

3. Does Joel 2:23 Indicate That the “First Month” of the Year is in the Fall?

The third “proof text” offered by Glenn Moore is Joel 2:23. The phrase “the latter rain in the first month” is the key phrase found in this verse. Without conducting anything more than a cursory reading of this particular translation of Joel 2:23, it would be easy to conclude that, yes, autumn must begin during the first month of the year. This is because, at least in my case, I had always presumed that the “latter rains” come in the fall, which as I later discovered, isn’t how ancient Israel understood the “early” versus the “latter” rains. However, when we carefully review this “proof text,” we find yet another case of Glenn “adding to the Word,” although in this instance he’s going along with the translators of the *King James Version*. At least the *King James Version* translators had the professional courtesy of putting the word “month” in italics, which was their way of inserting their understanding of what they *thought* was intended, even though the Hebrew word for “month” does not actually appear in the text of Joel 2:23. Here is how Joel 2:23 appears in the King James Version:

²³Be glad then, ye children of Zion, and rejoice in Yahweh your Almighty: for he hath given you the former rain moderately, and he will cause to come down for you the rain, the former rain, and the latter rain in the first *month*.

Glenn, in his presentation of Joel 2:23, did not put the word “month” in italics. Could this be because he would prefer for us to believe that the Hebrew word for “month” appears in the original text of Joel 2:23? Regardless of what Glenn’s intent was, the fact of the matter is, as indicated above by the *King James Version*’s use of italics, the Hebrew word for “month” does not appear in the text of Joel 2:23. It is not there, except by interpretation. I deliberately left the above verse completely intact¹, so as to allow you to see *exactly* how it appears in the *King James Version* of the Bible. As you can see, the word “month” appears in italics. In other words, the translators of the KJV *thought* that the word “month” was intended. Other translators, however, weren’t so sure. For example, here’s how this same verse appears in the *New Revised Standard Version*:

²³O children of Zion, be glad
and rejoice in Yahweh your Almighty;
for he has given you the early rain for your
vindication,
he has poured down for you abundant rain, the early and the
later rain, *as before*.

As you can see, the translators of the *New Revised Standard Version* had a completely different understanding of the original intent of Joel 2:23. In faithfully adhering to the original Hebrew text, they completely left out the word “month.” Other versions, such as the *NIV* and the *JPS Translation*, reflect this same understanding. Moreover, the Hebrew scholars who translated the Hebrew *Tanakh* into Greek during the 3rd century BCE agreed that “month” does not belong in either the translation or the interpretation of Joel 2:23. Here is the English translation from the Septuagint version:

¹ I should add that I left the text of Joel 2:23 completely intact with sole exception that I restored our Heavenly Father’s name (Yahweh) and I selected a more suitable translation for the original Hebrew *Elohim* because “God” can be proven to be the name originally ascribed to the Canaanite idol of fortune, which was retained by the lost tribes of Israel as they were scattered throughout northern Europe. For a detailed examination of the title “God,” I recommend reviewing our study entitled “Do We Honor Yahweh by Referring to Him as ‘Our God’?” This study is available online at the following URL:
<http://www.ponderscripture.org/PDF%20Files/Honor%20Name%20God.pdf>.

²³Rejoice then and be glad, ye children of Sion, in Yahweh your Almighty: for he has given you food fully and he will rain on you the early and the latter rain, **as before.**²

As demonstrated above, the Hebrew scholars who translated the Septuagint indicated absolutely *no correlation* between the “latter rain” with the first month of the year. This is simply a case of wishful thinking on the part of Glenn Moore, who continues to demonstrate a penchant for attempting to make Scripture conform to his doctrinal stand. As alluded to earlier, Glenn’s understanding is based solely on a superficial, casual reading of Joel 2:23. The truth of the matter is, Joel 2:23 can *in no way* be construed as indicating that the first month of the year occurs in the fall.

When Joel 2:23 is read in context, it is clear that the reference is *not* being made to a “latter rain” coming in the first month. Rather, it is a promise to restore the early and later rains “as before” – during a previous time period. This is made abundantly clear in verses 25-26:

²⁵And **I will restore to you** the years that the locust hath eaten, the cankerworm, and the caterpillar, and the palmerworm, my great army which I sent against you.

²⁶And ye shall eat in plenty, and be satisfied, and praise the name of Yahweh your Almighty, that hath dealt wondrously with you: and my people shall never be ashamed.

Verse 25 clarifies what Yahweh means when He says, “as before” in verse 23. The years of pestilence will be replaced by years of plenty, including the early and latter rains ... “**as before,**” or, as the JPS Translation puts it, “as formerly.” This is *not* a reference to a “latter rain in the first month,” as though we should believe that the “first month” of the year occurs in the fall.

In spite of all that I presented above, Glenn Moore still insists on using Joel 2:23 as a “proof text” for his “fall-to-fall” calendar doctrine. When I originally composed this chapter, I made the mistake of commenting that it was “common knowledge” that the early rains come in the spring and the latter rains come in the fall. This time it was Glenn’s turn to correct me, so I may as well be “up front” about the fact that I mistakenly presumed the order of the rainy seasons. Upon checking into this matter a little more carefully, I found that the general understanding is that the early rains come in the fall and the latter rains occur in the spring. However, the fact of the matter is, it makes no difference “when” the early or latter rains come ... the question is, “Did the ancients regard the latter rain as coming during the *first month* (as in Abib) or did they understand it as falling during the *eighth month* (as in Bul)? If Glenn is looking for the answer in Joel 2:23, he’s looking in the wrong place because Joel doesn’t tell us.

In Glenn’s reaction to this portion of our study, he in essence recognized his error of supplying the word “month” as though it is in the original text (although he nevertheless prefers to keep it in the text as though it were originally there, and especially since he chooses to refrain from italicizing it). However,

² As I did with the *King James Version* translation of Joel 2:23, I have restored the Creator’s name, Yahweh, as well as a more suitable translation of the Greek *Deo*, in this rendering. It has been demonstrated that the Hebrew characters comprising the Creator’s name (יהוה), pronounced *Yahweh*, appeared in the earliest copies of the Septuagint, so I feel this restoration is completely justified.

Glenn *still* believes Joel 2:23 is an adequate “proof text” supporting his position. Here is the update that Glenn supplied in response to our commentary above:³

There is, of course, evidence in support of the first month also being in the spring. Joel 2:23 speaks of the "early rain," and the "latter rain" which comes in the first month (Abib):

Be glad then, ye children of Zion, and rejoice in Yahweh your Elohim: for he hath given you the former rain moderately, and he will cause to come down for you the rain, the former rain, and the latter rain in the first month. (Joel 2:23)

The word for "month" is supplied by the translators of the King James Version, and other translations will sometimes say "as formerly" or "as at the first." Irregardless of this, based on our knowledge of the Jewish rainy season it is correct that the "latter rain" *does* come in the month of Abib, the first month of the Jewish religious year.³ But what of the "former rain" (or "early rain")? In Israel, *Tishri* (the 7th month) and *Bul* (the 8th month) are considered the time of the start of the rainy season, which is called in Scripture the "early rain," or "former rain."

Frankly, I’m confused by Glenn’s update. On the one hand, he concedes that Abib is the first month of the Jewish religious year, and since this is when he *also* says the latter rain falls, this would indicate that he now agrees that the “first month” occurs in the spring, not the fall. On the other hand, if you read the rest of Glenn’s study, he seems as determined as ever that the originally-ordained calendar is “fall-to-fall.” If the “latter rain in the first month” (presuming that the word “month” is in the original text) is a reference to spring rain, this means the first month of the year is in the *spring*, not the fall. *So why is Glenn presenting this as evidence supporting a “fall-to-fall” calendar?*⁴

³ From the late August 2009 revision of “Do Sabbatical Years Start in the Spring (Abib) or the Fall (Tishri)?” by W. Glenn Moore. This study may be read by accessing the following URL: http://www.itsaboutthatime.net/year_begins_fall.htm.

⁴ Glenn finally conceded his error of using Joel 2:23 as a supportive text for his “fall-to-fall” calendar position in his early September 2009 revision of “Do Sabbatical Years Start in the Spring (Abib) or the Fall (Tishri)?” In a separate footnote, he wrote the following: “My original comment on Joel 2:23 stated that this text could be used to support a fall New Year. However, after further investigation, it would appear that the "latter rain" is clearly a reference to the spring rain (in the month of Abib, the 1st month of the Jewish religious calendar). This text actually supports a spring New Year, but then I also acknowledge that the Jews used a spring calendar (as commanded in Exodus 12:1-2). "In Palestine and neighboring lands the agricultural year has always begun in the autumn. After the spring grass has been parched and the soil baked by the long, rainless summer, the autumn rains moisten the soil for planting. This is the early rain, beginning perhaps in October and increasing in November. The wet season lasts through the winter, ending with the "latter rain" of spring, which matures the grain (see. Deut. 11:14; Jer. 5:24; Hosea 6:3; Joel 2:23)." (*Seventh-day Adventist Bible Commentary, Vol. 2., Review and Herald Publishing Association, Washington, D.C., p. 108-109.*)”