the Levites would offer up the firstfruit of the grain harvest, so too does Paul offer up [Gr: *prosphora*] the harvest among the Gentiles.
- (d) The Greek word for “ministering” in v.16 is the compound verb *hierourgeo*. *Hiero[s][n]* = sacred/temple + *Urgon* = work, to perform sacred or temple related service.

Regarding the sacrificial nature of the New Covenant believer:

[SLIDE 22]

Romans 12:1 *I beseech you therefore, brethren, by the mercies of God, that ye present your bodies a **living sacrifice**, holy, acceptable unto God, which is your reasonable **service**.*

Paul is lifting this idea straight out of the Torah portion in which the Levites are being called and appointed to their office:

Numbers 8:13-15 *And thou shalt set the Levites before Aaron, and before his sons, and offer [wave] them for an offering [**tnuphah: wave offering**] unto YHVH. (14)Thus shalt thou **separate** the Levites from among*

*the children of Israel: and the Levites shall be mine. (15)And after that shall the Levites go in to do the **service** of the tabernacle of the congregation: and thou shalt cleanse them, and offer them for an offering [tnuphah].*

In Leviticus 23, the *Omer Rasheet* offering is called the *omer tnuphah* in v.15. In v.17, the two *bikkurim* loaves are called the *lechem tnuphah*. When the Levites were chosen to serve as the priesthood of the Mount Sinai Covenant, at their ordination they were literally presented as a “living wave offering” before YHVH. Paul takes this event and directly applies it to the New Covenant believer.

Regarding the drawing near and access to the God of Israel:

The Torah stipulates that only the Levites were permitted to enter into the tabernacle/temple precincts to draw near in service and worship. In fact the Levites were called to encamp around the perimeter of the tabernacle as a protective human shield between Israel and her God. The Levitical ministers had a physical access and closeness to the God of Israel that the average Israelite could not partake of – under penalty of death.

Numbers 1:49-53 *Only thou shalt not number the tribe of Levi, neither take the sum of them among the children of Israel: (50)But thou shalt appoint the Levites over the tabernacle of testimony, and over all the vessels thereof, and over all things that belong to it: they shall bear the tabernacle, and all the vessels thereof; and they shall minister unto it, and shall **encamp round about the tabernacle.***

*(51)And when the tabernacle setteth forward, the Levites shall take it down: and when the tabernacle is to be pitched, the Levites shall set it up: and **the stranger that cometh nigh shall be put to death.** (52)And the children of Israel shall pitch their tents, every man by his own camp, and every man by his own standard, throughout their hosts.*

*(53)But the Levites shall pitch round about the tabernacle of testimony, **that there be no wrath upon the congregation of the children of Israel:** and the Levites shall keep the charge of the tabernacle of testimony.*

Numbers 18:22-23 *Neither must the children of Israel henceforth **come nigh the tabernacle of the congregation, lest they bear sin, and die.***

(23)But the Levites shall do the service of the tabernacle of the congregation, and they shall bear their iniquity: it shall be a statute for ever throughout your generations, that among the children of Israel they have no inheritance.

Numbers 16:5-10 *And he [Moses] spake unto Korah and unto all his company, saying, Even to morrow YHVH will shew who are his, and who is holy; and will cause him **to come near** unto him: even him whom he hath **chosen** will he cause **to come near** unto him.*

(6) *This do; Take you censers, Korah, and all his company; (7) And put fire therein, and put incense in them before YHVH to morrow: and it shall be that the man whom YHVH doth **choose**, he shall be holy: ye take too much upon you, ye sons of Levi.*

(8) *And Moses said unto Korah, Hear, I pray you, ye sons of Levi: (9) Is it a small thing unto you, that the God of Israel hath **separated** you from the congregation of Israel, **to bring you near to himself** to do the service of the tabernacle of YHVH, and to stand before the congregation to minister unto them? (10) And he hath brought thee **near**, and all thy brethren the sons of Levi with thee: and seek ye the priesthood also?*

Regarding access into the holy precincts and drawing near to the God of Israel, Paul writes:

Ephesians 2:11-22 *Wherefore remember, that ye being in time past Gentiles in the flesh, who are called Uncircumcision by that which is called the Circumcision in the flesh made by hands; (12) That at that time ye were without Messiah, being aliens from the commonwealth of Israel, and **strangers** from the covenants of promise, having no hope, and without God in the world.*

(13) *But now in Messiah Yeshua ye who sometimes were far off are **made nigh** by the blood of Messiah. (14) For he is our peace, who hath made both one, and hath broken down the middle wall of partition; (15) Having abolished in his flesh the enmity, even the law of commandments contained in ordinances; for to make in himself of twain one new man, so making peace; (16) And that he might reconcile both unto God in one body by the cross, having slain the enmity thereby: (17) And came and preached peace to you which were **afar off**, and to them that were **nigh**. (18) For through him we both have **access** by one Spirit unto the Father.*

(19) *Now therefore ye are no more strangers and foreigners, but fellow citizens with the saints, and of the household of God; (20) And are built upon the foundation of the apostles and prophets, Yeshua Messiah himself being the chief corner stone; (21) In whom all the building fitly framed together groweth unto an holy temple in the Lord: (22) In whom ye also are builded together for an habitation of God through the Spirit.*

Concerning access and drawing near to the God of Israel, the writer of Hebrews states:

Hebrews 4:15-16 *For we have not an high priest which cannot be touched with the feeling of our infirmities; but was in all points tempted like as we are, yet without sin. (16) Let us therefore come boldly unto the **throne of grace**, that we may obtain mercy, and find grace to help in time of need.*

The “throne of grace” at which we obtain mercy, is called the *caphoret* in Hebrew, which is the “mercy seat” of the ark of the testimony:

Exodus 25:20-22 *And the cherubims shall stretch forth their wings on high, covering the mercy seat with their wings, and their faces shall look one to another; toward the mercy seat shall the faces of the cherubims be.*

*(21)And thou shalt put the mercy seat above upon the ark; and in the ark thou shalt put the testimony that I shall give thee. (22)And there **I will meet with thee**, and **I will commune with thee** from above the mercy seat, from between the two cherubims which are upon the ark of the testimony, of all things which I will give thee in commandment unto the children of Israel.*

Hebrews 10:16-22 *This is the covenant that I will make with them after those days, saith the Lord, I will put my laws into their hearts, and in their minds will I write them; (17)And their sins and iniquities will I remember no more.*

*(18)Now where remission of these is, there is no more offering for sin. (19)Having therefore, brethren, boldness **to enter into the holiest** by the blood of Yeshua, (20)By a new and living way, which he hath consecrated for us, through the veil, that is to say, his flesh; (21)And having an high priest over the house of God; (22)Let us **draw near** with a true heart in full assurance of faith, having our **hearts sprinkled from an evil conscience, and our bodies washed with pure water.***

This last comment by the writer of Hebrews is also an allusion to the ordination ceremony for the Levites, which involved sprinkling and washing, and is now being applied to New Covenant believers:

Numbers 8:5-7 *And YHVH spake unto Moses, saying, (6)Take the Levites from among the children of Israel, and cleanse them. (7)And thus shalt thou do unto them, to cleanse them: Sprinkle water of purifying upon them, and let them shave all their flesh, and let them wash their clothes, and so make themselves clean.*

In the following verse, Paul just comes out and says it plainly. Each covenant with Israel has an administrating priesthood attached to it. In the natural, the Levitical order served under the Covenant of Mount Sinai; in the spiritual the apostolic order serves under the New Covenant.

2 Corinthians 3:4-6 *And such trust have we through Messiah to Godward: (5)Not that we are sufficient of ourselves to think any thing as of ourselves; but our sufficiency is of God; (6)Who also hath made us able **ministers of the new covenant**; not of the letter, but of the **spirit**: for the letter killeth, but the spirit giveth life.*

Next, we come again to Peter's statements. Note how he:

(a) opens with a reference to the *second* birth; only those who are born of the spirit/from above, are included in this conversation. Peter is not writing to Levites, he is

writing to the “elect strangers” scattered throughout the northeast Mediterranean landmass.

(b) emphasizes the “spiritual” aspect of the Kingdom now in effect

(c) incorporates the vocabulary markers – *elect, chosen, called*

1Peter 2:2-10 *As newborn babes, desire the sincere milk of the word, that ye may grow thereby - (3)if so be ye have tasted that the Lord is gracious. (4)To whom coming, as unto a living stone, disallowed indeed of men, but chosen of God, and precious, (5)ye also, as lively stones, are built up a **spiritual house**, an **holy priesthood**, to offer up **spiritual sacrifices**, acceptable to God by Yeshua Messiah.*

*(6)Wherefore also it is contained in the scripture, Behold, I lay in Sion a chief corner stone, **elect**, precious: and he that believeth on him shall not be confounded.*

(7)Unto you therefore which believe he is precious: but unto them which be disobedient, the stone which the builders disallowed, the same is made the head of the corner, (8)and a stone of stumbling, and a rock of offence, even to them which stumble at the word, being disobedient: whereunto also they were appointed.

*(9)But ye are a **chosen generation, a royal priesthood, an holy nation**, a peculiar people; that ye should show forth the praises of him who hath **called** you out of darkness into his marvelous light: (10)which in time past were not a people, but are now the people of God: which had not obtained mercy, but now have obtained mercy.*

This word from Peter is confirmed by John:

Revelation 1:5-6 *...Yeshua Messiah, the faithful witness, the first begotten of the dead, and the prince of the kings of the earth. Unto him that loved us, and washed us from our sins in his own blood, (6)And hath made us **kings and priests unto God** and his Father; to him be glory and dominion for ever and ever. Amen.*

And finally, in the following passage from Revelation, we see the chosen / redemption concept and the priesthood concept brought together and **merged into one**. In the Natural, these things pertained to the choosing and redemption of only the genetic first-born sons of Israel and the genetic Levites. In the Spiritual, these concepts are expanded to encompass the world:

Revelation 5:9-10 *And they sung a new song, saying, Thou art worthy to take the book, and to open the seals thereof: for thou wast slain, and hast **redeemed us** to God by thy blood **out of every kindred, and tongue, and people, and nation**;*

*(10)And hast made us unto our God **kings and priests**: and we shall reign on the earth.*

Which is the fulfillment of one of our opening scriptures:

Exodus 19:5-6 *Now therefore, if ye will obey my voice indeed, and keep my covenant, then ye shall be a peculiar treasure unto me above all people: for all the earth is mine. And ye shall be unto me a **kingdom of priests**, and an holy nation. These are the words which thou shalt speak unto the children of Israel.*

~THE APOSTOLIC ORDINATION~

[SLIDE 23]

So as the apostolic priesthood is the priesthood established for the New Covenant, when did the official ordination ceremony take place?

In Acts chapter 1, the eleven apostles were instructed to remain in Jerusalem. They were not as of yet empowered and released to fulfill their duty as a royal priesthood to the world. During the ten days between Yeshua's ascension and the Day of Shavuote, they sequestered themselves in the "upper room" [Gr: *hupero-on*]. During this time, they selected a disciple from among the group of approximately 120 believers to fill Judas' vacant position.

On the Day of *Shavuote*, Acts 2:2 tells us the apostles were gathered together in one place described simply as "the house" [Gr: *Oikos*]. This Greek word is used numerous times in the Gospels/New Covenant writings in reference to "the house of God", or the Temple. As *Shavuote* is one of Israel's required pilgrimage feasts, and as the apostles had access to at least 3,000 men assembled from all the nations, it is entirely reasonable to assume that the location for Acts 2 is the Temple in Jerusalem – the "House of God", and logistically it is difficult to conceive of another scenario that could have encompassed all of the aspects of this gathering.

Acts 2:1-15 sets the stage for the most unusual Day of *Shavuote/Bikkurim* in Israel's history - *two* priesthoods were assembled on the Temple mount. At this point, remember that just as there was a sequential process to put into effect the natural first covenant, so too was there a sequential process to put into effect the spiritual second covenant:

Fifty-three days prior to this day, Yeshua had died on the cross, terminating the first Natural Covenant under Moses, and putting into effect the second, Spiritual Covenant – the New Covenant of Jeremiah 31, as it is recorded in the gospels:

Matthew 26:28 [Mark 14:24 , Luke 22:20] *For this is my blood of the new covenant, which is shed for many for the remission of sins.*

The transfer of Covenants was complete. The next stage in the sequence is the installation of Yeshua in his role as High Priest in the order of Melchizedek – the transfer of the High Priesthood from the Natural to the Spiritual. Also at the last supper with his apostles, Yeshua said:

Matthew 26:29 [Mark 14:25, Luke 22:18] *But I say unto you, I will not drink henceforth of this fruit of the vine, until that day when I drink it new with you in my Father's kingdom.*

In verse 28, Yeshua is signaling the transfer of the covenants. In verse 29 Yeshua is signaling the transfer of the high priesthood, because in the Torah the following commandment was specifically given to the High Priest while he was on duty:

Leviticus 10:8-9 *And YHVH spake unto Aaron, saying, (9)Do not drink wine nor strong drink, thou, nor thy sons with thee, when ye go into the tabernacle of the congregation, lest ye die: it shall be a statute for ever throughout your generations.*

By abstaining from wine, Yeshua is fulfilling the Torah for the High Priest who is on duty, and in Yeshua's case this is a continuous status until we are all gathered into the Kingdom. This transfer of covenantal law and priesthood is summarized and clarified by the writer of the book of Hebrews:

Hebrews 7:11-22 *If therefore perfection were by the Levitical priesthood, (for under it the people received the law,) what further need was there that another priest should rise after the order of Melchisedec, and not be called after the order of Aaron?*

(12)For the priesthood being changed, there is made of necessity a change also of the law. (13)For he of whom these things are spoken pertaineth to another tribe, of which no man gave attendance at the altar. (14)For it is evident that our Lord sprang out of Judah; of which tribe Moses spake nothing concerning priesthood. (15)And it is yet far more evident: for that after the similitude of Melchisedec there ariseth another priest, (16)Who is made, not after the law of a carnal commandment, but after the power of an endless life. (17)For he testifieth, Thou art a priest for ever after the order of Melchisedec.

(18) For there is verily a disannulling of the commandment going before for the weakness and unprofitableness thereof. (19)For the law made nothing perfect, but the bringing in of a better hope did; by the which we draw nigh unto God.

(20)And inasmuch as not without an oath he was made priest: (21)(For those priests were made without an oath; but this with an oath by him that said unto him, The Lord sware and will not repent, Thou art a priest for ever after the order of Melchisedec:) (22)By so much was Yeshua made a surety of a better covenant.

The New Covenant writers speak of Yeshua's role in this capacity:

Romans 8:33-34 *Who shall lay any thing to the charge of God's elect? It is God that justifieth. (34)Who is he that condemneth? It is Messiah that died, yea rather, that is risen again, who is even at the right hand of God, who also **maketh intercession for us.***

Hebrews 2:16-17 *For verily he took not on him the nature of angels; but he took on him the seed of Abraham. (17)Wherefore in all things it behoved him to be made like unto his brethren, that he might be a merciful and faithful high priest in things pertaining to God, to make reconciliation for the sins of the people.*

So now with the successful transfer from the Natural Covenant to the Spiritual Covenant, and the Natural High Priesthood to the Spiritual High Priesthood, we come to the next step in the process – the transfer and installation of the servant ministers given to the High Priest to carry out his will concerning the New Covenant. At this point, we return to the two priesthods assembled on the Temple Mount on the Day of *Shavuote/Bikkurim*:

The Natural Priesthood, the Levitical order, was still performing its duty as prescribed in the Natural, “shadow-picture” Covenant. However, by their rejection of the Messiah, the Temple authorities had no clue that the transfer of Covenants had taken place, and were continuing on with the shadow picture rituals attached to the recently deactivated Natural Covenant (as was the case with many of those of scattered Israel, who had not yet heard the Good News).

However, right beside them the twelve apostles had also gathered awaiting their activation as the priesthood for the New Covenant. How would the God of Israel, in the midst of the thousands of men gathered on the Temple mount, demonstrate which of the two priesthods was now recognized and accepted by him?

~THE GOD WHO ANSWERS BY FIRE~

There was another day in Israel’s history in which all Israel was gathered on a mountain top, and two priesthods were in competition before the people – the day Elijah squared off with the prophets of baal and ashera on Mount Carmel [I Kings 18:17-39]. On that day, Israel was confronted with two religious systems, and had to choose between one or the other. To make the choice easier for the people, it was determined that, “...the God who answers by fire, let him be God”.

Even as the fire fell on the altar and offering of Elijah, so too did the fire fall on the twelve apostles who were at the same time filled with the Holy Spirit - publicly demonstrating which of the two priesthods was now recognized, accepted and anointed by the God of Israel. And as it was in the days of Elijah, so now the people of Israel must decide which covenant they would follow.

Soon, in 70 A.D., the hand of the God of Israel would use his servant the Roman empire to scrape the Temple Mount clean, removing every vestige of the Natural shadow picture covenant, making Israel’s choice that much easier to make by eliminating the other option. By this time, for approximately forty years, the apostles and disciples had been fanning out from Jerusalem spreading the Good News. The Word was out, the transition was over – it’s now about accepting Yeshua and the New Covenant, or walking in a man-made, rabbinic substitute religion.

In keeping with the words spoken by the prophets, Yeshua foretold this transfer of priesthood.

[SLIDE 24] In Matthew 21, Yeshua is dressing down the chief priests at the Temple. He tells the Parable of the Vineyard, in which the rebellious workers attempt a hostile takeover of the vineyard by conspiring to kill the rightful heir. Yeshua is not pulling this parable out of thin air; this parable is based upon the actual historical events surrounding Ahab and Jezebel's hostile take over of Naboth's vineyard, in which conspiracy they raised up false witnesses against Naboth in a public trial, and executed him outside the city. In this shadow picture, the vineyard is the Kingdom of God, Naboth is Yeshua, the false witnesses and execution of Naboth is Yeshua's trial and crucifixion, Ahab represents the chief priests and Jezebel represents satan. Following the Parable of the Vineyard, Yeshua told the chief priests:

Matthew 21:43 *Therefore say I unto you, The kingdom of God shall be taken from you, and given to a nation bringing forth the fruits thereof.*

Even the chief priests agreed with the parable, and prophesied their own termination, by saying that the owner of the vineyard...

Matthew 21:41 *...will miserably destroy those wicked men, and will let out his vineyard unto other husbandmen, which shall render him the fruits in their seasons.*

This is transfer language. The vineyard is staying the same. The job description is staying the same. But there is going to be a change of the work staff – the first crew is going to be replaced by a second crew that will feed the flock, bind up the wounded, and set the captives free. Again, this is *fulfillment theology*, not *replacement theology*. Remember what YHVH spoke through the prophets:

[SLIDE 25]

Ezekial 34:9 *Therefore, O ye shepherds, hear the word of YHVH; (10)Thus saith the Lord YHVH; Behold, I am against the shepherds; and I will require my flock at their hand, and **cause them to cease from feeding the flock...***

Jeremiah 23:3-4 *And I will gather the remnant of my flock out of all countries whither I have driven them, and will bring them again to their folds; and they shall be fruitful and increase. (4)And **I will set up shepherds over them which shall feed them:** and they shall fear no more, nor be dismayed, neither shall they be lacking, saith YHVH.*

Who are these other shepherds who will feed the flock? In **John 21:15-17**, what did Yeshua tell Peter the fisherman his new job was? He told him three times: "**Feed my sheep**".

To the elders of the assembly in Ephesus, Paul likewise uses flock language in fulfillment of prophesy:

Acts 20:28 *Take heed therefore unto yourselves, and to all the flock, over the which **the Holy Spirit hath made you overseers, to feed the assembly of God, which he hath purchased with his own blood.***

And Peter again:

1 Peter 5:1-4 *The elders which are among you I exhort, who am also an elder, and a witness of the sufferings of Messiah, and also a partaker of the glory that shall be revealed:*

*(2)Feed the flock of God which is among you, taking **the oversight** thereof, not by constraint, but willingly; not for filthy lucre, but of a ready mind;*

*(3)Neither as being lords over God's heritage, but being ensamples to the flock. (4)And when **the chief Shepherd** shall appear, ye shall receive a crown of glory that fadeth not away.*

Whether we are speaking of the Kingdom of God in terms of the vineyard or the flock, there is a change of the work staff. To further confirm this transfer, consider the life of Barnabas:

[SLIDE 26]

a. **Acts 4:33-37** Here, Barnabas - a Levite - is bringing an offering to the apostles and laying it at their feet - recognizing the spiritual authority of the apostleship; a reversal of the days when the men of Israel would bring their offerings to the Levites.

b. **Acts 13:1-5** It is interesting to note that Barnabas had to receive a new commission to enter the ranks of the apostolic priesthood, right alongside Paul, a Benjamite. His natural born standing as a Levite under the Mount Sinai Covenant carried no weight in the New Covenant spiritual order. There was not an automatic carry-over; he had to be reborn, re-chosen and re-commissioned.

It is no accident that we are told that Barnabas is a Levite. In the life of Barnabas, we see the concession of the Levitical order to the Apostolic order. Consider also Titus. Paul gave him charge over the island of Crete:

Titus 1:4-5 *To Titus, mine own son after the common faith: Grace, mercy, and peace, from God the Father and the Lord Yeshua Messiah our Saviour. (5)For this cause left I thee in Crete, that thou shouldest set in order the things that are wanting, and ordain elders in every city, as I had appointed thee:*

Yet Titus was an uncircumcised Gentile:

Galatians 2:1-3 *Then fourteen years after I went up again to Jerusalem with Barnabas, and took Titus with me also. (2)And I went up by revelation, and communicated unto them that gospel which I preach among the Gentiles, but privately to them which were of reputation, lest by any means I should run, or had run, in vain. (3)But neither **Titus**, who was with me, being a **Greek**, was compelled to be circumcised:*

So now with the installation and activation of the Spiritual New Covenant, the New High Priesthood, and the New Priesthood, the only element missing is the Spiritual *Bikkurim* offering required on this *Moad*/Appointed Time.

In Acts 2:14 Peter stands in the midst of the gathering, preaches, and soon a harvest of approximately 3,000 first-born sons - *b'khorim* - are birthed into the Kingdom. So at the same time that the Levitical priesthood is offering up the Natural *bikkurim* wheat offering, the Apostolic priesthood is offering up the Spiritual *bikkurim* first-born son offering. This is the true harvest that satisfies the "hunger" of the God of Israel:

John 4:29-35 *Come, see a man, which told me all things that ever I did: is not this the Messiah? (30)Then they went out of the city, and came unto him. (31)In the mean while his disciples prayed him, saying, Master, eat. (32)But he said unto them, I have meat to eat that ye know not of. (33)Therefore said the disciples one to another, Hath any man brought him ought to eat? (34)Yeshua saith unto them, My meat is to do the will of him that sent me, and to finish his work. (35)Say not ye, There are yet four months, and then cometh harvest? Behold, I say unto you, Lift up your eyes, and look on the fields; for they are white already to harvest.*

At this point, we will make a comparison between the giving of the Law at Mount Sinai in Exodus 19-20, and the events surrounding Acts 2. At Mount Sinai:

- (1) All Israel was gathered in the third month.
- (2) There were voices.
- (3) There were flames from heaven.
- (4) However, the event was terrifying – the people were forbidden from drawing near, and in fact, withdrew from the mountain in great fear as these manifestations started to break out [Exodus 20:18].

In Acts 2:

- (1) All Israel was gathered from the nations on Shavuote/Bikkurim.
- (2) There were voices, as the pilgrims heard the wonderful works of God in their various native tongues.
- (3) Flames from heaven separated and settled on the apostles.
- (4) However, at this event, the manifestations caused the people draw near to hear the words of Peter.

What makes the difference between the two events? The death, burial and resurrection of the Messiah and the New Covenant. This is confirmed by the writer of the book of Hebrews who compares the two events. Speaking of Mount Sinai, he writes:

Hebrews 12:18-21 *For ye are not come unto the mount that might be touched, and that burned with fire, nor unto blackness, and darkness, and tempest, (19)And the sound of a trumpet, and the voice of words; which voice they that heard intreated that the word should not be spoken to them any more:*

(20)(For they could not endure that which was commanded, And if so much as a beast touch the mountain, it shall be stoned, or thrust through with a dart: (21)And so terrible was the sight, that Moses said, I exceedingly fear and quake:)

But of the mount in Jerusalem he writes:

Hebrews 12:22-24 *But ye are come unto mount Sion, and unto the city of the living God, the heavenly Jerusalem, and to an innumerable company of angels, (23)To the **general assembly and congregation of the firstborn**, which are written in heaven, and to God the Judge of all, and to the spirits of just men made perfect, (24)And to **Yeshua the mediator of the New Covenant**, and to the blood of sprinkling, that speaketh better things than that of Abel.*

This falling of fire from heaven, as an indicator of those who are accepted by the God of Israel [also see II Chronicles 7:1-3], will play another crucial role in the establishment of the New Covenant - the validation of the Gentiles. Up until Acts 10-11, the movement had been an exclusively Jewish phenomenon, but with the Holy Spirit falling on the household of Cornelius, the God of Israel once again demonstrated who was legitimate and accepted in his eyes.

The acceptability of the sacrificer/sacrifice hearkens back to Genesis. Both Cain and Abel brought an offering (*minhah*) before YHVH. Cain's was rejected, Abel's was accepted – why? Both animal and agricultural offerings are required and accepted by YHVH, so the offering *type* was not the issue. However, when we see that Cain is the first birth (representing the flesh) and Abel is the son of the *second birth* (born of the Spirit), it becomes clear – the Father is looking for worshipers who will worship him in Spirit and in truth.

The issue is not offering *type*, but offering *quality*. The quality of the offering is directly related to the heart of the one from whom it is offered, and in truth exposes the attitude of the heart of the giver towards the one to whom the offering is given. David's three mighty men endangered their lives to sneak behind enemy lines to bring David a cup of water from the well at Bethlehem [II Samuel 23:13-17]. A cup of water in itself is not a big deal, but what it took to obtain that cup reveals the passionate devotion of David's men toward their leader. Likewise with the widow who gave of her last two mites in Luke 21:1-4.

Cain's *minhah* (gift, offering) consisted of his produce - but he did not give the *bikkur* of his produce.

Abel's *minhah*, however, consisted of the *b'khorote* of his flock and its *halev*. *Halev* in Hebrew means *fat*, but also can mean *marrow* and *best part*. The same definitions are true in English for the word *marrow*. Additionally, there is an expression in Hebrew that incorporates the word *halev* and goes: *helbo v'damo* – which literally means “his fat/marrow and his blood”, and by expression means “wholeheartedness”. So we see all

of this quality incorporated into Abel's offering that we do not see in Cain's – the difference between the natural and the spiritual.

In Cain we see the despising of the sacrifice. The natural man in the flesh cannot give a high quality sacrifice. The flesh is always thinking of itself and will short-change God. We see this despising of the sacrifice manifested all through scripture – in Eli's sons [I Samuel 2:29-30], in Malachi 1:6-14, and in Isaiah 53:4 regarding Yeshua himself.

In Abel we see the valuing of the sacrifice. The spiritual man puts down his flesh and will joyfully go to the extreme to satisfy the desire of his Lord. David said, "...neither will I offer burnt offerings unto YHVH my God of that which doth cost me nothing [II Samuel 24:24]". It is the heart attitude, expressed through the quality of the sacrifice, which determines the acceptability in Yah's sight.

~THE FEAST OF SHAVUOTE~

THE APPOINTED TIME OF THE RETURN OF THE FIRST-BORN SONS

Now with a greater foundation and understanding of the *Bikkurim*/B'khorim, we will reexamine the actual instruction in the Torah as to the fullness of the meaning of this *Moad* of YHVH called the Feast of *Shavuote*/The Celebration of the *Bikkurim*.

~THE BIKKURIM OFFERING MADE ON THE FEAST OF SHAVUOTE~

[SLIDE 27]

There are three passages in the Torah that specifically pertain to this feast:

Leviticus 23:15-21 *And ye shall count unto you from the morrow after the sabbath, from the day that ye brought the sheaf of the wave offering; seven sabbaths shall be complete: (16) Even unto the morrow after the seventh shabbat shall ye number fifty days; and ye shall offer a new meat offering unto YHVH.*

(17) Ye shall bring out of your habitations two wave loaves of two tenth deals: they shall be of fine flour; they shall be baken with leaven; they are the BIKKURIM unto YHVH.

(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 YHVH, with their meat offering, and their drink offerings, even an offering made by fire, of sweet savour unto YHVH.

(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 BIKKURIM for a wave offering before YHVH, with the two lambs: they shall be holy to YHVH for the priest. (21) And ye shall proclaim on the selfsame day, that it may be an holy convocation unto you: ye shall do no servile work therein: it shall be a statute for ever in all your dwellings throughout your generations.

Numbers 28:26-31 *Also in the day of the BIKKURIM, when ye bring a new meat offering unto YHVH, after your weeks be out, ye shall have an holy convocation; ye shall do no servile work: (27) But ye shall offer the burnt offering*

for a sweet savour unto YHVH; two young bullocks, one ram, seven lambs of the first year; (28) And their meat offering of flour mingled with oil, three tenth deals unto one bullock, two tenth deals unto one ram, (29) A several tenth deal unto one lamb, throughout the seven lambs; (30) And one kid of the goats, to make an atonement for you.

(31) Ye shall offer them beside the continual burnt offering, and its meat offering, (they shall be unto you without blemish) and their drink offerings.

Deuteronomy 16:9-12 *Seven weeks shalt thou number unto thee: begin to number the seven weeks from such time as thou beginnest to put the sickle to the standing corn. (10) And thou shalt keep the feast of weeks unto YHVH thy God with a tribute of a freewill offering of thine hand, which thou shalt give according as YHVH thy God hath blessed thee.*

(11) And thou shalt rejoice before YHVH thy God, thou, and thy son, and thy daughter, and thy manservant, and thy maidservant, and the Levite that is within thy gates, and the stranger, and the fatherless, and the widow, that are among you, in the place which YHVH thy God hath chosen to place his name there. (12) And thou shalt remember that thou wast a bondman in Egypt: and thou shalt observe and do these statutes.

I see in this appointed time the entire redemptive story of Israel compacted and miniaturized down to a one day event. I also actually see two feasts coming together to create one awesome day.

The two components that stand out regarding this celebration are:

- (1) the count of seven Sabbaths/fifty days
- (2) the bread of the *bikkurim*

~THE 50 DAYS~

There is a fifty day span of time that connects the *Omer Rasheet* offering to the Feast of the *Bikkurim*. Seven Sabbaths are counted from the *Omer Rasheet* offering, then the next day – the fiftieth – is the Feast of *Shavuote/Bikkurim*. This counting formula and span of time is a small-scale version of the formula for calculating the Year of Jubilee, in which seven Sabbaths of years are counted – 49 years – with the fiftieth year being the Year of Jubilee:

Leviticus 25:10 *And ye shall hallow the fiftieth year, and proclaim liberty throughout all the land unto all the inhabitants thereof: it shall be a jubilee unto you; and ye shall return every man unto his possession, and ye shall return every man unto his family.*

I call it the “**Law of Return**” – for in it a man who has come into poverty and sold his land may return to it [see Leviticus 25:25-28], and a man sold into servitude to another is free to return home [see Leviticus 25:39-55].

~THE BREAD OF THE BIKKURIM~

The central feature of the Bikkurim observance is the bread. This bread is going to go on an interesting little journey. It is going to be split into two loaves, carried out from the home in which it is made, and travel across the countryside until it ultimately ends up at the Temple in Jerusalem. In this procession we see the redemptive history of Israel as detailed in Figure 27.

~COMBINING THE TWO INTO ONE~

The Law of Return, like all Kingdom concepts, has a Natural and a Spiritual dimension to it. In the natural, it is a national law limited to the borders of Israel, pertaining to an Israelite's financial debts being cancelled thereby opening the way for him to be restored to his home. In the Spiritual, it takes on greater significance. It becomes a global law whereby an Israelite's debt of sin is cancelled and the way is opened so that he can return from exile through the New Covenant and be restored to his rest and inheritance in the Kingdom.

With the resurrection of the Messiah, the fifty day "mini-Jubilee" clock was set into motion. On the fiftieth day, the day of Shavuote described in Acts 2:

1. The New Covenant was in place
2. The High Priest of the New Covenant, Yeshua, was in place
3. His chosen priesthood, the apostles were in place and anointed for service
4. The Spiritual Law of Return went into effect
5. The only element missing was the presentation of the *Bikkurim*.

On the day of *Shavuote/Bikkurim*, out of the whole assembly of Israel gathered at the Temple Mount, Peter preached and 3,000 **natural**-born Ishmaels had their hearts pierced and became 3,000 **spiritual**-born Isaacs through repentance and baptism into Yeshua – to become the *Bikkurim/B'khorim* offering of *Shavuote*.

Through the blood of the Messiah, the debt of sin of the exiled sons of Israel had been cancelled, putting an end to their exile and making a way for them to return home to YHVH their Father and eternal inheritance. Everything is in place – the new order is now underway. This is why I call this *Moad* THE APPOINTED TIME OF THE RETURN OF THE FIRST-BORN SONS.

~SHAVUOTE/BIKKURIM AND ISAIAH 54~

[SLIDE 28]

Yeshua said that he ordained the twelve that they should bring forth fruit, and that they should bring forth MUCH fruit [John 15:1-16]. On the first day of their ordination, after Peter's first exhortation, 3,000 souls were spiritually birthed into the kingdom. This is major fruit production – and a fulfillment of Isaiah 54:1-13.

Isaiah 53 details the grisly spectacle of the *suffering servant* aspect of the Messiah. As **Figure 20** demonstrates, the first three of the annual *Moadim* are imbedded in this chapter. But then in Isaiah 54 WE'RE JOYFULLY MAKING BABIES! Kick out the walls of the tent! We've got babies breaking out to the right and the left to the joyous singing of the once barren and rejected wife. However, as sharply contrasted as these two

passages appear, Isaiah 54 could never happen without Isaiah 53, and in fact is the after-affect of Isaiah 53. Schedule-wise, we've just stepped out of the Death, Burial and Resurrection of the Messiah and into the fourth *Moad* – the Feast of the Return of the First-born Sons/*Bikkurim*.

Isaiah 53 focuses on the husband, and the work he does on behalf of his bride. Isaiah 54 focuses on the bride and the effect his work – his death, burial and resurrection - has upon her life and their relationship – specifically her transformation from barrenness to fruitfulness, and the forgetting of her shameful past.

~FROM BARREN TO FRUITFUL~

Isaiah says the bride is *barren*. Why is she barren? One of the reasons that a woman cannot bear children is because she cannot receive the seed of her husband. Under the first marriage covenant, Israel the natural bride - faithless and hardened by sin - cannot receive the seed of her husband (which is the Word), and bring forth the good fruit the husband desires – a holy nation of virtuous, Godly offspring. See Jeremiah 6:16-19, 8:8-10, 11:1-17 [v.10].

Yeshua teaches the relationship between the receptivity of the seed and fruitfulness in the parable of the sower, the seed and the different types of soil [Matthew 13:1-23]. If the soil of the heart is hardened by sin and doubt, the seed of the Word will not germinate and produce a harvest. Much of Yeshua's ministry was spent battling the hardness of heart of his people [Mark 3:5, 6:52, 8:17, 10:5, 16:14]. No seeding – no fruitfulness – no babies.

However, Isaiah 54 opens with the once barren bride putting out babies in mass production – what has happened to the bride? Isaiah 53 has happened - the New Covenant and its promises have gone into effect: the bride gets a new Spirit, and a soft heart of flesh in the place of her heart of stone. The soil of her heart can now receive the word and reproduction can begin - see John 17:8, Acts 2:37-41, 8:14 [the Samaritans], 11:1 [the Gentiles], 17:11 [the Bereans], I Thessalonians 1:4-8, 2:13.

This internal, supernatural transformation of the bride is pictured in the lives of Sarai/Sarah, Rebecca, Rachel, and Hannah. At the first, these women were childless, but then each one became fruitful after they underwent a supernatural, internal adjustment by the hand of YHVH.

~FROM SHAMEFUL WIDOW TO REDEEMED, RIGHTEOUS BRIDE~

Isaiah speaks of the *shame* of the bride's *youth* – a reference to promiscuous Israel's adultery-plagued relationship with YHVH her husband even from the start [Psalm 106, Jeremiah 32:19-23, Ezekiel 20, Ezekiel 23:1-39].

Then Isaiah speaks of the *reproach* of her *widowhood*. A widow is a woman whose husband has died, thereby bringing an end to the marriage. When was the marriage? When did her husband die? And why is her widowhood a reproach to her?

Mount Sinai was the marriage site of rebellious Israel's first marriage to YHVH. This marriage contract would be in effect until the husband would die on the cross at Mount Calvary – terminating the first, disastrous marriage. And his death is a reproach

to her because he died on the cross not because of his own sin, but rather he gave up his innocent life to pay the penalty for her multitude of whoredoms [Isaiah 53].

But then in the next verse, we see that this disgraceful widow has a husband – YHVH her Maker. She is married again. When did this second marriage take place? A lasting covenant of peace will be made with her, and her shameful conduct will be remembered no more. She will receive mercy, she will be redeemed, she will be fruitful. This again is the New Covenant made at Jerusalem, and the effect of the implementation of its promises.

From barren to fruitful, from shameful to redeemed and beautified - everything hinges on this covenantal transfer. On the *Pesach* in which Yeshua died [Isaiah 53], the first fruitless marriage - marked by hostility and alienation between the husband and bride - came to an end. At the same time, the second marriage, the New Covenant, came into effect, in which the bride's former promiscuity is atone for, and the husband and bride are brought into a sincere, loving union enabling the generation of offspring [Isaiah 54].

~A FINAL NOTE ON THE CENTRALITY OF BIRTH~

Q: The father's inheritance falls to the first-born son. How does one go about obtaining that position?

Q: In order to draw near in service and worship, one had to be a Levitical priest. How does one go about becoming a Levitical priest?

Q: The Torah teaches that the bride of the high priest must be a virgin from the high priest's people – a Levite (Leviticus 21:13-14). How does a young woman acquire these qualifications?

In all three cases, the position is exclusively obtained through birth. There is no application to fill out. There is no school to go to. There is no list of accomplishments one must present to earn the position. You are either born to it or not. The people, who found themselves in this position, obtained this position through no effort of their own.

There is an interesting relationship between the position of the first-born son who gains his father's inheritance, and the office of priest who draws near in worship – the two positions complement each other. The *B'khor* gains the inheritance, but does not draw near in worship. The Levitical priest draws near in worship, but does not have an inheritance. And yet, the New Covenant writers tell us that both are one in the believer in Yeshua. Through our spiritual birth:

- (1) we can draw near and worship in "spirit and in truth",
- (2) we gain our inheritance in the Kingdom of God, and
- (3) we are qualified to become the Bride of the Messiah.