

drying. In the ancient times and even to-day with primitive methods the barley and wheat were harvested with a sickle and left on the land in sheaves for further drying. Therefore the crop could be harvested a couple of weeks earlier even if the barley would have been harvested with 20% moisture content. As you probably may know, at Passover the first Omer of barley was brought as sacrifice to the Temple and before this day, the new barley was not allowed to be consumed neither for the animals. New wheat was not allowed to be consumed before Pentacost or at least as long as old wheat was still available. In the Talmud, it is mentioned that there were years that the barley was not yet ripe at Passover. In order to be able to bring the Omer sacrifice of barley in time to the Temple, they used to sow barley upon some flat roofs in the Jericho valley, which would be ready and apt to the Sacrifice on the Passover. The Omer is not a big quantity of grain. I guess that this rather extended answer will satisfy you but in case that there is still any information required, don't hesitate to write again.

Yours sincerely

N. Bar-Droma

Director Field Crops Dept.

(Signed below this)

## **END OF THE LETTER**

Here are some comments regarding this letter:

1) This letter was written in 1983 only about 3 weeks after the barley harvest had started in the middle of May.

2) The writer was obviously knowledgeable about barley, being the director of a department within the Ministry of Agriculture in Israel.

3) The writer states that NORMALLY the barley harvest STARTS at around THE END OF APRIL. This is about 6 weeks LATER than some Karaite "experts" today claim to find "ripe barley". So Mr. Bar-Droma's comments are considerably at odds with the claims of some religious leaders who find "ripe barley" around the middle of March.

4) For the year 1983 the Jewish calendar started the year on MARCH 15, and Nisan 14 was on March 28. The actual lunar conjunction, expressed in Local Jerusalem Time, was on March 14 at 8:05 p.m., which was the first part of March 15. So in 1983 the Jewish calendar started the year on the day of the lunar conjunction. The "first Omer of barley", as Mr. Bar-Droma called it, would theoretically have been required on Sunday morning, April 3, during the Days of Unleavened Bread

5) Mr. Bar-Droma acknowledged that barley could be reaped "a couple of weeks earlier" if two favourable factors came into play:

A) Harvesting by hand permitted reaping earlier with a higher moisture content, and then letting the sheaves dry further in the fields.

B) Using specific varieties with shorter growing seasons also allows reaping at an earlier date.

Combining these two favourable factors could in biblical times have brought the time of the barley harvest forward from the end of April to the middle of April (i.e. a couple of weeks). That is still about 10