

Review: *The Calendar God Gave to Moses*

The Calendar God *Didn't* Give to Moses

Of all the arguments against the modern Jewish (Hebrew) calendar, the one most cited by Messianic Sabbath-keeping, Holy Day keeping groups is the study paper, "The Calendar God Gave to Moses" by Herbert Solinsky and Rob Anderson. Mr. Solinsky is the major author, and was a member of the Worldwide Church of God, which does not agree with his conclusions.

This "scholarly" work has been given wide publicity by a number of groups, who claim that it gives proof we are not to follow the modern Jewish calendar.

The paper says "Jewish scholars are certainly aware of the fact that the current Jewish calendar differs from the calendar God gave to Moses." Only four "proofs" are given. Three of them are citations from those who disagree with the calendar. Jewish scholars have always argued among themselves. The fourth "proof" is the fact that the Jewish year is 6.553 minutes longer than the actual solar year. This is no proof at all, because the earth has slowed in its rotation since the time of Moses. All calendars have to be adjusted from time to time, even the modern Gregorian calendar used throughout the Western world.

This "scholarly" work presupposes the "fact" that today's Jewish calendar is a **different** calendar than the one God gave to Moses. Throughout, there is a total lack of admission of the fact that the calendar was adjusted (intercalary years changed) in the 2nd Century, A.D. and that this adjustment was proper and necessary. There is no admission that Pentecost must be in the spring, which was the reason why the calendar adjustment was necessary. There is also a total lack of understanding of **Exodus 12:15-16** which shows that food preparation is limited only to the Unleavened Bread Holy Days, as we have shown.

Visual Calendar Is an *Impossibility!*

Chapter One of the paper gives a lesson in the astronomy of the sun, earth and moon. If azimuths and syzygies and other complex astronomical concepts can be made simple, they sure aren't in this lengthy chapter. It is almost as if the authors purposely attempted to write in unplain, technically-oriented language. I'd be surprised if 10% of the people who read this paper really gain a good grasp of what it says.

Page eight is most revealing. The new moon conjunction (molad) is when the earth is between the moon and the sun. "When the [astronomical] new moon [molad] occurs, it is invisible; however, the time of invisibility of the moon usually lasts from **one to three nights**, so **without measurements and calculations, it is not possible to accurately determine the new moon.**" Likewise, the full moon looks like a full circle for at least two nights, so knowing the precise time of the full moon does not determine the day of the visible new crescent.

The major goal of the paper is to show that the Bible does contain enough information to visually determine the calendar. However, the paper shows that observation alone is not enough to determine the calendar. Complex calculations and measurements are necessary!

The new moon after the vernal (spring) equinox is held to be the key factor in determining the Bible calendar. This equinox can vary from March 19 to March 21 on our Gregorian calendar. German astronomer Karl Schoch developed a table whereby one can calculate when the new moon could be observed, depending on where he is located on the earth. Solinsky recommends a "most accurate method" to determine the visibility of the new moon by using a computer program to determine the altitude and azimuth difference from Schoch's Table. "Even when limiting one's attention to Jerusalem, a simple rule involving required time from the new moon to sunset is not possible," (page 29). The calendar God gave to Moses, this paper says, is based upon human observation, but without a highly accurate mathematical model of the solar system, future biblical dates cannot be predicted to the exact day. Thanks to the computer, Solinsky says, we can do this today! (page 56).

As a computer professional, I am well aware of the law, "garbage in, garbage out"! Poor Moses didn't have a computer! Far from showing a simple Bible calendar that could be followed by someone stranded on a desert island, this study paper proves that a "self-observable calendar" is not possible. Why should I rely on this man's computer program based upon his faulty logic?

NEAR a *Tkufah*

The Hebrew word *moed* means "appointed time," not astronomical "seasons" as some incorrectly state. The King James Version incorrectly translates **Leviticus 23:4**, "the feasts of the LORD . . . in their seasons." We agree with Solinsky on this point. Again, it is correctly stated that the Feast of Ingathering is the same as the Feast of Booths (Tabernacles) and that **Exodus 34:22** is literally translated "the Feast of Ingathering [near] *tkufah*[the autumnal equinox of the year]." The Hebrew word *tkufah* refers to an equinox, either spring or fall.

Solinsky admits that there are no scriptural uses of *tkufah* referring to the Passover or Feast of Unleavened Bread period. But it is obvious that the spring equinox is six months prior to the fall equinox (September 21-24 on our Gregorian calendar), and therefore since Tabernacles is near the fall equinox, then Passover/ Unleavened Bread is NEAR the spring equinox. So far, so good.

Then, **without any scriptural or logical basis**, Solinsky concludes that **Exodus 12:2** really means (although this is not the literal translation), "This [visible] new crescent [which is on or first after the day of the vernal equinox, is] chief of [visible] new crescents to you; it [is] first among [visible] new crescents of the year to you," (page 51, comments by Solinsky). The reason given (page 52) for this interpretation of Scripture is that this is "a simple, natural, aesthetically satisfying, visually observable method . . . for determining the first month." Of course, with the aid of a sophisticated computer program.

How is the transition accomplished? Tabernacles is held (correctly) to be "near" the fall equinox. *Moed* does not mean astronomical season. But Abib 1 must be AFTER the spring equinox? Where is the proof? Certainly not in the 84-page paper entitled "The Calendar God Gave to Moses." There is no scripture that even mentions Abib 1 (new moon of first month) or Abib 14 (Passover) in relation to the *tkufah*, or equinox. There is absolutely no proof given that Abib 1 must be AFTER the spring equinox. Observing the spring equinox is

no more exact, without sophisticated computer calculations, than the first visible new moon.

This calendar method satisfies many who dislike the (ugh) "Jewish" calendar. Hence, following this study paper, the Church of God, Evangelistic Association of Missouri, says it's easy to determine Passover and other Holy Day dates: (1) Find the time of the vernal equinox, (2) find the first visible new moon AFTER that, and (3) Passover is the 14th day of that "month." Here is a brief quote from their March 1983 *Newswatch* magazine, page 34:

The Passover is never to occur except in the springtime. The first day of the new year is to be the first new crescent after the vernal equinox that begins spring. The Jewish historian, Josephus . . . held that the Passover was always a Springtime feast (*Antiquities*, Book III, X, 5). Philo Judaeus, in *Ten Festivals*, Ch. XI, stated the Passover occurred **AFTER** the Spring Equinox.

Notice carefully the above quotation. It has four sentences. Sentences 3 and 4 support sentence 1. Sentence 2 is NOT supported! Neither the Missouri church nor Solinsky give any proof that the first day of the new year is the first new crescent AFTER the spring equinox. The statements of Josephus and Philo are correct for what WAS true prior to the 2nd Century Calendar adjustment. Before the adjustment, Passover was always in the Spring. It is now. But in the first couple of hundred years after the adjustment, Passover was before spring. In every case, Nisan 16 (the earliest possible date for Wavesheaf Day) has always been in the spring. The *Newswatch* quote shows a totally dishonest use of historical "proofs."

I Samuel 20 and the New Moon

Solinsky and Anderson's paper extensively uses **I Samuel 20**.

David had to hide from King Saul who was trying to kill him. He told his friend Jonathan in **verse 5-7**: "**to morrow is the new moon**, and I should not fail to sit with the king at meat: but let me go, that I may hide myself in the field until **the third day** at even. If thy father [Saul] at all miss me, then say, David earnestly asked leave of me that he might run to Bethlehem his city: for there is a **yearly sacrifice** there for all the family."

It was the day before the Day of Trumpets. King Saul, according to custom had a feast day for two days, Trumpets and the day after. **Verse 18** shows that Jonathan also knew that "tomorrow is the new moon." Not a day to wait for observers to confirm the sighting of the new moon for it to be proclaimed. But it was definitely the new moon! **Verse 24**, "when the new moon was come, the king sat him down to eat meat." Saul noticed David was absent, but didn't say anything that day, assuming he was unclean. **Verse 27**, "And it came to pass on the morrow, which was the second day of the month" This time Saul asked Jonathan why David wasn't there, and became angry with Jonathan's answer.

The phrase "the second day of the month" in the KJV, is translated from the Hebrew *ha chodesh ha shaynee*. Solinsky points to the Interlinear Bible which literally renders this as "the new moon second." So he concludes that the 30th and 31st days of each month were set aside for observation of the new moon, since there were two possible days on which the crescent could first be seen if weather conditions were favorable. Further, he maintains that the Israelites were at this time not capable of calculating the exact day of the

visible new crescent. Certainly not by Solinsky's method, because that requires a FORTRAN computer program!

There is no Bible indication that there was doubt which day was the new moon. David and Jonathan both said it was tomorrow, which verse 6 clearly shows was the Holy Day of Trumpets. The prophet Samuel, who wrote I Samuel in verse 24 said it was the new moon. Why is Solinsky unsure of when was the new moon?

Chodesh can either mean "new moon" or "month." Solinsky himself admits this on pages 36 and 38. He shows that *chodesh* means "month" in **Genesis 29:14**, **Numbers 10:11**, **I Kings 5:14**, while in **II Kings 4:23**, **Ezekiel 46:3**, **Hosea 2:11**, **Amos 8:5**, *chodesh* means "new moon." The question is, what does *chodesh* mean in **I Samuel 20:27**? Solinsky reveals deceptiveness in his vain attempt to "prove" there were two new moon days, since he feels Israel was unsure as to when the new moon day was, lacking sophisticated methods of calculation. Here is why Solinsky is wrong:

(1) David, Jonathan and Samuel were positive as to when the new moon day was, in advance.

(2) Solinsky doesn't quote **I Samuel 20:27** in context. Before the phrase *ha chodesh ha shaynee* is the word *mi-mohorat*, which means "on the day after" (Green's Interlinear). "On the day after the [new] moon the second" is the literal Hebrew. Even if *chodesh* here should be translated new moon, the sentence still means, as Green's margin shows, "on the next day (of) the new moon." That is, the second day of the month. If Saul and his court were waiting for reliable witnesses to confirm the sighting of the visible new crescent, why would there definitely be two days of feasting if witnesses confirmed the first day as the new moon? There was no confirmation necessary. It took three days to travel from Jerusalem to northern Israel. There wasn't time to let others know when the first new moon was visually sighted. Calculation had to have been in force even in the early days of Israel, or they could not have kept the Holy Days! Yet Solinsky tells us that the "primitive" Israelites weren't intelligent enough to properly calculate the calendar!

(3) **Numbers 10:11** uses a similar phrase to that of **I Samuel 20:27**. The Hebrew there is *ba-chodesh ha-shaynee*, meaning "in month the second," or "in the second month." The structure of **I Samuel 20:27** demands a translation "the second day of the month."

Is the Barley Ripe?

Solinsky correctly concludes that "The Bible does not define a precise relationship between the barley and the first month called Abib," (page 49).

Abib or Ahveev in the Hebrew means "green (implying young and tender) ears (of barley)." In Israel, barley is planted in the late fall, around November. Today, the barley harvest in mountainous areas of Palestine begins in the middle of May, while on the hot coastal plains near Jericho, it begins in April.

Of the Biblical uses of *ahveev*, twice (**Exodus 9:31** and **Leviticus 2:14**) it refers to ears of barley, and six times it refers to the name of the first month (**Exodus 13:4**, **23:15**, **34:18** twice, and **Deuteronomy 16:1** twice).

Solinsky gives seven reasons why the barley harvest is not proper key to determining the first month.

(1) He says that **Leviticus 23:10-14** restricts using the new crop for food before the wave sheaf offering, but does not prohibit harvesting and storing the crop before the ceremony. This is not true. **Exodus 22:29** is a statute showing that one is not to delay offering firstfruits. One could not go out and harvest, and then weeks later come and offer a wave sheaf offering. There is not a precise relationship between the barley harvest and the first of Abib. True! Just like there is not a precise relationship between the spring equinox and the first of Abib! Why not be consistent in logic?

(2) Barley ripens at different times in the various parts of Palestine, as much as 50 days difference due to regional differences.

(3) Solinsky says that the Bible is not clear on whether the barley is to be ripe on the first of the month or on the wave sheaf offering day. True. But he fails to mention that the Bible does not say whether or not the barley has to be ripe for the wave sheaf offering! Abib means "green, tender ears." Go out into a field of wheat or barley sometime. Grab some husks and chew them, like the Messiah did when he walked around Palestine. If they are green, they are soft and chewy. If they are ripe, they are hard and more dry. The month of green ears of barley is Abib, not the month of dry, uniformly ripe ears!

Carl O'Beirn, former Worldwide Church of God minister of Cleveland, Ohio, left that church about the year 1970 over the issue of the calendar. His main point was that the barley must be RIPE, or the first month is postponed. He had an "official observer" in Palestine to report on the barley harvest. O'Beirn insisted that the "meat (cereal) offering" of **Leviticus 23:13** was of the new produce of the land, failing to mention that the drink offering of the last part of the verse is of wine (obviously from the last fall or earlier grape harvest). O'Beirn's Holy Days are generally a month later than the Hebrew calendar.

Let's test O'Beirn's "ripe barley" theory. What happens in the seventh sabbatical year, or the jubilee year, when no barley is sown at all? Do we cancel the Holy Days those years? Obviously not, but there isn't any barley, ripe or not, to examine! What about **Deuteronomy 16:13**? "Thou shalt observe the feast of tabernacles seven days, **after that thou hast gathered in thy corn and thy wine.**" Do you mean that you have to postpone the Feast of Tabernacles if all the crops are not harvested? But I broke my plow, we had a late summer, the grapes were late this year! No wonder the Rabbanites teased the Karaites, with the pitifully weak Karaite arguments presented by such as O'Beirn!

(4) The fourth reason given by Solinsky why the barley cannot be the key to calendar determination is that **Genesis 8:4, 13-15** show that Noah could determine the first month without ever leaving the ark. No need to observe the barley crop.

(5) **Genesis 1:14** show that the sun and moon, not the barley, determines the holy day seasons.

(6) During the forty years of wandering in the wilderness, Israel didn't have barley crops to examine, yet they knew when Passover was, **Numbers 9**.

(7) Barley harvest determination leads to conflicts and disputes, whereas (Solinsky's) calculated method with his computer is "more

objective."

Yes, the barley harvest is not the sole determining factor for determining the first new moon, nor Passover. And neither is the vernal equinox, nor Solinsky's computer program.

Future Intercalary Cycle Change Necessary

Mr. Solinsky is worried about the 6.553 minute per year "error" in the Hebrew calendar. He says that "No authoritative writing on the Jewish [sic.] calendar exists that reveals a provision in its rules to allow a change in its intercalary year sequence," (page 59).

This is not true. Both the *Jewish Encyclopedia* and Spier's *Comprehensive Hebrew Calendar* discuss the five centuries future adjustment. Spier says it will be the task of a new Sanhedrin to make a decision as to when and how the calendar should be adjusted.

The date of the crucifixion of the

Messiah, Wednesday April 25, 31 A.D., demonstrates that a different set of intercalary years was in effect at the time (before the 2nd Century A.D. adjustment). Contrary to Solinsky's paper "The Calendar God Gave to Moses," this fact proves that the 19-Year intercalary cycle was being followed, and that it makes since. Our Savior criticized the Scribes and Pharisees on many issues, but never on the calendar calculations.

Herbert Solinsky and Rob Anderson's paper, "The Calendar God Gave to Moses," is a poor job of fake scholarship. It has deceived some who are set to form their own independent church groups.

Remember what Zvi Ankori said in his book on the Karaites: (1) Karaites are themselves unsure of their position, and (2) Calendar differences are a crucial element in the sect-forming processes, a reason for separation from another institution or group. These two character weaknesses are very much evident in "modern Karaites."

Solinsky has proven that a "self-observable calendar" is not possible. Calculation is necessary. Why not follow the rules sanctified by the Sanhedrin? This is the TRUE "Calendar God Gave to Moses."

Additional Articles on God's Calendar :

[How Does God's Calendar Work?](#)

[Calendar Controversy](#)

[Holy Day Calendar](#)

[Main Holy Day Menu](#)

Written by: Richard C. Nickels
Giving & Sharing
PO Box 100
Neck City, MO 64849
United States of America

This material distributed on the Web by the Giving & Sharing site at: <http://www.giveshare.org>

[[Table of Contents](#) | [Giving & Sharing Home Page](#)]