

Calendar Controversy

A number of controversial issues have been raised as to the correct calendar for determining the Holy Days. This article examines some of these issues.

Feast of Unleavened Bread and the Calendar

The Feast of Unleavened Bread is a **unique** Festival. On each of the seven days, one must eat unleavened bread, **Leviticus 23:6**.

Seven days shall ye eat unleavened bread And in the first day [Nisan 15] there shall be an holy convocation, and in the seventh day [Nisan 21] there shall be an holy convocation to you; no manner of work shall be done in them, save that which every man must eat, that **ONLY** may be done of you (**Exodus 12:15-16**).

What does this mean? Why did God specify that on the two Holy Days of the Feast of Unleavened Bread, that work involving food preparation may be done? God did not repeat this allowance for the other Holy Days, not even the Sabbath. Why not? What is the purpose of this law? Is there proof? Does it make sense?

Of all the Holy Days, only Nisan 15 (the first day of the Feast of Unleavened Bread) can ever fall on a Sunday. When it does, which is a rare occasion, Nisan 14 (Passover) falls on the weekly Sabbath. In this case, preparation for Nisan 14 must be made on Friday, Nisan 13, while cleaning up of the Sabbath dishes and any last-minute food preparation for the night to be much observed and the morning of the Holy Day may be done on the Holy Day itself (Sabbath sunset to Sunday sunset). No food preparation for Sunday Nisan 15 may be done on the weekly Sabbath.

Passover (Nisan 14) and Nisan 21 (the last day of Unleavened Bread, a Holy Day) can and often do fall on a Friday. Nisan 21 is the *only* Holy Day that ever falls on the sixth day of the week. In such cases, preparation for the Holy Day and the succeeding weekly Sabbath should, as much as possible, be done on the day before the Holy Day (Thursday, Nisan 20). But a certain amount of food preparation for the Sabbath and the cleaning up of the dishes of the Holy Day may have to be done on the Holy Day. And God's law of **Exodus 12:15-16** permits this. The two annual Holy Days of the Feast of Unleavened Bread are **special**. To a certain extent, food preparation may be done on them that may not be done on the weekly Sabbath, OR on any of the other annual Holy Days.

Pentecost is always on Monday, not on a Sunday. One of the basic reasons is that food preparation for Pentecost must be on the day *before* Pentecost, not on Pentecost itself. God's Word allowing food preparation on Nisan 15 and 21 does NOT extend to Pentecost. In the Old Testament, the two large waveloaves had to be baked ahead of time in order to be offered on Pentecost morning as the firstfruits, **Leviticus 23:15-17**. The priest ate these loaves, **verse 20**. This baking could *not* have been done on the weekly Sabbath, **Exodus 16:23**. If the Pentecost loaves were baked on the preceding Friday, the bread would be two days old, hardly fit for an offering to the Eternal! Therefore, this is an important reason why Pentecost must be on Monday, not Sunday. Those waveloaves were baked on

Sunday, before Pentecost. To place Pentecost on Sunday is to violate the Sabbath.

Those who believe in a Monday Pentecost and at the same time believe that food preparation is allowed on Pentecost are inconsistent. If they are right in their assumption, then the waveloaves could have been baked after the end of the seventh Sabbath, and Pentecost might therefore be on a Sunday. A Sunday Pentecost violates either the weekly Sabbath or Pentecost itself. It opposes the very principle of the Sabbath. God's laws do not contradict themselves. Pentecost is on a Monday, a day on which food preparation is NOT allowed.

Concerning the fall Holy Days, it is significant to note that the Day of Trumpets, Tishri 1, the first day of the Feast of Tabernacles, Tishri 15, an Holy Day, and the Last Great Day, Tishri 22, all fall on the same day of the week ($1 + 7 + 7 = 15$ and $15 + 7 = 22$). None of these three annual Holy Days can ever, according to the rules of God's Sacred Calendar, fall on a Sunday, Wednesday or Friday.

Not on a Sunday, because these Holy Days *must* be preceded by a day of preparation. God's Word nowhere allows the preparation of food on these Holy Days, which are also to be FEAST days as well. Therefore Trumpets, first day of Tabernacles and the Last Great Day must always be preceded by a preparation day, which cannot be the weekly Sabbath, and therefore they can never fall on a Sunday.

Why not on a Friday? Why can't these three Holy Days fall on the day before a weekly Sabbath? It wouldn't matter, if food preparation for the Sabbath were allowed on these days. But we have seen that food preparation is *not* allowed on the weekly Sabbath nor on these specified Holy Days. If Trumpets, for example, *could* fall on a Friday, then food preparation for the Sabbath would have to be done on either this Holy Day or the Sabbath, which Scripture does not allow. The mind of the Eternal foresaw the implications of His own laws. They are perfect, and do not contradict.

If **Exodus 12:15-16** did not explain that certain food preparation is permissible on the Holy Days during Unleavened Bread, the follower of God would be put into a straight-jacket. Either way, he would be forced to break God's laws during the spring Holy Days. But the Eternal God is not so capricious.

In the same manner, and for like reasons, the Day of Atonement can never fall on a Friday or a Sunday. No food preparation is allowable on the Sabbath, and absolutely no work at all on Atonement, the "Sabbath of Sabbaths," **Leviticus 23:32**, literal Hebrew. God's calendar laws regarding Pentecost and the fall Holy Days prove that the allowed work of food preparation of **Exodus 12:16** does not extend to the Holy Days other than Nisan 15 and 21. The High Days of Unleavened Bread are indeed unique, like no other.

Truly, God's laws make sense. God intended that every one of the days of the Feast of Unleavened Bread should be a "feast" in the sense that unleavened bread is to be eaten in festive meals. To make sure they are special, God's law allows the preparation of that which one must eat on the Holy Days (first and last) of Unleavened Bread. This does not abrogate God's laws regarding what work is or is not permissible on Sabbaths. It upholds the sanctity of the Sabbath.

"This that which the LORD hath said, To morrow is the rest of the holy Sabbath unto the LORD: bake that which ye will bake to day, and seethe [boil] that which ye will seethe; and that which remaineth over lay up for you to be kept until the morning," **Exodus 16:23**.

"There remaineth therefore a **rest** [margin: "keeping of a Sabbath"] to the people of God," **Hebrews 4:9**.

Easter-Passover Calendar Controversy

Why does the professing Christian world celebrate **Easter**? On the other hand, why does the Church of God observe **Passover**? One way of answering this is that the Church of God has adhered to the sacred calendar, while others have rejected it.

It should be noted that to the majority of professing followers of Christ,

"Easter is central to the whole Christian year; not only does **the whole ecclesiastical calendar** of movable feasts **depend upon its date**, but the whole year of worship is arranged around it" (*Encyclopedia Britannica*, 1966 edition, article "Easter").

Preceded by forty days of Lent and "Holy Week," and succeeded by seven Sundays until Whitsunday (or Pentecost), Easter is the central religious day to many. It has even been termed "the Christian Passover." From very early times, certain believers have kept Sunday as a "little Easter," a weekly commemoration of the supposed day of the resurrection of Christ.

History records the Quartodeciman Controversy during the period of 100-350 A.D. Early Christians were mainly Jewish, and continued to observe the Passover on the 14th of Nisan along with Gentile converts. They followed the lunar-solar Hebrew calendar according to the Jewish Sanhedrin.

False religious teachers brought in damnable heresies into the true Church of God, **Acts 20:28-30**. Having enmity against God's laws, and seeking a personal following for monetary gain, they attempted to change the year of Jesus' birth, the year of His death, the day of His crucifixion, and the day of His resurrection. Sunday was already established as a pagan day of worship, so it was a convenient day in which to transfer "Christian" worship. Those who resisted the almost wholesale departure from revealed truth in the first and second centuries adhered to the Sabbath and a Nisan 14 Passover. The real heretics, who soon became the majority, observed *Sunday* and *Easter*. Not until the Council of Nicaea in 325 A.D. did the Easter-Sunday supporters gain complete victory in the Roman Empire. **True Christians were forced to flee!**

Instead of the Passover, which always falls on Nisan 14 (on either the second, fourth, sixth or seventh days of the week), heretics began to observe the "Christian" Passover on the following Sunday, the first day of the week. Since the Roman world used the Julian calendar, how would Easter be calculated?

The answer is that the "Jewish" calendar would be totally rejected in favor of the Roman calendar. The dominant Gentile influence felt that the church should have an ecclesiastical year independent and separate from Judaism. Easter was fixed at Nicaea (325 A.D.) as the first Sunday after the full moon which occurs on or next **after** the spring equinox (March 21). The "equinox theory" began in the false church! If the full moon occurs on a Sunday, Easter is postponed until the following Sunday, thus preventing the possibility of Easter coinciding with Nisan 15, the First Holy Day of Unleavened Bread. The Eastern Orthodox Church still follows this practice. The Roman Catholic (Western) Church ignores the full moon (Passover) factor entirely, making the western church's Easter sometimes before

Passover week, sometimes after it, and sometimes in it.

In reality, "Easter" is a counterfeit Wavesheaf Sunday. For the first so-called Easter was on a Sunday, the day Christ ascended to heaven to be accepted by the Father **John 20:1, 17**. It was NOT the day of Christ's resurrection. The calculation of Easter *appears* to be very similar to the computation of Passover and Wavesheaf Sunday. Actually, it is not the same. The rules of computing Easter totally disregard God's calendar with its intercalary months. Thus, Easter is sometimes one month earlier than Wavesheaf Sunday. Easter does not always fall on the true Wavesheaf Sunday in about one out of every five years, according to the Western, or Roman Catholic, computation.

The acceptance of Easter negates the calendar God instituted, with the Sabbaths, Holy Days, and New Moons. Its institution in the Catholic Church had this as its purpose. Church councils of Nicaea and Laodicea in the fourth century A.D. expressly stated that they wanted nothing in common with the "despicable" Jews. God's people, however, *do* want to be "Jews," **John 4:22**. *True Christianity IS a "Jewish" religion*. Anti-Jewish sentiment had much to do with the abandonment of the Sabbath, Passover and the Hebrew calendar. This sentiment continues in many who reject the Hebrew Calendar.

Polycarp:

"was not only instructed by the apostles, and conversed with many who had seen Christ, but was also, by apostles in Asia, appointed Bishop of the Church of Smyrna."

He came to Rome around 154 A.D., attempting to convince Anicetus the Bishop of Rome that the Passover should be observed on the fourteenth, not on the following Sunday, since he had received this truth from the apostles. Anicetus argued for Easter observance.

"For neither could Anicetus persuade Polycarp not to observe it [the Passover] because he had always observed it with John the disciple of our Lord, and the rest of the apostles, with whom he associated," (quotes are from Eusebius' *Ecclesiastical History*, Book V, Chapter 24, and *Nicene and Post-Nicene Fathers*, Volume I).

Some 35 years later, the Passover-Easter controversy again broke out. Victor, Bishop of Rome, attempted to excommunicate churches of Asia for observing the Passover. Polycrates, successor of Polycarp at Smyrna, answered in defense of the truth,

"As for us, then, we scrupulously observe the exact day, neither adding nor taking away. For in Asia great luminaries have gone to their rest, who shall rise again in the day of the coming of the Lord . . . I speak of Philip, one of the twelve apostles . . . John, moreover who reclined on the Lord's bosom . . . then there is Polycarp . . . these all kept the Passover on the fourteenth day of the month, in accordance with the gospel, without ever deviating from it, but keeping to the rule of faith" (*Ante-Nicene Fathers*, Volume III, Pages 773-774).

Christians of the first and second centuries observed God's calendar with the Passover and Holy Days. The Western World has two calendars, Roman and Hebrew. Which one will *you* observe?

The Code of Maimonides

The Code of Maimonides, Book Three Treatise Eight, "Sanctification of the New Moon," translated by Solomon Gandz. Edited by J. Obermann and O. Neugebauer. Yale Judaica Series. New Haven, Yale University Press, 1956.

In his preface to Maimonides' work, Julian Obermann says that Moses ben Maimon, known to history as Maimonides, wrote this treatise from 1173-1178 A.D., drawing from an Arabic authority, al-Battani. The most direct source of Maimonides "Sanctification" was the work of Abraham ben Hiyyah, known as Savasorda of Barcelona (b. 1065) who wrote *Sefer ha-ibbur* (Science of the Fixed Calendar), which work is available today, edited by H. Filipowski, London 1851. The calendric works of Saadia (d. 942) and two other scholars of Cordoba were quoted by Savasorda but these books have not been preserved.

The calendric controversy between Rabbanites and Karaites came to a head in the last part of the 8th Century A.D. The Karaites asserted that the appearance of the new crescent alone determined the beginning of the months, and that this had been Israel's practice at all times.

Saadia Gaon went to the opposite extreme in refuting this, saying that the fixed calendar, computation of *molad* and *tekufah* is a Mosaic-Sinaitic law that had been followed at all ages of the past, while observation of the new crescent was merely a passing episode introduced by the Sadducees to show the correctness of calendric calculation. Maimonides shows that in the Mishnah, or Oral Law, visual observation of the new crescent and its computation by true astronomical values were prescribed to *supplement* each other in the regulation of the calendar during the period of the Sanhedrin. Moses and Aaron were shown by God at Sinai the crescent of Nisan, **Exodus 12:1-2**, and the rules of calculation. Thus, the calculation rules were based upon what would be visible.

Here are several interesting quotations from Maimonides' work:

Chapter 1, Paragraph 5:

"The authority over the observation of the new crescent (and the subsequent proclamation of New Moon Day) was given not to everyone -- as is the case with the Sabbath day . . . which everyone counts 6 days and rests on the seventh day -- but only to the court [the Sanhedrin]. The day sanctified and proclaimed by the court as the beginning of the month was New Moon Day. For it is said: *This month* shall be unto you (**Exodus 12:2**), that is to say, accepting or rejecting evidence concerning this matter is put into your hands."

Paragraph 6:

". . . the Jewish court, too, used to study and investigate and perform mathematical operations, in order to find out whether or not it would be possible for the new crescent to be visible in its 'proper time,' which is the night of the 30th day. If the members of the court found that the new moon might be visible, they were obliged to be in attendance at the court house for the whole 30th day and be on the watch for the arrival of witnesses. If witnesses did arrive, they were duly examined and

tested, and if their testimony appeared trustworthy, this day was sanctified as New Moon Day. If the new crescent did not appear and no witnesses arrived, this day was counted as the 30th day of the old month If, however, the members of the court found by calculation that the new moon could not possibly be seen, they were not obliged to be in attendance on the 30th day or to wait for the arrival of witnesses. If witnesses nonetheless did appear and testified that they had seen the new crescent, it was certain that they were false witnesses, or that a phenomenon resembling the new moon had been seen by them through the clouds, while in reality it was not the new crescent at all."

Paragraph 7:

"Scripture made it incumbent upon the court to discover by calculation whether or not the new moon might be visible, to examine the witnesses, and then to sanctify the new moon and to send out messengers to inform the whole community which day was to be New Moon Day, so that the people would know on which days the holidays would fall (**Lev. 23:37, Ex. 13:10**)."

Paragraph 8:

"Only in Palestine was it permitted to compute and proclaim new moon days"

Chapter 2, Paragraph 8:

". . . it was not the observation of the new moon but the official pronouncement of the *Mekuddas* (sanctification) formula by the court which legally initiated the new month."

Chapter 2, Paragraph 10:

". . . for the authority over this matter had been given to them [the judges] only. He who has commanded us to observe the festivals has also commanded us to follow them, for it is written: which ye shall proclaim (**Leviticus 23:37**)."

Chapter 5, Paragraph 2:

"It is thus a Mosaic tradition from Sinai that in times when there was a (Palestinian) Synedrium [Sanhedrin], declaration of New Moon Days was based on visual observation [confirmed by court calculation as previously shown], while in times when no Synedrium existed, this declaration was based on calculations such as we are using today and no attention was paid to observation of the new crescent. Rather, the day established by calculation might well coincide with the day in which the new moon became visible, but it might sometimes be the day before it or the day after it."

Chapter 18, Paragraph 7:

" . . . the court followed a tradition transmitted by the Sages from one generation to another on the authority of Moses . . . on the basis of calculation"

Karaite Objections to Calculation

An excellent book which covers the calendar controversy is *Karaites in Byzantium, The Formative Years, 970-1100*, by Zvi Ankori. AMS Press: New York, 1968.

Karaites are a tiny Jewish sect which may even survive to the present day. *Webster's Unabridged Dictionary* defines them as a sect originating in Baghdad in the 8th Century, that rejects rabbinism and talmudism and bases its tenets on interpretations of the Scriptures. The name Karaite comes from the Hebrew *kara*, "to read."

Karaites flourished during the Byzantine Empire, 970-1100 A.D. Anan ben David led the Karaite anti-Rabbanite rebellion. His "Book of Precepts" is a "Talmud of his own." His widely heralded fundamentalism and exclusive reliance on the written Letter of the Law is largely a misnomer. He read into the Bible the customs and practices he already observed. The Dead Sea Scrolls people, the Essenes, seem to have a close affinity with later Karaites.

Karaites refused to light Sabbath candles Friday night, saying it was a violation of **Exodus 20:10**. Contrast the cheerful illumination in Rabbanite Jewish homes with the gloomy darkness in Karaite houses. Because the Jews had been exiled from Palestine, Karaites rejected the Jewish (and Biblical) concept of *oneg shabbat* (Sabbath delight).

Karaites consistently pressed for the actual observation of the New Moon and for up-to-date reports of the state of new crops (*abib*) in Palestine as the only admissible evidence for determining Rosh-Hodesh (New Moon) and the leap-year, respectively. Accordingly, they often celebrated the festivals on dates other than their Rabbanite neighbors, who had a pre-calculated calendar.

Late 11th Century Rabbanite leader Tobias ben Eliezer refuted the Karaites' demand for lunar observation by stating that because the Jews were scattered, they based themselves on the rules of the intercalation formula the way it was calculated from Adam to Noah, Noah to Shem, and Shem to Jacob, Jacob to Kehath, and Kehath to Amram the father of Moses. Ben Eliezer said that this method of calculation had been transmitted to the Sages of Israel of his day so that they may sanctify the month accordingly. Even though "Jewry is scattered in lands where the moon is not seen in the way it was seen in the Land of Israel, yet the Torah had stated, 'Ye shall have one law' (**Numbers 15:29**), and not a variety of observances."

A third point of contention between Karaite and Rabbanite Jews was the interpretation of **Leviticus 23:15**, "the morrow after the Sabbath." Karaites said that seven weeks had to be counted for Pentecost, and they kept the Festival of Weeks on a Sunday. On the other hand, the Rabbanites held to a fixed date, Sivan 6, for Pentecost (Feast of Weeks). The Karaites' reasoning was similar to the old Sadducees, and also that of Byzantine Greek Orthodox Catholics.

Other unique beliefs of the Karaites were: (1) they demanded even their children fast on the Day of Atonement, (2) ordered their months

from Nisan rather than Tishri, (3) distinguished between Passover and the Feast of Unleavened Bread, (4) called Tishri 1 the "Feast of Trumpets" rather than Rosh ha-Shannah, (5) did not observe Hanukkah since it was post-Biblical, (6) observed the Jubilee Year, (7) called calendar calculations the same as witchcraft, (8) thought the *lulab* and *ethrog* materials were to build the *sukkah* rather than to wave, (9) allowed the eating of fowl meat with milk.

In spite of other differences, the main point of contention between the Karaites and Rabbanites was conflict over the calendar.

"The history of any [Jewish] religious sect . . . is to a great extent a history of its calendar deviations. For such deviations have always been the most outstanding symptoms of the sect's break with its normative environment or with the general body to which its members adhered originally. Of course, differences of calendar are hardly the *reason* for secession; rather they seal the separatist trend and constitute the group's *final* declaration of self determination and independence [calendar controversies] became active ingredients in the ever more pronounced process of estrangement of the two factions, and widen almost irreparably the *social* rift between the opposing camps (page 293)."

Karaites were so much in favor of an observable calendar that they would not marry another Jew without having in the marriage contract the freedom to observe their Holy Days.

Although few today have heard of Karaites, their position has a following today by some Messianic believing Holy Day keepers. Relating the arguments from 1000 A.D. sounds much like the calendar arguments we are hearing in our day.

Rabbanites followed the *molad* [the pre-calculated birth of the New Moon] and they did not search for the *abib* [ripened barley] near the vernal (spring) equinox. Babylonian Karaites did not search for the *abib*, but followed computation of the vernal equinox alone, stipulating conditions different than the Rabbanites. The Palestinian-oriented Karaites observed the *abib* alone and did not investigate the position of the sun (equinox). Karaites in the Byzantium empire followed the Palestinian reckoning for several hundred years (pages 303-304).

Byzantine Karaites felt they needed written confirmation from Jerusalem as to the status of the barley each spring. They had misgivings as to the correctness of their calendar ideas and thus the Rabbanites would taunt the Karaites for their confusion. Karaites would follow the Rabbanite way of calculation, unless changed by a report from Jerusalem. Sometimes the barley ripened early and the Karaites' Nisan would equal the Rabbanites Adar (12th month). More frequently, the barley ripened later, so the Karaite's Nisan was equal to the Rabbanite's Iyar (2nd month), resulting in Karaite Holy Days being a month later.

Karaites and Rabbanites lived in close proximity. Because their Holy Days often differed, feuds developed. At one time, Karaites filed government charges against the Rabbanite factions, resulting in a heavy tax on the Rabbanites. Tensions became so bad that a wall may have been constructed in Constantinople between the Karaite and Rabbanite communities.

In 1099, the Crusaders destroyed the Karaite center in Jerusalem. It became more difficult to obtain information on the state of the crops there. Eventually in the 13th Century, the Karaites in Byzantium abandoned the attempt to observe the *abib* and gave in to the

Rabbanite pre-calculated 19-year cycle of intercalation. Those around Palestine continued to observe the barley.

Another major issue was lunar observation to determine the first day of each month. As the Byzantine Karaites gave in to the Rabbanite method of intercalation, lunar observation became the leading factor for continuing divisiveness between the two groups. Passover and Trumpets were often observed one day differently.

Rabbanites argued that the precalculated postponement rules have always been binding since the time of Adam. **Leviticus 23:2** does not say we are to individually observe the seasons, but they are **proclaimed**, sanctified by court decision (*kiddush beth din*). The second reason given by the Rabbanites was the issue of unity. Without an official standard, confusing factions would divide God's people.

Rabbanites would tease the Karaites: "What about observing the moon when the sky is cloudy?" There was confusion in the Karaite community because equally "pious" and "reliable" observers in different localities saw the new moon on different days, this made them "the laughingstock of the whole Jewish community." This confusion "was helplessly admitted by the Karaite scholars themselves," (page 352).

Besides division among themselves, Karaites fought against two other Jewish minority sects: the Tiflisites of Armenia and the Mishaivites. Tiflisites kept Pentecost on a Sunday, but used a different calendar than the Karaites. The Mishaivites also differed with the Karaites and Rabbanites over the calendar. Their calendar was strictly a solar one of 364 days. It ensured that yearly fasts and feasts fell on fixed days in the *week*, rather than on fixed days of the *month*, the way lunar a lunar calendar would have it. Their Day of Atonement always fell on a Sabbath, Passover on a Thursday, Pentecost on a Sunday seven weeks after the first Sunday after Passover. Mishaivites rejected the Karaite and Samaritan custom of beginning the Pentecost count on the Sunday *within* Passover week, and insisted it must start on the Sunday *after* Passover week, the position advocated by Apocryphal Book of Jubilees and the Qumran sect. Mishaivites also began their days in the morning rather than in the evening.

The purpose of giving the above historical tidbits is to show that calendar controversy has long been an issue among those striving to observe the Holy Days and New Moons of the Bible. True to human nature, "there is nothing new under the sun." Arguments by modern day "Karaites" and other sects closely parallel their historical counterparts whether they are aware of their predecessors or not. As Zvi Ankori states, calendar differences were:

"crucial in the sect-forming process of all times: calendar independence heralded a sect's self- determination and final separation from the Mother Institution," (page 377).

This is as true today as it was in 1000 A.D.

Modern Karaites

A number of Sabbath-keeping Churches of God observe the annual Biblical Holy Days. Among them, there is a considerable disagreement as to *when* these days occur. Which calendar should be used to determine the annual Bible Holy Days? The Hebrew

Calendar, or other calendars? Does the Bible specify *when* to observe the Holy Days? Is there a Bible Calendar? Does it make a difference which calendar we use, as long as we are "sincere"?

Some groups follow the Hebrew (Jewish) calendar: Worldwide Church of God, Church of God International, Church of God the Eternal, Mt. Zion Reporter (Messianic Jews), Biblical Church of God (with reservations), etc.

Other groups have other ideas of when the Holy Days are to be observed. These are some of the "modern Karaites": Seventh Day Church of God (Caldwell, Idaho), Church of God of Cleveland Ohio (Carl O'Beirn), Truth Fellowship of Clifton Park New Jersey (David L. Bierer), Assembly of Yahweh of Bethel Pennsylvania, Yahweh's Assembly in Messiah of Rocheport Missouri, etc.

Even those churches who only observe the Passover (Lord's Supper) and not the annual Holy Days, are divided: the Church of God, Seventh Day of Denver Colorado follows the Hebrew Calendar, while the Church of God Seventh Day of Salem West Virginia follows the equinoxes.

What a babylon of confusion! Who is correct?

The Equinox Theory

The diminutive Church of God Seventh Day (Salem, West Virginia) makes the calendar a major issue of difference between them and the much larger Church of God Seventh Day (Denver, Colorado). Here is their position:

We use God's time-pieces, the same ones that have been used by men and women of God at any age since man was created the sun, moon, and stars When the sun is directly over the equator, day and night are equal. This is called the equinox and the sun crosses the equator in the Spring and Fall of every year. Each new moon begins a month. The first month of the year then begins with the new moon nearest the Spring equinox (Ex. 12:2, Ps. 81:3,4; Isa. 1:13) There is no human calendar made that can equal God's way to tell time (*Advocate of Truth*, February 1971).

Notice! The above "proof" scriptures do not mention the equinox! In applying the equinox theory, the Salem, West Virginia group stated that in 1971, the new moon nearest the true equinox was on March 26, 2:24 p.m., and became visible the following night at 12:47 a.m., therefore March 28 was the first day of the new year for 1971. Again, scriptural proof is absent for this position. Their position is merely a "human calendar" based upon the unprovable "equinox theory."

Another group, the Church of God Evangelistic Association of Missouri, has a different version of the "equinox theory." For them, the first month is determined by the first visible new moon AFTER the spring equinox. Their April 10, 1983 tract, "Reason to Question" tries to reason how Moses could have determined when to observe the equinox and the first new moon. They don't answer the question, stating that "It is extremely unlikely that without modern day understanding of astronomy, he could have been certain within a day or two." If Moses would have had a hard time determining the first new moon by observation, how can modern day people have an easier time to do it without calculation? This group fails miserably to prove their point.

Does It Make a Difference?

At this point, some will say that it doesn't make any difference which day we observe. The Eternal looks at the heart and attitude, some will say, not the physical details of the letter.

But wait a minute! Sabbath keepers' reason for existence is that the day kept *does* make a difference. Many people sincerely keep Sunday as the "Sabbath." Yet we believe they are sincerely wrong, **Matthew 15:9**. The same must be true of the annual Passover memorial and the Holy Days.

Look at Passover. This day is so important that the Law even specifies that the service may be kept one month later when unavoidable circumstances prevent one from keeping it on the 14th day of the first month, **Numbers 9:1-14**. No, this does not justify keeping two different Passovers. It is the same Passover, *one* Passover, a service so important that it cannot be missed. Everyone must keep it, *once* a year, not twice or three times. The annual Passover is as important as eternal life, **John 6:53-54**.

Carlo Rasmussen, in a 1978 *Advocate of Truth*, illustrated this:

The two important dates for God's people to remember; the Lord's Supper date and the Seventh Day Sabbath, have been so cunningly and strongly bombarded by the Devil's wiles that many are lured . . . [into] thinking that it really makes no difference Concerning the Lord's Supper date, there has been only one true date for that memorial. God has set aside the day that He chose and has not changed, or altered it in any way. The Lord has set this date . . . by His time-piece in the heaven, the sun, moon and the stars Men under [Satan's] influence have tried continually to cause a change in this date by various attempts . . . or rationalize that they may have more than one date during the year.

There are many, many alternatives to the sincere believer in choosing the correct time-piece. Which is right?

Josephus and the Sign of Aries

One of the "Holy Day keeping" groups that does not follow the Hebrew Calendar is the Seventh Day Church of God of Caldwell Idaho. They publish a 13-page booklet entitled "Ecclesiastical Calendar."

A key point of the Caldwell group is that:

"Passover cannot occur earlier than March 20, nor later than April 18. Passover will always fall in the sign of Aries [one of the twelve signs of the Zodiac] according to the Jewish historian Flavius Josephus." The statement of Josephus is found in his *Antiquities of the Jews*, Book III, Chapter X, section 5:

In the month of Xanthicus, which is by us called *Nisan*, and is the beginning of our year, on the fourteenth day of the lunar month, **when the sun is in Aries** (for in this month it was that we were delivered from bondage under the Egyptians,) . . . [is] **the Passover** .

"Aries" is the constellation known as the Ram, the first of the twelve signs of the pagan zodiac, an imaginary belt in the heavens that encompasses the apparent paths of all the principal planets except Uranus, Neptune and Pluto. The zodiac is divided into twelve constellations, or signs, for astrological purposes. Aries is today held to be the in the March to April period. Can Aries, a heathen zodiacal sign, be used to determine the Creator's sacred appointments?

The booklet, "Horoscopes and the Christian" shows that the pagan Zodiac signs were based upon Ptolemy's inaccurate astronomical knowledge. Due to the inexact revolution of the earth, Spring arrives 20 minutes earlier each year. This is the scientific phenomenon known as the "precession of the equinoxes." What astrologers call Aries today is in reality Pisces, the second sign of the Zodiac.

On March 21 each year astrologers say that the sun is in Aries. In reality, the sun is not in the constellation Aries (though it was 2000 years ago) but is in the constellation Pisces. (page 37).

Heathen signs of the Zodiac are not the basis for the Eternal's calendar. Remember that Josephus, a Jew, was writing for Gentile audiences. During the time of Josephus, it was always true that Passover fell in the period of the sign of Aries. Due to the slowing down of the earth's rotation, an adjustment to the Hebrew calendar had to be made in the 2nd Century, A.D. Please see our article, "A New Look at Pentecost in Light of the Calendar Adjustment in the Second Century" in this series on Biblical Holy Days. This adjustment was necessary in order to prevent Pentecost from occurring in the summer, out of season. In some years, the first of Nisan or Abib occurs before the spring equinox. As time moves on, this will not be the case. At some date in the future, another calendar adjustment will be necessary.

The historical fact of the Hebrew calendar adjustment proves that the calendar is not tied to a zodiac sign. Josephus was not stating a calendar law when he said that the sun was in Aries when the Passover sacrifice was slain. It was an observation, based upon actual oral calendar laws, which later became codified to protect the calendar. It was these same calendar laws which demanded the 2nd Century change in the intercalary cycle to prevent Pentecost from falling in the summer. And these same laws are in the Hebrew calendar of today.

The so-called sign of Aries is an erroneous basis for calendar law.

Sacred Name, Observable Calendar

One grouping of Sabbath-keepers has emerged today as the leading proponent of a visually observed calendar, supposedly apart from calculation: the "Sacred Name" believers. Anti-Hebrew calendar sentiment is so prevalent among Yahwehists that the Sacred Name and observable calendar seem to go together. However, this is not universally the case. Just as they disagree over the exact pronunciation of the Hebrew names (Yahweh, Yahvah, Yahovah, etc.), some Sacred Name believers keep their Holy Days by the Hebrew calendar.

Recently weakened by a split, Jacob O. Meyer's Assembly of Yahweh, Bethel, Pennsylvania is still perhaps the largest Yahwehist group. The following is a summary of the arguments for an observable calendar from his article, "What Is the Authoritative Biblical Calendar for Yahweh's Assembly Today?" (February, 1982 *Sacred Name Broadcaster* magazine):

We follow the Bible exclusively. The Biblical calendar is based upon the visible new moons, viewing the first crescent of the new moon after sundown. The calendar of Hillel II is not authentic and stems no earlier than the fourth century A.D. It is man-made and assimilated many errors from the Babylonish calendar, as witnessed by the use of the names Nisan, Tammuz and Adar for the months.

Deuteronomy 16:1 literally says "Watch for the new moon of green ears and keep the Passover unto Yahweh." *Abib* means new or green ear month. Not all Jews keep the Hillel calendar today, as witness the Karaites. The Jews did not preserve the sacred calendar, God's Word did. Because the Jews keep Passover on the 15th of Abib, instead of the correct 14th, this proves that they did not preserve the correct traditions for keeping the Holy Days. It is not burdensome to prepare food for a Holy Day two days in advance, e.g. preparing for Sabbath and (Sunday) Pentecost on the preceding Friday. It is true (as the Worldwide Church of God says) that the astronomical new moon calculated for the U.S.A. is in general a day or two earlier than the appearance of the first faint crescent of the new moon in the west after sundown as observed from Jerusalem.

The barley must have come to a head. Every year, the Assemblies of Yahweh inquires concerning the condition of the harvest in the Holy Land. The spring Holy Days must be observed no earlier than about 10 days following the spring equinox to keep them in harmony with the Israeli harvest season.

Is there a *Bible* Calendar? Meyer is adamant that the Bible says the first visible crescent determines the new moon (first of month). But scriptural support for this idea is totally absent.

Deuteronomy 16:1 in the literal Hebrew (*Interlinear Bible* by Jay P. Green) says:

"Observe the month Abib and keep the Passover to Jehovah [YHVH] your God; for in the month Abib Jehovah your God brought you out of Egypt by night."

Another Sacred Name believer, Jacob Hawkins of Odessa, Texas clearly refutes Meyer's contention that this scripture tells us to observe the new moon for ourselves (article "The Jewish Calendar" in *The Prophetic Watchman*). Meyer claims falsely that the word "observe" in **Deuteronomy 16:1** means "watch for and see with the eye." The Hebrew word is *shamar*, the same word used in **Deuteronomy 5:12**, "keep the Sabbath day to sanctify it," and **verse 29**, "keep all my commandments." These and hundreds more uses of this word show that "observe" in **Deuteronomy 16:1** does not mean "watch for and see with the eye the new moon of Abib," but to keep, celebrate, the Passover in the month Abib. *Chodesh*, the word translated month, can mean new moon or beginning of the month, and also one whole month from one new moon to the next new moon. The Eternal did not bring Israel out of Egypt on the night that the month became new. On the contrary, it was a **full** moon. Passover is observed (kept) on the fourteenth day of the first chodesh, **Leviticus 23:5**.

Meyer claims to know Hebrew. He claims there is a Bible calendar. Yet he misinterprets **Deuteronomy 16:1** and adamantly says that he follows the *Bible* calendar, without citing proof texts. There are no such texts. There is no "Bible calendar."

As Hawkins remarks, there are at least three or four sects that each claim to get their Calendar from the Bible. "But the strange thing is,"

he says, "is none of these sects keep the Feast Days on the same days. Somebody must have read the Bible wrong."

But there is a sure way. Putting aside anti-Jewish bias, let us examine what the Jews record of their history.

Jewish Encyclopedia (1904 edition), Article, "Calendar"

"The first appearance of the new moon determines the beginning of the month It may, therefore happen that in different places the reappearance of the moon is noticed on different days. In order to prevent possible confusion, to the central religious authority, the chief of the Sanhedrin, in conjunction with at least two colleagues, was entrusted with the determination of new moon day for the whole nation.

"Although the Jewish calendar was thus regulated by direct observation, the members of the court seem to have been in possession of a recognized system, called 'Sod ha-Ibbur' [secret of the calendar intercalation] . . . which enabled them to test the accuracy of the evidence of the eye-witnesses There were times of persecution when the president and the Sanhedrin could not exercise their authority; times of trouble and war when neither witnesses nor messengers could travel in safety. On such occasions calculation had to be relied upon. The substitution of calculation for observation became gradually permanent, helping to maintain the religious unity of the nation, and insuring the uniform celebration of the 'seasons of the Lord,' independently of the vicissitudes of the times as well as of the distance of Jewish settlements from Palestine. A permanent calendar, still in force, was introduced by Hillel II, nasi of the Sanhedrin about 360."

Note: here are the Messiah's comments about the validity of the Jewish Sanhedrin: "The scribes and Pharisees sit in Moses' seat: All therefore whatsoever they bid you observe, that observe and do; but do not ye after their works: for they say, and do not," **Matthew 23:2-3**.

Encyclopedia Judaica, Article "Calendar"

"According to a tradition quoted in the name of Hai Gaon (d. 1038), the present Jewish calendar was introduced by the patriarch Hillel II [in 358/359 A.D.] This possibly only refers to the present fixed order of the seven leap years in the 19-year cycle, whose introduction would have had to be more suitable at that time than earlier to achieve the main raison d'etre of intercalation -- to prevent the lunar Nisan 16 from occurring before the day of the *tekufah* [equinox] in the crucial 16th year of the 19-year cycle -- on the presupposition that the *tekufah* of Nisan stands for the true, not the mean, vernal equinox While it is not unreasonable to attribute to Hillel II the fixing of the regular order of intercalations, his full share in the present fixed calendar is doubtful [because there are early indications of intercalation, even from Scripture in **Ezekiel 1:1, 8:1**].

". . . the Jews 'secret of the calendar intercalation' [sod ha-ibbur] [was] jealously guarded by its experts from outsiders, both Jewish and gentile."

Universal Jewish Encyclopedia, Article "Calendar"

"Comparatively little is known about the calendar of the early Israelites from the time of the patriarchs to the end of the period of the First Temple It is possible that an extra month was inserted (intercalated) every two or three years, as is done in the present Jewish calendar; in fact, Jewish tradition asserts that King Hezekiah (end of 8th century B.C.E.) made just such an intercalation

"Up to the middle of the 4th century C.E., the Palestinian patriarchate retained the prerogative of determining the calendar, and guarded the secrets of its calculation against the attempts of the rapidly advancing communities in Babylonia to have a voice in its determination. It was not until after [false] Christianity had become dominant in the Roman Empire [under Constantine], and the Christian rulers forbade the Jewish religious leadership to proclaim leap years or to communicate with the Jews outside the empire, that it was determined to abandon the method of official proclamation of months and years and to fix the calendar in permanent form. The patriarch Hillel II, in 359, decided to publish the rules for the calculation of the calendar, so that all Jews everywhere might be able to determine for themselves and to observe the festivals on the same day. From that time on the Jewish calendar has been stabilized."

The Comprehensive Hebrew Calendar by Arthur Spier

"This method of observation and intercalation [by the Sanhedrin] was in use throughout the period of the second temple (516 B.C.E. -- 70 C.E.), and about three centuries after its destruction, as long as there was an independent Sanhedrin. In the fourth century, however, when oppression and persecution threatened the continued existence of the Sanhedrin, the patriarch Hillel II took an extraordinary step to preserve the unity of Israel. In order to prevent the Jews scattered all over the surface of the earth from celebrating their New Moons, festivals and holidays at different times, he made public the system of calendar calculation which up to then had been a closely guarded secret. It had been used in the past only to check the observations and testimonies of witnesses, and to determine the beginnings of the spring season.

"In accordance with this system, Hillel II formally sanctified all months in advance, and intercalated all future leap years until such time as a new, recognized Sanhedrin would be established in Israel. This is the permanent calendar according to which the New Moons and Festivals are calculated and celebrated today by the Jews all over the world."

Did Hillel II *Invent* the Calculated Calendar?

Based upon the historical record, it would be an absurd assertion to say that Hillel II *invented* the calculated calendar. A fourth century calendar invention, coming during a time of persecution of Jews, would have been the last thing Jews would have accepted. The Sabbath and Holy Days were the glue that kept Jewish faith alive through the dark ages, even through the 20th Century Nazi persecutions. On the contrary, it was Hillel II's publication of calendar rules kept secret for centuries that preserved the Hebrew calendar, and the Jewish faith, up until our day.

The Solar Calendar and Jeroboam's Calendar

Have you ever heard of a "solar" calendar? Modern day advocates of this calendar totally ignore moon phases. The *Encyclopedia Judaica*, article "Calendar" reminds us of the fact that rebel King Jeroboam of the 10-tribed northern Israel counterfeited God's true calendar, as recorded in **I Kings 12:32-33**. The Samaritans seem to have followed the Northern Israel calendar. The Dead Sea Qumran sect appears to have had a 364-day solar calendar. Also, the apocryphal Book of Jubilees stresses that there are exactly 52 (4 x 13) weeks, or 364 days in a year and condemns vehemently those who observe a lunar calendar with festival dates different than theirs.

The "calendar God gave to Moses" was lunar **AND** solar.

Proof of A Lunar-Solar Calendar

There is proof, directly from the Bible, for a lunar-solar calendar, and that from time to time there must be 13 lunar months in a year.

A lunar-solar calendar requires the month to be complete days and the year to be complete months. **I Kings 4:7** and **I Chronicles 27:1-15** show that normally, a year has twelve months.

A passage in the Book of Ezekiel seems to show a Bible example of a 13-month year, and that the Hebrew calendar is NOT solar.

Ezekiel dates his first vision as the **5th year** of King Jehoichin's captivity, **the fourth month**, and **the fifth day**, **Ezekiel 1:1-2**. Then Ezekiel was commanded to go to the Israelite captives and speak the Eternal's words to them, **Ezekiel 3:4**. He sat down before them speechless for seven days, **verses 15-16**. In chapter four, the Eternal commanded Ezekiel to act out several prophecies. In one, he was to lie on his left side 390 days for the iniquity of Northern Israel. In another, Ezekiel was to lie on his right side 40 days for the sin of Judah. Each day represented a year of punishment. After further prophecies, Ezekiel dates the time in **Ezekiel 8:1** as the **sixth year**, **sixth month**, **fifth day** of the month, or an elapsed period of one year and two months from chapter 1. At least $7 + 390 + 40 = 437$ days, plus travel time, had to have elapsed between chapters one and eight.

If Israel were keeping a solar calendar of 364-365 days, a year and two months could not have elapsed ($365 + 60 =$ only 425 days). If there were 14 lunar months averaging 29.5 days, this would only come to 413 days! But if there were a 13th month during this year, the total would come to 443 days, enough to allow for 437 days plus a few for travel time and additional prophesying.

In this one passage, a solar calendar is disproved, and evidence is shown that some years were 13 months long.

Who *Invented* the 19-Year Time Cycle?

Some claim that a Greek named Meton *invented* the 19-year time cycle, and Hillel II merely copied this from the Greeks. Not so! The earth, moon and sun actually do align every nineteen years. The 19-year cycle is written in the Heavens and did not originate with the idea of a Greek scientist.

Every nineteen years the Holy Days are the same as the Roman calendar date, or plus or minus 1 day (the Roman calendar has to be

adjusted every four years with an added leap year day, February 29). Here is a comparison between 1967 and 1986, which are 19 years apart:

1967

1986

Passover: Apr 24 (Monday)	Apr 23 (Wednesday)
Feast of U.B: . Apr 25-May 1	Apr 24-30
Pentecost: June 19	June 16
Trumpets: Oct 5	Oct 4
Atonement: Oct 14	Oct 13
Tabernacles: Oct 19-26	Oct 18-25

Because Pentecost is calculated from the Sabbath during the Feast of Unleavened Bread, and Passover fell on different days of the week in 1967 and 1986 the date Pentecost is of more than plus or minus one day. Every 19th year from 1966-2000 that I have checked falls out with the holy days (other than Pentecost) on the same Roman calendar day, plus or minus one day.

Here are our answers to some questions on the calendar:

Question on the Calendar Adjustment

Question: "Would you happen to have any literature on the Jewish Calendar and the changes made in the 4th Century? Does the new month begin with the new moon, or the visible tiny crescent? It's hard for me to have confidence in the Jewish Calendar (with its changes) for the determination of Yahweh's Holy Days."

D. W., Ohio

COMMENT: To our knowledge, there were no "changes" in the *Hebrew* (it is not "Jewish") Calendar in the fourth century. A Church of God minister in St. Louis, Missouri has said, falsely, that "The modern Jewish calendar was not constructed until after 300 A.D." However, the *Universal Jewish Encyclopedia*, article "New Moon," contradicts his statement:

"It was not until the middle of the 4th cent. B.C.E. [**before** the Christian era] that the astronomical calculation of the new moon, which had, for along time, and up to that period, been guarded as the secret knowledge of the dynasty of the Patriarchs [Abraham, Isaac and Jacob] in Palestine, was made public."

The 12th Century A.D. Jewish scholar, Moses ben Maimon, also known as Maimonides, states that the rules of calendar calculation were given to Moses at Sinai. After Moses, authority for proclaiming the New Moon day was not given to everyone, but only the Council of Elders, the Court of the Sanhedrin, were responsible for proclaiming the New Moon. "The court followed a tradition transmitted by the Sages from one generation to another on the authority of Moses . . . **on the basis of calculation**" See: *The Code of Maimonides*, Book Three Treatise Eight, "Sanctification of the New Moon." Maimonides is regarded as a great Jewish scholar, second only to Ezra. He clearly and authoritatively taught that the rules governing today's Hebrew calendar were the same rules given by the Creator to Moses and the Patriarchs, and that calculation has precedence over observation.

You and I do not have the authority to determine for ourselves when the month begins. People living in cloudy climates such as western Oregon couldn't see the first visible crescent most of the time anyway. Did the Almighty preserve His Sacred Calendar and other oracles through the Jews (**Romans 3:2**) or didn't He? The Bible does not give calendar instructions. Either we look to the Jews or we look to history and human reason.

Late in the 2nd Century A.D., the Hebrew Calendar was *adjusted*, much like the Roman Julian calendar was adjusted by Pope Gregory several hundred years ago. The Calendar did not change, because the rules governing the Calendar necessitated an adjustment. And Calendar rules were not invented by Hillel II as some falsely claim.

Because there are so many false teachers today who are ignorantly or deliberately attacking the Sacred Hebrew Calendar, many sincere people have lost confidence in what they deride as the "Jewish" calendar. Religious principles that one does not like are often referred to as "Jewish." The pagan Emperor Constantine of the Roman Empire rejected the Sabbath, Holy Days and Sacred Calendar. "Let us have nothing in common with the detestable Jews" was his view. Did it ever occur to Constantine that Messiah and all the New Testament writers were Jews or Israelites?

And so it is today. Many Sabbath-keepers reject the Holy Days, terming them "Jewish Feast Days." Most Sacred Name groups reject the Hebrew Calendar, terming it "Jewish." Yet believe it or not, Sacred Names groups say that the Jews preserved the proper cycle of Sabbatical Years! This is another example of the "picking and choosing" approach to Truth.

Few really study an issue before drawing conclusions. I'm sure there are many who have rejected the Hebrew Calendar who haven't heard of Maimonides, the Karaites, or the 2nd Century A.D. calendar adjustment.

One thing should be noted: there are many conflicting ideas about when the "visible" new moon occurs. "Support" for conflicting positions must come from historians. Someone once said that you can "prove" *anything* from history, and the myriad of diverse calendar beliefs certainly demonstrates this. The Sacred Hebrew Calendar, given to the Patriarchs and Moses, has continued down through the ages. Its rules make much sense, unlike the confusion of Babylon.

Why Not Look to the Bible?

Question: A reader of our literature wrote us, " . . . you state that 'Maimonides is regarded as a great Jewish scholar . . . and that

calculation has precedence over observation.' Also, 'Either we look to the Jews or we look to history and human reason.' Why not look to the Word of God! *God* states that the lights -- sun AND moon -- (Genesis 1:14, etc.) are to be for calculating time -- i.e. a calendar." J.G., Florida

Question: ". . . most of us [Yahwehists] do use the heavenly calendar (Sun, moon and stars, Gen. 1:14) which makes Passover fall on the full moon *on* or after the days and nights are equal [spring equinox] . . . We do not trust the Jews as they are indoctrinated from Babylon." L.B., Indiana

B.R. of Oregon asked a number of technical questions relating to the Hebrew Calendar, as to the effect of the first month and the vernal equinox, and phases of the moon at that time of the year.

COMMENT: The spring equinox in A.D. 31 was on March 23. The first of Nisan or Abib is always the first new moon near the beginning of spring. It is NOT correct to state that Abib 1 is the new moon *closest* to the spring equinox. Abib 1, according to the Hebrew Calendar, can fall either before or after the spring equinox. Abib 14 can be up to two days before the equinox. The rule demanding Pentecost to be in the spring forces how late Passover may occur.

Some who study the sacred calendar attempt to express the calendar in a one rule sentence, such as "Abib 14 is the first *full* moon *after* the spring equinox." The Sacred Hebrew Calendar cannot be expressed in a single rule. Some Sabbath keepers use this man-devised "rule," and as a result observed "Passover" around the full moon of March 25, 1986, rather than the evening preceding April 23, 1986 as we did. Others also observed March 25, but for a different "rule." These hold that Abib 1 is the new moon *nearest* the spring equinox. Some hold that Passover must always be after the beginning of spring. Others hold that someone in Jerusalem must observe the barley, and when it is ripe, then the preceding new moon was the beginning of the year, Abib. Still others hold that Abib 1 must always be *after* the vernal equinox. Truly this is a Babylon of confusion. All claim to follow the Bible yet there is a multitude of conflicting arguments from history and human reason.

We will gladly offer \$1,000 to anyone who can show, using the Bible only, how to determine the proper days for the Sacred Calendar. It is not there! Either the Sacred Calendar has been preserved, or we have no basis for observing the Holy Days.

One of the few direct Bible statements is that the Holy Days are to be observed in their proper "seasons," **Leviticus 23:4, Genesis 1:14**. In attempting to be "righteous," some say that Passover can never occur before the spring equinox, that Passover must be in the spring. Nothing in the Bible says this. Those who observed "Passover" in 1986 around March 25, when the correct date was Tuesday evening April 22, in the same year observed Trumpets, Atonement, and part of Tabernacles in the *summer*! But "everyone" knows that these Holy Days are fall feasts, aren't they? NO! Actually, Trumpets and Atonement sometimes do occur in late summer! The Hebrew word for "seasons" is *moed*, and it means "an appointed time." The Eternal appoints the times for His Holy Days, not the vain imaginations of men.

In the spring of 31 A.D., the preceding year was intercalary, so Adar II (which always has 29 days), began on Wednesday, March 14, 31 A.D., and ended on Wednesday April 11. April 12 was a new moon near the beginning of spring. That is why we said in our article on

God's Calendar that "The first of Nisan or Abib is always the first new moon near the beginning of spring." The new moon of March 14 of 31 A.D. was nearer to the equinox than April 12. However, there is no Hebrew Calendar rule stating that Abib 1 must be the new moon **nearest** the spring equinox. ALL the calendar rules must come into play. There is no single rule to govern the calendar.

In 1986 I heard a Church of God minister say that the reason they were keeping Passover (Lord's Supper) around March 25 and not April 23 was that they were "following the Bible" and not the Jews. I am sure this man was sincere, but he is very wrong. There is no such Biblical law. The very reason for the Quartodeciman Controversy in the early centuries of the Christian Church centered over the calendar. Quartodecimans believed in carrying on the Jewish (Hebrew) traditions and calendar. Gentiles leading the apostate church decreed that their "Easter" should fall on the first Sunday after the first full moon after the vernal equinox, but always after Passover week. Eastern Orthodox Catholics follow this rule. The western, Roman Catholics deleted the reference to Passover. In 1986, the Roman Catholic Easter was on March 30, while Eastern Orthodox believers kept their Easter a month later. In rejecting the Jews (Hebrew Calendar), some Sabbath keepers today are siding with Rome. Most students of history know that the Eastern Orthodox Catholics are in some ways not as far removed from the truth as are Roman Catholics. Bible believers do not reject ALL Jewish traditions. The Messiah did not. Neither did Paul.

You have a choice. Believe in a simple one line rule for the Calendar, as so many have done, by an interpretation of history. Many others choose a simple rule **different** than yours. **OR**, you can accept the Hebrew Calendar with its handful of rules, based upon historical evidence, and the Bible indication that the Jews will preserve God's oracles, **Romans 3:1-2**. Which will it be?

You don't have to make a phone call to Jerusalem to see if the barley is ripe, or pore over astronomical data on new moons and equinoxes, or continually research ancient writings of Pharisees and Karaites arguing over the calendar.

Knowing that the earth and moon are out of kilter from their original creation, and that the earth is slowing down, I can understand why there had to be rather complicated calendar rules. This is not the way it was in the beginning, and until the Almighty restores all things at the return of the Messiah, it won't be again.

Not observing the Day of Atonement on a Friday or Sunday makes sense, as do the other calendar rules. That is, **IF** you understand how to keep the Sabbath, and how to keep the "Sabbath of Sabbaths," the Day of Atonement. Heavy food preparation and cleanup is not permitted on the Sabbath. That is why Atonement can't fall on Friday or Sunday. It is illogical on the one hand to accept the Masoretic text of the Old Testament, carefully preserved by the Jews, and on the other hand to reject the Hebrew Calendar, also carefully preserved since the days of Moses by the Jews.

The Bible tells us that the calendar is lunar *and* solar, but *the Bible does not tell us how to figure the calendar*. Using the Bible ONLY, one cannot determine when to keep the Holy Days (or even the weekly Sabbath).

"Jewish" Timekeeping: Both Exact and Inexact?

From the record of the Jews and secular history we can determine that the weekly cycle has not been lost or destroyed. So we are

confident that Saturday is the Sabbath. Likewise we can determine that the Sacred Calendar and its calculations have been preserved since the days of Moses.

The "self-observable calendar" proponents claim that by individual observation, they can determine for themselves when the Holy Days occur. So there are many, many different observations and everyone does what is right in their own eyes. They deride the Jews for their unbiblical traditions, claiming to follow the Bible only. Yet these anti-Hebrew calendar proponents themselves follow the non-Biblical traditions of a minority Jewish sect, the Karaites, who nearly a millennium ago rejected the Sacred Calendar calculation rules.

Observe this glaring contradiction of logic:

"Yahshua the Messiah knew exactly which day was the Sabbath. Yahshua showed it to Israel in the wilderness by withholding the miracles of the manna on the Sabbath. Even though our calendar has been changed . . . it was only the monthly date that was changed, not the sequence of days in the week.

"Jewish historians are very exact in their chronology. The weekly cycle has never been broken. The Jews never forgot or confused the proper Sabbath sequence through history. Their calendar shows the same seventh day as ours."

Above quoted from *The Sabbath, A Memorial and Promise* by Assemblies of Yahweh in Messiah (now called Yahweh's Assembly in Messiah), pages 31-32.

All of the above is true! However, this group believes the Hebrew calendar is mistaken as far as correct calendar days. The Jews did carefully preserve the weekly cycle. They did not sloppily foul up the new moons which determine Holy Day times.

The Calendar Evolution Theory

We continually receive mail attempting to "straighten us out" on our "error" regarding the Sacred Calendar.

We are often confronted with the nauseating "calendar evolution theory." This false idea states that the Jews (correct term is Hebrews or Israelites) were ignorant savages not capable of calculating a precise calendar as did the Egyptians and Greeks. Finally, some three to four hundred years after Christ, it is believed that the Jews had qualified astronomers. Then Hillel II published a calculated calendar for the first time. The Jews' knowledge supposedly took more time to evolve than other more advanced peoples.

This idea is pure hogwash. It borders on anti-Semitism. Historical research proves Abraham was a scientist. The Bible states Solomon's scientific knowledge was immense, and that the men of Issachar had knowledge of the times.

One Sacred Name church leader (name withheld) sent us excerpts from James Hastings' *Dictionary of the Bible* in an attempt to "prove" that the Hebrew calendar is of very recent origins. Hastings evolutionary beliefs are evident in his support of "higher criticism" teaching that the Torah was written by the "P" and "Y" writers. At least Hastings was a little more honest than most who attempt to develop a

"Bible Calendar." He says,

"The Bible offers insufficient data for confident generalizations regarding the methods employed at various periods for measuring and indicating the passage of time."

That is, Hastings correctly states that there is no Bible calendar.

The "calendar evolution theory" is a spurious attempt to belittle the civilization and culture of the children of Israel and is directly contrary to the Bible.

Do We Reject the Hebrew Calendar?

Some say that we reject the Hebrew Calendar. They say, "You don't keep Passover on Abib 15, but on the eve (beginning) of Abib 14. You don't keep the Feast of Weeks (Pentecost) on Sivan 6 as the Jews do, but on a Monday 50 days after the Sabbath during the Feast of Unleavened Bread. Therefore, you reject the Hebrew Calendar and are inconsistent."

The Messiah kept His last Passover a day earlier than many Jews of His time. So do we. He did not reject the Hebrew Calendar. Neither do we. Just because today's Jews observe several false Holy Days is no reason to follow them in error. We use their calendar because it has been carefully preserved. Today's Jews are the majority of many centuries of debate over sacred times.

In the business world, we must observe, take note of, track time by, the Roman calendar. That does not mean we are to keep false pagan Roman holidays such as Christmas, Easter, New Year's Day, Valentine's Day, etc. We are forced to observe the Roman calendar, but in no way do we have any part with pagan Roman holidays!

The Hebrew Calendar is NOT the Holy Days. The calendar lays out the months and days of the year. The Bible does tell us when, according to this calendar, to keep the Holy Days (Trumpets is the first day of the seventh month, etc.).

\$1000 Offer Challenged

One man wrote us claiming to satisfy our \$1000 offer for any scriptures that show us how to determine the Sacred Calendar. Through study he has rejected the Vernal Equinox Theory, and now goes "simply by the new moon during green ears." Scriptures given are **Exodus 12:2, 23:15, 34:18, Deuteronomy 16:1**.

We made the offer honestly. He made a sincere reply. But these scriptures do not tell when this man's "holy" days will occur.

Exodus 12:2 states that "this month" (elsewhere proven to be *Abib*, which means "green ears") is the beginning of months. There is nothing here to tell us when Abib 1 occurs. Are there other months that have green ears? Green ears of what? Some think it is barley. If so, green ears of barley where? Even in Israel, barley ripens in Jericho sooner than in Jerusalem. In eastern Washington State, they

grow Luther's barley. It ripens according to the growing season there. Maybe March, April or June. In Alaska, barley ripens much later. In Australia, barley ripens around September and October because seasons in the southern hemisphere are reversed from the north. There are places on the earth where barley doesn't grow. What do we do then? Look at green ears of sagebrush? Is Passover therefore to be observed locally depending upon barley or some other plant in your area? Remember, it wasn't until the Twentieth Century that we have been able to communicate instantly with Jerusalem from around the world.

Exodus 23:15 and **34:18** state that Israel is to keep the Feast of Unleavened Bread in the month Abib, when they came out of Egypt. So when is the green ears month? Does it have 29 days, 30 days or whatever? When does the Abib month start? These passages do not say. These verses are examples of the many times in the Bible when *chodesh*, Strong's #2320 means "month" rather than "new moon." When *chodesh* means "new moon" (e.g. **I Chronicles 23:31**), there is never a Bible definition given of how to figure the new moon. What is a new moon? Must you see it to define it? When? Standing in a valley or on a hill top? What if you miss seeing it and your neighbor sees it? He keeps one day as a holy day, and you keep another. This is utter confusion!

Deuteronomy 16:1 tells us to observe the month of Abib. Not the new moon, the month. Because in the middle of Abib, on the full moon, the Eternal led Israel out of Egypt. There were green ears then, which ripened at different times in the Nile Delta versus the Sinai peninsula and elsewhere.

I don't know when next year's barley green ears will appear where this man lives. He lives in a mild climate. Suppose I move next door and plant my barley seed a few weeks earlier than he does, or several months earlier in a greenhouse. My green ears will come earlier than his. I'll get the jump on Passover and keep it before he does. How absurd!

Yes, we are belittling the *ideas* (but not the *people* that espouse these ridiculous concepts). Elijah belittled the prophets of Baal for their absurd actions.

A Spiritual Conclusion

Since the Bible doesn't spell out a calendar, nor firm guidelines how to calculate the Sacred Calendar, some observe the "new" moon, the barley, the equinox or follow James Hastings or some modern religious leader's method. And there are others who believe the Creator preserved the Calendar through the Jews just like He used them to preserve the scripture (even though they themselves don't follow it perfectly).

We have perhaps spent too much time on this subject when judgment, mercy, faith and love are more important (**Matthew 23:23**). Judaism since the destruction of the Temple has been dominated by Phariseeism. The Master made this definitive statement [our comments in brackets]:

The scribes and Pharisees sit in Moses' seat [of authority]: All therefore whatsoever they bid you *observe* [compare with Hebrew word *shamar*, #8104, used in **Deuteronomy 16:1** to *observe* the month of Abib], that observe and do; but do not ye after their works: for they say, and do not [they set out the correct calendar, yet they don't follow the Bible instructions of when to correctly observe Passover and

Pentecost; they have preserved the weekly cycle yet often ignore the Holy Sabbath day].

Modern Karaites rebel against the scribes and Pharisees who sit in Moses' seat of authority. They falsely claim to have Biblical authority for their calendar. Karaites have always been schismatics. They must be exposed.

After a thorough analysis of the evidence from a multitude of sources, the only valid spiritual conclusion is that the Hebrew Calendar is valid for us today.

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