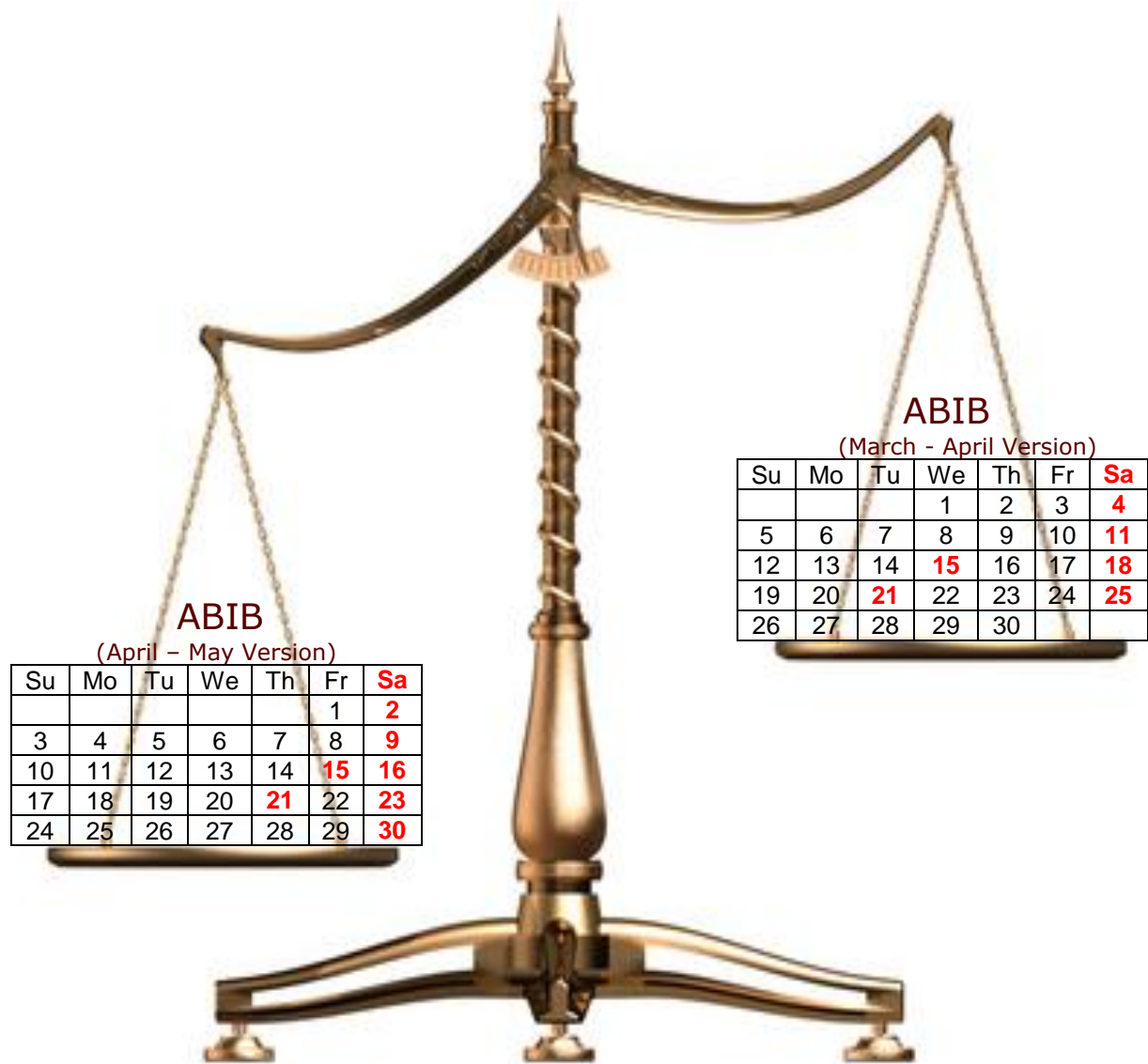


# Balancing the Calendar



Larry and June Acheson

# Balancing the Calendar

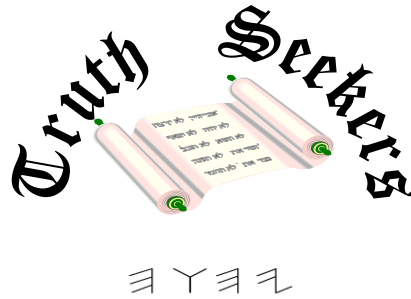
For several years, I managed to avoid and evade the calendar debates that are so prevalent within the Yahwist Movement, but inevitably questions arise, and inevitably some folks end up looking “down their noses” at those who don’t reckon the Scriptural calendar the same way they do. At length, I decided to compile some of the best reasoning I have come across, combining it with the results of my own personal research, which allowed me to offer a cohesive presentation that serves to best explain my own position without ridiculing the opposing view. Certainly there are other arguments that I could incorporate into this study, and eventually they found their way in our follow-up study titled “Balancing the Calendar II,” but I am persuaded that this study serves to offer strong evidence establishing which calendar was used by the ancients. By balancing Scripture and the historical record, I believe we come up with an irrefutable calendar.

This is a modified version of the handout given to accompany the presentation I gave at the 2005 Unity Conference held in Cisco, Texas. I am adding June’s name to this study because her insights and other contributions have truly made her a co-author.

Date of presentation: August 6, 2005

Revised August 13, 2005

Second revision: November 11, 2006



## A Truth Seekers Publication Plano, Texas

[seekutruth at aol dot com](mailto:seekutruth@aol.com)

This article can be found at the internet URL:

[www.ponderscripture.org/articles.html](http://www.ponderscripture.org/articles.html)

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## *1. The Scriptural Perspective*

Through the years, there have been seemingly countless debates over “which” calendar best represents the one that Yahweh gave to Moses, and each argument (at least the ones we’ve seen) is based upon an individual’s understanding of Scripture.

Since each version of the calendar is based upon an interpretation of Scripture, this means that each version is “Scriptural.” Over the years, we have been inundated with booklets or tracts in which the author attempts to persuade us that his Scriptural interpretation is the only one that “really fits” the one used by the ancient believers. The only problem is, after being on the receiving end of so much literature with diverse interpretations, we know that not all of those interpretations can be correct. In fact, only *one* of those interpretations can truly represent the calendar that Yahweh gave to Moses.

It is universally admitted that Scripture alone does not give us all the facts we need. As *The Anchor Bible Dictionary* puts it, “There is no statement in the Bible about how long a year lasted, and the data about its beginning are confusing.”<sup>1</sup> In spite of this statement, many folks who have shared their literature with us are fully persuaded that Scripture is “*very plain*” about when the year begins, and they are certain that their understanding is the only one that fits. Since we have heard so many different versions of these authors’ perspective of the truth, each one exhibiting different variables, we know we need to be careful in choosing the one that best fits what we believe Yahweh intends for His children to observe.

There are certain facts in the Bible that we always need to keep in mind when we compile our research. First of all, we understand that in the book of Genesis, Yahweh gave us lights in the heavens to help us in determining the festivals, or the “*mowedim*”:

<sup>14</sup> And the Almighty said, Let there be lights in the firmament of the heaven to divide the day from the night; and let them be for signs, and for seasons (*moedim*), and for days, and years.

Genesis 1:14 is a very well-known and often-used verse when it comes to proving the true calendar of Yahweh, but in the end, all it really tells us is that we are to use the lights in the heavens for determining our seasons, as well as our years. It doesn’t tell us when that beginning point is and as a result, we have a controversy on our hands!

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<sup>1</sup> From *The Anchor Bible Dictionary*, Vol. 1, article “Calendar,” Doubleday publishing, New York, 1992, p. 817.

## 2. Exodus 34:22 and The Tekufah

In citing verses of Scripture supporting the vernal equinox as preceding the first month of the year, many folks turn to Exodus 34:22. Here is what Exodus 34:22 says:

<sup>22</sup> And thou shalt observe the feast of weeks, of the firstfruits of wheat harvest, and the feast of ingathering at the year's end.

The expression “at year's end” in Exodus 34:22 literally reads “at year's tekufah,” which many understand as meaning “equinox.” The word tekufah is word #8622 in Strong's Hebrew and Chaldee Dictionary:

8622. תְּקוּפָה t<sup>e</sup>qûwphâh, tek-oo-faw'; or תְּקֻפָּה t<sup>e</sup>qûphâh, tek-oo-faw'; from 5362; a *revolution*, i.e. (of the sun) *course*, (of time) *lapse*:—circuit, come about, end.

As much as some folks want to make this word mean “equinox,” the meaning just doesn't fit. First of all, according to *Strong's*, the word means a “circuit.” It can mean *any* circuit or revolution. According to *The New Brown-Driver-Briggs-Gesenius Hebrew-English Lexicon*, this word, as used in Exodus 34:22, means “*at the circuit (completion) of the year*.”<sup>2</sup>

Secondly, this Hebrew word is only used in three other verses of Scripture, and in none of those verses can we define its meaning as “equinox.” Here are those three verses:

2 Chronicles 24:23 – And it came to pass at the **end** [tekufah] of the year, that the host of Syria came up against him (King Joash): and they came to Judah and Jerusalem, and destroyed all the princes of the people from among the people, and sent all the spoil of them unto the king of Damascus.

I Samuel 1:20 – Wherefore it came to pass, when the **time was come about** [tekufah] after Hannah had conceived, that she bare a son, and called his name Samuel.

[Note: The above verse literally reads, “And it happened **at the turning of** the days that conceived Hannah and bore a son ....”]

Psalms 19:6 – His [the sun's] going forth *is* from the end of the heaven, and his **circuit** [tekufah] unto the ends of it: and there is nothing hid from the heat thereof.

In none of the above verses of Scripture is there any implication that the word *tekufah* should be understood as a reference to the equinox.

Moreover, from a historical perspective, none of the ancients understood Exodus 34:22 as being a reference to the autumnal equinox. I, for one, do not recall reading any of the ancients citing Exodus 34:22 as a “proof text” in defense of their belief that the equinox is the event from which the first moon

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<sup>2</sup> From *The New Brown-Driver-Briggs-Gesenius Hebrew-English Lexicon*, Hendrickson Publishers, Peabody, MA, 1979 by Jay P. Green, Sr., p. 880.

of the year is reckoned. This can be readily observed from the *Septuagint* translation, which was translated into Greek from the Hebrew in the 3<sup>rd</sup> century BCE. Notice how the translator rendered the word *tekufah*:

<sup>22</sup>And thou shalt keep to Me the feast of weeks, the beginning of wheat-harvest; and the feast of ingathering in the **middle** [*tekufah*] of the year.

I'm not sure if I totally agree with the above translation of *tekufah*, but certainly from Yahweh's perspective the Feast of Ingathering (Tabernacles) is in the ***middle of the year***, not the end, since it occurs six months before the start of the new year in Abib. However, since the word *tekufah* in Exodus 34:22 was not understood as meaning "equinox" by the translators of the *Septuagint*, it becomes clear that this is not a verse that we can legitimately use as a proof text in establishing a case for the vernal equinox in beginning a new year. This is especially significant in view of the fact that the translators of the *Septuagint* supported beginning the first month of the year on or after the vernal equinox, as we will see later.

On top of this, even if the word *tekufah* in Exodus 34:22 were to be understood as meaning "equinox," this verse nowhere states that the feast of ingathering must be observed ***after*** the *tekufah*!

We believe it is always best to allow Scripture to interpret Scripture whenever possible, and with Exodus 34:22, there is a parallel passage that we believe allows us to understand the true intent of the Author. This passage is found in Exodus 23:14-16:

<sup>14</sup> Three times thou shalt keep a feast unto me in the year. <sup>15</sup> Thou shalt keep the feast of unleavened bread: (thou shalt eat unleavened bread seven days, as I commanded thee, in the time appointed of the month Abib; for in it thou camest out from Egypt: and none shall appear before me empty:)

<sup>16</sup> And the feast of harvest, the firstfruits of thy labours, which thou hast sown in the field: and the feast of ingathering, which is in the end [Heb. *alah*] of the year, when thou hast gathered in thy labours out of the field.

The above expression "in the end of the year" is universally understood as meaning precisely that ... the end of the year, not at the equinox.

Thus, we do not believe there is any justification for promoting Exodus 34:22 as a proof text supporting use of the vernal equinox in setting the new year.

### 3. Many “Scriptural Calendars”

Without a clear text from Scripture to define precisely how to begin the new year, and with nothing else to help us along, we are left to come up with seemingly endless interpretations of various texts, many of which may be understood in more than one way. As a result, some folks believe that their particular interpretation of Scripture is sufficient to prove the “true” calendar, and as a consequence to the differing interpretations, we have a vast array of “Scriptural calendars.” The question is, “Which of those ‘Scriptural calendars’ matches the one given by Yahweh?” Is there a way for us to find out?

We believe we should use Scripture as the “final authority” in determining which calendar Yahweh gave to Moses; yet it is possible to misinterpret Scripture, which in turn results in distortions of the original calendar. We believe one of these distortions is a calendar being promoted by folks known as “lunar sabbatarians.”<sup>3</sup> Lunar sabbatarians regard the weekly Sabbath as being governed by the lunar cycle, which in turn means they believe the weekly Sabbath must fall on certain days of the month. Typically those dates are either the 7<sup>th</sup>, 14<sup>th</sup>, 21<sup>st</sup> & 28<sup>th</sup> days of the month or the 8<sup>th</sup>, 15<sup>th</sup>, 22<sup>nd</sup> & 29<sup>th</sup> days of each month. At the end of each month there are “new moon days.”<sup>4</sup> Shown below is a calendar illustrating the perspective of lunar sabbatarians who believe the weekly Sabbath must fall on the 8<sup>th</sup>, 15<sup>th</sup>, 22<sup>nd</sup> & 29<sup>th</sup> days of each month:

LUNAR SABBATARIAN ABIB, 1 <sup>st</sup> Month						
(Also showing the last week of the previous month & first week of the following month)						
THIRD DAY	FOURTH DAY	FIFTH DAY	SIXTH DAY	SABBATH	NEW MOON DAY	NEW MOON DAY
25	26	27	28	29	[Does not count as a week day] 30	[Does not count as a week day] 1
FIRST DAY	SECOND DAY	THIRD DAY	FOURTH DAY	FIFTH DAY	PREPARATION	SABBATH
2	3	4	5	6	7	8
9	10	11	12	13	Passover 14	Unleavened Time 1 Passover (?) 15
Unleavened Time 2	Unleavened Time 3	Unleavened Time 4	Unleavened Time 5	Unleavened Time 6	Unleavened Time 7	Unleavened Time 8
16	17	18	19	20	21	22
23	24	25	26	27	28	29
NEW MOON DAY	FIRST DAY	SECOND DAY	THIRD DAY	FOURTH DAY	FIFTH DAY	PREPARATION
[Does not count as a week day] 1	2	3	4	5	6	7

<sup>3</sup> For more information on the beliefs of lunar sabbatarians, we invite you to read our study entitled *Something Different: Lunar Sabbaths*, which may be accessed at our web site (<http://www.ponderscripture.org/lunarsabb.html>).

<sup>4</sup> This is true, even though the 30<sup>th</sup> day of the month is still (obviously) a part of the old month. Also, this particular lunar sabbatarian rejects the notion of dubbing those days “extended sabbaths,” as explained in the following commentary, given on July 9, 2005: “RESPONSE; we do not recognize extended Sabbaths and I have never mentioned an extended Sabbath we call it a new moon worship day same as Ezekiel, it is not one of the six work days and therefore the new moon breaks up the cycle of six work days this is an absolute which cannot intelligently be denied. END” This comment was made in a forum topic entitled “Why you don’t count the New moon day when counting out the weeks,” which is located in the “True Sabbath” forum at EliYah’s Forums ([www.eliyah.com](http://www.eliyah.com)). This special forum was created in January 2004 and discontinued in 2007.



As you can see from the above calendar, from the perspective of a non-lunar Sabbatarian, it requires observing the weekly Sabbath on a different day of the week each month. This is because, at the end of each month, they have to wait for the new moon in order for the numerical sequence of weeks to “reset itself.” Those extra days at the end of each month are regarded as “sabbaths,” but not in the same way as the weekly Sabbath, as food preparation is permitted on those days, whereas it is not allowed on the weekly Sabbath.

## 4. *Eight Days of Unleavened Time?*

If you carefully examine the above calendar, you will notice that we show the lunar sabbatarians as observing *eight days* of unleavened bread. This is because, once the feast is over on Abib 21, the weekly Sabbath *always* occurs the very next day for lunar sabbatarians ... each and every year. And since one Sabbath follows another, this leaves no room for them to either purchase or prepare anything with leavening in it. They are left with no choice but to observe eight consecutive days of “unleavened time,” even though Yahweh only commanded *seven*. We refer to it as “unleavened time” because if we refer to it as “eight days of unleavened bread,” lunar sabbatarians respond that they simply do without *any* bread (unleavened or otherwise) on that eighth day.<sup>5</sup> However, Yahweh makes it clear that for *seven days* we are to do without leavening. In Exodus 13:7 He says:

<sup>7</sup> Unleavened bread shall be eaten seven days, and there shall be no leavened bread be seen with thee, neither shall there be leaven seen with thee in all thy quarters.

For there to be “no leaven seen with us for seven days,” we have to live on “unleavened time” for those seven days. However, as I just pointed out, once that seventh day of the feast ends (which is a “high day sabbath”), the weekly Sabbath day begins. For lunar sabbatarians, this means another day of “unleavened time,” as they have no means of preparing (or purchasing) any bread on the weekly Sabbath.<sup>6</sup>

To compensate for this apparent discrepancy, we have had lunar sabbatarians tell us that:

- 1) They don’t eat *any* bread on that eighth day. This way they can still say they had seven days of unleavened bread.
- 2) There is nothing wrong with starting a batch of *leavened bread* from “scratch” before the Feast of Unleavened Bread is over. This way, by the time the feast is over, they can have a head start on getting their leavened bread, which takes several days to make “from scratch” without any yeast to help it along.<sup>7</sup>

Our conclusion: Beware the leavening of lunar sabbatarians!

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<sup>5</sup> This is demonstrated through a comment made by a lunar sabbatarian on July 22, 2005 in the “True Sabbath” forum at EliYah’s Forums ([www.eliyah.com](http://www.eliyah.com)): “Once again, no one is relegated to eating unleavened bread eight days. YHWH says to eat it for seven days, and I take him at his word. I choose not to eat unleavened bread on Aviv 22. If someone wanted to continue eating unleavened bread on that day or for the next week or even month I see no reason to condemn them for it, but the commandment is only for seven days, not eight as YHWH has clearly stated.” -- From the forum topic entitled “**8 Days of Unleavened Bread Each Year ... Or 7 Days + A Day of "No Bread"?**”

<sup>6</sup> The lunar sabbatarians with whom I have engaged in this discussion agree that Yahweh does not permit either food preparation or business transactions on the weekly Sabbath.

<sup>7</sup> That lunar sabbatarians would have no problem with getting a head start in preparing *leavened bread* before the Feast of Unleavened Bread is over is evidenced from the following quotation (in defense of another lunar sabbatarian who had offered the suggestion): “I think [name deleted here] has brought something worth considering to the forum concerning the setting out of the dough on the 21st. If you are so adamant about having leavened bread as soon as possible, we could *both* make some dough on the 21st (in which we are allowed to cook - Exodus 12:16). We could then allow this dough to set literally for hours (just as the children of Israel let the dough sit on their shoulders as they left Egypt) on the 21st. As the dough is sitting the 22nd of Aviv begins, and then if the leavening process begins in the dough there is nothing wrong with that seeing Aviv 22 is the day after the feat [*sic*] of unleavened bread.” – From *EliYah’s Forums*, the “True Sabbath” forum thread entitled “**8 Days of Unleavened Bread Each Year ... Or 7 Days + A Day of "No Bread"?**”, 07-25-2005 at 10:08 AM.

## 5. Does Scripture Ever Refer to Passover on Abib 15?

**Y**ou may notice on the lunar sabbatarian calendar we displayed that lunar sabbatarians recognize both Abib 14 *and* Abib 15 as “Passover.” We believe this stems in part from the fact that the New Testament writers refer to the Feast of Unleavened Bread as “the feast of the Passover,” which might imply to some that any day of the feast is “the Passover.” However, nowhere in Scripture is Abib 15, nor any other specific day of the feast, ever referred to as “the Passover.” Moreover, in Yahweh’s Torah, it is abundantly clear that Abib 15 is not “the Passover.”<sup>8</sup>

Nevertheless, lunar sabbatarians who promote the calendar we have displayed agree that, in John 12:1, the reference to “the Passover” can only be understood as a reference to Abib 15, *not* the fourteenth. This is because, in John 12:1, we read that Yeshua journeyed to Bethany six days before “the Passover.” Shown below is John 12:1:

<sup>1</sup> Then Yeshua six days before the passover came to Bethany, where Lazarus was which had been dead, whom He raised from the dead.

If “the Passover” of John 12:1 is understood as having fallen on Abib 14, which according to the lunar Sabbatarian model can only occur on the sixth day of the week, this would have required Yeshua to have journeyed to Bethany on the weekly Sabbath [**Abib 8**]. If we go back to the previous chapter (Jn. 11:54), we learn that His previous location was Ephraim, which is located approximately 18 miles from Bethany. Since these lunar sabbatarians agree that it is not permitted to undertake such a long journey “for personal edification” on the Sabbath,<sup>9</sup> this means they agree that Yeshua would not have made such a trip on the weekly Sabbath day. Since six days prior to Abib 14 (“the Passover”) is indeed a weekly Sabbath day on the lunar sabbatarian calendar, the only option they have is to declare that “the Passover” of John 12:1 cannot be a reference to Abib 14, and that is precisely what they do. Instead, they declare this particular reference to “the Passover” as being a reference to Abib 15. The following is a lunar sabbatarian’s response to the dilemma created by John 12:1:

- A. Yahshua came to Bethany six days before Passover – John 12:1
- B. John’s use of the Passover in his evangel is to refer to the festival which begins on the 15th of Aviv. This harmonizes with the torah’s use of eating the Passover, and therefore keeping the Passover on the 15th of Aviv.
- C. Yahshua came to Bethany on Aviv 9 not Aviv 8. This shows that Aviv 9th could not have been a weekly Sabbath day which branches out into showing that the 16th also could not have been a Sabbath day. (This further proves that the Messiah could not have been crucified on Aviv 15 with the weekly Sabbath on Aviv 16 as some believe.)<sup>10</sup>

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<sup>8</sup> Cf., Leviticus 23:5, where we read, “In the fourteenth *day* of the first month at even *is* Yahweh’s passover.” See also Numbers 9:2-5; 11, 28:16; Joshua 5:10; Ezra 6:19-22; Ezekiel 45:21.

<sup>9</sup> That these particular lunar sabbatarians agree that it is not permitted to undertake a long journey on the Sabbath is affirmed by the following commentary: “**Yahweh here specifically condemns** their traveling on the Sabbath. This was merely traveling a short space to gather manna, much less instigating an attack through a battle march. Obviously Yahweh does desire us to travel to our places of worship on Sabbath, but something unnecessary, such as gathering manna or traveling for our own personal edification is something altogether different.” This commentary is borrowed from the lunar sabbatarian’s website, and may be read in its entirety by accessing the following URL: [http://www.angelfire.com/gundam/hypnautechs/battle\\_march.html](http://www.angelfire.com/gundam/hypnautechs/battle_march.html).

<sup>10</sup> From a posting submitted to the “True Sabbath” forum at EliYah’s Forums ([www.eliyah.com](http://www.eliyah.com)) in the thread entitled “Proving Abib 14 Passover Debunks Lunar Sabbath Theology” on 10-18-2004 at 11:14 PM.

Please notice that the lunar sabbatarian refers to the *Torah* as supportive evidence for “keeping the Passover on the 15<sup>th</sup> of Abib.” This is a clear distortion of Scripture, as *Torah* (as well as the rest of Scripture) in *every single instance* refers to the “keeping of the Passover” on Abib **14**, and *never* on the 15<sup>th</sup>. Here are a few examples:

**Numbers 9:3-6** - In the fourteenth day of this month, at even, ye shall keep it in His appointed season: according to all the rites of it, and according to all the ceremonies thereof, shall ye keep it. And Moses spake unto the children of Israel, that they should keep the passover. And they kept the Passover on the fourteenth day of the month, at even in the wilderness of Sinai: according to all that Yahweh had commanded Moses, so did the children of Israel. And there were certain men, who were defiled by the dead body of a man, that they could not keep the passover on **that day**: and they came before Moses and before Aaron on **that day**.

**Joshua 5:10** - And the children of Israel encamped in Gilgal, and kept the passover on the fourteenth day of the month at even in the plains of Jericho.

**2 Chronicles 35:17** - And the children of Israel that were present kept the passover at that time, and the feast of unleavened bread seven days. [Note: **For them to have kept the Passover and the Feast of Unleavened Bread requires a distinction between Abib 14 (which is not considered one of the days of unleavened bread) and the seven days of unleavened bread (Abib 15-21). Thus, Abib 15 could not have been considered “the Passover.”**]

**Ezra 6:19** - And the children of the captivity kept the passover upon the fourteenth day of the first month.

Again, in no instances do we ever read of “the Passover” ever falling on Abib 15, much less its being “kept” on that day. Nevertheless, in order to force-fit lunar sabbatarian theology, the lunar sabbatarian quoted above was compelled to write that *Torah* supports “keeping” the Passover on Abib 15.

## 6. *They Kept the Feast of Unleavened Bread for ... Eight Days???*

**T**he previous verse of Scripture we cited, from the book of Ezra, agrees that all of Yahweh's people kept the Passover on the fourteenth day of the month (the fifteenth is never mentioned as being "the Passover," even though that is when we personally believe the Passover meal is eaten). This is because all references to "the Passover" itself are references to the slaying of the Passover lamb.<sup>11</sup>

If we continue reading the passage from Ezra, we notice that the Israelites, after keeping the Passover on the fourteenth of the month, "kept the feast of unleavened bread seven days." They were on "unleavened time" for *seven days*, not eight (as required by the lunar sabbatarian calendar we displayed). Of course, some lunar sabbatarians will teach you that they didn't eat any bread on Abib 22. Of course, if this is true, then those "lunar sabbatarian Israelites" *still* had to remain on "unleavened time" an extra day because once the "high day" of Abib 21 had ended, they could not have gone out to find, make, or otherwise purchase any leavening, for that next day, Abib 22, is always a "lunar sabbath."

The same holds true for King Hezekiah and his famous Feast of Unleavened Bread that lasted fourteen days. In II Chronicles 30:22-23 we read about this feast:

<sup>22</sup> And Hezekiah spake comfortably unto all the Levites that taught the good knowledge of Yahweh: and they did eat throughout the feast seven days, offering peace offerings, and making confession to Yahweh Almighty of their fathers. <sup>23</sup> And the whole assembly took counsel to keep other seven days: and they kept *other* seven days with gladness.

If we "do the math," we will see that King Hezekiah could not have been a lunar sabbatarian, at least not one who kept the lunar sabbaths on the 8<sup>th</sup>, 15<sup>th</sup>, 22<sup>nd</sup> & 29<sup>th</sup> days of the month. If he had been such a lunar sabbatarian, he would have had to have kept the second portion of that feast [the "other seven days"] for *more* than seven days! Please keep in mind that for him to have kept that feast for "another seven days" means that he kept it for a total of fourteen days. If you examine the calendar we are providing (below), you will notice that Hezekiah would have been required to remain on "unleavened time" for a total of *fifteen days*, not fourteen. A lunar sabbatarian King Hezekiah would have had to have kept that feast for "*other eight days*," not seven. Yet we are told in Scripture that he kept it for "other seven days!"

Furthermore, please notice that lunar sabbatarians have this "other seven days" concluding the day before the weekly Sabbath. This begs the question of why they would disband when the weekly Sabbath began at the conclusion of those "other seven days." Why not just keep the congregation together and agree to have the feast another *eight days*, instead of only seven? Moreover, once the weekly Sabbath of Abib 29 had ended, why not take counsel to keep the **new moon festival** as well?

I realize some folks who are not familiar with Lunar Sabbatarian theology may not understand the reasoning behind how a lunar sabbatarian King Hezekiah would have had to have kept the Feast of

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<sup>11</sup> Strong's Hebrew and Chaldee Dictionary defines "Passover" as "Used only tech. of the Jewish *Passover* (the festival or the victim)." While the Feast of Unleavened Bread is often referred to as "the feast of the Passover," whenever the reference is made to a single day, it is always a reference to the fourteenth, not the fifteenth (or any other day of the festival). This meaning is supported by *The New Brown-Driver-Briggs-Gesenius Hebrew-English Lexicon*, p. 820.

Unleavened Bread for a total of fifteen days, so we will offer the following explanation, as well as a calendar illustrating this truth:

Let's presume that King Hezekiah was a lunar sabbatarian who observed the weekly Sabbath on the 8<sup>th</sup>, 15<sup>th</sup>, 22<sup>nd</sup> & 29<sup>th</sup> days of each month. On Abib 15, "day one" of the seven-day feast began. As we know, Abib 21 is "day seven" of that feast. However, King Hezekiah and his fellow Jews took counsel to keep yet *another* seven days, which means that "day 1" of the second count began on Abib 22 (a lunar sabbatarian weekly Sabbath).

Day 2, then, would have been on Abib 23.

Day 3 was on Abib 24.

Day 4 was on Abib 25.

Day 5 was on Abib 26.

Day 6 was on Abib 27.

Day 7 was on Abib 28.

For non-lunar Sabbatarians, this second "day 7" seems rather inconsequential. However, for lunar sabbatarians this is far from the case! Please remember that for these lunar sabbatarians, the weekly Sabbath must fall on the 8<sup>th</sup>, 15<sup>th</sup>, 22<sup>nd</sup> & 29<sup>th</sup> days of the month. And please notice that the day on which "day 7" fell was the day before the weekly Sabbath of the **29<sup>th</sup>**.

What does all this mean?

This means, quite frankly, that once the second "day 7" of that fourteen-day Feast of Unleavened Bread ended, the weekly Sabbath began!! And, once again, the question arises as to how King Hezekiah & company could have gotten off from "unleavened time" with the weekly Sabbath beginning as soon as "day seven" had ended.

We know that King Hezekiah and the Jews observed seven days of unleavened bread the "first time around," but they could not have observed it for seven days the second time around ... **if they were lunar sabbatarians!** They would have had no choice but to have observed it for eight days! Yet, once again, Scripture tells us that they observed it for seven days.

For those who may have difficulty visualizing how Hezekiah would have had to have kept that feast for a total of fifteen days, here is a calendar to illustrate my point. Notice that at the end of day 14 (i.e., the "second seven of the feast"), the new day that began was a weekly (lunar) sabbath ... a day on which it is prohibited to prepare food. King Hezekiah, then, had no choice but to observe a **fifteen-day feast**:

KING HEZEKIAH'S LUNAR SABBATARIAN ABIB						
(Showing How He would Have <u>HAD</u> to Have Kept a 15-Day Feast)						
THIRD DAY	FOURTH DAY	FIFTH DAY	SIXTH DAY	SABBATH	NEW MOON DAY [Does not count as a week day]	NEW MOON DAY [Does not count as a week day]
25	26	27	28	29	30	1
FIRST DAY	SECOND DAY	THIRD DAY	FOURTH DAY	FIFTH DAY	PREPARATION	SABBATH
2	3	4	6	6	7	8
9	10	11	12	13	Passover 14	Unleavened Time 1 Passover (?) 15
Unleavened Time 2 16	Unleavened Time 3 17	Unleavened Time 4 18	Unleavened Time 5 19	Unleavened Time 6 20	Unleavened Time 7 21	Unleavened Time 8 22
Unleavened Time 9 23	Unleavened Time 10 24	Unleavened Time 11 25	Unleavened Time 12 26	Unleavened Time 13 27	Unleavened Time 14 28	Unleavened Time 15 29
NEW MOON DAY [Does not count as a week day] 1	FIRST DAY 2	SECOND DAY 3	THIRD DAY 4	FOURTH DAY 5	FIFTH DAY 6	PREPARATION 7

For the record, we do not in the least believe the above calendar resembles the one used by King Hezekiah. We believe when Yahweh's Word says he and the whole assembly kept another seven days, that is exactly what it means. They kept the Feast of Unleavened Bread for *fourteen days*, not fifteen. They were not lunar sabbatarians.

***The Above Calendar is Scriptural!***

Believe it or not, the above calendar is a Scriptural one, as it is based entirely upon certain individuals' interpretation of Scripture. These individuals have made the claim that they go by "Scripture and Scripture alone." In reality, however, they are going by their *interpretation* of Scripture and their *interpretation* alone, as is evidenced by the fact that the calendar they promote is only one of many "Scriptural calendars" proposed by various groups.

## 7. Another “Scriptural Calendar” – the Full Moon = the New Moon!

Thus far, we have attempted to establish the fact that any of us can read the instructions found in Scripture pertaining to Yahweh’s calendar, and each of us is liable to come up with a different calendar! But since each of us would base our calendar upon an intense study of Scripture, each calendar is, to the individual who comes up with it, a “Scriptural calendar.” We have already illustrated an example of a “Scriptural calendar” concocted by men who claim to have reached their conclusion only after diligently studying Yahweh’s Word. Upon carefully analyzing their proposal, however, we found some flaws indicating that their calendar does not have the support of Yahweh’s Word. We are about to exhibit yet another calendar – this one is offered by a group promoting the notion that Yahweh’s months begin at the full moon. As with the previous calendars, this calendar is a “Scriptural calendar” because it is based upon certain folks’ understanding of Scripture after their own diligent study of Yahweh’s Word. Before we provide an illustration of this calendar, we would like to offer a quotation from this group’s website:

The Full Moon occurs at *a specific time*. It occurs when the moon is rising in the east as the sun is setting or has just set in the west. It is at this point, when the moon is ‘fullest,’ that the ‘New Moon’ occurs beginning the month. Only at this specific time is the moon truly full although it has already looked nearly full for a couple of days. This interpretation of the Full Moon as the New Moon is Scriptural because both the sun and moon are used together to determine the Full Moon and therefore, a new month as in Genesis 1:14 above. In the coming Messianic Age, the Full, New Moon will be used to determine the days for worship at the Temple.<sup>12</sup>

Now that we have established the fact that this group believes the Full Moon represents the first day of a new month, we will now reproduce here this group’s calendar for the upcoming month of August 2005. According to our secular calendar for August 2005, the full moon occurred on August 19th of that particular month. Beginning that evening, then, was the “new moon day,” which continued on into August 20<sup>th</sup>. Here, then, is the “Scriptural calendar,” as proposed by this group<sup>13</sup>:

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<sup>12</sup> From the online article entitled “The Quest for the Scriptural, Observable, Hebrew Calendar,” by Charles J. Voss. The entire article may be read by accessing the following URL: <http://www.uhcg.org/Cal-FI-Moon/cal-article.html>.

<sup>13</sup> This calendar is taken from the following URL: <http://www.uhcg.org/Cal-FI-Moon/cal-sheets2.html>



**(Ethanin) 7th Month in the UHC Year 8, Gregorian Year 2005**

1st Day	2nd Day	3rd Day	4th Day	5th Day	6th Day	Sabbath
Sun 14 Aug.	Mon 15	Tue 16	Wed 17	Thurs 18	Fri 19	Sat 20
						1 8:14 PM Feast of Trumpets
21 Aug.	22	23	24	25	26	27
2	3	4	5	6	7	8
28 Aug.	29	30	31	1 Sept.	2	3
9	10 Day of Atonement	11	12	13	14	15 Feast of Booths
4 Sept.	5	6	7	8	9	10
16	17	18	19	20	21	22 Last Great Day
11 Sept.	12	13	14	15	16	17
23	24	25	26	27	28	29
						1

As much as we disagree with the veracity of the above calendar, we have to concede that it is “Scriptural,” ... at least for the person who contrived it. The question is, “Is it *really* Scriptural?” Is the above calendar what Yahweh really had in mind for His children? Is there a way for us to know for sure “which” calendar He intended ... and *intends* ... for His children to follow?

## 8. *The Historical Calendar*

I believe we have demonstrated that we need to take great caution in proclaiming to go by “Scripture and Scripture alone,” as the end result is a multiplicity of calendars designed by men who claim to have found the “true, Scriptural calendar.” As we have seen, all we have are interpretations of calendars that can only succeed in leading people astray.

An alternative to going by “Scripture and Scripture alone” would be to go by “History and History alone.” Would *that* lead us to the true calendar? Well, as in the case of the Scriptural interpretations, there is a multiplicity of historical calendars out there. We could go with the Mayan calendar, for example. The Chinese calendar dates to 2637 BCE, so it is certainly a calendar rich in history. Could it be the “true calendar”? Or how about the ancient Egyptian calendar?

Shown on the following page is how we would reckon our weeks and months if we went by the ancient Egyptian calendar, which began each new year in the summer with the rising of the star Sirius. If we were to go by that ancient calendar, August 2005, the month during which this study was originally composed, would have had to have been considered the first month of the year:



**Tekh**

## ***Ancient Egyptian First Month***

**2005**

First Day	Second Day	Third Day	Fourth Day	Fifth Day	Sixth Day	Seventh Day	Eighth Day	Ninth Day	Tenth Day
1 July 23	2 July 24	3 July 25	4 July 26	5 July 27	6 July 28	7 July 29	8 July 30	9 July 31	10 August 1
11 August 2	12 August 3	13 August 4	14 August 5	15 August 6	16 August 7	17 August 8	18 August 9	19 August 10	20 August 11
21 August 12	22 August 13	23 August 14	24 August 15	25 August 16	26 August 17	27 August 18	28 August 19	29 August 20	30 August 21

From the article *Festivals*

by Barbara Ann Richter (<http://www.hethert.org/festivals.htm>)

The Ancient Egyptian calendar was divided into three seasons of four months each. Each month had three weeks of ten days each, on which the tenth (and later also the ninth) was a day of rest.

From *The Ancient Egyptian Calendar and Festivals: Part One*

by Kerry Wisner (<http://www.inkemetic.org/Library/calnfest.htm>)

The civil calendar on the other hand is much easier to calculate than the lunar. Originally the civil calendar was engineered to begin with the day of the appearance of Sirius/Sopdet at sunrise. Despite the fact that the Nile may have already begun to rise this date was considered to be the beginning of the season of Akhet. In the civil calendar each season is composed of four months, each month is made up of three weeks, and each week consisted of ten days. The total number of days in the civil year is 360. At the end of the last month of the civil year five days were added that were considered to be independent from the year. These were viewed as the days in the year on which several gods were born, primarily because these days were outside of the mundane civil calendar and thus of a spiritual nature. These were termed "the Days Upon the Year;" however, Egyptologists refer to them as the epagomenal days.

## ***Sirius Rises on July 23, 2005 ...***

“On or around the time of July 23, 2005 Sirius rises before the Sun ....”<sup>14</sup>

There may be some folks who will examine the above calendar and conclude that it is the “true calendar.” However, we hope not! Hopefully, we can all quickly see the missing ingredients to the above calendar that stick out like a sore thumb! First of all, it would be impossible to base the above calendar strictly on the lunar cycle, as we all understand that, with a lunar cycle of 29.5 days, there is no way we can have a 30-day month each month! Secondly, we also recognize that Yahweh’s weekly Sabbath day occurs each *seventh day*, not each *tenth day*!

What, then, is the solution? Do we go by our interpretation of “Scripture and Scripture alone”? Or do we go by our version of “history and history alone?”

We propose that each of us should diligently seek to apply the two above methods *together* as we investigate the calendar that Yahweh gave to Moses. We know that there is a vast array of proposed calendars offered by the various individuals and groups out there who claim to go by “Scripture and Scripture alone.” Some folks insist that the calendar is based upon the conjunction of the moon instead of the sighting of the crescent moon. Some folks begin the “Scriptural year” in the fall. Others insist that it begins in the spring. We likewise know that there is a multiplicity of calendar methods devised by various civilizations down through history.

Can we find a calendar that not only fits the Scriptural instructions, but *also* matches one of the historical calendars? I believe we can.

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<sup>14</sup> Taken from the following URL: [www.thequantumawakening.com/workshops.htm](http://www.thequantumawakening.com/workshops.htm)

## 9. Starting With Scripture

Scripture offers us some excellent clues to help narrow down the possibilities pertaining to when the new year begins. In Exodus 12:1-2, Yahweh commands Moses and Aaron that the current month in which He spoke to him was to be the beginning of months:

<sup>1</sup> And Yahweh spake unto Moses and Aaron in the land of Egypt, saying,

<sup>2</sup> This month shall be the first month of the year to you.

This text, by itself, doesn't offer us anything to go on, as it doesn't tell us what time of year "this month" was! However, thankfully, the above instructions were given in an approximate time setting, confirming that it was in the spring, as we are about to see. Exodus chapter 12 is where Moses and Aaron received instructions pertaining to the observance of the Passover ceremony, and the opening verses, as we have seen, indicate that the "moon" they were in is to be reckoned as the first month of the year.

It is likely that the above information was given to Moses and Aaron at the very beginning of the month, at or immediately after the new moon, so as to make certain they understood that this particular new moon was the first one of the year. Then, ten days later, they were to select a lamb for each household.

Additional information offered in the book of Exodus indicates that this particular month was either at the time of the barley harvest or shortly afterwards. This is because, as a result of the seventh plague of Egypt (the Plague of Hail), the barley and the flax crops were destroyed. We are told that the barley was in the "ear" [Hebrew "*Abib*"] and that the flax was "bolloed" (flowering stage). This information is given in Exodus 9:31-32:

<sup>31</sup> And the flax and the barley was smitten: for the barley *was* in the ear, and the flax *was* bolloed.

<sup>32</sup> But the wheat and the rie [spelt] were not smitten: for they *were* not grown up.

The question we all ask ourselves is, "When would the Egyptian barley have been in the ear ... and when would the Egyptian flax have been in bloom?"

No doubt this will be a point of contention for many. According to the best sources we have found, this event most likely occurred in late January at the earliest, and mid-February at the latest. Here is the information offered by *Commentary on the Old Testament* by Keil & Delitzsch:

These accounts [of the hail and the crops] are in harmony with the natural history of Egypt. According to *Pliny*, the barley is reaped in the sixth month after the sowing-time, the wheat in the seventh. The barley is ripe about the end of February or beginning of March; the wheat, at the end of March or beginning of April. The flax is in flower at the end of January. In the neighborhood of Alexandria, and therefore quite in the north of Egypt, the spelt is ripe at the end of April, and farther south it is probably somewhat earlier; for, according to other accounts, the wheat and spelt ripen at the same time (vid., *Hengstenberg*, p. 119). Consequently the plague of hail occurred at the end of January, or at the latest in the first half of February; so that there were at least eight weeks between the seventh and tenth plagues. The hail must have smitten the half, therefore, of the most important field-produce, viz., the barley, which was a valuable article of food both for men, especially the poorer classes, and for cattle,

and the flax, which was also a very important part of the produce of Egypt; whereas the spelt, of which the Egyptians preferred to make their bread (*Herod* 2, 36, 77), and the wheat were still spared.<sup>15</sup>

The above information is confirmed by *The Expositor's Bible Commentary*:

Furthermore, since in Egypt flax is usually sown in the beginning of January and is in flower three weeks later while barley is sown in August and is harvested in February, both would be exceedingly vulnerable if this plague occurred in the beginning or middle of February (probably a little later than usual with a high Nile year). Wheat and spelt (see Notes) were also sown in August but were not ready for harvest until the end of March.<sup>16</sup>

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<sup>15</sup> From *Commentary on the Old Testament*, Vol. 1, C. F. Keil and F. Delitzsch, Hendrickson Publishers, 2001, originally published by T. & T. Clark, Edinburgh, 1866-91, pp. 319-320.

<sup>16</sup> From *The Expositor's Bible Commentary*, Vol. 2, Frank E. Gæbelein, Gen. Ed., Zondervan Publishing House, Grand Rapids, MI, 1990, pp. 362-363.

## 10. The Meaning of “Abib”

**Y**ahweh Himself calls the first month of the year “Abib.” This word is word #24 in *Strong’s* Hebrew and Chaldee Dictionary, and according to *Strong’s*, it means “a young ear of grain.” It is also defined by *Strong’s* as meaning “green.” Here is a reproduction of the actual listing found in *Strong’s*:

24. אֲבִיב *’abîyb*, *aw-beeb’*; from an unused root (mean. to *be tender*); *green*, i.e. a young *ear* of grain; hence the name of the month *Abib* or Nisan:—Abib, ear, green ears of corn.

Early on in our feast-keeping days, we were taught that, since the barley was in the “abib stage” at the time of the plague of hail, this means that the next new moon signaled the first new moon of the new year. We were also taught that **Passover** must always fall on or after the vernal equinox, which is around March 21<sup>st</sup> or 22<sup>nd</sup>. Equipped with this understanding, would it have been possible for the hail to have fallen in Egypt at the time of the “*Abib*” stage of barley, and then have Passover fall on or after the day of the vernal equinox? The answer is yes!

As the two calendars displayed below illustrate, if the hail fell on February 12<sup>th</sup>, the Passover would have fallen on March 25<sup>th</sup>, well after the equinox.

### Twelfth Month – ADAR

		Feb. 10	Feb. 11	Feb. 12	Feb. 13	Feb. 14
		1	2	3	4	5
				Hail		
Feb. 15	Feb. 16	Feb. 17	Feb. 18	Feb. 19	Feb. 20	Feb. 21
6	7	8	9	10	11	12
Feb. 22	Feb. 23	Feb. 24	Feb. 25	Feb. 26	Feb. 27	Feb. 28
13	14	15	16	17	18	19
Mar. 1	Mar. 2	Mar. 3	Mar. 4	Mar. 5	Mar. 6	Mar. 7
20	21	22	23	24	25	26
Mar. 8	Mar. 9	Mar. 10	Mar. 11			
27	28	29	30			

### First Month – ABIB

				Mar. 12	Mar. 13	Mar. 14
				1	2	3
Mar. 15	Mar. 16	Mar. 17	Mar. 18	Mar. 19	Mar. 20	Mar. 21
4	5	6	7	8	9	10
Mar. 22	Mar. 23	Mar. 24	Mar. 25	Mar. 26	Mar. 27	Mar. 28
11	12	13	14	15	16	17
			Passover	Feast of ULB	Feast of ULB	Feast of ULB
Mar. 29	Mar. 30	Mar. 31	April 1	April 2	April 3	April 4
18	19	20	21	22	23	24
Feast of ULB	Feast of ULB	Feast of ULB	Feast of ULB			
April 5	April 6	April 7	April 8	April 9		
25	26	27	28	29		

The calendar depicted above presents a scenario that would allow for ripened barley to be used for the wave sheaf offering during the Feast of Unleavened Bread (Lev. 23:10-11).

The wave sheaf offering is a very important aspect of the Feast of Unleavened Bread. If the barley isn’t yet ripe, and especially if it hasn’t “headed out” yet, there can be no wave sheaf offering. If it can be determined that the barley will not be ripe in time for the wave sheaf offering, then at the time of the new moon, a thirteenth month is declared instead of beginning the new year with the month of Abib.

Shown below is Leviticus 23:10-11, which underscores the importance of having ripe barley in time for the Feast of Unleavened Bread:

<sup>10</sup> 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 your harvest unto the priest.

<sup>11</sup> And he shall wave the sheaf before Yahweh, to be accepted for you: on the morrow after the sabbath the priest shall wave it.

Again, if the barley isn't ripe in time for the wave sheaf offering, then it is obvious we should have intercalated a "thirteenth month" to the old year instead of prematurely beginning the month of Abib.

One thing about the above calendar that we need to point out is the fact that the barley which was destroyed by the hail was "**Egyptian barley**," not the barley in Israel. Furthermore, in the account of the plague of hail, we are not told how "ripe" the Egyptian barley was. As we will see shortly, the state of "*Abib*" can be several weeks long. Thus, it is quite possible that the barley was actually destroyed over a week earlier than the date we offered in the above calendar. The above calendar offers a "best case" scenario for those who believe Passover should fall on or after the equinox. However, if the hail fell only a few days earlier, it would have fallen, not in the month of Adar (the twelfth month), but in the *eleventh month*.

### Eleventh Month

	Jan. 12	Jan. 13	Jan. 14	Jan. 15	Jan. 16	Jan. 17
	1	2	3	4	5	6
Jan. 18	Jan. 19	Jan. 20	Jan. 21	Jan. 22	Jan. 23	Jan. 24
7	8	9	10	11	12	13
Jan. 25	Jan. 26	Jan. 27	Jan. 28	Jan. 29	Jan. 30	Jan. 31
14	15	16	17	18	19	20
Feb. 1	Feb. 2	Feb. 3	Feb. 4	Feb. 5	Feb. 6	Feb. 7
21	22	23	24	25	26	27
Feb. 8	Feb. 9					
28	29					

### Twelfth Month – Adar

		Feb. 10	Feb. 11	Feb. 12	Feb. 13	Feb. 14
		1	2	3	4	5
Feb. 15	Feb. 16	Feb. 17	Feb. 18	Feb. 19	Feb. 20	Feb. 21
6	7	8	9	10	11	12
Feb. 22	Feb. 23	Feb. 24	Feb. 25	Feb. 26	Feb. 27	Feb. 28
13	14	15	16	17	18	19
Mar. 1	Mar. 2	Mar. 3	Mar. 4	Mar. 5	Mar. 6	Mar. 7
20	21	22	23	24	25	26
Mar. 8	Mar. 9	Mar. 10	Mar. 11			
27	28	29	30			

As the above calendar reveals, it is quite possible that the Egyptian barley was "smitten" during the eleventh month of the year. At first glance it doesn't seem possible that barley could be ripe in the eleventh month of the year. However, we must understand that the barley harvest in Egypt generally precedes the barley harvest in Israel by one month.

We can also deduce from the above calendar that if we were to have sighted the green ears of barley at the time of the hail, and then declared the following month to have been "*Abib*," the Passover would definitely have fallen well before the equinox. In fact, it would have fallen on February 23<sup>rd</sup>! It is because of these factors that we must focus our understanding on the fact that there is typically one month difference between the time of the barley harvest in Egypt versus the time of the barley harvest in Israel.



Although the barley affected by the plague in Egypt was Egyptian barley, our concern today is not over whether or not the barley in **Egypt** is ripe in time for Passover. Our concern is whether or not the barley in **Israel** is ripe in time for the wave sheaf offering.

According to an online article entitled “Harvest Seasons of Ancient Israel” by Michael Morrison, the barley in Israel is typically harvested from April to May:

Wheat ripens later than barley and, according to the Gezer Manual, was harvested during the sixth agricultural season, *yrh qsr wkl* (end of April to end of May)" (page 88; also see the chart on page 37 of Borowski's book, reproduced below).<sup>17</sup>

Table 3. Harvesting and ingathering,  
based on modern agricultural practices in Israel

	March	Apr	May	June	July	Aug	Sep	Oct	Nov
Wheat			x						
Barley		x							
Oats			x						
Peas		x	x						
Chickpeas				x					
Lentils		x	x						
Vetch		x	x						
Sesame					x				
Flax					x				
Millet					x	x			
Grapes				x	x	x	x		
Figs						x	x		
Pomegranates						x	x		
Olives							x	x	x

Again, as the above chart reveals, the barley harvest in Israel typically occurs in April.

A friend named Herb Solinsky offers corroborating evidence that the above chart was certainly accurate in 1926, as he provided a translation from a book authored in 1928 by a man named Gustaf H. Dalman. The following is from a study that Herb compiled in 2002 entitled “Exodus 9:31-32 and ABIB”:

My translation from 415 of Dalman is, “The harvest that I first observed at Jerusalem on May 8, 1925 was during barley and wheat blossoming, and in the middle of the same month the barley harvest began, in which, on May 24, I used the ripping sickle. On May 19, 1926 the farmers in Jerusalem saw the barley harvest nearly completed, the wheat harvest still remaining. In Jericho the barley harvest is first permitted to begin about the middle or end of

<sup>17</sup> From *Agriculture in Iron Age Israel* by Oded Borowski, 1987, page 37. The above chart can also be examined by accessing the following URL: <http://www.wcg.org/lit/law/festivals/harvest.htm>.

April, for on the 18<sup>th</sup> of April 1909 I saw it nearly mature there. For the coastal plains April can be predicted as the time of the barley harvest, May as the time of the wheat harvest.”<sup>18</sup>

In his study, Mr. Solinsky also offered an essay entitled “Note on Exodus IX. 31, 32,” which was authored by W. Robertson Smith and published in volume 12 of *The Journal of Philology*, pp. 299-300, in 1883. In that essay, Smith affirmed that the **Egyptian** barley is in the ear by early January and that the flax blooms by mid-January. Here is an excerpt from that essay:

The barley is in the ear in the beginning of January, and the flax blooms in the middle of January, and the seed is found in it in the beginning of April. When the barley is in the ear the wheat is green herbage; but the seasons vary as I told you.

Finally, Mr. Solinsky demonstrated that the word “*Abib*,” in its original form, could not only be used to describe a green, unripe ear of barley, but *also* a ripe ear of barley! 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! Thus the stages of “*abib*” may range from a tender green ear all the way to ripe grains used in making bread.

This information is substantiated by the *Theological Wordbook of the Old Testament*, where we read the following under the heading of “*Abb*” (*abib*):

This noun [1b] refers to barley that is already ripe, but still soft, the grains of which are eaten either rubbed or roasted (Koehler & Baumgartner). 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 name 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 harvest was to consist of firstfruits of *abib*.<sup>19</sup>

It is thus a mistake to so narrowly define “*abib*” as only meaning “green ear.” What kind of firstfruits are *green firstfruits*?

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<sup>18</sup> From “Exodus 9:31-32 and ABIB,” by Herb Solinsky, March 16, 2002. See also “Exodus 9 and the First Biblical Month,” by Herb Solinsky, page 4, April 13, 2002. This study may be read in its entirety by accessing the following URL: [http://list.messianicgroups.com/wws/d\\_read/moedim/Articles/WaveSheaf\\_SpringEquinox3.pdf](http://list.messianicgroups.com/wws/d_read/moedim/Articles/WaveSheaf_SpringEquinox3.pdf)

<sup>19</sup> From *Theological Wordbook of the Old Testament*, R. Laird Harris, Editor, Mood Press, Chicago, IL, Vol. 1, page 3.

## 11. The Month of Abib

One of the strongest arguments we have heard in support of Abib occurring after the equinox lies in the fact that the name “**Abib**” is so often used interchangeably with the name “**Nisan**.” What does this mean to us today?

**Nisan** is simply another name for the Hebrew month **Abib**. It was borrowed by the Jews during their Babylonian exile. **Nisan**, then, is originally a Babylonian term, a universally recognized fact.<sup>20</sup>

Of course, this begs the question as to when and how ancient Babylon determined the start of the year. The answer: The first visible new moon crescent following the vernal equinox, as attested to by *The Interpreter's Dictionary of the Bible*, Vol. 1, p. 484:

A lunar-solar calendar was adopted by the first Babylonian dynasty (ca. 1830-1550 B.C.), and became effective in Assyria during the first millennium B.C. The Babylonians gave Semitic names to the months, but in most other respects this calendar was substantially the Sumerian calendar of Nippur as observed in the third dynasty of Ur (ca. 2180-1960). This calendar reckoned the year from one vernal equinox to the next, while counting months from new moon to new moon, with an added month when this was needed to make up the discrepancy. These lunar months were of thirty days' length except when a new moon occurred on the thirtieth day, in which case this would become the first day of the new month. Until the Persian era astronomical observation was the primary means of determining calendrical periods, but thereafter mathematical calculation became a sufficiently dependable method of determination.

As shown by the above reference, the Babylonians began the month *Nisan* on or after the vernal equinox, and until the Persian era, they began each new month based upon visual observation (i.e., the sighting of the crescent new moon).

The historian Josephus, in describing to his Roman audience the timing for the Passover, frequently mentioned the name for this month that Judaism borrowed from Babylon. One such instance can be found in his work entitled *Antiquities of the Jews*:

This calamity [the Great Flood] happened in the six hundredth year of Noah's government [age], in the second month, called by the Macedonians *Dius*, but by the Hebrews, *Marchesuan*; for so did they order their year in Egypt; but Moses appointed that *Nisan*, which is the same with *Xanthicus*, should be the first month for their festivals, because he brought them out of Egypt in that month; so that this month began the year as to all the solemnities they observed to the honor of God, although he preserved the original order of the months as to selling and buying, and other ordinary affairs.<sup>21</sup>

Of great importance here is the fact that Josephus not only recognized Abib as being equivalent to the Babylonian *Nisan*, but he also equated it with the Macedonian month *Xanthicus*. We already know

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<sup>20</sup> This is recognized by Judaism, as attested by the following quote taken from *The Chumash*, The Stone Edition, published by Mesorah Publications, Ltd., Brooklyn, NY, 1997, p. 349: “The currently used names of the months are of Babylonian origin, and came into use among Jews only after the destruction of the First Temple. Those names were retained as a reminder of the redemption from Babylon, which resulted in the building of the Second Temple (*Ramban*).” This is corroborated by *The New Brown-Driver-Briggs-Gesenius Hebrew-English Lexicon*, where we read that this word (#5212) is a loan word from the Babylonian *Nisannu*.

<sup>21</sup> From *Antiquities of the Jews*, Book I, ch. iii., sec. 3.

that the month *Nisan* began after the equinox. What about the month *Xanthicus*? Is there any information leading us to the knowledge of when that particular month began? Yes, there is.

The following is an excerpt from the book *Ante-Nicene Fathers*, VOL. I, “The Apostolic Fathers with Justin Martyr and Irenaeus,” by Philip Schaff, Wm. B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, first published in 1886, reprinted in 2001. Included in Schaff’s book is a letter attributed to the Assembly at Smyrna, written to the Assembly at Philomelium. Here is the introduction that Schaff gives to this letter:

The following letter purports to have been written by the Church at Smyrna to the Church at Philomelium, and through that Church to the whole Christian world, in order to give a succinct account of the circumstances attending the martyrdom of Polycarp. It is the earliest of all the Martyria, and has generally been accounted both the most interesting and authentic.

### Chapter XXI.—The date of the martyrdom.

Now, the blessed Polycarp suffered martyrdom on the second day of the month Xanthicus just begun,<sup>476</sup> the seventh day before the Kalends of May, on the great Sabbath, at the eighth hour.<sup>477</sup> He was taken by Herod, Philip the Trallian being high priest,<sup>478</sup> Statius Quadratus being proconsul, but Jesus Christ being King for ever, to whom be glory, honour, majesty, and an everlasting throne, from generation to generation. Amen.

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<sup>476</sup> The translation is here very doubtful. Wake renders the words *μηνος ισταμενου*, “of the present month.”

<sup>477</sup> Great obscurity hangs over the chronology here indicated. According to Usher, the Smyrnæans began the month Xanthicus on the 25th of March. But the seventh day before the Kalends of May is the 25th of April. Some, therefore, read *Απριλλιον* instead of *Μαιων*. The great Sabbath is that before the passover. The “eighth hour” may correspond either to our 8 A.M. or 2 P.M.

<sup>478</sup> Called before (chap. xii.) *Asiarch*.<sup>22</sup>

Of particular interest in the above quotation is the footnote regarding the month *Xanthicus*. We are told that, according to a man named Usher, the Smyrnæans began the month of Xanthicus on the 25th of March, which is a date following the vernal equinox. Usher, by the way, is a corruption of this man’s real name, James Ussher. Ussher was a renowned 17th century Old Testament chronologist who is “noted for being the most accurate chronologist of the Bible and world events from creation to A.D. 70.”<sup>23</sup>

We thus see that, according to historical understanding, the month *Xanthicus* matches the timing of the Babylonian *Nisan*, in that both months began on or after the vernal equinox. The month of *Xanthicus*, in addition to being the name of a month on the Smyrnæans’ calendar, is also the name of the same month on the Macedonians’ calendar, and Josephus understood the fourteenth day of *Nisan* (Passover) to be the equivalent of the fourteenth day of *Xanthicus*:

But when God had signified, that with one more plague he would compel the Egyptians to let the Hebrews go, he commanded Moses to tell the people that they should have a sacrifice

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<sup>22</sup> The above quotation can be read by accessing the following URL: <http://www.ccel.org/ccel/schaff/anf01.iv.iv.xxi.html>.

<sup>23</sup> This is a direct quotation from a review of Ussher’s book *The Annals of the World*, published in 1658 (two years after Ussher’s death). This particular book review may be accessed at the following URL: <http://www.swrc.com/newbookstore/books/history4.htm>

ready, and that they should prepare themselves on the tenth day of the month Xanthicus, against the fourteenth (which month is called by the Egyptians Pharmuth, and Nisan by the Hebrews; but the Macedonians call it Xanthicus) and that he should carry away the Hebrews ready for their departure, and having sorted the people into tribes, he kept them together in one place; but when the fourteenth day was come, and all were ready to depart, they offered the sacrifice, and purified their houses with the blood, using bunches of hyssop for that purpose; and when they had supped, they burnt the remainder of the flesh, as just ready to depart.<sup>24</sup>

As Josephus testifies, the Hebrew calendar, which had by that time integrated the Babylonian name *Nisan* instead of *Abib*, could be overlaid onto the calendar of the Macedonians, whose name for that month is *Xanthicus*. Of additional interest here is the fact that Josephus also notes that *Nisan* also paralleled the ***Egyptian calendar***, which used the name *Pharmuth* for that particular month.

You may wonder how the Egyptian calendar could possibly match the Babylonian calendar, especially since we have already demonstrated that the ancient Egyptian calendar consisted of three weeks containing ten days per week. The reason for this is simple: By the time of Josephus, all the calendars of the Near East, including Egypt, had been assimilated into one calendar, each with its own name. This is a point that is brought out by the book *Jews in the Hellenistic and Roman Cities*:

The Macedonian calendar of the early Hellenistic rulers happened also to be lunar, and thus was soon assimilated with the Babylonian, although, as Greek speakers, Seleucid rulers continued using Macedonian names of months. The Babylonian calendar was thus maintained in the Near East, and eventually outlived the disintegration of the Seleucid empire. It became the official calendar of the Parthian empire, of Nabataea, and of other kingdoms of the former Seleucid empire. In Judaea, likewise, it was adopted by the Hasmonaean dynasty (hence the Babylonian datings in the books of Maccabees, again equated with numbered biblical months).<sup>25</sup>

As vividly expressed by the above author, by the time of the Maccabees and continuing on through the days of Josephus, the calendars of the Near East, including that of the Jews, was essentially the same. That calendar year began on or after the vernal equinox.

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<sup>24</sup> *Antiquities of the Jews*, Book II, ch. xiv., sec. 6.

<sup>25</sup> From *Jews in the Hellenistic and Roman Cities*, edited by John R. Bartlett, Routledge publishing, London and New York, 2002, p. 108.

## ***12. Could the Original Passover Have Occurred in a Month That Began On or After the Vernal Equinox?***

**W**e have already shown a couple of examples illustrating that the original Passover could have occurred in a month that began *before* the vernal equinox, as the barley in Egypt certainly ripens a month or so earlier than the barley in Israel. If the barley in Israel doesn't ripen until mid-April, and if the vernal equinox occurs around the 21<sup>st</sup> of March, and if the barley in Egypt ripens well before the middle of March, then it is indeed possible that the original Passover occurred during a month that began before the equinox.

What Scripture doesn't tell us is the time frame that passed between the timing of that massive hail storm (Ex. 9:31-32) and the time of when Yahweh instructed Moses and Aaron that "This month shall be unto you the beginning of months" (Ex. 12:2). Was it a week? Or could it have been a month? We aren't told. All we know is that there was a plague of locusts and a plague of darkness prior to the grand finale, the plague of the firstborn.

We agree with Herb Solinsky's commentary:

Does it make sense to think that when Moses heard the words of Ex. 12:2 he thought of the barley in Israel? The context of Egypt and the context of Israel are very different for barley. Now consider the time difference from Ex 9:31-32 to Ex 12:2. After the plague of hail there was a plague of locusts and then a plague of darkness. Then came Ex. 12:2. From the context nothing prevents a separation of about two months or more. Ex 9:31-32 is just not in the context of Ex 12:2, and with the difference in the time of barley harvest between Egypt and Israel, Ex 9:31-32 should not be associated with the barley harvest in Israel. There is no reason for Moses to think about the barley harvest at Ex 12:2 because the word ABIB is not even there. One may not arbitrarily grab the word ABIB from EX 13:4 and shove it into Ex 12:2. If barley in itself was to define the timing of the first month, then it would be of the greatest importance for it or ABIB to appear in Ex 12:2, but it is not there!<sup>26</sup>

As Mr. Solinsky impresses upon us here, since we are not supplied with a time reference from the hail plague up to the plague of darkness, coupled with the fact that there is typically a month's difference between the barley harvest in Egypt and the barley harvest in Israel, we need to be careful about arbitrarily allowing the barley harvest itself to be the deciding factor in determining when the month of Abib occurs! With this in mind, we need to ask ourselves, "Is the following calendar scenario possible?"

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<sup>26</sup> From "Exodus 9:31-32 and ABIB," by Herb Solinsky, March 16, 2002.

### Eleventh Month

Jan. 11 1	Jan. 12 2	Jan. 13 3	Jan. 14 4	Jan. 15 5	Jan. 16 6	Jan. 17 7
Jan. 18 8	Jan. 19 9	Jan. 20 10	Jan. 21 11	Jan. 22 12	Jan. 23 13	Jan. 24 14
Jan. 25 15	Jan. 26 16	Jan. 27 17	Jan. 28 18	Jan. 29 19	Jan. 30 20	Jan. 31 21
Feb. 1 22	Feb. 2 23	Feb. 3 24	Feb. 4 25	Feb. 5 26 Hail	Feb. 6 27	Feb. 7 28
Feb. 8 29						

### Twelfth Month – Adar I

	Feb. 9 1	Feb. 10 2	Feb. 11 3	Feb. 12 4	Feb. 13 5	Feb. 14 6
Feb. 15 7	Feb. 16 8	Feb. 17 9	Feb. 18 10	Feb. 19 11	Feb. 20 12	Feb. 21 13
Feb. 22 14	Feb. 23 15	Feb. 24 16	Feb. 25 17	Feb. 26 18 Locusts	Feb. 27 19	Feb. 28 20
Mar. 1 21	Mar. 2 22	Mar. 3 23	Mar. 4 24	Mar. 5 25	Mar. 6 26	Mar. 7 27
Mar. 8 28	Mar. 9 29	Mar. 10 30				

### Thirteenth Month – ADAR II

			Mar. 11 1	Mar. 12 2	Mar. 13 3	Mar. 14 4
Mar. 15 5	Mar. 16 6	Mar. 17 7	Mar. 18 8	Mar. 19 9	Mar. 20 10 Darkness	Mar. 21 11 Darkness
Mar. 22 12 Darkness	Mar. 23 13	Mar. 24 14	Mar. 25 15	Mar. 26 16	Mar. 27 17	Mar. 28 18
Mar. 29 19	Mar. 30 20	Mar. 31 21	April 1 22	April 2 23	April 3 24	April 4 25
April 5 26	April 6 27	April 7 28	April 8 29			

### First Month – ABIB

				April 9 1	April 10 2	April 11 3
April 12 4	April 13 5	April 14 6	April 15 7	April 16 8	April 17 9	April 18 10
April 19 11	April 20 12	April 21 13	April 22 14	April 23 15	April 24 16	April 25 17
April 26 18	April 27 19	April 28 20	April 29 21	April 30 22	May 1 23	May 2 24
May 3 25	May 4 26	May 5 27	May 6 28	May 7 29	May 8 30	

The above calendar fits perfectly with Scripture in that the month of Abib falls in line with the barley harvest in Israel, which, as we have seen begins in mid-April, thus allowing for ripe barley to be offered for the wave-sheaf offering. In addition, it squares with the historical understanding of the month of *Nisan*, the Babylonian month considered as the equivalent to *Abib*, as well as the month *Xanthicus*. As we have already noted, both *Nisan* and *Xanthicus* began after the vernal equinox, just as the *Abib* of the above calendar does.

As we will see shortly, it has historically been a Jewish understanding that the first month of the year begins on or after the vernal equinox.

### 13. *The Evil Vernal Equinox*

Most of the opposition we have read to reckoning the first month of the year from the vernal equinox has addressed the heathen connection and the pagan festivities associated with this particular time of year. I am reminded of a presentation I attended in which the speaker attempted to vilify the practice of watching for the new moon crescent because of a statue he had seen in Rome of a goddess standing atop a crescent-shaped moon. This begs the question of whether the heathen fascination with the new moon began with corrupt worship or if it was a carry-over from pure worship that *became* corrupt.

What follows is one of the more serious attempts that we have read in which the author's intent is that of discrediting the use of the vernal equinox as a factor in beginning a new year. He vilifies the vernal equinox method due to a "heathen connection." The author of the following editorial emphasizes that we should base our reckoning solely on the new moon occurring after the green ears of barley have been found, and he portrays the vernal equinox as something that was only used by pagans:

#### **Why Not Use the Vernal Equinox?**

Some ignore barley altogether and set Abib 1 according to the vernal equinox. The vernal equinox is that instant when the sun is directly above the earth's equator while going from the south to the north (for inhabitants of the northern hemisphere). It is the time that most people take as the definition of the beginning of spring."

Those who employ the vernal equinox point to Genesis 1:14, claiming that the sun, moon, and stars set the Feasts. It is true that the sun divides day from night and establishes the seasons, while the new moon sets the beginning of months. Yet, nowhere in the entire Bible can one find where the vernal equinox establishes Abib. We can go even further and say unequivocally that nowhere in the Bible is there even any mention of the vernal equinox. To say that Genesis 1:14 refers to the vernal equinox is reading into Scripture what isn't there.

Passover is related to spring through the growing cycle of crops. First and foremost, it must occur in the month of Abib. And Abib is a condition of grain as much as it is a time of the year. The King James Version has led some astray in the way it translates *moed* in Exodus 13:10, Num. 9:2, 3, 7, and 13. The KJV uses "season" in these verses, causing some to believe that the command is specifically for springtime, and therefore must involve the vernal equinox. In reality, the Hebrew *moed* simply means "set time" or "appointed time." Yahweh has set Passover and the Feast of Unleavened Bread by the criteria of the crops, not by a purely astronomical reckoning known as the vernal equinox.

The vast majority of Jews gradually got away from actually looking for the green ears of barley, going instead by a calculated calendar that involved the vernal equinox. This was done for the sake of convenience. But Yahweh tells us that His growing cycle reveals the proper month for His Feasts.<sup>27</sup>

The author of the above article goes on to effectively attempt to "demonize" the vernal equinox by associating it with heathen rites and practices. He writes the following:

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<sup>27</sup> From the online article entitled "The Calendar – Equinox or Barley?" Copyright © 1999-2000 | Yahweh's Restoration Ministry. All rights reserved.. The article can be accessed at the following URL: [http://www.yrm.org/equinox\\_or\\_barley.htm](http://www.yrm.org/equinox_or_barley.htm).



## Vernal Equinox and Historic Paganism

When the Roman church deliberately acted to separate Easter from Passover, it ruled in 325 CE in the Council of Nicaea that Easter would fall on the first Sunday after the first full moon following the vernal equinox. This setting of an observance was entirely man-made, and appropriately applied to a man-made holiday called Easter. The Roman church on its own volition, therefore, bestowed a legitimacy on the vernal equinox as a calendar marker where it had none before — at least not in any kind of Biblical context.

That does not mean, however, that the vernal equinox had no significance among historic pagans and their calendars. Note the following:

- "Easter, too, celebrates the victory of a god of light (J-sus) over darkness (death), so it makes sense to place it at this season. Ironically, the name 'Easter' was taken from the name of a Teutonic lunar Goddess, Eostre (from whence we also get the name of the female hormone, estrogen). Her chief symbols were the bunny (both for fertility and because her worshipers saw a hare in the full moon) and the egg (symbolic of the cosmic egg of creation), images which Christians have been hard pressed to explain. Her holiday, the Eostara, was held on the Vernal Equinox Full Moon. Needless to say, the old and accepted folk name for the Vernal Equinox is 'Lady Day.' Christians sometimes insist that the title is in honor of Mary and her Annunciation, but Pagans will smile knowingly." -- **Lady Day: The Vernal Equinox**, by Mike Nichols.<sup>28</sup>

By using the above “guilt by association” approach, we are supposed to agree with the author that, since heathens used the vernal equinox as a part of their rituals, then *surely* no true believer could ever have allowed such an event as this to determine the first month of the year! While on the surface this may sound reasonable, we need to also consider the possibility that, in the beginning, when there was no corrupt worship, no corrupt calendar methods, *everyone* may have allowed the vernal equinox to determine when the new year would begin. If this is true, then could it be possible that, as man corrupted the pure worship of Yahweh, he nevertheless retained the knowledge of when the new year began?

As we consider and weigh out this possibility, we need to reflect on a few truths. First of all, if we are to allow heathen connections to determine our belief systems, then we would have to reject the resurrection of our Savior Yeshua<sup>29</sup> as an incredulous myth, for heathen myths involving various deities who died and were then resurrected back to life are well-attested. In fact, we will now call to mind some of these resurrection myths ... myths that we believe may well have been associated with one of the ten plagues of Egypt.

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<sup>28</sup> Ibid.

<sup>29</sup> I am aware that many are of the opinion that “Yeshua” is a false rendering of the Messiah’s name. I can only recommend reading the study that I have written on this topic entitled “Name of the Messiah: יהושע? ישוע?”

## 14. *The Resurrection of the Sun Deity and the Vernal Equinox*

**Y**ou might wonder why we would take the time to incorporate into this presentation the fact that heathens worshipped idols that they believed were resurrected at the time of the vernal equinox. What could this *possibly* have to do with Yahweh's calendar? We believe the resurrection myths associated with the vernal equinox actually offer additional evidence that Yahweh's year begins on or after the vernal equinox. I know there are many sources from which we could quote to verify the fact that heathens worshipped idols who died and were resurrected at the time of the vernal equinox, but we will only offer a few here. The following comes from a website known as *Astrology on the Web*, from their article entitled "Easter: Sacrifice and Resurrection":

At around the time of the spring equinox in March, marking the rebirth of the year, the death and resurrection of a number of divine or quasi-divine figures was celebrated. The beautiful god Adonis (cognate with *Adonai*, which means "Lord" in the Hebrew scriptures) was worshipped throughout the Middle East with his partner Aphrodite (Venus). Adonis was slain and resurrected and this was celebrated at this time, as was the death and resurrection of Tammuz, the lover of Ishtar, at the beginning of the new year as marked by the equinox. J. G. Frazer, author of *The Golden Bough*, is of



the view that the church has skilfully grafted the festival of the dead god Adonis onto the Easter festival of Christianity. The dead and risen Adonis thus became the dead and risen Christ. Greek depictions of the sorrowful goddess with her dying lover Adonis in her arms resemble and seem to have been the model for the Pieta of the Virgin with the dead body of her son in her lap. The most celebrated example is Michelangelo's Pieta in St Peter's Basilica in Rome. These and other dying and resurrected god figures are symbols of new life after the sleeping death of winter. The metaphysical aspect of awakening to a new life in the Spirit is a key element of initiation into the Mysteries.<sup>30</sup>

The following excerpt is from an article entitled "The Vernal Equinox," by Ruth Reichmann:

The Spring or Vernal Equinox is a celebration of the rebirth of nature and brings with it the symbols of birth/rebirth. It is replete with traditional symbols and superstitions. As part of the vernal equinox ritual, eggs play an important role in the festivities throughout the world. According to folklore, the vernal equinox is the one time of the year that eggs can be stood on end. Earth and nature are said to be in harmony if an egg can be balanced on its end during the equinox, at the very point in time, when day and night are also in balance.

The Vernal Equinox, the first official day of Spring, is on or about March 20. It is the point at which the sun crosses the celestial equator from south to north. This signals the beginning of Spring in the Northern Hemisphere. The vernal equinox has long been a significant event in

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<sup>30</sup> The entire article "Easter: Sacrifice and Resurrection" may be read in its entirety by accessing the following URL: <http://www.astrology.com/easter.html>.

the lives of agricultural peoples as it symbolizes nature's regeneration, fertility, growth and bounty. The word equinox comes from Latin and means "equal night" (Tag- und Nachtgleiche). On this day, night and day each last twelve hours. The Vernal Equinox used to be considered the beginning of the Pagan New Year. It was a time of joy called forth by the resurrection of the "Light of the World" (sun god) from the underworld of the winter, from where he arose to join his goddess Eostre.<sup>31</sup>

Finally, we will cite yet another article validating the fact that heathens celebrated the resurrection of their idols at the time of the vernal equinox. The following excerpt is taken from the article "Do Muslims Celebrate Easter and Christmas?" by Dr. E. Ahmed Tori:

The Church adopted spring equinox celebrations as Easter. As this time had already been one of celebrating the sun's resurrection and return to prominence, celebrating the resurrection of the son of God required no great change in understanding. In fact, the Easter celebrations were so similar to earlier celebrations - particularly those which recognized the resurrection of the Babylonian Adonis, the Greek Apollo, and the Roman Attis - that a bitter controversy arose with pagans claiming that the Christian Easter celebration was a spurious imitation of the ancient traditions. Vernal equinox bonfires, originally prohibited by the Church, found their way as Easter fires into the official liturgy of Rome by the ninth century. Fertility symbols associated with spring, such as the egg and the incredibly prolific rabbit, survived as well. (Ellerbe p.148).<sup>32</sup>

What do resurrection myths have to do with establishing Yahweh's calendar? Well, we believe we need to bear in mind the fact that when Yahweh unleashed His plagues upon Egypt, He did more than just make the Egyptians suffer for their stubbornness: He also made a mockery out of the idols they worshipped. For example, the Nile river, held as sacred by the Egyptians, was affected by the plague of blood. The frog was also considered sacred by the Egyptians. Many believe the plague of flies to either be a mockery of their worship of *baalzebub* ("lord of the flies") or else a mockery of their worship of the sacred beetle. The plague of hail was likely aimed at the Egyptian idol named *Set*, who was the deity who controlled the weather and who protected their crops.

This brings us to the plague of darkness. What Egyptian deity might the plague of darkness been aimed at? Might it have been Osiris, the Egyptian sun deity known as the "Lord of life after death" ... whose resurrection came at the time of the vernal equinox? The following information is taken from an online article entitled "Spring Equinox, Reincarnation, and The Great Cosmic Year," by Curtis Lang:

For millennia the Spring Equinox has been celebrated around the world as a festival of Resurrection, and it marks the start of the astrological New Year.

For the temple priests of the Egyptian dynasties, Osiris, the dying and reborn god connected with the morning star Venus, was known as 'the heart of the renewed sun.' Lord of the Underworld and King of the Dead, in his role as the resurrected God, Osiris represented light, life and consciousness, the ever-renewing power of the Solar Disc.

Osiris was also the god of vegetation, often depicted with green skin. Egyptians created wood-framed barley seedbeds in the shape of the god, known as 'Osiris gardens.' These sacred

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<sup>31</sup> From "The Vernal Equinox" by Ruth Reichmann, Max Kade German-American Center, Indiana Univ.- Purdue Univ. Indianapolis. This article may be accessed at the following URL: <http://www.serve.com/sheagermusa/vernal.htm>.

<sup>32</sup> From the article "Do Muslims Celebrate Easter and Christmas?" by Dr. E. Ahmed Tori. It may be accessed at the following URL: <http://www.missionislam.com/comprel/easterchristmas.htm>.

seedbeds have been found in tombs. Clearly, the plants which sprouted from these beds symbolized the resurrection of life after death.

The soul of Osiris was said to rest in his sarcophagus during the winter season, and the spring equinox marked his resurrection.<sup>33</sup>

From a logical perspective, we cannot think of a better time frame in which to make a mockery out of the equinoctial resurrection of the sun deity than to snuff out the sun's light during that time period. And why have darkness for *three days*? It was a widely-held notion, both among the Jews as well as other communities, that a person is not officially "dead" until after two days:

The Jewish people believed that, after death, the spirit lingered in the tomb for two days before departing. Therefore, people were not officially dead until the third day. This is the same reasoning behind the three days that Jesus spent in the tomb. If Jesus had not waited until after Lazarus had been dead three days; people would have said he wasn't really dead. The deep and miraculous joy of our Lord would have been incomplete. The miracle of Lazarus would not been the sign of Jesus' power over death!<sup>34</sup>

Indeed, it was a general superstition among many classes of people that three full days were required before a person could be "officially dead," and it was on that third day that the embalming or the anointing with spices would take place. The 5th century BCE historian Herodotus (c. 484-425 BCE) wrote that embalming did not take place until after three days when the spirit was supposed to be gone.<sup>35</sup>

In the same way that a person wasn't deemed to be "officially dead" until the third day, the Egyptian solar deity was at length considered "officially dead" when he failed to show up on that fatal third day. When he failed to be resurrected after two days, he was considered "officially dead" on day number three.

With the plague of darkness, Yahweh hammered the final nail in the coffin of the Egyptian sun deity. And what better time to lay the deity to rest than at the time that he was supposed to be "resurrected" – at the vernal equinox?

If this is what happened, then the plague of darkness occurred just prior to the month that Yahweh declared to Moses and Aaron as "the beginning of months." Thus, instead of approaching the vernal equinox's heathen connection as rationale for *disproving* its association with Yahweh's year, we believe we can use that connection to prove that the vernal equinox occurred at the time of the plague of darkness ... and *before* the plague of the firstborn.

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<sup>33</sup> From an online article entitled "Spring Equinox, Reincarnation, and The Great Cosmic Year," by Curtis Lang, March 18, 2005. The entire article may be read by accessing the following URL:

[http://www.satyacenter.com/library-curtis\\_lang\\_archive-spring-equinox-newsletter](http://www.satyacenter.com/library-curtis_lang_archive-spring-equinox-newsletter).

<sup>34</sup> From the online article entitled "'Unbind Him and Let Him Go!'" [http://onefamilyoutreach.com/bible/John/jn\\_11\\_01-45.htm](http://onefamilyoutreach.com/bible/John/jn_11_01-45.htm).

<sup>35</sup> Cf., Herod ii, 86-89.

## 15. *Historical Relevance of the Vernal Equinox*

As we mentioned earlier, 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,<sup>36</sup> 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.

Certainly, a first-century Jew known as Philo of Alexandria (c. 20 BCE – 50 CE) 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. 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.<sup>37</sup>

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.<sup>38</sup>

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.<sup>39</sup>

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

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<sup>36</sup> 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](http://www.hunkler.com/pyramids/pyramid_symbolism.html).

<sup>37</sup> 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.

<sup>38</sup> Ibid, “The Special Laws, I,” chap. XXXV, sec. 181, p. 551.

<sup>39</sup> From *Philo*, Supplement II, “Questions and Answers on Exodus,” translated by Ralph Marcus, Ph.D., Harvard University Press, Cambridge, MA:, 1953, pp. 2-3.

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 could best represent them. The question arises, “Would the Jews of Alexandria have chosen Philo had he not properly represented normative Jewish practice and belief?”

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.<sup>40</sup>

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<sup>41</sup>, the largest Jewish settlement outside Palestine. The only certain date known from his life comes from his account of the great pogrom<sup>42</sup> 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.<sup>43</sup>

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.<sup>44</sup>

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 Dystus. But as the Romans would say, before the eleventh of the calends of April. (15) But the sun is

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<sup>40</sup> From *The Cambridge History of Judaism*, Vol. 3, by William Horbury, W.D. Davies and John Sturdy, Cambridge University Press, 1999, p. 879.

<sup>41</sup> According to this same reference, article “Alexandria,” p. 152, we learn, “By the 1<sup>st</sup> 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.

<sup>42</sup> “Pogrom” is defined as “An organized and often officially instigated local massacre, especially one directed against the Jews. [<sup><</sup>Russian, destruction]” — From *The Reader’s Digest Great Encyclopedic Dictionary*.

<sup>43</sup> From *The Anchor Bible Dictionary*, Vol. 5, David Noel Freedman, Editor-in-Chief, article “Philo of Alexandria,” by Peder Borgen, Doubleday, 1992, p. 333.

<sup>44</sup> Ibid, p. 341.

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 dodecatomorium, 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) 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.<sup>45</sup>

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 (3<sup>rd</sup> 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 are about to see, 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* and very mature fields of barley covered 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.

<sup>45</sup> From *Eusebius' Ecclesiastical History*, Book 7, chapter 32, translated by C. F. Cruse, Hendrickson Publishers, 2000, pp. 273-274.

## 16. *A Karaite's View*

In a newsletter article dated March 20, 2005, a prominent Karaite known as Nehemia Gordon depicted those who believe the month of *Abib* should come after the vernal equinox as not understanding the sources that they quote. In other words, when Philo wrote that the cycle of months is reckoned *from the vernal equinox*, we are supposed to understand that he actually intended for us to understand that the Passover is to be reckoned from the vernal equinox, not the “cycle of months.” Here is what Mr. Gordon wrote:

As discussed in the above articles, the modern equinox-keepers begin their yearly cycle at the first new moon after the vernal equinox. Ironically they base themselves on ancient Pharisee sources (Talmud, Josephus) which mention the equinox, without actually understanding the meaning of these ancient sources.

The ancient Pharisees had two systems of setting the beginning of the year, only one of which took the equinox into account whereas both systems looked at the Aviv as a central factor (see Abib Faq). The modern equinox followers also fail to understand how the ancient sources used the equinox. Simply put, the ancient Pharisee system (Talmud and Josephus) was NOT based on the first NEW MOON after the vernal equinox! Instead, the ancient Pharisee equinox system was based on the 16th day of the month that fell out after the Vernal Equinox. It was completely acceptable in the ancient Pharisee system for the New Moon of the First Month to fall out before the vernal equinox, as long as the 16th day of that month fell out after the equinox.<sup>46</sup>

Again, Nehemia Gordon establishes his view that the ancient Jewish system allowed the new moon of Abib to “fall out” before the vernal equinox. This understanding, however, contradicts not only what Philo wrote, but also the understanding of Aristobulus, who preceded Philo by over 250 years.

We will not deny that some within ancient Judaism have expressed the view that the vernal equinox should precede the *Passover*, and not necessarily the new moon of Abib. One such Jew was a sage known as Maimonides.

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<sup>46</sup> From Karaite Korner Newsletter #202, entitled “Aviv vs. the Equinox,” Sunday, March 20, 2005 4:59 AM. The commentary may be read in its entirety by accessing the following URL: [http://groups.yahoo.com/group/karaite\\_korner\\_news/message/220?viscount=100](http://groups.yahoo.com/group/karaite_korner_news/message/220?viscount=100).



## 17. The View of Maimonides

Centuries after Eusebius, we read from the writings of a famous Jew known as Maimonides (1135 – 1204 CE) that the new year was begun on or after the vernal equinox. However, as Maimonides explains, the barley harvest did indeed play a significant role, as the year could indeed begin *before* the equinox if it could be determined that there would be ripe barley in time for the wave sheaf offering:

1. An embolismic year is a year to which a (13th) month has been added. Such an extra month is never any other month but an added Adar. Hence the embolismic year has two months of Adar, a First Adar and a Second Adar. And why is just this month added? Because of the season of the barley harvest—that is, in order that Passover be celebrated in that season. For it is said: *Heed the month of the ripening ears* (Deut. 16:1), which means, give heed that this month (of Nisan) fall in the season of the ripening ears. Without the addition of this month (of Adar), however, Passover would fall sometimes in the summer and sometimes in the winter.

2. Intercalation of the year depended upon the following three criteria: the *tekufah* [the equinox], the barley harvest, and the blooming of the tree fruits. Namely, if the court had ascertained by calculation that the tekufah 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—even if the tekufah was to take place prior to the 16th day of Nisan—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.

4. With regard to the barley harvest the court took into consideration the following three regions: Judea, Transjordan, and Galilee. If the barley crop was ripe in two of these regions but not in the third, the year was not intercalated; if, however, the barley crop was ripe in one of them but not in the other two, and if the fruit of the trees had not yet sprouted, the year was intercalated. These were the three main grounds for intercalation—in order that the years (of months) coincide with the solar years.<sup>47</sup>

It is plain to see that Maimonides' chief concern was not so much the *tekufah* (equinox) as it was whether or not there would be ripe barley in time for Passover if the upcoming new moon was declared to be *Abib*. The main criterion, however, was for the vernal equinox to occur before the 16<sup>th</sup> day of Nisan, i.e., the day of the wave sheaf offering. Maimonides did not express the view that the vernal equinox should precede the new moon itself.

We may wonder where Maimonides gleaned the information regarding when to begin the new year. From all appearances, he borrowed it from the Talmud. When people mention the Talmud, people tend to raise their eyebrows with suspicion, for the Talmud certainly contains a lot of unsound teachings that do not line up with Scripture. However, this should not be taken to mean that everything

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<sup>47</sup> From *The Code of Maimonides*, Vol. XI, Book Three, Treatise Eight, "Sanctification of the New Moon," translated from the Hebrew by Solomon Gandz, Yale University Press, New Haven, CT, pp. 16-17, 1956.

found in the Talmud is corrupt. For the purpose of examining the historical calendar, the Talmud is valuable as a source of historical information. The following excerpt is purported to date to approximately the year 50 CE, as it involves the rabbi Gamaliel, who was an instructor under whom the Apostle Paul sat:

It once happened that Rabban Gamliel [the Apostle Shaul's teacher] was sitting on a step on the Temple Mount, and the well-known scribe Yochanan was standing before him with three cut sheets [of parchment] lying before him. He (Gamliel) said to him (Yochanan), ... (and) take the third [sheet] and write to our brethren, the Exiles of Babylon and to those in Media, and to all the other exiled [sons] of Israel, saying: 'May your peace be great forever! We beg to inform that the doves are still tender, and the lambs are still young, and the Abib is not yet ripe. It seems advisable to me and to my colleagues to add thirty days to this year.'<sup>48</sup>

Based upon this quotation, the ripeness of the barley was an important factor in deciding whether or not to intercalate a "Second Adar," just as Maimonides noted. Note also that Gamaliel mentioned that the "*Abib*" was not yet ripe. This implies that the "*Abib*" is something that can be ripe ... contrary to the teaching of some that "*Abib*" can only refer to green ears. This understanding of the meaning of *Abib* also supports the reference we read earlier from *The Temple Scroll*.

Here is an additional 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."<sup>49</sup>

According to this historical record, both the "barley crowd" and the "equinox crowd" are correct ... but it takes **both** factors, not just one. Based upon this information, 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.

Again, we do not support using the Talmud as a source for instruction, but we believe it is a mistake to ignore the fact that it is a source for historical evidence pointing to Jewish practice and belief during the first few centuries following Yeshua's resurrection. Clearly, it does not align with the understanding expressed by Philo, yet I don't believe any of us can argue that the item of primary importance was that of having ripe barley in time for the wave sheaf offering.

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<sup>48</sup> From *The Babylonian Talmud*, Tractate Sanhedrin 11b.

<sup>49</sup> Ibid.

## 18. *Additional Historical Information from the Elephantine Letters*

Thus far we have provided evidence from the writings of Eusebius, Maimonides, and the Talmud in establishing the fact that a line can be drawn from the days of Yeshua's ministry to at least the tenth century CE, documenting that some within Judaism understood that **Passover** must occur after the vernal equinox. Other Jews, such as Philo and Aristobulus, insisted that the **new moon** must occur after the vernal equinox, but all agreed that the barley had to be ripe in time for the wave sheaf offering.

I believe we have also demonstrated that the Hebrew month *Abib* dovetails with the Babylonian month *Nisan*, and that the scholarly consensus is that *Nisan* always began **after** the vernal equinox. Moreover, I believe we have offered compelling evidence that, during the year of the Exodus, the first month of the year began after the vernal equinox.

Recently, evidence has surfaced demonstrating that an ancient Jewish garrison that was stationed on Elephantine Island also reckoned the first month of the new year as beginning on or after the day of the vernal equinox. The following information about this garrison is taken from the book *New Testament Chronology*:

Elephantine Island is in the Nile near Aswan in upper Egypt. During the fifth century BCE there was a colony of Jewish soldiers there. They were part of a military garrison protecting the southern limits of the Persian Empire. Almost a hundred Aramaic documents have been recovered from there. Outside the Bible these provide the earliest documentation of the political, economic, social, and religious life of a Jewish community from the southern Diaspora. Many of these are double-dated legal documents that give some insight into calendar reckoning of the period. The papyri from Elephantine demonstrate that the post-exile Jews used a calendar similar to the Babylonian calendar.

Many of these legal documents include the required Egyptian civil year date and the regnal year of the current Persian king according to non-accession reckoning based on the Egyptian calendar. The two earliest papyri dated in 494 and 483 BCE contain only the Egyptian date, which suggests that the Jewish dating was not used that early. Soon thereafter a date using the new Jewish month names is also given according to the Babylonian calendar, the calendar used by their Persian overlords. Double-dated documents cover the period 471 to 402 BCE. From these it can be established that the Jews at Elephantine used reckoning similar to the Babylonian calendar. This included evening to evening days, a new year beginning in Nisan only after the Vernal Equinox, and the use of an intercalated sixth month. There was little, if any, difference between the Jewish and Persian reckoning.

The Jewish dating is given in the same sequence as contemporary portions of the Bible and Jewish documents of the second commonwealth: day-month-year. This was unlike the contemporary Egyptian and Neo-Babylonian documents. It was also unlike the earlier Monarchy, year-month-day, indicating that this was not a continuation of the Exodus calendar.

The dating of most of the double-dated papyri is straightforward, although a few documents may contain scribal errors. The Jewish date can only be reconciled to the known Egyptian date by consistently using sunset reckoning. The reign of the Persian king is given according to Egyptian reckoning. The regnal year is one year higher than Persian reckoning when it falls between the Egyptian new year on Thoth 1 (December during the period) and the Persian new year on Nisanu 1 (March/April). If the Jews had reckoned from Tishri then the Egyptian regnal year also would have been one year higher between Nisan and Tishri, or vice versa; this

situation did not exist. Thus, the Jews reckoned the reigns of the Persian kings as from Nisan. This would be expected for a Persian military garrison.<sup>50</sup>

We recently received a study on the Elephantine letters that I found to be very intriguing. The author, Wayne L. Atchison, investigated these “double dated letters,” offering specific examples of instances in which the individuals who wrote them began the new year on or after the vernal equinox, even though the previous new moon occurred only a few days prior to the equinox. Here are some excerpts from his study:<sup>51</sup>

Modern scholars have failed to reconcile all of the Elephantine letters. This is because they are using the wrong rules to compute the observed calendar dates. Thus they fail to match the Egyptian date that is also specified in each document.

This is significant. By matching all letters, firm evidence is established that the ancient observed calendar was based upon a defined and unwavering set of simple rules, and that the same observed calendar was used by the governing officials of Persia, including Jerusalem’s Temple priests, throughout the entire Asia Minor region.

Some may not be aware that Elephantine is historically extremely significant. The significance of the Elephantine Island in the Nile river is that Israel had a huge and fully functioning Temple of YHWH built on this island. In this Temple they kept the Mowadahs of YHWH and the sacrificial ceremonies for hundreds of years. In this Temple the Levitical priests of Israel proclaimed and presided over the Mowadahs during the time when Solomon’s Temple was destroyed, and later they held the Mowadahs in parallel with the Second Temple, until the time Elephantine was destroyed. As a matter of historical record, **the demonstration herein that both Temples of YHWH used the exact same calendar is monumental in its significance.**<sup>48</sup>

Papyrus No.	Egyptian Date	Jewish Date	Reign of King	Matching Julian Date
AP 25	THOT 12 01/12/333	KISL 3	Yr. 9 Egyptian, 8 Persian Darius II 1569828.75	(w=4) 12/16/-415

A Babylonian Tablet shows 3/25/-415 was an Adar II. This year was a very close call. They could have determined the observed spring equinox to be either on the 2<sup>nd</sup> or the 3<sup>rd</sup> day of the month in question. They did intercalate, waiting a full month for Nisan. Also, notice that the whole region was unified by a single determination. Written after sunset. Letter Yedoniah b. Uriah to Yedoniah and Mehseiah, sons of Nathan (whose mother was Mibtahiah).

Papyrus No.	Egyptian Date	Jewish Date	Reign of King	Matching Julian Date
Kr 4	EPIP 25 11/25/314	TISH 25 7/25	Yr 31 (Persian) Artaxerxes I 1563206.75	(w=4) 10/30/-433

Intercalated the crescent seen 14 days in winter, not allowing the alleged “Spring Passover Rule.”

Letter references Ananiah b. Azariah and Bagazust.

<sup>50</sup> From *New Testament Chronology*, by Kenneth F. Doig, (Lewiston, NY: Edwin Mellen Press, 1990, chapter 2. This excerpt may be read online by accessing the following link: <http://www.doig.net/NTC02.htm>.

<sup>51</sup> From Christian Technical Notes, “The Elephantine Letters” by Wayne L. Atchison, originally authored 03/14/94, edited 05/14/2002. Used by permission.

Papyrus No.	Egyptian Date	Jewish Date	Reign of King	Matching Julian Date
AP 10	THOTH 4 01/04/312	KISLEV 7 09/07	Yr. [29] (Egyptian) Artaxerxes I	(w=3) 12/13/-436

Intercalated the crescent seen 11 days in winter, not allowing the alleged “Spring Passover Rule.”

A proposed alternative reading Yr [9] has no match.

Papyrus No.	Egyptian Date	Jewish Date	Reign of King	Matching Julian Date
Kr 3	PAYN 9 10/09/311	ELUL 7 06/07	Yr 28 (Persian) Artaxerxes I 1562065.75	(w=4) 09/14/-436

Intercalated the crescent seen 11 days in winter, not allowing the alleged “Spring Passover Rule.” Written after sunset.

Letter references Ananiah b. Azariah and Bagazust b. Bzw.

Papyrus No.	Egyptian Date	Jewish Date	Reign of King	Matching Julian Date
AP 14	PACH 19	AB 14 5/14	Yr 25 (Persian) Artaxerxes I 1560950.75	(w=2) 08/26/-439

Intercalated the crescent seen 8 days in winter, not allowing the alleged “Spring Passover Rule.” Written after sunset.

Letter Pi` to Mibtahiah, daughter of Yedoniah.

Papyrus No.	Egyptian Date	Jewish Date	Reign of King	Matching Julian Date
Kr 1	PHAM 25 07/25/297	SIVA 20 03/20	Yr 14 (Persian) Artaxerxes I 1556881.75	(w=7) 07/06/-450

Intercalated the crescent seen 6 days in winter, not allowing the alleged “Spring Passover Rule.” Written after sunset.

Letter references Mahseiah b. Yedoniah as a witness.

Papyrus No.	Egyptian Date	Jewish Date	Reign of King	Matching Julian Date
AP 6	THOT [17] 01/17/284	KISL 18 09/18	Yr 21 (Persian or Slothic) Xerxes Beginning Artaxerxes I ascension year 1551948.75	(w=2) 01/02/-463

Intercalated the crescent seen 3 days in winter, not allowing the alleged “Spring Passover Rule.” Written after sunset.<sup>48</sup>

As is evident from the above charts offered by Mr. Atchison, the new moon of the new year was reckoned from the vernal equinox ... at least by the priests stationed on Elephantine Island in the 5<sup>th</sup> century BCE. The latest entry he provides refers to the intercalation of an “ADAR 2,” even though the new moon crescent was sighted only three days prior to the vernal equinox.

Certainly many individuals would express disagreement with the method employed by the priests on Elephantine Island in reckoning the new year, and we’re certain that many “Scriptural calendars”

can be produced to illustrate opposing views. Nevertheless, this is how they did it, and it is a method that parallels that which was promoted by Philo, which in turn parallels that which was promoted by Aristobulus. This method was also practiced by the Babylonians, who are universally recognized as beginning the month *Nisanu* on or after the vernal equinox.

The fact that Israel was able to overlay the dates of Abib with the dates of Nisan demonstrates that the two calendars were identical. We are unable to do this with the Gregorian calendar currently used by the nations of the world. For example, no one in his or her right mind would teach that April 14<sup>th</sup> is the Passover because April and Abib do not correspond.

POST-UNITY CONFERENCE NOTE: During the question/answer session that followed my presentation, one gentleman openly expressed distrust for the priests at Elephantine Island, pointing out that the Jews were at that time dispersed because of their rebellion against Yahweh, which might cause one to interpret their use of the vernal equinox as a sign of adopting the heathen practices of the nations around them. I do not believe the answer I gave this man was sufficient, so I would like to here explain that regardless of how rebellious the Jews had been, this does nothing to negate the fact that the month *Abib* is identical to the month *Nisan*. Historically, this is fact, unless someone is able to produce evidence otherwise. If nothing else, this demonstrates that, as early as the fifth century BCE and continuing all the way down to Josephus (and beyond), *Nisan* was considered as another name for the month *Abib*. The two were simply identical, except for the name, and continued to be recognized as such all the way down from the fifth century BCE until the days of Josephus ... a time span that encompassed the days of Yeshua the Messiah. Certainly, Yeshua never spoke against the timing of the month of *Nisan*, a Babylonian name that is mentioned twice in Scripture (Neh. 2:1 and Esther 3:7). Something tells me the *Nisan* recognized by the priests of Elephantine Island and the *Nisan* of the Bible were one and the same month – a month considered the equivalent of *Abib*. The attempt to discredit the calendar of the Elephantine Island Jews because of their rebelliousness just doesn't add up in view of the historical record.

## 19. The Importance of Historical Information

We have been criticized by many folks for putting emphasis on historical information. The ones who criticize me the most are the ones who respect historical data the least, such as the lunar sabbatarians, who have on more than one occasion accused me of putting historical data *above* Scripture. Quite frankly, if we choose to minimize the record of history, as many folks do today, we are inviting in more and more esoteric doctrines, as well as the folks who promote them. When we look back upon the record of history and see how well it *complements* Scripture, we simultaneously recognize that this is not a matter of putting the historical record above Scripture. Instead, it becomes a matter of enjoying the view as we see how well history and Scripture work *together*.

I believe sometimes we take historical information for granted. For example, how many of us know how long a cubit is? The cubit is a unit of measure mentioned in Scripture, yet Scripture doesn't tell us how long it is. If we go to the historical record, though, we find that a cubit is the basic equivalent of 18 inches. We can do the same thing with a *hin*. If we cannot trust the historical record, then we cannot trust the accounts telling of such things as how the Roman emperor Hadrian changed the name of Jerusalem to Aelia Capitolina during the second century CE. In fact, if we cannot trust history, how do we know that the current city of Jerusalem is the same city as that mentioned in the Bible? How do we know that any of the maps we have of ancient cities are even accurate?

Many are not aware that the historical record also confirms the understanding that the early believers obeyed the Torah. Irenaeus (130-202 CE), in his treatise entitled *Against Heresies*, wrote the following:

Thus did the apostles, whom the Lord made witnesses of every action and of every doctrine -- for upon all occasions do we find Peter, and James, and John present with Him -- scrupulously act according to the dispensation of the Mosaic law, showing that it was from one and the same God; which they certainly never would have done, as I have already said, if they had learned from the Lord [that there existed] another Father besides Him who appointed the dispensation of the law.<sup>52</sup>

It is through reading historical documents such as this that we can piece together the truth that the early believers in no way taught that the law was “done away,” but rather that they believed Yahweh’s Torah and they put it into practice, just as we should all do.

It is through recent events that can be traced back through history that we can verify that the weekly Sabbath we observe [on the day commonly referred to as Saturday] is the same weekly Sabbath and the same weekly cycle that Yahweh gave at Creation. In the 18<sup>th</sup> century some traders from Baghdad stumbled across an isolated Jewish community in the country of India. Upon further inquiry, it was learned that these Jews’ ancestors arrived in India after having been shipwrecked while fleeing persecution in the 2<sup>nd</sup> century BCE. Cut off from the rest of the world, those Jews were practicing circumcision, they were observing the dietary laws, and they were observing the weekly Sabbath on the same day as the rest of Judaism, providing yet further historical evidence that Judaism of today is worshipping on the same day that the early believers worshipped on, the same day that Yahweh blessed, which is a continuously-repeating weekly cycle ending with the day that is commonly known as “Saturday,” but is properly known as “*Shabbat*.”

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<sup>52</sup> From *Against Heresies* by Irenaeus, Book III, ch. 12:15.

When we put our trust in Yahweh's Word while simultaneously respecting the historical record, everything fits. When we reject it, we begin questioning and second-guessing the historical record to the point that everything is reinterpreted so as to conform to our religious views instead of conforming to the truth. As truth seekers, it is our responsibility to prove all things and examine everything from *all* angles, not just a singular interpretation of Scripture. As much as all of us would love for Scripture to provide us complete instructions on when to begin a new year, it does not. However, the historical record in no way conflicts with Scripture; in fact, it offers us a clear picture of how the early believers understood Yahweh's instructions. It is by balancing the calendar with Yahweh's Word *and* the historical record that we can better understand Yahweh's intentions for His children.