

# Should we follow the Jewish Calendar?

By Don Esposito

The Romans start the year in January, in the dead of the winter, where as the Orthodox Jews start the year in September - October according to the man-made rules of the Rabbi's. But when does the bible say is the beginning of the year?

***Exo 12:2 This month (Aviv) shall be the chief of months for you. It shall be the first of the months of the year for you.***

Very clearly the year begins in the spring when the Passover is celebrated. The first month of the biblical calendar is called Aviv, which means "ripe or young ears" (barley in this case). Now we know from Deut 16:9 that we must start our Pentecost count "***when the sickle hits the standing grain;***" or in other words when the barley is ripe. The Jewish calendar does not take this biblical precedent into consideration at all for determining the start of the biblical year. The biblical calendar is completely agricultural as where the Jewish calendar does not take any of these things into account.

There is another important part of scripture that the current modern Jewish calendar does not also consider to the start of the year; this is the biblical precedent of waiting until after both the vernal equinox and the precession of the equinox, when the sun both passes the equator to start spring, and also passes from the 12<sup>th</sup> constellation back to the first one, to finish its full yearly cycle.

Scripture clearly tells us that we are to equate time by the celestial bodies in the sky.

***Gen 1:14 And Elohim said, Let luminaries be in the expanse of the heavens, to divide between the day and the night. And let them be for signs and for seasons, and for days and years.***

So we see that the calendar is a solar/lunar calendar made up of the Sun to rule the day; when it is sunset we start our new day. The moon to rule the month; when it finishes its full rotation and restarts itself at conjunction the new month begins and a combination of the Sun and stars to rule the year.

***Exo 34:22 And you shall observe a Feast of Weeks for yourself, the first fruits of the harvest of wheat; also the Feast of Ingathering (after) the turn of the year (Tekufah).***

The word for turning of the year in Hebrew is Tekufah. This word actually means a full revolution of the sun. This happens twice a year. Once when the sun passes the equator from the southern hemisphere to the northern hemisphere in spring, and again when it passes back on the other side of the earth from the Northern hemisphere back to the south on about September 21-23, each year. Clearly you cannot start Monday in the middle of Sunday, and you can't start January in the middle of December and likewise you can't start your new year in the middle of winter of the previous year, before the vernal equinox comes and spring is here. Also note in the original Hebrew, the word "at" is not in the original Hebrew but is "added" and actually the word *after* is more properly inferred from the original language.

Clearly Passover must be kept in its season (*spring, not winter*) from year to year.

**Exo 13:10 Thou shall therefore keep this ordinance in his season from year to year.**

The modern Jewish calendar does not take into account the turning of the seasons from after the vernal equinox occurs, but in some years such as 2007 starts the year in winter before the vernal equinox, to keep it in line with the Easter season and the old Julian calendar.

Their mistake is quite simple. Yahweh states, as we already have shown that "Aviv is the beginning of months to you (Ex 12:1). But according to the modern Jewish calendar they start the year in the 7<sup>th</sup> month and count back the days to Aviv and Passover. Then as long as Passover (*and not the 1st day of the month of Aviv*) falls after the vernal equinox, they will still start the year even though the first 2 weeks may still be in winter and still part of the old year. Again, their mistake is following the tradition of the Rabbi's in starting the year in Tishri, the 7<sup>th</sup> month and not starting it in Aviv, the first month.

Why is it, according to the rabbinical Jewish calendar that Passover cannot come before the vernal equinox? It is because the Jews say you cannot have two Passovers **in the same year.**

*Should the Tekufah of Tammuz extend till after the Succoth Festival, 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.(Sanh 11b)*

So there you have it, according to the Jewish calendar, they are saying that the vernal equinox **IS** indeed the beginning of spring and the New Year; that is why they will **NEVER** have Passover before the equinox. But as already quoted, **Aviv 1 and not Passover on Aviv 14** should be the start of the year, according to scripture. No where in scripture does it ever state that only Passover has to start in the New Year and the other 13 days of the new month of Aviv can still be in the Old year, back in winter. This is totally illogical.

The calendar they are using today is **NOT** the one used in the time of the 1<sup>st</sup> century when Yahshua the Messiah walked the earth, as even the Encyclopaedia Judaica openly admits that the modern Jewish calendar started in the fourth century by a Rabbi named Hillel the 2<sup>nd</sup> and was not completely codified until the earliest the 10<sup>th</sup> century AD.

*It is generally accepted that certain elements of the calculated Jewish calendar, commonly in use today, were codified in approximately 358 C. E. by the (president of the Jewish Sanhedrin), Hillel II. (Encyclopaedia Judaica)*

Let me add some historical proof to dogmatically show that the calendar that the Jews used in the first century AD was one that started in *spring* and not *fall* and the year did **NOT** ever start before the vernal equinox or the precession of the equinox. There are 12 constellations in the sky and the sun goes through each one approximately every 30 days. After it has gone through the 12<sup>th</sup> and starts back in the first one then the New Year can start.

The Jewish historian Josephus referred to this in Antiquity of the Jews when he stated

*"the year had now begun as the sun was now in the constellation of Aries."*

Also, the noted historian Eusebius had much to say confirming that ancient Israel **ALWAYS** waited until after the vernal equinox to start the year in spring and NOT winter.

### **Extracts from the Canons of Anatolius on the Paschal Festival**

*But as the Romans would say, before the eleventh of the calends of April. (15) But the sun is found on the said twenty-sixth of the month Phamenoth, not only as entering the first segment (of the zodiac), but on the fourth day is already found passing through it. But this segment they generally call the first dodecatomorium, and the equinox, and the beginning of the month, and the head of the cycle, and the head of the planetary course. But that segment, and the last dodecatemorium, and the end of the planetary revolution. Hence, also, those that place the first month in it, and that fix the fourteenth of the month by it, commit, as we think, no little and no common blunder. (16) But neither is this our opinion only, but it was also known to the Jews anciently, and before Christ, and was chiefly observed by them, as we may learn from Philo, Josephus, and Musaeus, and not only from these, but also from those still more ancient, i.e., the two Agathobuli, commonly called the masters, and of Aristobulus, that most distinguished scholar, who was one of the seventy that translated the holy Scriptures from the Hebrew for Ptolemy Philadelphus, and his father, and dedicated his exposition of the law of Moses to the same kings. (17) These, when they resolve inquiries on Exodus, say that **all ought to sacrifice the Passover alike after the vernal equinox, in the middle of the first month**. But this is found to be when the sun passes through the first segment of the solar, or, as some call it, the zodiac circle. But this Aristobulus also adds, it was requisite that not only the sun should have passed the equinoctial segment for the feast of the Passover, but the moon also. But that the first month of the Hebrews must occur after the equinox may be gathered also from the book of Enoch."*

We see also in the 19th Psalm that there is more to determine the proper observation of time than just the new moon.

***Psa 19:1-6 The heavens declare the glory of Elohim; and the firmament shows His handiwork. Day unto day utters speech, and night unto night shows knowledge. There is no speech nor language, where their voice is not heard.***

***Their line is gone out through all the earth, and their words to the end of the world. In them hath He set a tabernacle for the sun, Which is as a bridegroom coming out of His chamber, and rejoices as a strong man to run a race. His going forth is from the end of the heaven, and His circuit (Tekufah) unto the ends of it: and there is nothing hid from the heat thereof.***

The question of exactly what the connection is between the times and the seasons may well be understood in the term for *line*, which connotes *connection*, and certainly would include more than a simple sunrise/sunset repetition, particularly in the light that is **their line**, the line of the heavens and firmament, not just the line of the sun. The line mentioned in Hebrew thought is always circular and not linear.

While the daily rotation of the earth provided the smaller connecting circuit, the returning of the sun each year to the same point at the vernal equinox was the greater connecting circuit. From the earliest times there was an understanding of

the geometry of the earth, and that the sun in its transit across the equatorial line created the equinoxes'. This astronomical event precludes any artificial man-made rules.

Let us look at another scripture that shows this same concept.

***11* But the land which you are entering to possess it is a land of hills and valleys, drinking water from the rain of the heavens; *12* a land which Yahweh your Elohim cares for; the eyes of Yahweh your Elohim are constantly on it from the beginning of the year to the end of the year.**

When you read this scripture in Hebrew, it is once again showing a circular pattern, not a linear one. Yahweh's eyes are always on the land of Israel in a never-ending circular pattern, which is physically manifested by the "tekufah" or circuit of the sun, portrayed yearly with the start of the New Year at the vernal equinox.

That the learned men of old understood that Abib 1<sup>st</sup> always fell **AFTER** the vernal equinox is crystal clear. The debate of when Passover and the Feast of Unleavened Bread were properly kept hinged on this single event.

*"Peter, the Bishop of Alexandria, mentions that the Jews had kept the Passover properly up to the destruction of Jerusalem in 70 C.E. But after the destruction of the city they 'err in reckoning the beginning of the month, which is first amongst the months of the year, on the fourteenth day of which, being accurately observed, AFTER the equinox, the ancients celebrated the Passover according to the Divine Command: whereas the men of the present day now celebrate it BEFORE the equinox, and that altogether through negligence and error, being ignorant how they celebrate it in their season..." Anti-Nicene Fathers, Vol. VI, p. 280.*

It is recognized that the calendar followed during the time of Yahshua Messiah was regulated by the priestly lineage, the Sadducees, who never started the New Year until **AFTER THE VERNAL EQUINOX** for reckoning the month of Aviv. As a matter of fact it is stated in Jack Finegan's handbook of biblical chronology that when Solomon built the temple of Yahweh at Jerusalem that it was made specifically so that the sun would shine directly through the Eastern Gate on both the vernal and autumn equinoxes.

Also, during the some 175 years of the Elephantine letters of the Jews in Diaspora in Egypt, never once did they start the year before either the precession of the equinoxes or the vernal equinox. Look at the following quoted Excerpt from: Kenneth F. Doig, *New Testament Chronology*, (Lewiston, NY: Edwin Mellen Press, 1990).

*"Many of these legal documents include the required Egyptian civil year date. Double-dated documents including the Hebrew dates of the Elephantine Jews cover the period 471 to 402 BCE. This included evening to evening days and a **New Year beginning in Nisan (Aviv) only after the Vernal Equinox.** Almost all of the datable documents can be referred back to a **Nisan (Aviv) beginning only after the Vernal Equinox each year.**"*

Clearly history shows us, and it is no secret, that the modern Jewish calendar is based from a 4<sup>th</sup> century Rabbi and it was not codified for several hundred years after that and it is not based on the original Hebrew calendar from scripture. Even

in the Talmudic writings of the 2<sup>nd</sup> to 4<sup>th</sup> century it clearly states that the Passover must be in spring and not winter.

The modern Jewish calendar also has 4 postponement rules, so that if the Holy Days happen to fall on a certain day of the week that is not convenient to keep them, then they simply postpone the holy Day (*in some cases up to 2 days*) to the next day that is acceptable to the Rabbis.

**UNBELIEVABLE!** “*This cannot be true*”, some will say; but it is true. In Rabbinical Judaism it is taught that the Rabbi’s have the authority from heaven to change the Torah and even Holy set apart appointments of Yahweh. The Talmud also states that Yahweh is only one of 70 Rabbi’s and must submit to the will of the other Rabbis. Let me list the 4 postponement rules that the current Jewish calendar uses when the Holy days fall on inconvenient days of the week.

U.S. Naval Observatory summarizes the four *dehiyyot* [postponements] as follows:

- (a) If the Tishri *molad* falls on day 1 [Sunday], 4 [Wednesday], or 6 [Friday], then Tishri 1 is postponed one day.
- (b) If the Tishri *molad* occurs at or after 18 hours (i.e., noon), then Tishri 1 is postponed one day. If this causes Tishri 1 to fall on day 1, 4, or 6, then Tishri 1 is postponed an additional day to satisfy the *postponement rule* (a).
- (c) If the Tishri *molad* of an ordinary year (i.e., of twelve months) falls on day 3 [Tuesday] at or after 9 hours, 204 *halakim* [at or after about 3:11 a.m.], then Tishri 1 is postponed two days to day 5, thereby satisfying the *postponement rule* (a).
- (d) If the first *molad* [the Tishri *molad*] following a leap year falls on day 2 [Monday] at or after 15 hours, 589 *halakim* [at or after about 9:32 a.m.], then Tishri 1 is postponed one day to day 3 [Tuesday].

Remember also as already shown, that the modern Jewish calendar starts the year incorrectly from Tishri and NOT from the biblical Aviv. The main points of postponing Yahweh’s sacred set apart days is so a Holy Day and in particular the day of atonement (*Yom Kippur*) will not fall on a Friday or Sunday, which the Jews conceive as a burden due to the Sabbath day next to it.

In addition, they will not allow the last day of the feast of tabernacles to fall on a Sabbath due to a ritual that Jewish tradition used to perform in beating willow branches, which they believe would be breaking the Sabbath day. So instead of changing their man made tradition, they just postpone the Holy Day to another day.

Nowhere in scripture does it ever state that any man has the authority to change Holy time. There is a man coming (*the anti-messiah*) who will attempt to change times and laws and is strictly condemned for doing so (Dan 7:25). Very clearly, scripture tells us to keep the Passover on the 14<sup>th</sup> day of the first month! PERIOD! When the new moon occurs, then on the 14th day from that time, you are to keep the Passover. NOWHERE does scripture ever even remotely suggest about postponing Yahweh’s Holy Appointments.

Some will still argue that the oracles of Yahweh were given to the Jews and we must follow whatever calendar they use, even if it is wrong.

***Rom 3:1 What advantage then hath the Jew? or what profit is there of circumcision?***

**Rom 3:2 Much every way: chiefly, because that unto them were committed the oracles of Yahweh.**

This is not proper reasoning or the meaning of this scripture.

The oracles of Yahweh spoken about in Romans the 3<sup>rd</sup> chapter is not even remotely hinting that the Jewish rabbi's were given authority to change the eternal word of Yahweh and that believers in Yahshua must follow them.

The word oracle comes from the Greek word *logios* , and means the utterance or words of Yahweh were given to the Jews to **preserve, Not change**. Judah never lost their identity because it was their job to preserve the Torah unabated so that the people would still have the pure word of Yahweh for when the Messiah would come in the first century AD.

Romans 3:1-2, is stating that the advantage that Judah had over Ephraim is that since they always had the written Torah preserved, then they had the first chance at salvation, as where Ephraim, who had lost his identity had to wait patiently in captivity for the gospel message to come to them. By far in no way does the fact that Judah's job was to preserve the written Torah give them liberty to change any part of it. Anyone who even changed one word of scripture was under a curse.

***Deu 4:2 You shall not add to the Word which I command you, nor take from it, to keep the commandments of Yahweh your Elohim which I command you.***

Actually the oracles of Yahweh (*His written word*) were only entrusted to Judah until the Messiah would come and then it would be the job of the followers of the Messiah to preserve the true unadulterated word from there.

***Gen 49:10 The scepter shall not depart from Judah, nor a lawgiver from between his feet, until Shiloh come; and unto him shall the gathering of the people be.***

Also, you must remember the 4 postponement rules mentioned above **WERE NOT IN FORCE** in the first century in the days of Yahshua, and I will quote straight out of the Jewish Mishnah to prove that point conclusively.

It is from the Mishnah that we learn that a Holy Day could occur on any day of the week (Dansby's translation) such as is given on p. 125, #6: *On a Festival-day next to the Sabbath, whether before it or after it, a man may prepare two Erubs...*"

Still with the Mishnah, on p. 146 #10 we learn that the 16<sup>th</sup> Aviv may fall on a Sabbath; pp. 197, 201, 213 show that the old calendar is not in harmony with the present-day Jewish calendar. In fact p. 509 #7 shows that the Day of Atonement could fall on a Friday, the day before the weekly Sabbath. This is in direct opposition to the modern Jewish calendar which has postponements rules so the Day of Atonement cannot be either before or after the weekly Sabbath.

So there you have it. If we are to follow the Rabbis for the setting of the calendar, which rabbis of which era do we follow, as the Jewish calendar today is not the calendar used in the days of Yahshua, and not even the one used in the 2<sup>nd</sup> to 4<sup>th</sup> century, as at that time the Passover used to fall before the vernal equinox and now the Passover, but not the first day of Aviv, must fall after the

vernal equinox. Also, there were no postponement laws in the time of Yahshua and the year before he died Yom Kippur actually fell on a Sunday, which would be against one of the rules of postponement.

I would also like to prove from the New Testament that conclusively there were no postponement rules in the first century, during Yahshua's ministry.

***Joh 7:2 And the Jewish Feast of the Tabernacles was near.***

***Joh 7:37 And in the last day of the great feast, Jesus stood and cried out, saying, If anyone thirsts, let him come to Me and drink.***

***Joh 7:53 And they each one went to his house.***

***Joh 8:1 But Jesus went to the Mount of Olives.***

***Joh 8:2 And at dawn, He again arrived into the temple; and all the people came to Him. And sitting down, He taught them. ( This is the next day after the last great day)***

***Joh 9:1 And passing by, He saw a man blind from birth. (It is still the same day after last Great day)***

***Joh 9:7 And He said to him, Go, wash in the pool of Siloam, which translated is Sent. Then he went and washed, and came seeing.***

***Joh 9:14 And it was a Sabbath when Jesus made the clay and opened his eyes.***

Interesting enough if you read the above scriptures you will see that the last great day or the 8<sup>th</sup> day of the feast was on a Friday and the next day was a Sabbath when Yahshua healed the blind man. Knowing this for sure from scripture, just merely count back from Friday, the last great day which is the 22<sup>nd</sup> day of the 7<sup>th</sup> month, back to the 10<sup>th</sup> day of the month, which is Yom Kippur, and you will see that it was on a Sunday, so right here from scripture one can easily disprove that there was any type of postponement rules for Yom Kippur not falling on a Sunday in the first century.

Scripture is very clear. Yahweh created the Sun and moon and stars to tell us the timing of His Holy Days. No man has the authority to change that. To postpone the Feast of Trumpets for a day is no different than postponing the Sabbath for Sunday. There is no scriptural basis for either.

Clearly, from scripture we are to start the year in spring after the vernal equinox and not in winter before it; thus, the next new moon after the equinox was the beginning month of Aviv, thus always occurring in the spring. If the 12th month of the year (Adar) fell early enough to allow another new moon to occur before the Vernal Equinox, it necessitated adding a 13th month and waiting until the vernal equinox was observed as the beginning of spring and the New Year. This addition of an intercalary month always kept the 1st month of the year after the Vernal Equinox! The vernal equinox is the last day of the old year.

The year is an astronomical event determined by the sun! It is the point at which the revolution of the earth around the sun comes to complete its cycle. The sun determines the year! And that returning point is the Vernal Equinox.

Determining Passover after the beginning of the New Year, i.e. after the Vernal Equinox, then setting Aviv 1st before the Vernal Equinox, would be allowing Passover to be in the New Year, but setting Aviv 1st before the year ends, i.e. before the circuit of the sun is complete at the vernal equinox. This is still in the winter of the previous year, which is not Aviv. That is the reason for intercalary

years, i.e. the addition of an extra month, so that the first new moon after the year begins, after the Vernal Equinox, is Aviv.

The year 2010 is one such year when the Jewish calendar will be starting the year in winter, one month earlier than the biblical calendar. They will also postpone Yahweh's Holy Days due to them falling on inconvenient days according to the Rabbis. That means that the Jewish calendar will actually be starting their year exactly 45 days before the actual biblical Feast of Tabernacles or Sukkot should be.

Daniel has a very interesting prophecy that just may be speaking of this very topic.

***Dan 12:9 And He said, Go, Daniel! For the words are closed up and sealed until the end time.***

***Dan 12:10 Many shall be purified and made white and tested. But the wicked shall do wickedly. And not one of the wicked shall understand, but the wise shall understand.***

***Dan 12:11 And from the time the regular sacrifice shall be taken away, and the abomination that desolates set up, a thousand, two hundred and ninety days shall occur.***

***Dan 12:12 Blessed is he who waits and comes to the thousand, three hundred and thirty five days.***

I find it quite interesting that between the 1290 days first spoken, and then the 1335 days that those "who wait" will be blessed for, is exactly 45 days. 45 is the exact amount of days between the false Feast of trumpets this year to the true feast of Sukkot. Could this be a prelude for a coming year when the Messiah returns that will similarity have the Jewish calendar off by these 45 days?