

God's Sacred Calendar

The Hebrew lunar-solar calendar is the true calendar for all mankind. God Himself established it, and gave it to the children of Israel when they came out of Egypt (Exodus 12:1).

However, its principles go back to creation, when the sun and moon were appointed by God "for signs, and for seasons, and for days, and years" (Gen. 1:14). The word for seasons here is *moadim* and literally means "an appointment, a fixed time or season; a FESTIVAL, by implication, an assembly" (see *Strong's Exhaustive Concordance*, #4150). Thus God appointed the heavenly bodies to determine the "appointed times" of His weekly sabbaths, annual Holy Days and Festivals from the moment of Creation!

All authorities agree that the basis in law for God's calendar is indeed found in Genesis 1:

And God said, Let there be lights in the firmament of the heaven to divide the day from the night; and let them be for **signs**, and for **seasons**, and for **days**, and **years**.

And God made TWO great lights; the greater light to rule the day, and the lesser light to rule the night; he made the stars also. -- Genesis 1:14, 16.

We can, at the very least, realize that whatever these "lights" are, they are natural phenomena which clearly dictate the rules of order for calculating time. And, notice this, it is not a singular source of light (i.e. the sun) but ALL collectively, "Let *them* be for..."

Signs, Seasons, Days and Years

It would be much simpler if the Bible contained a clearly laid-out formula for a Sabbath calendar. The Bible (in Genesis 1:14) only tells us what source we are to use for calculations. But there seems to be no explicit instructions on their practical implementation. Notes Jonathan Brown: "Notching off seven "solar-day" periods which never correspond at the beginning or end with heavenly lights does not satisfy Genesis 1:14."

Those four words in Genesis 1:14 -- *signs*, *seasons*, *days* and *years* -- can be defined in the following way:

- 1) *Signs* fairly defines the underlying Hebrew word implying **astronomical events** such as **eclipses**, and other we *observe* with our eyes in the **sun**, **moon** and **stars** -- reminding us of **oaths** God has made to us (Jeremiah 32:35-36).
- 2) The sun generally marks *days*.
- 3) After 12 moon cycles have passed, the earth would have gone through nearly four seasons of weather changes constituting a *year*, marked with the **sun** by four distinct earth tilts called

equinoxes and **solstices**. These are determined by the angle of the sun throughout which the sun-light hours grow longer to a threshold at which they then begin growing shorter again.

4) Finally, the word *seasons* appears at first glance to be the four radical weather shifts each year -- winter, summer, spring and fall or autumn. However, although the English word certainly implies such, the underlying Hebrew word "**mowadah**" (*Strong's* #4150), literally means "an appointment, that is, a fixed time...by implication, an *assembly* (as convened for a definite purpose); technically the *congregation*; by extension, the *place of meeting*..."etc.

To use the English word "seasons" to translate a word that literally means an appointment is, at the very least, a grave error. Besides, we have just seen that the sun (equinoxes and solstices) marks the four seasonal changes which constitute an actual *year*. To interpret the Hebrew word *mowadah* to mean those seasons is duplicitous at best.

In the Book of Psalms we find the answer to the enigma of the apparent deliberate mistranslation. There the same word -- *mowadah* -- is used specifically in relation to the moon:

He appointed the MOON for SEASONS [mowadah]...(Psalms 104:19).

According to *Strong's Concordance*, the English word *appointed* in this passage actually means "made" (#6213). In other words, God *made* the moon for *appointments*! What are His appointments? Notice Leviticus 23:

Speak unto the children of Israel, and say unto them, Concerning the FEASTS of the LORD, which ye shall proclaim to be holy convocations, even these are my FEASTS.

Six days shall work be done: the seventh day is the sabbath of rest, an holy convocation; ye shall do no work therein; it is the sabbath of the LORD in all your dwellings. -- Verses 2 and 3.

The word "feasts" found in verse 2 above is, in fact, the word *mowadah* -- the same as "seasons" in Genesis 1:14 and Psalm 104:19. Following the Sabbath *mowadah* in Leviticus 23 is the list of what we commonly call "feasts," including Passover/Unleavened Bread, Pentecost, Trumpets, Day of Atonement and Tabernacles. ALL ARE "MOWADAH." The mistake in translating *mowadah* strictly as "feasts" becomes very obvious when in verse 3 the sole subject is the seventh-day Sabbath. Most people generally don't consider the Sabbath as being a "feast" *per se*, but it leads the list of "feasts" in Leviticus 23.

With this in mind -- the actual planetary moon being *established* for *mowadah* or God's *appointments* as shown in Psalm 104 -- the passage in Leviticus confirms the fact that this is the sole means by which the seventh day Sabbath was calculated. The Sabbath is a *mowadah* -- the moon was made for *mowadah*. Nothing in the Bible specifies this term for the sun.

Another witness to this understanding is found in the *Book of Ecclesiasticus*:

And then the moon, ever punctual to mark the times, an everlasting sign:

It is the moon that signals the *feasts*, a luminary that wanes after being full. The month derives its name from hers, she waxes wonderfully in her phases, banner of the hosts on high, shining in the vault of heaven (Ecclesiasticus 43:6-8).

This text was originally written in Hebrew in the time-frame of 190-180 B.C. and translated into Greek in approximately 132 B.C. Notice in verse 7 the word *feasts*. Its underlying Greek word (heorte -- #1859) is the same as the one in the Septuagint Version of Leviticus 23:2 -- in which verse 3 includes the seventh-day Sabbath. Although Ecclesiasticus is considered apocryphal, it runs contrary to its contemporaries (Enoch and Jubilees) which insist that the sun is the only means by which to calculate feasts and Sabbaths.

The earliest manuscripts show that the moon was made for appointments -- the first of which is the Sabbath. "At the very lest," states Jonathan Brown, "this shows that the lunar reckoning of sabbaths and holy days was commonly known by the authors of the Bible."

The Polluting of the Calendar

Unfortunately, in the fourth century A.D., the rabbis of Babylonia polluted God's sacred calendar by introducing the continuous week and postponements to prevent certain days from clashing with the Saturday sabbath which they had created. When Hillel II introduced these changes, not all of the religious leaders of the Jews went along with it. In fact, a large number of the leaders continued to observe the new moons by observation -- as was done in Jesus' day.

In the book *Saadia Gaon: His Life and Works*, by Henry Malter, we read --

It is generally accepted that the Jewish festivals were, in Biblical times, fixed by observation of both the sun and the moon. Gradually, certain astronomical rules were also brought into requisition, primarily as a test, corroborating or refuting the testimony of observation. Such rules are mentioned for the first time in the Book of Enoch, in the Book of Jubilees, in the Mishna, and later in the two Talmudim [Babylonian and Jerusalem]. It has been authoratively proved that in spite of a more advanced knowledge of astronomy the practice of fixing the new moon and the festivals by observation was in force as late as the latter part of the fifth century [C.E., A.D.].

Continues Malter:

The right to announce the new moon after receiving and testing the witnesses who had observed its appearance was the prerogative of the Palestinian Patriarchs, and the repeated attempts of the authorities in Babylonia to arrogate this right unto themselves were promptly frustrated by interdicts from Palestine. With the beginning of the fourth century, however, Palestine, owing to the terrible persecutions suffered at the hands of the Romans, gradually ceased to be the spiritual center of Jewry. Babylonia, where better conditions prevailed under the Persian rule, took its place, and the religious right to fix the calendar likewise passed over to the heads of its flourishing academies, though not without protests from Palestine.

Malter clearly shows that the observation of the new moons continued way past the time that Hillel II introduced the written calendar --

In Babylonia also, the practice of observation was continued until the time of the last Amoraim, although a practical system of reckoning had been known to scholars for more than a century. It was only after the close of the Babylonian Talmud, in the sixth or perhaps later, in the seventh century, that the observation of the moon was entirely given up, and a complete and final system of calendation introduced. This was adopted by all the Jews of the Diaspora, and has been accepted as binding down to the present day.

With the obvious polluting of God's sacred calendar by Hillel II and the rabbis of his sect, the present Jewish calendar cannot be trusted in the determination of God's Holy Days and Sabbaths. So where does this leave us? Back to the Bible! Even though the Bible doesn't go into great detail about the calendar, it does give us valuable information we can use to correctly determine the new moons.

If you study the gospel accounts of Jesus' life one thing stands out above all others -- He never once upbraided or corrected the Jews of His day regarding the observance of the Feast Days or the Sabbaths. He kept the Passover and Feast of Tabernacles at the same time as everyone else -- "On the last day, that great day of the feast, Jesus stood and cried out, saying, 'If anyone thirsts, let him come to Me and drink'" (John 7:37).

Notes Ronald L. Dart --

We don't know what they [the Seventy Elders] did about the calendar, but we do know that the rules and observations of the calendar were, in the days of Jesus' ministry, in the hands of the Sanhedrin. We also know that in spite of all the issues where Jesus opposed the Jewish leadership, *He never argued with them about the calendar.*

The Biblical New Moon is the "First Crescent"

If the Jews were keeping the Feast Days at the correct time, then they were also keeping the new moons at the right time! And how were they determining the new moons in Christ's day? Notice!

During the period of the Sanhedrin, a committee of the Sanhedrin met to evaluate reports of sightings of the LUNAR CRESCENT...(Calendars, by L.E. Doggett).

Each lunar month began with the New Moon Sanctification by recognition of the Sanhedrin. Policy dictated that two witnesses in two different locations, IN OR NEAR JERUSALEM, must testify to sighting the NEW MOON CRESCENT. A vote by the Sanhedrin was then required to officially reckon a new month beginning (*Christian Era Calendars*, by Clark K. Nelson).

The Sanhedrin originally determined the new moon by actually observing the FIRST FAINT CRESCENT (or young moon) in the western sky (*Postponements: Another Mystery of the Ages*).

"Hodesh" (New Moon) is derived from the Hebrew root H.D.SH. -- meaning "new" or "to make new/renew." The New Moon Crescent is called Hodesh because it is the first time the moon is seen *anew* after being hidden for several days at the end of the lunar cycle. At the end of the lunar month the moon is close to the sun and eventually reaches the point of "conjunction" when it passes between the sun and the earth. As a result of this, very little of the moon's illuminated surface faces the earth at the time of the conjunction, and it is not visible through the infinitely brighter glare of the sun. After the moon moves past the sun it continues on towards the opposite side of the earth. As it travels farther away from the sun the percentage of its illuminated surface facing the earth increases, and one evening -- shortly after sunset -- the moon is seen *anew* after being invisible for 1.5 to 3.5 days. Since the moon is seen anew after a period of invisibility the ancients called it a "New Moon" or "Hodesh" (from Hadesh meaning "new").

Clearly, then, the determination of the new moon day and the start of the month by the new moon crescent is that approved and actually kept by Christ Himself. NOWHERE DOES THE BIBLE AUTHORIZE US TO DO OTHERWISE! And where should the new moons be observed? In Jerusalem! Jerusalem is where God placed His name, and is where YEHOVAH God and Christ will return to and set up the Government of God -- ruling and disseminating God's Law from the newly built Temple! This is the only place the new moons are to be determined -- not locally in whatever part of the world you live.

Crescent vs. Astronomical New Moon

Unfortunately, many people have been led astray by an inaccurate understanding of the term "New Moon." Modern astronomers adopted this term -- which had *always* referred to the first visible sliver -- and used it to refer to the *conjunction* when the moon passes between the earth and the sun. This is the time when the moon is not visible. The astronomers soon realized that the inaccurate use of the term "New Moon" to refer to the conjunction would lead to confusion. To be more accurate, scientists now distinguish between the "Astronomical New Moon" and the "Crescent New Moon." As used by the astronomers, the "Astronomical New Moon" means the conjunction. In contrast, the "Crescent New Moon" means the first visible sliver. The *Random House Dictionary of the English Language* (Unabridged Edition) defines the New Moon as: "The moon either when in conjunction with the sun or soon after being either invisible [Astronomical New Moon] or visible [Crescent New Moon] only as a slender crescent."

The "Concealed Moon" Theory

Some people have been confused by the use of the term "New Moon" in modern astronomy and have sought Biblical support for this incorrect meaning of the term. They usually cite *Psalms 81:3*, which says:

Blow on a horn for the *Hodesh* (New Moon)
On the *Keseh* (Full Moon) for the Day of our Hag (Feast).

According to the "Concealed Moon Theory," the term "Keseh" is derived from the root K.S.Y. meaning "to cover" and therefore means "covered moon" or "concealed moon." According to this interpretation, when the verse says to blow on a horn on the day of Keseh it actually means "[blow on a horn] on the day of the Concealed Moon." However, the language here DOES NOT support this argument because the second half of the verse also refers to the day of Keseh as "the day of our Feast (Hag)." In the Bible, Feast (Hag) is a technical term which *always* refers to the three annual pilgrimage-feasts (Unleavened Bread, Pentecost, Tabernacles; see Exodus 23 and 34). The New Moon Day (Hodesh) is **never** classified as a "Pilgrimage-Feast" so Keseh/Hag cannot possibly be the same as the New Moon Day (Hodesh). It has even been suggested that Keseh refers to the Biblical holiday of Yom Teruah (Day of Shouting), which always falls out on the New Moon Day. Unfortunately for this theory, the Bible describes Yom Teruah as a *Moed* (appointed time) and *never* as a *Hag* (Pilgrimage-Feast) -- so Keseh/Hag cannot refer to Yom Teruah either!

It is more than likely that Keseh is related to the Aramaic word "Kista" and the Assyrian word "Kuseu" which mean "full moon" -- see *Brown-Driver-Briggs* p. 490b. This fits perfectly with the description of Keseh as the day of the Hag since two of the three Pilgrimage-Feasts (Hag HaMatzot and Hag HaSukkot) are on the 15th of the month, which is the time of the full moon!

The Length of "Concealment"

Another important point to consider -- and one that destroys the theory of the "Concealed Moon" -- is that there is NO ACTUAL "DAY" OF CONCEALMENT! In fact, the moon stays concealed anywhere from 1.5 to 3.5 days in the Middle East! It has been proposed that the "day" of the concealed moon is actually the day of the conjunction (when the moon passes between the earth and the sun). However, it was only 1,000 years AFTER Moses that the Babylonian astronomers discovered how to calculate the moment of the conjunction. Therefore, the ancient Israelites would have had no way of knowing when the moment of conjunction takes place and would not have known on which day (out of a possible 3.5) to observe the "Concealed Moon Day"!

It has been suggested by those who are determined to cling to this theory that the ancient Israelites could have looked at the "Old Moon" and determined the Day of Conjunction by when the Old Moon was no longer visible in the morning sky. Needless to say, such a method would not work in the Middle East where the so-called "concealed moon" can remain concealed for as many as 3.5 days! It is in fact common for the moon to stay concealed for 2.5 days and in such instances *HOW* would the ancient Israelites have known which day was the Day of Conjunction?

In contrast, the ancient Israelites would have been well aware of the Crescent New Moon. In ancient societies people worked from dawn until dusk and they would have noticed the Old Moon getting smaller and smaller in the morning sky. When the morning moon had disappeared altogether the ancient Israelites would have anxiously awaited its reappearance 1.5 to 3.5 days later in the evening sky. Having disappeared for several days and then appearing anew in the early evening sky they would have called it the "New Moon" or "Hodesh" (from Hadash meaning "New"). This is how the "New Moon" was determined during the time of Christ and following centuries.

Computer Programs

Today, in this computer age, we have programs that will determine the new moon crescent for us ahead of time, so that actual observation is not necessary. However, there is nothing wrong with using physical sightings in Jerusalem as a corroboration for the programs we use.

The annual Holy Days were intended for all mankind, even as the weekly Sabbath was ordained for all mankind! (Compare Gen. 2:1-3; Mark 2:27-28). Note that the "Sabbath" -- which includes the annual Sabbaths (Lev. 23:32, 38-39) -- was "made for MAN" (Mark 2:27) -- not just for the Jews! In the coming Kingdom of God, ALL NATIONS will observe God's annual and weekly Sabbaths according to the lunar-solar calendar (Isaiah 66:23), and go up to Jerusalem for the Feast of Tabernacles (Zech. 14:16-19).

Following is the calendar for the year of 2001 -- with the Sabbath days and Feast days placed in their proper relationship:

January, 2001

Sunday	Monday	Tuesday	Wednesday	Thursday	Friday	Saturday
	1	2	3 Sabbath	4	5	6
7	8	9	10 Sabbath	11	12	13
14	15	16	17 Sabbath	18	19	20
21	22	23	24 Sabbath	25 New Moon	26	27
28	29	30	31			

February, 2001

Sunday	Monday	Tuesday	Wednesday	Thursday	Friday	Saturday
				1 Sabbath	2	3
4	5	6	7	8 Sabbath	9	10
11	12	13	14	15 Sabbath	16	17
18	19	20	21	22 Sabbath	23 New Moon	24 New Moon
25	26	27	28			

March, 2001

Sunday	Monday	Tuesday	Wednesday	Thursday	Friday	Saturday
				1	2	Sabbath 3
4	5	6	7	8	9	Sabbath 10
11	12	13	14	15	16	Sabbath 17
18	19	20	21	22	23	Sabbath 24
New Moon 25	New Moon 26	27	28	29	30	31

April, 2001

Sunday	Monday	Tuesday	Wednesday	Thursday	Friday	Saturday
1	Sabbath 2	3	4	5	6	7
8 Passover (at evening)	Sabbath + 1st Day ULB 9	10	11	12	13	14
15 Last Day of ULB	Sabbath 16	17	18	19	20	21
22	Sabbath 23	New Moon 24	25	26	27	28
29	30					

May, 2001

Sunday	Monday	Tuesday	Wednesday	Thursday	Friday	Saturday
		Sabbath 1	2	3	4	5
6	7	Sabbath 8	9	10	11	12
13	14	Sabbath 15	16	17	18	19
20	21	Sabbath 22	New Moon 23	New Moon 24	25	26
27	28	29	30	Sabbath 31		

June, 2001

Sunday	Monday	Tuesday	Wednesday	Thursday	Friday	Saturday
					1 Pentecost	2
3	4	5	6	7 Sabbath	8	9
10	11	12	13	14 Sabbath	15	16
17	18	19	20	21 Sabbath	22 New Moon	23
24	25	26	27	28	29 Sabbath	30

July, 2001

Sunday	Monday	Tuesday	Wednesday	Thursday	Friday	Saturday
1	2	3	4	5	6 Sabbath	7
8	9	10	11	12	13 Sabbath	14
15	16	17	18	19	20 Sabbath	21 New Moon
22	23	24	25	26	27	28 Sabbath
29	30	31				

August, 2001

Sunday	Monday	Tuesday	Wednesday	Thursday	Friday	Saturday
			1	2	3	4 Sabbath
5	6	7	8	9	10	11 Sabbath
12	13	14	15	16	17	18 Sabbath
19 New Moon	20 New Moon	21	22	23	24	25
26	27 Sabbath	28	29	30	31	

September, 2001

Sunday	Monday	Tuesday	Wednesday	Thursday	Friday	Saturday
						1
2	Sabbath	4	5	6	7	8
9	Sabbath	11	12	13	14	15
16	Sabbath	N. Moon + F. of Tr.	19	20	21	22
23	24	Sabbath	26	Day of Atonement	28	29
30						

October, 2001

Sunday	Monday	Tuesday	Wednesday	Thursday	Friday	Saturday
	1	Sabbath + F. of Tab.	3	4	5	6
7	8	Sabbath + LGD	10	11	12	13
14	15	Sabbath	New Moon	New Moon	19	20
21	22	23	24	Sabbath	26	27
28	29	30	31			

November, 2001

Sunday	Monday	Tuesday	Wednesday	Thursday	Friday	Saturday
				Sabbath	2	3
4	5	6	7	Sabbath	9	10
11	12	13	14	Sabbath	New Moon	17
18	19	20	21	22	Sabbath	24
25	26	27	28	29	Sabbath	30

December, 2001

Sunday	Monday	Tuesday	Wednesday	Thursday	Friday	Saturday
						1
2	3	4	5	6	Sabbath 7	8
9	10	11	12	13	Sabbath 14	New Moon 15
New Moon 16	17	18	19	20	21	22
Sabbath 23	24	25	26	27	28	29
Sabbath 30	31					



