

Harvesting and Ingathering Based on Modern Agricultural Practices in Israel

Biblical Months	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	
Roman Months	MAR	APR	MAY	JUN	JUL	AUG	SEP	OCT
Barley	X	X	X					
Wheat			X	X	X			
Oats			X					
Peas		X	X					
Chickpeas				X				
Lentils		X	X					
Vetch		X	X					
Sesame					X			
Flax		X			X			
Millet					X	X		
Grapes					X	X	X	
Figs						X	X	
Pomegranates						X	X	
Olives							X	X

= Three major seasons of harvests of grain, grapes and olives

Various biblical laws and stories refer to ancient Israelite crops and harvests. It is therefore helpful to have some general information about the harvests and their seasons. Major crops of the land are listed in Deuteronomy 8:8: wheat, barley, grapes, figs, pomegranates, olives and honey. In ancient Israel, the primary harvest season extended from April to November. This harvest period might be subdivided into three seasons and three major crops: the spring grain harvest, the summer grape harvest and the autumn olive harvest.

Various herbs and legumes were harvested in the spring, but the most important spring crops were barley and wheat. Although they were both planted in the autumn, barley matured faster and was harvested sooner than wheat. The first fruits of the grain offered during the Festival of Unleavened bread, therefore, would have been barley. Wheat ripens later than barley and it was harvested from the end of April to the end of May. Pentecost celebrated the entire grain harvest even though the whole crop might not have been harvested by then. After Pentecost, most of the harvest was fruit: grapes, olives, dates, figs, pomegranates and numerous fruits, seeds and vegetables. Grapes were the first major crop to ripen in these later summer months. The grape harvest was usually completed before Tabernacles, and most of the olive harvest came after the autumn Appointments.

During the autumn Appointments there was great rejoicing (Deuteronomy 16:13-15). Why? A possible reason is that Tabernacles celebrated both the spring harvest and the summer harvest. Note the mention of both grain and grapes in verse 13: "Celebrate the Feast of Tabernacles for seven days after you have gathered the produce of your threshing floor and your winepress."