

Aviv Barley for Beginners

Norman B. Willis

Both the Christian Calendar and the Orthodox Jewish Calendars are easy to use. They base their dates off of the flight paths of the sun, the moon and the stars; and because the flight paths of these celestial bodies can be predicted with some accuracy, one can project dates on these calendars literally years in advance.

The ability to project calendar dates months and years in advance is very utilitarian. It makes it possible to plan complex tasks such as industrial production cycles, military operations and other things that require lots of coordination and lead time. It even makes it easier to reserve accommodations for the Passover or the Feast of Tabernacles, since one can know the projected dates far in advance of the event.

However, as utilitarian as it can be to be able to project calendar dates far out into the future, in The Torah Calendar study we show that the Christian Calendar has literally nothing to do with Scripture (except the fulfillment of some pagan rites and rituals which YHWH expressly prohibits). We also show that while the Orthodox Calendar seeks to approximate real events, it often misses the true dates. This is because the Orthodox Calendar uses mathematical algorithms to approximate real events and much like margarine, approximations are not always as good as the real thing.

In The Torah Calendar study we explain that the New Moon Day is properly determined by going outside at Moon. YHWH's system could not be simpler: we just go outside at dusk and look up in the sky, and when we see the first crescent sliver of the new moon, that is the New Moon Day. If we are not able to see the first crescent sliver due to clouds or rain, then the next month begins on what would have been the 31st day, because a month cannot be longer than 30 days.

The flight paths of the celestial bodies are elliptical, and they wobble a lot. However, it takes an average of some 29.5 days for the moon to make a full circuit around the earth. About half of the time the months are 29 days long, and the other half of the time they are 30 days long. That is, it normally takes either 29 or 30 days to go from one new moon sighting to the next, depending on the weather, which can never really be known very far in advance.

In modern times it is possible to predict when the first crescent sliver of the new moon might be seen, supposing that there are no clouds. However, this is not what YHWH asks us to do. YHWH's system is simply to wait patiently until one sees the first crescent sliver of the new moon; and then that is the New Moon Day. While it is easier in the short run to use calendars that are mathematically approximated, there are huge spiritual benefits in learning to keep a calendar that is based upon learning to patiently wait upon YHWH, and upon physical verification of assumptions.

The Orthodox Jewish Calendar is brilliant, but as good as it is, mathematical approximations can never be as good as physically sighting the real thing; and it causes problems when people refuse to realize that fact. For example, I was in Jerusalem when our Jewish brethren were celebrating the New Moon Day a full day after the first crescent sliver of the new moon was physically sighted. This was not by any means a rarity. It felt so awkward to watch our brethren celebrate the New Moon Day, even though the New Moon was sighted a full day before. I had to wonder how YHWH felt.

The same problem holds true with determining the Head (or the start) of the Year. The Orthodox Calendar was designed to approximate the ripening of the Aviv barley by mathematical means; but the mathematical calculations are fixed according to the motions of the sun, the moon and the stars (and especially the Spring Equinox). If the weather was 'standard' from year to year, the Orthodox Calendar would probably hit 99% of the time; but since the weather YHWH sends changes from year to year, it misses a good part of the time.

Barley is a winter crop. It grows throughout the winter, and comes ripe in the spring. If the weather is warm and the barley gets enough rain at just the right times, the barley can

ripen a full month or more ahead of the date that the Orthodox Calendar predicts. However, if the weather is cold, or if the barley does not get the required amount of rain, the barley can ripen a full month or more after the date that the Jewish Calendar predicts. When we compound this with the error in sighting the New Moon, this explains why I have seen the Orthodox Rabbinical Calendar call the New Year a month and a day ahead of the actual dates. Again, one has to wonder how YHWH feels.

Again, no matter how brilliant the Orthodox Calendar's mathematical algorithm is, it cannot know the weather before it happens. For this reason, it will never be as good of a calendar system as just patiently waiting for the barley to be Aviv, and But what is Aviv barley? And why do the sects of the Nazarenes, the Karaites and even the Orthodox Jewish Sanhedrin all agree that the Hebrew New Year should begin after the barley in the Land of Israel becomes Aviv?

Barley is simply a cereal grass; and like any other cereal grass, barley goes through several stages of development. Without getting technical, first it grows, and then it buds, and then it starts to develop fruit. At first the fruit is an empty seed pod; and then it begins to be filled with a kind of a watery, milky substance, but there is not really much to it yet. However, as barley continues to mature, the milky fluid begins to take on the consistency of soft bread dough; and then later it becomes more like a hard bread dough. Eventually it gets to the point where it is 'soft-ripe', and finally it gets to a point where it is hard-ripe, and ready for harvest by ancient methods. But at which point is it Aviv?

The term 'Aviv' (אֲבִיב) is often translated as 'in the ear' or 'in the head.' Here it is in the third line down.

Exodus 9:31

31 Now the flax and the barley were struck, for the barley was in the head and the flax was in bud.

We talk about this more in The Torah Calendar study, but basically, barley is Aviv when it is in the breaddough stage. It is still moist enough that it would just rot if it were stored; but it has developed to the point that it can be roasted in fire or parched, and still yield a delicacy similar to puffed wheat.

The reason we wait until the barley is Aviv before declaring the Head of the Year is that one of the Spring Festivals is the Wave Sheaf Offering, also known as Firstfruits, or the Omer. No one is allowed to eat or sell his crops until after the Wave Sheaf has been offered.

Vayiqra (Leviticus) 23:10-11, 14

10 "Speak to the children of Israel, and say to them: 'When you come into the land which I give to you, and reap its harvest, then you shall bring a sheaf of the firstfruits of your harvest to the priest.

11 He shall wave the sheaf before YHWH, to be accepted on your behalf; on the day after the Sabbath the priest shall wave it...."

14 "You shall eat neither bread nor parched grain nor fresh grain until the same day that you have brought an offering to your Elohim; it shall be a statute forever throughout your generations in all your dwellings."

When the winter is cold and the barley ripens late, the Rabbinical Calendar holds the festival at least a month early. There is no wave sheaf to wave, but just a bunch of barley stalks that are still in the vegetative growth stage, which is pretty silly when you think about it. Instead of waving the Wave Sheaf of barley unto YHWH, the priesthood ends up just waving a bunch of grass. This could have been solved just by simply going out and taking a look at the barley, to see if it really is ready, or not. Again, one has to wonder how YHWH feels.

Another reason the New Year needs to be based off of the physical sighting of the Aviv barley is that one of the main purposes of the festivals is to give the people an opportunity to bring their first (and third) tithes up to Jerusalem. The priesthood survives by the tithe and the offering, and without the people's support, they will not be able to function.

Bemidbar (Numbers) 18:19-21

19 "All the heave offerings of the set apart things, which the children of Israel offer to YHWH, I have given to you and your sons and daughters with you as an ordinance forever; it is a covenant of salt forever before YHWH with you and your descendants with you."

20 Then YHWH said to Aharon: "You shall have no inheritance in their land, nor shall you have any portion among them; I am your portion and your inheritance among the children of Israel."

21 "Behold, I have given the children of Levi all the tithes in Israel as an inheritance in return for the work which they perform, the work of the tabernacle of meeting."

The start of the year is tied to the agricultural harvest cycles to ensure that the priesthood has the funds necessary to do its job. As I explain elsewhere, when we get back to the Land of Israel, the existing system of secular taxes will be replaced with a flat ten percent tax, plus three tithes. The overall rate of taxation will be far less than what we now pay under the secular governments we live under in the Dispersion; and the tithes will be used to support the renewed priesthood in performing all essential government services that are nowadays funded by secular taxes. Not only will the overall rate of taxation under YHWH's system be less, but the funds themselves will be used by the priesthood in such a way as to strengthen, rather than weaken the people's devotion to YHWH and His Covenant.

Considering the fact that one of the purposes of the festivals is to allow the people to bring up the tithes of their agricultural produce, it is kind of amusing and ironic that the rabbis still maintain a calendar system that ignores the state of the agricultural produce in Israel. It is not uncommon for the rabbis to declare the Head of the Year while the barley is not yet ripe enough to form a Wave Sheaf.

There was a time, following the Bar Kochba Revolt of 132-136 CE that the Jews were no longer allowed into Judea. Therefore, they could no longer find out when the barley was coming ripe, so they had to figure out some other system. We explain the history in some more detail in The Equinox Error, but the Orthodox Calendar was finally adopted some time around 330-365 CE, under the leadership of Rabbi Hillel II. A brilliant piece of mathematical work, the Orthodox Calendar intercalates (i.e., determines) the months and the head of the year by using the orbits of the sun, the moon, and the Spring Equinox.

The Orthodox Jewish calendar 'drifts backward' about a day about every 224 years (meaning every 224 years, it adds a day). While even the Orthodox Jewish Sanhedrin acknowledges that the calendar is off, for many years it served its purpose of approximating the ripening of the Aviv barley in Israel. However, at this present point in time, it no longer serves any purpose: it just happens to be easier to use, and so many people are reluctant to go back to the correct method. It is ironic that adherents of the Orthodox Calendar assume it is the 'correct' calendar, even when it conflicts with Scripture, and even the Orthodox Jewish Sanhedrin admits it is wrong. It is not infrequent that certain persons in the Nazarene-Messianic movement periodically make the claim that those who keep time by the Aviv barley and the physical sighting of the first crescent sliver of the new moon are 'causing division.'

The accusation that is usually made is that 'if only the Aviv barley people would get with the program', then we could all be in unity. The irony of this argument is that one cannot cause division by doing what YHWH says. The way one causes division is to do something other than what YHWH says.

When we do what YHWH asks, then we can receive His blessings of unity that is real unity; and when we do something other than what YHWH says, He has no reason to bless us. Even if we were to somehow try to forge a false unity apart from what YHWH commands, all we would end up with would be a spiritual Tower of Babylon, and unity that is no unity. Yet why this simple fact is not appreciated by so many of His people, year after year, is something I do not really understand.

We all see through a glass darkly, and YHWH tells us that one day we will all be properly humbled, and then we will all keep His commandments. For His sake, I pray He will bring that day very soon, so that we might all worship Him as we should. Bring us back to You, YHWH, and we will be brought back unto You. Renew our days, as of old.

In Yeshua's name,
Amein.