Calendar Conundrums

by

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Yahwist congregations strive to be spiritual Israelites, persevering obediently to the end of their life, or the age. Accordingly, they want to know when the scriptural year begins in order to observe the set-apart days in Leviticus 23 at the correct time. But the scriptures do not provide a rationale for determining 1 Nisan. Various criteria for doing so have resulted in calendar conundrums instead of a common rationale.

A solution does exist if one prays, "seeks and reproves all things," and studies external sources. To be confident of a given rationale, we must know what we believe, and why. We must act upon what we know, irrespective of what others may do.

Consider the scriptural calendar for 2007 as an example. According to the United States Naval Observatory, Astronomical Applications Dept.'s website, the instant of the Spring Equinox occurred on March 21, at 00 hours and 07 minutes, 2007 Universal Time (UT), Greenwich, England, usual midnight-to-midnight reckoning.

Jerusalem, at longitude: E35.1 and latitude: N31.5, is two time zones east of Greenwich. Therefore, the instant of the Spring Equinox occurred there earlier (UT +2 hours) on March 21, at 02:07 Local Time (LT).

Using scriptural sunset-to-sunset reckoning, the 24 hour solar day of March 21, had begun at the sunset of March 20, at 18:51 hours LT. This juxtaposition was considered a 'close-call' in 2007 by those who thought the 24 hour Day of the Spring Equinox was the first day of spring, which it is *not*, as will be explained.

The new moon crescent was visible at Jerusalem *before* the instant of the Spring Equinox occurred by several hours. The leader of a congregation decides when to start the scriptural year, and whether or not to intercalate Adar II, a second 12th month of 29 days. Not all congregations adhere to the same criteria so there is no commonly accepted rationale for determining the first day of a scriptural calendar. The principal criteria for doing so will be examined herein.

First, a review of some scripture. We know from Genesis 1:14 - 16 that Yahweh let "*...luminaries be in the expanse of the heavens to divide the day and the night... for signs and for seasons, for days and years...*" "*... the greater luminary* [the sun] *to rule the day, and the small luminary* [the moon] *to rule the night to give light upon the earth and to divide between the light and the darkness...*" "*... and the stars*."

According to the book of Genesis the universe began in darkness. Because the darkness preceded the light, the Israelites reckoned a day from sunset-to-sunset. Other nations, even those on other continents, did likewise.

We can know the season Moses told the Israelites the scriptural year was to begin from the book of Exodus.

Exodus 9:31, describes the plague of hail the Almighty Yahweh brought upon all Egypt to destroy their immature barley and flax crop. The time of the year for that stage of growth is what we would today call 'late winter.' Even today Egypt has hail in the winter, but there is no record of hail ever having been as severe as described in Exodus.

Barley is the fastest growing of the cereals (wheat, Spelt, etc.). Even now in Israel barley is planted in the late autumn. The barley germinates in the cold wet ground during winter. As the ground warms and the 'latter rain' occurs, the barley grows and approaches maturity in eighty-nine days in what would be called 'early Spring.'

Ancient barley had a head with two-rows of kernels. The barley was hand-harvested with a sickle when the kernels were pasty-firm and partially green while the attachment of the kernels to the head remained flexible. Optimum timing of the harvest minimized kernel loss from the impact of the sickle when the stalks were cut.

The cut stalks were then bound into a sheaf, left in the field to further dry, then hauled to a threshing floor. The floor was a smooth rock outcrop where wind blew gently. The heads were flailed and kernels and chaff winnowed by tossing them into the air with a wide basket or fork. The grains being heavier, fell back down while the lighter chaff was carried away by the wind.

A further clue as to the season when the scriptural new year began is in Exodus 10:5 wherein is a description of the plague of locust. The Egyptians were warned before the plague that *"...the locust will eat every tree that sprouts to you in the field..."* As the ground temperature increases in that area, an early ripening variety of fig tree, which could have survived the plague of hail, sprouts. And, almond trees that survived, could have started to blossom.

After the plague of locust, came the plague of darkness. For *three days and nights* it was so dark the Egyptians did not leave their houses. This divine intervention was likely caused by dust in the atmosphere, clouds, etc., which prevented the light from the sun, moon, and stars from reaching Egypt, except in the land of Goshen where the Israelites lived.

The plague of darkness on Egypt may have coincided with the approximate three days in a month when the moon is not visible from the Earth because of the glare of the sun. The period occurs when the center of the Moon comes into and out of alignment between the center of the Earth and Sun. That instantaneous event is called a conjunction of the moon. Those who advocate the Conjunction Theory for determining the scriptural new year, call this period 'the dark of the moon.' Modern astronomers call the instant an 'Astronomical New-Moon.' But the 'new-moon' in the scriptures means something completely different.

In Exodus 12:1, Moses told the Israelites: *"This month shall be the chief of moons for you. It shall be the first of the moons of the year for you..."* The word moon translated 'months' is the Hebrew word 'chodesh,' defined in *James Strong's Exhaustive Concordance Hebrew Dictionary*,

2318 to 2320 as: *new* (or rebuilding) *moon*. Obviously, this refers to the *visible* new-moon crescent which the Israelites could *see*.

One of the definitions of chodesh in *The Theological Word Book of the Old Testament* is a "... *polished sword*..." (scimitar shaped crescent moon).

The name of the first Israelite month describes the state of vegetation at that time. It is given in Exodus 13:4 as 'abib.' It is Strong's 24, defined as: *tender, green, young ears of grain.* This could only be referring to the barley crop. So, we know from the book of Exodus that first new-moon crescent, visible in Goshen, was the delimiter for beginning the first month subsequently called Abib.

On the 10th day of that *first* month, an Israelite head-of-household selected a yearling male lamb without blemish, from the flock. The lamb was to be set apart from the flock *until* the sunset which began the14th, then killed. The blood was collected to mark the door posts and lintel of Israelite houses. By the 14th, the new-moon crescent would have grown to near fullness and would have provided illumination for these events and for the Exodus which would begin the next night.

The slaughtered lamb was then roasted and eaten by the Israelites in their houses in *trepidation*. This accurate word translation is found in the Schocken Bible - *the Five Books of Moses*, by Everett Fox. In Exodus 11:4 the Almighty Yahweh said He, not a 'Death Angel' as is commonly read, would pass over the houses of the Israelites and kill all first-born Egyptian males, man and beast. The Israelites were likely concerned about retribution because of the dead Egyptians, even though the Israelites had witnessed the plagues and had been promised deliverance through Moshe.

The Israelites were in no 'haste,' as is commonly read, because the scriptures tell us they were forbidden by Moses to go out of their house before morning. That included Moses and Aaron to whom Pharaoh's decree to depart Egypt was delivered. The Israelite partakers of that Passover meal were also told to burn any leftovers *before* daybreak. Taken together, the words in Exodus indicate the new-moon crescent, which began that first month, occurred in the season we today call Spring.

Spring begins *after* the day of the spring equinox *ends*. Ancient Babylonian clay tablets written in cuneiform have been translated and show the beginning of their first month, 1 Nisanu. From *BCE 500 to 68 CE* it began *after* the Day of the Spring Equinox. When the Israelites were released after seventy years captivity by the Babylonians, Ezra adapted the names of Babylonian months (Nisanu = Nisan, etc.) which are seen on Jewish calendars today.

Scripture mentions only two seasons (Strong's Concordance 4150 'mowadahs,' defined as a fixed time or season) in Israel. There was Winter- a time of plowing, sowing, and planting when the weather was rainy and cold, and Summer - a time of harvesting and gathering when the weather grew warm, then hot.

Those seasons were delimited by what we today call the Spring and Autumnal Equinox.' This is when the Earth's equator crosses the Plane of the Ecliptic in which the planets of this solar system

orbit. The ancients knew that on the day of an equinox the Sun's *apparent* path cast a shadow in a straight line due East and West over a vertical object like a gnome or sundial.

There is no Hebrew word for Spring or Equinox. Equinox is generally interpreted as being 8622 'tequwphah,' defined as: a revolution, a circuit, a course (as of the sun), and an end (of a season).

One can construct a visual aid to show the elliptical orbit of the earth around the sun - it being one of two foci. The four Israelite lunar months named before the Babylonian Captivity can be superimposed over the names of the twelve adapted names from the Babylonians afterward. The months can be keyed to known agriculture activity, and the Equinoxes, and the Solstices shown.

The difference in the number of days between Equinoxes and Solstices, star constellations including the first point of Aries, fixed Gregorian calendar months, etc., can be also be shown. One can list thereon the sequence of intercalary years in the 19 year Metonic cycle before CE 250, and afterward. And, an appendage can be added to show the effect of intercalating Adar II, which keeps the time of the calendar seasons from advancing into the Winter due to the lunar year being about 10.89 days shorter than the solar year.

Apparently in ancient times, scriptural calendar determinations were the responsibility of Aaron after being designated High Priest, and his prodigy. Today we endeavor to discern the calendar rationale of the Sadducean priesthood who certainly were of Aaron's line during the Temple era. The priests were responsible for scriptural calendar matters up to the destruction of the Temple in CE 69-70. Of particular interest to Yahwists is the rationale used during the second temple era because it spanned the life of our Savior, Yeshua the Anointed.

We can conjecture about the accuracy of methods used by the ancient priests to determine the equinoxes. As mentioned, the priests could have watched the sun's shadow over a gnome at noon to know if the spring equinox had occurred on the previous day, was occurring on the current day, or would occur on the following day. They could see the new-moon crescent, and also could see the first point of Aries, in the star constellation then called Tleh in Hebrew.

The Sadducean priesthood *officially* 'declared' the beginning of the scriptural year, the observance of set-apart days, the intercalation of a month, etc. The Israelites knew the book of Leviticus so did not need a calendar of published dates for observances. Before the destruction of the Second Temple, history informs us there were differences of opinion regarding calendar rationales amongst the Sadducees, Pharisees, Kariates, Essens, etc., religious sects. After the destruction of the second Temple, pharisee leaders became Rabbis. Their *opinions* are found in various Rabbinic writings. The other sects essentially died out.

So, it should be no surprise there are some differences of opinion amongst the leaders of Yahwist congregations about criteria that should be used in determining 1 Nisan. There is need to have a *common* rationale for determining the beginning of the scriptural New Year, the Gregorian date of observances, intercalation of a second 12th month, etc. To have a common rationale requires the criteria of existing rationales be validated against scripture and external sources. If a criteria cannot be validated, it must be discarded.

Several years ago the leadership responsible for determining the start of the scriptural year for some congregations changed their published date for 1 Nisan. They advanced it to the last new-moon crescent in *Winter*, solely because of a report of early maturing volunteer barley, not cultivated barley, in Israel.

This was done even though scripture *does not* mention wild or cultivated barley as a criteria for determining 1 Nisan. Not mentioned was the fact that varieties of cultivated barley in Israel today are different from ancient barley. Selective breeding has resulted in four and more rows of kernels. Further, modern genetically engineered barley varieties used in Israel can have various maturity times different from ancient barley.

Never mentioned is the date when barley was *sown* in ancient times, and *why*. Yet same is indicated from ancient Rabbinic writings, which will be discussed herein.

The following comments informally summarize the principal criteria differences of rationales for determining the beginning of the scriptural year. In each, one criteria is valid. The conclusion of the reader will point toward a common rationale for a scriptural calendar determination:

1. Reckon the beginning of the scriptural year 1 Nisan, to: (a) the instantaneous astronomical conjunction of the *invisible* moon, or (b), reckoning to the first *visible* new-moon crescent, with the unaided eye.

This criteria difference is pivotal. Those who believe the Conjunction Theory will start the beginning of a scriptural year *one to three* days *before* the earliest visible new-moon crescent. Because the conjunction occurred *before* the day of the Spring Equinox in 2007, a second 12th month, Adar II, will be intercalated in the scriptural year ending, to ensure 1 Nisan begins *after* the spring equinox. This is necessary about every three years in the 19 year Metonic cycle of lunar years. It is was done by the Israelites, the Babylonians, and others.

Until about BCE 300 the conjunction of the moon was unknown. Later, it became known to a few Athenian astronomers only. It was many years before even those astronomers could determine the conjunction of the moon with reasonable accuracy.

Reckoning1 Nisan to the instantaneous conjunction of the *invisible* moon for determining the scriptural calendar is a relatively modern *theory*. It is *not* mentioned in ancient literature written *before* the destruction of the Temple in CE 69-70, so could not have been used by High Priests up to that time. There is *no mention* of a conjunction of the moon in Rabbinic writings.

A quote from Herb Solinski is enlightening: "The Rabbinic writings (primarily the Mishnah c.200, Tosdfta c.300, Jerusalem Talmud c.400, Babylonian Talmud c.600) do not refer to the conjunction at all. They refer to the new moon (CHODESH)..." "...They do not admit that a calculated calendar was in use during the days of the writing of these documents."

So, for these reasons alone, and there are many more, the conjunction theory could not have been a rationale used *during* the Temple era for calendar determination.

The appeal of the conjunction theory is its *assumed* accuracy because the *theoretical* lunation is shown to nine decimal places. But that number is a mathematical *average* over many centuries. It is *not* an actual lunation which can vary from 12 to 14 hours depending upon the mass and alignments of moving celestial objects. That variation in time is a natural occurrence which can, and does, affect the actual determination of 1 Nisan.

Conversely, the first new-moon crescent of the 'small luminary' of Genesis delimits the beginning and ending of months and years by its brief appearance. It is a delimiter so simple any Shepard boy like David could relate to it because he could *see* it. Plain common sense says that neither David, or anyone else, could have reckoned to the conjunction of an *invisible* moon which they could not see.

The visible new moon crescent was one of the 'signs' given to the Israelites for the purpose of reckoning the new year, months, and set-apart days.

The calculated calendar likely became known to the Sadducee priesthood during the Babylonian Captivity, but there is no evidence they ever used it. The knowledge was likely considered a *contingency* due to the increasing harshness of the Roman occupation, and most surely was a necessity after the destruction of the second Temple in CE 69-70. After the uprising in CE 134 the High Priest could not even enter Jerusalem so could not declare the beginning of the scriptural year in that city.

The early rabbis closely guarded the methodology for a calculated calendar. The methodology was not formerly published until about CE 300 - 400 by Hillel. However, the method contained an error, which was corrected by the son, Hillel II. The calculated calendar was most useful for the Israelites living in the Diaspora.

Later, non-scriptural observances such Purim, Hanukkah, etc., were added to what is now called the Jewish Calendar, as were the Four Postponements of Yahweh's set-apart days, for the convenience of the Rabbis.

2. - Reckon to a calendar wherein the first day of the new year, 1 Nisan, may fall (a) ON or PRECEDING the Spring Equinox, or (b), only on a day AFTER the Spring Equinox.

The Sadducee priests obtained their calendar guidance from the book of Genesis, Exodus, Leviticus, and Deuteronomy. As mentioned, they began the first month of the scriptural year only after the day of the Spring Equinox.

During their captivity the Sadducee priests became aware that the Babylonians reckoned their new year *essentially the same as did Israel.* Babylonian new-moon records made then have been translated into English in the book: *Babylonian Chronology 626 BC to AD 75*, by Parker and Dubberstein. It shows an *unbroken* record of almost 8600 sightings of the *new moon crescent* seen in *Babylon*, written in cuneiform on clay tablets. As mentioned, from BCE 500 to 68 CE the Babylonian records show the Babylonian New Year only beginning *after* the Day of the Spring Equinox.

The tablets contained the name of the king reigning at the time, many of whom are recognizable from the scriptures.

The tablets are 'hard' evidence the Babylonians utilized the sighting of the new-moon crescent to determine the first day of their new year, and months. They started their calendar wholly in the spring, and intercalated months. This is very significant because although the Babylonians possessed the knowledge to calculate a calendar, *they instead relied upon visual sightings* and recorded them.

There is *no* evidence that during the 70 year Babylonian Captivity the Israelites did not use the Babylonian calendar, including the name of Babylonian months. After the captivity, Ezra adapted those familiar names (Nisanu became Nisan, etc.) for the Jewish Calendar, as is shown in Chapter III on page 26. of Parker and Dubberstein's book, and as seen on a Jewish Calendar today.

There is *no* evidence a calculated calendar, or one based upon the instantaneous conjunction of the invisible moon, was used in Israel *before* CE 69-70.

Again, the day of an equinox or solstice, always begins in the season *ending*. This makes the 24 hour solar day of an equinox or solstice, the *last day* of that season. The next day, however reckoned, is wholly within the new season. Since the day of the Spring Equinox begins in *Winter*, it is a day of *Winter* until it ends. The first day of Spring is the next day.

The logic for when to delimit 1 Nisan in the proper season is very obvious when looking at the US Naval Observatory's internet home page www.usno.navy/mil. On the left side of the page under Departments, click on *Astro Applications*, *Data Services, Dates, and Earth's Seasons, Equinoxes, Solstices, Perihelion, and Aphelion 1992-2020*.

Note that there are *only two* categories: *ON* or *PRECEDING* and *AFTER*. There is <u>*no*</u> other category.

See also the translated writings of Philo Juda who lived in Alexandria, Egypt, the Calendar of Ginza, the Lachish Letters, and other sources.

3. - Reckon the beginning of the day as (a) sunrise-to-sunrise, or (b), sunset-to-sunset.

The book of Genesis tells us that the universe began in darkness, then there was light. The light came directly from the sun, and indirectly from the sunlight being reflected by the moon.

The Egyptians worshiped the sun, and reckoned their days from sunrise-to-sunrise. This fact must be kept in mind when reading the translated writings of authors who lived in Alexandria, Egypt such as Philo Juda.

We know that what we call a 'day' refers to the 24 hour solar period which is essentially one rotation of the Earth, and, that same word 'day' is used to refer to the illuminated portion of the 24 hour solar day at our location.

4. - Reckon the new-moon crescent to (a) local time anywhere, or (b), local time in Jerusalem, Israel, time zone (UT+2).

It seems condescending to Almighty Yahweh's word to use ones own local time to reckon 1 Nisan and the dates of set-apart days, because it overlooks significant facts. Jerusalem is the city spoken about in the scriptures many times as the place of special significance. The Almighty Yahweh caused his presence to dwell on Mount Zion, and within the Holy of Holies of the first Temple there. Our Savior died in Jerusalem. etc. It is the city in which the High Priest officially *declared* scriptural calendar matters.

Congregations reckoning events to Jerusalem avoid the confusion of using local time when living in a country like the USA which has several time zones. Congregations on the east coast may not see a new-moon crescent whereas later those on the West Coast, will. Muslims had the same problem until they decided to reference their calendar to Medina, a location in the approximate center of their adherents.

Jerusalem as a reference point is similar in some respects with Greenwich, England. By international agreement, Greenwich is the location of zero longitude and zero Universal Time reference. It is the only reference point from which time zones are reckoned. This is done by adding hours for time zones if to the east, or subtracting hours if to the west. Scripturally, it is fitting the location of Jerusalem be the reference from which new-moon sightings, 1 Nisan, and set-apart days, are determined.

Even without using today's instant communications and precise astronomical information, anyone observing a new-moon crescent at a given location can predict it's probable occurrence in Jerusalem. This is done by aligning the bottom of ones' out-stretched thumb with the horizon. If a new moon crescent can be seen above the top side of ones' thumb, that new moon crescent has enough altitude to be visible in Jerusalem, conditions permitting.

5. - Do not (a) intercalate a second 12th month, Adar II at the scriptural year ending to ensure 1 Nisan starts after the spring Equinox, or (b), do intercalate Adar II.

Whether or not to intercalate Adar II, a second 12th month of 29 days (not a thirteenth month) to the scriptural year ending, is a decision which is made by a congregation's leader. Again, some may think it is a 'close-call' when 1 Nisan falls *on* the day of the Spring Equinox, but it is because they incorrectly *assume* that day is the first day of spring. As mentioned, it is instead the *last day of Winter*.

So, 1 Nisan 2007 was not a 'close-call' when one reckons a day from sunset-to-sunset, a month by the observed new-moon crescent *in Jerusalem*, recognizes that the preponderance of ancient evidence shows the scriptural new year *always began after* the Day of the Spring Equinox, and, intercalates Adar II when necessary.

6. - Assume: (a) cultivated barley in Israel is the same variety as in ancient times, and is a criteria for beginning the scriptural New Year, or (b), do not assume barley ever was a criteria.

Starting in Exodus, barley is *not* mentioned as a criteria when Moses told the Israelites the first day of their new year and month was to begin. Barley is *not* mentioned as a criteria during the forty years the Israelites traveled in the wilderness, *nor* as a criteria after they crossed the Jordan River into the promised land. And, it is *not* mentioned as a criteria for starting the scriptural year during the Temple eras.

Leviticus 23:10 required that *when* the Israelites entered the land they were promised, they were to *cut and bring* the first-fruit of the grain (barley crop planted by non-Israelites) to the priests for an Elevated Offering and a Burnt Offering, *not* as a determinate for the scriptural year which had *already* begun.

The first-fruit offering was to be *cut and brought* to the priests at the *beginning* of the *first day* after the *weekly* Sabbath *following* Passover, even if dark. That first day will fall within the Days of Unleavened Bread. The *count* to the Feast of Weeks must start on that first day of the week (now called Sunday).

The *season* in which the Israelites entered the Promised Land is known from Joshua 3:15 ..."now the Jordan overflows all its banks during the time of [barley] *harvest*," and from Joshua 4:19 "and the people came up from the Jordan River on the *tenth* day of the *first* month, and they camped in Gilgal." Clearly, the scriptural year had *just* begun.

Barley matures the earliest of all cereals (wheat, spelt, etc.). Egypt being further south than Israel, would have had the barley reach the 'abib' state (pasty-firm to dry kernels) earlier than Israel.

Regardless of these facts, in past years some leaders of congregations which published a scriptural calendar, advanced the start of the scriptural year one lunar month *before* the Spring Equinox, thus into the *Winter*, because of reports of *volunteer* (not cultivated) barley in Israel in the abib state.

The leaders cited no scripture support for doing so. No outside proof was offered to show that during the Temple eras the scriptural year had ever begun *before* sunset of the Day of the Spring Equinox. All things being equal, increased global warming could cause grain crops in Israel and elsewhere to mature earlier in coming years.

How did the ancient Israelites: (a) ensure there would likely be barley in 'the abib' state at Passover so (b), the first-fruits of the barley harvest could be cut and prepared for the Day of the Elevated Offering, and (c), the cutting would also be in accordance with Deuteronomy 16:9 for counting to the Feast of Weeks?

One would assume the optimum date which farmers sowed the barley was handed down from father-to-son over centuries. However, there are Rabbinic writings which tend to show during the Temple eras that the *sowing date was linked* to the date of Passover in the *next* scriptural year.

Alfred Edersheim's book *The Temple its Ministry and Services*, Chapter XIII The Days of Unleavened Bread and the Feast of Weeks, describes a special temple delegation sent to harvest the first-fruit of the cultivated barley crop for the Elevated Offering and Burnt Offering. It was to come from an ordinary field in the Kidron Valley. The footnote on page 258, The Wave-sheaf, reads:

> [1] *Mishnah,* Menach. *viii. 1, 2.* The field was to be ploughed in the autumn, and sowed seventy days before the Passover.

The abbreviation stands for: Menachoth, Chapter 8., paragraphs1, and 2.

Theoretically, sowing barley *seventy days* before Passover would cause it to be nineteen days from maturity. The link would provide a margin of nineteen days toward maturity to accommodate differences in growing conditions, etc.

Assuming the footnote reflected what barley farmers did:

> (a) The link to Passover would tend to ensure the barley crop would have kernels which would be pasty-firm to dry, *when* Passover came. Same would also occur in years when a second twelfth month, Adar II, was intercalated because the whole calendar shifted.
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> (b) It would enable the first-fruit of the barley crop to be cut on the first day *after* the weekly Sabbath following Passover, *regardless* which date it fell upon within the seven Days of Unleavened Bread. The barley would only get more mature toward the end of the feast.
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> (c) It ensured the beginning of the count to the Feast of Weeks would occur as in Deuteronomy 16:9 "... begin to count seven weeks from the time when you put the sickle to the grain."

However, for barley farmers to be able to count seventy days to the *next* Passover, they first had to know when the *next scriptural new year would begin.*

Until the destruction of the Second Temple in CE 70, it seems likely farmers sighted new-moon crescents, counted to the crescent first after the day of the Spring Equinox, and added the fourteen days to Passover. They could then count back seventy days for the date to the sow. Genesis 1:14-16 was common knowledge.

While Rabbinic writings are never as reliable as Scripture, the above footnote shows that barley was *not* a determinate for beginning the Scriptural year. Instead, it infers Passover on 14 Nisan, in the *next* year, determined the date for sowing barley in the autumn of the current year. That variable sowing date would have occurred around the Hebrew month named Shebat, i.e., after plowing and when there was 'rain on high,' it was cold, there was snow on mountain tops', etc.

Further, there is also *no evidence* during the Temple eras that farmers used a calculated calendar based on the invisible astronomical conjunction of a moon they could not see.

If the first-fruit of the barley crop was not mature by 14 Nisan, the start of the new year could be postponed one lunar month.

Non-scriptural year determination issues -

7. - Advocating that the Passover lamb was killed: (a) during the afternoon of 14 Nisan and eaten at the beginning of 15 Nisan, or (b), immediately after the sunset which began 14 Nisan, roasted, and eaten immediately thereafter while it was night.

The following refers to those who reckon days sunset-to-sunset. Accordingly, 14 Nisan starts at the sunset of 13 Nisan.

The connotation of the Hebrew word translated 'evening,' is the period of diminishing light after sunset, until night. "Night," as a Rabbi is to have said: "is when you can see three stars." In the spring there are about 1-1/2 hours of visibility for a head-of-household to have killed a yearling lamb, roast it, and it be eaten in his house during that first pass-over night.

To draw the nation of Israel together, king Josiah (BCE 637-607) encouraged the domestic Passover event of killing a male lamb by a head-of-household, to instead be killed by a Levite priest in a national event, at the temple in Jerusalem. He did so to draw the nation together, which it did. Apparently, shortly after this got started is when the evolving traditions of the Jews slowly began to change the way they observed Yahweh's set-apart days.

Due to the increasing number of lambs as the population grew, it seems the time for slaughtering them nationally, *of necessity,* was moved from the *beginning* of 14 Nisan, to about *mid-afternoon*. Doing so was likely considered *justified* then because the slaughtering still occurred on the commanded 24 hour solar day.

Passover, originally a separate *memorial* of the *deliverance* of Israel from slavery because of their sin, became merged into a *celebration* of Israel's *exodus* out of Egypt. The national sacrifice of Passover on 14 Nisan became relegated to the afternoon by New Testament times. The Gospels record Passover being referred to as the 'preparation' day 'of the Jews' for15 Nisan, the first set-apart day of the seven day Feast of Unleavened Bread. The day is called 'an High day' in John 19:31, is an annual Sabbath, and can fall on any day, including a weekly Sabbath.

The Gospels record that the Jewish religious leaders who were accusing Yeshua would not enter the Roman Judgement Hall on14 Nisan because they considered to do so would defiled them from eating the feast which was to commence immediately *after* the sunset of that day, which started 15 Nisan.

A close reading of the Gospels however, reveals Yeshua and his Apostles observed the *domestic* Passover about the time it had been first observed in Exodus. The lamb they ate was killed at the beginning of 14 Nisan.

But the killing of the innocent male lambs nationally at the Temple on the afternoon of 14th Nisan seems to have had divine approbation so to be synonymous with our innocent Savior being killed on that same day.

Some people also *suppose* there is a scriptural requirement for the set-apart days in the month of Tishri, the 7th month, to always occur *after* the Autumnal Equinox. The supposition is that the gathering of the dates, summer figs, etc., had to be completed to provide for the tithe the Israelite males contributed on the first day of the Feast of Tabernacles.

That supposition is not a scriptural requirement. If 1 Nisan does not occur *earlier* than seven days *after* the Spring Equinox, *all* set-apart days in the month of Tishri automatically fall *after* the Autumnal Equinox.

Apparently those living in ancient Israel observed single Day of Trumpets, 1 Tishri; and Day of Atonement, 10 Tishri, domestically. If so, they could make the pilgrimage to Jerusalem for the Feast of Tabernacles, 15 - 22 Tishri, in three to four days traveling time.

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