Balancing the Calendar II

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"Next to love, balance is the most important thing." – John Wooden

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Introduction: How I Became Persuaded That the Scriptural Year Begins On or After the Vernal Equinox

After twelve years of allowing the reports of green ears of barley in Israel to influence our decision for when we should begin the Scriptural new year, a fellow believer sent me a bundle of literature to read in hopes that I would either change my mind or show him the errors in what he sent me. He was so determined to find the ultimate source of truth about the Scriptural calendar that he asked June and me to cancel our previously-made plans for one particular Sabbath in order to hash things out together. I did as he asked and read the material that he sent in advance of our meeting, and by the time our friend and his family arrived at our home for the big meeting, I had already changed my mind. What did he send me that served to dissuade us from recognizing the calendar that we felt had served us so well for over ten years?

If you think this seal's balancing act looks difficult, try balancing the *Scriptural calendar*! There are many views on which method is the correct way to determine the Scriptural calendar – with all these "correct calendars" to choose from, can we be certain which view truly *balances the calendar* in harmony with the Creator's intent?

If your only knowledge about what June and I believe and practice comes from having read our original study titled *Balancing the Calendar*[1], then you do not know what information served as the actual catalyst in our decision-making process to make the change from what is known as the "Green Ears of Barley Calendar" to what is known as the "Equinox Calendar." In our original *Balancing the Calendar* study, we address the basics with a heavy focus on the historical perspective. By "addressing the basics," I mean that we cover the primary calendar arguments presented by both sides, both Scriptural and historical. The chief dilemma faced by both sides is the fact that, Scripturally-speaking, neither side has much of a case. This truth is recognized by leading scholars. *The Anchor Bible Dictionary* succinctly summarizes the problem that both sides are faced with:

> There is no statement in the Bible about how long a year lasted, and the data about its beginning are confusing.[2]

I once read that although most calendar studies are produced by authors claiming Scripture as their ultimate source of information, those same authors have no choice but to go outside of Scripture to actually validate their claims. Sometimes I wonder why some of the instructions found in the Torah are not more plainly written and understood. Is it because some things have been lost in the translation? Or could it be that our Heavenly Father wants to test how patient we are with others when it comes to understanding His written instructions? Think of all the men throughout the ages who were so certain they had a firm grasp on the correct interpretation of Scripture, to the point that they were intolerant of any other views. Some of those views include an intolerance of anyone keeping the weekly Sabbath. We could learn a lesson from this type of intolerance. We may feel 110% confident that our view is the correct one, but if we're wrong, then we will be misrepresenting the will of the Father. If we demonstrate

[1] Our original study was composed in 2005. It can be read online by accessing the following URL: http://www.ponderscripture.org/PDF%20Files/Balancing%20the%20Calendar.pdf.

[2] From *The Anchor Bible Dictionary*, Vol. 1, article "Calendar," Doubleday publishing, New York, 1992, p. 817.

more tolerance of other views in the face of a disagreement, we will have a better opportunity of reflecting Yahweh's mercy to the world.

Since scholars admit that Scripture is unclear when it comes to determining exactly how and when the Creator's calendar begins, we should view this as an opportunity that Yahweh has given us to exhibit an acceptance of other views, even if we disagree with them. Certainly, Yahweh could have made His will perfectly clear in His Word. If we were to read a verse stating, "Ye shall begin reckoning the beginning of your months after the vernal equinox, after the time when the length of day and night become equal," this would have simplified things for all of us.

Conversely, if we were to read a verse that reads, "Take heed that the barley in the fields near the city where I choose to place My name is in the full green ear before beginning the first month of thy years," this would have settled the matter without any need for us to engage in this sort of discussion.

If we can accept the fact that Scripture is sometimes ambiguous in its instructions – and if we can nevertheless hold on to our belief that it is inspired by the Creator of the universe, I believe we can better prepare ourselves to move forward with productive dialog.

Sometimes, even in life, we experience instructions that, to some, might seem ambiguous and confusing; but if we give those instructions some serious thought, we can discern the intended meaning. For example, consider the instructions found in a Laundromat:

•AUTOMATIC WASHING MACHINES:
PLEASE REMOVE ALL YOUR CLOTHES WHEN THE LIGHT GOES OUT

Anyone *literally* following the above instructions might be arrested for public indecency; yet who could argue that they acted unlawfully if they understood that they were to physically undress when the washing machine's light went out?

Our understanding of Scripture is often such that we cannot understand why others don't share that understanding. As previously mentioned, it would have been a simple matter for Yahweh to have just spelled things out in such a way that no room is left for alternate interpretations. Many of us would like to add the needed clarification to Scripture. If you were given a green light to add one of the two following verses to Scripture, which one would *you* add?

FREE! ADD ONE VERSE TO SCRIPTURE WITHOUT FEAR OF RETRIBUTION!

If you could do it, which one would you choose?

A.

Ye shall reckon the beginning of your years on or after the day of the vernal equinox, the day on which the length of day and night becomes equal.

B.

Take heed that the barley in the fields near the city where I choose to place My name is in the full green ear before beginning the first month of thy years.

Calendar Wars

Although we cannot find a definitive Bible verse pinpointing when the new Scriptural year begins, it seems there is no shortage of individuals and groups promoting their own personal calendar views as "correct," whereas anything else is (in their estimation) pure deception. Here's an example from Michael Rood's July 2010 newsletter:

> Were you supposed to be in Jerusalem for Shavuot, but you made an excuse? Did you get lost on a Jerusalem side street and decide to wait it out in the shade? Did you decide to follow the takanot of the Pharisees or Samaritans and celebrate Shavuot at another time? Are you following the false apostles who added another month onto the year to honor the Babylonian Equinox? DO NOT WORRY! Yahweh CALLED OTHERS TO TAKE YOUR PLACE! Go ahead – do your own thing. He will get exactly 144,000 to the Temple Mount on the Last Great Day according to His prophetic calendar. He will pour out a double portion of His Holy Spirit on the obedient ones who are actually walking by the Spirit – and not just pretending.[3]

According to Michael Rood, anyone who reckoned the Scriptural calendar a month later than he did in 2010 is a "false apostle" who apparently chose to do so in honor of the "Babylonian equinox." The same author, in a separate newsletter, wrote the following:

> It is good and right to purge the old leaven from our homes and live, but if we do not fill the void with the pure Torah as received by Moses and taught by Yeshua, then we will most certainly fill it with every new and novel revelation, interpretation, translation, and desecration that comes down the pike – and as Yeshua taught us, surely our last fate will be worse than the first. We must get the leaven out and study the pure Torah. Do not listen to the fantasies and fairy-tales of men. Open your Scriptures and read. Does the Torah tell you to follow the calculated calendar? The Enochean calendar? The equinox calendar? No! It calls for the children of Israel to follow the Creator's calendar! Do not be deceived by novelty. Once you have purged the leaven out of your house, do not fill your house with leaven others are casting out. Open the Torah and pray as you read. The Spirit of the Holy One is the Spirit of truth who will lead you into all truth.[4]

The above author makes a distinction between the "Equinox Calendar" and the "Creator's Calendar," with the obvious desired effect being for the reader to conclude that the "Equinox Calendar" can in no way be associated with the Creator's Calendar. Of course, Mr. Rood presumably has the correct knowledge of which calendar is the Creator's Calendar, or at least that is what he would like for his reading audience to believe.

Another author, in an apparent drive to make those of the "Equinox Persuasion" appear confused and deceived, wrote of how the barley crop in Israel was already "reseeding itself" by March 30, 2010 (which coincided with the day before those of his persuasion observed Passover that year). By "reseeding itself," I believe he meant that some of the seeds from the current barley crop were dropping to the ground due to age and the stalks no longer being able to support hanging on to those seeds. By March 30th, those fallen seeds were already springing up as new stalks of barley, an apparent embarrassment to those who, like June and me, observed Passover/Unleavened Bread a month later. Here is what he wrote:

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[3] Michael Rood, *A Rood Awakening!* newsletter, "The 63rd Shavuot and the Impending Destruction of Damascus," July 2010, p. 2.

[4] Michael Rood and Glenn McWilliams, *A Rood Awakening!* Newsletter, "Filling the House," May 2010, p. 2.

> On Tuesday [March 30, 2010] I went with Nehemiah Gordon and we searched for the Barley to see what state it is in now just before Passover. I am so grateful to him and Shoshannah for sharing their day with me and letting me come along. We found barley by the fields full ready and Aviv. We also found fields where the barley had already reseeded itself. If you were to wait as some new groups now claim then by the time they keep Passover next month then a lot of barley will already be reseeded and the farmer will have missed the narrow opportunity to harvest it because you cannot harvest it until you first make the wave sheaf offering which is on the morrow after the weekly Sabbath and is Sunday. This Sunday April 4th, 2010. Make sure you watch the videos.[5]

Again, by "reseeding," the author apparently means the barley crop was already shedding its seeds, and new plants were springing up. This sounds serious! The desired impression that this scenario creates is such that, unless the crop is harvested *quickly*, it will all go to seed, and the harvest will be a bust! That is the picture the author was attempting to paint for his readers, and I'm sure it worked for lots of people. They probably told each other, "Those silly 'Equinox' believers aren't going to have much of a harvest!" We will address this perspective, as well as the videos referenced above, in greater detail later in our study.

Beware of "Assuming Credentials"!

There is an abundance of propaganda on the Internet designed to persuade us of how to determine the true calendar. This propaganda comes not only from the "Barley Believers," but those who promote the "Equinox" perspective are also represented. In my own search, I find that the majority of sites are supportive of requiring the barley to determine whether or not the new month is the first month of the year. One form of propaganda favoring the Green Ears of Barley that I'm sure has been very effective involves a YouTube video in which the narrator authoritatively presents his view a distinctive Hebrew accent. Certainly, if the narrator has a Hebrew accent, this must mean he knows more about the calendar than someone with a Texas accent, right?[6]

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[5] Joe Dumond, "Passover 2010 Being Meeked and The Seprent in the Garden," Newsletter 5846-004, April 3, 2010. The complete commentary may be read by accessing the following URL: http://www.sightedmoonnl.com/?page_id=624.

[6] The YouTube video I'm referring to is titled "**Abib (Nisan) - The Jewish Month of Abib (Nisan)**" and can be accessed at the following URL: https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=v0nR2XgaG4k. The only supportive verses of Scripture offered in this video are Shemot 9:31, Psalms 104:19, Psalms 81:3, Vayikra (Leviticus) 23:37, Shemot (Exodus) 34:18, Vayikra (Leviticus) 23:9-11 and Devarim (Deuteronomy) 16:9-10, none of which offer proof about when the new year is supposed to begin, although we do agree that ripe barley is necessary for the ancient Wave Sheaf Offering.

I. Using the New Moon that Appears After the Green Ears of Barley in Israel Have Been Confirmed

Where is the Scripture Text?

As previously mentioned, for twelve years June and I relied on the reports from Israel to notify us that the barley crop had headed out and was in the "green ears" stage. The next new moon sighting not only constituted the beginning of a new month, but the beginning of the new year. Although there is no Scripture verse instructing us to determine a new year based on the first new moon after the confirmation that the barley in Israel has green heads, or green ears, we ***do*** know from Exodus chapter 9 that the barley crop was destroyed by the seventh plague that was inflicted upon the Egyptians – the Plague of Hail. We all know that the Plague of Hail came before the final plague – the death of the Egyptians' firstborn children, which coincided with the Passover.

Does Exodus 9:31 + Exodus 12:2 = Green Ears of barley immediately preceding the first month of the year?

Exodus 9:31-32 describes the scenario after the Plague of Hail:

> [31]And the flax and the barley was smitten: for the barley *was* in the ear, and the flax *was* bolled.
> [32]But the wheat and the rye were not smitten: for they *were* not grown up.

If you continue reading the account of the Plagues of Egypt, you know the next two plagues were that of the locusts and the Plague of Darkness. Then, in Exodus chapter 11, Yahweh informs Moses that yet one more final plague will He execute on the Egyptians – the Plague of the Firstborn. Before this final blow is dealt to the Egyptians, we read in Exodus 12:2 that a new month has just begun:

> [2]This month shall be unto you the beginning of months: it *shall be* the first month of the year to you.

Three chapters after the account of the Plague of Hail, Yahweh informs Moses and Aaron that the month they were in was to be the beginning of months. Since the barley crop was in the ear in Exodus chapter 9, and we later read that the a subsequent month was to be the beginning of months, some folks presume this must mean that the month mentioned in Exodus 12 is the month following the Plague of Hail. However, Scripture doesn't tell us this, so it becomes a matter of interpretation based on evidence presented. The fact of the matter is, as presented in our original *Balancing the Calendar* study, Egyptian barley can be in the ear as early as January. Those who are familiar with Egypt's climate understand that there is nothing in the Biblical account preventing an interval of two months between the Plague of Hail and the Death of the Firstborn. The state of the barley crop in Egypt, then, should not be used as a Scriptural measuring stick in determining when the new year should begin.

Does it Matter if Barley is Ripe in Time for the Feast of Unleavened Bread?

Another truth that needs to be factored into our reasoning process is the fact that Egyptian barley generally ripens a month before the barley crop in Israel. Although we thoroughly covered this point in our original study, it bears repeating here. Although Egyptian barley can be ripe a month before Israel barley, the fact is, it is the land of *Israel* that had to have ripe barley in time for the Passover. The Wave Sheaf Offering, which consisted of the firstfruits of the newly-ripened barley crop, was offered on the morrow of the first day of the Feast of Unleavened Bread[7]. If the barley is in a general state of green ears at the sighting of the new moon, we can normally expect to have ripe barley in time for the Feast of Unleavened Bread.

By now it obvious that I lean towards the view that we should not begin the new year until after the vernal equinox; nevertheless, I am not in agreement with some of our "Equinox" brethren who *insist* that the state of the barley crop in Israel has no bearing whatsoever in determining the first month of the new year. Herb Solinsky is one such individual. Mr. Solinsky is a man whom I consider to be a calendar expert, and I have occasionally borrowed from his labors while presenting my own views, including a portion of our original study. However, Mr. Solinsky has expressed the view that the barley in Israel has no bearing whatsoever on determining the first month of the year. Here is an excerpt from an e-mail that Mr. Solinsky sent us:

> I am not aware of any Scripture that requires the first month to conform to some condition of barley. While it is true that in order to perform the wave sheaf offering there must be stalks of barley grain, there is no Scripture that indicates in any clear way that if weather conditions (such as lack of rain throughout Israel at the critical time) does not produce any barley stalks, that the first month cannot be declared. It could be interpreted as a slap in the face of the priesthood and the people for sin, so that they would be unable to perform a required activity. But this does not imply that the first month cannot begin.
>
> There is nothing historical from before the Temple was destroyed to indicate that barley had any role in the determination of the first month.[8]

While I cannot say that Mr. Solinsky has misrepresented Scripture, I do believe that he misrepresents the argument, and I do believe Scripture attributes greater importance to the stage of the barley crop than he is willing to admit. First, Mr. Solinsky suggests that if the barley crop does not produce barley stalks, this should not hinder us from declaring the first month of the Scriptural year. He adds that if there is no barley by the time of the Feast of Unleavened Bread, this could be construed as a slap in the face of the priesthood. However, the problem lies not with declaring the first month in spite of a *lack* of harvestable barley, but with those who "jump the gun" and declare the month of Abib *before* the barley is in a general stage of maturity. The "priesthood" in need of being slapped, then, is not those who have no barley in time for a post-equinox Feast of Unleavened Bread (although this would certainly be indicative of a curse on the land); rather, it is the "priesthood" that rushes to start a year even though the barley is not yet ready.

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[7] I.e., Abib 16, cf. Lev. 23:11, esp. the LXX reading, where we read that the sheaf of firstfruits is to be waved "on the morrow of the first day" (*lit.* "on the next day of the first").

[8] From an e-mail sent by Herb Solinsky on 02/09/2010.

Secondly, while we concur with Mr. Solinsky's admission that there must be stalks of barley grain before the wave sheaf offering can be performed, we feel he needs to attribute more emphasis on the need for those stalks of barley grain to be truly harvest-ready and from a field that is in a general stage of maturity. This understanding is strongly implied by the following Scripture:

> [10]Speak unto the children of Israel, and say unto them, When ye be come into the land which I give unto you, and shall reap the harvest thereof, then ye shall bring a sheaf of the firstfruits of our harvest unto the priest:
> [11]And he shall wave the sheaf before Yahweh, to be accepted for you: on the morrow after the sabbath the priest shall wave it.

If I understand Yahweh's intent when He inspired the above verses to be written, He expects us to know that the barley crop will be in harvestable state by the starting point of the Feast of Unleavened Bread. For this reason, I maintain that Scripture enjoins us to be well aware of the stage of the barley crop before arbitrarily determining that the next new moon will start the month of *Abib*. However, the problem is, we're in the United States of America, and Israel is too far away for most of us to go there to check those barley conditions. Adding to the problem is the fact that some men have taken it upon themselves to be the "barley checkers," and as I'm about to demonstrate, there is sufficient cause to question their qualifications and their knowledge of raising barley.

For those of us who are too far from Israel to perform a satisfactory check of the condition of the barley crop, there is a time-tested recourse that allows us to be certain that the barley is in the stage that will allow us to declare the next month to be the month of Abib – with Yahweh's approval. That recourse is the vernal equinox.

Jumping the Gun?

I believe we need to be careful about accepting reports about "Green Ears of Barley" in Israel, and the events of the year 2010 offer a classic reason why. First, I need to bring up two YouTube videos that a Karaite Jew named Nehemia Gordon distributed to all of his e-mail constituents, including us.[9] These are the videos that were referenced earlier by the individual who claimed that by March 30th the barley in Israel was already "reseeding" itself. He recommended watching the videos so we could see for ourselves. We believe that anyone with a basic knowledge of agriculture will recognize that the barley from those videos was not quite as "harvest-ready" as the narrator would have liked for his viewers to believe. When June and I watched the March 12, 2010 YouTube video in which Nehemia Gordon provided footage of what he classified "Green Ears of Barley," we were not as impressed as the narrator, who kept saying, "Wow!" as he strolled through the barley field. Yes, we saw some green ears of barley, but many, if not most, of the stalks that we saw were not headed out yet, and those that had reached that stage of maturity were barely thicker than #9 wire. Shown below is a screen shot from that video:

[9] Shortly after the publication of this study, we were apparently removed from Mr. Gordon's e-mail distribution list. We have never had direct communication with Nehemia Gordon.

To really grasp the problem with the above YouTube video, we believe it is important to understand the requirements for harvesting barley. Although I have never participated in a barley harvest, I have raised wheat, which is very similar to barley when it comes to harvesting methods. We would observe the maturation progress of our wheat crop as it moved from the green ear stage to a blend of green and brown, then to mostly brown, then to its golden color. Even after the last remnants of the greenish hue had disappeared, this didn't mean that the wheat was fully ready for harvest. If the moisture content was too high, we had to wait even longer.

In the above video, June and I expected to see a lot of green because when the "ears" or heads of barley have fully formed, they are still green, though not yet mature. However, as previously mentioned, we were surprised that the stalks of barley which had headed out were not *fully* developed heads. Rather, they primarily consisted of thin wisps that were hardly any thicker than #9 wire. Heads that are this thin cannot contain fully developed seeds. At such an early stage of development, it is highly questionable that the field could be "harvest-ready" within the three-week period that would bring us to the 14th day of the following month. Remember, it's not enough for the barley to just "look" ripe – to be truly harvest-ready the seeds need to at least be fairly dry.

You can go to various web sites online to see that for barley to be harvest-ready, the field really should have a golden brown color. One horticulturist produced a video titled How to Grow Barley in which she echoes our own understanding that barley needs to be a golden (yellow) color before it is fully ripe:

> Hi, this is Yolanda Vanveen and in this segment we're going to talk about how to grow barley. Now barley is an ornamental grass or it can be used as a production grass as well for farm lands, and it's used mostly to make beer and different types of alcohol, so it's quite trendy right now. And it has all of the nutritional value of wheat grass. So it's very, very high in all types of minerals and it's really, really healthy. So a lot of people are making their own bread and you can use barley in all types of recipes as well, and it's really easy to grow. Barley is best sown in the winter or early spring because it's more of a cool season crop; it does not want to go above fifty five degrees. And a lot of times if you grow it into the spring it might not even produce seed heads because it gets too warm in the heat of the summer. So you start it just like any other grass; even the grass in your lawn; you start it from seed either in a container or right in the ground and you want to start it in the winter time and not in the heat of the summer and it'll sprout and grow and it's ready to harvest between forty to fifty five days – that quickly. And it's a green plant; as soon as the leaves are strong, but they turn yellow but a little bit brittle; then you know it's time to harvest. So barley has lots and lots of medicinal qualities as well. It's full of fiber, so it's a great digestive aid and it's a great plant to grow even in your garden as an ornamental grass. Even if you don't use it for making beer or you're not making a nice drink out of it, it's still a great plant to have in your garden.[10]

Yolanda Vanveen understands that barley is not in the "green" stage at maturity. Rather, it is a yellow (golden) color.

I don't believe I need to be a barley farmer to understand that virtually the same harvesting methods used in harvesting wheat are also used for harvesting barley. However, for those who prefer validation from barley experts, here is an excerpt from Western Australia's Department of Agriculture and Food:

> ***Direct heading of dry barley***
>
> The simplest and most common harvesting method for barley is to wait until the grain has ripened and dried to a moisture content of less than 12% so that it can be delivered directly to the receival point. Once the crop is ripe, harvest as soon as possible to reduce the potential losses from wind damage or weathering.[11]

When there is 12% moisture in the barley grain, the barley stalk has by that time turned yellow and is no longer green. To be fair, not all references that we checked agree that barley needs to be yellow (golden) before it can be declared "harvest ready." According to the book *Todd's Country Homes and How to Save Money*, barley stalks should have a "greenish lustre" at harvest time:

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[10] Transcript of the video "How to Grow Barley," by Yolanda Vanveen, taken from the following gardenguides.com URL: http://www.gardenguides.com/video-60353-grow-barley.html. Note: As of 2018, this video is no longer available for viewing.

[11] From "Barley harvest and grain quality," Department of Agriculture and Food, Western Australia, 02/20/2007. The article may be read in its entirety by accessing the following URL: http://www.agric.wa.gov.au/PC_90002.html?s=1883474280

WHEN TO HARVEST BARLEY.—

They take the sickle from the barn, when morning dews shine pearly;
And the mower whets the ringing scythe, to cut the bearded barley.

MARY HOWITT.

Most farmers allow their barley to stand too long before cutting it. The cutting should not be deferred until every ear appears fully ripe. Barley is ripe when the red roan, as the farmers term it, meaning a reddish color on the ear, is gone off; or when the ears droop and fall, as it were, double against the straw, and the stalks have lost their verdure. But in the latter case it is too ripe. When barley is cut in the *striped* state, the skin is thinner, the grain is said to sprout quicker and more vigorously, is preferred by maltsters, and will bring a higher price in the market than if it had been allowed to become dead ripe. If cut even two or three days too early, the berry shrinks very badly. If allowed to stand a few days after it is in condition to cut, the stalk bends over, and the head points toward the ground, and the straw being short and limber, in a little time the head will be so low that the reaping machine will cut the straw twice in two, dropping many of the ears on the earth, where no rake can gather them. Thus the grain will be lost, unless harvested almost the day it is in proper condition. In this country, there is no necessity for seeking early ripening barley, as our convenience is promoted by having our barley harvest as late as our seasons will allow. This is the principal reason why our farmers prefer to raise the two-rowed, to the six-rowed. The two-rowed does not ripen so early as the six-rowed, and the barley harvest will not come in the time of wheat harvest. Though the six-rowed is worth the most per bushel, and sometimes produces more bushels to the acre than does the two-rowed, it must be harvested at the same time as the wheat; and if it is not cut just at the right time, great loss in the value of the grain must be sustained. Barley is almost always fit to cut, while there is a greenish lustre on the straw. As soon as the grain has passed the "dough state," let the crop be cut. Barley should be cut when ripe enough to prevent shrinking. [11]

I'm not sure how much confidence we can put in the above report. For one, it is common knowledge that barley matures a month *earlier* than wheat.[13] However, according to the above author, one variety of barley (the six-rowed variety) is mature at the same time as wheat and another variety (the two-rowed variety) ripens *after* the wheat harvest. This information certainly conflicts with the information we have

[12] From *Todd's Country Homes and How to Save Money*, by Sereno Edwards Todd, Bradley & Company, Philadelphia, PA, 1885, pp. 399-400.

[13] Cf., *The Anchor Bible Dictionary*, Vol. 2, article "First Fruits," David Noel Freedman, Editor-in-Chief, Doubleday, New York, NY, 1992, p. 797, where we read, "This initial sheaf was of barley, for barley ripens earlier than wheat (cf. the Gezer calendar: 'His month is barley harvest. His month is wheat-harvest and festival ['festival' refers to Pentecost].'"

already received regarding the ripening process for barley. Nevertheless, the article does make the point that the barley crop should be past the "dough stage" before harvest. At the same time, he makes the point that barley harvested two to three days too soon will shrink very badly. In other words, we need to make absolutely certain that the general state of the barley crop is such that the grain will not shrink after having been harvested. Moreover, there is one question that the author leaves unanswered with regard to his definition of "harvest-ready" barley. He mentions barley that is harvested for seed and barley that is harvested for "maltsters" (beer brewers), but he makes no mention of harvesting barley for baking bread, which is what was done with the barley harvested for the Feast of Unleavened Bread. For bread-making, do we want to harvest barley with a high moisture content (while it still has the "green lustre") or should it be fully ripe (low moisture content)?

Clue From the New Testament

We have just seen that some folks, even back in the 1800's, were persuaded that the barley was ready for harvesting even before it turned yellow. While we are inclined to disagree with that understanding, we will at least acknowledge that it's out there. We can understand harvesting barley while it has that "greenish lustre" if you're going to let it dry out for several days. However, the ceremony for reaping the barley just prior to the Feast of Unleavened Bread involved immediately threshing the grain before grinding it into the flour that was used for the wave sheaf offering (more correctly, the "waving of the omer"). It does not seem likely that this flour would come from immature stalks.

Yeshua is widely recognized at being the antitype of the wave sheaf offering, the firstfruits of the harvest. Yeshua recognized, not plants with a "greenish lustre," but plants that were "white to harvest":

> *John 4:35 -- Say not ye, There are yet four months, and then cometh harvest? behold, I say unto you, Lift up your eyes, and look on the fields; for they are white already to harvest.*

Yeshua did not specify the type of crop that was "white to harvest." Some may think that the white color must be a reference to cotton. However, there are no records, archaeological or otherwise, that cotton was raised in Israel during that period of history. Although we know that Yeshua was referring to the spiritual readiness of potential human believers, we can be certain that His analogy wouldn't be valid if the maturity level of grain crops was understood as being *green*. "White to harvest" may not seem like an apt description of ripened barley, especially since we have already identified a ripe field of barley as being more yellow or golden brown in color. Nevertheless, as seen from a distance, even the yellow barley fields are known to appear white. Certainly, the same cannot be said of a field having the appearance of a greenish lustre.

Some commentators, in their reviews of John 4:35, express the view that the physical crop from which Yeshua derived His analogy is none other than barley. The following comes from *John Gill's Exposition on the Bible*:

> John 4:35
> ***Say not ye, there are yet four months***
> Our Lord had been in Jerusalem and Judea, about eight months from the last passover, and there remained four more to the next passover:

> ***and then cometh harvest***?
> barley harvest, which began at that time. Now as the passover was in the middle of the month Nisan, which was about the latter end of our March; reckoning four months back from thence shows, that it was about the latter end of our November, or beginning of December, that Christ was in Samaria, and at Jacob's well. Some think, that this does not refer to the then present time, as if there were so many months from thence to the next harvest, but to a common way of speaking, that there were four months from seed time to harvest; during which time there was a comfortable hope, and longing expectation of it: but this will, by no means, agree either with the wheat or barley harvest. The wheat was sown before this time, and the barley a good while after.[14]

Not only do commentators such as John Gill believe that barley is the physical crop from which Yeshua derived his analogy, but Jewish understanding from at least the end of the 8th century CE shared the same understanding that barley, when it is ripe, has a whitish appearance. The following commentary is borrowed from what is known as the *Targum Pseudo-Jonathan*. The commentary is taken from Genesis 49:8-12:

> Jehuda, thou didst make confession in the matter of Tamar: therefore shall thy brethren confess thee, and shall be called Jehudain from thy name. Thy hand shall avenge thee of thy adversaries, in throwing arrows upon them when they turn their backs before thee; and the sons of thy fathers shall come before thee with salutations. I will liken thee, my son Jehuda, to a whelp, the young of a lion; for from the killing of Joseph my son thou didst uplift thy soul, and from the judgment of Tamar thou wast free. He dwelleth quietly and in strength, as a lion; and as an old lion when he reposeth, who may stir him up? Kings shall not cease, nor rulers, from the house of Jehuda, nor sapherim teaching the law from his seed, till the time that the King the Meshiha, shall come, the youngest of his sons; and on account of him shall the peoples flow together. How beauteous is the King, the Meshiha who will arise from the house of Jehuda! He hath girded his loins, and descended, and arrayed the battle against his adversaries, slaying kings with their rulers; neither is there any king or ruler who shall stand before him. The mountains become red with the blood of their slain; his garments, dipped in blood, are like the outpressed juice of grapes. How beautiful are the eyes of the king Meshiha, as the pure wine! He cannot look upon what is unclean, nor on the shedding of the blood of the innocent; and his teeth, purer than milk, cannot eat that which is stolen or torn; and therefore his mountains are red with wine, and his hills white with corn, and with the cotes of flocks.[15]

"White with corn" can be construed as being a reference to barley, which is occasionally referred to as "corn."[16] These historical references validate the understanding that barley, when "harvest-ready," does *not* have a greenish lustre.

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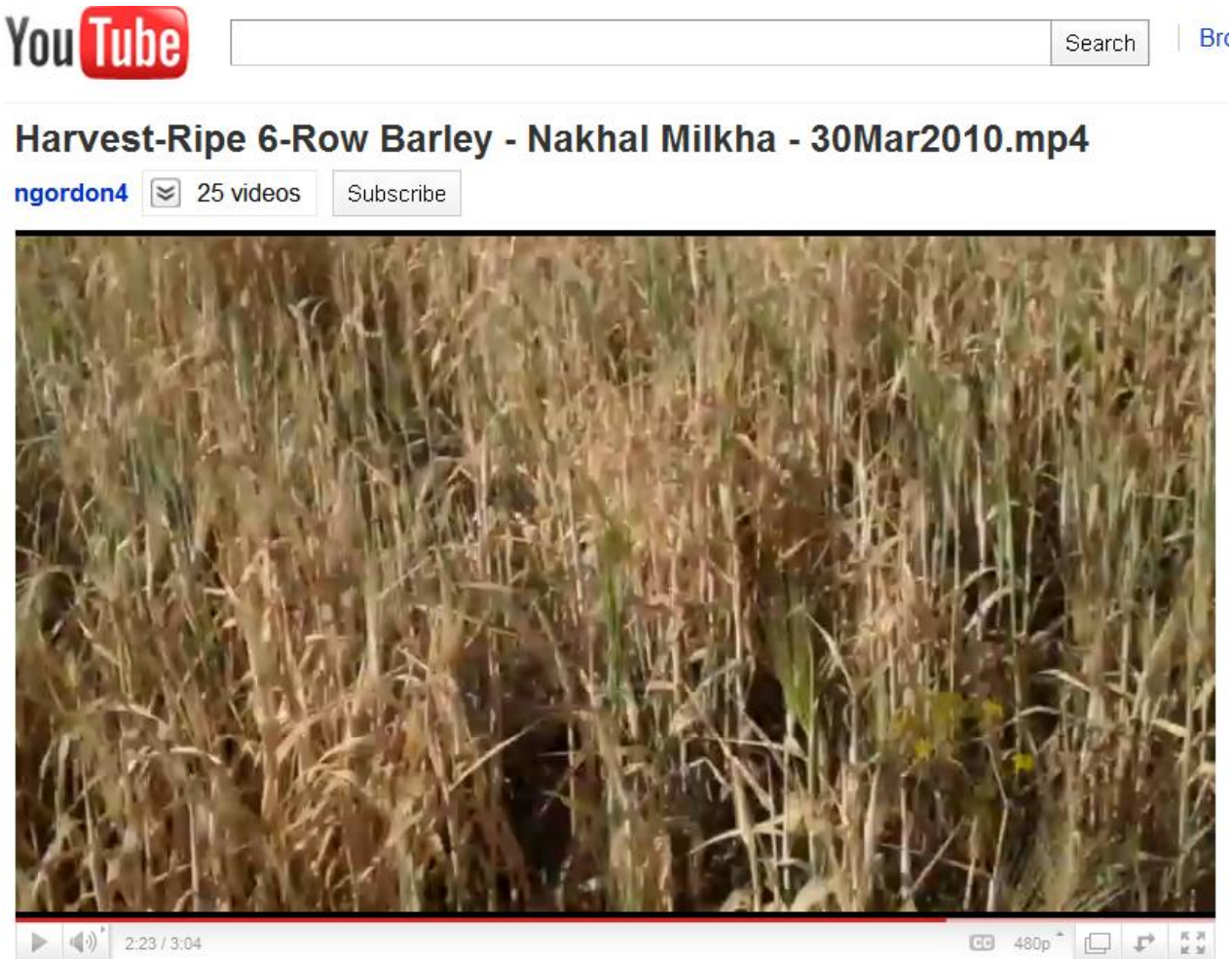
[14] From *An Exposition of the New Testament*, by John Gill (published from 1746-1748), John 4:35. This particular excerpt can be viewed by accessing the following URL: http://www.biblestudytools.com/commentaries/gills-exposition-of-the-bible/john-4-35.html.

[15] From *Targum Pseudo-Jonathan*. This commentary can be read online by accessing the following URL: http://targum.info/pj/pjgen47-50.htm. This writing is often referred to as the *Targum Yonatan*, or the *Targum Jonathan*, after the 1st century Jewish Tanna, Jonathan ben Uzziel. However, there is no record that Jonathan ben Uzziel authored a commentary on the Torah, and many scholars now agree that the error of attributing the writing to Jonathan ben Uzziel stems from early abbreviations of this Targum as "TY," which actually represented *Targum Yerushalmi*, and is generally thought to have been composed sometime after the end of the 8th century CE. For additional information on this targum, you may be interested in accessing the following URL: http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Targum_Pseudo-Jonathan.

[16] Cf., *Theological Wordbook of the Old Testament*, Vol. I, R. Laird Harris, Gleason L. Archer, Jr., and Bruck K. Waitke, Moody Press, Chicago, IL, 1980, p. 182, where we read the following about the Hebrew word *dāgān* (word #403): "**dāgān. *Grain,*** translated 'corn' in the KJV in all forty occurrences except Num 18:12 and Jer 31:12 where it is translated 'wheat.' 'Corn' is old English for cereal grain." Note: The word *dāgān* is word #1715 in *Strong's* Hebrew and Chaldee Dictionary.

Beware of Non-Farmers Who Produce Reports of "Harvest-Ready Barley"

Two weeks after posting his initial green ears of barley sighting video, Nehemia Gordon put out another video, this time showing what he dubbed "fully harvest-ripe" barley. The barley in Mr. Gordon's video *might* be declared harvest-ready insofar as the information provided by *Todd's Country Homes and How to Save Money*, but even by that book's standard, the condition of the crop in Mr. Gordon's video looks questionable at best. Again, please remember that most experts agree that barley, like wheat, is not harvest-ready until the green is gone, so we encourage you to watch the video and ask yourself if the barley from Mr. Gordon's video is "*fully harvest-ripe*." Also ask yourself if you would want to make bread from the grain harvested from a field such as the one in Mr. Gordon's video. We're not saying that none of the barley in his video was ripe. In his video, Nehemia Gordon selected a head of barley that had ripened and he had a fellow participant test it for hardness. It was determined that it was sufficiently hardened, which is not surprising because different stalks of a crop will mature at different rates. I don't question that *some* of the barley in his video was harvest-ready, but the majority of it did not appear to be that far along. You can be the judge yourself, as a screen shot from the video is displayed below:[17]



This is the "harvest-ripe barley" presented by Nehemia Gordon. The individual who manned the camera did not provide close-up shots that would enable us to get a better view of the overall condition of ripeness of the barley field. Could barley bread be made by harvesting this crop? We have our doubts.

[17] Accessed from the following URL: http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=lfCX5srVivI&feature=related

June and I try to put out a new calendar each month, which we post on our website (www.ponderscripture.org) for anyone interested. For our 2010 Abib calendar, I decided to post side-by-side, for comparison purposes, a photo of *truly* harvest-ready barley and a screen shot from Nehemia Gordon's video. I understand that the photo on the right is of professional-grade quality, whereas the other one is a screen shot from a video. It may appear that I'm trying to make Nehemia Gordon's barley look sickly. For that reason, I would like to ask you to *try* to visualize a YouTube video of the field on the right and *then* compare it to the one on the left. From a farmer's perspective, there is no question in my mind that the barley dubbed "harvest-ready" by Nehemia Gordon is *not* in fact ready for harvest.

Comparing "Harvest-Ready" Barley Fields

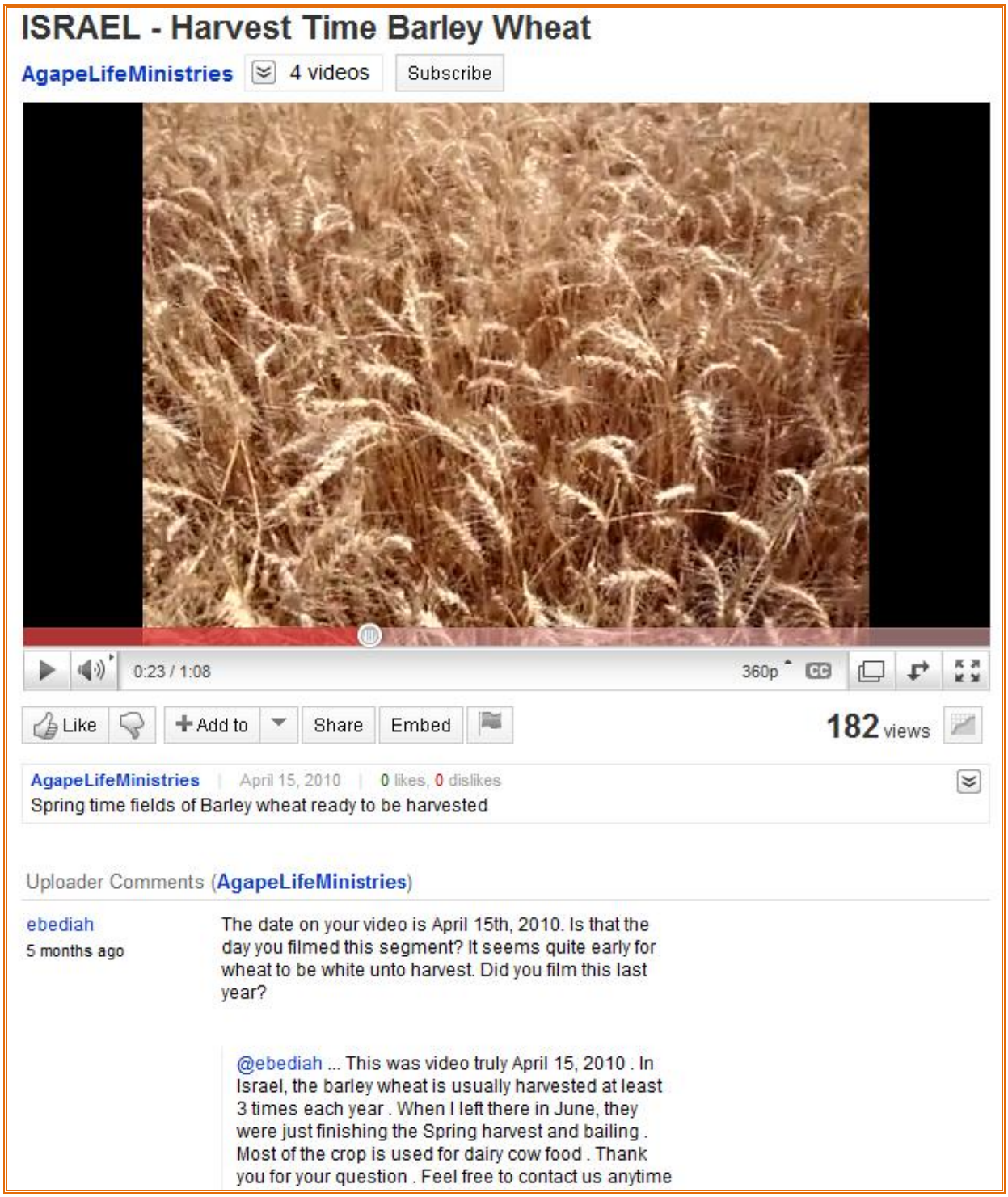
BELOW LEFT: Caption taken from a "You Tube" video of a barley field deemed "harvest ready" by Karaite Jews on March 30, 2010, in advance of their Passover/Feast of Unleavened Bread observance. Notice the mixture of what appears to be ripe stalks with *unripe* green stalks.

BELOW RIGHT: Photo of a field of ripe barley. Notice that there are no green stalks co-mingled with the ripe barley. This field is *truly* "harvest ready." Did the Karaites declare Abib too soon? Ancient Jews such as Philo wrote that the first month of the year began after the spring equinox.

Please bear in mind that Nehemia Gordon's video was taken on March 30, 2010, the day before they observed Passover. From our perspective, they observed Passover on the 14th day of the *13th month* of the previous Scriptural year, i.e., a month too early. For them, their video was produced on the 13th day of the *1st month* of the new Scriptural year. The question is, if we are supposed to have ripe barley – harvest-ready barley – in time for the Feast of Unleavened Bread, did the field presented by Nehemia Gordon in his March 30th video qualify? Was he right in declaring our "13th month" to be the "1st month" of the year? Or should he have waited?

As it turns out, we found *another* 2010 video of "harvest-ready" barley in Israel, but this video was taken 16 days later than Nehemia Gordon's video. The video I'm referring to was produced on April 15, 2010. As we viewed that April 15th video, our first question was, "If the barley in Israel was truly 'harvest-ready' on March 30th … and if that barley was so mature that it was already 'reseeding itself' (as claimed by those who were so zealous to get the new year started) … then why hadn't the field in the *April 15th video* been harvested yet?" You can see a screen shot of the field from the April 15th video below.

How about a look at <u>another</u> "harvest-ready" field of Israel barley as seen from YouTube:[18]



[18] From the video titled "ISRAEL…SPRING WHEAT HARVEST TIME," published on 04/15/2010 and accessed at the following URL: http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=SfQWmamuGm4. Note: The title appears to indicate that the crop identified within the video is *wheat*, but the author later clarifies that the crop is "Barley Wheat."

We must emphasize the fact that the YouTube video shown above was produced 16 days after Nehemia Gordon's video. Again, it was recorded on April 15, 2010. Later that evening, the new moon was sighted, marking (*for Nehemia Gordon*) the second month of the Scriptural year. For us, that new moon marked the start of the *first* month of the Scriptural year, and 14 days later was Passover. The above field of barley had certainly ripened in time for the upcoming Feast of Unleavened Bread, which for us began on April 30, 2010. Was that field sufficiently ripe two weeks *before* the video recording was produced?

While the farmer who owns the above barley field may not have needed to wait until April 30th to harvest it, something tells me that he would not have even considered harvesting it two weeks earlier.

So What's the Problem With Using the Green Ears of Barley?

Based on my personal experiences, there really isn't so much a problem with using the Green Ears of Barley in Israel to determine the first month of the year as there is a problem with the *quality* of the reports that we have read over the years. It wasn't until 2010 that I saw my first-ever video of alleged "harvest-ready" barley, and it dawned on me that for ten years I had trusted the Israel barley reports without really questioning who the reporters were. I am persuaded that if Nehemia Gordon had gone by a *truly* general state of Abib, he would have waited a month before issuing his declaration. In this way, not only would the barley have been genuinely "harvest ready," but he would have been on the same page as those who go by the first moon following the equinox.

I have read lots of papers addressing the subject of the calendar, and it never ceases to amaze me the number of times the opposition will point out that the Bible never tells us to begin the new year on or after the equinox. Some authors go so far as to claim that those who go by the vernal equinox to start the new Scriptural year "add to the Word." I would ask, "Where, then, does the Bible tell us to begin the new year after confirming that there are green ears of barley in Israel?" If anything, those who go by the equinox truly allow the heavenly lights to mark seasons and years, just as we are told to do in Genesis:

> ***Genesis 1:14-19*** *And Elohim said, "Let there be lights in the expanse of the sky to separate the day from the night, and let them serve as signs to mark seasons and days and years, And let them be lights in the expanse of the sky to give light on earth." And it was so. Elohim made two great lights—the greater light to govern the day and the lesser light to govern the night. He also made the stars. Elohim set them in the expanse of the sky to give light on the earth, to govern the day and the night, and to separate light from darkness. And Elohim saw that it was good. And there was evening, and there was morning—the fourth day.*

Where are we ever told to allow the green ears of barley to mark seasons and days and years? Later in our study, we will examine Scriptural evidence supportive of the view that the equinox plays an even larger role in determining the start of a new year than previously considered.

Let's take one more look at the "harvest-ready" barley of April 15th, this time comparing it with Nehemia Gordon's "harvest-ready" barley of March 30th:

Israel Barley – April 15, 2010

Israel Barley – March 30, 2010

Question: If the barley on the left was "harvest ready" on March 30th, then why hadn't it been harvested by April 15th?

ABIB – Man's Definition vs. Scriptural Definition

Some individuals define "abib" as "green ears of barley." A common term used is, "Abib has been found!" and is used to describe barley that is in the "green ear" stage. Here is a sample taken from the Karaite Korner newsletter:[19]

#452: Aviv Found in Jordan Valley! Message List

Reply **Message #476** of 516 < Prev | Next >

Karaite Korner Newsletter #452

Aviv Found in Jordan Valley!

This morning (March 12, 2010) we found Aviv barley in the Jordan Valley in two fields just north of the Israeli army checkpoint. We took three samplings from these fields and they were 90-100% Aviv. I posted two videos of these fields on Youtube, taken with my new Flip MinoHD video camera:
http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=MQFFrPPymS4
http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=9lBSl2aEoHk

We also found Aviv barley further south in the Jordan Valley and smaller quantities near Ein Mabua.

Thanks to Devorah Gordon and Shoshanah Waterman for participating in this preliminary Aviv excursion. The main Aviv Search will still go ahead on March 16-17 but what we found so far is already enough to call it for this year. This means the new biblical year will begin on March 17, 2010 at sunset. For more details of the Gregorian dates see:
http://www.karaite-korner.org/holiday_dates.shtml

Nehemia Gordon
Jerusalem, Israel

Fri Mar 12, 2010 8:40 pm

Show Message Option

"ngordon4" <ngordon4@...>
ngordon4
Offline
Send Email

Reply **Message #476** of 516 < Prev | Next >

Certainly, the "Aviv barley" that Nehemia Gordon found on March 12, 2010 was not ripe barley, so by his definition, "aviv" does not need to be barley that can be harvested. Does his definition match the Scriptural definition of *abib*? We are about to see that the answer is no.

Another controversial year for the "Green Ears of Barley vs. the Equinox" debate was in 2005, when the Karaites claimed to have found "abib barley" as early as March 8th. The following excerpt is taken from the article "When Does the Biblical YEAR Begin?" which is authored by a supporter of Nehemia Gordon's Abib determination practices:[20]

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[19] Taken from Yahoo! Groups Karaite Korner Newsletter #452, which can be accessed at the following URL: http://dir.groups.yahoo.com/group/karaite_korner_news/message/476.

[20] From "When Does the Biblical YEAR Begin?" by William F. Dankenbring, April 2005. The article may be read in its entirety at the following URL: http://www.triumphpro.com/year-new-look-at-beginning-of.pdf. Note: The Karaites have additional pictures of their barley search posted at the following URL: http://www.karaite-korner.org/abib/2005/.

Abib Barley Found!

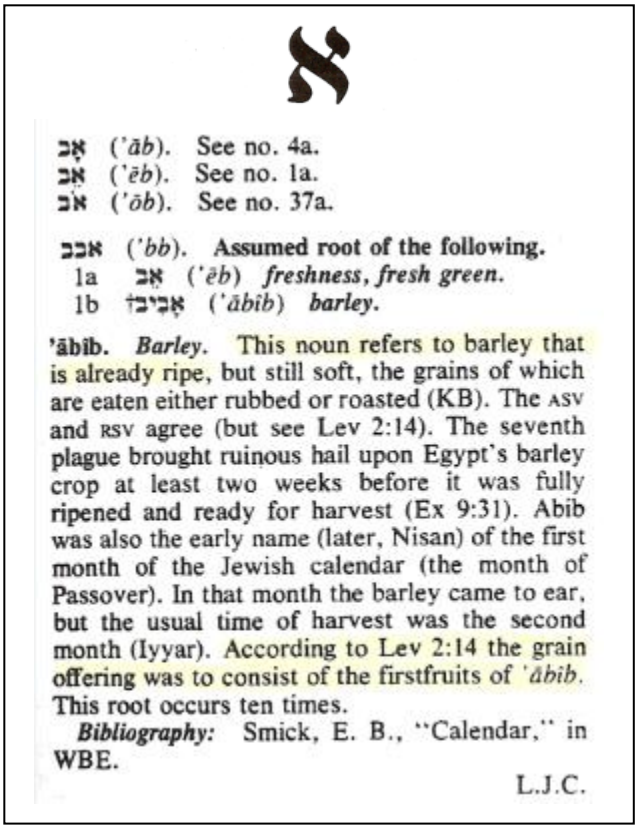
This year Nehemia Gordon and his abib search team in Israel on March 8 found Aviv stage barley in a new area, near the spring of Ein Mabua, 9 miles east of Jerusalem. Vast quantities of lush healthy Aviv were found, as shown in the picture above. Therefore, the New Moon of March 11 began the New Year and the first day of "Abib" or "Nisan," the first month of the year, was from sunset March 11 till sunset March 12.

Question: If we already know where the barley fields are, why do we need to go on an "Abib barley hunt"? Why not just go to the field and check to see if it's in an overall state of maturity conducive to a harvest within a two-week period? Why would we go *searching* for barley in rocky ravines like children on an Easter egg hunt?

Is it possible that Nehemia Gordon does not promote the correct definition of the word *abib*?

Now let's take a look at *another* definition of *abib*. This is the definition found in the *Theological Wordbook of the Old Testament*:[21]

[21] From the *Theological Wordbook of the Old Testament*, Vol. 1, R. Laird Harris, Editor, Moody Press, Chicago, IL, 1980.



א

אָב (*'āb*). See no. 4a.
אֵב (*'ēb*). See no. 1a.
אֹב (*'ōb*). See no. 37a.

אבב (*'bb*). **Assumed root of the following.**
1a אֵב (*'ēb*) ***freshness, fresh green.***
1b †אָבִיב (*'ābîb*) ***barley.***

'ābîb. ***Barley.*** This noun refers to barley that is already ripe, but still soft, the grains of which are eaten either rubbed or roasted (KB). The ASV and RSV agree (but see Lev 2:14). The seventh plague brought ruinous hail upon Egypt's barley crop at least two weeks before it was fully ripened and ready for harvest (Ex 9:31). Abib was also the early name (later, Nisan) of the first month of the Jewish calendar (the month of Passover). In that month the barley came to ear, but the usual time of harvest was the second month (Iyyar). According to Lev 2:14 the grain offering was to consist of the firstfruits of *'ābîb*. This root occurs ten times.

Bibliography: Smick, E. B., "Calendar," in WBE.

L.J.C.

According to the above resource, *abib* refers to barley that is "already ripe," not green, immature barley. Not every reference work out there promotes the "already ripe" definition, so we need to be careful when it comes to allowing anyone – even scholarly reference works – to influence our understanding of the true meaning of "Abib." When reviewing the following source, ask yourself the following questions: "How can 'Green Ears of barley' be considered as Firstfruits? How does one thresh unripened grains from green ears?" The following is taken from the Interlinear Scripture Analyzer 2:[22]

מִנְחַת		תַּקְרִיב־	וְאִם	2:14	
mnchth		thqrib -	u·am		
present-offering-of		you-are-[c]bringing-near	and·if		
קָלוּי		אָבִיב	לַיהוָה	בִּכּוּרִים	
qlui		abib	l·ieue	bkurim	
being-toasted		pollinated-ears	to·Yahweh	firstfruits	
אֵת	תַּקְרִיב	כַּרְמֶל	גֶּרֶשׂ	בָּאֵשׁ	
ath	thqrib	krml	grsh	b·ash	
»	you-shall-[c]bring-near	crop	groats-of	in·[the]·fire	

14 And if thou offer a meat offering of thy firstfruits unto the LORD, thou shalt offer for the meat offering of thy firstfruits green ears of corn dried by the fire, [even] corn beaten out of full ears.

[22] Interlinear Scripture Analyzer 2, ISA basic 2.1.3, Copyright © 2002-2010 Scripture4All Foundation - All Rights Reserved, www.scripture4all.org.

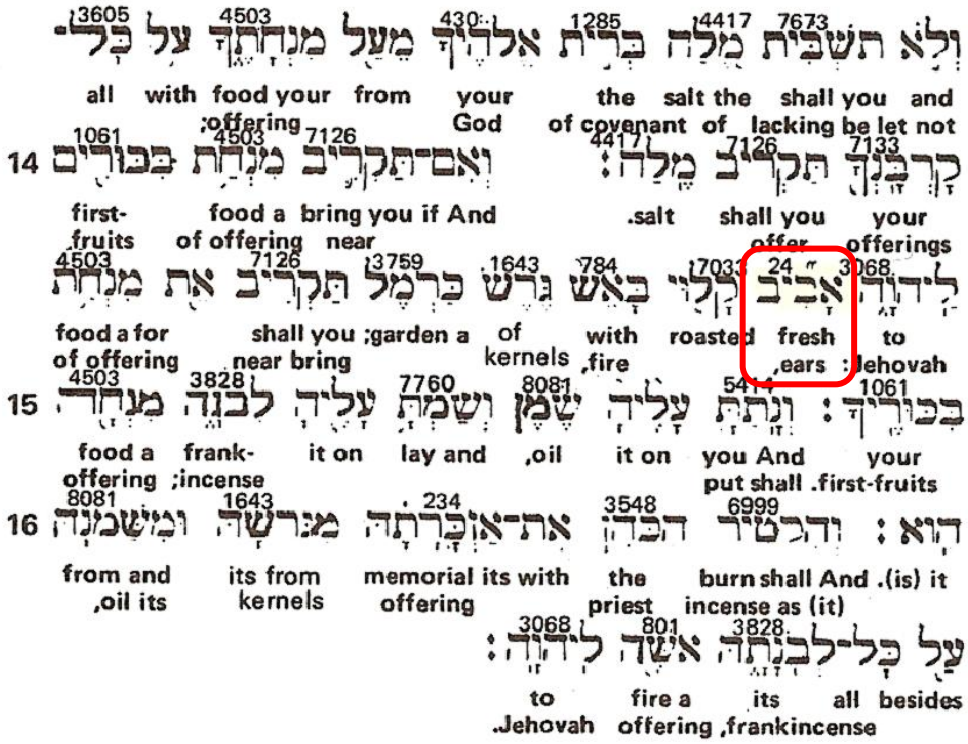
As much as we would like to believe that the individual who translated the word "abib" truly understands the intrinsic meaning of the word, we are inclined to believe that he falls short of properly grasping the obvious meaning provided from context. Green ears of barley, contrary to the way he translates Leviticus 2:14, would not be considered a viable firstfruits offering.

Another well-respected interlinear is *The Interlinear Bible*, translated by Jay P. Green, Sr. I feel that Jay P. Green offers his readers a better understanding of what the Hebrew word "abib" means:[23]

88 LEVITICUS 2:14

with salt, and you shall not let the salt of the covenant of your God be lacking from your food offering; you shall offer salt with all your offerings.

14 And if you bring near a food offering of first-fruits to Jehovah, fresh ears roasted with fire, kernels from a garden, you shall bring near your first-fruits for a food offering. 15 And you shall put oil on it, and lay on it frankincense; ite *is* a food offering. 16 And the priest shall burn it as incense, with its memorial offering from its kernels, and from its oil, besides all its frankincense, a fire offering to Jehovah.



We believe the above translator, Jay P. Green, most adequately captures the intended meaning of the Hebrew word "abib." It makes more sense to understand "abib" as being a reference to fresh, yet ripened, ears of grain. This, then, is the *Scriptural definition* of Abib. Anyone bringing a first-fruits offering to Yahweh was required to bring *abib* grains – fresh, ripened grains. No one would have offered immature, unripened grains.

Furthermore, according to the *Dictionary of Classical Hebrew*, one of the understandings of the meaning of "Abib" is derived from a text found among the Dead Sea Scrolls known as *The Temple Scroll* (abbreviated 11QT and dated at 150 BCE). In chapter 19:7 of this text, the translation reads, "new bread (made of) ears of various cereals." In the original text, the word translated "ears" is the Hebrew word "*abib*." Since the bread was made from the "abib of cereals," it is plain the "abib" must have been ripe!

[23] From *The Interlinear Bible*, 2nd Edition, Jay P. Green, Sr., General Editor and Translator, Hendrickson Publishers, Peabody, MA, 1986, p. 88.

Further complicating the issue of how to properly translate "abib" is the fact that Nehemia Gordon, although we've already seen that he dubs unripened heads of barley "aviv," elsewhere recognizes that the Scriptural definition of "Abib" is *ripened ears of barley*. The following screen shot is taken from the www.karaite-korner.org "Abib FAQ" page[24]:

Q: Does Abib mean "Green Ears" or "Green, tender ears"?

No. Abib does not mean "green ears", despite the incorrect translation in the King James Bible. The precise meaning of Abib must be reconstructed by going into the fields and studying the barley and cross-referencing this with the Biblical evidence. The Bible often speaks of "Abib parched in fire". This refers to grain which is developed enough to be eaten after it has been parched. In contrast, "Green Ears" is such a broad term that it can refer to grain which when parched will shrivel up leaving no edible material. This has been confirmed by experiments. In order to be Abib, the barley must be more developed than *Green, tender ears*.

Biblical evidence also shows that Abib is a brittle state as can be seen from the description of the crops destroyed by the Plague of Hail:

"And the flax and the barley were smitten, because the barley was Abib and the flax was Giv'ol. And the wheat and the spelt were not smitten because they were dark (Afilot)." (Ex 9,31-32)

The full meaning of this passage and its ramifications for understanding the agricultural term Abib is discussed at: http://www.karaite-korner.org/abib.shtml

I agree with Nehemia Gordon's "official definition" of *Abib*. The question is, "Does he rely on this definition when determining the start of the first Scriptural year?"

Was the barley field that he promoted in his video *truly* "harvest-ready"?

Defining "Tekufah"— Does it Matter?

Nehemia Gordon also claims to know the correct definition of "tekufah," and that it is *not* "equinox." He goes on to insist that those who go by the equinox are using what he calls an "anachronism," which means he believes that those of the "equinox persuasion" are basically taking a modern-day definition and applying it to an ancient meaning. In other words, we are redefining "tekufah" to suit our doctrinal position, or so he believes. He gives an example of the word "computer." The modern Hebrew word for computer was used in ancient times to refer to someone who sat at a desk and performed calculations. So if we read of an ancient reference to a "computer," does this mean there were computer laptops in ancient times?

Once Mr. Gordon makes his point about "computers," he has us set up to arrive at the same conclusion about the word "tekufah." If *tekufah*, in modern-day lingo, is used to mean "equinox," i.e.,

[24] The entire "Abib FAQ" page can be reviewed by accessing the following URL: http://www.karaite-korner.org/abib_faq.shtml#green_tender_ears.

when day and night are equal, does this mean that this is what the ancients *also* understood it to mean? Nehemia Gordon says no. This is his opinion, which is open for debate. Personally, we are inclined to believe that the ancients *did* understand that *tekufah* can be used to mean "equinox." As we will see later in our study, a first century Jew named Philo of Alexandria wrote, "Moses puts down the beginning of the vernal equinox as the first month of the year." If Exodus 34:22 presents the *tekufah* feast cycle as ending in the fall, then it follows that it begins in the spring. If this cycle begins with the vernal equinox, then we can understand how and why Philo regarded the vernal equinox as representing a *tekufah* (Greek *mesountos*)[25]. The alternative is to believe that Philo added to Scripture, which may be what Nehemia Gordon believes. The question, then, is, "Did Philo and his contemporary Jews understand *tekufah* to be used in reference to the vernal equinox or did Philo add 'vernal equinox' to the Torah in violation of Deuteronomy 4:2?"[26]

The original and intended meaning of the Hebrew word *tekufah* has been debated, and while I'm not about to say that I can present the original, intended understanding of the ancient Hebrew term, the fact of the matter is, history demonstrates that ancient cultures knew very well how to determine the equinox, and the equinox was accordingly used in determining when the new year began. This, in our estimation, makes the original meaning of *tekufah* a moot point. Before we proceed with our examination, let's review Mr. Gordon's claim about the vernal equinox versus the tekufah:

The Karaite Korner

תמיך

Abib FAQ:

Vernal Equinox and Tekufah

Q: Is the equinox (Tekufah) mentioned in the Tanach (Hebrew Bible)?

The claim has been made by proponents of the equinox calendar theory that the word equinox actually appears in the Tanach. They are referring to the word Tekufah or Tequfah which appears in the Hebrew Bible four times. Tekufah is in fact the post-Biblical word for "equinox", however, it never has the meaning of "equinox" in the Tanach. In Biblical Hebrew, Tekufah retains its literal meaning of "circuit", that is something which returns to the same point in time or space [from the root Nun.Quf.Pe. meaning "to go around"]. To claim that Tekufah means equinox in the Tanach, just because it had this meaning in later Hebrew, is an anchronism. This would be like saying that there were handguns in ancient Israel because the word EKDACH, the post-Biblical Hebrew word for handgun, appears in Isaiah 54:12. Let us consider another example of this anachronistic use of language: Before the invention of the electronic computer during World War II, the word "computer" referred to a man who sat at a desk calculating (computing) mathematical equations. Imagine if we found an 18th century document mentioning "computers" and proclaimed to the world that there were really electronic computers in the 18th century. This is exactly what the equinox-followers are doing with the word Tekufah. To better understand this, let us consider the four appearances of Tekufah in the Tanach.

[25] Philo, who used the Septuagint Bible, would have most likely been familiar with *mesountos* (μεσούντος), the Greek word used to translate *tekufah*. *Mesountos*, which is word #3322 in *Strong's* Greek Dictionary of the New Testament, means "middle" or "halfway point." Since the autumnal equinox is the halfway point of the circuit that only reaches its "full circle" at the vernal equinox, we can see how Philo, as well as normative Judaism, would have understood *tekufah* to represent the equinox.

[26] Deuteronomy 4:2 says, "Ye shall not add unto the word which I command you, neither shall ye diminish *aught* from it, that ye may keep the commandments of Yahweh your Almighty which I command you."

Is it true that the Scriptural definition of "tekufah" *cannot* be "equal day and night"? No one can know for certain; at least we cannot prove the originally-intended meaning of *tekufah* one way or the other. For all we know, then, Nehemia Gordon is correct about the original meaning of *tekufah*. However, the *tekufah* may present more of a "red herring" argument than anything else, leading us down the wrong path as we seek to find out just exactly *how* the ancients reckoned their calendar. Nevertheless, if *tekufah* really means "circuit," then, indeed, the equinoxes can be referred to as "circuits" marking a certain passage of time – including when day and night became equal.

Did the ancients know how to calculate equal day and night? According to *Handbooks on the History of Religions*, they did. In this book, we learn of an ancient Babylonian writing, which some date to the sixth century BCE (before 499 BCE). In this ancient writing, equal day and night are discussed, proving that the ancients knew how to make this determination:

> On the sixth day of Nisan,
> Day and night were balanced.
> There were six double hours of day,
> Six double hours of night.
> May Nabu and Marduk
> Be gracious to the king, my lord.[27]

Regardless of the time measurement methods used by the Babylonians, I am persuaded that they knew that on a certain day, day and night became equal. However ignorant of time measurement some folks may believe the Babylonians were, I am willing to give them credit for knowing that, during one particular year, the equinox fell on Nisan 6, otherwise known as Abib 6. In scrutinizing the above writing, one might ask, "If we aren't supposed to allow the month of Abib/Nisan to begin until on or after the equinox, then how's come the Babylonians broke that rule by starting Nisan six days *before* the equinox?" We will address this apparent conflict later.

For now, suffice it to say that the ancients knew how to determine the equinox, and we also have a first-century Jewish leader named Philo who wrote that the year doesn't begin until after the vernal equinox. More on that later as well.

Another ancient writing that merits our attention is the Talmud. While we do not put a whole lot of stock in the information found in the Talmud, it does offer historical understanding of Jewish practice and belief, at least going back as early as the 2nd century CE. Here is a reference from the Talmud that is worthy of our consideration:

> Our rabbis taught: "Based on three things is the year intercalated: on the Abib (barley), on the fruit of the trees, and on the (Solar) Equinox. Based upon two of them the year is intercalated, but based on one of them alone the year is not intercalated; but when the Abib is one of them, everyone is pleased."[28]

According to the historical record supplied by the Talmud, both the "barley crowd" and the "equinox crowd" are correct … but according to the Talmudic author, it takes ***three*** factors, not just one. Those

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[27] *Handbooks on the History of Religions*, by Morris Jastrow, Jr., Ph.D., Professor of Semitic Languages in the University of Pennsylvania, Vol. II, *The Religion of Babylonia and Assyria*, The Athenæum Press, Ginn & Company - Proprietors, Boston, MA, 1893, p. 356. This book is available to download at the following URL: http://www.etana.org/coretexts/14921.pdf.

[28] From *The Babylonian Talmud*, Tractate Sanhedrin 11b.

ancient Jews kept a close watch, not only on the circuit of the sun, but also on the maturity level of the barley crop and the tree fruits. Centuries later, the Jewish sage known as Maimonides expressed the same opinion as that offered by the Talmud. Maimonides wrote the following:

> **2.** Intercalation of the year depended upon the following three criteria: the *tĕkufah*, the barley harvest, and the blooming of the tree fruits. Namely, if the court had ascertained by calculation that the tĕkufah of Nisan would fall on the 16th day of Nisan, or later, it intercalated the year and declared the Nisan of this year to be a Second Adar, so that Passover might fall in the season of the barley harvest. This criterion alone was sufficient to rely upon for the intercalation of the year, and no attention was paid to any other criterion.
> **3.** Similarly, if the court found that the barley crop was not yet ripe, being retarded, and that such tree fruits as usually sprout during the Passover season had not yet produced buds, it took these two conditions as a criterion and proceeded to intercalate the year—in order that the barley crop might be available for the offering of the Sheaf of Waving on the 16th day of Nisan, and in order that the fruits might sprout as usual during the season of the barley harvest.[29]

Clearly, Maimonides did not require the equinox (tekufah) to determine the starting point of a new year. The maturity level of the barley crop, as well as the status of the fruit trees, were ultimately the determining factors. Please notice that Maimonides wrote that a second Adar was declared only if the *tekufah* occurred on or after the 16th of Nisan (Abib). Maimonides, then, did not believe that Scripture requires setting the month of Abib on or after the day of the vernal equinox. We believe this is an important consideration for those who insist that the vernal equinox must always precede the start of the first month of the Scriptural year. It bears repeating that we only support allowing the vernal equinox to be our guide at this time because (A) we do not feel we can trust the "barley reports" that have emanated from Israel and (B) sufficiently mature barley prior to the vernal equinox seems to be more the exception than the norm.

Based upon the information gleaned from the Talmud and from Maimonides, I believe we can make a few rational inferences. First of all, I believe it is clear that there will ***always*** be ripe barley in time for the Passover if we allow the vernal equinox to determine when the new year will begin. Secondly, I believe it is ***also*** clear that a year may arise during which the barley, as well as the fruit of the trees, are noticeably mature enough that an experienced farmer would know whether or not there would be ripe barley in time for an "early Passover" … a Passover whose month began before the vernal equinox.

The problem is, some of us who live far away from Israel are concerned that the developments which unfolded in the year 2010 in Israel will be repeated in the future. As previously mentioned, we have learned to not trust the barley reports that have come out of Israel. As a result, we need more than glorified "breaking news" reports produced by self-proclaimed experts. We need accounts validated by *certified* experts, and if the "harvest-ready" crop exposes a lot of green, we need explanations instead of biased testimonies that we're supposed to accept without question.[30] We *do not* need reports produced by "aviv hunters" roaming around Israel's countryside like children on an Easter egg hunt hoping to find prized green ears of barley. We *do* need reports of barley fields that are visited periodically and certified

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[29] Cf., *The Code of Maimonides*, by Moshe ben Maimon (Maimonides, 1135 – 1204 CE), Book Three, Treatise Eight, "Sanctification of the New Moon," chapter IV, translated from the Hebrew by Solomon Gandz, Yale University Press, New Haven, CT, 1956, pp. 16-17.

[30] June and I have literally experienced situations in which it is clear that certain believers do indeed accept without question whatever decisions are made by Nehemia Gordon. At a Sabbath gathering in the summer of 2008, June asked a woman how she counts to Pentecost. The woman answered, "However Nehemia Gordon does it!"

when mature enough to be ripe in time for Passover. If, shortly before the end of the 12th month, it is expertly determined and agreed upon that the fields will be generally ripe within two weeks, then we see no problem with declaring the next new moon to be the moon of Abib, even if the equinox has not yet occurred.

Regrettably, we do not envision such a development as described above forthcoming in the near future. Consequently, for those of us who are nowhere near the land of Israel, we are content to proceed with the same understanding exhibited by Philo – who wrote that it is "proper to reckon the cycle of months from the vernal equinox."[31]

[31] From *Philo*, Supplement II, "Questions and Answers on Exodus," translated by Ralph Marcus, Ph.D., Harvard University Press, Cambridge, MA:, 1953, pp. 2.

II. How Was the Month of Abib Determined for the Year of the Crucifixion?

Always interpret the New Testament in light of the Old, not the Old in light of the New

While I am persuaded that interpreting the New Testament in light of the Old Testament is generally the safest route to take, there are times when I believe we need to make an exception to the rule, and the calendar issue is one of those times. If what we call the Old Testament had given us a clear signal one way or the other, things would be different. However, as we have already pointed out, scholars agree that the data from the Old Testament about when a year begins is confusing, and all we can come up with are our own private interpretations.

For us, switching from reliance on the "green ears of barley" reports in Israel to the vernal equinox was not an easy decision, but when we did a review of the apparent year in which we believe the Messiah was crucified, the decision became easy. This is because if we can agree on the year in which He was crucified, we can understand that the Passover of that particular year must have been determined the same way that we feel it should have been done in the year 2010 – a month later than the modern-day "barley folks."[32]

We had already known for years that the generally-recognized time frame for Yeshua's death and resurrection falls somewhere between the years 28–33 CE. While we do not recommend putting a whole lot of stock in allowing prophetic fulfillments to determine the years of events, I will state that the 69-week prophecy presented in the book Daniel seems to point to the year 31 CE as being the year. Briefly, here is how that understanding works:

Many scholars agree that the sixty-nine week prophecy mentioned in Daniel 9:24-27 offers insight into the year in which the Messiah was killed:

> [24] Seventy weeks have been determined upon thy people, and upon the holy city, for sin to be ended, and to seal up transgressions, and to blot out the iniquities, and to make atonement for iniquities, and to bring in everlasting righteousness, and to seal the vision and the prophet, and to anoint the Most Holy.
> [25] And thou shalt know and understand, that from the going forth of the command for the answer and for the building of Jerusalem until Messiah the prince *there shall be* seven weeks and sixty-two weeks: and then shall return, and the street shall be built, and the wall, and the times shall be exhausted.
> [26] And after the sixty-two weeks, the anointed one shall be destroyed, and there is no judgment in him: and he shall destroy the city and the sanctuary with the prince that is coming: they shall be cut off with a flood, and to the end of the war which is rapidly completed he shall appoint to desolations.
> [27] And one week shall establish the covenant with many: and in the midst of the week my sacrifice and drink-offering shall be taken away: and on the temple *shall be* the abomination of desolations; and at the end of the time an end shall be put to the desolation.

[32] Of course, this calendar controversy not only surfaced in the year 2010, but as we will see in chapter VI, this same discussion occurred in 2018. It occurred again in 2021 and is a recurring concern about every three years. This is due to the fact that twelve lunar cycles do not quite fill out a solar year, causing the calendar to slowly shift over time.

The above prophecy is commonly referred to as a seventy-week prophecy; however, the timeline from the decree to rebuild Jerusalem until the Messiah's first coming is 69 weeks (v. 25). The decree to rebuild Jerusalem, as we are about to see, is commonly understood as being the decree given by Artaxerxes I in the year 457 BCE. If this decree went forth in the year 457 BCE, then when did the 69th week begin?

If we use 457 BCE as our starting point and count forward 69 weeks of years (483 years), we arrive at the year 27 CE. The middle of that "week" is the year 30, so on the surface the middle of the 69th "week" appears to be the year 30 CE. However, please remember that Yeshua's ministry lasted more than three years. It was a three and a half-year ministry that began with His baptism in the fall and ended with His crucifixion in the spring – the beginning of the year 31 CE. Notice which year falls in the middle of that "week":

27	28	29	**30**	**31**	32	33

We realize that there are bound to be skeptics who question the rationale of using the year 457 BCE as the starting point for Daniel's 70-week prophecy. While we aren't about to promote that year as the only possibility, at the same time, several well-respected sources offer reasons for believing the Messiah was "cut off" in the year 31 CE, and they use 457 BCE as the beginning year of this prophecy. One of those sources is *The Expositor's Bible Commentary*:

> The next possible fulfillment is the decree issued to Ezra in the seventh year of Artaxerxes I (464-424), that is, in 457 B.C. Its text is found in Ezra 7:12-26, which lays the chief emphasis on adorning and strengthening the temple at Jerusalem and enforcing the laws and regulations of the Mosaic code. Yet in his understanding of the implications of that decree, Ezra himself affirmed in his solemn, penitential prayer on behalf of Israel that "our God has not deserted us in our bondage. He has shown us kindness in the sight of the kings of Persia: He has granted us new life to rebuild the house of our God and repair its ruins, and he has given us a wall of protection in Judah and Jerusalem" (Ezra 9:9). To Ezra's mind, then, the commission he received from Artaxerxes included permission to rebuild the wall of Jerusalem. To be sure, he did not succeed in doing so; his attention was monopolized by the social and religious reforms the Jerusalem community so urgently needed. Certainly he lacked the manpower and financial resources to proceed with so ambitious an undertaking; so the rebuilding never went beyond the talking stage. If this led to a delay of thirteen years in working on the walls, Nehemiah's disappointment (Neh 1:4) when in 446 he heard from Hanani that no progress had been made seems all the more appropriate. Nehemiah no doubt had hoped for more tangible results from Ezra's leadership and expected him to have made some headway in fortifying the city during the twelve years he had been there.
>
> If, then, the *terminus a quo* for the decree in [Daniel 9] v.25 be reckoned at 457 B.C. (the date of Ezra's return to Jerusalem), then we may compute the first seven heptads as running from 457 to 408, within which time the rebuilding of the walls, streets, and moats was completed. Then from 408 we count off the sixty-two heptads also mentioned in v.25 and come out to A.D. 26 (408 is 26 less than 434). But actually we come out to A.D. 27, since a year is gained in our reckoning as we pass directly from 1 B.C. to A.D. 1 (without any year zero in between). If Christ was crucified on 14 Abib A.D. 30, as is generally believed (cf. L.A. Foster, "The Chronology of the New Testament," EBC, 1:598-99, 607), this would come out to a remarkably exact fulfillment of the terms of [Daniel 9] v.25. Christ's public ministry, from the time of his baptism in the Jordan till his death and resurrection at Jerusalem, must have taken up about three years. The 483 years from the issuing of the decree of Artaxerxes came to an end in A.D. 27, the year of the "coming" of

> Messiah as Ruler (*nāśî*). It was indeed "after the sixty-two 'sevens'"—three years after—that "the Anointed One" was "cut off."[33]

Another source offering support for the year 457 BCE as the year in which the decree was made to rebuild Jerusalem is a Seventh-Day Adventist report titled *The Chronology of Ezra 7*:

> **Ezra's journey in the seventh year of Artaxerxes.** Consequently, if the 1st year of Artaxerxes 1 ran from the fall of 464 to the fall of 463 BC according to Jewish reckoning, the king's 7th year ran from the fall of 458 to the fall of 457 BC, as is clearly seen in Figure 5. Then the journey of Ezra, dated in Ezra 7:8, 9 as having begun in Nisan and ended in Ab of the 7th year of Artaxerxes, reached from late March to late July, 457 BC. The evidence presented in chapter, 4, not only from Nehemiah, but also from an Elephantine papyrus proving that the Jews in Egypt reckoned a Persian king's years according to a fall-to fall year, as well as the establishment in the present chapter of Artaxerxes' accession date in December, 465 BC, from an Ur Tablet, places the dates given in the preceding paragraph on a sound basis. These documents, taken together with the Biblical statements of Nehemiah and Ezra, lead to the inescapable conclusion that the decree of Artaxerxes 1 went into effect after Ezra's return from Babylon, in the late summer or early fall of 457 BC.[34]

We thus see that there is scholarly support for believing that Daniel's 70-week prophecy began in the year 457 BCE and ended in the year 34 CE. If these scholarly conclusions are true, then the "midst of the week" when the sacrifice and drink offering were taken away is the year 31 CE.

If we can agree, then, that Yeshua's death and resurrection occurred in the year 31 CE, which is the midst of that final week of prophecy, another question arises as to whether or not He was crucified in the midst of a literal seven-day week. For those of us who agree that Yeshua literally meant what He said when He told His critics that He would be in the heart of the earth for three days and three nights (Matthew 12:38-40), a "midst of the week" sacrifice (on the fourth day of the week) is the only one that fits. While we are persuaded that when Yeshua gave this sign as a literal sign, many believers are persuaded otherwise. That, of course, is their prerogative. For us, however, a literal fulfillment of this "sign" helps us to further narrow down the precise year of Yeshua's crucifixion. We will provide additional reasons for believing that Yeshua was crucified on the fourth day of the week later in our study. For now, we would like to focus on further narrowing down the precise year.

Although the prophetic fulfillment of Daniel's seventy week prophecy seems to narrow the year of Yeshua's death and resurrection to the year 31 CE, some may still argue that Yeshua was not executed in the year 31 CE. Regardless of the various opinions, it is generally agreed that His death and resurrection had to take place between the years 26 and 36 CE because those are the years during which Pontius Pilate reigned as Prefect of Judaea,[35] and as every Bible student knows, it was during Pontius Pilate's reign that

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[33] From *The Expositor's Bible Commentary*, Vol. 7, by Gleason L. Archer, Jr., ZondervanPublishingHouse, Grand Rapids, MI, 1985, p. 114.

[34] From *The Chronology of Ezra 7*: A Report of the Historical Research Committee of the General Conference of Seventh-Day Adventists, Siegfried H. Horn, Ph.D., Professor of Archeology, Seventh-Day Adventist Theological Seminary, and Lynn H. Wood, Ph.D., Sometime Professor of Archeology, Seventh-day Adventist Theological Seminary, Review and Herald Publishing Association, Washington, D.C., 1953, pp. 29-30.

[35] Various sources attribute the years of Pontius Pilate's reign to have been between 26 and 36 CE. For example, the *Mercer Dictionary of the Bible*, Watson E. Mills, Gen. Editor, Mercer University Press, Macon, GA, 1997, p. 690 states, "Pontius Pilate was the Roman procurator of Judea, 26-36 C.E., subject to some degree to the Roman legate in Syria." For additional information, please consult the Bible History Online web site at the following URL:

Yeshua was condemned to die. Scholars generally agree that He was executed between the years 28 and 33 CE.

For those of us who are persuaded that Yeshua was crucified on the fourth day of the week (a Wednesday), the question becomes, "Which year between the years 28 and 33 CE has the Passover falling on the fourth day of the week?"

Although the year 27 CE is not generally considered a possible option for consideration when it comes to determining the year of Yeshua's death and resurrection, we are displaying the calendar for that year for illustration purposes. According to the data shown on the calendar for 27 CE, used in conjunction with moon calculation software, the Passover fell on a Thursday that year:[36]

Calendar for year 27 (Israel)

January

Su	Mo	Tu	We	Th	Fr	Sa
			1	2	3	4
5	6	7	8	9	10	11
12	13	14	15	16	17	18
19	20	21	22	23	24	25
26	27	28	29	30	31	

4:◐ 11:○ 18:◑ 26:●

February

Su	Mo	Tu	We	Th	Fr	Sa
						1
2	3	4	5	6	7	8
9	10	11	12	13	14	15
16	17	18	19	20	21	22
23	24	25	26	27	28	

3:◐ 9:○ 17:◑ 25:●

March

Su	Mo	Tu	We	Th	Fr	Sa
						1
2	3	4	5	6	7	8
9	10	11	12	13	14	15
16	17	18	19	20	21	22
23	24	25	26	27	28	29
30	31					

4:◐ 11:○ 19:◑ 26:●

April

Su	Mo	Tu	We	Th	Fr	Sa
		1	2	3	4	5
6	7	8	9	10	11	12
13	14	15	16	17	18	19
20	21	22	23	24	25	26
27	28	29	30			

2:◐ 9:○ 17:◑ 25:●

May

Su	Mo	Tu	We	Th	Fr	Sa
				1	2	3
4	5	6	7	8	9	10
11	12	13	14	15	16	17
18	19	20	21	22	23	24
25	26	27	28	29	30	31

1:◐ 9:○ 17:◑ 24:● 31:◐

June

Su	Mo	Tu	We	Th	Fr	Sa
1	2	3	4	5	6	7
8	9	10	11	12	13	14
15	16	17	18	19	20	21
22	23	24	25	26	27	28
29	30					

7:○ 16:◑ 22:● 29:◐

The moon was at 7.37° at sunset on March 27th; if it was sighted, March 28th was Abib 1. Abib 14 would have been on April 10th (a **Thursday**). There should not have been a dispute about this new moon, since March 28th was after the vernal equinox.

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http://www.bible-history.com/archaeology/israel/pilate-inscription.html.

[36] The calendars used here were obtained from www.timeanddate.com.

The year 28 CE presents an interesting year. Although it is considered as not likely being the year of Yeshua's death and resurrection, if the year was begun prior to the vernal equinox, Passover would have most likely fallen on a Tuesday. However, if the first month of the year was not begun until after the vernal equinox, the Passover would have most likely fallen on a Wednesday. Although we agree that the year 28 CE is most likely too early, it presents the same pattern that occurred in the year 31 CE.

Calendar for year 28 (Israel)

January

Su	Mo	Tu	We	Th	Fr	Sa
				1	2	3
4	5	6	7	8	9	10
11	12	13	14	15	16	17
18	19	20	21	22	23	24
25	26	27	28	29	30	31

1:○ 7:◑ 15:● 23:◐ 30:○

February

Su	Mo	Tu	We	Th	Fr	Sa
1	2	3	4	5	6	7
8	9	10	11	12	13	14
15	16	17	18	19	20	21
22	23	24	25	26	27	28
29						

6:◑ 14:● 22:◐ 28:○

March

Su	Mo	Tu	We	Th	Fr	Sa
	1	2	3	4	5	6
7	8	9	10	11	12	13
14	15	16	17	18	19	20
21	22	23	24	25	26	27
28	29	30	31			

6:◑ 15:● 22:◐ 29:○

April

Su	Mo	Tu	We	Th	Fr	Sa
				1	2	3
4	5	6	7	8	9	10
11	12	13	14	15	16	17
18	19	20	21	22	23	24
25	26	27	28	29	30	

5:◑ 13:● 20:◐ 27:○

May

Su	Mo	Tu	We	Th	Fr	Sa
						1
2	3	4	5	6	7	8
9	10	11	12	13	14	15
16	17	18	19	20	21	22
23	24	25	26	27	28	29
30	31					

5:◑ 13:● 20:◐ 27:○

June

Su	Mo	Tu	We	Th	Fr	Sa
		1	2	3	4	5
6	7	8	9	10	11	12
13	14	15	16	17	18	19
20	21	22	23	24	25	26
27	28	29	30			

4:◑ 11:● 18:◐ 25:○

The moon was at 15.59° at sunset on March 16th; if it was sighted, March 17th was Abib 1. Abib 14 would have been on March 30th (a **Tuesday**).
The moon was at 9.25° on April 14th; if it was sighted, April 15th was Abib 1. Abib 14 would have been on a **Wednesday**. Many consider this year to be too early.

The Passover in the year 29 CE would not have fallen on a Wednesday regardless of whether Judaism began the year before or after the vernal equinox. We circled dates in both March and April to illustrate the unlikelihood of a March Passover. Even if the barley would have been ripe in time for a March 19th Passover, it would not have occurred on a Wednesday:

Calendar for year 29 (Israel)

January

Su	Mo	Tu	We	Th	Fr	Sa
						1
2	3	4	5	6	7	8
9	10	11	12	13	14	15
16	17	18	19	20	21	22
23	24	25	26	27	28	29
30	31					

3:● 11:◐ 19:○ 25:◑

February

Su	Mo	Tu	We	Th	Fr	Sa
		1	2	3	4	5
6	7	8	9	10	11	12
13	14	15	16	17	18	19
20	21	22	23	24	25	26
27	28					

2:● 10:◐ 17:○ 24:◑

March

Su	Mo	Tu	We	Th	Fr	Sa
		1	2	3	4	5
6	7	8	9	10	11	12
13	14	15	16	17	18	19
20	21	22	23	24	25	26
27	28	29	30	31		

4:● 12:◐ 18:○ 25:◑

April

Su	Mo	Tu	We	Th	Fr	Sa
					1	2
3	4	5	6	7	8	9
10	11	12	13	14	15	16
17	18	19	20	21	22	23
24	25	26	27	28	29	30

2:● 10:◐ 17:○ 24:◑

May

Su	Mo	Tu	We	Th	Fr	Sa
1	2	3	4	5	6	7
8	9	10	11	12	13	14
15	16	17	18	19	20	21
22	23	24	25	26	27	28
29	30	31				

2:● 9:◐ 16:○ 23:◑ 31:●

June

Su	Mo	Tu	We	Th	Fr	Sa
			1	2	3	4
5	6	7	8	9	10	11
12	13	14	15	16	17	18
19	20	21	22	23	24	25
26	27	28	29	30		

8:◐ 14:○ 22:◑ 30:●

The moon was at 8.09° at sunset on April 3rd; if it was sighted, April 4th was Abib 1. Abib 14 would have been on April 17th (a **Sunday**). There should not have been a dispute about this new moon, since April 4th was after the vernal equinox, and a new moon sighting of March 5th (14.11°) is too early.

The year 30 CE presents the same basic scenario as the year 29 CE. Passover could not have fallen on a Wednesday for either of the two belief systems that we are addressing here:

Calendar for year 30 (Israel)

January

Su	Mo	Tu	We	Th	Fr	Sa
1	2	3	4	5	6	7
8	9	10	11	12	13	14
15	16	17	18	19	20	21
22	23	24	25	26	27	28
29	30	31				

8:○ 15:◑ 22:● 30:◐

February

Su	Mo	Tu	We	Th	Fr	Sa
			1	2	3	4
5	6	7	8	9	10	11
12	13	14	15	16	17	18
19	20	21	22	23	24	25
26	27	28				

7:○ 13:◑ 21:●

March

Su	Mo	Tu	We	Th	Fr	Sa
			1	2	3	4
5	6	7	8	9	10	11
12	13	14	15	16	17	18
19	20	21	22	23	24	25
26	27	28	29	30	31	

1:◐ 8:○ 15:◑ 22:● 31:◐

April

Su	Mo	Tu	We	Th	Fr	Sa
						1
2	3	4	5	6	7	8
9	10	11	12	13	14	15
16	17	18	19	20	21	22
23	24	25	26	27	28	29
30						

6:○ 13:◑ 21:● 29:◐

May

Su	Mo	Tu	We	Th	Fr	Sa
	1	2	3	4	5	6
7	8	9	10	11	12	13
14	15	16	17	18	19	20
21	22	23	24	25	26	27
28	29	30	31			

6:○ 13:◑ 21:● 28:◐

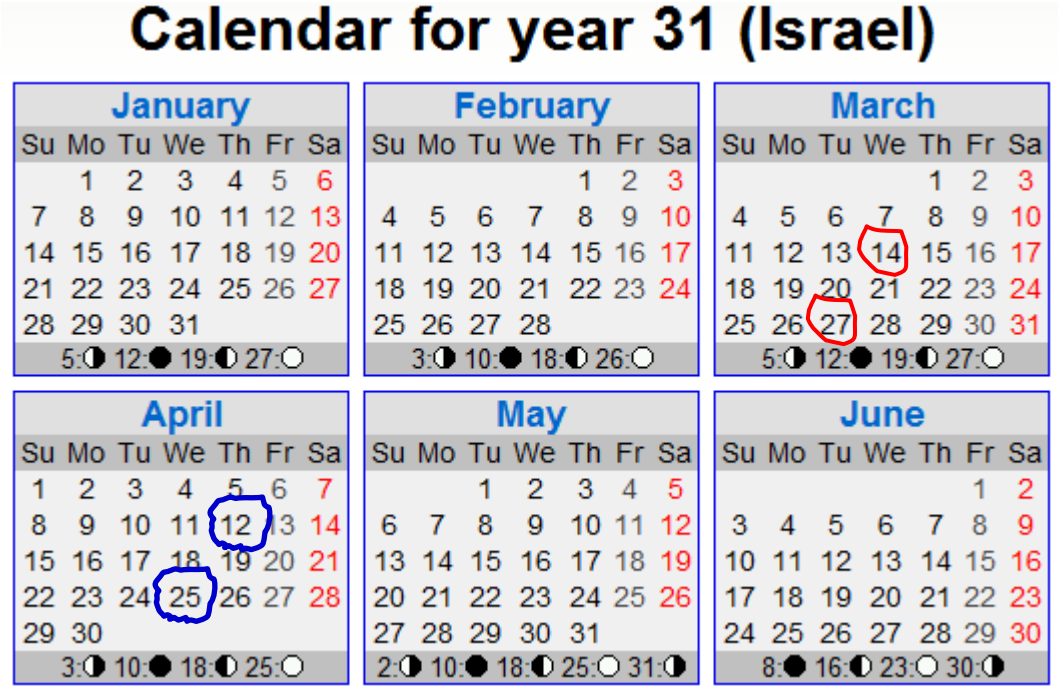
June

Su	Mo	Tu	We	Th	Fr	Sa
				1	2	3
4	5	6	7	8	9	10
11	12	13	14	15	16	17
18	19	20	21	22	23	24
25	26	27	28	29	30	

4:○ 11:◑ 19:● 27:◐

The moon was at 8.08° at sunset on March 23rd; if it was sighted, March 24th was Abib 1. Abib 14 would have been on April 6th (a **Thursday**). There should not have been a dispute about this new moon, since March 24th was after the vernal equinox.

This brings us to the year 31 CE. As displayed below, for those who began the new year before the vernal equinox, Passover fell on a *Tuesday*. However, for those who began the new year after the vernal equinox, Passover fell on a *Wednesday*. If 31 CE represents the year in which the Messiah was executed, as many believe, then there can be no question that Abib 1 fell *after the vernal equinox*:



Calendar for year 31 (Israel)

January

Su	Mo	Tu	We	Th	Fr	Sa
	1	2	3	4	5	6
7	8	9	10	11	12	13
14	15	16	17	18	19	20
21	22	23	24	25	26	27
28	29	30	31			

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February

Su	Mo	Tu	We	Th	Fr	Sa
				1	2	3
4	5	6	7	8	9	10
11	12	13	14	15	16	17
18	19	20	21	22	23	24
25	26	27	28			

3:◑ 10:● 18:◐ 26:○

March

Su	Mo	Tu	We	Th	Fr	Sa
				1	2	3
4	5	6	7	8	9	10
11	12	13	14	15	16	17
18	19	20	21	22	23	24
25	26	27	28	29	30	31

5:◑ 12:● 19:◐ 27:○

April

Su	Mo	Tu	We	Th	Fr	Sa
1	2	3	4	5	6	7
8	9	10	11	12	13	14
15	16	17	18	19	20	21
22	23	24	25	26	27	28
29	30					

3:◑ 10:● 18:◐ 25:○

May

Su	Mo	Tu	We	Th	Fr	Sa
		1	2	3	4	5
6	7	8	9	10	11	12
13	14	15	16	17	18	19
20	21	22	23	24	25	26
27	28	29	30	31		

2:◑ 10:● 18:◐ 25:○ 31:◑

June

Su	Mo	Tu	We	Th	Fr	Sa
					1	2
3	4	5	6	7	8	9
10	11	12	13	14	15	16
17	18	19	20	21	22	23
24	25	26	27	28	29	30

8:● 16:◐ 23:○ 30:◑

The moon was at 17.53° at sunset on March 13th; thus, March 14th was Abib 1 for those of the "Green Ears of Barley" persuasion. Abib 14 would have been on March 27th (a **Tuesday**).

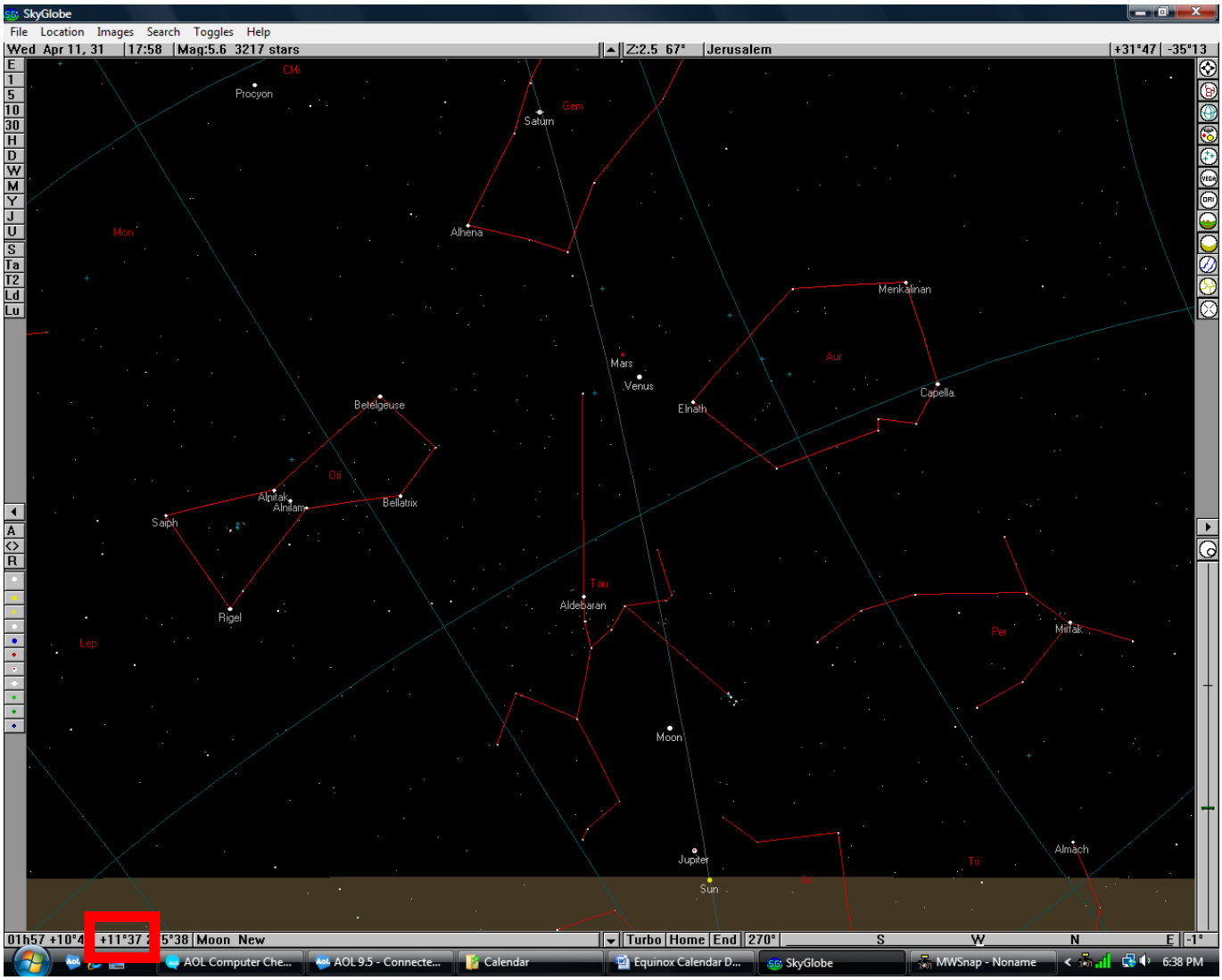
The moon was at 11.37° at sunset on April 11th; if it was sighted, April 12th was Abib 1. Abib 14 would have been on a **Wednesday**.

Not only does the year 31 CE conform with the seventy-week prophecy of Daniel 9:24-27 in which the sacrifice and drink offering were taken away in the "midst of the week," but it also represents a year in which the Messiah was killed in the midst of a literal week – during a month whose beginning fell *after* the vernal equinox.

Some may question how we know that the Abib new moon of 31 CE was sighted on the evening of April 11th. Hopefully, the screen shot on the following page, taken from our Skyglobe® software program[37], sufficiently illustrates the likelihood that the new moon was indeed sighted after sunset that evening. We realize that there is a contingency of believers who maintain that ancient Judaism reckoned the months from the astronomical new moon. However, the testimony of ancient Judaism, as well as our understanding of Scriptural texts, indicates that new months were determined by visual observation of the new moon crescent.[38]

[37] SkyGlobe 2.03 for Windows, A Shareware product of KlassM Software, Copyright 1996 by Mark A. Haney.

[38] For additional information on how the new months were determined during ancient times, we invite you to read our study "When and *Where* Does the Scriptural Month Begin?" which can be read by accessing the following URL: http://www.ponderscripture.org.



Screen shot from SkyGlobe moon calculation software depicting the location of the new moon at sunset on April 11, 31 CE. At over 11 degrees above the horizon at sunset, the new moon should have been sighted that evening. With this sighting, April 12th was Abib 1, and Passover would have fallen on Wednesday, April 25th.

The year 32 CE represents another year in which the Passover could not have fallen on a Wednesday for either of the two groups whose calendar views are addressed in this study:

Calendar for year 32 (Israel)

January

Su	Mo	Tu	We	Th	Fr	Sa
		1	2	3	4	5
6	7	8	9	10	11	12
13	14	15	16	17	18	19
20	21	22	23	24	25	26
27	28	29	30	31		

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February

Su	Mo	Tu	We	Th	Fr	Sa
					1	2
3	4	5	6	7	8	9
10	11	12	13	14	15	16
17	18	19	20	21	22	23
24	25	26	27	28	29	

7:◐ 15:○ 22:◑ 29:●

March

Su	Mo	Tu	We	Th	Fr	Sa
						1
2	3	4	5	6	7	8
9	10	11	12	13	14	15
16	17	18	19	20	21	22
23	24	25	26	27	28	29
30	31					

7:◐ 15:○ 23:◑ 29:●

April

Su	Mo	Tu	We	Th	Fr	Sa
		1	2	3	4	5
6	7	8	9	10	11	12
13	14	15	16	17	18	19
20	21	22	23	24	25	26
27	28	29	30			

6:◐ 14:○ 21:◑ 28:●

May

Su	Mo	Tu	We	Th	Fr	Sa
				1	2	3
4	5	6	7	8	9	10
11	12	13	14	15	16	17
18	19	20	21	22	23	24
25	26	27	28	29	30	31

6:◐ 13:○ 20:◑ 27:●

June

Su	Mo	Tu	We	Th	Fr	Sa
1	2	3	4	5	6	7
8	9	10	11	12	13	14
15	16	17	18	19	20	21
22	23	24	25	26	27	28
29	30					

5:◐ 12:○ 18:◑ 26:●

The moon was at 7.33° at sunset on March 30th; if it was sighted, March 31st was Abib 1. Abib 14 would have been on April 13th (a **Sunday**).

There should not have been a dispute about this new moon, since March 31st was after the vernal equinox.

The same goes for the year 33 CE. Notice, however, that for those who began the year *before* the vernal equinox, Passover fell on a Friday. Because many are persuaded that Yeshua was killed on a Friday, the year 33 CE is often presented as the year of Yeshua's death and resurrection. Passover that year, according to this reckoning, fell on April 3rd:

Calendar for year 33 (Israel)

January

Su	Mo	Tu	We	Th	Fr	Sa
				1	2	3
4	5	6	7	8	9	10
11	12	13	14	15	16	17
18	19	20	21	22	23	24
25	26	27	28	29	30	31

4:○ 12:◑ 19:● 26:◐

February

Su	Mo	Tu	We	Th	Fr	Sa
1	2	3	4	5	6	7
8	9	10	11	12	13	14
15	16	17	18	19	20	21
22	23	24	25	26	27	28

3:○ 11:◑ 18:● 24:◐

March

Su	Mo	Tu	We	Th	Fr	Sa
1	2	3	4	5	6	7
8	9	10	11	12	13	14
15	16	17	18	19	20	21
22	23	24	25	26	27	28
29	30	31				

5:○ 12:◑ 19:● 26:◐

April

Su	Mo	Tu	We	Th	Fr	Sa
			1	2	3	4
5	6	7	8	9	10	11
12	13	14	15	16	17	18
19	20	21	22	23	24	25
26	27	28	29	30		

3:○ 11:◑ 17:● 25:◐

May

Su	Mo	Tu	We	Th	Fr	Sa
					1	2
3	4	5	6	7	8	9
10	11	12	13	14	15	16
17	18	19	20	21	22	23
24	25	26	27	28	29	30
31						

3:○ 10:◑ 17:● 24:◐

June

Su	Mo	Tu	We	Th	Fr	Sa
	1	2	3	4	5	6
7	8	9	10	11	12	13
14	15	16	17	18	19	20
21	22	23	24	25	26	27
28	29	30				

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The moon was at 12.35° at sunset on March 20th; March 21st was Abib 1. Abib 14 would have been on April 3rd (a **Friday**).

The moon was at 8.44° at sunset on April 18th; April 19th was Abib 1. Abib 14 would have been on May 2nd (a **Saturday**).

Although the consensus seems to be that the year 34 CE is too late to be a likely candidate for the Messiah's crucifixion, it nevertheless presents a year in which the Passover fell on a Wednesday for those who go by the "Green Ears of Barley" reckoning instead of allowing the vernal equinox to determine the new year:

Calendar for year 34 (Israel)

January

Su	Mo	Tu	We	Th	Fr	Sa
					1	2
3	4	5	6	7	8	9
10	11	12	13	14	15	16
17	18	19	20	21	22	23
24	25	26	27	28	29	30
31						

1:◑ 9:● 16:◐ 23:○ 31:◑

February

Su	Mo	Tu	We	Th	Fr	Sa
	1	2	3	4	5	6
7	8	9	10	11	12	13
14	15	16	17	18	19	20
21	22	23	24	25	26	27
28						

7:● 14:◐ 22:○

March

Su	Mo	Tu	We	Th	Fr	Sa
	1	2	3	4	5	6
7	8	9	10	11	12	13
14	15	16	17	18	19	20
21	22	23	24	25	26	27
28	29	30	31			

2:◑ 9:● 15:◐ 23:○ 31:◑

April

Su	Mo	Tu	We	Th	Fr	Sa
				1	2	3
4	5	6	7	8	9	10
11	12	13	14	15	16	17
18	19	20	21	22	23	24
25	26	27	28	29	30	

7:● 14:◐ 22:○ 30:◑

May

Su	Mo	Tu	We	Th	Fr	Sa
						1
2	3	4	5	6	7	8
9	10	11	12	13	14	15
16	17	18	19	20	21	22
23	24	25	26	27	28	29
30	31					

6:● 13:◐ 22:○ 29:◑

June

Su	Mo	Tu	We	Th	Fr	Sa
		1	2	3	4	5
6	7	8	9	10	11	12
13	14	15	16	17	18	19
20	21	22	23	24	25	26
27	28	29	30			

5:● 12:◐ 20:○ 27:◑

The moon was at 16.57° on March 10th; March 11th was Abib 1. Abib 14 would have been on March 24th (a **Wednesday**).

The moon was at 12.46° on April 8th; April 9th was Abib 1. Abib 14 would have been on April 22nd (a **Thursday**).

Many consider this year to be too late.

While we do not believe the crucifixion occurred in the year 34 CE, we think it is only fair to remark that *if* it was the year of the crucifixion, then the month of Abib must have been declared in the month commonly known today as March.

Comparing "Abib" Conditions Between the Years 31 CE and 2010

Let's consider the similarities between the situation in 2010 and the year 31 CE. When comparing the years 2010 and 31 against the Gregorian calendar, Abib 1 for those of the "Green Ears of Barley" persuasion fell only 4 days later in the year 2010 than in 31 CE (March 14th vs. March 18th). With those four extra days to contend with in 2010, the Karaites were still only able to find a field that, at best, had only 80% ripe barley. On top of that, it is questionable as to whether or not the "field" was one that had been sown in barley that would qualify it as "firstfruits." Remember, it is the firstfruits of a *harvest*. Farmers know that they harvest what they have sown, not some wild crop. Based on the agricultural conditions present *this year* in Israel for the month of March, I am persuaded that things were much the same in the year 31 CE.

In other words, we believe that if we insist that the barley crop be *truly* harvest-ready in time for the Passover, the Passover in both 31 CE and 2010 CE would fall in a month that began after the vernal

equinox. Shown below is a calendar for how the two different groups reckoned the Passover in the year 2010:

Calendar for year 2010 (Israel)

January

Su	Mo	Tu	We	Th	Fr	Sa
					1	2
3	4	5	6	7	8	9
10	11	12	13	14	15	16
17	18	19	20	21	22	23
24	25	26	27	28	29	30
31						

7:◑ 15:● 23:◐ 30:○

February

Su	Mo	Tu	We	Th	Fr	Sa
	1	2	3	4	5	6
7	8	9	10	11	12	13
14	15	16	17	18	19	20
21	22	23	24	25	26	27
28						

6:◑ 14:● 22:◐ 28:○

March

Su	Mo	Tu	We	Th	Fr	Sa
	1	2	3	4	5	6
7	8	9	10	11	12	13
14	15	16	17	18	19	20
21	22	23	24	25	26	27
28	29	30	31			

7:◑ 15:● 23:◐ 30:○

April

Su	Mo	Tu	We	Th	Fr	Sa
				1	2	3
4	5	6	7	8	9	10
11	12	13	14	15	16	17
18	19	20	21	22	23	24
25	26	27	28	29	30	

6:◑ 14:● 21:◐ 28:○

May

Su	Mo	Tu	We	Th	Fr	Sa
						1
2	3	4	5	6	7	8
9	10	11	12	13	14	15
16	17	18	19	20	21	22
23	24	25	26	27	28	29
30	31					

6:◑ 14:● 21:◐ 28:○

June

Su	Mo	Tu	We	Th	Fr	Sa
		1	2	3	4	5
6	7	8	9	10	11	12
13	14	15	16	17	18	19
20	21	22	23	24	25	26
27	28	29	30			

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The moon was at 19.25° at sunset on March 17th; March 18th was Abib 1. Abib 14 was on March 31st (a **Wednesday**). This is when the Karaites observed Passover.

The moon was at 13.04° on April 15th; April 16th was Abib 1. Abib 14 was on a **Thursday**. This is when June and I observed Passover.

If the agricultural conditions in the year 31 CE were anything close to the way things were in 2010 CE, then the "Green Ears of Barley" (Karaite) adherents would have declared Abib in the month of March that year. Let's not forget the comment made in 2010 that by March 30th the barley was already "reseeding itself." Nevertheless, despite the similar conditions, Abib in 31 CE wasn't declared until *April*.

III. Evidence That Yeshua Was Crucified on a Wednesday

The preceding section was based on the premise that Yeshua was crucified on a Wednesday. If He was not in fact crucified on a Wednesday, then all the information provided in our previous chapter is worthless. However, we are persuaded that the evidence from the reports of His crucifixion, as found in the four Messianic accounts, supports believing that, indeed, He was executed on the fourth day of the week. Since none of the authors of the Messianic accounts supply us with the day of the week on which He was crucified, we are left to do the best we can with the available information. June and I have been on record as stating that by and large, the record of history supports our understanding of Scripture, but this is one instance in which we believe there is ample reason to question the historical understanding of the day of the week on which the Messiah was crucified.

Historically, Messianic believers have understood a sixth-day crucifixion. Even Justin Martyr, who lived in the second century, wrote of how the Messiah was killed on a Friday ("the day before that of Saturn"). The following is taken from his *The First Apology of Justin*, 67, written circa 150 CE:

> But Sunday is the day upon which we all hold our common assembly -- and Jesus Christ our Saviour on the same day rose from the dead. For He was crucified on the day before that of Saturn; and on the day after that of Saturn, which is the day of the Sun, He appeared to His apostles and disciples and taught them what we now submit to your consideration.

We don't have to agree with Justin Martyr's theology, i.e., his belief that a transition was made from Sabbath worship to Sunday worship, yet certainly we can see that early believers did indeed believe the Messiah was killed on a Friday.

Many of us are familiar with the prophecy given by Yeshua the Messiah about His death. When the scribes and Pharisees asked Him for a sign, Yeshua gave the one and only sign that would validate His authority. That sign was that He would be in the heart of the earth for three days and three nights. Many teach against this sign, more or less expecting us to believe that "three days and three nights" actually means *parts* of three days and only *two* nights (from Friday before sunset until Sunday morning). The sign we are referring to is found in Matthew 12:38-40:

> [38]Then certain of the scribes and of the Pharisees answered, saying, Master, we would see a sign from thee.
> [39]But he answered and said unto them, An evil and adulterous generation seeketh after a sign; and there shall no sign be given to it, but the sign of the prophet Jonas:
> [40]For as Jonas was three days and three nights in the whale's belly; so shall the Son of man be three days and three nights in the heart of the earth.

We believe it is reasonable to believe that if Yeshua stated that He would be in the heart of the earth (the grave) for three days and three nights, then that is exactly what He meant. Nevertheless, for the benefit of those who remain persuaded that He was executed on a Friday, there is additional evidence from the New Testament supportive of a Wednesday crucifixion.

The Women Purchased Spices After the High Day Sabbath, Prepared Them on Friday, Then Rested on the Weekly Sabbath According to the Commandment

In Mark 15:47, the last verse of the chapter, we read that Mary Magdalene and Mary the mother of Joses saw where Yeshua's body was laid. In the very next verse, Mark 16:1, we read that when the Sabbath was past, they bought sweet spices in order to anoint Him. Were those spices purchased on a Saturday night? Did the spice vendors open for business that quickly after the Sabbath ended? Let's read Mark 15:47 – 16:1, and as we read let's remember that when Mark authored his account, there were no chapter divisions:

> [47]And Mary Magdalene and Mary the mother of Joses beheld where he was laid.
> [1]And when the sabbath was past, Mary Magdalene, and Mary the mother of James, and Salome, had bought [Gr. *egorasan*] sweet spices, that they might come and anoint him.

If we follow the sequential flow of the above account, it does not seem unreasonable to believe that the "sabbath" being referred to is the "high day" Sabbath (Abib 15), which is the day following the Passover. When this "high day" Sabbath ended, it became lawful to buy and sell, and the women did just that, purchasing the amount of sweet spices needed to anoint Yeshua's body.

According to Luke 23:56, the women prepared these spices and ointments, *then* they rested on the Sabbath day "according to the commandment":

> [52]This man went unto Pilate, and begged the body of Yeshua.
> [53]And he took it down, and wrapped it in linen, and laid it in a sepulchre that was hewn in stone, wherein never man before was laid.
> [54]And that day was the preparation, and the sabbath drew on.
> [55]And the women also, which came with him from Galilee, followed after, and beheld the sepulchre, and how his body was laid.
> [56]And they returned, and prepared spices and ointments; and rested the sabbath day according to the commandment.

When comparing the accounts presented by Mark and Luke, the question that needs to be answered is, "How could the women have prepared the spices and ointments *prior* to resting on the sabbath day [Lk. 23:56] if they didn't buy them until *after* the Sabbath had ended [Mk. 16:1]?" To put this question in layman's terms, how could they have prepared spices that they hadn't yet purchased? We have yet to read a satisfactory answer to this question from those who believe He was crucified on a Friday. Shown below are two "calendars" that are representative of the two views:

This is the scenario proposed by those of us who believe Yeshua was crucified on a Wednesday:

Wednesday	Thursday	Friday	Sabbath
14 PASSOVER	**15** When this "Sabbath" was past, Mary Magdalene, Mary the mother of James and Salome bought sweet spices in order to anoint Yeshua's body (Mark 16:1)	**16** After having purchased the spices, the women prepared them, then "rested on the Sabbath day according to the commandment" (Luke 23:56).	**17** The women rested on this day "according to the commandment."

While we believe the above scenario makes the most sense, some folks might propose that the women actually purchased the spices *prior* to Yeshua's death – while it was still the Preparation Day. In this way, they might feel that they are reconciling the fact that the women "had bought" the spices in such a way that the spices had already been purchased in advance of the Sabbath. If this is true, which we highly doubt, we would like to know why the women would have purchased these spices *before* Yeshua's death? When would they have made their purchase? While He was dying, did they get the idea that they should go buy some spices to anoint Him with after His burial?

Of course, the other enigma that needs to be resolved is how the women could have prepared those same spices in advance of the weekly Sabbath (Luke 23:56).

We believe it makes more sense to believe that the women waited until after the first "high day" Sabbath ended (Thursday) … when Yeshua was already dead … to buy the spices. This would most likely have been during the daylight portion of Abib 16. They prepared the spices (no easy task) on that same day, *then* they rested on the weekly Sabbath day. This all fits, reconciling the accounts as authored by Mark and Luke. It *especially* fits if we think of Mark 16:1 as having been better placed as the last verse of the previous chapter.

Here is the "Spice Girls" scenario as explained by those who believe Yeshua was crucified on a Friday:

Wednesday	Thursday	Friday	Sabbath
		14 PASSOVER The women prepared spices as Yeshua was dying, then they "rested on the Sabbath day according to the commandment" (Luke 23:56).	**15** After this Sabbath ended, the women, who had "<u>already</u> bought" sweet spices, took those spices to the tomb in order to anoint Yeshua's body.

Those who are persuaded that Yeshua was crucified on a Friday are left to believe that when Mark wrote that the women bought sweet spices when the Sabbath was past, what he *meant* was they had already purchased the sweet spices before the Sabbath had begun. This is why the King James Version says they "HAD BOUGHT" sweet spices – a reference to something they had already done ahead of time.

So when was the "pre-Sabbath" purchase made? Did the women realize, while Yeshua was dying, that it would be a good idea to purchase some spices before the Sabbath began so they could anoint his dead body later? And how were they able to prepare those spices before the onset of the Sabbath?

To make the proposal of the Friday crucifixion adherents all the more difficult, we find that it is only the King James Version that translates the Greek verb *egorasan*, as "had bought" in Mark 16:1. This rendering is questionable because if we are to understand that the women "had bought" the spices, it would be easy to assume that they had already made their purchase in advance of the Sabbath. However, *egorasan* is the imperfect tense (Greek aorist tense) for the Greek verb that means "to buy." All other versions correctly render *egorasan* as "bought" instead of "had bought." When viewed with the correct translation of *egorasan*, it becomes clear that the women purchased the spices after the high day Sabbath was over; then, after preparing those spices, they rested on the weekly Sabbath "according to the commandment."

Yeshua's Journey from Ephraim to Bethany (John 11:54 – John 12:2)

Yeshua's journey from Ephraim to Bethany offers additional evidence that Passover was not on a Friday that year. While we're not trying to say that Yahweh forbids traveling on the day of the weekly Sabbath, we do not believe a true believer will make extensive travel plans for that day if it can be avoided. The distance from Ephraim to Bethany is 30 kilometers, which is approximately 18½ miles. By today's standards, we would think nothing of driving 18½ miles to go somewhere, even on the weekly Sabbath (presuming it is for worship purposes). But how many of us would seriously consider undertaking such a Sabbath journey *on foot*? According to the text of John 11:54 – John 12:2, that is what Yeshua did – *if* the day of Passover fell on a Friday that year.

> [53]Then from that day forth they took counsel together for to put him to death.
> [54]Yeshua therefore walked no more openly among the Jews; but went thence unto a country near to the wilderness, into a city called Ephraim, and there continued with his disciples.
> [55]And the Jews' passover was nigh at hand: and many went out of the country up to Jerusalem before the passover, to purify themselves.
> [56]Then sought they for Yeshua, and spake among themselves, as they stood in the temple, What think ye, that he will not come to the feast?
> [57]Now both the chief priests and the Pharisees had given a commandment, that, if any man knew where he were, he should shew it, that they might take him.
>
> [1]Then Yeshua six days before the passover came to Bethany, where Lazarus was, which had been dead, whom he raised from the dead.
> [2]There they made him a supper; and Martha served: but Lazarus was one of them that sat at the table with him.

Shown on the following page is a map depicting not only the location of Ephraim in relation to Bethany, but also the hilly terrain separating the two cities. An 18½ mile journey on foot, especially through hilly, rugged terrain, would not have been a trip that *any* Sabbath observer would seriously consider undertaking on the day of the weekly Sabbath.

0 10 20 30 40 Miles
0 10 20 30 40 50 60 Kilometers
Copyright © 1981 The Reader's Digest Association, Inc.
Lake Semechonitis
33°00′
Capernaum
Cana?
5
Sea of Galilee
GALILEE
MEDITERRANEAN SEA
6
1
Ginae
Scythopolis
30′
Jordan River
Sychar
4
Mt. Gerizim
SAMARIA
Lebonah
3
Phasaelis
32°00′
7
10
Ephraim
Jericho
8
Jerusalem
Bethany
2
9
JUDEA
Lake Asphaltitis (Dead Sea)
30′
35°00′
30′
30′

The following scenarios illustrate the possible days on which Yeshua journeyed to Bethany. Six days before the Passover (Abib 14) is Abib 8 (14 – 6 = 8). For those who believe Yeshua was crucified on a Friday, six days before the Passover was a Sabbath day:

Scenario With a Friday Passover

2	3	4	5	6	7	**8**
9	10	11	12	13	14	**15**
16	17	18	19	20	21	**22**

As previously mentioned, we find it very difficult to believe that Yeshua or any torah-observant Jew would have considered undergoing the rigorous 18½ mile journey from Ephraim to Bethany on the day of the weekly Sabbath.

This following scenario presumes that Yeshua was crucified on a Wednesday (i.e., Passover fell on a Wednesday that year). If Yeshua was crucified on a Wednesday, then six days before the Passover was the *fifth* day of the previous week. If Yeshua left Ephraim for Bethany on the Abib 8, He could have split His trip up into a two-day journey to arrive in plenty of time before the Sabbath began:

Scenario With a Wednesday Passover

4	5	6	7	8	9	**10**
11	12	13	14	15	16	**17**
18	19	20	21	22	23	**24**

We thus see that a Wednesday Passover eliminates any requirement for Yeshua to have traveled on the day of the weekly Sabbath.

Does Luke 24:21 Validate a Sunday Resurrection?

In our original study, we did not address the above question because we felt the previous two examples established why we feel justified in believing that Yeshua intended for His audience to understand that "three days and three nights" mean just that – nothing more, nothing less. We know that various writers out there go to quite a bit of trouble to try and make us believe otherwise. Idiomatically-speaking, they say, when a Hebrew speaker or writer mentions any time frame, we must always think "inclusive reckoning." We agree that sometimes the context of a narrative requires understanding "inclusive reckoning." For example, we are told in Scripture to circumcise a male on the eighth day of his life. To reach that "eighth day," one must include each of the days, beginning with the day of birth. If Johnny is born on a Monday, the eighth day will be the following Monday. When it comes to counting to Pentecost, the same principle applies. We are told to count "<u>from</u> the morrow of the sabbath," which must of necessity include the morrow of the sabbath as part of the count to Pentecost. The morrow of the sabbath is *included*, not excluded, from the count to Pentecost. What does all of this have to do with Luke 24:21? Answer: A lot!

Luke 24:21 forms a part of Cleopas' summary response to the risen, but identity-cloaked Yeshua, who essentially asked him and his friend on the road to Emmaus what was troubling them. After detailing the mighty deeds performed by Yeshua of Nazareth, Cleopas explained that He was put to death, tragically dashing the hopes of those who had expected that He would deliver Israel. Moreover, as we read in such versions as the King James Version, the day on which this discussion transpired was the third day since all "these things" were done. Now that we know the summary, let's read the account:

> [13]¶ And, behold, two of them went that same day to a village called Emmaus, which was from Jerusalem about threescore furlongs.
> [14]And they talked together of all these things which had happened.
> [15]And it came to pass, that, while they communed together and reasoned, Yeshua himself drew near, and went with them.
> [16]But their eyes were holden that they should not know him.
> [17]And he said unto them, What manner of communications are these that ye have one to another, as ye walk, and are sad?
> [18]And the one of them, whose name was Cleopas, answering said unto him, Art thou only a stranger in Jerusalem, and hast not known the things which are come to pass there in these days?
> [19]And he said unto them, What things? And they said unto him, Concerning Yeshua of Nazareth, which was a prophet mighty in deed and word before the Almighty and all the people:
> [20]And how the chief priests and our rulers delivered him to be condemned to death, and have crucified him.
> [21]But we trusted that it had been he which should have redeemed Israel: and beside all this, <u>to day is the third day since these things were done</u>.

Those who support believing that Yeshua was crucified on a Friday and resurrected on a Sunday have been known to point to the above passage, declaring it to be culminating proof that Yeshua was resurrected on the first day of the week. We can certainly understand why they would use a passage such as this one in an attempt to validate their view; after all, if that day (a Sunday) was indeed the third day since "these things were done," *and* if "third day since" is *inclusive* of the day on which "these things were done," then He must have been crucified on a Friday. The key Greek word in verse 21 is the one translated "since" (ἀφ', *apŏ*, #575 in *Strong's Greek Dictionary of the New Testament*). We certainly understand the reasoning behind the argument; nevertheless, we will see that in the final analysis, Cleopas' remark in Luke 24:21 proves nothing insofar as the day on which Yeshua was crucified.

In order to get a better handle on why some folks insist that Luke 24:21 proves a Friday crucifixion, I read an exhaustive study titled "Proof that the Crucifixion Did Not Occur on a Wednesday" by James Lowell Sorenson. The author makes some very profound remarks in his 44-page treatise and I especially appreciate his comments about the true meaning of the Hebrew expression *ben-ha-arbayim*. However, sadly, we are at odds with his view that "Hebraic counting" must always require inclusive counting. Certainly, there are times when inclusive reckoning is understood from the context, but there are other times when *exclusive* reckoning conveys the clear intent of the author. An example of inclusive reckoning would be the account of the woman with the issue of blood who touched Yeshua's tassel (*hem* in the KJV) and was thereby healed. In Matthew 9:22, He told her, "Daughter, be of good comfort; thy faith hath made thee whole." The verse goes on to say that the woman was made whole "*from that hour*." We know that the woman didn't have to wait for an hour to elapse before she experienced the healing. No, she was instantly healed, which is *inclusive* of that hour. That is a proper understanding of "inclusive reckoning." When, however, one says, "it's been three days since something happened," we can rightly understand that the clock began ticking the day *after* the event, not inclusive of the day on which it occurred. Are there any Scriptural examples of *exclusive reckoning*? Yes, there are.

One Scriptural example of *exclusive reckoning* is really all we need to discredit any mistaken assumptions that ancient Hebrews would have understood "three days since" something happened as being inclusive of the day on which it occurred. In Matthew 22, after enduring attempts from both the Pharisees and the Sadducees to catch Him in some sort of doctrinal misspeak, Yeshua decided it was His turn to ask the questions. In verse 42, He asked:

> [42]"What think ye of Messiah? Whose son is He?" They say unto Him, "*The son* of David."
> [43]He saith unto them, "How then doth David in spirit call him Master, saying,
> [44]"Yahweh said unto my Adonai (Master), 'Sit thou on my right hand, till I make thine enemies thy footstool'"?
> [45]"If David then call him Master, how is he his son?"
> [46]And no man was able to answer Him a word, neither durst any *man* <u>from that day forth</u> ask him any more *questions*."

Once Yeshua caught the Pharisees at their own game, they decided to leave Him alone. From that day forth, they didn't dare ask Him any more questions. For those who insist that "the third day since these things were done" in Luke 24:21 must be inclusive of the day on which those things were done, we would ask if "from that day forth" in the above passage must also be inclusive of the day on which the discussion between Yeshua and the Pharisees occurred. In other words, did the Pharisees ask Yeshua any

questions on the day of the discussion? The answer is yes, they did. However, *after* that day, no more questions were asked. This is a proper example of *exclusive* reckoning. Of course, there are other examples of time expression in which this same Greek word *apŏ* should not be construed as being inclusive of the first time reference. In Luke 5:4-10, Yeshua beckoned Simon Peter to cast his net into the lake to catch some fish. Peter reluctantly obeyed after explaining that they had toiled all night trying to catch fish, but had come up empty. When the ensuing catch was so huge that it broke the net, Peter immediately became aware of his sinful state and fell at Yeshua's knees. Yeshua replied, "Fear not; from (*apŏ*) henceforth thou shalt catch men." We would not understand inclusive reckoning from the above passage because it wasn't until considerably later that Peter began "catching men." This, then, is another example of *exclusive reckoning*. Hopefully by now we are all cautious of those who insist that the "Hebraic method of counting" must be inclusive.

If we can understand that there is a time and a place for both inclusive and exclusive reckoning, not only in our English-speaking culture but also in Hebraic thought, the question becomes, "Does the 'third day since these things were done' include or exclude the day on which those things were done? If you say, "This is the 17th year since I graduated," are you including the year of your graduation in your count? The people with whom we are acquainted would not include the year of their graduation in their count, nor would we. We would therefore understand *exclusive reckoning*.

There is actually more than one factor to consider in our response to those who insist that Luke 24:21 proves a Sunday resurrection. First, we need to define when the "these things" clock began ticking. When were "these things" actually done (i.e., completed)? If we assume the clock started ticking at Yeshua's death and burial, then "today" in Luke 24:21 would have been the *fourth* day, not the third day since these things were done. On the other hand, if the clock began ticking when the tomb was sealed out of a concern that someone might steal Yeshua's body and claim that he had been resurrected (Matt. 27:62), then "today" would have been the *third* day. In fact, this latter argument is what many "Wednesday crucifixion" supporters use. The following is taken from a booklet titled "He Arose! …But When?":

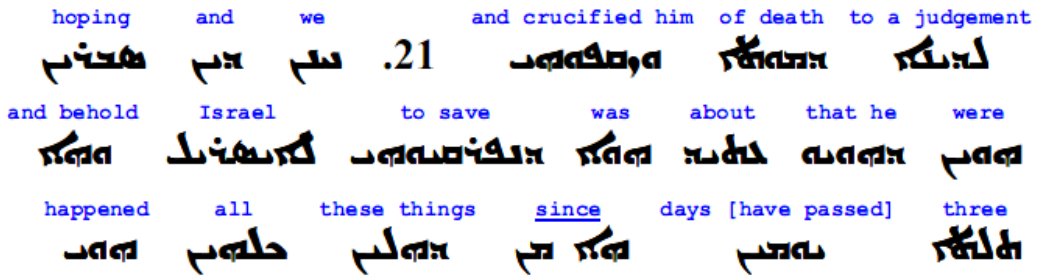
> Those on the road to Emmaus had not yet heard that the Messiah had risen, and were talking with Him likely late Saturday night, Luke 24:13-21. They mention that this is the third day since these things were done, but they do not pinpoint what they mean by "these things." It most likely was the sealing of the tomb, on Thursday, and now three days later they were not aware that the risen Savior Himself was talking with them.[39]

As much as we would like to agree with the above author, we are persuaded that it is highly unlikely that the discussion between Yeshua and the men on the road to Emmaus took place late Saturday night, especially when you read the entire chapter in full context. The chapter opens with the women's early morning discovery that the tomb was empty and their visit with the men in shining garments. Hopefully, we all know what day that was. Later in the chapter, beginning with verse 13, we read the account of Yeshua and the men on their way to Emmaus. Verse 13 opens with, "And behold, two of them (disciples) went THAT SAME DAY to a village called Emmaus …." We have every reason to believe that the walk to Emmaus described in Luke 24 not only occurred on the first day of the week, but it was well after

[39] From the booklet "He Arose! …But When?" A YNCA Publication, Yahweh's New Covenant Assembly, Kingdom City, MO, 1994, p. 19.

sunrise and most likely (though not necessarily) during the afternoon hours. Certainly, this portion of the visit could well have taken place during the morning hours; after all, it's at least a seven-mile journey from Jerusalem to Emmaus.[40] We also question the above author's contention that "these things" most likely refers to the sealing of the tomb. Is it possible? Certainly. However, there are other factors that need to be addressed before reaching our conclusion.

We find it interesting that in the Aramaic Peshitta, the word "today" is not found within the text of Luke 24:21. Here is a screen shot of this passage, complete with English translation, as taken from www.peshitta.org:



As you may know, Aramaic is read from right to left, so a literal reading would be, "… to a judgment of death and crucified him; and we were hoping that he was about to save Israel; and behold, three days have passed since these things all happened." Again, the word "today," which is found in the Greek texts that we have seen, is *not* found in the Aramaic Peshitta text. The absence of this word can have a profound effect on the way this passage is interpreted. Many folks are persuaded that the Greek text was actually translated from an original Aramaic text, so we must consider the possibility that the word "today" may not have been included in Luke's original composition, but that a translator or copyist may have inadvertently supplied it, perhaps subconsciously thinking that it fits the context. Certainly, if the day on which Yeshua and the men from Emmaus had their discussion was the third day, then the word "today" belongs in the text. But what if the discussion actually took place on the *fourth day* after those things were done?

Let's consider the context of Luke chapter 24. Verse 1 tells us that it was the first day of the week, the day commonly known as Sunday, and it was on this day, very early in the morning, that the women discovered the empty tomb and visited with the men in shining garments, whom we know from the other accounts were angels. The angels explained that Yeshua was not there because He had already risen, just as He had said He would. More significantly, the angels reminded the women that Yeshua had previously told them that on *the third day* He would rise again.

Please remember that the tomb was already empty when the women arrived; Yeshua had already risen from the dead. If He rose the previous evening, as the Sabbath drew to a close, then He would have perfectly fulfilled the "three days and three nights" sign that He gave the scribes and Pharisees in Matt. 12:38-40. Remember, we are never specifically told "when" Yeshua rose from the dead and even with the account of the earthquake in Matthew 28, which many presume represents the time of His

[40] Some scholars maintain the Biblical city of Emmaus is actually found some 18 miles from Jerusalem and that the city is better known as Emmaus-Nicopolis. If so, the conversation on the road to Emmaus most likely began during the morning hours of the first day of the week.

resurrection, Matthew's actual focus is on the *event* itself instead of being on its specific *timing*. In other words, was Yeshua's resurrection at the time of the women's visit or had it already occurred and Matthew was overlaying that account onto the account of the women's visit, which came later? Matthew, in his account, describes the fainting guards and the rolling away of the stone, but had Yeshua had already risen by that time? Was that event witnessed by the women or did it occur hours beforehand, possibly as early as the previous evening at sunset? In reading the resurrection accounts, we are left to assume a lot about the specific timing of the events because we are told so little. Thus, there is nothing in Matthew's or Luke's account to prevent us from believing that not only was the tomb empty at the time of the women's visit, but it may very well have been empty for ten hours or more.

Of course, the aforementioned reasoning only applies if the word "today" is missing from Luke 24:21. If it is missing, then what exactly were Cleopas and his friend attempting to convey to Yeshua? It could be paraphrased like this: "He was a prophet mighty in deed and word before the Almighty and all the people, but the chief priests and rulers delivered Him to be condemned to death and he was crucified. Our hopes were dashed because we were expecting that He was the One who would save Israel; not only that, but three days have come and gone since all these things happened!"

Cleopas and his friend go on to describe the report they heard about the women's visit to the tomb and that some of their group had also visited the same tomb and likewise found it empty. As we read the "Cleopas Report," we expect the men to properly assimilate all the information that they shared with Yeshua, the spiritual light bulb eventually illuminating their minds with the realization that Yeshua is indeed alive and that He is indeed the promised Messiah. Instead, they are downcast, their hopes dashed. It isn't until Yeshua reveals Himself to them that they are able to "put two and two together," so to speak. Thus, the context of this account is not for Luke's readers to understand the day of their walk to Emmaus as having been the third day "since these things were done"; rather, the context is that, from Cleopas' perspective, the three days specified by Yeshua had come and gone and the disciples were still without hope because Israel was still left undelivered. We therefore do not see this passage proving or disproving a sixth-day crucifixion.

Finally, on a more technical note, even if the word "today" was in the original text of Luke 24:21, it can be argued that the first day of that week was indeed the third day since those things were done. We all know that Yeshua was crucified and buried before sunset, but if the crucifixion was on a Wednesday, here is how Sunday was the third day since the crucifixion:

Late Thursday afternoon = 1 day has elapsed since the crucifixion
Late Friday afternoon = 2 days have elapsed
Late Saturday afternoon = 3 days have elapsed

If the conversation on the road to Emmaus took place in the morning or even during early afternoon hours of Sunday, four complete days had not yet elapsed. Technically-speaking, four days could not have elapsed until late afternoon on Sunday.

IV. Visual Sighting or Conjunction?

Another point of contention within many circles involves the discussion as to whether Judaism of Yeshua's day determined the first day of the month by the visual sighting of the new moon or by the conjunction (the astronomical new moon). We are persuaded that Judaism of Yeshua's day reckoned the calendar based on the visual sighting of the new moon. The following commentary is actually taken from our study "When and *Where* Does the Scriptural Month Begin?" We feel the reasoning that we offer in that study is worth repeating here:

We were surprised to learn that many believers out there are persuaded that the conjunction of the moon (sometimes referred to as the "astronomical new moon") determines the first day of the month, which, of course, also determines the first day of the Scriptural New Year. I have always felt that it makes sense to believe that when Yahweh told Moses and Aaron that "this month" is the beginning of months, they were looking at a crescent new moon. Otherwise, what was the connection (or *context*) to "this month"? Were they looking at calculations that determined the conjunction had just occurred, and in the process of discussing those calculations Yahweh interrupted them to say, "By the way, this month that you just calculated is the beginning of months?" Or were Moses and Aaron looking up at a crescent new moon when Yahweh clarified that that new moon was the first new moon of the year? This latter option makes the most sense to us.

When we combine the logic of this option with the understanding of first-century Judaism, it makes even *more* sense. Notice what Philo wrote with regard to "when" the new moon is:

> XXVI (140) Following the order stated above, we record the third type of feast which we will proceed to explain. This is the New Moon, or beginning of the lunar month, namely the period between one conjunction and the next, the length of which has been accurately calculated in the astronomical schools. The new moon holds its place among the feasts for many reasons. First, because it is the beginning of the month, and the beginning, both in number and in time, deserves honour. Secondly, because when it [i.e., *the new moon*] arrives, nothing in heaven is left without light, for while at the conjunction, when the moon is lost to sight under the sun, the side which faces earth is darkened, when the new month begins it resumes its natural brightness.
> (141) The third reason is, that the stronger or more powerful element at that time supplies the help which is needed to the smaller and weaker. For it is just then that the sun begins to illumine the moon with the light which we perceive and the moon reveals its own beauty to the eye.[41]

According to first-century Jew Philo, when the new moon arrives, "nothing in heaven is left without light." He contrasts this with the *conjunction*, which he describes as the time when the moon is "lost to sight" and the side that faces earth is *darkened*. However, as Philo continues, when the new month begins, it (the moon) "resumes its natural brightness." As if those words aren't plain enough in describing when Philo believes the new month begins, he added that at the time of the new moon "the sun begins to illumine the moon with the light which we perceive and the moon reveals its own beauty to the eye."

Another ancient testimony is that of a work known as *The Book of Enoch*. Some individuals have supported the belief that *The Book of Enoch* was written under the inspiration of Yahweh. We do not wish to enter into this debate because regardless of whether or not it is inspired by Yahweh, its historical

[41] *The Works of Philo*, Vol. 7, "The Special Laws, II," Ch. XXVI, section 140, translated by F. H. Colson (Harvard University Press, Loeb Classical Library, Cambridge, MA, 1937), p. 391, 393.

significance cannot be denied. *The Book of Enoch* offers historical evidence detailing the religious views of certain first century BCE Jewish believers. In chapter LXXVIII, vv. 10-13, we read the following understanding:

> 10. And [the angel] Uriel showed me another law: when light is transferred to the moon, and on which side it is transferred to her by the sun. 11. During all the period during which the moon is growing in her light, she is transferring it to herself when opposite to the sun during fourteen days [her light is accomplished in the heaven], and when she is illumined throughout, her light is accomplished in the heaven. 12. And on the first day she is called the new moon, for on that day the light rises upon her. 13. She becomes full moon exactly on the day when the sun sets in the west, and from the east she rises at night, and the moon shines the whole night through till the sun rises over against her and the moon is seen over against the sun.[42]

Although the majority of Judaism today bases their religious calendar on the astronomical new moon, they agree that, originally, the calendar was based on visual observation. For example, the following concession appears in *The Oxford Dictionary of the Jewish Religion*:

> Until Hillel II instituted a permanent calendar based on astronomical calculations (in 358), the fixing of Ro'sh Hodesh (the new moon) was determined by observation and the evidence of witnesses.[43]

Medieval Jewish rabbi, physician and philosopher Maimonides (frequently referred to as "the Rambam") authored a treatise entitled "Sanctification of the New Moon" in which he went into considerable detail outlining how the new moon was determined in ancient times. Rather than quote all 40+ pages of his work, we'll just cite the following paragraph:

> 3. Each month the moon disappears and becomes invisible for about two days, or somewhat more or less–for about one day at the end of the old month, before it reaches its conjunction with the sun, and for about one day after its conjunction with the sun. Then it reappears in the evening in the west, and this night, on which it becomes visible in the west after its disappearance, is the beginning of the month. From this day on 29 days were counted, and if the new crescent appeared on the night of the 30th day, this 30th day was the first day of the *new* month. If, however, it did not appear on that night, the 30th day would belong to the *old* month and the 31st day would be the first day of the new month. And no matter whether the moon did or did not appear in the night of the 31st day, no attention was paid to it, for the lunar month never lasts longer than 30 days.[44]

In spite of all the above evidence, which happens to align with our understanding of Scripture, a large contingent of believers insists that the original calendar was (and is) based on the astronomical new moon.

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[42] *The Book of Enoch* (I Enoch), translated by R. H. Charles, D.Litt., D.D., Hollen Street Press Ltd, at Slough (Great Britain), 1991, p. 105.

[43] *The Oxford Dictionary of the Jewish Religion*, R. J. Zwi Werblowsky and Geoffrey Wigoder, Editors in Chief, Oxford University Press, New York, 1997, p. 145.

[44] *The Code of Maimonides*, Book Three, Treatise Eight, "Sanctification of the New Moon," translated from the Hebrew by Solomon Gandz, Yale University Press, New Haven, CT, 1956, chapter I, pp. 3-4. Note: Maimonides lived from 1135 until 1204.

V. Historical Relevance of the Vernal Equinox

In our original *Balancing the Calendar* study, we incorporated a chapter addressing the historical relevance of the vernal equinox. Since we have touched on this historical aspect here in this follow-up study, I believe this same chapter has a place here as well.

It has historically been a Jewish understanding that the first month of the year begins on or after the vernal equinox. For instance, we need to consider the fact that Moses was learned in all the ways of the Egyptians (Acts 7:22). Since the pyramids were used to indicate solstices and equinoxes,[45] there is no reason to doubt that Moses knew how to determine when the vernal equinox occurred. Furthermore, anyone can determine when the equinox occurs by the use of a sun dial, such as the one used by King Hezekiah in II Kings 20:8-11.

Karaite Jew Nehemia Gordon makes light of any knowledge that Moses may have had about determining the day of the vernal equinox, claiming that any such knowledge was later lost to ancient Judaism:

> Fear not, say advocates of the equinox, Moses had secret astronomical knowledge learned at the court of Pharoah. This secret knowledge supposedly included the exact calculation to work out the true timing of the Vernal Equinox. If Moses had this secret knowledge it was unfortunately unknown to later Jews. The early Rabbis mention the Vernal Equinox but they did not have a way of reliably calculating it because they did not know the true length of the solar year. There were actually two contradictory opinions about the length of the solar year and both were wrong. According to Rabbi Samuel the solar year was 365 days 6 hours whereas Rabbi Ada reckoned the solar year to be 365 days 5 hours 55 minutes 25.4 seconds. The difference between these two values may sound trivial but they result in the Vernal Equinox falling out on different days, neither of which is the correct day! For example, this year the Equinox of Samuel falls out on April 8, 2010 whereas the Equinox of Ada is March 28, 2010. As already mentioned, the true Vernal Equinox is March 21, 2010 – 7 days before the Equinox of Ada and 18 days before the Equinox of Samuel. Which one of these three values did Moses supposedly use: the Equinox of Ada, the Equinox of Samuel, or the true astronomical value only worked out in modern times? If this knowledge was known to Moses then why was it unknown to every other ancient civilization including the Jews? Did God really intend for us to wait for the advent of modern astronomy to know the true timing of the biblical feasts? Or did he set out a simple system that ancient Israelite farmers could easily follow by looking at their crops as they grew in the fields? It seems to me this is what the Creator was talking about when he said: "Observe the Month of the Aviv" in Deuteronomy 16:1. No need for secret astronomical knowledge; just a simple way to track the solar cycle relevant to an ancient farming society.[46]

According to Nehemia Gordon, the Jews may have *thought* that they knew when the vernal equinox was, but they were mistaken; moreover, claims Mr. Gordon, there wasn't any agreement as to when it actually occurred. Of course, we can expect the obviously biased Mr. Gordon to portray rabbinic Judaism

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[45] For example, see the article "Symbolism and Coincidences of the Great Pyramid," by Tim G. Hunkler, which may be accessed at the following URL: http://www.hunkler.com/pyramids/pyramid_symbolism.html.

[46] From the *Karaite Korner Newsletter*, #455: "Will the Real Equinox Please Stand Up" by Nehemia Gordon, Saturday, March 20, 2010. The entire article can be read by accessing the following URL: http://groups.yahoo.com/group/karaite_korner_news/message/479.

as being rather confused and certainly in error. Notwithstanding, an engineer/archaeologist named Glen Dash disputes Nehemia Gordon's claim that Moses could not have known how to determine the equinoxes. Glen Dash has worked at archaeological sites in Egypt, Greece, Cyprus and the United States and in 2017 he presented his conclusion that the pyramids were precisely aligned with the help of the sun, but not in the ordinary way -- they were aligned *specifically on the day of the autumnal equinox*. His complete report is found in *The Journal of Ancient Egyptian Architecture*, but we read about it in the February 22, 2018 posting on *The Smithsonian.com*. According to author Brigit Katz, Glen Dash "notes that the Great Pyramid is nearly perfectly aligned along the cardinal points—north, south, east and west—with 'an accuracy of better than four minutes of arc, or one-fifteenth of one degree.'" Katz adds, "Over the years, experts have proposed a number of theories to explain how the ancient Egyptians built the pyramids. Some have posited that they used the constellations, while others believe they relied on the sun. In his paper, Dash suggests that ancient Egyptians did in fact use the sun to align the pyramids—but specifically on the day of the fall equinox."[47] In his complete report, Dash concludes, "It is hard to imagine a method that could be simpler either conceptually or in practice."[48] But how could this have been a "simple method" if Nehemia Gordon's confident claim is true -- that the ancients did not have the technical know-how to precisely determine the day of the equinox?

For those who would like to delve more deeply into the notion that the Egyptians aligned the pyramids on the day of the autumnal equinox, please consider the legacy of a man named Imhotep. Imhotep is known as one of the chief officials of the Pharaoh Djoser. Egyptologists ascribe to him the design of the Pyramid of Djoser, a step pyramid at Saqqara in Egypt, in 2630–2611 BCE and they say he may also have been responsible for the first known use of stone columns to support a building. There is strong supportive evidence that Imhotep was none other than the Biblical Joseph.[49]

Even if the Jews of that time period were slightly off in their determinations, they *thought* they had it right. Nehemia Gordon has himself been known to use imprecise means in arbitrarily declaring a new month on the 29th day at sunset, even though no new moon was sighted, because he *thought* it should have been visible if it hadn't been for "dust on the horizon."[50] Does this mean the new moon would definitely have been visible if there had been no "dust on the horizon"? And how does Mr. Gordon know that the Almighty didn't put the dust there to test him to see if he would be patient enough to wait for the new moon to actually be sighted before making a declaration on his own? Thus, Nehemia Gordon certainly *thought* he had it right, but that doesn't mean he did, nor does it mean that the world stopped spinning if he had it wrong.

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[47] *Smithsonian.com*, article "Is the Fall Equinox the Secret to the Pyramids' Near-Perfect Alignment?" by Brigit Katz, 02/22/2018.

[48] *The Journal of Ancient Egyptian Architecture*, article "Occam's Egyptian razor: The Equinox and the Alignment of the Pyramids," by Glen Dash, Vol. 2, 2017.

[49] See Ark Discovery International, "Joseph in Ancient Egyptian History," by Mary Nell Wyatt (based on Ron Wyatt's research), no date listed.

[50] For example, the following excerpt is taken from Newsletter #33: New Moon Report: April 2000: "On April 5, 2000 the New Moon was not sighted by any of the observers from Israel. It was very hazy all over Israel apparently caused by dust in the air, which made the relatively slender crescent invisible to the naked eye. However, in the past the moon has been visible under similar astronomical conditions. This means that were it not for the dust on the horizon, the moon would have been visible. Therefore, we will be observing Rosh Hodesh (New Moon Day) on the evening of April 5 and the day of April 6." This report can be read in its entirety by accessing the following URL: http://groups.yahoo.com/group/karaite_korner_news/message/37?threaded=1.

Certainly, a first-century Jew known as Philo of Alexandria (c. 20 BCE – 50 CE) felt that he knew how to determine when the vernal equinox occurred. On at least three separate occasions he matter-of-factly wrote that this is when the new year begins, and it hardly seems likely that he would have written about such a method if he didn't know how to implement it. The following comes from his work entitled "On the Life of Moses, II":

> Moses puts down the beginning of the vernal equinox as the first month of the year, attributing the chief honour, not as some persons do to the periodical revolutions of the year in regard of time, but rather to the graces and beauties of nature which it has caused to shine upon men; for it is through the bounty of nature that the seeds which are sown to produce the necessary food of mankind are brought to perfection.[51]

Philo offers the same explanation in his work entitled "The Special Laws, I":

> In the first season—he calls springtime and its equinox the first season—he ordered that a feast which is called 'the feast of unleavened bread' be celebrated for seven days and declared that every day was equal in honor in religious services.[52]

Finally, in another work entitled "Questions and Answers on Exodus," Philo wrote the following:

> (Scripture) thinks it proper to reckon the cycle of months from the vernal equinox. Moreover, (this month) is said to be the 'first' and the 'beginning' by synonymy, since these (terms) are explained by each other, for it is said to be the first both in order and in power; similarly that time which proceeds from the vernal equinox also appears (as) the beginning both in order and in power, in the same way as the head (is the beginning) of a living creature. And thus those who are learned in astronomy have given this name to the before-mentioned time. For they call the Ram the head of the zodiac since in it the sun appears to produce the vernal equinox.[53]

It was clearly Philo's understanding that the first month of the year was reckoned from the vernal equinox. I realize the reaction of those who don't agree with what Philo wrote is to try to discredit him and his writings. Some may present the argument that Philo was a confused man who dabbled a little too much into Greek philosophy and had a bizarre way of expressing himself. We can see why someone might think that way. We have personally found that much of Philo's writings tend to be generally ambiguous, but some of what he wrote is very clear. There is much about the life of Philo that many people don't know, and I believe it is worthy of commentary here. Philo was more than just a Jew living in Alexandria, Egypt. He was ***the most prominent Jew*** living in Alexandria, Egypt. His fellow Jews chose him over all other Jews to represent their people in protesting an officially instigated massacre of Jews in Alexandria. This was a very serious issue — a matter of life and death for the Jews of Alexandria. In order to plead their cause before the Roman emperor, they had to select the man who they felt would best represent them. The question arises, "Would the Jews of Alexandria have chosen Philo had he not properly represented normative Jewish practice and belief?"

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[51] From *The Works of Philo*, "On the Life of Moses, II," chap. XLI, 222, translated by C.D. Yonge, Hendrickson Publishers, 1993, pp. 510-511.
[52] Ibid, "The Special Laws, I," chap. XXXV, sec. 181, p. 551.
[53] From *Philo*, Supplement II, "Questions and Answers on Exodus," translated by Ralph Marcus, Ph.D., Harvard University Press, Cambridge, MA:, 1953, pp. 2-3.

Indeed, they would only have chosen a man whose beliefs reflected their own beliefs, whether that be Sabbath observance, new moon observance, and yes, when to begin the Scriptural year. This is indeed a significant fact, as echoed by *The Cambridge History of Judaism*:

> It is significant that his co-religionists chose him as ambassador to Caligula in 39-40. In such circumstances only a man who was important in the city would be appointed.[54]

For those who question the credibility and reliability of Philo, we are providing the following excerpt from *The Anchor Bible Dictionary*:

> Philo was a prominent member of the Jewish community of Alexandria[55], the largest Jewish settlement outside Palestine. The only certain date known from his life comes from his account of the great pogrom[56] in Alexandria which started in A.D. 38 under the prefect Flaccus, during the reign of the Roman emperor Gaius Caligula. Philo was then chosen to head a delegation (Gaium 370) sent in A.D. 39/40 by the Jewish community to Gaius Caligula in Rome.[57]

Philo clearly had the trust of his fellow Jews in Alexandria, but did his practice and belief reflect all of normative Judaism? Again, let us turn to *The Anchor Bible Dictionary* for that answer:

> Was Philo then fundamentally Greek or Jewish? His loyalty to the Jewish institutions, the laws of Moses, the role of Israel as the priesthood of the world, and his harshness against renegades (even to the point of advocating lynching) shows that he was fundamentally a Jew.[58]

Philo represented the beliefs of normative Judaism, and Philo reckoned the beginning of the new year with the new moon following the vernal equinox.

Eusebius (260 – 339 CE) is popularly known as "The Father of Church History." He carried forward the same understanding expressed by Philo, namely, that the equinox determined the first month of the new year. The following is taken from his work entitled *Ecclesiastical History*:

> (14) You have, therefore, in the first year, the new moon of the first month, which is the beginning of every cycle of nineteen years, on the twenty-sixth of the Egyptian month Phamenoth. But according to the months of the Macedonians the twenty-second of Dystrus. But as the Romans would say, before the eleventh of the calends of April. (15) But the sun is found on the said twenty-sixth of the month Phamenoth, not only as entering the first segment (of the zodiac), but on the fourth day is already found passing through it. But this segment they generally call the first dodecatomorium, and the equinox, and the beginning of the months, and the head of the cycle, and the head of the planetary course. But that (segment) before this, they call the last of the months, the twelfth segment, and the last dodecatemorium, and the end of the planetary revolution. Hence, also, those that place the first month in it [the twelfth segment], and that fix the fourteenth of the month by it, commit, as we think, no little and no common blunder. (16)

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[54] From *The Cambridge History of Judaism*, Vol. 3, by William Horbury, W.D. Davies and John Sturdy, Cambridge University Press, 1999, p. 879.

[55] According to this same reference, article "Alexandria," p. 152, we learn, "By the 1st century C.E. the Jewish population in Alexandria numbered in the hundreds of thousands." The majority of these Jews were descendants of prisoners of war who were forcibly settled there by Alexander when the city was founded.

[56] "Pogrom" is defined as "An organized and often officially instigated local massacre, especially one directed against the Jews. [<Russian, destruction]" — From *The Reader's Digest Great Encyclopedic Dictionary*.

[57] From *The Anchor Bible Dictionary*, Vol. 5, David Noel Freedman, Editor-in-Chief, article "Philo of Alexandria," by Peder Borgen, Doubleday, 1992, p. 333.

[58] Ibid, p. 341.

> But neither is this our opinion only, but it was also known to the Jews anciently, and before Christ, and was chiefly observed by them, as we may learn from Philo, Josephus, and Musaeus; and not only from these, but also from those still more ancient, i.e., the two Agathobuli, commonly called the masters, and of Aristobulus, that most distinguished scholar, who was one of the seventy that translated the holy Scriptures from the Hebrew for Ptolemy Philadephus, and his father, and dedicated his exposition of the law of Moses to the same kings. These, when they resolve inquiries on Exodus, say that all ought to sacrifice the Passover alike after the vernal equinox, in the middle of the first month. But this is found to be when the sun passes through the first segment of the solar, or, as some call it, the zodiacal circle. But this Aristobulus also adds, it was requisite that not only the sun should have passed the equinoctial segment for the feast of the Passover, but the moon also.[59]

Clearly, Eusebius carried forward the same understanding conveyed by Philo some three hundred years earlier. That understanding was that the vernal equinox determined when the new year was about to begin.

Please notice that Eusebius wrote that it was the Jewish understanding for the vernal equinox to precede the Passover sacrifice. This raises a significant question: If we were in Israel and we found very mature fields of barley prior to the new moon … ***and*** we knew that the new moon occurred before the vernal equinox, could we declare that new moon to be *Abib*, the first month of the year? According to what Eusebius wrote, the Jewish sages agreed that the criterion was for the Passover sacrifice (***not the new moon***) to occur after the vernal equinox. However, Eusebius ***also*** wrote that Aristobulus, one of the translators of the Septuagint, believed that the vernal equinox should precede the ***new moon***. Notice again what Eusebius wrote:

> But this Aristobulus also adds, it was requisite that not only the sun should have passed the equinoctial segment for the feast of the Passover, but the moon also.

Thus, it appears that there was some disagreement among the Jews even during Aristobulus' day (3rd century BCE) as to when precisely the new year should be declared. Must the vernal equinox precede the new moon of Abib, or the Passover sacrifice that occurred later on in that month?

We see that there was apparently some confusion among the Jews as to when the new year should begin. We have already read the clear statements from Philo in which he expressed that the "cycle of months is reckoned ***from the vernal equinox***." In other words, the vernal equinox comes first, then comes the new month. However, it is apparent that not all of Judaism embraced this method of reckoning. In fact, as we have already presented, other Jews openly expressed the view that the "bottom line" was for there to be ripe barley in time for Passover. In other words, if we were in the month *Adar* with very mature fields of barley covering the landscape, and it was clear that the fields would be ripe within two weeks of the next new moon sighting, that new moon would be declared the first new moon of the year, even if the equinox hadn't occurred yet.

When we take a *balanced* approach to Yahweh's calendar, I believe we can see that both sides have meritorious arguments. Those of the "Green Ears of Barley" persuasion rightly recognize that there should be ripe barley in time for the Feast of Unleavened Bread. Those of the "Equinox" persuasion properly understand that Yahweh ordained the heavenly lights for determining seasons and days and

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[59] From *Eusebius' Ecclesiastical History*, Book 7, chapter 32, translated by C. F. Cruse, Hendrickson Publishers, 2000, pp. 273-274.

years. What we the people need are iron-clad, certifiable reports from Israel that, indeed, the general stage of barley is such that it will be ripe in time for the Feast of Unleavened Bread … even though the new moon they are dubbing "Abib" begins prior to the vernal equinox. If there is no consensus about the maturity level of the barley crop, then we should all be mature enough to agree to be patient and wait for the next new moon. Sadly, we do not see such an agreement to be forthcoming any time soon. But then again, why should we anticipate the adoption of a *balanced* calendar in such an *unbalanced* world?

VI. Calendrical Hypocrisy

Our dictionary defines "hypocrisy" as "The pretense of having feelings or characteristics one does not possess." In religious circles, a classic example of this occurred in the late 1980's when a famous television evangelist accused another pastor of sexual immorality. The accused pastor went on to expose the self-righteous evangelist, who had been visiting a prostitute in a hotel. Hypocrisy with regard to one's stand on sexual immorality may seem more serious than hypocrisy with one's stand on the Creator's calendar; nevertheless, if it's a pretense of feelings that one does not actually possess, it's hypocrisy. Such proved to be the case with one religious group in 2018 when they promoted the importance of not allowing the upcoming new moon to determine the first month of the Scriptural year if there was no "Abib barley" in Jerusalem by the time it (the new moon) was sighted. It turns out the barley was certainly *not* in the "Abib" stage by the time of the new moon sighting, but the group decided to declare the new year anyway. We'll read more about this later.

We closed the previous chapter expressing concern about not foreseeing any forthcoming consensus among the various assemblies about the proper maturity of Israel's barley crop in time for Passover. We expressed that concern back in 2011. Then came 2018 and sadly, as alluded to above, those insights into the future again proved themselves true. 2018 was another of those "controversial" years. Winter weather hung around considerably longer than anyone, including us, anticipated. As spring drew closer, we actually thought 2018 might not be a controversial year. With unseasonably cold weather lingering on through the entire month of March, we considered the possibility that primary "Abib barley" watchers might agree the crop just wasn't at the proper stage of maturity for declaring the new year. Here in North Texas, where January has been known to have bouts of unseasonably warm weather, things stayed on the cold side. Things didn't really get much better in February, with 15 days of temperatures in the 30's or lower. The Red Bud trees, which usually display their colorful pink flowers in late February, didn't make their usual yearly appointment and their flowers didn't appear until sometime in March.

On the day we observed Passover that year, May 1, 2018, I happened to be a guest on a Truth Seekers TV program hosted by Brother Ace Elliott in Mesquite, TX. As I drove home, I listened to a couple of innings of a baseball game between the Texas Rangers and the Cleveland Indians. The announcer marveled that the average temperature for the Cleveland Indians' home games in April 2018 was 20 degrees colder than their average April temperature. My brother, who farms in Midwestern Illinois, expressed not remembering any year where it stayed so cold, even after the onset of spring. In fact, he texted me the following photo taken from outside his home on the morning of April 9, 2018:

My brother does not share our Torah values and has never expressed any regard for the Scriptural calendar, so I did not tell him that I'm pretty sure I know the reason why things were so slow in warming up in 2018: It was an *intercalary year* - a year in which an extra month needed to be added to bring the seasons into their proper focus. The Scriptural year ending in 2018, then, should have consisted of not 12, but ***13*** months. The beginning of Yahweh's new year, from all reasonable perspectives, needed to be delayed and the photo on the left, taken over a week after many assemblies had already completed their Feast of Unleavened Bread observance, vividly illustrates the problem they apparently chose to ignore. Please don't get me wrong: Even here in Texas we've been known to experience sudden weather changes, and I can remember a year in which it snowed during the Feast of Unleavened Bread in mid-April. However, that was not a weather *pattern*; such weather

changes are not uncommon during the transition from winter to spring. The cold snap is usually abrupt and by the next day temperatures are often back in the 60's or 70's.

Based on the above observations during March 2018, we truly believed it MIGHT just be the year when the "Abib barley" watchers would agree that the timing wasn't right for declaring the new year and the first month of Abib. However, in the back of our minds we also knew there is a faction of believers who have an inexplicably strong desire to "jump the gun." I first noticed this characteristic back in the year 2000 when Karaite Jew Nehemia Gordon declared a new moon at the end of the 29th day, even though the viewing was obstructed by "dust on the horizon." Since the new moon crescent was not actually seen, a 30th day should have been declared; instead, Mr. Gordon declared it "day 1" of a new month. A few years later, from our perspective, he jumped the gun again by prematurely proclaiming the month of Abib in early March. Our surprise by this time was not so much that he took it upon himself to make such an early declaration as it was the throng of believers who unquestionably took his word for it. By 2010, as previously presented in this study, Mr. Gordon was proudly offering YouTube videos revealing golden strands of barley interspersed within a larger hue of green heads -- dubbing the fields "harvest-ready barley." His supporters, building on his confident declaration, pointed out that barley fields which had not been harvested by mid-month were already "reseeding themselves." In other words, the barley crop was so ripe that seeds were falling and germinating into new plants – an intended, albeit misplaced, embarrassment for those of us who were still observing a 13th month. However, instead of panicking at this scary report, Israeli farmers simply set to work harvesting barley a month later -- precisely when we were persuaded that the harvest *should* have begun.

And now, back to the year 2018. With all the reports of uncharacteristic, unseasonably cold temperatures all across the USA, I couldn't help but be curious about how things were doing climate-wise in the state of Israel, specifically in Jerusalem. *Why is Jerusalem important?* Number one, because Jerusalem is the place where Yahweh placed His name and nowhere do we read that it is no longer the chosen place. Number two, it is recorded that in ancient times the priests set aside a field near the temple where the barley used for the wave sheaf offering was to be harvested; if that barley was not "harvest-ready," then the high priest could not have performed the commanded Wave Sheaf Offering. Alfred Edersheim, in his book *The Temple: Its Ministry and Services*, offers the following historical narrative:

> ***The Sheaf of Firstfruits***
> A little later on in the evening of that same day [Abib 14], just as it was growing dark, a noisy throng followed delegates from the Sanhedrim outside the city and across the brook Kedron. It was a very different procession, and for a very different purpose, from the small band of mourners which, just about the same time, carried the body of the dead Saviour from the cross to the rock-hewn tomb wherein no man had yet been laid. While the one turned into 'the garden' (John 20:15), perhaps to one side, the other emerged, amidst loud demonstrations, in a field across Kedron, which had been marked out for the purpose. They were to be engaged in a service most important to them. It was probably to this circumstance that Joseph of Arimathea owed their non-interference with his request for the body of Jesus, and Nicodemus and the women, that they could go undisturbed about the last sad offices of loving mourners. The law had it, 'Ye shall bring a sheaf [literally the omer] of the firstfruits of your harvest unto the priest; and he shall wave the omer before Jehovah, to be accepted for you: on the morrow after the Sabbath the priest shall wave it' (Lev 23:10, 11). This Passover-sheaf, or rather omer, was to be accompanied by a burnt-offering of a 'he lamb, without blemish, of the first year,' with its appropriate meat- and drink-offering, and after it had been brought, but not till then, fresh barley might be used and sold in the land. Now, this Passover-sheaf was reaped in public the evening before it was offered, and it was

> to witness this ceremony that the crowd gathered around 'the elders,' who took care that all was done according to traditionary ordinance.[60]

Author Edersheim borrowed his historical understanding of how the reaping of the omer was carried out from Jewish sources, including *The Mishnah*, specifically the Fifth Division, titled "Holy Things," tractate "Menahot," chapter 10, Mishnah 3.[61] Of course, there will always be those who believe the Jews made up the information about how and where the omer offering was reaped, but this leaves such naysayers to produce an alternate account. Thus far, they have not come through. As such, we remain persuaded that during the time period in which the temple stood, the priests needed ripe barley for the Wave Sheaf Offering and it was reaped, not from some location in south Israel such as the Negev; rather, it was reaped right there on the eastern edge of Jerusalem, near the temple.

The reason it is so important to understand why the ripe barley used for the Wave Sheaf Offering was always found in the area of *Jerusalem* is because many of today's "barley watchers" are content to settle for barley found *anywhere* in the land of Israel. Once they declare "the Abib has been found," naïve believers accept their testimony without question and *voilà* – throngs of trusting believers observe a feast during a month when virtually anyone with a sense of "climate awareness" can determine that something's out of kilter with the climate for something known as a *spring* feast. I say this with all due respect to the many believers who are earnestly seeking to obey the Father out of love, just as June and I strive to do and just as we did for those twelve years when we based our calendrical reckoning on those same barley reports year after year.

My concern is not so much for those who, in their efforts to get things right, are steered the wrong way by the leaders of the various assemblies as it is for those assembly leaders just referenced. A prime example of this *wrongful steering* occurred in the winter of 2018 when an assembly, in their newsletter, alerted their constituents to be looking for the upcoming new moon which, as they stated, would start the count to Passover <u>if the barley is seen in Jerusalem</u> (the underlining is theirs). I was startled to see such emphasis on finding barley in Jerusalem since, to the best of my knowledge, this assembly had not previously exhibited such a specific criterion for determining the start of the new year. My understanding was that they, like the many assemblies out there, simply went by general reports of barley found *anywhere* in Israel. My curiosity was thus piqued – *if there <u>aren't</u> green ears of barley found in Jerusalem prior to sighting the upcoming new moon, will this assembly go with declaring an intercalary month, thus waiting a full extra month to celebrate Passover/Unleavened Bread?* Displayed below is a screen shot of the pertinent page from their *Beginning Anew* newsletter:[62]

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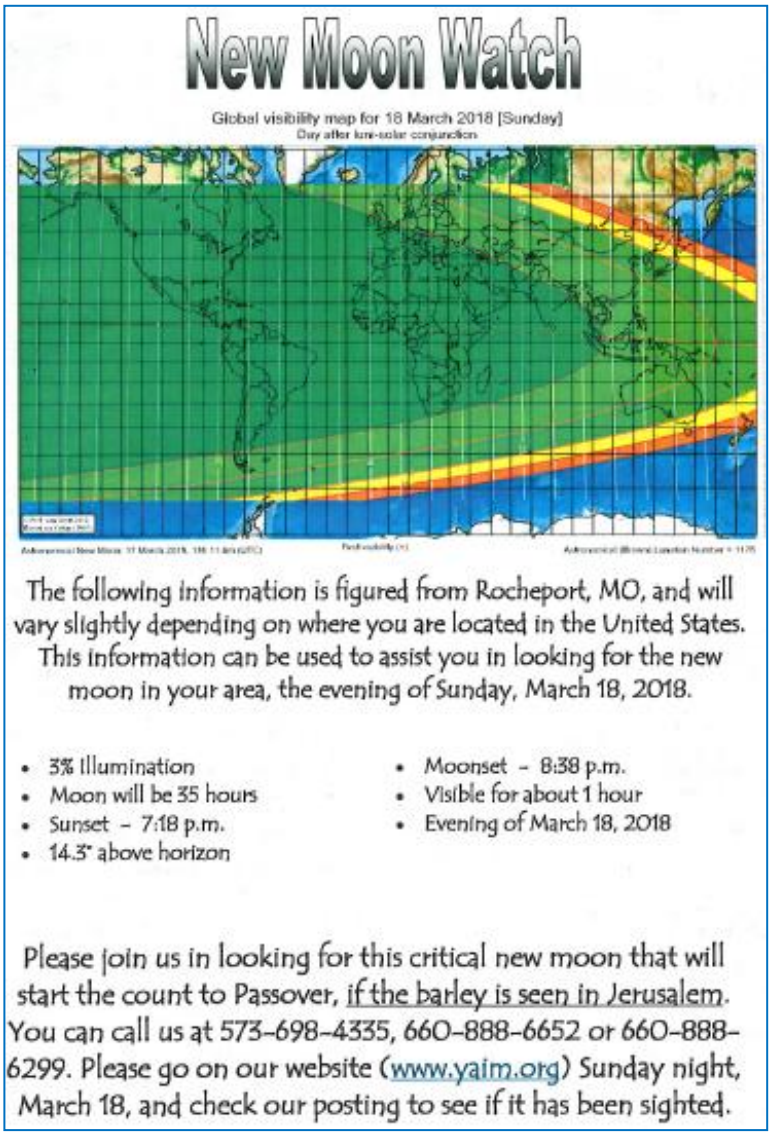
[60] From *The Temple: Its Ministry and Services*, by Alfred Edersheim, D. D., Ph. D., originally published in 1874, Wm. B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, Grand Rapids, MI, 1988, pp. 256-57.

[61] For those wishing to know more about the *Mishnah*, here's a brief summary taken from *Encyclopædia Britannica*: "Mishna, also spelled Mishnah (Hebrew: 'Repeated Study'), plural Mishnayot, the oldest authoritative postbiblical collection and codification of Jewish oral laws, systematically compiled by numerous scholars (called tannaim) over a period of about two centuries. The codification was given final form early in the 3rd century AD by Judah ha-Nasi. The Mishna supplements the written, or scriptural, laws found in the Pentateuch. It presents various interpretations of selective legal traditions that had been preserved orally since at least the time of Ezra (c. 450 BC)." From the online Encyclopædia Britannica, article "Mishna," by The Editors of Encyclopaedia Britannica, accessed at https://www.britannica.com/topic/Mishna, © 2018 Encyclopædia Britannica, Inc.

[62] Taken from *Beginning Anew* newsletter, published by Yahweh's Assemblies in Messiah, Rocheport, MO, April-May 2018, Vol. 39, No. 3, third page. Important: Although it was the April-May issue, we received this newsletter in early *March* 2018, well in advance of the new moon sighting.



As the day of the anticipated new moon sighting drew nearer, I scoured the internet for any and all "Green Ears of Barley in Israel" reports. Frankly, it seemed as though no groups or individuals were interested in divulging their findings, which is one more reason why I sensed that all the groups would agree that indeed we needed to add an extra month to the old, cold year. Then I came across a web site called "**Abib of God**," hosted by a believer named Brian Convery. I have no idea who Brian is, but for those who know me and my stand regarding whether or not we honor Yahweh by referring to Him as "God," it should be clear that the very name of his web site offers a clue that we have at least one major doctrinal difference of opinion. Nevertheless, when I read what he stands for and the general tone of his writings, I found him to be a man of integrity. I respect his desire to be true to our Heavenly Father, even if I disagree with many of his methods and conclusions. In explaining the purpose for his web site, Brian writes, "*Our primary function for this site is simple*. We endeavor to provide the biblical and the technical assistance to those who seek to follow the command to keep the annual appointed times of meeting with God/Elohim (plural)." We appreciate Brian's summary, even if we don't agree with the name he uses in reference to our Heavenly Father. He's only trying to help others and I wish more believers had such a heart for others.

It turns out the new moon was sighted as expected on March 18, 2018 and Brian posted a semi-detailed commentary outlining why he was persuaded the new Scriptural month was *also* the first month of a new year. Here's an excerpt from his "Abib Summation: March 18, 2018":

> And we have inspected the barley as to the head/bud being found perfect/complete so it can reproduce itself and thus be ground into fine flower for a first of the first fruits offering of the early harvest of grain, the barley harvest, which bows deep before God/Elohim prior to its use as the Wave sheaf Offering. There is enough barley which meets the Leviticus 2:14 minimum qualifying requirement to satisfy all the different factions that I am aware of. However that is my opinion and understanding.

I previously mentioned that Brian's "Abib Summation" above was "*semi-detailed*." As detailed as it was, it nevertheless omitted one critical factor – the same factor referenced above in the *Beginning Anew* newsletter. The burning question was this: *Was "Abib barley" found in Jerusalem?*

In spite of my disappointment at not finding the answer to this critical question in Brian's "Abib Summation," I didn't give up and I noticed that Brian offered his viewing audience a video of his "teleconference" Abib report. That video supplied the answer I needed. In spite of my adamant disagreement with Brian's methods, I must simultaneously commend him for the integrity of his answers. After offering details of his findings in various locations in southern Israel, Brian graciously fielded questions from those who participated in the teleconference report. The very first question came from a man named Carl, who apparently shares our own curiosity – and his question was whether or not "Abib barley" was found in Jerusalem.

For the purposes of documentation, I am supplying a link to the video referenced above, but for those who only want to hear the precise question and its answer, here's a separate link. For those who simply prefer reading a transcript of the question and Brian's answer, I am listing it below. I should point out that a woman named Bridget served as the liaison between the callers and Brian, so she begins the segment as follows at the 46:33 mark of the video:

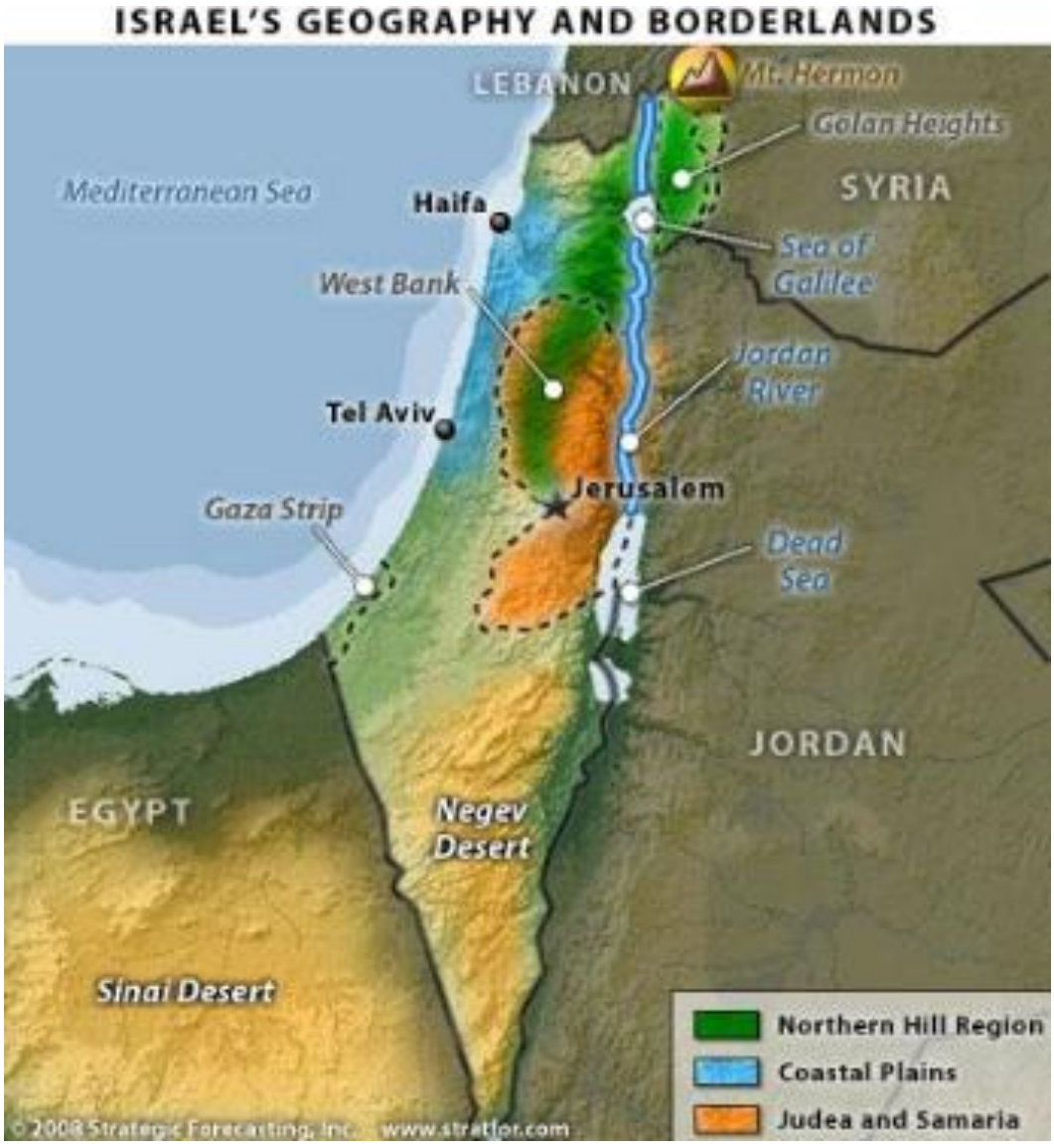
> Bridget: Carl Ryder has his hand up ... Carl, if you take your mute button off, go ahead and ask your question.
> Carl: Yeah, Brian, I just want to confirm -- did you guys find Abib barley in the areas around Jerusalem? I think I understood "No."
> [Nine seconds of painful silence]
> Bridget: Brian, are you there?
> Carl: I think we lost him.
> Brian: No, I'm here.
> Carl and Bridget: Okay.
> Bridget: Did you hear the question?
> Brian: About finding Abib barley around the Jerusalem area, correct?
> Bridget: Right.
> Carl: Yes.
> Brian: Yes ... no, we did not. Actually, the barley up there is pretty young. I took two respective pictures and posted them. But it is ... it is young. And it just ...even on the sides of the slopes in the stonier ground it's still young, so -- very young.[63]

I'm not sure why there were nine seconds of what I term "painful silence" after Carl posed his question, but I would surmise it's because the question is one that Brian would have *preferred* to not have fielded, which would further explain why he didn't cover the barley condition in the Jerusalem area in his "Abib Summation" report. For many believers, myself included, if I'm informed that sufficiently ripened barley has been found growing in a field near Jerusalem prior to the sighting of the new moon, I might be inclined to regard that new moon as being the first new moon of the new year – *even if it's sighted before the vernal equinox*. Some would ask why I can only state that I "might" be inclined to regard such a new moon as being the first new moon of the new year; it's because sadly, based on previous experience, I'm

[63] From the video titled "Sabbath 3-17-2018 from Israel," 03/17/2018. As of 06/02/2018, this video is available on YouTube at the following link:
https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=elDHx6GkvxA&index=1&list=PLtwC8EDq43SP-0EMpD_1I17KlP9-gNjVV.

not sure if I can trust the "Abib barley" reports from Israel, plus after nearly 20 years of starting the new year after the equinox, I'm not aware of a single year in which there was truly "Abib" barley in time for a previous month's Passover/Unleavened Bread observance.

It turns out there was a second witness to there being no "Abib barley" in the area surrounding Jerusalem in March 2018. We were only made aware of one additional 2018 "Israel barley" report and it was forwarded to me by a friend. The report came via an e-mail distribution list sent by Devorah Gordon, who has a Facebook page called "Devorah's Date Tree." Devorah Gordon's report appears to be accurate and it matches Brian Convery's report, yet it was composed subtly enough that upon reading it the first time, I actually came away with the impression that Abib barley was found in Jerusalem. Upon reading it a *second* time, however, it occurred to me that the only place specifically mentioned as having Abib barley was the Northern Negev region, which is located in a desert area well to the south of Jerusalem, as illustrated by the map on the following page:



As it turns out, the friend who forwarded me Devorah Gordon's report came away with the same impression that I had at my first reading. It later occurred to me that it would have been a simple matter for Devorah Gordon to have clarified the fact that *no Abib barley was found in Jerusalem*, especially since this is definitely something about which inquiring minds want to know. Instead, she wrote, "The barley in the Judean Hills and Jordan Valley was quite immature this year." In what area of Israel might we find the Judean Hills? Answer: The mountainous region situated to the west of the Jordan Valley generally encompassing the land given to the tribe of Judah. As many of us know, the city of Jerusalem is located within that region. Conclusion: The barley in and around Jerusalem was quite immature by March 18, 2018. A screen shot of Devorah Gordon's Abib report is displayed below:

This month shall be the beginning of months for you; it is to be the first month of the year to you." (Exodus 12:2)

March 18, 2018

The Aviv Search Team has spent the past few days inspected the barley crop in the Land of Israel to determine whether this year needs to be intercalated with a 13th month. We concentrated our search in the Northern Negev, Judean Hills, and the Jordan Valley, as barley ripens first in these regions.

The barley in the Judean Hills and Jordan Valley was quite immature this year, while the barley in the Northern Negev was more mature. The most developed location we looked at in the Northern Negev had a good amount of patches of aviv barley. We also found some individual stalks at other fields. It is the unanimous conclusion of the participants, that we found enough aviv barley to begin the year with the upcoming new moon sighting.

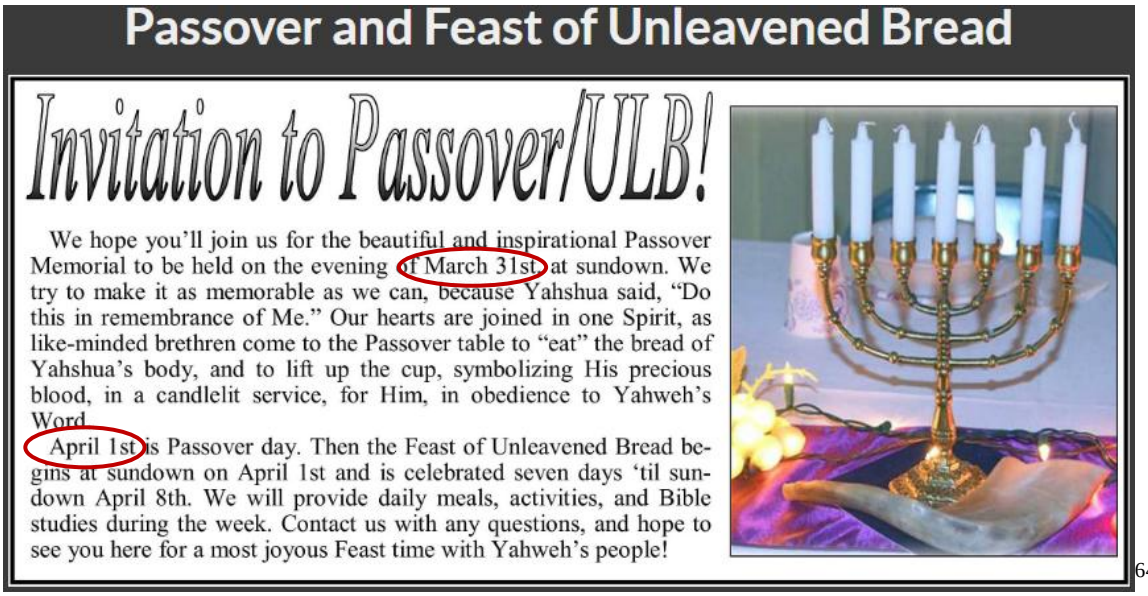
For many who rely on the "Abib barley" reports from Israel, the only thing that matters is whether or not there is Abib barley *anywhere* in Israel, regardless of its stage in the Jerusalem area. Since the historical report of priests reaping barley outside the temple area is taken from the *Mishnah*, a writing that

is of little or no consequence to Karaite Judaism, we shouldn't really expect Devorah Gordon, possibly a Karaite related to Nehemia Gordon, to specifically address whether or not there was Abib barley in the Jerusalem area. For June and me, the report found in the *Mishnah* may not be 100% accurate, but nevertheless, it only makes sense that the priests would have reaped the barley for the Wave Sheaf Offering in a spot near the temple.

This perspective about whether or not there was Abib barley in the Jerusalem area was also important enough to the editor of the *Beginning Anew* newsletter that he underlined it:

> Please join us in looking for this critical new moon that will start the count to Passover <u>if the barley is seen in Jerusalem</u>.

Now let's fast-forward to the above assembly's web site (www.yaim.org), where I simply HAD to go in order to satisfy my curiosity as to whether or not they would ***truly*** abide by their expressed contingency of only starting the count to Passover with the March 18, 2018 new moon **IF** the Abib barley was [first] seen in Jerusalem. Since no "Abib barley" was found in Jerusalem, did this assembly postpone their Passover plans for another month or did they cave to the "Abib watcher" reports that accept barley found *anywhere* in Israel? A screen shot taken from the assembly's web site is displayed below and it is with great disappointment that we are compelled to report the leadership of the above assembly reneged on the apparent commitment driving their expressed "critical" nature of the new moon of March 2018. They created the impression that it was "critical" to them because IF there had been "Abib barley" in Jerusalem, that new month would have started the count to Passover; otherwise, Passover/ULB would have been postponed until a month later. As plainly reported by the "Abib of God" report, *there was no "Abib barley" in Jerusalem prior to the sighting of that critical new moon*; hence the title given to this chapter of our study, "Calendrical Hypocrisy." If the assembly would have remained true to the criterion specified in their newsletter, they would have waited until the new moon sighting of April 17, 2018 to declare the month of Abib, with Passover falling on May 1, 2018. However, here's what we found on their web site:



Passover and Feast of Unleavened Bread

Invitation to Passover/ULB!

We hope you'll join us for the beautiful and inspirational Passover Memorial to be held on the evening of March 31st at sundown. We try to make it as memorable as we can, because Yahshua said, "Do this in remembrance of Me." Our hearts are joined in one Spirit, as like-minded brethren come to the Passover table to "eat" the bread of Yahshua's body, and to lift up the cup, symbolizing His precious blood, in a candlelit service, for Him, in obedience to Yahweh's Word.

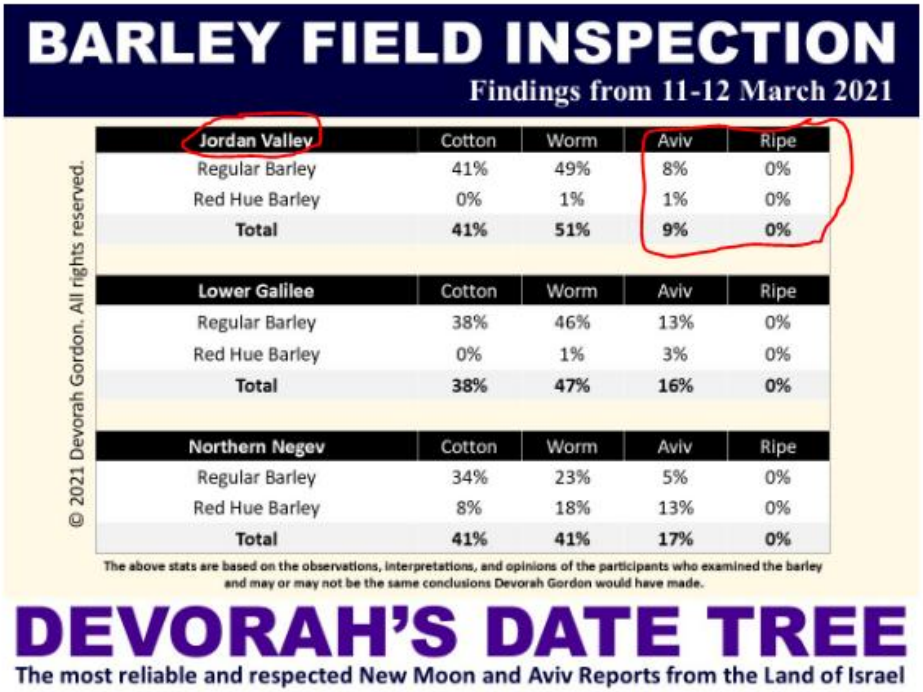
April 1st is Passover day. Then the Feast of Unleavened Bread begins at sundown on April 1st and is celebrated seven days 'til sundown April 8th. We will provide daily meals, activities, and Bible studies during the week. Contact us with any questions, and hope to see you here for a most joyous Feast time with Yahweh's people!

[64]

[64] From https://yaim.org/web/events/15-feast-of-unleavened-bread , accessed 05/07/2018.

For Truth Seekers Fellowship, the Passover memorial was observed on the night of May 1, 2018 at sundown, which coincided with the first day of the Feast of Unleavened Bread.

I support the right for any individual or group portrayed here as being hypocritical to defend themselves. Perhaps the author *intended* to type, "Please join us in looking for this critical new moon that will start the count to Passover if the barley is seen in **Israel**," but inadvertently typed "Jerusalem" instead. On that basis, prior to composing this chapter I accessed their web site's "Contact us" page and typed the following question: "Shalom! I was wondering if you could please share details confirming Abib barley in Jerusalem prior to the sighting of the new moon on March 18, 2018? Thank you!"[65] I felt that waiting two weeks for a response was reasonable; however, with no response forthcoming, we felt that this additional dimension of the "calendar controversy" needed to be presented here in our study, along with the admonition to be true to ourselves *and* faithful to Yahweh. Not only did they not respond, but this same calendar controversy resurfaced in 2021 and they posted the same "critical" admonition: "Green (young tender) ears of barley must be seen in Jerusalem to make this the first month of the year (Abib) according to Deut. 16:1."[66] As it was in 2018, so it was in 2021: The barley was not sufficiently ripe in March 2021 to declare March 15th as "Abib 1," as exhibited below by the following data released by Devorah Gordon on her "Devorah's Date Tree" Facebook page:[67]



BARLEY FIELD INSPECTION

Findings from 11-12 March 2021

Jordan Valley	Cotton	Worm	Aviv	Ripe
Regular Barley	41%	49%	8%	0%
Red Hue Barley	0%	1%	1%	0%
Total	**41%**	**51%**	**9%**	**0%**

Lower Galilee	Cotton	Worm	Aviv	Ripe
Regular Barley	38%	46%	13%	0%
Red Hue Barley	0%	1%	3%	0%
Total	**38%**	**47%**	**16%**	**0%**

Northern Negev	Cotton	Worm	Aviv	Ripe
Regular Barley	34%	23%	5%	0%
Red Hue Barley	8%	18%	13%	0%
Total	**41%**	**41%**	**17%**	**0%**

The above stats are based on the observations, interpretations, and opinions of the participants who examined the barley and may or may not be the same conclusions Devorah Gordon would have made.

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DEVORAH'S DATE TREE

The most reliable and respected New Moon and Aviv Reports from the Land of Israel

I would hardly term 9% "Aviv barley" in the area surrounding Jerusalem as having the potential of being 100% ripe in time for a March 2021 Passover. I should point out that even the individual who posted the above chart (presumably Devorah) expressed uncertainty about whether or not there could be ripe barley in time for a March Passover. Here's her response to a concerned follower:

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[65] Submitted to "Contact Us" page, access link to "Elder George Garner Pastor & Office Manager" on 05/07/2018. An automatic acknowledgement was received, but there was no response from the pastor.

[66] Taken from *Beginning Anew* newsletter, published by Yahweh's Assemblies in Messiah, Rocheport, MO, Feb-March 2021, Vol. 42, No. 2, tenth page. This same admonition was repeated on the seventh page of their April-May 2021 issue.

[67] Taken from "Devorah's Date Tree" at https://mailchi.mp/d022ddefd1e9/3rd-barley-field-inspection-march-11-12-2021.

> **Do you think we will have harvestable fields by Yom HaNafat HaOmer (the Day of the Wave Sheaf Offering), were this upcoming New Moon the beginning of the New Year?**
>
> I don't feel I have enough data from previous years to be able to make a prediction. All I can do is share with you the current state the barley, remind you that it has matured considerably since we were out 10 days ago, let you know that it's not all that warm here right now, and point out that if this upcoming new moon is the beginning of the year, then Yom HaNafat HaOmer would be April 4, 2021, in other words exactly three weeks from today. I understand this may not be an easy decision for you to make, but that's all the information I have.[68]

I personally appreciate Devorah's integrity in reporting based on facts, not on bias. In a later report, Devorah noted that the barley in the Jordan Valley was indeed harvest-ready by April 6th, but her Feast of Unleavened Bread would have ended on April 4th.[69] Nevertheless, she expressed her view that there would have been harvest-ready barley in time for the ancient Wave Sheaf offering to start to feast. Her latter report, in and of itself, raises *another* concern: Even ***if*** the barley had been harvest-ready in time for a March 27th Passover, how could they have predicted such a development based on the "9% Aviv" report of March 12th? I mean, if you go with your instincts, but it later turns out there isn't sufficient harvest-ready barley in time for the Wave Sheaf offering, then this is what would constitute a "blown call" or "jumping the gun." Please bear in mind that Israeli agricultural experts agree that the barley harvest in Israel generally begins in late April.[70] So if you start in *early* April, are you too late? Despite the uncertainty expressed within Devorah's initial "9% Aviv" March 12th report, Yahweh's Assemblies in Messiah observed a Passover memorial service on the evening of March 27th, as reported on the ninth page of their June-July 2021 *Beginning Anew* newsletter.

In summary, we would love to be on the same page with all believers, but regrettably there is little unity when it comes to recognizing the true Scriptural calendar. While we appreciate the reasoning of those who understand the need for the "Abib barley" to be harvest ready by Passover in the areas immediately surrounding Jerusalem, we are very disappointed when those same individuals and groups contradict their own criteria for declaring the new year in order to go along with those who have little or no regard for the stage of the barley crop in and around Jerusalem. It happened in 2018 and 2021; it will likely happen again and again.

[68] Ibid.
[69] Ibid, https://mailchi.mp/43752de396d2/harvest-ready-fields-have-been-found.
[70] Read, for example, the letter sent by N. Bar-Droma, Director Field Crops Dept. in June 1983 (https://www.franknelte.net/article.php?article_id=43).
Based on the testimony of experts, any reports of "shattered heads of barley" on an April 6th date should rightly be regarded as "scare tactics" designed to persuade naïve believers to accept a doctrinal stand as "truth."