

YEHOVAH's True Calendar for 2002!

The debate over the calendar has been going on for some years now. By now many of those in the Churches of God have come to see quite clearly that there are problems with the present-day Jewish calendar. There is a growing urgency to reach some Bible-based decisions regarding the calendar. Unless we find a viable solution for this problem, YEHOVAH's people are in danger of being scattered even more than we have already been scattered. This article provides some answers based on the immutable word of YEHOVAH!

John D. Keyser

The Hebrew lunar-solar calendar is the true calendar for all mankind. YEHOVAH Himself established it, and gave it to the children of Israel when they came out of Egypt (Exodus 12:1).

However, its principles go back to creation, when the sun and moon were appointed by YEHOVAH God "for signs, and for seasons, and for days, and years" (Gen. 1:14). The word for seasons here is *moadim* and literally means "an appointment, a fixed time or season; a FESTIVAL, by implication, an assembly" (see *Strong's Exhaustive Concordance*, #4150). Thus YEHOVAH appointed the heavenly bodies to determine the "appointed times" of His weekly sabbaths, annual Holy Days and Festivals from the moment of Creation!

All authorities agree that the basis in law for YEHOVAH's calendar is indeed found in Genesis 1:

And God 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**, and for **days**, and **years**.

And God made TWO great lights; the greater light to rule the day, and the lesser light to rule the night; he made the stars also. -- Genesis 1:14, 16.

We can, at the very least, realize that whatever these "lights" are, they are natural phenomena which clearly dictate the rules of order for calculating time. And, notice this, it is not a singular source of light (i.e. the sun) but ALL collectively, "Let *them* be for..."

Signs, Seasons, Days and Years

It would be much simpler if the Bible contained a clearly laid-out formula for a Sabbath calendar. The Bible (in Genesis 1:14) only tells us what source we are to use for calculations. But

there seems to be no explicit instructions on their practical implementation. Notes Jonathan Brown: "Notching off seven "solar-day" periods which never correspond at the beginning or end with heavenly lights does not satisfy Genesis 1:14."

Those four word in genesis 1:14 -- *signs, seasons, days* and *years* -- can be defined in the following way:

1) *Signs* fairly defines the underlying Hebrew word implying **astronomical events** such as **eclipses**, and other we *observe* with our eyes in the **sun, moon** and **stars** -- reminding us of **oaths** God has made to us (Jeremiah 32:35-36).

2) The sun generally marks *days*.

3) After 12 moon cycles have passed, the earth would have gone through nearly four seasons of weather changes constituting a *year*, marked with the **sun** by four distinct earth tilts called **equinoxes** and **solstices**. These are determined by the angle of the sun throughout which the sunlight hours grow longer to a threshold at which they then begin growing shorter again.

4) Finally, the word *seasons* appears at first glance to be the four radical weather shifts each year -- winter, summer, spring and fall or autumn. However, although the English word certainly implies such, the underlying Hebrew word "**mowadah**" (*Strong's* #4150), literally means "an appointment, that is, a fixed time...by implication, an *assembly* (as convened for a definite purpose); technically the *congregation*; by extension, the *place of meeting*..."etc.

To use the English word "seasons" to translate a word that literally means an appointment is, at the very least, a grave error. Besides, we have just seen that the sun (equinoxes and solstices) marks the four seasonal changes which constitute an actual *year*. To interpret the Hebrew word *mowadah* to mean those seasons is duplicitous at best.

In the Book of Psalms we find the answer to the enigma of the apparent deliberate mis-translation. There the same word -- *mowadah* -- is used specifically in relation to the moon:

He appointed the MOON for SEASONS [mowadah]...(Psalms 104:19).

According to *Strong's Concordance*, the English word *appointed* in this passage actually means "made" (#6213). In other words, YEHOVAH *made* the moon for *appointments!* What are His appointments? Notice Leviticus 23:

Speak unto the children of Israel, and say unto them, Concerning the FEASTS of the LORD, which ye shall proclaim to be holy convocations, even these are my FEASTS. Six days shall work be done: the seventh day is the sabbath of rest, an holy convocation; ye shall do no work therein; it is the sabbath of the LORD in all your dwellings. -- Verses 2 and 3.

The word "feasts" found in verse 2 above is, in fact, the word *mowadah* -- the same as "seasons" in Genesis 1:14 and Psalm 104:19. Following the Sabbath *mowadah* in Leviticus 23 is

the list of what we commonly call "feasts," including Passover/Unleavened Bread, Pentecost, Trumpets, Day of Atonement and Tabernacles. ALL ARE "MOWADAH." The mistake in translating *mowadah* strictly as "feasts" becomes very obvious when in verse 3 the sole subject is the seventh-day Sabbath. Most people generally don't consider the Sabbath as being a "feast" *per se*, but it leads the list of "feasts" in Leviticus 23.

With this in mind -- the actual planetary moon being *established* for *mowadah* or YEHOVAH's *appointments* as shown in Psalm 104 -- the passage in Leviticus confirms the fact that this is the sole means by which the seventh day Sabbath was calculated. The Sabbath is a *mowadah* -- the moon was made for *mowadah*. Nothing in the Bible specifies this term for the sun.

Another witness to this understanding is found in the *Book of Ecclesiasticus*:

And then the moon, ever punctual to mark the times, an everlasting sign:
It is the moon that signals the *feasts*, a luminary that wanes after being full.
The month derives its name from hers, she waxes wonderfully in her phases, banner of the hosts on high, shining in the vault of heaven (Ecclesiasticus 43:6-8).

This text was originally written in Hebrew in the time-frame of 190-180 B.C. and translated into Greek in approximately 132 B.C. Notice in verse 7 the word *feasts*. Its underlying Greek word (heorte -- #1859) is the same as the one in the Septuagint Version of Leviticus 23:2 -- in which verse 3 includes the seventh-day Sabbath. Although Ecclesiasticus is considered apocryphal, it runs contrary to its contemporaries (Enoch and Jubilees) which insist that the sun is the only means by which to calculate feasts and Sabbaths.

The earliest manuscripts show that the moon was made for appointments -- the first of which is the Sabbath. "At the very lest," states Jonathan Brown, "this shows that the lunar reckoning of sabbaths and holy days was commonly known by the authors of the Bible."

The Polluting of the Calendar

Unfortunately, in the fourth century A.D., the rabbis of Babylonia polluted YEHOVAH's sacred calendar by introducing the continuous week and postponements to prevent certain days from clashing with the Saturday sabbath which they had created. When Hillel II introduced these changes, not all of the religious leaders of the Jews went along with it. In fact, a large number of the leaders continued to observe the new moons by observation -- as was done in Yeshua's day.

In the book *Saadia Gaon: His Life and Works*, by Henry Malter, we read --

It is generally accepted that the Jewish festivals were, in Biblical times, fixed by observation of both the sun and the moon. Gradually, certain astronomical rules were also brought into requisition, primarily as a test, corroborating or refuting the testimony of observation. Such rules are mentioned for the first time in the Book of Enoch, in the Book of Jubilees, in the Mishna, and later in the two Talmudim [Babylonian and Jerusalem]. It has been authoritatively proved that in spite of a more advanced knowledge of astronomy

the practice of fixing the new moon and the festivals by observation was in force as late as the latter part of the fifth century [C.E., A.D.].

Continues Malter:

The right to announce the new moon after receiving and testing the witnesses who had observed its appearance was the prerogative of the Palestinian Patriarchs, and the repeated attempts of the authorities in Babylonia to arrogate this right unto themselves were promptly frustrated by interdicts from Palestine. With the beginning of the fourth century, however, Palestine, owing to the terrible persecutions suffered at the hands of the Romans, gradually ceased to be the spiritual center of Jewry. Babylonia, where better conditions prevailed under the Persian rule, took its place, and the religious right to fix the calendar likewise passed over to the heads of its flourishing academies, though not without protests from Palestine.

Malter clearly shows that the observation of the New Moons continued way past the time that Hillel II introduced the written calendar --

In Babylonia also, the practice of observation was continued until the time of the last Amoraim, although a practical system of reckoning had been known to scholars for more than a century. It was only after the close of the Babylonian Talmud, in the sixth or perhaps later, in the seventh century, that the observation of the moon was entirely given up, and a complete and final system of calendation introduced. This was adopted by all the Jews of the Diaspora, and has been accepted as binding down to the present day.

With the obvious polluting of YEHOVAH's sacred calendar by Hillel II and the rabbis of his sect, the present Jewish calendar cannot be trusted in the determination of YEHOVAH's Holy Days and Sabbaths. So where does this leave us? Back to the Bible! Even though the Bible doesn't go into great detail about the calendar, it does give us valuable information we can use to correctly determine the New Moons.

If you study the gospel accounts of Yeshua's life one thing stands out above all others -- He never once upbraided or corrected the Jews of His day regarding the observance of the Feast Days or the Sabbaths. He kept the Passover and Feast of Tabernacles at the same time as everyone else -- "On the last day, that great day of the feast, Jesus stood and cried out, saying, 'If anyone thirsts, let him come to Me and drink'" (John 7:37).

Notes Ronald L. Dart --

that the rules and observations of the calendar were, in the days of Jesus' ministry, in the hands of the Sanhedrin. We also know that in spite of all the issues where Jesus opposed the Jewish leadership, *He never argued with them about the calendar.*

The Biblical New Moon is the "First Crescent"

If the Jews were keeping the Feast Days at the correct time, then they were also keeping the New Moons at the right time! And how were they determining the New Moons in Yeshua's day? Notice!

During the period of the Sanhedrin, a committee of the Sanhedrin met to evaluate reports of sightings of the LUNAR CRESCENT...(Calendars, by L.E. Doggett).

Each lunar month began with the New Moon Sanctification by recognition of the Sanhedrin. Policy dictated that two witnesses in two different locations, IN OR NEAR JERUSALEM, must testify to sighting the NEW MOON CRESCENT. A vote by the Sanhedrin was then required to officially reckon a new month beginning (*Christian Era Calendars*, by Clark K. Nelson).

The Sanhedrin originally determined the new moon by actually observing the FIRST FAINT CRESCENT (or young moon) in the western sky (*Postponements: Another Mystery of the Ages*).

In the first century A.D. the day of the New Moon was clearly determined by eyewitness observation. When two witnesses had seen the New Moon in the west (just after sunset), that day -- beginning with that sunset -- would be declared the New Moon day. The New Moon was declared when the new crescent was first seen in the west after the conjunction. The Jewish *Talmud* is very clear on this point. The *Talmud* is a historical document that reflects JEWISH understanding. It is *NOT* -- I repeat -- it is *NOT* in any way "inspired." It is, however, the work Jews refer to as "the Oral Law." Like Israel, the Babylonians, Assyrians, Persians and the Greeks also observed the first visible crescent for their new moons.

The Sanhedrin's calendar council, called the Beth Din, was responsible for cross-examining the witnesses. Jerusalem was the prime location of observation, although the council would take testimony (when the seeing conditions were not good at Jerusalem) from witnesses who traveled to Jerusalem. In no case was the month ever made to be longer than 30 days, or shorter than 29 days.

"Hodesh" (New Moon) is derived from the Hebrew root H.D.SH. -- meaning "new" or "to make new/renew." The New Moon Crescent is called Hodesh because it is the first time the moon is seen *anew* after being hidden for several days at the end of the lunar cycle. At the end of the lunar month the moon is close to the sun and eventually reaches the point of "conjunction" when it passes between the sun and the earth. As a result of this, very little of the moon's illuminated surface faces the earth at the time of the conjunction, and it is not visible through the infinitely brighter glare of the sun. After the moon moves past the sun it continues on towards the opposite side of the earth. As it travels farther away from the sun the percentage of its illuminated surface facing the earth increases, and one evening -- shortly after sunset -- the moon is seen *anew* after being invisible for 1.5 to 3.5 days. Since the moon is seen anew after a period of invisibility the ancients called it a "New Moon" or "Hodesh" (from Hadesh meaning "new").

Clearly, then, the determination of the New Moon day and the start of the month by the New Moon crescent is that approved and actually kept by Christ Himself. NOWHERE DOES THE BIBLE AUTHORIZE US TO DO OTHERWISE!

According to *Rabbinical Mathematics and Astronomy* by W.M. Feldman, "the Phase Method of determining the beginning of a month...prevailed until the time of Abbaye and Raba (middle of the 4th century), when it was REPLACED by the fixed calendar Method which makes use of a **Mean Conjunction or Molad** to determine the beginning of a month" (page 185). After the year 359 A.D. the rabbinic Jews began to observe the 1st of Tishri on the day of the conjunction (called the "molad") rather than on the day of the visible crescent according to all previous tradition. The astronomically inclined rabbis acknowledge today that the current calendar used among them IS NOT the same as the ancient calendar used during the Second Temple Period.

This "new calendar" calculated the New Moons by a formula that is, at times, up to 15 hours in error. Postponement rules were introduced to make the calendar conform to certain "traditions," and a system of intercalating a 13th month seven times in every 19 years was adopted which totally ignored the fact that the year must always start in the spring. So, from 359 A.D. onwards, the Jews followed a calendar which REPEATEDLY placed the Passover into the winter, and which REPEATEDLY placed the entire Feast of Tabernacles into the summer -- blatantly ignoring YEHOVAH's instruction in Exodus 34:22.

Crescent vs. Astronomical New Moon

Unfortunately, many people have been led astray by an inaccurate understanding of the term "New Moon." Modern astronomers adopted this term -- which had *always* referred to the first visible sliver -- and used it to refer to the *conjunction* when the moon passes between the earth and the sun. This is the time when the moon is not visible. The astronomers soon realized that the inaccurate use of the term "New Moon" to refer to the conjunction would lead to confusion. To be more accurate, scientists now distinguish between the "Astronomical New Moon" and the "Crescent New Moon." As used by the astronomers, the "Astronomical New Moon" means the conjunction. In contrast, the "Crescent New Moon" means the first visible sliver. The *Random House Dictionary of the English Language* (Unabridged Edition) defines the New Moon as: "The moon either when in conjunction with the sun or soon after being either invisible [Astronomical New Moon] or visible [Crescent New Moon] only as a slender crescent."

The "Concealed Moon" Theory

Some people have been confused by the use of the term "New Moon" in modern astronomy and have sought Biblical support for this incorrect meaning of the term. They usually cite *Psalms 81:3*, which says:

Blow on a horn for the *Hodesh* (New Moon)
On the *Keseh* (Full Moon) for the Day of our Hag (Feast).

According to the "Concealed Moon Theory," the term "Keseh" is derived from the root K.S.Y. meaning "to cover" and therefore means "covered moon" or "concealed moon." According

to this interpretation, when the verse says to blow on a horn on the day of Keshah it actually means "[blow on a horn] on the day of the Concealed Moon." However, the language here DOES NOT support this argument because the second half of the verse also refers to the day of Keshah as "the day of our Feast (Hag)." In the Bible, Feast (Hag) is a technical term which *always* refers to the three annual pilgrimage-feasts (Unleavened Bread, Pentecost, Tabernacles; see Exodus 23 and 34). The New Moon Day (Hodesh) is **never** classified as a "Pilgrimage-Feast" so Keshah/Hag cannot possibly be the same as the New Moon Day (Hodesh). It has even been suggested that Keshah refers to the Biblical holiday of Yom Teruah (Day of Shouting), which always falls out on the New Moon Day. Unfortunately for this theory, the Bible describes Yom Teruah as a *Moed* (appointed time) and *never* as a *Hag* (Pilgrimage-Feast) -- so Keshah/Hag cannot refer to Yom Teruah either!

It is more than likely that Keshah is related to the Aramaic word "Kista" and the Assyrian word "Kuseu" which mean "full moon" -- see *Brown-Driver-Briggs* p. 490b. This fits perfectly with the description of Keshah as the day of the Hag since two of the three Pilgrimage-Feasts (Hag HaMatzot and Hag HaSukkot) are on the 15th of the month, which is the time of the full moon!

The Length of "Concealment"

Another important point to consider -- and one that destroys the theory of the "Concealed Moon" -- is that there is NO ACTUAL "DAY" OF CONCEALMENT! In fact, the moon stays concealed anywhere from 1.5 to 3.5 days in the Middle East! It has been proposed that the "day" of the concealed moon is actually the day of the conjunction (when the moon passes between the earth and the sun). However, it was only 1,000 years AFTER Moses that the Babylonian astronomers discovered how to calculate the moment of the conjunction. Therefore, the ancient Israelites would have had no way of knowing when the moment of conjunction takes place and would not have known on which day (out of a possible 3.5) to observe the "Concealed Moon Day"!

It has been suggested by those who are determined to cling to this theory that the ancient Israelites could have looked at the "Old Moon" and determined the Day of Conjunction by when the Old Moon was no longer visible in the morning sky. Needless to say, such a method would not work in the Middle East where the so-called "concealed moon" can remain concealed for as many as 3.5 days! It is in fact common for the moon to stay concealed for 2.5 days and in such instances *HOW* would the ancient Israelites have known which day was the Day of Conjunction?

In contrast, the ancient Israelites would have been well aware of the Crescent New Moon. In ancient societies people worked from dawn until dusk and they would have noticed the Old Moon getting smaller and smaller in the morning sky. When the morning moon had disappeared altogether the ancient Israelites would have anxiously awaited its reappearance 1.5 to 3.5 days later in the evening sky. Having disappeared for several days and then appearing anew in the early evening sky they would have called it the "New Moon" or "Hodesh" (from Hadash meaning "New"). This is how the "New Moon" was determined during the time of Christ and following centuries.

Biblical Requirements for a Calendar

As we have seen, a calendar should take into consideration two things: the movements of the moon around the earth, and the movement of the earth around the sun. Within these parameters

the calendar must ensure that the Feast of Tabernacles FALLS IN THE AUTUMN -- i.e. after the autumn equinox. When this is the case everything else will automatically fall into place. Exodus 34:22 states --

"And you shall observe the Feast of Weeks, of the firstfruits of the wheat harvest, and the Feast of Ingathering AT THE YEAR'S END."

The Feast of Tabernacles must, therefore, *always* be in the autumn, i.e. after the autumn equinox. Since the time from the Passover to the Feast of Tabernacles is about one week shorter than the time from the vernal equinox to the autumn equinox, it means that if Tabernacles is never before September 23, then the Passover will *never* be before March 29. It follows that it is more important to focus on Tabernacles than on the Passover -- if the time for Tabernacles is correct, then the Passover will *automatically* also be correct. This is why the calculation of the calendar starts with calculating Tishri and *NOT* with calculating Nisan!

If, therefore, the calendar calculations are based on calculating or observing the first visible crescent of Nisan by looking at the vernal equinox, it is quite easy to select a date that may cause the Feast of Tabernacles to commence *before* autumn -- *because of this one extra week of summer*. But if the calculation or observation is based on the first visible crescent of Tishri -- and if this is done correctly -- then Passover and Unleavened Bread will automatically be correct -- also because of this one extra week of summer. If the first visible crescent of Tishri should cause Tabernacles to start *before* the autumn equinox, then the sequence of intercalation is ***obviously incorrect***. Passover will automatically be correct if the calendar ensures that Tabernacles never starts before the equinox.

It is an obvious fact that when the Feast of Tabernacles STARTS in the summer it is the Feast BEFORE the equinox -- it has begun BEFORE the year's end! And while the whole Feast of Tabernacles is seven days long, we should remember that THE FIRST DAY is the Feast day, the one on which "a holy convocation" is commanded. For the other six days "holy convocations" are not really commanded. The only other commanded "holy convocation" is the Last Great Day. So it is artificial to say that Exodus 34:22 is fulfilled as long as "a part of the Feast" is after the equinox. Clearly, THE FEAST DAY at the Feast of Ingathering is the First Day of Tabernacles -- and by that time the farmers are to be there and not on their farms. So when the Feast of Tabernacles starts before the equinox it does not fulfill the spirit of Exodus 34:22 -- and we should NOT attempt to justify Hillel's wrong decision!

The Green Ears of Abib

There are some (the Karaite Jews in particular) who believe that the year should be intercalated according to the condition of the crops in Palestine -- based upon Deuteronomy 16:9: "You shall count seven weeks for yourself; begin to count the seven weeks *from THE TIME you begin to put the sickle to the grain.*" Therefore, they made sure the crop was ripe, and by those crops determined the time of the seven sevens, which in turn determined the Passover, which in turn determined the time of the first month. However, the words "THE TIME" in this verse mean in Hebrew "LEGAL TIME," i.e. "You shall count seven weeks for yourself; begin to count the seven weeks FROM THE TIME IT BECOMES LAWFUL to put the sickle to the grain." The day in

which it became lawful to harvest -- grain ripe or not -- was the 16th day of the first month, after the first holy day of Unleavened Bread. It is quite possible that the grain *would not be ripe* on this date -- in that rare case the *unripe* grain would be cut and used in the Temple ceremony.

Many people have been misled into believing that the wavesheaf or "firstfruits" offering was really of "ripe grain" rather than of the "firstfruits of green ears." This often results in the utilization of a late intercalation method which was extant among the Jews in Babylonian provinces such as Elephantine. The following considerations clearly show that the barley harvest DOES NOT establish the first day of the year --

- 1) For two successive growing seasons -- the Sabbath and Jubilee years -- NO GRAIN was to be planted and, therefore, no maturing barley was available to consult -- see Leviticus 25:1-24. Some might say that barley sometimes sprouts and grows by itself without cultivation, however this is less likely in the second year. Since it was illegal to reap such grain in the 50th year, the Israelites allowed their flocks to graze the fields -- which was quite legal according to Leviticus 25:7 and 11.
- 2) How did Noah get on during the Flood? He was obviously able to determine the first day of the year without consulting the state of the barley harvest!
- 3) During the 40 years of wandering in the wilderness (a desert), the Israelites kept a careful record of the months and years -- apparently without consulting the barley harvest in Canaan.
- 4) Genesis 1 nowhere states that a grain harvest should be used to determine the calendar in any fashion.

While there is certainly a close relationship between the ripening of the barley and the new crescent of the first month (Abib -- "green ears"), the Bible simply *does not support* starting the new year by "green ears," but rather by the returning sun -- which causes the green ears to grow and ripen.

This faulty understanding, along with its resultant intercalation system, is nothing other than the direct descendant of the practice of Jeroboam who caused apostate Israel to seek alliances with the surrounding Aramaic-speaking countries and to keep the Feast of Tabernacles in the "eighth month" -- which would have been the "seventh" month on the Babylonian Calendar.

The Meaning of "Tekufah"

The Feast of Tabernacles is also called "the Feast of Ingathering" in Exodus 23:16 and in Exodus 34:22. Notice --

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 OF THE YEAR, when thou hast gathered in thy labours out of the field (Exodus 23:16).

This is a clear reference to the main harvest in the AUTUMN. Going now to Exodus 34:22 we will find that there is a *different* expression for "at the year's end" --

And thou shalt observe the feast of weeks, of the firstfruits of wheat harvest, and THE FEAST OF INGATHERING AT THE YEAR'S END (Exodus 34:22).

The expression "at the year's end" consists of the two Hebrew words "tekuphah shaneh." The word "shaneh" means "year" -- coming from the Hebrew word "shanah" meaning "to change" or "to repeat." The word "tekuphah" (plural is "tekophot") is explained as follows:

TEKUFOT ("Seasons"). As stated, the *four seasons* in the Jewish year are called "tekufot." MORE ACCURATELY, it is THE BEGINNING OF EACH OF THE FOUR SEASONS -- according to the common view, the mean beginning -- that is named "tekufah" (literally "circuit," related to "to go around"), the "tekufah" of Nisan denoting the mean sun at the vernal equinoctial point, that of Tammuz denoting it at the summer solstitial point, that of Tishri, at the autumnal equinoctial point, and that of Tevet, at the winter solstitial point (*Encyclopedia Judaica*, article "Calendar," p. 46, vol. 5).

It should be quite apparent that the Jewish understanding of the Hebrew word "tekuphah" is that it refers to the solstices and the equinoxes. The word is used only four times in the Old Testament, including Psalm 19:6 where it is used in reference to the sun. It is translated as "circuit." There is absolutely no reason to doubt that the Jewish understanding that "tekuphah" pinpoints the start of the four seasons at the equinoxes and the solstices is in fact correct!

The *Talmud* backs up this understanding. There is also a *difference* between the Jews understanding THE MEANING OF THE HEBREW WORD "TEKUFAH" and how they INTERPRET this word. Notice Mas. Rosh HaShana 8a --

If you like I can say that R. Hisda explains the Mishna here in the same way as R. Zera, since R. Zera said [that it¹⁴ means], for reckoning cycles¹⁵, in this following the view of R. Eleazar, who said that the world was created in Tishri¹⁶."

Footnote 15:

(15) I.e., the cycle of Tishri is the first of the FOUR CYCLES of the year, v. infra p. 43, n. 9. The year is DIVIDED INTO FOUR CYCLES CALLED TEKUFOTH, the Tekufah of Nisan (Vernal Equinox); Tammuz (Summer Solstice); Tishri (Autumn Equinox); Tebeth (Winter Solstice). The term Tekufah is also applied to the season itself.

This quotation from the *Talmud* clearly shows that the Jews understand the word "tekufah" to refer to the FOUR SEASONS, which all *START* at either an equinox or at a solstice. This also DOES NOT ALLOW for the word to refer to any number of days that PRECEDE such an equinox or solstice.

Let's look at another example from the *Talmud* --

Mas. Sanhedrin 11b

Our Rabbis taught: A year may be INTERCALATED on three grounds: on account of the premature state of the corn-crops⁷; or that of the fruit-trees⁸; or on account of THE LATENESS OF THE TEKUFAH⁹.

Footnote 9:

(9) Lit. "cycle," "season." The Jewish Calendar, while being lunar, takes cognizance of the solar system to which it is adjusted at the end of every cycle of nineteen years. For ritual purposes the FOUR TEKUFOTH SEASONS, are calculated according to the solar system, each being equal to one fourth of 365 days, viz. 91 days, 7 1/2 hours. Tekufah of Nisan (VERNAL EQUINOX) begins March 21; Tekufah of Tammuz (SUMMER SOLSTICE), June 21; Tekufah of Tishri (AUTUMNAL EQUINOX), September 23; Tekufah of Tebeth (WINTER SOLSTICE), December 22. *Should the Tekufah of Tammuz extend till after the Succoth Festival [Tabernacles], or the Tekufah of Tebeth till the sixteenth of Nisan, the year would be INTERCALATED, so that the festivals might fall in their due seasons, viz. PASSOVER IN SPRING, SUCCOTH IN AUTUMN.*

Note here that the Tekufah of Nisan BEGINS on March 21 -- and the Tekufah of Tishri BEGINS on September 23. Thus any date BEFORE September 23 CANNOT be part of the Tekufah of Tishri. Also note that the seasons, as correctly delineated in Footnote (9) above, are NOT of equal length --

Spring = March 21 - June 20 = 92 days

Summer = June 21 - September 22 = 94 days

Autumn = September 23 - December 21 = 88 days

Winter = December 22 - March 20 = 89 or 90 days (in a leap year).

In the Northern Hemisphere Spring + Summer are over one week longer than Autumn + Winter. Note further the clear statement that "Succoth" (Tabernacles) is to fall "IN AUTUMN"! We should keep in mind that while the Jews could manipulate their own calendar in various ways -- they could NEVER manipulate "the tekufoth"! Each tekufah is FIXED in the solar system -- it cannot be moved by calendrical maneuverings. The number of days between two adjacent tekufoth is FIXED.

It is quite clear that --

- 1) The Jews understand "tekufah" to refer to 4 specific days in the year.
- 2) They also understand "tekufah" to refer to the 4 seasons which START with those 4 days.
- 3) They also acknowledge that SOME of their sages taught that the ENTIRE Feast of Tabernacles should be in the AUTUMN.
- 4) The reasoning the Jews present to justify starting Tabernacles BEFORE the Tekufah of Tishri has no biblical support of any kind whatsoever. The fact that different rabbis allowed a different number of days before the actual Tekufah of Tishri only REINFORCES the point that they were without biblical support in reaching such conclusions.

Concerning the seasons or Tekufoth, author Arthur Spier has this to say in his *The Comprehensive Hebrew Calendar* --

With the introduction of the permanent [Judaic] calendar, the solar and lunar years have been adjusted by a calculation which guarantees the co-incidence of the lunar months with the seasons as required by the law. THEREFORE THE INDEPENDENT COMPUTATION OF THE BEGINNINGS OF THE FOUR SEASONS, THE TEKUFOTH, HAS LOST ITS IMPORTANCE (p. 19).

This is an amazing admission in light of the fact that the seasons -- especially those determined by the equinox -- are of *critical importance* in the regulation of the true calendar. Here is an admission that the computation of the seasons has lost its impact on the calendar, being *watered down* to some "vaguely guaranteed co-incidence." This divergence is also linked to DISREGARDING the celebration of the New Moons in the Jewish religion of today. Once the New Moons had become so ill-respected and downgraded, the CRITICAL ROLE they played in YEHOVAH's calendar regulation was neutralized. The result was that months could then be structured on an *inaccurate* and schematic formula. The formal New Year -- of which Scripture is silent -- was conformed to the Babylonian system and the names of months altered to a mix of Babylonian and Canaanite pagan references, and a formalized intercalary system was IMPOSED in place of YEHOVAH's specified regulatory mechanism.

Referring back to Spier's comments on the Tekufoth:

Therefore the independent computation of the beginnings of the four seasons, the Tekufoth, HAS LOST ITS IMPORTANCE.

Concerning the impact of this statement, there is clearly two main, or compound, "seasons" -- as seen in Genesis 8:22: "While the earth remaineth, seed-time and harvest, and cold and heat, and summer and winter, and day and night SHALL NOT CEASE." And, in Psalm 74:7: "Thou hast set all the borders of the earth: thou hast made summer and winter." The vernal equinox was termed "the return of the year," notes I Kings 20:26, and the autumnal equinox was termed "the going out of the year" -- as seen in Exodus 23:16 -- "...and the feast of ingathering, which is in the end [going out of] the year."

The First of Aries

Now many -- including the Jews -- argue that the month in which Passover occurs is determined from the New Moon *nearest to the vernal equinox* in the Northern Hemisphere. This appears to rest on inferences derived from extra-Biblical information and sources -- such as Josephus' *Antiquities of the Jews* (3.10.5). Here Josephus states that Passover occurs in the 14th day of the lunar month *when the sun is in ARIES*, for it was in Aries that the children of Israel left Egypt (on the 15th Abib, under the full moon). The *Encyclopedia Americana*, under the heading "Aries," states --

The vernal equinox is still called "The First of Aries."

Now if the vernal equinox was the beginning of Aries, and taking this with Josephus' information, then, in the absence of any more convincing "evidence," the matter is open as to whether the first visible crescent of the month in which Passover falls was BEFORE or AFTER the vernal equinox. Both can satisfy the above criteria. The "nearest visible crescent to the vernal equinox" arrangement would always satisfy the criteria on the Jewish 15th Abib Passover, and the "first visible crescent *after* the vernal equinox" would do so some 50% of the time. This, however, doesn't help us and leaves open the question of whether the Sacred Year could actually start with the first visible crescent BEFORE the vernal equinox -- for it would then be starting in the time of "the going out of the year."

However, it would seem strange indeed that the beginning of the first season -- at the vernal equinox -- could possibly occur when the true Sacred Year had already started. If the vernal equinox is a SIGN or a MARKER, which it gives every appearance of being, then it is difficult to see WHY it would be set and then the entire "back-lapped" as it were, by starting the Sacred Year before it. The logical arrangement would be for the SIGN, and only thereafter the occurrence of that which is signaled.

It appears from the historical records that the Samaritans and the Sadducees kept exactly the same method of determining the start of their months from their calculation of the New Moon, vis-a-vis the vernal equinox. The Samaritan records show, however, that their method of determining the START of the first month of the year was on the New Moon SUBSEQUENT to the vernal equinox -- *never before it*. The Samaritans, on the other hand, set their vernal equinox IMMUTABLY on March 25, which has had the slowly accumulative effect of displacing their feast days, tending to place some years *one month behind* compared with the adjusted vernal equinox, which was regressing very, very slowly over the centuries.. The fact remains, however, that by the time of the Second Temple the Samaritans were celebrating their feasts sometimes *a month behind* the Sadducees due to their late equinox. The Sadducees, for their part, were observing the same rule as the Samaritans by commencing the first month of the year on the first New Moon *after* the vernal equinox.

The question here, then, is whether the Samaritans have retained a first-month-of-the-year practice -- although not reconciled to the current date of the vernal equinox -- which is none other than that which was in place during the First Temple period and, later, during the Second Temple period, but which became lost to the Jews in the period after 70 A.D. when the rabbinical struggle for control was at its height.

There is no evidence of a FIXED and announced intercalary system by even the 2nd. century A.D., according to Schurer. Concerning the decision of whether to intercalate or not Schurer, in his *The History of the Jewish People in the Age of Jesus Christ*, remarks --

The Feast of Passover, to be celebrated at full moon in the month of Nisan, must always fall AFTER the vernal equinox [meta isemerian earninen]...Anatolius, in a fragment of great importance for the history of the Jewish calendar preserved in Eusebius HE vii 32, 16-19, characterizes this as the UNANIMOUS VIEW of all the Jewish authorities....The statements of Philo and Josephus also *accord with it*. If therefore, it was noticed towards

the end of the year that Passover would fall BEFORE the vernal equinox, the intercalation of a month before Nisan was decreed.

There is also a SOUND BIBLICAL FOUNDATION for this viewpoint found in the words of King David in Psalm 104:19: "He appointed the moon FOR SEASONS; the sun knoweth his going down." This verse contains a verifiable statement on the moon, vis-a-vis THE SEASONS -- but only if the first visible crescent starting the "summer season" is the first AFTER the vernal equinox. If the first month "straddles" the vernal equinox (as happens in the present-day Judaic calendar), it would be "part-in and part-out" of the summer season, and as such COULD NOT mark the start of the summer season. THE CONCLUSION, THEREFORE, IS THAT THE START OF THE YEAR MUST BE WITH THE FIRST VISIBLE CRESCENT AFTER THE VERNAL EQUINOX. The Hebrew word translated "moon" in Psalm 104:19 is *yareach*, deriving from *yerach*, meaning "lunation." This contains the idea of a complete lunation or month marking out the beginning of the year, and NOT a part-month in the winter season and a part-month in the summer season.

The Sacred Year starts with the first month, as set by YEHOVAH, and commanded in Exodus 12:1-2: "And the Lord spake unto Moses and Aaron in the land of Egypt, saying, This month [in which the Passover occurred] shall be unto you the *beginning of months*: it shall be *the first month of the year* to you," and NOT the seventh month as followed by the Jews under the continuing influence from their days of captivity in Babylon. This is rendered clearer if the word "month" is substituted by "new moon," for that is the meaning of the Hebrew "chodesh": "And the Lord spake unto Moses and Aaron in the land of Egypt, saying, This *new moon* shall be unto you the beginning of new moons: it shall be the first new moon of the year to you." Taking this in tandem with the idea of a *complete lunation*, it leaves no doubt that the Sacred Year begins with the first New Moon *after* the vernal equinox.

Let us now examine some quotations from *The Encyclopedia Judaica*, published in 1971. The article "Astronomy" in volume 3, column 798, has the following subheading:

THE FOUR SEASONS (Tekufot).

Clearly, the Jews view the word "tekufah" as one of the words that means "SEASONS"! The article "Calendar" in volume 5, column 46, has the following subheading --

Tekufot ("Seasons"). As stated, the four seasons in the Jewish year are called tekufot. More accurately, it is the beginning of each of the four seasons according to the common view, the mean beginning that is named tekufah (literally "circuit," from quph related to nagaph, "to go around"), the tekufah of Nisan denoting the mean sun at the vernal equinoctial point, that of Tammuz denoting it at the summer solstitial point, that of Tishri, at the autumnal equinoctial point, and that of Tevet, at the winter solstitial point.

This quotation supports what we earlier saw in the *Talmud*, that the "tekufah" refers to THE BEGINNING of each of the four seasons, being the two equinoxes and the two solstices. It therefore follows that tekufah does NOT refer to any days BEFORE such a solstice or equinox. Human traditions that it "may" refer to a certain number of days before, specifically, the Tekufah of

Tishri have the obvious ulterior motive of wanting to justify an existing wrong practice of sometimes starting Tabernacles before the Tekufah of Tishri.

All the above information should more than suffice to make it absolutely clear that the Jews are, in their own minds, very clear about what the word tekufah means!

The Verses in Exodus

With this background under our belts, let us now examine two verses in the Bible -- starting with Exodus 23:16 --

And the feast of harvest, the firstfruits of thy labours, which thou hast sown in the fields; and the feast of ingathering, which IS IN THE END OF THE YEAR, when thou hast gathered in thy labours of the field.

In this passage from Exodus we have the expression "IN THE END OF THE YEAR" defined for us. It is "when thou hast gathered in thy labours out of the field." This is NOT talking about winter or summer or spring -- it is clearly talking about the AUTUMN. Some of the Hebrew words used in this passage are as follows --

- 1) feast of "ingathering" = feast of "acyph" (from the root verb "acaph").
- 2) "thou hast gathered in" = "acaph" (a primary root verb meaning "to gather, to collect").
- 3) "in the end" = "yatsa" (a primary root verb meaning "to go out, to go forth").
- 4) "of the year" = "shaneh" (from the verb "shanah" meaning "to change, to repeat").

In this passage the expression "in the end of the year" is NOT a reference to the last month of the year. The verb "yatsa" is used 1069 times in the Old Testament and is translated 518 times as "out" and 411 times as "forth." ONLY here in Exodus 23:16 is this verb "yatsa" ever translated by the English noun "END." It doesn't really mean "end of the year." The expression "year's end" is found, for example, in II Kings 8:3, where it is translated from "shaneh qatseh" ("qatseh" being a noun). The verb "yatsa" has *no connection* to the noun "qatseh"! So the Hebrew "shaneh qatseh" DOES mean what we in English would call "the end of the year" -- but the Hebrew "shaneh yatsa" means something else. The description contained in Exodus 23:16 itself shows that this expression is here used to refer to "harvest time."

The bottom line is that Exodus 23:16 is NOT talking about "the end of the (Jewish) year" -- it is speaking about the season of autumn.

Now let's take a look at Exodus 34:22 --

And thou shalt observe the feast of weeks, of the firstfruits of wheat harvest, and the feast of ingathering AT THE YEAR'S END.

In this passage we have another reference to "the feast of ingathering," which is clearly a reference to exactly the same feast as in Exodus 23:16. But here we find a *different* Hebrew expression used for "the year's end." When we read the English translations of Exodus 23:16 and

Exodus 34:22, we could get the idea that "in the end of the year" is exactly the same expression as "at the year's end" -- but this is NOT so! What we have here is some *confusion* that was introduced by the English translators.

Where in Exodus 23:16 "in the end of the year" is "shaneh yatsa," in Exodus 34:22 "at the year's end" is "shaneh tekufah." YEHOVAH, therefore, chose to inspire TWO DIFFERENT WAYS of telling us when the Feast of Tabernacles is to take place. Later, in the Book of Leviticus, we find that it is to be "the fifteenth day of the seventh month" (Leviticus 23:34), and it is to CONTINUE for seven days. So we now have THREE different ways to determine the timing for the Feast of Tabernacles --

- 1) Exodus 23:16 tells us that it is when we HAVE GATHERED IN the harvests from our fields -- this is a reference to the season of AUTUMN.
- 2) Exodus 34:22 tells us that it is AT THE TEKUFAH OF THE YEAR. The extensive evidence from the *Talmud* and other sources makes clear that this is AT OR AFTER one of the two equinoxes or one of the two solstices. With the information found in Exodus 23:16 fresh in our minds, this HAS TO BE "the Tekufah of Tishri" in Jewish reckoning. Leviticus 23:34 also confirms this.
- 3) Leviticus 23:34 then tells us that this is the 15th day of the 7th month, plus the following six days. The phrase "the 7th month" verifies that Exodus 34:22 HAS to be talking about the Tekufah of TISHRI.

The question that now remains is this: Can A PART of the Feast of Tabernacles (1 day or 2 or 3 or 4 or 5 or even 6 days) fall before the Tekufah of Tishri -- or must ALL 7 days fall on or after the Tekufah of Tishri?

We have just gone through a plethora of historical evidence showing clearly that "tekufah" refers to TWO things --

- 1) A very specific day in the solar year (the autumn equinox).
- 2) The season that STARTS WITH AND FOLLOWS that specific day.

The only conclusion that we can come to is that the "tekufah of the year" means that the Feast of Ingathering (Tabernacles) -- all 7 days of it -- must fall within THE SEASON (tekufah) of Tishri -- between September 23 and December 21. Since a 7-day Feast obviously CANNOT all fall onto one single day (the other meaning of the Tekufah of Tishri is ONE SPECIFIC DAY, the autumn equinox), THEREFORE Exodus 34:22 simply has to be a reference to THE SEASON in which this Feast is to be observed. This understanding (that "tekufah" also means "season") is in FULL AGREEMENT with all the historical data available to us. It also agrees with the current Jewish understanding of the word "tekufah."

Let me make one thing perfectly clear -- Exodus 34:22 is not intended to pinpoint one specific day for the Feast of Tabernacles since the movements of the new moons in a solar calendar make this utterly impossible. Exodus 34:22 is primarily intended to pinpoint THE SEASON in

which this festival of 7 days is to be observed. It follows that it therefore CANNOT straddle TWO SEASONS!

In the present Jewish calendar the ENTIRE Feast of Tabernacles falls into the AUTUMN MOST OF THE TIME! So "most of the time" the Jewish calendar is in full agreement with this understanding. It is just OCCASIONALLY that in the Jewish calendar Tabernacles commences BEFORE the autumn equinox -- and for those rare occasions the Jews have invented elaborate excuses and justifications, as seen in the Talmud. This alone should be enough to discard the present-day Jewish calendar as being any sort of authority in determining YEHOVAH's New Moons and feast days.

Where Should the New Moons Be Observed?

And where should the New Moons be observed? In Jerusalem! Jerusalem is where YEHOVAH placed His name, and is where YEHOVAH God and Christ will return to and set up the Government of God -- ruling and disseminating YEHOVAH's Law from the newly built Temple! This is the only place the new moons are to be determined -- not locally in whatever part of the world you live.

Many people feel that there is no need for some "central standard" in determining the New Moon times. They feel that all that is needed is the visual sighting of the New Moon crescent in whatever part of the world they live in. For instance, if you live in Paris, France then you just need to know the New Moon times in terms of local Paris time. If you live in New York then you just need to know the New Moon times in terms of Eastern Standard Time (E.S.T.). If you live in Bombay, India then you just need to know the New Moon times in terms of local Bombay times.

While this may sound simple enough, it will result in CHAOS in practice. Here's why. Let's start by looking at the times of the New Moons of the first month of the year -- and then we will move on to the New Moons of the seventh month. Here are the accurate New Moon times for the first month, expressed in Greenwich Mean Times (I'm using conjunction times since I don't have visible crescent times at my finger tips):

2001 = March 25, 1:22:03 a.m.
2002 = April 12, 7:22:12 p.m.
2003 = April 1, 7:19:46 p.m.
2004 = March 20, 10:42:24 p.m.
2005 = April 8, 8:33:05 p.m.
2006 = March 29, 10:16:20 a.m.
2007 = April 17, 11:37:06 a.m.
2008 = April 6, 3:56:23 a.m.
2009 = March 26, 4:07:00 p.m.
2010 = April 14, 12:30:00 p.m.
2015 = March 20, 9:37:18 a.m.

Days start and end at sunset according to the Bible. For the purpose of this illustration we could use either midnight or we could use 6:00 p.m. to represent the start of a new day. Here we

will use 6:00 p.m. since this is very close to sunset for many areas of the world around equinox time. The principles that we will see by using 6:00 p.m. as the start and the end of a day are exactly the same if we were to replace them with actual sunset times. Keep in mind that we live in "time zones" anyway. None of us today go by our REAL local time -- we accept the time as being the same as the time zone in which we find ourselves.

Let's now consider WHEN these New Moons occur IN LOCAL TIME ZONES for various areas of the world:

The Year 2001:

The New Moon (conjunction, for this illustration) is on March 25 at 1:22:03 a.m. GMT. -- which is the zero meridian. Expressed in LOCAL time this is --

4:22 p.m. on March 24 at 135 degrees west of Greenwich
5:22 p.m. on March 24 at 120 degrees west of Greenwich
6:22 p.m. on March 24 at 105 degrees west of Greenwich
7:22 p.m. on March 24 at 90 degrees west of Greenwich
8:22 p.m. on March 24 at 75 degrees west of Greenwich, etc.

Again, we will take 6:00 p.m. as being the time of sunset on March 24 (even though it could be any time between 5:23 p.m. and 6:22 p.m.). This will not make any difference.

Therefore, the New Moon occurs on **March 25** (i.e. after 6:00 p.m. on March 24) for all areas on U.S.A. "Mountain Time" (105 degrees west) and EAST of there. This means Colorado, Montana, the central and eastern U.S.A., South America, Europe, Africa, Asia and Australasia.

But the New Moon occurs on **March 24** (i.e. before 6:00 p.m. on March 24) for all areas on U.S.A. "Pacific Time" (120 degrees west) and areas to the WEST of there. This means California, Oregon, Washington, British Columbia, Alaska, Hawaii and various Pacific Ocean islands.

So WHEN does the New Moon for 2001 actually take place? Well -- that depends on where you are! If you are in Texas or in Colorado it will be on **March 25**, but if you are in California it will be on **March 24**. The division will go right through the U.S.A. and Canada.

The Year 2002:

The New Moon (conjunction, for this illustration) is on April 12 at 7:22:12 p.m. GMT. -- which is the zero meridian. Expressed in LOCAL time this is --

4:22 p.m. 45 degrees west of Greenwich
5:22 p.m. 30 degrees west of Greenwich
6:22 p.m. 15 degrees west of Greenwich
8:22 p.m. 15 degrees east of Greenwich
9:22 p.m. 30 degrees east of Greenwich, etc.

So the New Moon occurs on **April 13** (i.e. after 6:00 p.m. on April 12) for all areas 15 degrees west of Greenwich and EASTWARD from there. This means Iceland, all of Europe, Asia, Africa and Australasia.

But the New Moon occurs on **April 12** (i.e. before 6:00 p.m. on April 12) for all of North and South America. So, for the first month of 2002, the dateline goes right through the Atlantic Ocean. But six months later in the same year the dateline will be somewhere else!

The New Moon (conjunction, for this illustration) of the SEVENTH month in 2002 is October 6, 11:18:37 a.m. GMT. Expressed in LOCAL time this is --

4:18 p.m. at 75 degrees east of Greenwich
5:18 p.m. at 90 degrees east of Greenwich
6:18 p.m. at 105 degrees east of Greenwich
7:18 p.m. at 120 degrees east of Greenwich, etc.

This means that in the SEVENTH month in 2002 the New Moon will take place on **October 6** for all areas 90 degrees east of Greenwich and WESTWARD from there. This means Bangladesh, India, the Middle East, Europe, Africa and North and South America.

But the New Moon falls on **October 7** for all areas 105 degrees east of Greenwich and EASTWARD from there. This means Thailand, Malaysia, the Philippines, Japan and Australasia.

In the year 2002 YEHOVAH's people in Europe and in Africa will keep the Passover and Days of Unleavened Bread on the *same day* as YEHOVAH's people in Australia and in the Philippines; but ONE DAY AFTER YEHOVAH's people in North and South America.

Similarly, YEHOVAH's people in Europe and in Africa will keep Trumpets, Atonement and the Feast of Tabernacles that same year on the *same day* as YEHOVAH's people in North and South America; but ONE DAY AFTER YEHOVAH's people in Australia and in the Philippines. Now this is *confusion!* It is confusion for YEHOVAH's people in Europe to keep the spring Holy Days *one day after* YEHOVAH's people in America, but to keep the autumn Holy Days on *exactly the same days* as YEHOVAH's people in America. This same point could be demonstrated over and over again!

If you do not accept the New Moon time based on some fixed location on earth; if you insist on converting the New Moon time into your own local time zone, then you will **FOR EVERY YEAR** differ by *one day* in your observance of the spring Holy Days with some of YEHOVAH's people either to the east of you or to the west of you; and for the autumn Holy Days you will differ by *one day* with some of YEHOVAH's people who kept the spring Holy Days on the *same days* you did; and you will keep the *same days* for the autumn as some of the people with whom you differed by one day in the spring!

This is because using New Moon times in terms of YOUR LOCAL TIME ZONE places YOU at THE CENTER OF THE UNIVERSE! Everything revolves around you and your specific location on earth. Sometimes you are in harmony with people to the east of you and differ by one

day with people to the west of you. At other times you are in harmony with people to the west of you and you differ by one day with people to the east of you. But you will always be in the center. This problem will arise every single year.

In terms of time, each one degree of longitude is equivalent to 4 minutes. One hour is made up of 15 degrees longitude. The area of Israel in the Middle East is *less than two degrees* of longitude from east to west! So we have a country where the difference between the earliest sunset and the latest sunset is **LESS THAN 8 MINUTES!** It is easy to apply one standard to the whole country. However, it is still possible to have a real problem in a land as small as Israel. In Old Testament times there were no "time zones" -- people relied totally on local sunsets. Now suppose the New Moon occurred **3 MINUTES BEFORE SUNSET** at Joppa on the Mediterranean Sea, which happened to be **3 MINUTES AFTER SUNSET** at Gilgal and Jericho. If you relied on **LOCAL** sunset times as your standard for establishing the calendar, this would have meant that the people in the **EASTERN** part of Israel would have kept the Passover and all the Holy Days *one day later* than the people in the **WESTERN** part of Israel. Yet it would be absurd to place a date-line right through the middle of a tiny country (in terms of area) like Israel. It would also be equally absurd to consider placing a dateline through the middle of a country like the U.S. or Canada.

In Old Testament times there were no people anywhere outside of the boundaries of Israel who observed YEHOVAH's Feasts and Holy Days. There was never a need to spell out detailed instructions for people in other areas of the world. Today YEHOVAH's people are scattered around this entire globe. Today there is a real need to have some central reference point for a calendar that can be used by people in all of the 24 different time zones. Without this simple amenity it is not possible to "dwell together in unity" as recorded in Psalm 133. How can a member of YEHOVAH's church keep the Passover this evening in London, England, and then catch a 1-hour flight to Paris, France, tomorrow morning -- and tell his brethren there: "No, I can't keep the Passover with you this evening, because I already kept it last night in London"? That would clearly be divisive and show a lack of concern for other brethren.

One of the motivations for accepting the New Moon times in terms of a fixed location on earth is *a concern for people in other parts of the world!* It is a desire to be in harmony with brethren in other areas. The motivation behind insisting on using a local standard reveals a *lack of concern* for YEHOVAH's people elsewhere. It says, in effect: I don't care whether you people to the east of me are in agreement with me or not; and I don't care whether you people to the west of me are in agreement with me or not. I am going to do what is right for me -- and to the heck with the rest of you!

Without some central fixed reference point a calendar is doomed to produce confusion. That is why Yeshua obviously agreed with the Second Temple custom of observing the New Moon crescent in Jerusalem and then lighting fires on the hill tops so that people in outlying areas would know the new month was starting. Also, there is much evidence to show that YEHOVAH first created human beings in the vicinity of Jerusalem. This being so, "the first evening and the first morning" in Genesis chapter 1 were given from the perspective of the general geographical area of Jerusalem. It is the place where YEHOVAH God tells us that He placed His name -- He selected the area of Jerusalem. It is the area on which the Bible focuses.

We should, therefore, view the New Moon times in terms of "Jerusalem time," rather than in terms of "Greenwich Mean Time" or some other local time zone. This means that we use JERUSALEM as our "reference point." However, we do NOT start and end days at Jerusalem! We use the International Dateline to start and end days -- as does the entire world around us.

Should We Use a Fixed Calendar?

It is really not a question of whether at one time or another in the past people visually determined the time of the New Moons. What people have done in the past is not necessarily a guide for the future.

No instruction can be found anywhere in the Bible to show exactly how we should go about determining the time of the New Moon. For example, while someone may not be able to "see" the first new crescent of the moon with *his* naked eye, someone else, with their naked eye -- or with a pair of binoculars -- may at that same time actually be able to see the crescent! The point is, the new crescent is in fact THERE -- but because of its proximity to the position of the sun it is not visible to everyone with the naked eye. That doesn't change the fact that it is THERE!

Next, there is no instruction anywhere that the New Moon must be determined by its appearance in Jerusalem. For over 400 years after Moses, Jerusalem was still a Canaanite city. So, obviously, Moses didn't use a Jerusalem standard. However, after David took Jerusalem from the Jebusites and made it the capital of Israel, it became -- with YEHOVAH's blessing -- the center of the earth and the place where YEHOVAH will soon return.

Also, while the nation of Israel occupied just a small area in Palestine, it was possible to communicate the New Moons reasonably quickly to all the towns and villages in the country. This was done by lighting fires on the hill-tops. BUT -- if Israel had been as large as the then extant Roman Empire (stretching from Spain to Palestine) -- it would have been utterly impossible for a calendar to be based on the VISUAL New Moons at Jerusalem. How could such information have possibly been communicated throughout the empire so that everyone knew when the month started?

As an example, consider the Jews who were visiting Jerusalem at the time of Pentecost --

Parthians, and Medes, and Elamites, and the dwellers in Mesopotamia, and in Judaea, and Cappadocia, in Pontus, and Asia, Phrgia, and Pamphylia, in Egypt, and in the parts of Libya about Cyrene, and strangers of Rome, Jews and proselytes, Cretes and Arabians, we do hear them speak in our tongues the wonderful works of God (Acts 2:9-11).

These Jews lived in all of these countries mentioned. All of these countries had small Jewish populations. How, then, could all these Jews POSSIBLY have observed the Holy Days without a calculated calendar? The journey from Jerusalem to some of these areas took MONTHS! How could they possibly receive news of the VISUAL sightings of the New Moon in Jerusalem in time to start the month at the correct time?

It should be self-evident that Jews in Spain simply would NOT have been able to wait for confirmation of visual sightings of the New Moon before knowing which day would start the new

month. It should be quite obvious that such far-flung communities needed a FIXED CALENDAR that was based on calculations!

It should also be very clear that Jews in Spain during Yeshua's time should NOT have calculated a calendar based on the LOCAL visibility of the New Moon. That -- as we have seen -- would produce chaos! The further west one goes, the earlier the New Moon becomes visible. It would be a fairly common occurrence for a New Moon to be visible in Spain one day BEFORE it is visible in Jerusalem. As a result, if the Jews in Spain developed a calendar based on the visibility of the New Moon in Spain, then some of the time they would have kept the Holy Days on different days from their brethren in Jerusalem.

So while there is no clear command in the Bible that the New Moon should be based on Jerusalem time, it is an UNAVOIDABLE requirement that ONE recognized standard be accepted for the entire world -- simply to avoid confusion! Since YEHOVAH chose Jerusalem as His own -- this is where it should be determined!

Don't judge this question from the viewpoint of our present means of instant communications. For the overwhelming portion of man's time on this earth, communication with distant lands was a long and difficult process. During that entire time a FIXED CALENDAR, based on the calculations we have just covered, was absolutely necessary to enable people in areas away from Jerusalem and Palestine to observe YEHOVAH's Holy Days.

Without a fixed calendar the Jews throughout the Roman Empire during the first century A.D. would simply not have been able to keep the Holy Days. It should be more than self-evident that a fixed calendar -- one that all true Christians in all parts of the world acknowledge and recognize as valid -- is the only way to avoid confusion.

How to Determine the New Moons

In order to calculate the correct months of YEHOVAH's calendar -- and therefore the correct Holy Days -- the following information is necessary --

- 1) The date and time of the Tekufah of Tishri (autumn equinox) in Jerusalem.
- 2) The date and time of the first visible crescent of the New Moon in Jerusalem.
- 3) The local time of Jerusalem sunsets.

With this information we can go ahead and calculate as follows --

- 1) The first visible crescent AFTER the Tekufah of Tishri (autumn equinox) is the first New Moon in determining YEHOVAH's calendar. This will automatically place the New Moon of Nisan in its correct place AFTER the vernal equinox.
- 2) The Jerusalem date and time of the first visible crescent is compared with the Jerusalem sunset. This gives the time and correct date of the New Moon for Jerusalem.

3) Step 2 is repeated for all subsequent visible New Moons following Nisan in Jerusalem -- giving the complete Sacred Year monthly calendar.

4) The annual Holy Days are then added in the normal manner on the dates set by YEHOVAH.

This completes YEHOVAH's true calendar.

Why Are We So Concerned With the Pharisees?

What is it that motivates people in the Churches of God to give the benefit of the doubt to unconverted, carnal and hypocritical Pharisees? The Jewish calendar in existence today is nothing more than a product of the Jewish sect of the Pharisees. Its overwhelming goal and purpose is to adhere to "THE TRADITIONS OF THE FATHERS" -- something Yeshua resoundingly condemned! Only AFTER all the "traditional requirements" have been met, does the Jewish calendar even concern itself with pinpointing the start of the 7th month. It NEVER, at any stage, concerns itself with the REAL New Moons. Biblical instructions are relegated to second place behind the traditional requirements.

Instead of giving the Pharisees the benefit of the doubt -- WHY don't more people in the Churches of God give YEHOVAH the benefit of the doubt? Why don't we "assume" that YEHOVAH actually means what He says? Why don't we start out from the premise of "assuming" that YEHOVAH is intelligent enough to SAY EXACTLY WHAT HE MEANS -- AND THAT HE MEANS EXACTLY WHAT HE SAYS?

Why do we so often have to resort to "INTERPRETING" YEHOVAH's instructions to us? When YEHOVAH tells us that Tabernacles is to be "at the tekufah of the year," WHY do we assume that "as long as we have at least the 7th day at the tekufah, we are still okay? Why do we assume it's okay to have the Passover season start in the winter and the New Moons according to the corrupted calendar of the Jews?

The New Moons and the annual Holy Days were intended for all mankind, even as the weekly Sabbath was ordained for all mankind! (Compare Gen. 2:1-3; Mark 2:27-28). Note that the "Sabbath" -- which includes the annual Sabbaths (Lev. 23:32, 38-39) -- was "made for MAN" (Mark 2:27) -- not just for the Jews! In the coming Kingdom of God, ALL NATIONS will observe YEHOVAH's annual and weekly Sabbaths according to the lunar-solar calendar instructions found in His word the Bible (Isaiah 66:23), and go up to Jerusalem for the Feast of Tabernacles (Zech. 14:16-19).

January 2002

Sunday	Monday	Tuesday	Wednesday	Thursday	Friday	Saturday
		1	2	3	4	5
Sabbath 6	7	8	9	10	11	12
Sabbath 13	New Moon 14	New Moon 15	16	17	18	19
20	21	Sabbath 22	23	24	25	26
27	28	Sabbath 29	30	31		

February 2002

Sunday	Monday	Tuesday	Wednesday	Thursday	Friday	Saturday
					1	2
3	4	Sabbath 5	6	7	8	9
10	11	Sabbath 12	New Moon 13	14	15	16
17	18	19	Sabbath 20	21	22	23
24	25	26	Sabbath 27	28		

March 2002

Sunday	Monday	Tuesday	Wednesday	Thursday	Friday	Saturday
					1	2
3	4	5	Sabbath 6	7	8	9
10	11	12	Sabbath 13	New Moon 14	New Moon 15	16
17	18	19	20	Spring 21 Equinox	Sabbath 22	23
24	25	26	27	28	Sabbath 29	30
31						

April 2002

Sunday	Monday	Tuesday	Wednesday	Thursday	Friday	Saturday
	1	2	3	4	5 Sabbath	6
7	8	9	10	11	12 Sabbath	13 New Moon
14 New Moon	15	16	17	18	19	20
21 Sabbath	22	23	24	25	26	27 Passover (at evening)
Sabbath 28 + 1st Day ULB	29	30				

May 2002

Sunday	Monday	Tuesday	Wednesday	Thursday	Friday	Saturday
			1	2	3	4 Last Day of ULB
5 Sabbath	6	7	8	9	10	11
12 Sabbath	13 New Moon	14	15	16	17	18
19	20 Sabbath	21	22	23	24	25
26	27 Sabbath	28	29	30	31	

June 2002

Sunday	Monday	Tuesday	Wednesday	Thursday	Friday	Saturday
						1
2	3 Sabbath	4	5	6	7	8
9	10 Sabbath	11 New Moon	12 New Moon	13	14	15
16	17	18	19 Sabbath	20 Pentecost	21	22
23	24	25	26 Sabbath	27	28	29
30						

July 2002

Sunday	Monday	Tuesday	Wednesday	Thursday	Friday	Saturday
	1	2	3 Sabbath	4	5	6
7	8	9	10 Sabbath	11 New Moon	12	13
14	15	16	17	18 Sabbath	19	20
21	22	23	24	25 Sabbath	26	27
28	29	30	31			

August 2002

Sunday	Monday	Tuesday	Wednesday	Thursday	Friday	Saturday
				1 Sabbath	2	3
4	5	6	7	8 Sabbath	9 New Moon	10
11	12	13	14	15	16 Sabbath	17
18	19	20	21	22	23 Sabbath	24
25	26	27	28	29	30 Sabbath	31

September 2002

Sunday	Monday	Tuesday	Wednesday	Thursday	Friday	Saturday
1	2	3	4	5	6 Sabbath	7 New Moon
8 New Moon	9	10	11	12	13	14
15 Sabbath	16	17	18	19	20	21
22 Sabbath	23 Autumn Equinox	24	25	26	27	28
29 Sabbath	30					

October 2002

Sunday	Monday	Tuesday	Wednesday	Thursday	Friday	Saturday
		1	2	3	4	5
6 Sabbath	7 New Moon + F. of Tr.	8	9	10	11	12
13	14 Sabbath	15	16 Day of Atonement	17	18	19
20	21 Sabbath + F. of Tab.	22	23	24	25	26
27	28 Sabbath +LGD	29	30	31		

November 2002

Sunday	Monday	Tuesday	Wednesday	Thursday	Friday	Saturday
					1	2
3	4 Sabbath	5 New Moon	6 New Moon	7	8	9
10	11	12	13 Sabbath	14	15	16
17	18	19	20 Sabbath	21	22	23
24	25	26	27 Sabbath	28	29	30

December 2002

Sunday	Monday	Tuesday	Wednesday	Thursday	Friday	Saturday
1	2	3	4 Sabbath	5 New Moon	6	7
8	9	10	11	12 Sabbath	13	14
15	16	17	18	19 Sabbath	20	21
22	23	24	25	26 Sabbath	27	28
29	30	31				