

# How The High Priest Determined The Scriptural Calendar

by  
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Religious leaders should know when and how the High Priest at the Tabernacle and the Temples in Jerusalem determined the Scriptural Calendar. It is a prerequisite to correctly know when the commanded weekly and annual holy convocations in Leviticus 23 occur, and how to keep them.

Few denominations keep the weekly Sabbath even though it is a holy convocation and the Fourth Commandment. No holy convocation or commandment has been amended or rescinded. All are as applicable as when given to Moshe. Persevering in obedience to the word of the Almighty Yahweh qualify his people to receive eternal life. Disobedience does not.

Yahweh's son, Yeshua the Anointed, kept the Commandments and Holy Convocations of his Father as did the Disciples, Paul, the early Jewish and Gentile converts, and the Apostolic Fathers.

## Who is Obligated to Determine the Scriptural Calendar?

Determination of the scriptural calendar correctly is obligatory upon the leader of a congregation that uses the bible. It is the leader's responsibility to ensure the congregation knows when and how to observe holy convocations. This includes knowing how to count to the Feast of Weeks (Day of Sabbaths, Pentecost), and the significance of the events in Exodus 16:1-30.

In the tabernacle and temples era, determination of the scriptural calendar correctly was a life-or-death matter for the High Priest (Leviticus 16:2 and 30:10) so it was not delegated.

Today all adult male members of a congregation, especially the head of a household, must be able to correctly determine the scriptural calendar. All adult females should be familiar with the rationale to do so. One can learn about determination of the scriptural calendar during the tabernacle and temples era by reading free research on the Internet.

Perhaps the most exhaustively researched document about the scriptural calendar is the: *Treatise on the Biblical Calendar, 2nd ed. (TCB2)*, by Herb Solinsky, April 3, 2009, 335 pages. It can be downloaded at [www.biblicalcalendar.org/tbc2.pdf](http://www.biblicalcalendar.org/tbc2.pdf).

Another excellent document is: *The Observed Calendar of the Second Temple Era* by Wayne L. Atcheson, May 25, 2002, 41 pages. It can be downloaded at [Z2cs@Bendnet.com](mailto:Z2cs@Bendnet.com).

## Celestial Objects and Their Purpose

In Genesis 1:14-18 Elohim (deity) gave mankind three visible celestial objects: the sun, moon, and stars, to be used for four purposes: signs, set times, days, and years.

In ancient times Israelites were engaged in animal husbandry and in agriculture when in the promised land. Knowledge about the sun, moon, stars, and things pertinent to a luna-solar year were passed down. The rationale used by the High Priest to determine the scriptural calendar correctly is not detailed in the scriptures, however it can be ascertained.

### **Summary of the Rationale**

The rationale which Aaron, Moshe's older brother and first High Priest, used to determine the scriptural calendar is certainly the same used by Aaron's successors. It is summarized as follows:

- A day is reckoned from sunset-to-sunset.
- A week consists of seven days, referred to as: the first, second, third, fourth, and fifth of the Sabbath; the sixth was called the 'eve of the Sabbath,' and 'the Sabbath' itself.
- The *tequphah* (equinox) is one of two days a year when the sun's shadow moves east-to-west in a straight line. Of the two, the Spring Equinox (N. Hemisphere) is calendar pertinent.
- A scriptural year begins with the first new-moon crescent seen after the sunset of the day of the Spring Equinox, reckoned and declared by the High Priest at Jerusalem.
- A new-moon crescent occurs in not less than twenty-nine days, nor in more than thirty.
- For scriptural calendar purposes the first new-moon is thirty days long, the second twenty-nine, etc. The sequence results in new-moons with an average interval of 29-1/2 days.
- If a scriptural year ends *before* the Spring Equinox, that year is extended to the new-moon next *after* that equinox. Such years will have thirteen moons.
- Each weekly and annual *chodesh miqra* (holy convocation) in Leviticus 23:1- 41 is observed with all applicable statutes and ordinances.
- The count to *shavuot* (Feast of Weeks, Day of Sabbaths, Pentecost), in Deuteronomy 16:9, can begin only on the 'first of the Sabbath' (Sunday) after Passover, within the seven-day Feast of Unleavened Bread.

### **Reckoning Days and Months**

The reckoning of a 'day' from sunset-to-sunset, and the number of days in a week, are from Genesis 1:4 and 5. The seven day Sabbath week was established in Exodus 16:1-30.

A Sabbath week consisted of seven days, known as the: first, second, third, fourth, and fifth of the Sabbath; the sixth was the 'eve of the Sabbath,' and the seventh, the Sabbath (*ha shabbat*)

defined

as: an intermission, or rest. Lev. 23:32 shows a Sabbath day is reckoned from sunset-to-sunset.

New-moons (moons) were originally numbered only. Genesis 7:11 shows Noah's voyage began on the 17<sup>th</sup> day of the 2<sup>nd</sup> moon, and Genesis 8:4 shows the voyage ended on the 17<sup>th</sup> day of the 7<sup>th</sup> moon, 150 days later. Each moon then consisted of 30 days.

Later, as seen in the books of Exodus and 1<sup>st</sup> Kings, the first of four named moons were called: abib; the second, zif; the seventh, ethanim; and the eighth, bul. In Leviticus 23:5 it states: "In the first new-moon ..." In Deuteronomy 16:1 the first new-moon of the scriptural year is identified by name: "... you shall observe the new-moon of abib."

The other moons remained numbered until after the Babylonian Captivity of the Israelites when Ezra adapted the by then familiar name of Babylonian moons. The first Babylonian moon *nisanu*, became *nisan*, etc. The name Ezra adapted for each moon is seen in the calculated fixed calendar of Hellel II (320-385 CE) which Jews and others use today.

A scriptural year is luna-solar so is about eleven days less than a solar year. Every two to three years a scriptural year ends *before* the spring equinox, in the twelfth moon adar, in the winter. To start a new year scripturally in the spring, in the first moon abib, Aaron would have extended the end of the year to the thirteenth moon veadar. Aaron's successors would have done the same until the destruction of the Second Temple in 70 CE. Later, in Hellel's calendar, that thirteenth moon was intercalated *between* the eleventh moon shebat, and twelfth moon adar, so the Jewish feast of Purim and Dedication would remain in the twelfth moon. Rabbinic postponement rules to optionally alter the date which Jews observed Yahweh's holy days, etc., were also included.

### **The Spring Equinox**

The high priest noted the occurrence of natural things preceding the day of the '*tequphah*.' This word is defined in James Strong's Exhaustive Concordance - Hebrew Dictionary, 8622, as:

*a revolution i.e.(of the sun) course, (of time) lapse:- circuit, come about, end.*

The word is understood to refer to opposite points in the elliptical orbit of the earth when the center of the earth, its equator, and the center of the sun, come into instantaneous alignment. The points are called: the Spring and the Autumnal Equinox. They occur midway between the point of the Winter and the Summer Solstice. The four points indicate the beginning/end of seasons.

The high priest knew the day of the Spring Equinox was preceded by various *signs* associated with the end of winter: i.e., increasing air and soil temperature, rain, thunderstorms, green sprouts of vegetation, growth of the heads of barley, lambing, birds fledgling, melting snow causing the Jordan River to overflow its banks, etc.

The high priest could predict the very day of the spring equinox by noting the daily change in the

apex of the arc of the sun's shadow behind a vertical object such as a gnome, tower, etc. The shadow became a straight line only on the day of an equinox because only on that day the sun rises due east and sets due west. Moshe's royal education would have included the fact that one side of the then ancient pyramids at Giza were oriented due east and west to mark the equinoxes.

The Temples in Jerusalem were at an elevation of about 2500 feet and purposely oriented to face due east. This is known from Ezekiel 8:16 "...there were about twenty-five men with their backs toward the door of the Temple and their faces toward the east; and they were worshiping the sun toward the east." On the day of an equinox only, light from the rising sun would have shown straight through the door of the Temples as the sun proceeded to its zenith.

Scripture mentions only two seasons in Israel - Plowing/planting which took place after the autumn equinox when the weather became cool, rainy, then cold, and Harvesting/gathering which took place after the spring equinox when the weather became warm then hot and dry. When *tequphah* refers to the autumn equinox, it signifies the end of non-grain agricultural harvests.

### **The New-Moon Crescent**

After the sunset of the day of the spring equinox the high priest next looked for the first *chodesh* (rebuilding) new-moon crescent. Being in the spring that crescent marked the beginning of the new scriptural year. Before then it was winter and the 12<sup>th</sup> moon adar, of year ending.

It was known in ancient times that when the moon was invisible, a new-moon crescent would occur within one to three days, and, the interval of its appearance was never less than twenty-nine days, nor more than thirty. If a new-moon crescent was not visible in Jerusalem because the sky was obscured, nor seen by observers on nearby mountain tops when expected on the 29<sup>th</sup> night, its occurrence was assumed on the 30<sup>th</sup> for calendar purposes. The short-term average interval of a new-moon over many years was found to be about twenty-nine and one-half days. The actual average interval measured over centuries is: 29 days, 12 hours, 44 minutes, and 2.8 seconds.

The high priest declared the first day, of the first new-moon, of the new scriptural year at noon at the Temple. It, new-moons, weekly and annual Sabbaths were signified by the blowing of horns.

**Passover** - Having determined 1 abib (nisan), the first day of the new moon of the new scriptural year, the high priest knew from Leviticus 23 that at the sunset of the 13<sup>th</sup> day, Passover the 14<sup>th</sup> day, began.

The first pass-over in Egypt began at '*ben ha arbayim*' (between the setting times) of the sun. As instructed by Moshe, the head of a household sacrificed the yearling male lamb without defect that had been set apart from the flock on the 10<sup>th</sup> day. The blood was collected and used to mark the lintel and door posts of the Israelite houses. The lamb was then roasted and eaten inside the house in trepidation, with unleavened bread and bitter herbs. During the night first born Egyptian males and their male animals died. All left-overs from the lamb were burnt before daybreak.

That first pass-over sacrifice was a memorial of the deliverance of Israel from Egyptian bondage, symbolized as sin. It was to become the memorial of our Savior's sacrifice for mankind's sin. Passover is memorialized today in a similar manner as at our Savior's last supper. Commonly some unleavened bread is eaten, some grape juice is drunk, there is foot washing, the singing of hymns, and the reading of verses from the Old and New Testament applicable to Passover.

**Feast of Unleavened Bread** - The sunset of the 14<sup>th</sup> begins the 15<sup>th</sup>, the first day of the seven-day Feast of Unleavened Bread. Leviticus 23:6 mentions that the feast is observed from the sunset of the 14<sup>th</sup>, to the sunset of the 21<sup>st</sup>. The Feast of Unleavened Bread memorializes the exodus of the Israelites out of Egypt. No work is allowed on the first day or the last day. Unleavened bread is to be eaten daily.

Within the seven day Feast of Unleavened Bread, the high priest made the Wave Sheaf Offering, other offerings, and made sacrifices. On that day he gave thanks to the Almighty Yahweh for the blessings the Israelites received in the year recently ended, and asked for blessings in the year which had recently begun.

A sheaf of the 'first-fruit' of the barley crop was cut off from the earth on the 'first of the Sabbath'(i.e., Sunday), on the 'morrow' after the weekly Sabbath following Passover. Passover and the weekly Sabbath can fall on the same day depending upon the day of the year. The cutting of the first-fruit barley could occur on any date within the seven days of Unleavened Bread. The rest of the barley crop could not be harvested until after the first-fruit barley sheaf had been cut.

After the sunset which began that first day of the week, the first-fruit barley sheaf was cut and brought to the priests, even in darkness. The priests flailed a portion of the barley heads, parched the kernels if needed, ground them, sifted the flour, etc. They baked bread and put loafs and the sheaf of first-fruit barley together for the High Priest to offer later the morning of that same sunset-to-sunset reckoned day.

Deuteronomy 16:9 states that when the sickle is put to the standing grain, the count of days to the *shavuot* is to begin. Details for making the count are in Lv. 23:15 - 16.

Thus, the cutting of the first-fruit barley sheaf, the beginning of the count of fifty days to *shavuot* (Feast of Weeks, Day of Sabbaths, Pentecost), and when the wave sheaf offering was made that year, occurred on the same day, reckoned sunset-to-sunset. On that day in 31 CE Miriam of Magdala would come very early to Yeshua's tomb, and he would first go to his Father in heaven.

**Feast of Weeks** - *shavuot* is the only holy convocation in Leviticus 23 where no date is given for when it is to be observed. That date must be determined by counting, starting on the 'first of the Sabbath'(Sunday) within the days of unleavened bread. The count must include: seven complete Sabbath weeks, the morrow, and end on the 'first of the Sabbath (Sunday)' fifty days later. The day and date of *shavuot* falls within the 3<sup>rd</sup> moon (sivan) around the time the wheat crop in Israel is white and ready for harvest.

In Luke 4:16 the fiftieth day of the count is commonly mistranslated: 'on the Sabbath (*Sabbatou*

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singular) day.’ But the Greek manuscripts show it to be: ‘on the day of Sabbaths’ (*Sabbaton* - plural). Accordingly, the verse should read: ”... *Yeshua entered the synagogue as was the custom of him on the day of Sabbaths and stood up to read.*” In Acts 2:1 that same interval of days is translated: Pentecost (*pentekoste*) defined as: ‘fiftieth.’ It was on that same fiftieth day when the Holy Power of Yahweh came upon the disciples as dividing tongues of fire.

**Day of Trumpets** - The Day of Trumpets begins on 1 Tishri with the 7th new-moon crescent. During the daylight hours which followed, musicians concealed within the Temple precincts continuously blew horns made of silver.

**Day of Atonement** - At the sunset of 9 Tishri, which also began 10 Tishri the Day of Atonement, all Israelites began a one day fast from food and drink until the sunset of 10 Tishri. Only on that day could the High Priest go behind the veil into the Holy Place without dying. In Exodus 16:2 the Almighty Yahweh told Moshe to warn Aaron “not to go into the holy place at all times else he would die from the presence of Yahweh within the cloud over the Mercy Seat” (lid of the Ark of the Covenant). It was for self-preservation that Aaron and successive high priests personally determined the scriptural calendar to ensure it was correct.

On the day of Atonement the high priest himself made offerings and atoned for his sins, his household’s, and the nation of Israel. Then he asked for forgiveness and a blessing for the nation.

**Feast of Tabernacles** - The sunset of 14 Tishri also begins 15 Tishri the first day of the seven day Feast of Tabernacles. The feast ends at the sunset of 21 Tishri. The first and last day of the feast are a holy convocation when no work is allowed.

**Solemn Assembly** - The sunset of 21 Tishri also begins 22 Tishri, the holy convocation called Solemn Assembly. It is the last commanded holy convocation of the scriptural calendar.

### **Passover is a Memorial of Our Savior’s Death**

Passover is a memorial of the death of Yeshua the Anointed which occurred on the afternoon of Wednesday (not Friday), April 25, 31CE (Julian). He was entombed shortly before sunset of 14 Nisan. According to his own prophecy about himself, he would be: “... in the heart of the earth three days *and* three nights.” As prophesied, he arose on the weekly Sabbath just before sunset.

That year the day beginning at that sunset was the first day of the Feast of Unleavened Bread, an annual Sabbath. It is called ‘an High Day’ in some Gospels. It was also the day of the Wave Sheaf Offering. Yeshua was already risen when Miriam of Magdala came to the tomb ‘very early’ the morning of that ‘first of the Sabbath’ (Sunday). It is highly likely that about the time the first-fruit wave sheaf offering was elevated by the high priest, Yeshua the Anointed first went to his Father as the perfect sacrifice, having shed his blood to atone for mankind’s sins. He was the first of the ‘first-fruit’ of the harvest to follow.

### **Summary**

A scriptural calendar determination today must be made in the context of things which Aaron knew and could see. Aaron's incentive for personally determining the scriptural calendar was to avoid death by going into the holy place on the wrong day. It was prudent for succeeding high priests to do the same as Aaron. No high priest is on record as having died in the holy place.

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