

How The High Priest Determined The Scriptural Calendar

by

Anthony V. Gaudiano

Religious leaders should know *why*, and *how*, the High Priest at the Temple in Jerusalem determined the Scriptural Calendar. The *why*, because it is a prerequisite for correctly keeping the *weekly* and *annual* Holy Convocations commanded in Leviticus 23; and the *how*, to correctly *know* when they occur.

Few denominations observe the weekly *Sabbath* even though it is a holy convocation and *also* the Fourth Commandment. This is strange because *none* of the Ten Commandments have been amended or rescinded. All are as applicable as when given to Moshe. Observing holy convocations is a matter of obedience to the inspired word of the Almighty Yahweh.

Yeshua the Anointed obediently kept his Father's commandments and holy convocations. So did his Disciples, Paul, the early Jewish and Gentile converts, the Apostolic Fathers, etc.

Who is Obligated to Determine the Scriptural Calendar?

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

Responsibility in this matter is analogous to that of the High Priest during the Temple Era. All males of a congregation, especially the head of a household, must be able to determine the scriptural calendar correctly. All adult members should be familiar with the rationale.

One can learn about the determination of the scriptural calendar in the temple 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.

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.

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*, *seasons*, *days*, and *years*.

In ancient times Israelites were principally engaged in agriculture and animal husbandry. They passed down common knowledge about the moon and the sun and the start of a luna-solar year. The method for determining months, days, years, seasons, etc., is *not* detailed in the scriptures, however it can be discerned.

Summary of the Rationale

The preponderance of research shows the rationale the High Priest used for determining the scriptural calendar during the temple eras can be summarized:

- A day was reckoned from *sunset-to-sunset*.
- A week consisted of *seven days*, numbered the: first, second, third, fourth, and fifth of the Sabbath; the sixth called the ‘eve of the Sabbath,’ and ‘the Sabbath’ itself.
- The approach of the *tequphah* Spring Equinox (N.H.) was apparent by green sprouts, lambing, etc., and by the daily apex of the sun’s shadow tending toward a straight line, east to west.
- A scriptural year began only at the *first* new-moon crescent *after* the sunset of the day of the *spring equinox*, reckoned and declared at Jerusalem.
- A new-moon never occurred in less than twenty-nine days nor in more than thirty.
- The first month of the scriptural calendar was assigned thirty days, the second month twenty-nine, etc.
- Adar II, a month of thirty days, was intercalated between the eleventh and twelfth month (Shebat and Adar) in the 2rd, 5th, 7th, 10th, 13th, 16th, and 18th scriptural year, in a nineteen year cycle.
- Each weekly and annual *chodesh miqra* (holy convocation) in Leviticus 23:1- 41 was observed with all applicable statutes and ordinances.
- The count to *Shavuot* (Feast of Weeks), according to Deuteronomy 16:9, started on the ‘first of the Sabbath’ (Sunday) within the seven-day Feast of Unleavened Bread, regardless of the date.

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.

A 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, *ha Shabbat* (the Sabbath) defined as an intermission, or rest.

New-moons (months) were originally numbered only. This is seen in Genesis 7:11 when Noah began his voyage on the 17th day of the 2nd month, and in Genesis 8:4 when he ended his voyage on the 17th day of the 7th month 150 days later. Each month had thirty days then.

Later, as seen in the books of Exodus and 1st Kings, the first month was named Abib; the second, Zif; the seventh, Ethanim; and the eighth, Bul. In Leviticus 23:5 it states: "In the first month ..." later in Deuteronomy 16:1 that first month is identified: "... you shall observe the month of Abib."

The other months were unnamed until *after* the Israelite captivity in Babylon when Ezra adapted the then familiar name of Babylonian months. The first Babylonian month Nisanu, became *Nisan*, etc., as seen on the *calculated* fixed calendar attributed to Helle II (320-385 CE) which Jews use today. The calculated calendar is about a month *earlier* than the scriptural calendar some years.

The scriptural calendar is luna-solar therefore is about eleven days shorter than a solar year. An intercalary month of thirty days, called Addar II, was by Jewish tradition, inserted *between* the eleventh and twelfth month so their Feast of Dedication (2nd Temple) would be in the last month. Intercalation ensured the start of the new scriptural year was *after* the spring equinox, in the proper season, and had an accuracy of one day in over two centuries. Before AD 250 intercalation was made on the 2nd, 5th, 7th, 10th, 13th, 16th, and 18th year of consecutive 19 year cycles.

The Spring Equinox

The High Priest observed the *signs* indicating the approach of the '*tequphah*,' which today is understood to be the Spring Equinox. The definition of *tequphah* in Strong's Concordance - Hebrew Dictionary is:

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

The spring and autumnal equinox occur when the center of the earth, its equator, and the center of the sun, come into instantaneous alignment, as the earth orbits the sun.

The scriptures mention only two general seasons in ancient Israel - *Harvesting*, the time *after* the spring equinox when the temperature became warm then hot and dry, and *Planting*, the time *after* the autumn equinox when it became cool, rainy, then cold.

The approach of the spring equinox was indicated by various signs: the budding of vegetation, maturing of the barley crop, lambing, melting snow which caused the Jordan to overflow its banks, changes in temperature, precipitation, etc., the vertical alignment of stars in the great square of the constellation Tleh (Pegasus), etc.

The *spring equinox* itself could be accurately predicted by noting the decrease in the apex of the sun's shadow behind a vertical object such as a tower, gnomon, sundial, etc., from the sun's southern-most position. On the day of the spring (and autumnal) equinox only, the shadow begins and ends in a straight line, because on those two days the sun rises due east, and sets due west.

The Temples in Jerusalem were at an elevation of about 2500 feet, and faced due east. This is recorded in 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 worshipping the sun toward the east."

On the day of the equinoxes, light from the rising sun shown straight through the door of the Temple as the sun approach its zenith.

The New-Moon Crescent

After the sunset of the day of the spring equinox, the high priest looked for the first *chodesh* (rebuilding) moon. That new-moon crescent, began the scriptural new year *after* the spring equinox. Before then would be *winter* and the 12th month Adar of the year *ending*.

It was known in ancient times that when the moon was *not* visible, a new-moon crescent would occur within one to three days afterward, and, the interval of its appearance was never in less than twenty-nine days, nor in more than thirty. If a new-moon crescent was not visible in Jerusalem because the sky was obscured, nor seen by observers on nearby mountains when expected on the 29th night, its occurrence was assumed on the 30th. The average interval of the calendar month was twenty-nine and one-half days, close to the actual *average* interval recorded *over centuries* of: 29 days, 12 hours, 44 minutes, and 2.8 seconds.

The high priest then *declared* the 1st day of the first new-moon, a new scriptural year. All new-moons and holy convocations were signified by the blowing of horns made of beaten silver.

Passover - Having determined the 1st day of the first month of the new scriptural year, the high priest knew from Leviticus 23, that at the sunset of the 13th day, Passover on the 14th began. The first pass-over in Egypt began at *ben ha arbayim* (between the setting times) of sunset.

As instructed by Moshe, the head of a household cut the throat and collected the blood of a yearling male lamb without defect which had been set apart from the flock on the 10th day. The blood was used to mark the lintel and door posts of the Israelite houses. The lamb was then roasted and eaten with unleavened bread and bitter herbs inside the house during the night which followed. All left-overs were burnt before daybreak.

That first pass-over is a holy convocation and a memorial of the *deliverance* of Israel from Egyptian bondage, symbolized as sin.

Passover is memorialized today in a similar manner as at the 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 14th begins the 15th, 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 14th, *to* the sunset of the 21st. Unleavened bread is to be eaten daily. The first and last day are holy convocations when no work is allowed.

The Feast of Unleavened Bread memorializes the *exodus* of the Israelites out of Egypt.

Within the seven day Feast of Unleavened Bread, Leviticus 23 requires the high priest to make a *Wave Sheaf Offering* and to offer sacrifices. On that holy convocation the High Priest gave thanks to the Almighty Yahweh for the blessings the Israelites received in the year just ended, and asked for blessings in the year which had just begun.

A sheaf of the 'First-fruits' of the barley crop was cut for the wave offering on the '*first of the Sabbath*' (Sunday) the morrow after the first *weekly* Sabbath which followed Passover. Passover and the weekly Sabbath could fall on the same day because of the luna-solar year. The cutting could occur on any date *within* the seven days of Unleavened Bread. The barley crop could *not* be harvested *until* the First-fruits barley sheaf had been *cutoff* from the earth.

After the sunset beginning that Sunday, the First-fruits barley sheaf was cut and brought to the priests, even if dark. The priests flailed the sheaf, parched the kernels if needed, ground them, sifted the flour, etc., to prepare for the wave sheaf offering later the morning of that *same* day.

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

Thus, the cutting of the First-fruits wave sheaf, the beginning of the count of fifty days to the Feast of Weeks, and the Wave Sheaf Offering, occurred on the same day. It was also the day Miriam of Magdala came to the tomb, and Yeshua the Anointed ascended to his Father in heaven.

Feast of Weeks - Shavuot (Feast of Weeks) is the *only* holy convocation in Leviticus 23 *without* a date given for when to observe it. The day for observing it is found by counting, starting *after* the first weekly Sabbath after Passover on the 'first of the Sabbath' (Sunday), during the Feast of Unleavened Bread. The count is to include: seven *complete* Sabbath weeks *and* the morrow and end on the 'first of the Sabbath' *fifty* days later, in and *3rd* month (Sivan). The Feast of Weeks occurs about the time the wheat crop is to be harvested.

In Luke 4:16 that fiftieth day is commonly mistranslated as 'on the Sabbath (*Sabbatou* - singular) day.' But the Greek manuscripts show it should be translated: '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." At that same interval of days in Acts 2:1, the word is translated Pentecost (Greek = Pentekoste) which means 'fifty,' i.e. 'count fifty.' It was on that fiftieth day when the Holy Power of Yahweh came upon the disciples as tongues of fire.

If one makes a lunar-solar calendar keyed to Exodus 16:1-30 in the second month, one can correlate at least eleven scriptural events: (a) the day of the pass-over in Egypt, (b) the night when the exodus began, (c) the day when the Reed Sea was crossed, (d) the day of the week quail arrived at sunset, and (e) manna first came in the morning, (f) the self-same day of the week the Israelites left Rameses and arrived at Sinai, (g) when the Israelites washed their clothes and (h) sanctified themselves in the wilderness, toward (i) when the Ten Commandments were given, (j) when Yeshua read in Lk. 4:16, and (k) when Holy Power came upon the disciples in Acts 2:1.

Day of Trumpets - The *Day of Trumpets* on 1 Tishri occurs at the 7th new-moon crescent. During this holy convocation trumpets were blown *continuously* at the temple during the daylight hours, by musicians who were *concealed*.

Day of Atonement - Knowing 1 Tishri, the High Priest looked toward the *sunset* of 9 Tishri, which also began 10 Tishri, the *Day of Atonement*. At that sunset all Israelites began a one day *fast* from food and drink, until the *sunset* of 10 Tishri.

The High Priest entered the Holy of Holies within the Temple *only* on the Day of Atonement. There he asked Yahweh by name for forgiveness of his sins, those of the nation of Israel, and a blessing for the nation in the coming year.

Feast of Tabernacles - The sunset of 14 Tishri began 15 Tishri and the seven day *Feast of Tabernacles*. The feast ended 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, which also began 22 Tishri, is the holy convocation called *Solemn Assembly*. It is the last *commanded* annual holy convocation of the scriptural year.

A Memorial of Our Savior's Death

Passover is *also* a *memorial* of the death of Yeshua the Anointed, which occurred on Wednesday (not Friday), April 25, CE 31, Julian.

According to his own prophecy about himself, he would be “in the heart of the earth three days and three nights.” He arose on the *weekly Sabbath* just before sunset.

The day beginning at that sunset was the Feast of Unleavened Bread, called ‘an High Day’ in some Gospels. It was also the day of the Wave Sheaf Offering that year. Yeshua was *already* risen when Miriam of Magdala went to the tomb very early in the morning on that 1st of the Sabbath (Sunday).

It is very likely that about the time the First-fruit wave sheaf offering was elevated by the High Priest, Yeshua the Anointed first ascended to his Father as the perfect sacrifice, having shed his blood to atone for mankind's sins, and also as the first of the First-fruits of the harvest to follow.

8/21/2010