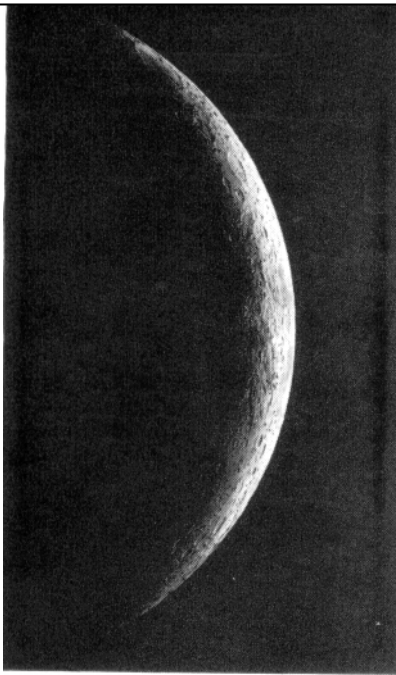


*A New Look at*  
*God's True*  
**CALENDAR**



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## A Warning from God

“Bring no more offerings of vanity (emptiness, falsity, vainglory, and futility); [your hollow offering of] incense is an abomination to Me; the New Moons and Sabbaths, the calling of assemblies, I cannot endure –[it is] iniquity and profanation, even the solemn meeting. *Your* New Moon festivals and *your* [hypocritical] appointed feasts My soul hates. They are an oppressive burden to Me I am weary of bearing them” (Isaiah 1:13-14, Amplified Parallel Bible).

“I will cause to cease all her mirth, her feast-making, her New Moons, her Sabbaths, and all her solemn feasts and appointed festival assemblies” (Hosea 2:11).

“Behold, I will rebuke your seed [grain – which will prevent due harvest], and I will spread the dung from the festival offerings upon your faces, and you shall be taken away with it” (Malachi 2:3).

“And I will turn *your* feasts into mourning and all *your* songs into lamentation, and I will cause sackcloth to be put upon all loins and baldness [for mourning] shall come on every head; and I will make that time as the mourning for an only son, and the end of it as a bitter day” (Amos 8:10).

“My people are *destroyed* for lack of knowledge; because you [the priestly nation] have rejected knowledge, I will also reject you that you shall be no priest to Me; seeing you have forgotten the law of your God, I will also reject your children” (Hosea 4:6).

“In vain (fruitlessly and without profit) do they worship Me, ordering and teaching [to be obeyed] as doctrines the commandments and precepts of men. You disregard and give up and ask to depart from you the commandment of God and *cling to the tradition of men* [keeping it carefully and faithfully]. And He said to them, You have a fine way of rejecting [thus thwarting and nullifying and doing away with] the commandment of God in order to keep your tradition (your own human regulations)!” (Mark 7:7-9).

## Foreword

Did God give mankind a calendar? Seems like an innocent enough question. There is no record of a “calendar” given to mankind in the first book of the Bible. However, we know there was a calendar, because Noah very plainly gave us the length of the Flood, its beginning point, and its termination date. Moses wrote, “In the six hundredth year of Noah’s life, in the second month, the seventeenth day of the month, on that day all the fountains of the deep were broken up” (Gen.7:11). The waters prevailed for 150 days (verse 24). At the end of 150 days the waters decreased, “Then the ark rested in the seventh month, the seventeenth day of the month, on the mountains of Ararat” (Gen.8:3-4).

However, the first mention of God’s calendar in the Scriptures is found in Exodus 12, where God Himself, speaking of the first month in the spring, called “Abib,” said, “This month shall be your beginning of months” (Exo.12:2).

Why, then, does the present “Orthodox” Jewish calendar begin in the fall?

Another question arises. In 358 A.D., Rabbi Hillel II changed the Jewish calendar from one based primarily on observation, double-checked by astronomical calculations, to one based solely on astronomical calculations and averages, to determine the beginning of months. No longer was the New Moon sighted in Israel, as had been true throughout history up to that time, including the time of Christ. Now the calendar was solely based on mathematical formulas, which only approximated the sighting of New Moons in Israel. The truth is, sometimes this led to the month beginning a day or two AFTER the appearance of the New Moon – and sometimes this led to a month beginning a day or two BEFORE the sighting of the New Moon!

How quixotic! How strange! Here we are, supposed to obey God, and keep HIS commandments, which would include HIS calendar, and yet we find many people follow the contemporary Jewish Orthodox calendar – right or wrong!

Not only this, but Hillel II in 358 A.D. added several “laws of postponements” to keep certain annual Holy Days from falling on the day before or after the weekly Sabbath. Why? For the sake of Jewish “tradition.” He did not feel it was proper for Yom Kippur – the Day of Atonement – to fall on the day before or after the Sabbath. So he changed the calendar! When the calendar calculations showed that this would occur, he instituted a rule that delayed the first day of Tishri one day, or sometimes two days, in order to prevent that from happening! And other similar “laws” he added.

But was this a godly thing to do? Were these “postponements” truly “kosher”? Jewish and Mishnaic evidence proves this was not the custom during the time of Christ or before. So the question arises – should we follow the mainstream Jews even when they changed God’s original calendar for the sake of their “traditions”?

So what should we do? Some think the whole subject is too difficult and we should throw in the towel and simply follow the Jews, right or wrong. Others have gone about devising their own “calendars,” based on varying principles and ideas, and suggest that we should “follow them.”

However, what most every one has overlooked is that there is more than one “Jewish calendar.” There is a Jewish calendar, extant today, which IS based on the sighting of the New Moons, and which IS based on the Biblical calendar rules, and which has been utilized by the Karaite Jews for centuries, ever since the original calendar disputes they had with the Rabbinic Jews in the early ages of the Diaspora!

Leon Walker, of the United Church of God, speaks of the Jewish “rules of postponement” and calls them “an *essential element* of the Jewish calendar” (“Did God Give a Calendar?”, *United News*, November 2000). Why in the world would he ever call those rules “essential”? It makes no sense. Has he, along with United, simply “caved in” to the Jewish calendar, not wanting to seriously check into this question? Do they feel it is just more simple and feasible to “go along” with the crowd?

Whatever happened to the saying, “PROVE all things”? (I Thess.5:21). Is this admonition of the apostle Paul now become antiquated, out of date, no longer necessary? Or is it more needful than ever, in our age of distrust, suspicion, deception, and fraud?

Whatever happened to the importance of the exhortation that we must “contend earnestly for the faith which was once for all delivered to the saints”? (Jude 3).

Leon Walker ridicules the idea that we must somehow “reconstruct” a calendar from available Scriptural principles. He says there is not enough information in the Bible. But is this really the issue or the case? Who says we must “create” our own calendar, anyway? Can we not go by the Bible evidence, combined with historical and Jewish evidence, and then come to the PLAIN TRUTH?

Of course we can! The Bible gives us plenty of evidence, and when we combine that with common sense, and the historical evidence from Judaism, and the knowledge preserved by the Karaite Jews, we have plenty of proof and factual data to enable us to know the dates of God’s true, original, and divinely-inspired Calendar, and therefore the correct dates for God’s Holy Days! *This is very important in God’s sight! If we observe the wrong days, we are living in disobedience, and lose the promise of His protection!*

It’s high time we open our eyes. It’s high time we put God’s TRUTH above human preference. It’s high time we choose to go through the narrow gate, that leads to salvation, rather than follow the comfortable road and easy path that the crowds follow, that leads to eternal death and destruction. As the Messiah told us, “You shall know the TRUTH, and the truth shall make you FREE” (John 8:32).

-- William F. Dankenbring

## *Chapter One*

# **The Incredible Origin of Today's Jewish Calendar!**

A number of years ago I received the following letter, which brings up some salient points which need to be considered concerning the Sacred Calendar as we have received it, and certain changes made concerning it in the fourth century. The writer says:

“I enjoyed reading the information about the origin of the Septuagint. The idea of an alternate text to the Massoretic text was new to me. This other Hebrew model, used by the translators sent from Jerusalem, must surely have been the official version in use. If the Nazarene Christians used this set of Scriptures and the defenders of traditional Judaism despised them, they certainly could have used this as an opportunity to distance themselves from these ‘blasphemers.’ What better way than to give preference to a different group of texts and discredit those used by the Nazarenes.

“When considering this grudge held by the adherents to Pharisaic and Rabbinic tradition, I find myself in some confusion. In the Sept./Oct. 1994 Prophecy Flash, I read about the dispute between the Nazarenes and Rabbis concerning the Oral Law. The Nazarenes never rejected it, shown, in one respect, by their acknowledgement of the sacred calendar. However, they did reject what they referred to as ‘the traditions of the elders.’ It was apparent to them that these were different from the ‘customs of the fathers’ (Acts 28:17). They understood that these traditions would make the word of God of none effect (Matt.15:6, Mark 7:13), and were not actually binding on them. After the destruction of Jerusalem, they were no longer tolerated but expelled and cursed; and it seems that Judaism continued on its course of giving greater importance to biased interpretations than to Scripture.

“If the Nazarenes did have a proper understanding of the Oral Law, I can’t imagine how they could agree to the use of a sacred calendar that had been altered through Rabbinic tradition. Surely, they must have seen the drift away from the way established by God and conveyed in the Oral Law for which they had already suffered isolation. The idea of doing things simply for the sake of ‘unity’ didn’t govern their decision making and they didn’t interpret Matt.23:2 to mean they owed complete obedience to those who ‘sit in Moses’ seat.’ I do wonder, since the leaders of Judaism did create a religious tyranny, if the new sacred calendar may have helped to identify ‘heretics.’ After all, the ‘church’ in the Middle Ages did have its way of recognizing dissidents.

“There can be no doubt that God did preserve the Law, oral and written, through the Jews and that we should never take for ourselves authority God doesn’t intend for us. Like the Nazarenes, we must also ‘reject and refuse the new rabbinical expansive

interpretations and emendations of the Law.’ If changes are made by men who despise the Messiah, sent for their redemption, and his followers, how much weight should their opinions hold in our eyes?

“As you can see, this is a tough issue to get a handle on. Everyone wants to have a proper understanding of what God expects from His people. At the same time, there are many people worthy of respect for their knowledge of God’s ways, such as yourself, who disagree on the calendar to be used. I have considered what you have written about the way the Nazarenes approached this type of problem and their way seems to make sense. It would be most helpful if you would comment at length, in your magazine, on how faithful and discerning people, like the Nazarenes, would approach and solve problems like this one.”

-- Pennsylvania

I agree that the approach of the Nazarenes is the best one since it is that of the early New Testament Church and reflects the words of Christ as to the Christian relationship to the Laws of God, the traditions of the elders (which Christ often condemned), and the customs of the fathers, which Paul said he did nothing contrary to. The question is: Would the Nazarenes have rejected the Rabbinic changes in the calendar, especially those adopted by Hillel II in the fourth century? If the changes were in line with Oral Law and precedent, then I do not believe they would have rejected them at all. If the changes were of a practical nature, and enabled widely scattered branches of Jews (and, for that matter, true Christians) to adhere to the same calendar, in unity, even though out of touch with each other, then I believe they would have endorsed such changes.

### *A Careful Look at the History of God’s Calendar*

In effect, what happened is that after 135 A.D., after the Bar Kochba rebellion was squashed by the Romans and Emperor Hadrian, the Romans were so furious at the Jews, who had just revolted in 70 A.D., sixty five years previously, that they decided to banish the Jews from Jerusalem.

Now, according to the Oral Law of the Jews, the calendar was to be determined by new moon sightings by properly appointed officials of the Sanhedrin at the Mount of Olives, at Jerusalem. But after the Jews were banished from Jerusalem, this “Oral Law” became impractical, even impossible, to perform. The true Sanhedrin was abolished by the Romans. Over the following two centuries, persecution and intolerance toward the Jews, by the Roman Empire, increased, threatening the very existence of Judaism as a separate faith. Under these very adverse conditions, the Rabbinical court in exile, of that time, had to make a decision -- as to how to preserve the calendar -- and how to preserve their very existence as Jews, together with the Torah, the Scriptures, and Jewish commentary dealing with God’s Word.

The essence of Judaism revolves around the celebration of the weekly Sabbath and the annual Festivals. Therefore, the preservation of the calendar was of vital significance! Should widely scattered congregations all do their own observations, locally, of the new moons, thus leading to differences, and loss of cohesion on the calendar dates, dates of the holy days, etc.? This was no doubt viewed as a very unhealthy and reprehensible view -- the way to chaos and confusion -- a guaranteed recipe for disaster!

As the apostle Paul himself wrote, “For God is not the author of confusion but of peace,

as in all the churches of the saints” (I Cor.14:33, NKJV). Who is the “author of confusion”? Satan the devil is the “prince of darkness” and therefore is also the true author of confusion (Eph.6:12; James 3:16).

How did the leaders of the Jewish people settle this question, as they saw Jewish communities in exile being widely scattered and many of them out of touch with each other? They had no telephones, no radios, no means of instant communication. They had no true “headquarters,” as Jerusalem had been. So how would they be able to preserve the calendar, and the holy days, which were the essence of Judaism? How were they to preserve their own identity?

In the fourth century, after the extremely harsh edicts of Constantine virtually outlawed Judaism and condemned the Jews, the very existence of the Jews was severely threatened. With the awesome stress of their very existence in question, the rabbinical sage Hillel II saw the need to preserve the unity of the Jewish calendar -- to preserve its very existence, also. How could this be done, so that all Jews would retain the same calendar, all over the world, and observe the same holy days, no matter when they were located?

The answer? Hillel II created the “perpetual calendar,” which was similar to the Jewish calendar which had always been used. But instead of using “observation” of the new moon at Jerusalem, to determine the New Moons, since the Jews could not live there any longer, and since there was no proper Sanhedrin, he invoked the historical precedent of determining the dates of the calendar mathematically, based on astronomical laws which until then had only been used as a back-up system to verify the sighting reports.

This approach, based on astronomy, was always the “back up” or “fail safe” system used by the Jews of antiquity, when they could not literally “sight” the new moon at Jerusalem due to inclement weather, and to double-check those who claimed to be witnesses of the New Moon.

Jewish tradition tells us that these mathematical principles of the calendar actually go back to Moses and was revealed by God to him, as well as the method of sightings of the new moons, and the techniques of intercalation of the leap year to keep the lunar calendar in line with the solar year.

### *The Oral Law*

Provision for the existence of an “Oral Law” was made in the Torah or Written Law of God itself. God told Moses: “If anyone is found slain, lying in the field in the land . . . and it is not known who killed him . . . Then the priests, the sons of Levi, shall come near, for the LORD your God has chosen them to minister to Him and to bless in the name of the LORD; *by their word every controversy and every assault shall be settled*” (Deut.21:1-5). These judgments and decisions became “legal precedents,” and were memorized and passed down from generation to generation as part of the “legal code.”

God also told Moses: “If a matter arises which is too hard for you to judge, between degrees of guilt for bloodshed, between one judgment or another, or between one punishment or

another, matters of controversy within your gates, then you shall arise and go up to the place which the LORD your God chooses. And you shall come to the priests, the Levites, and to the judge there in those days, and inquire of them: they shall pronounce upon you the sentence of judgment. You shall do according to the sentence which they pronounce upon you in that place which the LORD chooses. And you shall be careful to do according to all that they order you. According to the sentence of the law in which they instruct you, according to the judgment which they tell you, you shall do; you shall not turn aside to the right hand or to the left from the sentence which they pronounce upon you” (Deut.17:8-11).

Thus judicial “case law” became legal precedent and part of the “Oral Law.” In this way, the Law of God as given at Sinai was kept relevant and up-to-date for each succeeding generation.

### *Ezra the Scribe*

These matters were the business primarily of the priesthood of Aaron, and later that of the prophets, and the scribes (such as Ezra), who maintained the law, and interpreted it. As we read in Nehemiah, “So Ezra the priest brought the Law before the assembly of men and women and all who could hear with understanding on the first day of the seventh month. Then he read from it in the open square that was in front of the Water Gate from morning until midday, before the men and women and those who could understand; and the ears of all the people were attentive to the Book of the Law. . . . Also Jeshua, Bani, Sherebiah, Jamin, Akkub, Shabbethai, Hodijah, Maaseiah, Kelita, Azariah, Jozabad, Hanan, Pelaiah, and the Levites, helped the people to understand the Law; and the people stood in their place. So they read distinctly from the book, in the Law of God; and they gave the sense, and helped them to understand the reading” (Neh.8:2-3, 7-8).

Ezra is the one who founded the “Great Assembly” or “Sanhedrin,” after the Babylonian captivity. Their judicial decisions became part of binding Oral Law, as the book of the Law itself foretold.

The Church of God would not have rejected the authorities of the scribes and Rabbinic Judaism regarding these matters of the calendar, so long as their rulings were in line with Scripture, the written Torah, which must always take precedence.

However, if the Jews perverted, twisted, distorted, and corrupted the calendar, that would have been an altogether different matter.

What is the TRUTH about the present Jewish calendar? Is it according to the Scriptures? Or did the Jews go into apostasy, and make fundamental CHANGES to the calendar God gave to Israel, which contradict God's Word and His laws?

The apostle Paul wrote, “What advantage then has the Jew, or what is the profit of circumcision? Much in every way! Chiefly because to THEM were committed the ORACLES of God. For what if some did not believe? Will their unbelief make the faithfulness of God without effect? Certainly not!” (Rom.3:1-3).

The Jews have done an outstanding job of preserving the knowledge of God's calendar, and Laws of God, *even while in exile and dispersion around the world, without a country of their own!* What other people have accomplished this? None! God knew what He was doing when He gave this task to the Jews. As Paul also wrote: “For I could wish that I myself were accursed from Christ for my brethren, my countrymen according to the flesh, who are Israelites, to whom pertain the adoption, the glory, the covenants, THE GIVING OF THE LAW, THE SERVICE OF GOD, and the promises” (Rom.9:3-4).

However, simply because they preserved this knowledge, did they use it correctly? Is the present Jewish calendar correct, in God's eyes? Or is it fundamentally flawed?

Speaking of the Jews, Paul also wrote: “For I bear them witness that they have a ZEAL for God, but not according to knowledge [of the Messiah]. For they being ignorant of God's righteousness [redemption through Christ], and seeking to establish their own righteousness, have not submitted to the righteousness of God” (Rom.10:2-3).

### ***What Really Happened***

The Jews have indeed preserved the knowledge about the sacred calendar. Were it not for them, we would all be hopelessly lost and in confusion, without a “compass” to guide us! “The Jew's catechism is his calendar,” wrote Samson Raphael Hirsch a hundred years ago, when he called upon Jews of his time to count and live their days according to the hallowed order of the sacred Jewish calendar.

Famed educator, scholar and calendar expert, Arthur Spier tells us,

“In the early times of our history . . . [the] beginnings of the months were determined by direct observation of the new moon. Then those beginnings of the months (Rosh Hodesh) were sanctified and announced by the Sanhedrin, the Supreme Court in Jerusalem, after witnesses had testified that they had seen the new crescent and after their testimony had been thoroughly examined, *confirmed by calculation*, and duly accepted” (*The Comprehensive Hebrew Calendar*, p.1).

He goes on:

“A special committee of the Sanhedrin, with its president as chairman, had the mandate to REGULATE AND BALANCE the solar with the lunar years [the lunar year equals 12 lunar months, about 354 days long; the solar year is 365.25 days long; thus it is approximately 11 days longer than 12 lunar months]. This so-called Calendar Council (*Sod Haibbur*) CALCULATED the beginnings of the SEASONS (*Teklufoth*) on the BASIS OF ASTRONOMICAL FIGURES which had been HANDED DOWN AS A TRADITION OF OLD. Whenever, after two or three years, the annual excess of 11 days had accumulated to approximately 30 days, a thirteenth month Adar II was inserted before Nisan in order to assure that Nisan and Passover would occur in Spring and not retrogress toward winter. However, the astronomical calculation was not the only basis for intercalation of a thirteenth month. The delay of the actual arrival of spring was another decisive factor. The Talmudic sources report that the Council intercalated a year when the barley in the fields had not yet ripened, when the fruit on the trees had not grown properly, when the winter rains had not

stopped, when the roads for Passover pilgrims had not dried up, and when the young pigeons had not become fledged. The Council on intercalation considered THE ASTRONOMICAL FACTS TOGETHER WITH THE RELIGIOUS REQUIREMENTS OF PASSOVER and the natural conditions of the country.

“This method of observation and intercalation was in use throughout the period of the second temple (516 B.C.E. -- 70 C.E.), and about three centuries after its destruction, *as long as there was an independent Sanhedrin*. In the fourth century, however, when OPPRESSION AND PERSECUTION THREATENED THE CONTINUED EXISTENCE OF THE SANHEDRIN, *the patriarch Hillel II took an extraordinary step to PRESERVE the UNITY OF ISRAEL. In order to prevent the Jews SCATTERED ALL OVER THE SURFACE OF THE EARTH from celebrating their New Moons, FESTIVALS and holidays at DIFFERENT TIMES, HE MADE PUBLIC THE SYSTEM OF CALENDAR CALCULATION WHICH UP TO THEN HAD BEEN A CLOSELY GUARDED SECRET.* It had been used in the past only to check the observations and testimonies of witnesses, and to determine the beginnings of the spring season.

“In accordance with this system, Hillel II formally sanctified all months in advance, and intercalated all future leap years UNTIL SUCH TIME AS A NEW, RECOGNIZED SANHEDRIN would be established in Israel. This is the PERMANENT CALENDAR according to which the New Moons and Festivals are calculated and celebrated today by the Jews ALL OVER THE WORLD” (p.1-2).

Just because the Jews rejected the Messiah, which they were prophesied to do, as a whole, nevertheless, that fact does not mean they totally rejected the Laws and Torah of God, or that they totally rejected the principles of the calendar. But they did make “compromises.” They did make some drastic changes and additions. Were these changes of God? or of MEN?

Perhaps the Jews got the "cart before the horse." Hillel II did away with the observation of the New Moons, because of the scattered conditions of the Jews, to preserve "unity." But "unity" at the expense of obedience to God's laws is still disobedience!

Rather than change God's calendar, maybe the Jews should have *repented of their sins, including rejecting the Messiah*, so that they would have been restored to their land!

At any rate, they did not -- and continued in exile for nearly 2,000 years! The question is, then, how accurate is the calendar they have given us? They applied ancient astronomical knowledge to the calendar calculations. But did they do anything else?

## Chapter Two

# What's All This Furor over “POSTPONEMENTS”?

Are the "postponements" added to the sacred calendar in the fourth century of the present era justified? Did Hillel II and his compatriots in 358 A.D. wisely add new regulations to the calendar, causing Yom Kippur to never fall on a Friday or Sunday, or Hoshana Rabbah never to fall on a weekly Sabbath? What about these so-called "postponements"? WHY were they added? Were they observed in the days of the Second Temple? Were they observed during the time of Jesus Christ?

The apostle Paul declared, “What advantage then hath the Jew? or what profit is there of circumcision? Much every way: chiefly because that unto *them* were committed the ORACLES OF GOD. For what if some did not believe? Will their unbelief make the faithfulness of God without effect? Certainly not! Indeed, let God be true but EVERY MAN a liar. As it is written, ‘That You may be justified in Your words, and may overcome when You are judged’” (Rom.3:1-3-4, NKJV).

Jesus Christ also affirmed, "The scribes and Pharisees sit in Moses' seat: All therefore whatsoever they bid you observe, that observe and do; *but do not ye after their works: for they say, and do not*" (Matt.23:2-3).

How do these statements relate to the Jewish calendar? Everybody admits that the Jewish calendar today is far different from the calendar of Biblical times. It is based on mathematical formulas, whereas in Christ's time the calendar was based on observations of the new moon every month. The calendar was changed in 358 A.D. by Hillel II and his compatriots, because of the fear that the Jewish religion would become extinct, due to persecution of the Romans, and due to the widespread scattering of Jewish communities throughout the world, which would have no central authority. Jews had been banished from Jerusalem, except to visit one day a year.

Therefore, the Jewish authorities decided to make public the calendar calculations which had been kept secret for generations, so that the calendar principles would not be lost. However, they did much more than that. They also devised and added NEW calendar rules never heard of

in the time of the second Temple, or Christ's day -- they added several new laws called "postponements." These laws made it necessary to actually *delay the Feast of Trumpets, called Rosh Hashanah, to keep Yom Kippur from falling on a Friday or a Sunday, and to keep Hoshana Rabbah -- the seventh day of the Feast of Tabernacles -- from falling on the weekly Sabbath.*

Was this change in the holy calendar justified? Was it "kosher"?

Some would say, "Yes, because the Jews sat in Moses' seat." However, does the fact that the Pharisees sat in Moses' seat give them authority to CHANGE THE CALENDAR? Daniel warns us about those who would "seek to *change times and laws*" (Dan.7:25).

Concerning Jesus' remarks in Matthew 23, where He said the Pharisees sat in Moses' seat, the Critical-Experimental Commentary has this to say:

"... **the scribes and Pharisees sit.** The Jewish teachers *stood* to read, but *sat* to expound the Scriptures . . . **in Moses' seat** -- that is, as INTERPRETERS OF THE LAW given by Moses. **All therefore** -- that is, all which, as *sitting in that seat and teaching out of that law, they bid you observe, that observe and do.* The word 'therefore' is thus, it will be seen, of great importance, AS LIMITING THOSE INJUNCTIONS HE WOULD HAVE THEM OBEY AS TO WHAT THEY FETCHED FROM THE LAW ITSELF. In requiring implicit obedience to such injunctions, He would have them to recognize the authority with which they taught over and above the obligation of the law itself -- an important principle truly; but HE WHO DENOUNCED THE TRADITIONS OF SUCH TEACHERS (ch.15:3) CANNOT HAVE MEANT HERE TO THROW HIS SHIELD OVER THESE. It is remarked by Webster and Wilkinson that the warning to *beware* of the scribes is given by Mark and Luke WITHOUT ANY QUALIFICATION; the charge to respect and obey them being reported by Matthew alone. . . ."

In other words, we should obey the injunctions of the scribes and Pharisees *so long as they are in accord and agreement with Scripture itself!* But when they begin to contradict the laws of Moses, or misinterpret them, then we must "obey GOD rather than men" (Acts 5:29).

Adam Clarke's Commentary says along the same lines:

"Verse 2. *The scribes and Pharisees sit in Moses' seat.* -- They *sat* there formerly by Divine *appointment*; they *sit* there now by Divine *permission*. What our Lord says here refers to their expounding the Scriptures, for it was the custom of the Jewish doctors to *sit* while they *expounded the law and prophets* (chap.5:1; Luke 4: 20-22) and to *stand up* when they *read* them.

"By the *seat of Moses*, we are to understand authority to teach the law. Moses was the great teacher of the Jewish people; and the scribes, etc., are here represented as his successors.

"Verse 3. *All therefore whatsoever.* That is, all those things which they read out of the law and the prophets, and *all things which they teach CONSISTENTLY WITH THEM.* *This must be our Lord's meaning: He could not have desired them to do everything, without restriction, which the Jewish doctors taught; because himself WARNS his disciples AGAINST THEIR FALSE TEACHING, AND TESTIFIES THAT THEY HAD MADE THE WORD OF GOD OF NONE EFFECT BY THEIR TRADITIONS.* See chapter 15:6, etc. Besides, as our Lord speaks here in the past tense -- *whatsoever they HAVE commanded* -- he may refer to the

teaching of a former period, when they taught the word of God in truth, or were much less corrupted than they were now."

Remember, we cannot use one Scripture to contradict another one! "The Scripture cannot be broken" (John 10:35). Jesus nowhere, and at no time, gave us a command to follow the Pharisees and scribes in ALL that they taught! His command to do whatsoever they taught refers ONLY to those things they taught correctly, out of and regarding the LAW of Moses! When they taught error, we are to disregard them and obey God's Word instead!

This overall fact being acknowledged, however, another question remains. What about the "postponements" which were added to the overall Jewish calendar in 358 A.D. by Hillel II and his rabbinical associates? Remember, these additions were made to the calendar laws THREE CENTURIES AFTER the time of Christ and the apostles! Are these laws binding upon us today? Should God's Church be bound to follow the modern "Jewish calendar" and all its additions and "postponements"?

This is another question altogether, and needs investigating!

What about this matter of calendar "postponements"?

### ***But What about "Postponements"?***

How, then, should we view questions about the "postponements"? First, let's carefully notice just what these "postponements" are.

Notice! Arthur Spier in *The Comprehensive Hebrew Calendar* tells us:

"12. These are the four Dehioth (postponements):

"a. When the Molad Tishri occurs on a Sunday, Wednesday, or Friday, Rosh Hashanah is postponed to the following day.

"b. When the Molad Tishri occurs at noon (18h) or later, Rosh Hashanah is postponed to the next day. (Or if this day is a Sunday, Wednesday or Friday, to Monday, Thursday or Sabbath because of Dehiah a.)

"c. When the Molad Tishri of a common year falls on Tuesday, 204 parts after 3 A.M., i.e., 3d 9h 204p or later, Rosh Hashanah is postponed to Wednesday, and, because of Dehiah a., further postponed to Thursday.

"d. When, in a common year succeeding a leap year, the Molad Tishri occurs on Monday morning 589 parts after 9 A.M., i.e., 2d 15h 589p or later, Rosh Hashanah is postponed to the next day."

Spier goes on:

"Dehiah a mainly fulfills the following three religious requirements: Yom Kippur (Tishri 10) shall not occur on the day before or after the Sabbath and Hoshana Rabbah (Tishri 21) shall not occur on the Sabbath.

*"By tradition the Hebrew calendar year must be of a certain number of days, neither*

*more nor less, which accomplishes the balancing of the solar year with the lunar, according to the rule of intercalation. To make Dehioth a and b possible, so as to postpone Rosh Hashanah by 2 days occasionally, Dehioth c and d were established, so that in such a case a year will not be too short or too long" (Spier, p.15, emphasis mine except in the final paragraph).*

Arthur Spier points out the *fact* of postponements, when they occur, but not much about the *why*. The "why" of postponements is explained more in another volume, *Understanding the Jewish Calendar*, by Rabbi Nathan Bushwick. He writes:

"The second *dechiah* prevents Yom Kippur from falling the day before or the day after Shabbos. **This is avoided so that there will not be two days in a row on which it is forbidden to prepare food or do the other sorts of work** that are permitted on Yom Tov. Since Yom Kippur is one week and two days after Rosh Hashanah, Rosh Hashanah cannot fall on Wednesday or Friday in order that Yom Kippur not fall on Friday or Sunday. The second *dechiah* also prevents Hoshanah Rabbah from falling on Shabbos, **in which case we would not be able to perform the custom of Arava and the seven hakofos**. In order to prevent this, Rosh Hashanah is not permitted to fall on Sunday.

"There are therefore three days, Sunday, Wednesday and Friday, on which Rosh Hashanah can never fall. If the *molad* falls on one of these days, then Rosh Hashanah is *nidcheh* -- pushed off -- until the next day. In case the *molad* falls after noon on Shabbos, Tuesday or Thursday, Rosh Hashanah is pushed off one day because it is a *molad zoken*, and since that would put it on one of the three days on which it cannot fall, it is pushed off yet another day. In such a case we find that Rosh Hashanah has been postponed two days from the *molad* (*Understanding the Jewish Calendar*, p.80-81, bold emphasis mine).

Now let's notice these "postponements" more closely.

In the days of Hillel II, the Jewish leadership had already rejected Christ as the Messiah. They had rejected His reinterpretation of the Sabbath laws. He was much more permissive and lenient, and Himself "broke" their stringent Sabbath regulations (see Mark 2:23-28; Matthew 12:1-8; Luke 6:1-11; John 5:1-10, 16). Jesus said many of their "Sabbath laws" were a yoke of bondage, contrary to God's original intent.

However, in the centuries that followed, the Jewish leaders became even more hostile toward the Christian elements in their society. Messianic Jews were banished from the synagogues following the rebellion in 70 A.D. By 135 A.D., a "CURSE" had been written into the daily synagogue prayer, the Amidah. This "curse" was against all "heretics" and "Nazarenes" -- meaning those who followed Jesus Christ, the "Nazarene."

By the time of Hillel II, Judaism had become more and more legalistic. To the legalistic Jewish leaders, if you celebrated Yom Kippur on a Friday, a day of mourning and repentance of sin, you could not leap right into a festive day of joy and rejoicing that very Friday evening. Therefore, they *moved the Day of Atonement*, so it could not fall on a Friday!

Stroke of a pen -- change in a divine law! How this must have made them feel powerful, and authoritative! "Kinda cool," as some might say, today!

The rabbis reasoned, how could you prepare food, and a meal fit for a king, for that Sabbath evening, if you were fasting on Friday?

And what about celebrating Yom Kippur right on the heels of the weekly Sabbath? If you had been celebrating the Sabbath with joy and rejoicing, and that very evening Yom Kippur begins, the Jews felt that you would have no opportunity to "prepare" for it -- to get into the right mental and spiritual frame of mind, repenting of sins, and fasting. They reasoned, how can you jump immediately from feasting to fasting? Or, from fasting to feasting -- without a day in between?

*The Jewish Book of WHY* has this to say about the "postponements":

"Why does the first day of Rosh Hashana never fall on a Wednesday, Friday, or Sunday?

'When the calendar was finally issued by Hillel II in 359 C.E., it was arranged so that the holidays would not interfere with the observance of the Sabbath and so that the Sabbath would not interfere with holiday observance.

"If Rosh Hashana (1 Tishri) were to fall on a Wednesday, Yom Kippur (10 Tishri) would fall on a Friday. If Yom Kippur were to fall on a Friday, that would make it impossible for Jews to prepare for the Sabbath.

"If Rosh Hashana were to fall on a Friday, Yom Kippur would fall on a Sunday, which would allow no time for Jews observing the Sabbath to prepare for Yom Kippur, which would begin immediately after the Sabbath" (p.227-228).

Nevertheless, the question remains: Is this reasoning of the Jewish leaders really sound-minded, according to the Scriptures? Or were the decisions on these "postponements" added to the calendar laws because of Jewish legalism and false thinking?

Solomon wrote: "There is a way which seemeth right unto a man, but the end thereof are the ways of DEATH" (Proverbs 14:12; 16:25).

*The Jewish Book of WHY* also explains about the postponement for Hoshana Rabbah, the seventh and final day of the Feast of Tabernacles:

"Rosh Hashana never falls on a Sunday because that would mean that Hoshana Rabbah (the last day of Sukkot, which *always* falls on 21 Tishri) would fall on a Saturday, which would not be desirable.

"In talmudic times Hoshana Rabbah was regarded as a day much like Yom Kippur. It brought to an end the long holiday period beginning with Rosh Hashana, and was considered to be the one final opportunity to reverse an unfavorable decree issued against the individual on the High Holidays. If Hoshana Rabbah were to fall on the Sabbath, this would interfere with the ceremony of beating a bunch of *hoshanot* (willows) during the *synagogue services, an action forbidden on the Sabbath*. Beating the willows was an act of self-flagellation and a sign of remorse, similar to the *malkot* ceremony practiced on Yom Kippur" (p.228).

Here again, this postponement was made due to Jewish Sabbath halacha -- the stringent and onerous Jewish Sabbath rules. Jesus Christ did NOT endorse the Jewish Sabbath technical

regulations and restrictions, but rather He reproved the Jewish religious leaders for making the Sabbath a "yoke of bondage" (compare Matt.15 and Mark 7). He upbraided and censored them over their "traditions of the elders"!

### *A Look at Psalm 81*

The Talmud has a story, much like a parable, to teach us a sublime and precious truth about the calendar. Writes Arthur Herzog in *Judaism*:

"Rabbi Pinhas and Rabbi Hilkiah said in the name of Rabbi Simon: Each year all of the ministering angels appear before the Holy One, praised be He, and ask: 'Lord of the Universe When does Rosh Hashanah occur this year?' And He answers them, 'Why do you ask Me? Let us inquire of the earthly court' (which in ancient times set the date of each new month and thus the entire calendar).

"Rabbi Hoshayah taught: When the earthly court decrees 'Today is Rosh Hashanah,' the Holy One, praised be He, tells the ministering angels, 'Set up the court room, and let the attorneys for defense and prosecution take their places, for My children have stated 'Today is Rosh Hashanah.' But if the earthly court should reconsider and decide that the following day should be declared the first of the year, the Holy One, praised be He, tells the ministering angels, 'Set up the court room and let the attorneys for prosecution and defense take their places on the morrow, for My children have reconsidered and decided that tomorrow is to be declared the first of the year.'

"What is the reason for this? 'For it is a statute in Israel, an ordinance of the God of Jacob' [Psalm 81:5]. However, if it is not a statute in Israel, it is not an ordinance [for] the God of Jacob" (*Judaism*, "The Cycle of the Year," p.191-192).

No doubt this was a basic, true principle, during the time of Christ, and the Second Temple period. Let's notice Psalm 81 more closely. What is God telling us here? Beginning in verse 3, God says, "Blow up the trumpet in the new moon, *in the time appointed*, on our solemn FEAST DAY. For this was a statute in ISRAEL, and a *law of the God of Jacob*" (Psa.81:3-4, KJV).

"In the time appointed" means the time or date that GOD appointed (*His "appointed feasts"* -- see Lev.23:2-4). Obviously, the blowing of the trumpet occurs primarily on the "Feast of Trumpets," the "Day of Blowing," called *Rosh Hashanah* (the "head of the year"), and *Yom Teruah* (the "day of blowing").

But notice the sequence, then. First, God "appoints" the day. Then, determining the new moon or Tishri 1, the "Feast of Trumpets," was the duty of the children of Israel -- first, THEY declared the new year, making it a "statute," a "statute of Israel." Then, once they have done that, God Himself endorsed their action -- their decision became "a *law of the God of Jacob*."

This passage of Scripture shows that God normally backs up His priests and the elders and judges of His people when they make decisions *based and founded in His Law* regarding His sacred calendar! But if they make decisions *contrary to the Law*, then their decisions are NOT VALID OR LEGALLY BINDING!

But what about their decisions concerning the "postponements"? Should we follow the

Jewish authorities on these matters as well?

***Whose AUTHORITY "Counts"?***

As the servants of God, we are required by God's own authority to preach the TRUTH, and adhere to the TRUTH, no matter what the Jews do! Yes, they do sit in Moses' seat. But their authority is not compulsory, if they teach contrary to the Torah, the Scriptures, and the Law of God! In such cases, we must evaluate carefully what they are teaching, and analyze it in the light of the Scriptures themselves.

As Isaiah the prophet wrote: "*To the law and to the testimony: If they speak not according to THIS WORD [THE SCRIPTURES], there is NO LIGHT in them*" (Isaiah 8:20).

Jesus Christ plainly gave *His apostles* the power and authority to make halachic decisions whenever necessary, upon this earth. He plainly said, "Whatsoever thou shalt *bind* on earth shall be *bound* in heaven: and whatsoever thou shalt *loose* on earth shall be *loosed* in heaven" (Matt.16:19).

This authority was given to His true apostles and the true leaders of His Church! In cases where Jewish authorities go astray, or wrongly interpret the laws of God, the apostles and leaders of the Church Jesus founded have authority from Him to "bind and to loose" -- to explain what is Scriptural and obligatory, and what is not! Compare also Matthew 18:18 and John 20:23.

God's TRUE ministry has authority to "bind and loose." But again, this authority must be used in accordance with and agreement with the LAW and Scriptures of God -- according to TRUTH!

So, bottom line – whose authority really counts? The answer – *God's authority!* So the real question is – what does Almighty GOD say about these things? Let's see!

## Chapter Three

# *The Calendar in Jesus' Time*

Hillel II did not invent a "new" calendar in 358 A.D. Rather, because of onerous Roman persecution against the Jews, in order to *preserve the calendar and Jewish unity amongst the Diaspora*, Hillel II and the rabbinical council agreed to make the age-old calendar calculations, used to verify the visual sightings of the new moons each month, which had come down from the time of Aaron and Moses, public information, so that the sacred calendar would never be lost, even during the galut, or time of Jewish dispersion and banishment from the land of Israel.

Hillel's publication of this knowledge did not "destroy" the sacred calendar. Rather, it *preserved important knowledge regarding the calendar* by making it possible for generations to study it, to learn its principles, and how it works.

As we have already seen, Arthur Spier in *The Comprehensive Jewish Calendar* tells us what happened. Originally, he says, the beginning of months was determined by direct observation of the new moon from Jerusalem. These dates were then announced and sanctified by the Sanhedrin, or Jewish Supreme Court in Jerusalem, after witnesses had testified they had seen the new crescent, and after their testimony had been "thoroughly examined, confirmed by calculation, and duly accepted." Let's review Arthur Spier's seminal points:

Spier explains:

"A special committee of the Sanhedrin, with its president as chairman, had the mandate to regulate and balance the solar with the lunar years. This so-called Calendar Council (*Sod Haibbur*) calculated the beginnings of the seasons (*Tekufoth*) on the basis of *astronomical figures which had been HANDED DOWN AS A TRADITION OF OLD . . .*" (Spier, *The Comprehensive Hebrew Calendar*, p.1).

Spier tells us what the Jews believed they had to do in the fourth century in order to preserve the calendar. He asserts:

"This method of observation and intercalation was in use throughout the period of the second temple (516 B.C.E.-70 C.E.), and about three centuries after its destruction, *as long as there was an independent Sanhedrin. In the FOURTH CENTURY, however, when oppression and persecution threatened the continued existence of the Sanhedrin, the patriarch Hillel II took an extraordinary step to PRESERVE THE UNITY OF ISRAEL. In order to PREVENT the Jews scattered all over the surface of the earth from celebrating their new moons, festivals and holidays at DIFFERENT TIMES, he made PUBLIC the system of calendar calculation which up to then had been a CLOSELY GUARDED SECRET. . . .*

"In accordance with this system, Hillel II formally sanctified all months in advance, and intercalated all future leap years *until such time as a new, recognized Sanhedrin would be established in Israel*" (p.2).

### ***What about the "Postponements" in the Calendar?***

However, what about the "postponements" added to the calendar by Hillel II and the Sanhedrin of his time? Rabbi Hillel II did institute certain changes in the calendar, when going from an observational calendar to a mathematical one. The major change he inaugurated was the introduction of "postponements" of the New Year (Rosh Hashanah) and subsequent holy days.

Accordingly, when the *molad* (new moon) of Tishri occurs on a Sunday, Wednesday or Friday, the 1st of Tishri is postponed to the following day. This legality was introduced mainly to prevent Yom Kippur occurring on the day before or after the weekly Sabbath, and to prevent Hoshanah Rabbah (the seventh day of the Feast of Tabernacles) from occurring on a Sabbath.

This change or innovation was supposedly made, based on the authority given to the Sanhedrin to interpret and rule on technical legal matters for the good of the community during every generation or circumstance.

This authority is essentially based on God's provisions as stated in the Torah. The Scriptures themselves clearly give certain limited authority to the presiding rabbinical authorities of each generation – the rulers of God's people -- the authority to make judgments and binding decisions -- *so long as they are properly based on the laws of God and not contrary to the Scriptures themselves* (John 10:35).

### ***A NEW LOOK at the "Postponements"***

Because of the decisions made by the Rabbinical Council and Rabbi Hillel II in 358 A.D., in the modern mathematically-based Jewish calendar, Passover (Nisan 14) can only fall on a Monday, Wednesday, Friday, or Sabbath.

Therefore, Nisan 16 -- the day of the wave sheaf offering -- can only fall on a Wednesday, Friday, Sunday, or Monday. This is because of the "postponements" made for the calendar for the time of the dispersion or Diaspora of the Jewish people. But did God actually give the Jewish leaders the authority to make such arbitrary "postponements"? Or are they based on mere "human reasoning," which can end in "death" (Proverbs 14:12)?

To answer this question, let's examine the calendar used during the time of Christ, and the Second Temple period. Were these postponements also in effect in the calendar *before* Hillel II, or during the time of Christ?

### ***Evidence from the Mishnah***

The Mishnah is the written record of Jewish oral law, relating to the Torah and Jewish customs, handed down from time immemorial -- from the days of Moses. These "oral laws" were written down and compiled in about 200 A.D., in narrative form, in the centuries after

Christ, to insure that they would never be lost or forgotten. The Mishnah itself was part of the Talmud, a larger body of Jewish tradition and interpretation and history of Jewish thinking and commentary. The Mishnah itself was compiled, therefore, about 158 years *before* the rulings of Hillel II!

### *The Rite of Circumcision*

According to the Mishnah, circumcision of a male child is normally performed on the eighth day after birth (Gen.17:10-14). But the Mishnah added laws *before the time of Hillel II* giving circumstances when it must be performed later. Says the Mishnah:

"A child can be circumcised on the eighth, ninth, tenth, eleventh, or twelfth day, but never earlier and never later. How is this? The rule is that it shall be done on the eighth day; but if the child was born at twilight the child is circumcised on the ninth day; and if at twilight on the eve of Sabbath, the child is circumcised on the tenth day; if a Festival-day falls after the Sabbath the child is circumcised on the eleventh day; *and if the two Festival-days of the New Year fall after the Sabbath* [that is, on Sunday and Monday] the child is circumcised on the twelfth day" (*Mishnah, Shabbath 19:5*, Danby, page 117).

This law regarding circumcision is interesting. The Jews had added detailed laws as to when circumcision could and could not be done. But during Christ's time, circumcision WAS permitted on the weekly Sabbath. Jesus said to the Jews, "Yet because Moses gave you circumcision (though actually it did not come from Moses, but from the patriarchs), you circumcise a child on the sabbath" (John 7:22-23).

Apparently, because of this criticism, the Jewish legalists later reinterpreted the laws of circumcision and did not allow it to be done on the weekly Sabbath or a Holy Day!

However, the point I want to reiterate here is that according to this statement, then, in the times *before* Hillel II, the Jewish New Year (Rosh Hoshanah), *could fall on a Sunday*, the day after the weekly Sabbath. Yet in the Hillel II calendar, this *cannot occur* because of the "postponements." Here is a clear cut example of a CHANGE made in the calendar! That is, it was "tampered with," and ALTERED, to suite Jewish traditions and customs!

Let's notice this in another translation of the Mishnah passage into English. In *The Mishnah, a New Translation*, by esteemed Jewish professor Rabbi Jacob Neusner, we read in "The Second Division: Appointed Times," under "Shabbat":

- "19:5 A. An infant is circumcized on the eighth, ninth, tenth, eleventh or twelfth days [after birth].
- "B. never sooner, never later.
- "C. How so?
- "D. Under normal circumstances, it is on the eighth day.
- "E. [If] he was born at twilight, he is circumcised on the ninth day.
- "F. [If he was born] at twilight on the eve of the Sabbath, he is circumcized on the tenth day [the following Sunday].
- "G. In the case of a festival which follows after the Sabbath, he will be circumcized on the eleventh day [Monday].
- "H. **In the case of the two festival days of the New Year [ROSH HASHANAH,**

**that is, Tishri 1-2], he will be circumcized on the twelfth day [Tuesday]"**  
*(The Mishnah, p.203).*

Did you notice that last ruling? Clearly, it states that Rosh Hashanah -- Tishri 1 -- could fall on the first day of the week -- Sunday! Since the Jews observe two days for Rosh Hashanah, Tishri 1 and 2, this means that the New Year could fall on Sunday and Monday, causing circumcision of a child born on the eve of the weekly Sabbath a week before Rosh Hashanah (that is, late on Friday) to be deferred until twelve days later -- a Tuesday -- if Rosh Hashanah fell on a Sunday, that year.

Clearly, the postponement of Rosh Hashanah ITSELF from Sunday to Monday was NOT DONE during Temple times, or the Mishnaic period! This postponement was an entirely NEW addition to the law -- a NEW regulation -- devised by Hillel II and his compatriots, in 358 A.D.!

### *The Day of Atonement*

But let's notice another example from the Mishnah. In the Mishnah section titled "The Fifth Division: Holy Things," under "Menahot," we read the following:

"R. [If] the Day of Atonement coincides with the Sabbath, the loaves  
 [of the showbread in the Temple] are divided in the evening.

"S. **[If] it coincided with the EVEN OF THE SABBATH**, the goat of  
 the Day of Atonement is eaten in the evening" (p.758).

Did you notice? The Day of Atonement, during Temple times, could and did occur on the "eve of the Sabbath" -- that is, FRIDAY! Therefore, Dechiah "a" forbidding the Day of Atonement to occur on a Friday was not observed in Temple times, and is null and void, as far as the Law of God is concerned! It was only added about three hundred years AFTER Temple times because of unjustified concerns about having two days in a row in which no food was to be prepared!

### *Hoshana Rabbah*

Here is another example from the Mishnah, showing that the ruling concerning Hoshana Rabbah was also a new invention by Hillel II and was not observed in Temple times. Again, in the section of the Mishnah titled "The Second Division: Appointed Times," under "Sukkah," we read the following:

"4:1 A. [The rites of] the lulav and the willow branch [carried by the  
 priests around the altar, M.5:5] are for six or seven [days]. . . .

"4:3 A. The willow branch rite is for seven days: How so?

B. **[If] the seventh day of the willow branch COINCIDED WITH  
 THE SABBATH**, the willow branch [rite] is for seven days . . .

"4:5 F. And on that day [the seventh day of the willow branch] they walk  
 around the altar seven times. . . .

"4:6 A. **As the rite concerning it [is performed] on an ORDINARY DAY,  
 SO THE RITE CONCERNING IT [IS PERFORMED] ON THE  
 SABBATH"** (page 286-287).

Notice! This is talking about the seventh day of the Feast of Tabernacles, or "Sukkot." The seventh day is known as Hoshanah Rabbah. During Temple times, this day could and often did coincide with the weekly Sabbath! When it did so, the rites of the willow branch and lulav were performed AS THEY WERE ON AN "ORDINARY DAY"!

So states the authoritative Mishnah itself!

There is still further evidence from the Mishnah, the Jewish "Oral Law" which was handed down and orally transmitted from generation to generation -- and which was finally published from about 150-200 A.D., about 150 years before the time of Hillel II -- which proves conclusively that *Nisan 16 could fall on a Sabbath during second Temple times*. This, of course, would put Nisan 14 -- Passover -- on a Thursday, which cannot happen in the modern calendar.

In the Mishnah, in *Pesahim* 7:10, we read, "The bones and sinews [of the Passover or chagigah offering which often accompanied the Passover] and what remains over must be burnt on the 16th. *If the 16th falls on a Sabbath they must be burnt on the 17th, since they override neither the Sabbath nor a festival day*" (*The Mishnah*, Danby, p.146).

Since the 16th of Nisan could fall on a Sabbath, the 14th would have been on a Thursday. Thus in Bible times, the day of the Passover sacrifice could fall on a Thursday, even though it could not do so today, because of the "postponements" added by Hillel II.

### *The Ninth of Av*

Similarly, under the present Hebrew calendar, the 9th of Av never falls on a Friday. Yet, in the Mishnah, it relates, "They may not decree a public fast on the first day of a month or during [the Feast of] the Dedication or at Purim. But if they had begun they may not interrupt the fast. So Rabban Gamaliel. R. Meir said: Although Rabban Gamaliel has said, 'They may not interrupt the fast,' he admitted that they need not fast the whole day. So, too, with the Ninth of Av *if it fell on the eve of a Sabbath* [i.e., a Friday]" (*The Mishnah*, *Taanith* 2:10, Danby, p.197).

The 9th of Av could fall on a Friday during those times, although it cannot, today. When it did, the Jews cut short their fast on that day -- "they need not fast the *whole day*," if the day fell on a Friday.

Since the days of Hillel II, however, this problem no longer exists, since the 9th of Av can no longer fall on a Friday, due to the "postponements."

This halachic requirement, *which was extant in Temple times*, permitted Jews to cut short their fast on the 9th of Av, when it fell on a Friday. But they did not change the calendar itself to solve this problem! They did not postpone the day! They merely abbreviated the fasting edict!

Therefore, there is no evidence that the "principle" of "postponements" was ever applied in the centuries prior to Hillel II. In those days, Hoshana Rabbah could fall on a Sabbath, and Yom Kippur could fall on a Friday or a Sunday!

Clearly, this evidence from the *Mishnah* itself indicates that the "postponements" of the modern Hebrew calendar, instituted by the Rabbinic Council in the days of Hillel II, *did not apply to earlier times*. They were a *new innovation* brought about in the fourth century of the present era!

What are we going to do with this striking, plain, in-your-face knowledge? Are we just going to ignore it, and go on in our lives, as if nothing happened? Or are we going to allow ourselves to be instructed, and to evaluate and USE this new knowledge in serving God as He commands and directs?

The historical evidence does prove that the "postponements" of the annual Holy Days, as they are practiced in modern Judaism, were only introduced in 358 A.D., *three centuries* after the time of Christ and the apostles, and have NO BIBLICAL BASIS for their existence! That is a longer period of time than the United States has been a country!

### ***So What Difference Does It Make?***

What difference, then, does this truth make, for us today?

*All the difference!*

Should we follow the Jewish "postponements," even if they are NOT sanctioned by the Word of God itself?

Or, as Peter and the apostles said, should we, "Obey God rather than man" (Acts 5:29)? Christ Himself said, "You will know the *truth*, and the *truth* will make you FREE" (John 8:32). Yeshua also declared: "But the hour cometh, and now is, when the true worshippers shall worship the Father *in spirit and in TRUTH*: for the Father seeketh such to worship him. God is a Spirit: and they that worship him must worship him in spirit *and in truth*" (John 4:23-24).

"Truth" is very important to God. How important is it to you? Wise Solomon wrote in Proverbs, "There is a way which seemeth right unto a man, but the end thereof are the ways of DEATH" (Proverbs 14:12).

Jesus Christ said man must live by "every word that proceedeth out of the mouth of God" (Matt.4:4; Luke 4:4).

He also said of the Father, "Thy WORD is TRUTH" (John 17:17).

**Whenever there is a clear cut conflict between God's Word, His Law, and rabbinical "tradition," or Jewish halacha, we must obey GOD rather than man!**

Paul tells us in direct warning, that the time is coming, and now is, that many will become deceived, and seduced by Satan's wiles and stratagems. He wrote: "For the mystery of

iniquity doth already work: only he who now letteth [margin, "hindereth"] will let ["hinder"], until he be taken out of the way. And then shall that Wicked be revealed, whom the Lord shall consume with the spirit of his mouth, and shall destroy with the brightness of his coming.

"Even him, whose coming is after the *working of Satan, with all power and signs and lying wonders, and with ALL DECEIVABLENESS of unrighteousness* in them that perish: because they received not the *love of the truth, that they might be saved*. And for *this cause* God shall send them *strong delusion* that they should believe a LIE: that they might all be damned [Greek, "judged, condemned, sentenced"] who *believe not the TRUTH*, but had pleasure in unrighteousness" (II Thessalonians 2:7-12).

### **“VAIN WORSHIP”!**

Clearly, the Jews during the time of Hillel II changed the ancient calendar by adopting the "postponements" of Rosh Hashanah in order to accommodate their views on how to observe the weekly Sabbath. They actually altered the calendar, which God had given to them, in order to preserve their own "traditions" of Sabbath keeping.

Would Almighty God approve of such changes? Or did the Jewish leaders go too far?

This is no matter of mere historical curiosity. This is a matter of whether we observe the true holy days God intended, or some man-made alternatives, calling them "holy"!

Concerning the principle behind such matters, Jesus Christ declared:

"HOWBEIT IN VAIN DO THEY WORSHIP ME, *teaching for doctrines the commandments of MEN*" (Mark 7:7).

He added,

"For *laying aside the commandment of God, ye hold the traditions of men*, as the washing of pots and cups: and many other such like things ye do. And he said to them, Full well ye *reject the commandment of God, that ye may keep your own tradition . . .making the word of God of none effect through your traditions, which ye have delivered:* and many such like things ye do" (v.8-13).

Those who wish to change, altar, or tamper with God's holy calendar, as given to Moses and ancient Israel, are guilty before God of insubordination and rebellion. They put *tradition* before the Laws of God. They emphasize "traditions" of men before the Torah itself!

This would include such man-made innovations as the "postponements" of the fourth century. Jewish leaders themselves are accountable before God for these changes in the law of God.

Those who make such changes, without any justification in God's Word, are misusing

their God-given authority. They are perverting the truth. They are "thinking to change times and laws" (Daniel 7:25), and will be held accountable before the throne of God Himself !

Whether Jewish or Gentile, whether rabbi or minister, any who tamper with and alter the calendar of God, without divine approval, are standing on trembling ground. They are treading where even angels fear to tread. They are leaping to false conclusions, and jumping off a spiritual precipice -- leaping off a cliff, and hurtling to their own destruction on the jagged, sharp rocks below.

To mess around with the calendar of God is to twist and distort and violate HOLY TIME. This statement applies whether the perpetrator is Jewish OR Gentile -- rabbi or minister or layman! Such men create CONFUSION among the people of God; they create an environment of CHAOS! By their own stubborn will, and rejection of God's Law, they lead others into sin and error. They begin to observe the annual holy days on the wrong days! And when they tamper with the "leap year" cycles, they observe the annual holy days a WHOLE MONTH away from the appointed times God decreed they should be observed!

It is high time we get a BALANCE in these things! Yes, the Jews preserved the calendar, and its computations and laws. But they also went *too far* when they used their ecclesiastical authority and added the unbiblical "postponements" in the fourth century!

Tampering with God's calendar -- even if intended for "good" -- is still a SIN! Truly, calendar confusion, today, is a clear example of Satan the devil's incredible deceptive power! Millions have fallen for Satan's diabolical cunning and clever "changes" in the calendar.

Some, because of Jewish sins and errors, want to throw out the entire calendar, which has been preserved, and start all over, with their own ideas combined with various historical theories and assumptions. In essence, they want to throw out the baby with the bath water, and start all over!

God warns in His Word: "There is a way that seemeth right, but the END thereof are the *WAYS OF DEATH*" (Proverbs 16:25).

Wisdom says we can accept the principles of the Jewish calendar, even though we do not need to accept the invalid "postponements" added in reference to Yom Kippur and Hoshana Rabbah. When it comes to making postponements, merely to avoid certain activities on the Sabbath, or to keep Yom Kippur from falling on a Friday, or a Sunday, we can ignore such man-devised rules and keep the days God originally intended.

But what about the months and "New Moons" themselves? Does the mathematical Jewish calendar rightly and accurately give the New Moons and beginning dates of months?

Here is another vital area which we need to examine!

But before we do, what about you? Do you see the reason why the "postponements" are not valid or approved in God's sight?

### *Polluting God's Calendar*

A prophecy of this "changing" of God's laws, by His people, was actually made by Ezekiel. The prophet relates God's own warning, saying of Israel and Judah:

"Notwithstanding the children rebelled against me: they walked not in my statutes, neither kept my judgments to do them, which if a man do, he shall even live in them; they polluted my sabbaths. . . .

"I lifted up mine hand unto them also in the wilderness, that I would *scatter them among the heathen* [which He did in 70 A.D. and 135 A.D.], and disperse them through the countries; because they had not executed my judgments, but had despised my statutes, and had polluted my sabbaths . . .

*"Wherefore I gave them [over to] also statutes which were NOT good, and judgments whereby they should NOT live; and I polluted them in their own gifts. . . ." (Ezek.20:21-26).*

The "postponements" added to the calendar laws in the fourth century are nothing but "pollutions," in the sight of God! These are among the statutes which are "NOT good," and judgments whereby God's people should "NOT live"! A holy day of God must not be changed merely for the sake of human convenience, or to "safeguard" the weekly Sabbath day from imagined infringements.

We must not change God's Law merely to honor human "traditions."

Do you have the "love" of the truth? How valuable is it to you? The *New Revised Standard Version* says the ones who will be deceived during this turbulent, tremulous, end-time world age, are deceived "because they *REFUSED to love the truth* and so be saved" (II Thess.2:10, last part).

Many things have been done in ignorance, in the past. But when the knowledge of the truth comes into our lives, what are we going to do about it? Will we continue to follow Jewish traditions, even when they are not justified?

Will we go to the opposite extreme, and throw out the baby with the bath water?

Or will we get a balance in these things -- and put God's Law before human tradition?

Let's put first things first -- the Law of God before "tradition"! Now that we have learned these things, let's do them -- with all our heart! As Paul said to the Athenians on Mars' Hill in about 53 A.D., "And the times of this ignorance God winked at; but *NOW commandeth all men everywhere to REPENT*: because he hath appointed a day, in the which he will judge the world in righteousness by that man whom he hath ordained . . ." (Acts 17:30-31).

## Chapter Four

# WHY Does Almighty God Say, “*Your Feast Days My Soul Hates!*”?

Why would God say such a thing? Why would He tell His people that He abhors and despises the New Moons, and Sabbaths -- including the annual Feast Days? What has been done to the annual Holy Days and New Moons that warrants such a declaration?

Almighty God declares in His Word, "The New Moons, the Sabbaths, and the calling of assemblies -- I cannot endure iniquity and the sacred meeting. *Your New Moons and your appointed feasts My soul hates*; they are a trouble to Me, I am *weary* of bearing them" (Isaiah 1:13-14, NKJV). Why in the world would God say such a thing about the New Moons and Annual Festivals which He Himself appointed for Israel to observe?

Furthermore, He says through the prophet Amos, "*I hate, I despise your feast days, and I do not savor your sacred assemblies. . .*" (Amos 5:21, NKJV). Isn't this strange? Why would God feel this way?

The prophet Isaiah quotes God as saying, "Stop bringing meaningless offerings! New Moons, Sabbaths and convocations -- I cannot bear your evil assemblies. Your New Moons, festivals and your appointed feasts my soul hates. They have become a burden to me; I am weary of bearing them. When you spread out your hands in prayer, I will hide my eyes from you; even if you offer many prayers, I will not listen" (Isa.1:13-15, NIV).

There must be something about the way most of God's people, who claim to celebrate His holy days, do it that is not pleasing in the sight of God. What is it? God calls them "evil assemblies," and says that they are a "burden" to Him, and He is weary of bearing them. He says that His very "SOUL" HATES THEM!

The rest of this chapter points out that there is something hypocritical and wicked about the way many of God's people conduct their lives, and then celebrate His holy festivals. God thunders, "Your hands are full of blood; wash and make yourselves clean. Take your evil deeds out of my sight! Stop doing wrong, learn to do right! Seek justice, encourage the oppressed.

Defend the cause of the fatherless, plead the case of the widow. 'Come now, let us reason together,' says the LORD. 'Though your sins are like scarlet, they shall be as white as snow; though they are red as crimson, they shall be like wool. If you are willing and obedient, you will eat the best from the land; but if you resist and rebel, you will be devoured by the sword.' For the mouth of the LORD has spoken" (Isa.1:15-20).

### *Does God Hate His Own Holy Days?*

Just what it is that God abhors about the way His people celebrate His holy days? It seems so strange -- people just take for granted that they are righteous in God's sight, and assume that they are observing His holy days properly.

Many people just assume they have a good relationship with God, but all the time they are living in a dreamland -- a spiritual fantasy-land of make-believe.

In the last chapter of Isaiah's prophecy, God explains further about what He hates concerning the offerings and celebrations of His people -- notice! "But whoever sacrifices a bull is like one who kills a man, and whoever offers a lamb, like one who breaks a dog's neck; whoever makes a grain offering is like one who presents pig's blood, and whoever burns memorial incense, like one who worships an idol. They have CHOSEN THEIR OWN WAYS, and their souls delight in their ABOMINATIONS" (Isa.66:3).

What is God saying here? It is simple. His people have PERVERTED HIS TRUTH, and corrupted His laws, and their religious practices are closely akin to PAGANISM -- whether they know or realize it or not! Their worship practices are related to idolatry. They have chosen their OWN ways -- instead of God's clear commandments. And the result is that they do things that God hates and detests!

This is very serious in God's sight -- not something to take lightly, or to brush off. God says: "So I also will choose HARSH treatment for them and will bring upon them WHAT THEY DREAD" (v.4). What most religious people dread is suffering the pangs and sorrows and anguish inflicted by the wrath of a jealous, holy God! -- the Great Tribulation and the Lake of Gehenna fire -- and unless God's people "get real" with their faith and obedience, and repent of their sins, which causes God to even hate their "New Moons, Sabbaths, and Sacred Assemblies" -- that is exactly what they are going to have to experience with unmitigated horror and undiminished pain and agony -- the results of their callous disregard of His divine laws and commandments!

"But how have we disobeyed God?" many wonder, and, "How is it that the way we observe the annual holy days is wrong and displeasing to God?"

There are many ways the Christians -- and the Jews -- have both forsaken the original laws and commandments of God!

But why does God even say He hates something about the way many of His people observe His holy days -- which He calls THEIR New Moons, Sabbaths, and Festivals?

### *The Oracles of God*

The apostle Paul declared boldly: "What advantage, then, is there in being a Jew, or what value is there in circumcision? Much in every way! First of all, THEY have been entrusted with the very words of God" (Romans 3:1-2).

The Jews have preserved the very oracles -- the very words -- of God, even though some of them haven't believed in the Messiah or held to the true faith. They still preserved the Old Testament Scriptures, and the knowledge of the laws, commandments, and words of God faithfully. They have preserved the knowledge of the sacred calendar, as well. However, as Paul declared, even though they *preserved the oracles of God, THEY HAVE NOT OBEYED THEM!* Paul wrote, "Chiefly because to them were committed the oracles of God. For what if *some did not believe? Will their unbelief make the faithfulness of God without effect?* Certainly not! Indeed, let God be true but every man a liar" (Rom.3:3-4, NKJV).

But in spite of the fact the Jews have preserved the oracles of God, the Scriptures still declare that *they have not obeyed them!* What happened? Where did the Jews, and others who follow their lead, go wrong? WHY does God Himself say that He "hates" their New Moons, Sabbaths, and annual Festivals and sacred assemblies?

### *"Destroyed for Lack of Knowledge"*

God warns in the prophecy of Hosea, "Now let no man contend, or rebuke another; for your people are like those who contend [argue, fight] with the priest. Therefore you shall stumble in the day; the prophet [minister] also shall stumble with you in the night; and I will destroy your mother. *My people are destroyed for lack of knowledge. Because you have REJECTED KNOWLEDGE, I also will reject you from being a PRIEST for Me*" (Hosea 4:4-6, NJKV).

It would seem that for some reason the people of God -- including the Jews, and their descendants today -- the Rabbis and their followers -- as well as Christians and ministers of the various churches of God -- have become guilty of great sin, in the sight of God. What have they done? They have *rejected the knowledge of GOD -- the truth of the Torah, and the Scriptures!* They have all been guilty of replacing God's law and His truth with their own TRADITIONS, and *commandments of MEN!*

Because they have forsaken God and His laws, He says through Hosea: "I will also cause all her mirth to cease, her feast days, her New Moons, her Sabbaths -- all her appointed feasts" (Hosea 2:11, NKJV). But why is God so upset? Why is He so angry?

Jeremiah, looking into this end time generation, as well as describing previous generations of God's people, begins to describe the sin of God's people. He declared under divine inspiration:

"Even the stork in the heavens knows her appointed times; and the turtledove, the swift, and the swallow observe the time of their coming. But My people do not know the judgment of the LORD. How can you say, 'We are wise, and the law of the LORD is with us'? *Look, the false pen of the scribe certainly works falsehood.* The wise men are ashamed, they are dismayed and taken. Behold, they have *rejected the word of the LORD*; so what wisdom do they have?" (Jeremiah 8:7-9, NKJV).

The Hebrew word for "appointed times," here, is *moadim*. It is the very word used for God's "festivals," which are also called "appointed times" (Lev.23:4). This Scripture is warning us that even migratory birds know the appointed times for their migrations, but God's people have forgotten and rejected their own "appointed times" to meet with God on HIS Holy Days, and New Moons!

Why? Because their religious leaders have led them astray! Christian ministers have led Christians astray -- and Jewish rabbis and leaders have led the Jewish people astray!

Malachi makes this perfectly plain. He declares, in the final book of the Old Testament:

"For the lips of a priest should keep knowledge, and people should seek the law from his mouth; for he is the messenger of the LORD of hosts. *But you [you priests and rabbis] have departed from the way; you have CAUSED MANY TO STUMBLE at the law; you have corrupted the covenant of Levi,* says the LORD of hosts. 'Therefore I also have made you contemptible and base before all the people, *because you have not kept My ways but have shown PARTIALITY IN THE LAW*'" (Malachi 2:7-9).

How have the priests and rabbis caused many to stumble at God's Law? Don't they teach the law of God? What about the Orthodox rabbis? Don't they teach us God's laws? Haven't they preserved the "oracles" of God? Don't they obey them? Haven't they preserved the holy calendar, and the knowledge of all God's annual holy days, and when they are to be observed? -- at the "appointed times"?

Those are very important questions! Most people who observe God's annual holy days, as God commanded, tell us that the JEWS preserved the calendar and the knowledge of the Holy Days! I, too, once believed this to be true -- and assumed it was essentially true. But now new evidence has come to light exposing the TRUTH! The Jewish rabbis have committed an egregious error, causing MANY people to observe the WRONG DAYS as if they were "God's holy days"!

Isn't it time we look into this matter carefully?

The apostle JUDE tells us in no uncertain terms:

"Beloved, while I was very diligent to write to you concerning our common salvation, I found it necessary to write to you exhorting you to **CONTEND EARNESTLY** for the faith which was once for all delivered to the saints. *For certain men have crept in unnoticed . . . ungodly men, who turn the grace of our God into lewdness and deny the only Lord God and our Lord Jesus Christ*" (Jude 3-4, NKJV).

Brethren, and people of God, let's face it! IF the Jews have made errors and mistakes concerning the HOLY CALENDAR, then we must determine what they were, and correct them, if we are to observe God's annual holy days at the right time, and on the God-appointed and God-sanctioned days!

Rather than take it for granted, as thousands and millions do, that the Jews have correctly preserved the Hebrew calendar, down through the ages, let's examine this issue -- this question -- once and for all -- without fear, favor or prejudice!

### ***The WARNINGS of Jesus Christ***

In the time of Jesus Christ, the Jewish religious leaders were already departing from the Torah and laws of God. The Pharisees, the religious leaders most highly respected and followed by the masses, were already adding many additional rules and restrictions regarding holy day and Sabbath day observance, dietary rules and personal cleanliness laws. At one point they accosted Jesus and asked Him why His disciples didn't wash their hands according to the "traditions of the elders" before eating (Matt.15:1-2).

Jesus saw through their smokescreen of hypocrisy, and responded, saying: "Why do you also transgress the commandment of God *by your tradition?* For God commanded, saying, Honor your father and your mother; and, He who curses father or mother, let him be put to death. But you say, 'Whatever profit you might have received from me is a gift to God' -- then he need not honor his father or mother. Thus you have *made the commandment of God of no effect by your tradition*" (Matt.15:3-7).

Christ went on, saying of the Pharisees, and their religion of strict rules and burdensome regulations, called the "traditions of men":

"Every plant which My heavenly Father has not planted will be uprooted. Let them alone. *They are blind leaders of the blind. And if the blind leads the blind, both will fall into a ditch*" (Matt.15:13-14).

In the gospel of Mark, who mentions either the same or a similar encounter, Jesus said to the Pharisees of that time:

"Well did Isaiah prophesy of you hypocrites, as it is written: 'This people honors Me with their lips, but their heart is far from Me. And IN VAIN do they WORSHIP Me, teaching as doctrines the *commandments of men.*' For laying aside the commandment of God, *you hold the tradition of men* -- the washing of pitchers and cups, and many other such things you do. He said to them, *All too well you reject the commandment of God, that you may keep your TRADITION*" (Mark 7:6-9, NKJV).

Have the Jews added more "traditions" to the laws of God, since the time of Jesus Christ and the first century? What about the calendar of the Jews, preserved down through the centuries? Have ungodly and unholy "traditions" been incorporated into the very calendar itself, the calendar the Jews follow today, and which they use to determine the beginnings days -- or New Moons -- of each month of the year, and the dates for the annual holy days of Passover, Pentecost, Rosh Hashanah, Yom Kippur (Day of Atonement), Sukkot (Feast of Tabernacles), and Shemini Atzeret (the Eighth Day)?

*If the Jews at some point in history DID change the calendar in some basic, tangible way, then that would be VERY SERIOUS IN GOD'S SIGHT!*

What does the record of history tell us? What about the Jewish or Hebrew calendar which we have today? How and when did it originate? How accurate is it?

### ***A Brief Review of the Jewish Calendar***

According to the record of history, the Jewish Temple was destroyed in 70 A.D. by the Roman armies under Titus and Vespasian. The Jewish nation was destroyed in the Bar Kochba rebellion in 135 A.D. The Jews were driven into exile, into every nation under heaven. They were banished from Jerusalem, and the Jewish Sanhedrin was abolished. The Jewish leaders, in the lands of Arabs, survived with many of the Jewish people, and managed to keep their religious faith intact. But in those trying years, the calendar became a serious problem, because widely scattered Jewish people no longer had a central authority to sight the New Moons, and to report the correct days of the Holy Days. Different systems began to develop.

To put an end to this confusion, Rabbi Hillel II, in 358 A.D., made public the secret calendar calculations carefully maintained from ancient antiquity, and he and his colleagues decreed the "fixed" or "permanent" Hebrew calendar, based on those ancient calculations. So far, so good. By this means, they managed to maintain the unity of the Jewish faith through the unified observance of the Holy Days, no matter where Jews resided around the world.

So far, so good. This was an honorable achievement and desire. With the threat of persecution driving the Sanhedrin "out of business," as it were, it was necessary for the Jews to resort to unusual and remarkable methods to preserve their unity and the unity of their faith and holy days, so all could observe the holy days and New Moons at the same time.

***"Ay, There's the Rub"***

If this were all the Jewish leaders did at that time, we would have no problem, today. But having done this, Hillel II and his compatriots went a huge step further. They added to the calendar rules NEW RULES dealing with and permitting "postponements" to the calendar.

People have on occasion mentioned to me that they have noticed in some years that the Feast seemed to occur later than normal. That is, the full moon of Tishri, which normally falls on Tishri 15, in some years occurs a day or two BEFORE the 15th of Tishri, according to the Jewish calendar! This was caused, of course, by adherence to the "postponements."

But are these postponements really valid in the eyes of God? *Where they ever allowed or sanctioned during the time of Christ, or the second Temple period?* Or do they fall into the category of those "traditions of men" which were added by the Rabbis, which actually negate and nullify the LAWS of God Himself?

Did the Jewish leaders under Hillel II actually cause a CHANGE in the law of God CONTRARY to God's original instructions? Was this a case of men "thinking to change times and laws" (Dan.7:25)?

For years, I could not answer this question. I did not know the answer. Therefore, with no proof to the contrary, I assumed that the Jewish authorities may have been allowed to add the postponements. So I gave the Jewish rabbis -- and Hillel II -- the benefit of the doubt.

But now I have learned that such was definitely not the case at all! In actual fact, they usurped God's authority, and replaced it with their own "rabbinical" authority! They changed God's laws by inserting their "postponements."

Would Jesus Christ have "approved" of these postponements, added to and changing the Jewish calendar, from 358 A.D. till the present time?

The answer should be obvious! He did not approve of the ridiculous Jewish restraints on the Sabbath day, and all their minutiae rulings about its observance, during the first century (Mark 2:1-28; John 5:1-18). He rejected their "traditions of men" instituted to be a "hedge" around the Sabbath, but making it a burdensome yoke instead!

*How much less would He have "approved" of the new laws and restrictions they added three hundred years later!*

These new rulings to hedge about the Sabbath -- the postponement of "Dechiah a" -- causing Holy Days to be delayed a whole day due to Jewish "traditions" on how to keep the Sabbath -- were not inspired of God, and were not followed during Temple times, and in the time of Christ and the apostles!

Clearly, then, the changes wrought in the calendar in the days of Hillel II concerning the postponement of "Dechiah a" were an innovation not supported by Scripture, nor were they

observed in Temple or Biblical times. *They constituted a DEPARTURE FROM THE LAW of Almighty God!* They were unholy, unwarranted, and sacrilegious! Because of them, millions have been keeping God's annual Holy Days *on the wrong day, for centuries, and even down to this present time!*

No wonder God says He *hates* them! No wonder He says:

"The New Moons, the Sabbaths, and the calling of assemblies -- I cannot endure iniquity and the sacred meeting. *Your New Moons and your appointed feasts My soul hates*; they are a trouble to Me, I am weary of bearing them" (Isaiah 1:13-14, NKJV).

"*I hate, I despise your feast days, and I do not savor your sacred assemblies*" (Amos 5:21-26, NKJV).

The word for "hates" in this verse is *sane* in Hebrew, and means "to hate (personally); enemy, foe, be hateful, odious." *Vine's Complete Expository Dictionary of Old and New Testament Words* declares that "*sane* represents an emotion ranging from intense 'hatred' to the much weaker 'set against' . . . The strong sense of the word typifies the emotion of jealousy, and therefore, *sane* is the feeling Joseph's brothers experienced because their father preferred him (Gen.37:4; cf. v.11). This 'hatred' increased when Joseph reported his dreams (Gen.37:8). Obviously, the word covers emotion ranging from 'bitter disdain' to outright hatred" (p.105).

The Septuagint renders this passage:

"I cannot bear your new moons, and your sabbaths, and the great day; your fasting, and rest from work, your new moons also, and your feasts *my soul hates*: ye have become loathsome to me" (Isa.1:13-14, LXX).

Why would God say such a thing about the new moons and holy days celebrated by His people? Why would He call His own people "*loathsome*"? That is very strong language!

Are we beginning to get the picture -- a clear understanding of what happened, and where the Jewish leadership went wrong in 358 A.D.? Although the Jewish calendar calculations were preserved by the Jews, they themselves have at times disregarded them, time and time again, because of the inserted postponements!

Because of Dechiah a, the Jewish calendar of modern times is seriously flawed. In some years, it throws both the fall and spring Holy Days off by as much as *two days*! That may not seem like very much, but God demands perfection (Matt.5:48). "Close" is only good in "horseshoes and handgrenades"! Or, hydrogen or nuclear bombs! If you miss the target, if you miss the 'bulls-eye,' then you fail to win the prize!

Is being "off" a day or two really "kosher" in the sight of God? Of course NOT!

### *Tragedy of Comedies*

For example, in the year 2001 A.D., according to the U.S. Naval Observatory, the New Moon conjunction for the month of Nisan occurs on March 25, at 01 hours, 21 minutes, Universal Time (Greenwich Meridian, in England). This is based on the Roman day, which begins at midnight. The New Moon would not become visible until about 24 hours later. This would place the first day of Nisan, the first month of the new year, on March 27th!

However, the Jewish "New Moon" on their fixed calendar places Nisan 1st on Sunday, March 25, beginning *hours before the conjunction of the moon and earth -- and TWO DAYS BEFORE THE VISIBLE NEW MOON!*

The New Moon from which we are to determine the beginning of EACH MONTH is NOT the "astronomical New Moon." Rather, it is the first sighting of the thin new CRESCENT of the moon FROM JERUSALEM! As the U.S. Naval Observatory says, "The ancient Hebrew calendar was also based on actual lunar crescent sightings" ("Crescent Moon Visibility and the Islamic Calendar, p.1).

Says the Naval Observatory, "The date and time of each New Moon can be computed exactly but the time that the Moon first becomes visible after the New Moon depends on many factors and cannot be predicted with certainty." This authority goes on:

"In the first two days after the New Moon, the young crescent Moon appears very low in the western sky after sunset, and must be viewed through bright twilight. It sets shortly after sunset. **The sighting of the lunar crescent within one day of New Moon is usually difficult.** The crescent at this time is quite thin, has a low surface brightness, and can easily be lost in the twilight. **Generally, the lunar crescent will become visible to suitably located, experienced observers with good sky conditions ABOUT ONE DAY AFTER the New Moon.** However, the time that the crescent actually becomes visible varies quite a bit from one month to another. The *record* for an early sighting of a lunar crescent, with a telescope, is 12.1 hours after New Moon; *for naked-eye sightings, the record is 15.5 hours from New Moon.* **These are exceptional observations and crescent sightings this early in the lunar month should not be expected as the norm" (*ibid.*).**

Therefore, the earliest we should normally expect to be able to see a thin visible crescent of the New Moon would be about ONE DAY -- that is, 24 hours -- after the moment of conjunction. If we use this figure as our basis for approximating the *visible* New Moons in advance, we find that the New Moons based on the *calculated* Jewish calendar are *very often a day off!*

Why? What happened?

History shows, and the Jews confess, that the Jewish religious authorities departed from an observational calendar, in 358 A.D., and adopted a "mean value for the lunation cycle" (using a standard figure from month to month). They departed from the visible crescent New Moon to the use of a *tabular* (calculated) New Moon or *molad*. In other words, they "averaged" the

length of time between New Moons, instead of using the actual astronomical New Moon conjunctions. This has led to their so-called "New Moons" sometimes being a DAY BEFORE the visible crescent could possibly be seen, in some cases, and a DAY LATE in other cases!

"So what?" you may ask. Well, this is why the current Jewish calendar is messed up and in error often when it comes to determining the molads or New Moons! The Jewish calendar *makes no pretense* of accurately figuring each month's New Moon! The calendar makers *CONFESS they merely used a "statistical mean" or "average"!*

Do we begin to see the picture? And the matter of the "postponements" make this problem even WORSE!

*Could God possibly be pleased when His children celebrate His Holy Day on the wrong day? Or one day too late? Absolutely NOT!*

***What if Israel had observed PASSOVER a DAY TOO LATE because of human traditions the year they came out of Egypt? ALL THEIR FIRSTBORN WOULD HAVE DIED IN THE PLAGUE OF THE FIRSTBORN!***

***What if they observed it a day TOO EARLY? Same thing -- DEATH!***

In another example, in the year 2002, another problem crops up. According to the Naval Observatory in Washington, D.C., the actual time of the Molad is May 12, 10 hours, 45 minutes. Again, correcting this for the Hebrew calendar, if we add 24 hours, as the length of time between conjunction and first likely visible sighting, and add two hours for Jerusalem time, giving us May 13, 12 hours, 45 minutes. Therefore, the New Moon would not be sighted till the following day, making Sivan 1 to fall on May 13. This puts Pentecost on May 18th.

However, in this case, the Jewish calendar has the New Moon *one day early* -- on May 12 -- even though the actual Molad falls after noon -- in violation of their own Calendar Rules! As a result, this maneuver consequently puts Sivan 6, the Holy Day of Shavuot or Pentecost, *one day early!*

As it turns out, a careful study of the calendar, and the Molads for each month of the years, has revealed an astonishing thing. By the creation of their postponements, based on "Dechiah a," and related innovations, the present Jewish calendar many times has the New Moon of each month occurring one day LATER than it should, and sometimes the reverse is true -- and they put the New Moon one day *too early!*

The calculated Jewish calendar may have served its purpose, down through the centuries, to keep the far-flung Jewish communities unified in observing the annual holy days at the same time. But *it erred in adding unscriptural and unjustified POSTPONEMENTS, AND CREATED A "MESS," when it comes to figuring the monthly New Moons!*

In effect, it has sacrificed TRUTH for the appearance of "unity"! But "unity" IN ERROR is not unity with GOD!

Because of the calendar changes caused by the un-Biblical rules of postponements for the sake of human traditions, the result is that the Jewish rabbis have altered the calendar's New Moon dates, and as a result their New Moons are often either TOO EARLY, or TOO LATE -- a truly "revolting development" in God's sight! Their "New Moons" are often a day too early or a day too late, compared to the first visible crescent of the New Moon.

As the old saying goes, "The king has no clothes!"

Remember, all these facts are easily provable, just by checking the astronomical New Moons at the Naval Observatory, or any other official source, and then adding 2 hours to allow for the difference in time between Jerusalem and Universal time, and then adding 24 hours to allow for the time between actual conjunction and the first faint visible crescent of the New Moon!

Again -- what does Almighty GOD think of all this? God's Word tells us:

**"A road may seem right to a man, but in the end it is a road to death"** (Prov.14:12, Tanakh).

God Himself instructs Israel -- **"You shall not add anything to what I command you or take anything away from it"** (Deut.4:2, Tanakh).

How far human beings have departed from and gone beyond the Word of the living God!

### *Are You Confused?*

Sadly, many people are intimidated by the very thought of the "calendar." They assume it is highly complex, and that simple folk can't understand it. So they don't want to even think about it -- much less, study into it! However, God's truth is never too complicated. It was never meant to be too complex. An old saying in science says, "KISS," which means, "Keep It Simple, Stupid!"

Paul the apostle says, "For God is NOT the author of confusion but of peace" (I Corinthians 14:33, NKJV). God further says in His Word that we are to take nothing for granted, but commands us: *"TEST ALL THINGS; hold fast what is good"* (I Thess.5:21).

Many people, perhaps, think that they are unable to "prove" or "test" the calendar. It is too erudite and sophisticated. But such is not the case at all. The basic principles a CHILD can be taught, and understand! All it takes is a little patience, instruction, and a willingness to LEARN!

Most of the great laws of science, can be reduced to simple equations. The laws of motion, the laws of thermodynamics, the principle of gravity, even the famous  $E = mc^2$  of Albert Einstein states a basically simple premise, the energy of an object equals its mass times the speed of light squared.

Even so, God's calendar was not meant to be confusing, complex, or difficult! But with the additions of Dechiah a and resultant innovations to "fix" the calendar, in 358 A.D., the resultant calendar does become complicated. However, once we remove the man-made postponements, it becomes very simple once again!

How did we get into such a pickle? How did the Jewish leaders make such a "mess," in 358 A.D., when they could have preserved the true calendar *without making any arbitrary changes*? The answer lies in one word: ATTITUDE!

### *Where Men Always Go Astray*

God says in His Word: "Whatsoever I command you, be careful to observe it: *you shall not add to it nor take away from it*" (Deuteronomy 12:32; see also Deut.4:1-2).

Human nature, however, seems impelled to rebel. Paul tells us about the unregenerate heart of man: "Because the CARNAL MIND is enmity against God: for it is not subject to the law of God, nor indeed can be" (Rom.8:7). Jeremiah adds: "The heart is deceitful above all things, and desperately wicked: Who can know it?" (Jer.17:9).

Solomon wrote in wisdom: "There is a way that SEEMS right to a man, but its end is the way of DEATH" (Prov.14:12). This precept is so important that God inspired it to be repeated word for word in Proverbs 16:25!

But doing what may "seem right" isn't doing what IS "right"! And although making certain changes to the calendar by adding "postponements" to accommodate religious sensitivities about the weekly Sabbath may have SEEMED right to Hillel II and his colleagues, that did not make it right at all! The end result, God says, is DEATH! And DEATH is the wages -- the payment earned -- for SIN (Romans 6:23). And what is "SIN"? "Sin is the transgression of the LAW" of God (I John 3:4). To nullify God's law, to reject God's law, for the sake of a few human TRADITIONS, is SIN -- lawlessness!

Isn't it time we study these matters fully, and become fully convinced in our own minds -- and determine to obey God in ALL things, no matter what the cost, humanly speaking? God commands: "Be diligent to present yourself approved to God, a worker who does not need to be ashamed, rightly dividing the word of truth. But shun profane and idle babblings, for they will increase to more ungodliness. And their message will spread like cancer" (II Tim.2:15-17).

As an old adage goes, "Close only counts in horseshoes and hand grenades"! People who observe the wrong day, in ignorance, can be forgiven. But to refuse to repent, and change, when proven wrong -- that is tantamount to *willful and deliberate* SIN! It is very serious *presumptuous* transgression of God's Law, His holy Word!

Remember, "The fear of the LORD is the beginning of knowledge," Solomon wrote (Proverbs 1:7), "but fools despise wisdom and instruction."

***"Repent -- Or Perish!"***

"Therefore to him who knows to do good and does not do it, to him it is sin" (James 4:17).

Jesus Christ warned: "Beware of the leaven of the Pharisees, which is hypocrisy. For there is nothing covered that will not be revealed, nor hidden that will not be known. Therefore whatever you have spoken in the dark will be heard in the light, and what you have spoken in the ear in inner rooms will be proclaimed on the housetops" (Luke 12:1-3, NKJV).

Isn't it time we stop following the treacherous teachings of hypocrites, and serve God in sincerity and truth? As Jesus said,

"You worship what you do not know; we know what we worship, for salvation is of the Jews. But the hour is coming, and now is, when the TRUE WORSHIPERS will worship the Father in *spirit and truth*; for the Father is seeking such to worship Him. God is Spirit, and those who worship Him must worship in *spirit and truth*" (John 4:22-24, NKJV).

The time has come to repent, and to obey God and serve Him and Him alone in sincerity, in spirit and in truth -- according to the truth of His Word.

How important is repentance and true obedience?

"And Jesus answered and said to them, Do you suppose that these Galileans [whose blood Pilate had mingled with their sacrifices] were worse sinners than all other Galileans, because they suffered such things? *I tell you, no; but unless you REPENT, you will all likewise perish.*"

The time has come to REPENT of tinkering and tampering with the Holy Calendar of Almighty God, which He gave to His people! Yeshua the Messiah went on, saying:

"Or those eighteen on whom the tower in Siloam fell and killed them, do you think that these were worse sinners than all other men who dwell in Jerusalem? I tell you, no; but UNLESS YOU REPENT, *you will all likewise PERISH*" (Luke 13:2-5, NKJV).

It is a shame that so many of God's people are so deceived, and bewitched, and so ignorant -- so trusting of their religious leaders that they will follow them into the jaws of death and the gates of Hell, before they would ever think of questioning them or their teachings!

It is up to each one of us to prove these things, and then do what is RIGHT! Don't let men -- human leaders -- make excuses for sins, and lead you astray!

God says, "Bringing oblations is futile, incense is offensive to me. New moon and sabbath, proclaiming of solemnities, assemblies with iniquity, I cannot abide. YOUR *new moons and fixed seasons fill me with LOATHING*; they are become a burden to me. I cannot endure them. And when you lift up your hands, I will turn my eyes away from you; though you pray at length, I will not listen. Your hands are stained with crime -- WASH YOURSELVES CLEAN; put your evil doings away from my sight. CEASE TO DO EVIL; learn to do good. Devote yourselves to justice; aid the wronged. Uphold the rights of the orphan; defend the cause of the widow.

"Come, let us reach an understanding, -- says the LORD. Be your sins like crimson, they can turn snow-white; be they red as dyed wool, they can become like fleece. If, then, you agree and give heed, you will eat the good things of the earth; but if you REFUSE and DISOBEY, you will be DEVoured [by] the sword. -- For it was the LORD who spoke" (Isaiah 1:13-20, *Tanakh*).

This is the truth of God. Jesus Christ, Yeshua the Messiah, Himself told us just how important the TRUTH is, for He said: "If you hold to my teaching, you are really my disciples. Then you will *KNOW THE TRUTH*, and the truth will *set you free*" (John 8:31-32). Is it not high time that we cleanse our hands of all the filth of error and lawlessness, and man-made human traditions, which ignore the Laws of God? Is it not high time that we turn to the LORD our God, in sincerity and in truth, and worship Him according to HIS WORD and His commandments, faithfully, loyally, and whole-heartedly?

These matters are indeed serious business. As Paul said to the Athenians, "In the past God overlooked such ignorance, *but NOW he commands all people everywhere to REPENT*. For he has set a day when he will judge the world with justice by the man he has appointed" (Acts 17:30-31).

God challenges us, "PROVE ALL THINGS; hold fast that which is GOOD" (I Thess.5:21). God declares many are going to be deceived and led astray, and lose out on salvation, during these last days, "because they did not receive *the love of the truth* that they might be saved. And for this reason God will send them *strong delusion*, that they should believe *the lie*" (II Thess.2:10-11, NKJV). Do you LOVE the truth?

## *Chapter Five*

# **What Is the True Biblical Calendar?**

What does the Bible say about the calendar, months, days and years? When did the modern Jewish calendar begin and why was it changed from the original Hebrew calendar of Bible times? What do the Scriptures themselves tell us about the calendar? More than you might imagine! Are there calendar keys which we have overlooked? Who were the Karaite Jews and what do they have to do with the calendar?

Contrary to what you may have been taught or heard from some ministerial source, there is FAR MORE about the calendar of God in the Scriptures than most people imagine!

For many years, I accepted and followed the Jewish calendar, assuming that we really had no bona fide choice in the matter. It was either follow the Jewish calendar -- or everybody do his own thing, and create his or her own calendar, sighting New Moons, and so forth -- "every man doing what was right in his own eyes" -- which, as we know, is the "way of death" (Prov.14:12).

Then, about two years ago, I began discovering that things were not as they seemed to be on the surface. Probing deeper into the mysteries of the Jewish calendar, I began to discover that the Jews had not only changed from a visual "sighting" of new moons to determine new months, which was done in Biblical times -- but that in 358 A.D. the Jewish community, fearful of its own demise and disintegration while scattered and persecuted, changed from a visual sighting calendar to a fixed mathematical calendar, which approximated the New Moons (and was in many months one or two days off from the literal visual New Moon).

Not only did they do that, but they added NEW calendar "rules," called "postponements," which were based upon nothing more than putting manmade "hedges" around the weekly Sabbath day, so that Yom Kippur -- a fast day -- could not fall on either the day before or the day after a weekly Sabbath. Why? Because rabbis then deemed it impractical or a burden to have two days in a row when food could not be prepared -- Yom Kippur and the Sabbath!

Another postponement was added to keep the seventh day of Sukkot or Tabernacles from falling on a weekly Sabbath (certain rituals on that day were considered "work" and therefore considered inappropriate for the Sabbath!).

Although I had known of these "postponements" for several years, I let the matter rest because I thought there might have been a precedent for them in Bible times. I simply did not know, and did not want to reject the postponements unless I knew and could PROVE that they were wrong, and were never followed in Bible times.

Then, in the fall of 1999, in studying the matter deeper, I came across passages in the Mishnah which literally "blew me out of the saddle," so to speak. I found undeniable and incontrovertible PROOF FROM THE JEWISH ORAL LAW ITSELF -- THE MISHNAH -- *that there were NO POSTPONEMENTS WHATSOEVER IN BIBLE TIMES! In other words, the "postponements" were an entirely NEW device created and added to the Jewish calendar, three centuries after Temple times!*

This discovery was earth-shocking. It sent my mind reeling. Had we been wrong, therefore, in following the Jewish calendar, without question, all these years, simply because it was "Jewish"? Had we been wrong to accept their calendar without question, as Herbert Armstrong did, and as all the churches which sprang out from Worldwide Church of God, in recent years, have done?

God is merciful. And He is patient. I have learned that He reveals new truth a little at a time, so as not to overwhelm us or inundate us or bury us, causing mental paralysis, or chaos and confusion. So it is with the calendar. Herbert Armstrong many times said, "it is ten times as difficult to UNLEARN ERROR as it is to learn new truth!" Sometimes I think it is *one hundred* times more difficult! People often just will not face the new facts and discoveries honestly. They have been "PROGRAMMED" -- they have been BRAINWASHED -- and no amount of new truth or facts will persuade them that they have been wrong! Like Winston Churchill once said, "Men often stumble across the truth, get up, brush themselves off, and continue on as if nothing ever happened."

How true!

Let us explore this vital subject, and see exactly what happened -- and where mainstream Judaism went wrong! What is the TRUTH about the calendar of GOD? What does the Word of God say on this very crucial subject? Did the Jews have the right to CHANGE that which God had ordained? Or was it lack of faith and obedience to God which led them to alter the calendar to maintain "unity," even if it was unity based on error? Could this also be one reason why God has never accepted them back into His good graces, to this very time, and their "Diaspora" has continued longer than any other people in history?

### ***What Does the Bible Say?***

What does the Bible reveal about the calendar? When we begin to look in the Bible itself, we begin to notice right off, that it differs greatly from the present day calendar of the

Jews. Hard to believe? Well, take a good look for yourself!

Beginning in the book of "Beginnings," that is, the book of Genesis, we read: "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" (Gen.1;14). The word "seasons" here is the Hebrew *moadim* and means "an *appointment*; a *fixed time* or season; spec. a *festival*; conventionally a year; by implication, an assembly; technically, the congregation; by extension, the place of meeting." *The Torah, a modern commentary*, translates this verse: "God said, 'Let there be lights in the expanse of the sky to separate day from night; they shall serve as *signs for the SET TIMES* -- the days and the years.'"

Here we see that God's calendar -- His set feast days and appointed times for religious meetings and festivals -- were to be based on the movements of the sun and the moon. This is God's simple directive -- His commandments. Nowhere in Scripture does God ever give permission to alter, deviate, or change from this basic underlying principle -- or LAW.

However, the simple fact is that today, the Jewish calendar is NOT based on the precise movements of the moon and the sun -- it is rather a mathematically fixed, rigid set of rules which MERELY APPROXIMATE the movements of the sun and moon in the sky! Once one studies into this issue, this fact stands out like a throbbing sore thumb! In other words, in 358 A.D. the mainstream Jewish communities, with a few notable exceptions, changed from God's calendar, based on the movements of the sun and moon, to a mathematical approximation, and replaced the truth with approximations thereof!

Admits Arthur Spier on his book *The Comprehensive Jewish Calendar*:

"In the early times of our history [Biblical times, that is] . . . The beginnings of months were determined by direct observation of the new moon. Then those beginnings of months (Rosh Hodesh) were sanctified and announced by the Sanhedrin, the Supreme Court in Jerusalem, after witnesses had testified that they had seen the new crescent and after their testimony had been thoroughly examined, confirmed by calculation, and duly accepted" (page 1).

Because the solar year is about 365 days and the lunar year (12 lunar months) is about 354 days, there is about 11 days difference. Since these add up to a 30 day month about every three years, an extra month -- a "leap month" -- is added. Says Spier:

"However, the astronomical calculation was not the only basis for intercalation of a thirteenth month. The delay of the arrival of spring was another decisive factor. The Talmudic sources report that the Council intercalated a year *when the barley in the fields had not yet ripened, when the fruit on the trees had not grown properly, when the winter rains had not stopped, when the roads for Passover pilgrims had not dried up, and when the young pigeons had not become fledged*" (*ibid.*).

With these facts in mind, it becomes clear that God never intended His calendar to become a FIXED, rigid, unalterable calendar, based on pure mathematics. Many factors were involved as to when an extra, "intercalary" month had to be added to the end of the year, the month before Passover. *The barley had to be ripe enough to permit the offering of the first fruits for the wave sheaf offering during Passover week!* If it wasn't, then an extra month had to be

inserted creating a "leap year," which would delay Passover and Unleavened Bread one month. As Spier says, another cause for inserting an intercalary month could be very bad weather, which would cause roads to become impassable, thus not allowing people to travel to Jerusalem to keep the Passover.

The modern Jewish calendar, of course, permits of no such variations! It is rigid, and unchangeable, with intercalary months being added at unchanging years in the 19 year cycle, regardless of weather, regardless of the condition of the barley harvest. It has no real connection with the harvest cycle, particularly the barley harvest, so necessary for the observance of the "wave sheaf offering" which God commanded!

### ***The True First Month***

The modern Jewish calendar as we know revolves around the first day of Tishri, the so-called holiday of "Rosh Hashanah," or New Year. This holiday is celebrated by Jews the world over as the New Year's Day. "Rosh Hashanah" literally means, "Chief" or "Head of the Year." It begins the fall holy day season.

But again, is this really a Scriptural truth or viewpoint? Does the Bible anywhere called the 1st day of Tishri "Rosh Hashanah"? *No it does not!*

Incredible as it may sound, the Scriptures declare an altogether different day as being the true "Rosh Hashanah"! Notice it! In the chapter we often quote leading up to the first Passover, God says to Moses and Aaron: "*This month shall be unto you the beginning [rosh] of months [chodesh]: it shall be the FIRST MONTH OF THE YEAR [HA SHANAH] to you*" (Exodus 12:2).

In Exodus 13:4, God says, "This day came ye out in the month *Abib*."

"The Scripture cannot be broken" (John 10:35). The true Rosh Hashanah, according to the Scriptures, is *Abib 1* -- not Tishri 1! God says, "Thou shalt keep the feast of unleavened bread . . . in the time appointed of the month *ABIB*; for in it thou camest out of Egypt . . ." (Exodus 23:15).

In the book of Leviticus, God makes this crystal clear: He said, "These are the feasts of the LORD, even holy convocations, which ye shall proclaim in their seasons. In the fourteenth day of the FIRST MONTH at even is the LORD's passover" (Lev.23:4-5). Which month is this "first" month? *ABIB!* Not Tishri! As far as the first day of Tishri is concerned, this same chapter says: "In the SEVENTH MONTH, in the first day of the month, shall ye have a sabbath, a memorial of *blowing of trumpets*, an holy convocation" (verse 24). Notice that this holy day is not called "Rosh Hashanah" in the Scriptures -- it is clearly identified as *YOM TERUAH* -- *the "the day of blowing of trumpets"*! Also, notice that Tishri is called the *seventh month* in Scripture -- never the "first" month! (see also verses 27 and 34).

Numbers 28:16 also speaks of *Abib* -- the month of Passover -- as being the "first month" of the year. And it is the "seventh month, on the first day of the month," that was to be "a day of

blowing the trumpets unto you" (Num.29:1). Notice again that this holy day is *Yom Teruah* in Scripture -- NOT "Rosh Hashanah," as the Jews insist on calling it, today!

***"Observe the Month of Abib"***

We read in Deuteronomy 16:1 the plain commandment of Almighty God: "OBSERVE the month of Abib, and keep the Passover unto the LORD your God: for *in the month of ABIB* the LORD thy God brought thee forth out of Egypt by night."

This is the only place in Scripture where God commands us to "OBSERVE" a month! And what month IS it? The month of Abib -- in the spring! Nowhere does God ever tell us to "Observe the month of Tishri." But He does command us to keep -- observe -- guard -- watch for -- the month of ABIB!

The Hebrew word for "observe" here is #8104 in Strong's Concordance, the word *shamar*, which means: "prop. to *hedge about* (as with thorns), i.e., *guard*; gen. to *protect, attend to*, etc.: beware, be circumspect, take heed, keep, mark, look narrowly, observe, preserve, regard, reserve, save, wait for, watch." The word is often used in regard to observing (keeping) God's statutes, holy days, commandments, and laws. It is a very powerful word.

Therefore, when God commands us to "observe" the month of Abib, He means to give it our undivided, clear-cut, full attention, and to pay special attention to keeping it properly -- at the right time, and in the right manner. Why is this SO very important? Because, as the Scripture says, in reality IT IS THE FIRST MONTH OF THE YEAR -- *the month which truly determines all the following months of the year, and when they occur!*

Therefore, the Jews again have departed from this basic, essential truth of God's Word, and have substituted "Tishri" as the month they "observe" and "watch for" in their substitutionary calendar, which revolves around Tishri 1 instead of Abib 1!

Several times God's Word commands us regarding the month of Abib. We read; "The feast of unleavened bread shalt thou keep. Seven days thou shalt eat unleavened bread, *as I commanded thee, in the time of the month Abib: for in the month Abib thou camest out from Egypt*" (Exodus 34:18).

Just what is "Abib"? Since we are commanded to "observe," and "guard," and "carefully watch" and "protect" this month, and "hedge it about," just what does it mean, anyway?

We read in Exodus 9, when Israel was still in Egypt, under the yoke of slavery, that God sent a mammoth plague upon the Egyptians of an immense storm with thunder and lightning and hail (vs.23-25). In the aftermath of destruction from this plague, we read:

"And the flax and the barley was smitten: for the barley was *in the ear*, and the flax was balled. But the wheat and the rie were not smitten: for they were not grown up" (Exodus 9:31-32).

Notice that during the time of this plague, the "barley was in the ear." The NIV has this verse: "The flax and barley were destroyed, since the *barley had headed* and the flax was in bloom. The wheat and spelt, however, were not destroyed, because they ripen later."

The word for "ear" in this verse, in Hebrew, is ABIB! Says Strong's Concordance, #24, *abib*; from an unused root (mean. to *be tender*); *green*, i.e. a YOUNG EAR OF GRAIN; hence the name of the month Abib or Nisan: -- Abib, ear, green ears of corn."

"Abib" therefore refers to young green ears of barley grain. It is the very NAME of the first month in God's holy calendar. God *names things what they ARE*. Therefore, for a month to be named, literally, "Abib," meaning "green ears," *it must be the month when those green ears of barley OCCUR!* Otherwise, it would be a complete misnomer -- a flat out "lie," or deception!

The month of "Abib," therefore, *must be the month when the green ears of barley appear as the barley nears the time of harvest!* If the month occurs at any other time, it is out of sync -- it is wrong -- it is a deviation from the true calendar of God!

This is important -- because under the modern Jewish calendar, the month of Abib (which they conveniently call "Nisan"), because of the fixed rules of intercalation of leap months, sometimes falls *OUT SIDE* the time of ABIB OR "GREEN EARS"! When that happens, the whole calendar is displaced by a period of a month -- and ALL the subsequent holy days are observed ONE ENTIRE MONTH LATE!

Let's understand. When grains are early in development, they are flexible and have a dark green color. As they begin to ripen, they become more yellowish in color, and become more brittle. The reason the barley was destroyed by the hail in Egypt was because it had developed to the stage called "Abib" -- forming young green ears -- and had become brittle enough to be destroyed by the hail storm. In contrast, the wheat and spelt had not yet become mature enough to form heads of grain, and were still flexible enough to avoid being damaged severely by the hail. The description of the wheat and spelt as "dark" (*afilot* in Hebrew) means they were still in the stage where they were deep green and had not begun to lighten. The barley, on the other hand, had begun to form ears, and was no longer "dark," and had begun to ripen. It was in the stage of *abib*.

Barley in the stage of "abib" is not completely ripe, but has begun to ripen, enough so that its seeds can be eaten parched in fire. Parched barley was a common food in ancient Israel. Many Bible passages mention it -- for example, we read, "If you bring a meal offering of first fruits to the LORD, you shall bring *NEW EARS parched with fire, grits of the fresh grain*, as your meal offering of first fruits" (Lev.2:14, Tanakh). The King James has this, "green ears of corn dried by fire." The NIV has it, "crushed heads of new grain roasted in the fire." The Hebrew word here once again is *ABIB*.

*CLEARLY, the month of ABIB is defined by its very name as the month of NEW EARS of grain -- barley grain!* The month of Abib is therefore the month which commences after the barley has reached the stage of Abib. This can only be determined by examination of the barley crops near to Jerusalem. Careful examination of the progress of the barley plants, as they mature

and begin to bring forth green ears, determines the month of Abib.

Therefore, Jewish "barley inspectors" go out, in the month of Adar, to determine the progress of the barley, which was planted. Careful inspection is made in the closing days of Adar. If it is seen that the barley has begun to become *abib*, then the next month is declared to be the month of ABIB. If the barley is still immature, and not very close to the ABIB condition, then the next month is declared to be an intercalary month (a 13th month), or Ve-Adar (Adar II).

### *The Barley Harvest and Passover*

This is how God originally intended His calendar to be sequenced. The barley MUST ripen during the month of ABIB, and the barley harvest must be ready to BEGIN right after Passover, which occurs in the middle of the month (Abib 14-15).

Notice what God commands, concerning the barley harvest, and its profound connection with Passover:

"In the first month, on the fourteenth day of the month, between the evening times, is the Lord's passover. And on the fifteenth day of this month is the feast of unleavened bread to the Lord; seven days shall you eat unleavened bread. *And the FIRST day shall be a holy convocation to you. . . .*

"And the Lord spoke to Moses, saying, Speak to the children of Israel, and thou shalt say to them, When ye shall enter into the land which I give you, and reap the harvest of it, then shall ye bring a sheaf, the first-fruits of your harvest, to the priest; and he shall lift up the sheaf before the Lord, to be accepted for you. ON THE MORROW OF THE *FIRST DAY* the priest shall lift it up. . . .

"And ye shall number to yourselves, *from the day after the sabbath, from the day on which ye shall OFFER THE SHEAF* of the heave offering, *seven full WEEKS*: until the morrow after the LAST WEEK ye shall number fifty days . . ." (Lev.23:5-16, LXX).

Notice carefully! The barley crop harvest has to begin with the offering of the FIRST-FRUITS of barley, offered to the Lord, on the day after the first day of unleavened bread -- the Annual Sabbath! That holy day occurs on Abib 15. Therefore, the wave sheaf offering is made to the Lord on the following day -- Abib 16. Then seven WEEKS are counted off, till we come to the end of the seventh week, or 49 days -- and the very next day is PENTECOST!

How vitally important it is then that the month of Abib really fall during "ABIB" -- the forming of the green ears of barley at the beginning of the month! How could the children of Israel perform a first-fruits of barley offering, as God commanded, if the month of Abib was TOO EARLY and the barley was not ripe? Or how could they obey God's commandment if the

barley harvest has already started BEFORE the month of Abib arrived?

Notice further proof! In Deuteronomy 16, God commands: "Observe the month of Abib [green ears] and celebrate the Passover of the Lord your God, because in the month of Abib he brought you out of Egypt by night. . . . For six days eat unleavened bread, and on the seventh day hold an assembly to the Lord your God and do no work. *Count off seven weeks from the time you put the sickle to the standing grain.* Then celebrate the Feast of Weeks" (Deut.16:1-10, NIV).

Now consider! How could they put the sickle to the barley harvest, to begin the harvest, if it had already started? Or, how could they begin the harvest, if "Abib" had not yet occurred, and the barley wasn't ready? Plainly, then, the month of Abib MUST BE at the proper time for the barley to begin to be harvested -- and not too early or too late in the year!

Yet the modern Jewish calendar does not even take this into consideration! It ignores completely this Biblical injunction and command!

God's commandment is very clear. But the modern Jewish calendar IGNORES this literal commandment of God *completely!* It pays no attention to the barley harvest in Israel at all. Perhaps soon the rabbis will repent of their inaccurate, and fraudulent "fixed" calendar -- which has been "neutered" like a "fixed" dog or cat -- and return to the calendar God once delivered to His people. I surely hope and pray that they will.

### ***Definitions Are Important!***

In the book of Psalms, we read: "He appointed the MOON for seasons [*moadim*]: the sun knoweth his going down" (Psalm 104:19). "The moon marks off the seasons," says the Moffatt and New International Versions. Remember, the word "seasons" is *moadim* and also refers to the festivals, appointed times, feast days, holy days, when convocations were commanded for worship purposes.

These are determined by the "moon." How so? Because they occur on set days of the month (except for Pentecost, which occurs 50 days after Passover, which occurs on a set day of the month) -- and it is the NEW MOON which determines the beginning of each month!

Or, at least, that was indeed the case in Bible times, when the Jews observed the New Moons -- the first faint visible light from the new crescent of the moon -- and then declared that day to be the beginning day of the new month!

New Moons are very important to God! The prophet Isaiah says that during the reign of the Messiah, in the wonderful world tomorrow, "*From one New Moon to another, and from one Sabbath to another, all mankind will come and bow down before me,* says the Lord" (Isaiah 66:23, NIV). Does it matter to God whether we worship Him on the real day of the New Moon? Or is it all right if we are a day or two off? -- sometimes a day EARLY? often a day or two LATE?

What do you think? By definition, the Hebrew word for New Moon and Month is the SAME IDENTICAL WORD -- the word *chodesh!* It is #2320 in Strong's Exhaustive Concordance, which says: "*chodesh*, the new moon; by implication, a month: -- month(-ly), new moon." It is translated "month" 194 times in the King James Version. It is translated "new moon" 8 times, and "new moons" 11 times. Says *The Torah: a modern commentary*, regarding Exodus 12:2: "**this month.** ☾Chodesh ☼ means the new (Hebrew *chadash*) month and also, by extension, the whole month. The spring month was *Chodesh ha-Aviv* (as in Exo.13:4; Deut.16:1), hence Aviv came to mean spring, (as in Tel Aviv, "Mound of Spring," Ezek.3:14). When the Jews took over the Babylonian calendar, they renamed the month Nisan (Neh.2:1, from an Akkadian word probably meaning "firstfruits")" (p.458).

What happened? Where and how did the Jews go wrong?

Here is the intriguing story.

### *The Sadducees and Pharisees*

The story begins with the Sadducees and the Pharisees. These were the two dominant religious bodies during the latter times of the Second Temple, from about 100 B.C. to 70 A.D. when the Temple was destroyed by the Romans. Will Durant in *The Story of Civilization*, vol.3, "Caesar and Christ," comments about these two groups:

"Within the Temple was the hall Gazith, meeting place of the Sanhedrin or Great Council of the Elders of Israel. Probably the institution arose in the period of Seleucid rule (ca. 200 B.C.), to replace the earlier council mentioned in Numbers (11:16) as advising Moses. Originally selected by the high priest from the sacerdotal aristocracy, it had come in Roman times to co-opt into its membership a rising number of Pharisees and a few professional Scribes. These seventy-one men, under the presidency of the high priest, claimed supreme power over all Jews everywhere, and orthodox Jews everywhere acknowledged it. . . . They could pass sentence of death upon Jews in Judea for religious offenses, but could not execute it without confirmation by the civil power.

"In this assembly, as in most, two factions fought for predominance -- a conservative group led by the high priest and Sadducees, and a liberal group led by Pharisees and Scribes. Most of the upper clergy and upper classes belonged to the Sadducees (*Zadokim*), so named after their founder Zadok; they were nationalistic in politics and orthodox in religion; they stood for enforcement of the Torah or written Law, but rejected the additional ordinances of the oral tradition and the liberalizing interpretations of the Pharisees. They doubted immortality and were content to possess the good things of the earth.

"The Pharisees (*Perushim*, separatists) were so named by the Sadducees as meaning that they separated themselves (like good Brahmans) from those who contracted religious impurity by neglecting the requirements of ritual cleanliness. They were a continuation of the Chasidim, or Devotees, of the Maccabean age, who had upheld the strictest application of the Law. . . . For this purpose they added to the written Law of the Pentateuch the oral tradition of interpretations and decisions made by recognized teachers of the Law. These interpretations were necessary, in the judgment of the Pharisees, to clarify the obscurities of the Mosaic Code, to specify its application in particular cases, and to modify its letter, occasionally, in adaptation

to the changed needs and conditions of life. They were at once rigorous and lenient, softening the Law here and there as in Hillel's decree on interest, but *demanding the full observance of the ORAL TRADITION as well as of the Torah. . .*" v.3, pages 536-537).

Hillel's decree on interest referred to the law of God in Deuteronomy 15:1-11, where God decreed that all debts were to be forgiven and written off in the Sabbatical year, the year of "release." In Hillel's day, he saw that Jews were not making loans to other Jews because they did not want to lose their interest and principal payments when the seventh year, or Sabbath year, came around. Hillel's solution? Abolish the divine Law of God! Thus Jewish "halacha" or tradition and Rabbinical rulings replaced the Torah in some cases -- overwrote them, and effectively rescinded them. It was this kind of Jewish "tradition" that Jesus Christ vehemently condemned as vain worship and transgression of the commandments of God through Jewish "tradition" (Matthew 15:1-14; Mark 7:1-23).

Thus in the eyes of the Pharisees, oral tradition had more legal weight than the Word of God -- the Torah -- itself! In the Mishnah itself -- the book of the Jewish Oral Law -- we read of this sheer effrontery and chutzpah of the Jewish rabbinical leadership. In the "Fourth Division: Sanhedrin," we read:

"3. Greater stringency applies to [the observance of] the Words of the Scribes than to [the observance of] the words of the [written] Law. If a man says, 'There is no obligation to wear Phylacteries' so that he transgresses the words of the Law, he is not culpable; [but if he said] 'There should be in them five partitions,' so that he adds to the words of the Scribes, he is culpable" (p.400).

Thus the Pharisees and the Rabbinite, their successors down through the ages since Temple times, place *tradition and the oral law ABOVE the authority of the Scriptures and the Word of God itself!*

What a bizarre state of affairs!

### ***The Diaspora History of Judaism***

After the Jewish nation was destroyed by the Romans, in 70 and 135 A.D., and the Jews were scattered throughout Europe, Africa and Asia, the teaching of the Law and Jewish tradition -- the "Oral Law" -- became cement that held the Jews together. After the rebellion of the Jews, under Bar Kochba in 132-135 A.D. and their crushing defeat by the Roman armies of Hadrian, stiff penalties were enacted against Judaism.

"Resolved to destroy the recuperative virility of Judaism, Hadrian forbade not merely circumcision, but the observance of the Sabbath or any Jewish holyday, and the public performance of any Hebrew ritual. . . . The Council at Jamnia was dissolved and outlawed; a minor and powerless council was permitted at Lydda, but public instruction in the Law was prohibited on pain of death. . . ." (Durant, *ibid.*, page 548).

During the centuries following the time of Christ, and the destruction of the Temple, and the banishment of Jews from Jerusalem in the time of Hadrian, the Jews began writing down

their vast bodies of literature known as the Talmuds.

Writes Will Durant:

"In the Temple, the synagogues, and the schools of Palestine and Babylonia the scribes and the rabbis composed those enormous bodies of law and commentary known as the Palestinian and Babylonian Talmuds. Moses, they held, had left to his people not only a written Law in the Pentateuch, but also an Oral Law, which had been handed down and expanded from teacher to pupil, from generation to generation. *It had been the main point of contention between the Pharisees and the Sadducees whether this oral Law was also of divine origin and binding force.* As the Sadducees disappeared after the Dispersion of A.D. 70, and the rabbis inherited the tradition of the Pharisees, the oral Law was accepted by all orthodox Jews as God's commandment, *and was added to the Pentateuch to constitute the Torah or Law by which they lived,* and in which, quite literally, they had their being" (*The Story of Civilization, "The Age of Faith,"* vol.4, page 350).

Clearly, the Sadducees disputed with the Pharisees over the true meaning and importance of the "Oral Law," even as Jesus Christ disputed with them over the very same issues, as they applied to washings and cleansings, Sabbath laws, and the like. But after the destruction of the Temple, these "oral traditions" began to assume even GREATER meaning and importance to the Jewish people. While scattered in the Diaspora, their very existence threatened seemingly on a daily basis, they clung with increasing desperation to their "oral traditions," as a means of maintaining unity and cohesion.

### ***The Corruption of the Visible Christian Church***

In the meantime, what was happening to the Christian Church? We don't have space to go into the sad story here, but the Church itself -- like the Jews of the Diaspora -- also went into increasing apostasy and idolatry. The apostasy began even during the days of the apostles themselves (II Pet.2; Jude; II Tim.4).

Paul rebuked the Galatian church, saying, "I am astonished that you are so quickly deserting the one who called you by the grace of Christ and are turning to a different gospel -- which is really no gospel at all. Evidently some people are throwing you into confusion, and are attempting to pervert the gospel of Christ" (Gal.1:6-7, NIV). Later on he wrote Timothy, and declared, "You know that everyone in the province of Asia has deserted me" (II Tim.1:15, NIV).

By the fourth century, and the Nicean council, in 325 A.D., the visible church no longer represented the original, pristine faith at all. Will Durant says in *The Rise of Civilization*:

"Christianity did not destroy paganism; it adopted it. The Greek mind, dying, came to a transmigrated life in the theology and liturgy of the Church . . . the Greek mysteries passed down into the impressive mystery of the Mass. Other pagan cultures contributed to the syncretistic result. From Egypt came the idea of a divine trinity . . . From Egypt the adoration of the Mother and Child, and the mystic theosophy that made Neoplatonism and Gnosticism, and obscured the Christian creed. . . . From Phrygia came the worship of the Great Mother; from Syria the resurrection drama of Adonis [Easter celebration]. . . . The Mithraic ritual so closely resembled the eucharistic sacrifice of

the Mass that Christian fathers charged the Devil with inventing these similarities to mislead frail minds. *Christianity was the last great creation of the ancient pagan world*" ("Caesar and Christ," vol.3, p.595).

Thus by the fourth century, Judaism wasn't the only religion in serious trouble, and undergoing a tremendous transformation, from its original form. Christianity, as the world knows and recognizes it, strayed from the original teachings of the church Jesus built, and became a catholic, worldwide bastion of neo-paganism. The truth of the Scriptures was buried under tons of pagan ritual and practice; the Scriptures were done away with, changed into metaphors and the commandments were claimed to be "nailed to the cross," and abolished.

The Church, in effect, rejected all Scriptural Law, and replaced it with "grace."

The Jews, on the other hand, went to the opposite extreme -- and institutionalized tradition as law, especially "Oral Law," and placed it on a pedestal as more important than the Scriptures themselves. The Jews forgot the admonition of God, through Moses, "*Do not add to what I command you, and do not subtract from it, but keep the commands of the Lord your God that I give you*" (Deut.4:2, NIV). They are still laboring in this spiritual "fog bank" and can't see what they have actually done.

### ***Supremacy of the "Oral Law"?***

Oral law, as we have seen, became of even more importance to them than Scripture itself! The oral law, which was supposed to be a blessing, in effect became a curse to the Jews! Originally, no doubt, many of its aspects were good and useful, interpreting the rules of sacrifices, rituals, offerings, temple duties of priests, and the like. But over time, with ever newer rulings and additions, it eventually became the "yoke of bondage" to which Jesus Christ and the apostles referred (Matt.23:4; Acts 15:10; Gal.5:1-4).

This oral law was composed of rabbinical decisions, rulings, opinions, and legal requirements added to the Torah, or Scriptures, which even went so far as to nullify and erase the true laws of God in the minds of the people. Jesus put it very clearly when He declared, "Full well ye reject the commandment of God, that ye may *keep your own tradition*" -- that is, the great body of oral laws which had been added generation after generation (see Mark 7:9), "making the law of God of *none effect* through your *tradition, which ye have delivered*" (Mark 7:13).

These oral traditions or laws were "delivered" from generation to generation, and got worse and worse, as the Jewish leadership grew increasingly distant from the Word of God. Will Durant wrote about this serious problem:

"The Talmud, so far as it is halacha, is also God's eternal word; it is the formulation of laws orally communicated to Moses by God, and by Moses to his successors; and its decrees are as binding as anything in the Scriptures. *Some rabbis ranked the Mishnah ABOVE the Scriptures in authority, as being a later and revised form of the Law. Certain rabbinical edicts frankly VOIDED LAWS of the Pentateuch, or interpreted them into harmlessness.* During the Middle Ages (476-1492) the Jews of Germany and France studied the Talmud far more than the Scriptures" (Durant, vol.4, p.353).

It was under these conditions and circumstances, then, that we come to the pivotal year of 358 A.D. when Hillel II and his compatriots nullified the Biblical calendar, ostensibly to preserve the rituals and holy days of Judaism, and their oral traditions, and reinterpreted it as a mathematical calendar with rigid, fixed "new moons," and the addition of new halachic "postponements."

They may well have been sincere, and well-intentioned, so far as that goes. But their actions constituted a lack of respect toward the Law of God, a lack of faith in the protection of God, and a distinctive lack of obedience to the Torah of God.

### *Rise of the Karaites*

In the centuries following, the Jews became very numerous in the lands of Persia, Babylon, and Syria. They were allowed to be ruled in their internal affairs by their own exilarch and the rulers of their religious academies. In 658 A.D., the Jewish rabbinical academy of Sura, in the Islamic empire, was freed from the rule of the exilarch, and given its independence. The leader took the title of Gaon, or Excellency, and the Gaonate ruled Jewry from the seventh to the eleventh centuries.

Then a fascinating event occurred. In 762 A.D., the Exilarch Solomon died, and his nephew Anan ben David stood in line to succeed him. But the heads of Sura and Pumbeditha discarded the hereditary principle, and installed his younger brother Chananya. Bypassed and rejected, Anan fled to Palestine and rebelled against the established system, and founded his own synagogue, and "called upon Jews everywhere to reject the Talmud and obey only the law of the Pentateuch" (Durant, *ibid.*, p.367). Says Will Durant:

"This was a return to the position of the SADDUCEES; it corresponded to . . . the Protestant abandonment of Catholic traditions for a return to the Gospels. Anan went further, and reexamined the Pentateuch in a commentary that marked a bold advance in the critical study of the Biblical text. *He protested against the CHANGES that the Talmudic rabbis had made IN THE MOSAIC LAW by their adaptive interpretations, and insisted on the strict fulfillment of the Pentateuch decrees; hence his followers received the name Quaraites [Karaites] -- 'adherents of the text.'* Anan praised Jesus as a holy man who had wished to set aside not the written Law of Moses but only the oral Law of the scribes and Pharisees. Jesus, in Anan's view, had aimed not to found a new religion but to cleanse and strengthen Judaism" (*ibid.*).

When the Muslims swept through the Middle East in the seventh century, they gave the Jews within their empire a measure of autonomy and self-rule, under a system known as the Exilarchate. Overnight, as it were, the Rabbinate turned from a more or less local Babylonian phenomenon into a widespread monolithic political power among Jews throughout the Middle East. From the 3rd to the 5th centuries, they had developed a body of religious laws known as the Babylonian Talmud, which were now imposed on Jews throughout the Muslim empire. Resistance especially in the east was severe and fierce. Eastern Jews had never heard of the "Talmud," and did not accept it easily.

In the eighth century, Anan ben David Hanassi rose up and fed the fuel of the fires of

resistance. He organized Jews to resist the Rabbinates, and also lobbied the Caliphate of the Muslim empire to establish a second Exilarchate for those Jews who disagreed with the Rabbis and their authority -- that is, those many Jews who rejected the Talmud. His following later merged with other anti-Talmud groups, and became known as the "Followers of the Bible" -- Bnei Mikra -- which was later abbreviated into "Karaim" or "Karaites."

Anan ben David declared, "Search ye well in the Scripture and do not rely on my opinion." Sounds a lot like Herbert W. Armstrong, who said often, "Don't believe me, or any other man -- believe what you find in your own Bible!"

The Karaites, therefore, are a legitimate branch of Judaism. They trace their beliefs and practices back to the original Sadducees of the Second Temple period. They, like them, reject most of the "traditions" of the Jewish elders -- even as Jesus Christ did. They rejected also the wearing of "phylacteries" -- little boxes containing scriptures bound on the right wrist and on the forehead. They take Moses' admonition to bind the Torah to our right hands and foreheads as a metaphorical command, meaning to take them to heart and to apply them in all our activities (see Deut.6:4-8).

### *Reemergence of Karaites in Israel, Today*

The ancient religious sect of the Sadducees, which was later identified as the Karaites, has once again been reborn in modern day Israel. A website on the Internet, identified as the "Karaites Korner," claims to be a modern remnant of the *true* form of Judaism, going back to the original Sadducees, who claim to be back to Moses and Aaron.

Like their predecessors, the modern Karaites dispute the Jewish changes to the Laws of God, and their many "traditions" and "oral law." They also observe the original Hebrew calendar, by observing the growth of barley around Jerusalem and nearby precincts, and have planted several crops of barley, in different places, to confirm the true "green ears" of the new barley every spring. They also visually sight the New Moon, every month, from the region around Jerusalem, and reject the modern Jewish calendar inaugurated by Hillel II.

Like their predecessors, the modern Karaites are thoroughly Jewish, and also reject the Messiahship of Jesus Christ, and the authority of the New Testament. They, like the ancient Sadducees, also count Pentecost from the wrong day -- from the Sunday following the weekly Sabbath during the days of unleavened bread.

Karaism has never been a monolithic movement, where everyone agrees with everyone else. Because the burden of interpretation lies with each individual, and not a central authority, one finds great differences of opinion on many subjects among different Karaites. This is looked upon as a strength, rather than a weakness, preventing Karaism from becoming bogged down with a given interpretation despite the obviousness of its error.

Despite the diversity within Karaism, however, there are still basic underlying principles of doctrine which all Karaites hold as sacred. They all believe in One God, as do other Jews. They all believe in the divinity and authority of the 24 books of the Tanakh, but reject the

Apocrypha, Pseudopigrapha, and the New Testament and the Koran. They also believe in the ultimate coming of a Davidic Messiah as described in the Bible (such as Isaiah 11:1). All Karaites reject Jesus Christ -- Yeshua Moshiach -- as the Messiah.

### ***History Repeats Itself!***

So once again, as in Bible times, we have the scene of two Jewish religious groups -- the descendants of the Sadducees and Pharisees -- battling it out over the "oral Law" and Jewish "traditions."

And once again, in the midst of the picture, we have true Christians -- true Messianic believers and followers of the Christ -- returning to the "FAITH once delivered to the saints" (Jude 3). We must weave our way carefully through the labyrinthine jungle of "oral laws," traditions, and commandments of men, and sort out the original, true LAWS OF GOD, as they are revealed and expounded in the Scriptures.

Once again, we see proved beyond any doubt that both Jews and Gentiles have gone astray from the truth of God.

### ***"To the Jews" -- WHICH Jews?***

But in the meantime, what should we as God's people, do? Some say we should follow the modern Orthodox Jews in error and ignorance, simply because to do otherwise would be to "add" to the chaos and confusion over the calendar. Some say that since the "oracles" were committed to the "Jews" (Rom.3:2-4), we should accept the standard Jewish calendar, even with its postponements, additions, and changes. Is this really true?

It is true that the apostle Paul stated that to the Jews were committed the "oracles" of God. But wait a minute. Just who are the "Jews"? And *which Jews* was Paul talking about? He did not say "Pharisees," or their successors. He simply declared: "What advantage, then, is there in being a *Jew*, or what value is there in circumcision? Much in every way! First of all, they have been entrusted with the very words of God" (Rom.3:1-2).

The King James Version uses the word "oracles of God" here, but what are these oracles? The original Greek here simply means the WORDS of God -- that is, the Scriptures, and all that pertains to them. This could certainly include knowledge passed on by scribes, elders and priests by word of mouth from generation to generation, regarding the sacrifices, rituals, conduct of religious rituals at the Sanctuary or Temple, divers washings, and specialized knowledge concerning astronomy to be used as a "back-up" proof of the calendar New Moon sightings.

However, those who focus on this verse to "prove" we must follow the *traditional* Orthodox Jewish calendar overlook one vital point of this verse. Paul did NOT say "Pharisees," he said "*Jews*" -- and that would include ALL the religious elements of ancient Jewish society! In other words, both the Sadducees AND Pharisees and other Jewish groups in Judea, including the Essenes, were given the oracles or words of God -- *not only the Pharisees*. One of those groups was the Sadducees -- and *their* successors, the Karaite Jews!

The Karaite Jews, descended from the Sadducees, themselves rejected the calendar innovations created by Hillel II and his followers. When authentic Jewish groups disagree among themselves, about the calendar, then we need not "flip a coin" to decide which is right. In such cases, we must go to the "court of final resort" -- the Scriptures themselves -- to prove who is right and who is wrong.

As Paul himself wrote, "Will *their* lack of faith [and obedience] nullify God's faithfulness? Not at all! Let God be true, and every man a liar" (Romans 3:3, NIV). The Karaite Jews and their modern descendants do not accept the revised calendar of 358 A.D., and we certainly have no obligation to do so, either! The Word of God should be our supreme standard of authority -- not the traditions of the Jews!

Paul's comments in Romans 3:1-2 do NOT mean we must follow one particular branch of the Jews, at all times, on Biblical exegesis -- or follow the Jewish calendar which was adopted in 358 A.D. Not at all! As we have seen, the *Jews themselves were in disagreement over that calendar and its changes authorized by Hillel II!* The Karaite Jews, followers in the footsteps of the ancient Sadducean priests, totally rejected that calendar!

Clearly, when one group of Jews -- even the dominant group -- decides to CHANGE even the plain Scriptural RULES governing the calendar, the month of Abib, the sighting and observance of REAL "New Moons," and so forth, *we are not obligated, of necessity, to follow them AT ALL!*

As the apostle Paul would say, "*God forbid!*"

Should we follow the traditional Jewish calendar, even when we have *PROVED* it is in egregious error based on *tradition* rather than the Word of God? Of course not!

*God forbid!*

### ***The Faith Once Delivered***

Rather, let's get back to the faith -- body of doctrines -- once delivered to the saints. Let's observe the SAME CALENDAR JESUS CHRIST DID, and all the apostles, and the early Church -- BEFORE the detestable and hateful "postponements" and changes were made to the calendar in 358 A.D.!

The apostle Jude made it very plain. He wrote, "Dear friends, although I was very eager to write to you about the salvation we share, I felt I had to write and *urge you to CONTEND for the faith* that was ONCE FOR ALL entrusted to the saints. For certain men, whose condemnation was written about long ago have secretly slipped in among you" (Jude 3-4, NIV).

Anytime we come to see that we have been in error, in the past, should we cover it up, deny it, and go on as if nothing had happened? *Absolutely not!*

Let's understand this! Human "TRADITIONS" made VOID the laws of God! Whenever there is a conflict between tradition, or oral testimony, or the opinions of rabbis, ministers, or scholars, and the LAW OF GOD, we must choose the LAW OF GOD!

Jesus Christ made it plain as day: He declared, twice: "It is written: Man does not live by bread alone, but on *every word that comes from the mouth of God*" (Matt.4:4; Luke 4:4, NIV).

Isaiah the prophet also made it plain: "To the law and to the testimony [Scripture]! If they do not speak according to *this word*, they have no light of dawn" (Isaiah 8:20, NIV).

Likewise, Paul declared in clear and unmistakable language: "*ALL SCRIPTURE* is God-breathed, and is useful for teaching, rebuking, correcting and training in righteousness, so that the man of God may be thoroughly equipped for every good work" (II Tim.3:16-17, NIV).

When we find errors in what we have believed, and assumed, in the past, what should we do? How should we handle them? I believe that the answer is crystal clear. The apostle Paul says, in ringing words: "In the past God overlooked such ignorance, but *NOW He commands all people everywhere to REPENT*" (Acts 17:30).

Jesus Christ, Yeshua the Messiah, declared plainly,

"Yet a time is coming and has now come when the true worshipers will worship the Father in spirit and truth, for they are the kind of worshipers the Father seeks. God is spirit, and His worshipers must worship *in spirit and in truth*" (John 4:23-24, NIV).

Jesus also declared, "If you hold to my teaching, you are really my disciples. Then you will *know the truth, and the truth will set you free*" (John 8:31-32).

## *Chapter Six*

# **A New Look at the Pharisees and ‘Moses’ Seat’**

*In Matthew 23, Jesus Christ said the Pharisees sat in “Moses’ seat,” and that therefore we should do and observe according to their teachings – or so many believe, today. But what did the Messiah REALLY say? And what does this have to do with the Jewish Calendar and its observance?*

Many of those who claim that we must follow the Jewish calendar, right or wrong, even if it does have errors, base this assertion on the scripture found in Matthew 23:2-3, where Jesus Christ appears to tell His followers to follow the Pharisees, and do what they say to do. The reasoning is as follows: The modern and historical Rabbis have followed in the tradition of the Pharisees. Therefore, the Pharisaical authority has devolved to them. Therefore, we must accept the calendar changes made by Hillel II in 358 A.D., and not make an issue over them.

This kind of reasoning, however, says that we should follow the Jewish calendar, *even if it is WRONG!*

*Could this be what Jesus meant? Would the Messiah endorse ERROR?*

Let’s understand this! Just what did Yeshua mean in Matthew 23? To help answer this question, let’s look at Matthew 23, the rest of the New Testament evidence, and the *original HEBREW version* of the perplexing Scripture in Matthew 23:2-3.

### ***The Hebrew Text of Matthew***

The complete Hebrew text of the gospel of Matthew is still in existence! Although many may not be aware of it, Matthew originally wrote his gospel in the Hebrew language. The early church fathers attested to this fact in their writings.

Eusebius in his *Church History*, discussing the canonization of the Scriptures, quoted Origen as follows: “Among the four gospels, which are the only indisputable ones in the Church of God under heaven, I have learned by tradition that the first was written by Matthew, who was once a publican, but afterwards an apostle of Jesus Christ, and it was *prepared for the converts from Judaism, and published in the Hebrew language*” (*Nicene and Post-Nicene Fathers*, vol. 1, *The Church History of Eusebius*, book VI, chap.xxv, 4, page 272).

Eusebius himself tells us, “For Matthew, who had at first preached to the Hebrews, when he was about to go to other peoples, committed his Gospel to writing *in his native tongue*, and thus compensated those whom he was obliged to leave for the loss of his presence” (*ibid.*, book III, chap. XXIV, 6, page 152).

Eusebius quotes Irenaeus also on this matter of Matthew’s gospel. According to Irenaeus, “Matthew published his Gospel among the Hebrews *in their own language*, while Peter and Paul were preaching and founding the church in Rome” (*ibid.*, book V, chap. VIII, 2, page 222).

Irenaeus, in *Against Heresies*, made this statement. He declared, as recorded in *Ante-Nicene Fathers*, “Matthew also issued a written Gospel among the Hebrews in their own dialect, while Peter and Paul were preaching at Rome, and laying the foundations of the Church” (book III, chap.I, 1, vol. 1, page 414).

Eusebius also quotes Papias, (circa 60-130 A.D.), as the earliest church father who related that Matthew wrote his Gospel in Hebrew. He declared: “But concerning Matthew he [Papias] writes as follows: ‘So then Matthew wrote the oracles in the Hebrew language, and every one interpreted them as he was able’” (*Nicene and Post-Nicene Fathers*, vol. 1, *The Church History of Eusebius*, bk. III, chap.39, 16, page 173).

### ***Matthew’s Hebrew Gospel***

But do we have a copy of Matthew’s gospel in the Hebrew language, as it was originally written, according to these ancient sources?

The amazing fact is that the complete Hebrew text of Matthew’s gospel was preserved in the body of a 14<sup>th</sup> century Jewish polemical treatise entitled *Evan Bohar*. The author of the treatise, one by the name of Shem Tov Ben Isaac Ben Shaprut, completed his work in 1385 A.D. and revised it several times afterwards. He utilized nine different Hebrew manuscripts of the preserved Gospel of Matthew to compile his translation.

Ben Shaprut was no Christian. He was a Jewish rabbi who was writing to defend his faith against the encroachments of Christian theologians. To counter-act the teachings of Matthew, he used Matthew’s original Hebrew Gospel, and carefully compiled his translation.

The gospel of Matthew, in the Hebrew, has now been translated into English, and is available from Mercer University Press, in Macon, Georgia (ISBN 0-86554-4700). It is titled simply, *Hebrew Gospel of Matthew*, by George Howard. It is a fascinating book to read, and

compare with our modern English versions, translated from the Greek copies of the Gospel. The similarities are most remarkable, as well as the many insights the Hebrew gives in many textual areas where the Greek seems mystifying.

Says George Howard, it is clear from the evidence that the Hebrew Matthew contained in the text of Shem Tov's *Evan Bohan* predates the 14<sup>th</sup> century – in fact, the evidence strongly suggests it goes back to the earliest centuries since Christ!

Howard declares that of the nine manuscripts used by Shem Tov Ben Shaprut, two of the writings are virtually identical, are carefully copied, and show minimal tendency toward scribal error or assimilation to the canonical Greek and Latin.

Says Howard, since the discovery of the Dead Sea Scrolls, many of which are written in Hebrew, it is now known for a fact that Hebrew was used as a written medium in the first century – the time of Christ and the apostles. Hebrew, and even Greek, were both spoken in first century Palestine.

Shem-Tov's Hebrew Matthew is the earliest complete Hebrew text we now have of Matthew's gospel. However, Jewish and anti-Christian writings prior to the 14<sup>th</sup> century often quote excerpts from Matthew in Hebrew, in a Shem-Tov type form. Says Howard, "Shem-Tov's comments, scattered throughout the Hebrew text, confirm that this text is not a creation of the fourteenth century. The comments preserve telltale remarks implying that Shem-Tov had before him a preexisting Hebrew Matthew" (*Hebrew Gospel of Matthew*, page 173).

Although Howard says Shem-Tov's Matthew "does not preserve the original in a pure form," nevertheless, he adds, "Considerable parts of the original, however, appear to remain, including its unpolished style, ungrammatical constructions, and Aramaized forms" (p.178).

The Hebrew gospel of Matthew, he points out, is saturated with literary devices, such as puns, word connections, and alliteration, which make sense in Hebrew, but are lost in the Greek form of Matthew. They belong to the very structure of the Hebrew text, thus showing that the Hebrew is authentic, and was not translated from the Greek texts of Matthew which were extant.

Interestingly, the Hebrew Matthew text of Shem Tov has "significant agreement" with the Codex Sinaiticus, which was discovered in the middle of the 19<sup>th</sup> century, five centuries after Shem Tov translated his copy from the Hebrew. The Codex Sinaiticus was discovered in the monastery of St. Catherine in the Sinai Peninsula where it had been hidden for many centuries, since the medieval period, until its discovery. As Howard states, therefore, "The roots for their agreement, therefore, must go back to the early centuries of the Christian era" (page 192).

Also pointing to the early age of the Shem Tov Matthew, it is striking in that it has many agreements with the Old Syriac gospel of Matthew, which was displaced by the Peshitta text around the end of the fifth century, and only two copies have survived. However, "The many readings shared by Shem-Tov and the Old Syriac, therefore, strongly suggest a relationship, whose roots go back to the early centuries of the Christian era" says Howard (p. 196).

Howard points out that there are also readings in Shem-Tov's Matthew which agree with one of the other Gospels, but disagree with the Greek version of Matthew. This fact, he says, suggest that the author of John's gospel, for example, which was written later, must have known of a Shem-Tov type of text for Matthew's gospel, and used it when he wrote his gospel.

Thus, when we look at it objectively, there is strong reason to believe that the Shem-Tov Hebrew Gospel of Matthew is a very useful and helpful copy of the original gospel of Matthew, which was indeed written in Hebrew, according to the early church fathers, based on knowledge handed down to them.

Let us, therefore, examine the text of Shem-Tov's Matthew, in Matthew 23, where the controversy arises as to just what Matthew was recording concerning the "seat of Moses," upon which the scribes and Pharisees "sat."

### *Moses' Seat in History*

In the King James Version of the Bible, we read in Matthew 23:2-3, the following words of Jesus: "The scribes and Pharisees sit in Moses' seat: All therefore whatsoever they bid you observe, that observe and do; but do not ye after their works: for they say, and do not."

The NIV Bible has these verses: "The teachers of the law and the Pharisees sit in Moses' seat. So you must obey them and do everything they tell you to. But do not what they do, for they do not practice what they preach."

Moffat has this passage: "The scribes and the Pharisees sit on the seat of Moses; so do whatever they tell you, obey them, but do not do as they do. They talk, but they do not act."

Now, it *sounds, on the surface*, that Jesus is saying do everything the scribes and Pharisees teach, command, whatever they tell you – EVERYTHING!

But this cannot possibly be true, because this same Jesus also says: "Take heed and beware of the LEAVEN of the Pharisees and of the Sadducees" (Matt.16:6). The disciples thought He was talking about physical bread, containing leavening, but He explained He was not talking about physical bread, but their TEACHING! "Then understood they how that he bade them not beware of the leaven of bread, but of the DOCTRINE of the Pharisees and of the Sadducees" (verses 7-12).

The Pharisees claimed to represent Moses; they said they followed Moses' teachings. But all too often, they did not! They were hypocrites! They added many additional commands to the laws God gave through Moses – including many "Sabbath" restrictions, holy day restrictions, and spiritual minutiae, turning the laws of God into a yoke of miserable bondage which nobody could bear.

Jesus told His disciples, in Luke's gospel, "Beware of the leaven of the Pharisees, which is hypocrisy. For there is nothing covered, that shall not be revealed; neither hid, that shall not

be known. Therefore, whatsoever ye have spoken in darkness shall be heard in the light; and that which ye have spoken in the ear in closets shall be preached upon the housetops” (Luke 12:1-3).

Jesus certainly did not mean for us to do *everything* that the Pharisees taught – for He Himself often contradicted them, and disobeyed their “legal requirements” regarding the Sabbath, washing the hands, and such like! In fact, He upbraided and corrected them on these and similar issues, where they had made the laws of Moses, and of God, whom they claimed to represent, of NO EFFECT!

When the Pharisees questioned why His disciples did not wash their hands before eating, according to their ritual and practice, Jesus replied: “Why do ye also transgress the commandment of God by your tradition? For God commanded, saying, Honour thy father and mother: and, He that curseth father or mother, let him die the death. But ye say, Whosoever shall say to his father or mother, It is a gift, by whatsoever thou mightest be profited by me; and honour not his father or his mother, he shall be free. *Thus have ye made the commandment of God of none effect by your tradition. Ye hypocrites, well did Isaiah prophesy of you, saying, This people draweth nigh unto me with their mouth, and honoureth me with their lips; but their heart is far from me. But IN VAIN they do worship me, teaching for DOCTRINES the commandments of men . . .*” (Matt.15:3-9).

Jesus certainly did not mean for His disciples to do EVERYTHING the scribes and Pharisees taught, regarding the Scriptures, the law of God, because they added many VAIN TRADITIONS and false interpretations to that LAW given by God through Moses!

What, then, did He mean in Matthew 23:2-3?

### ***What Do You Mean, “Moses’ Seat”?***

In Exodus 18.13 we read, "And it came to pass on the morrow, that Moses SAT to judge the people: and the people stood by Moses from the morning unto the evening." Now, let's be honest with the Word of God. Moses sat, judging the people. Obviously, then, he was sitting down – in a “seat” of some sort, as he exercised his authority, given to him by God. What was this “authority? Well, he JUDGED among the people! How did he do this?

Let us read on, and see exactly what Moses did, while he "sat" in his seat! Moses’ father-in-law, Jethro, was concerned that Moses would wear himself out, handling so many people's problems. He asked him why he did this.

"And Moses said unto his father in law, 'Because the people come unto me to INQUIRE OF GOD: When they have a matter, they come unto me; and I *judge* between one and another, and I DO MAKE THEM KNOW THE STATUTES OF GOD, AND HIS LAWS" (Exodus 18.15-16).

Do you see? Moses, in his "seat," TAUGHT THE PEOPLE THE LAWS, COMMANDMENTS, AND STATUTES OF GOD! He was a ruler and a teacher. He

expounded and interpreted God's Laws, and helped people see HOW THEY APPLIED in specific, human and societal situations.

This was the primary function of those who later "sat in Moses' seat." This was what Jesus said plainly that the Pharisees were responsible for. He said they sat in Moses' seat – so the responsibility of explaining, expounding, interpreting God's laws, and issuing judgments based upon them, was theirs to handle. Jesus said so. BUT – did He really say we should do WHATEVER they tell us to do – *even if it disagreed with the words of Moses – and the Torah – the WRITTEN LAWS of GOD?*

*Of course not!* The Scriptures CANNOT be broken (John 10:35). God's Word is TRUTH (John 17:17). Therefore, one Scripture cannot contradict another one. If it appears to be so, then it must be our UNDERSTANDING that is wrong!

Jesus plainly said we are to do what the scribes and Pharisees said, and observe what they said, but elsewhere He plainly told us to BEWARE of their doctrines and their teachings – particularly their "TRADITIONS OF MEN," which they ADDED TO the Laws of Moses and the Laws of GOD!

Clearly, their authority was to be obeyed *so long as it was not used to contradict the very Word of God itself*, so long as their words were NOT CONTRARY to Scripture, or the plain meaning of God's LAW, or the express commands of Jesus Christ, the Word of God (John 1:1-3, 14).

### ***The Apostles and the Jewish Sanhedrin***

In the book of Acts, the Pharisees, sitting in the Sanhedrin, their Supreme Court, *commanded* the apostles of Christ not to preach in His Name. This was a direct command, which they gave while they "sat" on the "seat of Moses," and issued their judicial rulings and decisions. We read in Acts: "And when they [the officers] had brought them [the apostles], they set them before the council [the Sanhedrin]: and the high priest asked them, saying, Did not we straitly COMMAND you that ye should not teach in this name? And, behold, ye have filled Jerusalem with your doctrine, and intend to bring this man's blood upon us. Then Peter and the other apostles answered and said, "*We ought to OBEY GOD rather than men*" (Acts 5:27-29).

Notice! The apostles themselves ran into this situation, where the scribes and Pharisees commanded them not to preach in the name of Jesus. This was a "command" issued by the Sanhedrin – by those who "sat" on "Moses' seat."

According to some people's interpretation, therefore, Peter and the apostles should have said, "Okay, you're right. You sit in Moses' seat. Whatever you say, we must do – everything you say. Therefore, we apologize, and we will no longer preach in the name of Christ!"

Does that make any sense? Of course NOT!

Peter and the apostles responded, "We must *obey God rather than man*" (Acts 5:29). How clear! The REAL meaning of Jesus' words, therefore, in Matthew 23:2-3, is that we should OBEY the Pharisees and scribes SO LONG AS WHAT THEY SAY IS IN ACCORDANCE WITH THE WORD – THE WRITTEN LAW – OF GOD!

Otherwise, when they disagree with God's plain instructions, we must "OBEY GOD *rather than men*" – *even men who "sit" in "Moses' seat"!*

The fact that the Pharisees, scribes, and priests of Jesus' day, sometimes *abused* their authority, did not give the people license to disobey them when they taught the truth according to the Scriptures. Their office, as leaders and teachers, was to be respected and honored. But whenever they issued a decree or command that contradicted GOD's Word, then, we are to obey God rather than even human authority which sits in Moses' seat! We should, however, obey them, in all those matters where there is no conflict with the Word of God!

Let me reiterate this vital point: The fact that the Pharisees, and priests of Jesus' day, at times abused their authority, did not give the people license to disobey them *when they taught the commandments of God*, for those commandments did not originate with the Pharisees, but with GOD!

### ***Laws of God Vs. Traditions of Men***

We all know that the Pharisees were hypocrites, and fools, in Christ's time (see Matthew 23:13,14,15,17,19,23,24,26,27,28,29,33). They, as a whole, had become a "generation of vipers."

But that did not do away with their authority from God, as they "sat on Moses' seat," to teach the commandments of God!

We know, however, that they added many human "do's and don'ts" to the law of God, and human traditions, making the law of God of no effect -- such as the "washing of cups, pitchers and kettles" (Mark 7.4).

These "traditions" – called "halacha" by the Rabbis -- they "added" to the laws of God, as a sort of "fence" to prevent the laws being trampled. But the FENCE often replaced the LAW itself, becoming another LAW!

Their "traditions of men," therefore, were not binding upon the people. God never gave the scribes and Pharisees authority to ADD TO His law -- merely to explain and interpret it correctly!

Jesus rebuked them severely for this excess and abuse of their God-given authority. He castigated them for sometimes supplanting their own traditions of men for the commandments of God (Matt.5, 15; Mark 7). But He never once accused them of changing the day of a holy day, or counting Pentecost wrongly, or found fault with their observation of the New Moons, and the calendar which they followed, based on those monthly observations, and backed up by their calendar calculations!

It should be clear then that we must understand Jesus' words in Matthew 23:2-3 in the light of the other Scriptures which bear on this subject of the authority of the scribes and Pharisees. Jesus very plainly called them a pack of wolves, a den of snakes, hypocrites and fools, and said to BEWARE of their doctrines!

So where do we draw the line?

The *Jamieson, Fausset and Brown Commentary* points out regarding these verses:

**"In Moses' seat** that is, *AS INTERPRETERS OF THE LAW* GIVEN BY MOSES.

"All therefore -- that is, all which, as *SITTING IN THAT SEAT*, and *TEACHING OUT OF THAT LAW*, they bid you observe, that observe and do. The word 'therefore' is thus, it will be seen, of *GREAT IMPORTANCE, AS LIMITING THOSE INJUNCTIONS WHICH HE WOULD HAVE THEM OBEY TO WHAT THEY FETCHED FROM THE LAW ITSELF*. In requiring *EXPLICIT OBEDIENCE* to such injunctions, He would have them to recognize the *AUTHORITY BY WHICH THEY TAUGHT* over and above the obligation of the law itself -- an important principle truly; but He who denounced the traditions of such teachers (chap. 15:3) cannot have meant here to throw His shield over these [traditions, and rules which were *not* "fetched from the law itself"] . . ."

In other words, "Moses' seat" meant authority to administer the *LAW OF GOD* -- the Law given by God to Moses -- correctly. And, as long as they were administering that Law, and teaching it correctly, they were to be *OBEYED*. However, this did not include their own humanly devised *traditions*, or man-made "laws," because such "traditions of men" and "added" human commandments were *NOT* given to Moses and were never part of the Law of God!

In other words, the Pharisees were guilty of *SIN* -- breaking God's Law (I John 3:4) -- because they *ADDED* to God's Laws their *OWN* legal requirements as hedges around the Law of God, and many other additional laws and regulations, which were a heavy and grievous *YOKE* of bondage over the people! They violated God's commandment in Deuteronomy, where He said plainly: "*You shall not add to the word which I command you, nor take from it, that you may KEEP the commandments of the LORD your God which I command you*" (Deut.4:2, NKJV).

This principle is *SO* important, that God said it *TWICE*! He declared in chapter 12 of Deuteronomy, "*Whatever I command you, be careful to observe IT; you shall not ADD TO it nor take away from it*" (Deut.12:32).

The Pharisees were guilty of *BOTH*! They added many self-righteous regulations to the simple Sabbath commandment to *REST* on that day, they proceeded to enumerate 24 different kinds of "work" which was prohibited. As Jesus Christ said, they were, "Blind guides, who strain out a gnat and swallow a camel" (Matt.23:24).

But not only did they *ADD* their own rigorous requirements and legal absurdities, the Pharisees also abrogated and rescinded parts of God's Law. Jesus Himself pointed out how they

in effect rescinded the commandment “Honor thy father and thy mother” by their interpretations concerning gifts their children might give to the priests, nullifying their responsibilities to their parents. God certainly gave the Pharisees no such authority to tamper and mess with His divine Word!

Since that time, of course, the Jews have made many such “modifications” and changes in the Laws of God, calling their changes “halacha,” and deeming them necessary for the application of God’s law in each succeeding generation. As the centuries passed, they became more tied to the additional “traditions” which they added, and more removed from the original intent of the Law and the Law Giver Himself!

Because of these man-made alterations and changes, no wonder God says in His Word, to the Jews, “*Your New Moons, and your appointed feasts, My soul hates; they are a trouble to Me, I am weary of bearing them. When you spread out your hands, I will hide My eyes from you; even though you make many prayers, I will NOT hear*” (Isaiah 1:14-15, NKJV).

Many Jews wonder why God allowed the Holocaust in World War II; they wonder why a loving God would allow such unmitigated and cruel suffering and bloodshed upon the Jewish people. Could their attitude towards His divine Laws be part and parcel of the real Answer? Think about it!

### *A New Look at Matthew 23:2-3*

With all this in mind, therefore, let’s take a new look at the pivotal Scripture in Matthew 23:2-3. Just what kind of authority DID Jesus Christ the Messiah say the “scribes and Pharisees” actually possessed? Just how far did their authority, as they sat upon Moses’ seat, extend? Did they have the right to enact NEW laws and regulations? Did they have the power to issue NEW commandments, to inaugurate NEW statutes and judgments, which were not in the Word of God?

The answer is a resounding, reverberating, thundering *NO!* A thousand times *NO!!!*

We have already seen how the rest of the gospel of Matthew itself answers this question. Christ pointedly declared we must “BEWARE” of the doctrine and teaching of the hypocritical Pharisees, who pretended to worship God, but who invalidated His commandments by supplanting them with their own “commandments of men.”

We have also seen how this sort of situation played itself out in the days of the apostles, when the Pharisees again abused and misused their authority, in the Sanhedrin, to bully, whip, and imprison the apostles, who taught in the name of Jesus Christ, Yeshua the Messiah.

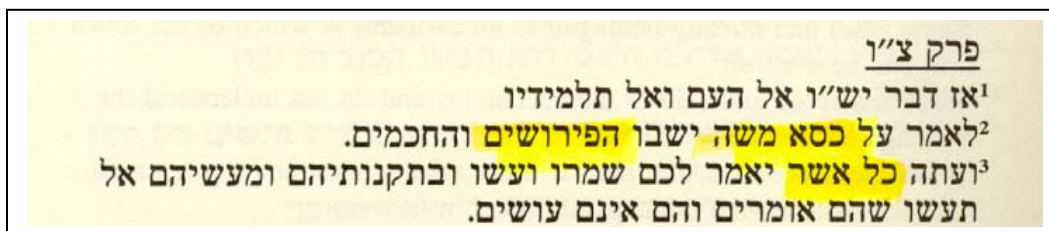
But we still have that strange-sounding passage in Matthew 23:2-3. Just what did Jesus really mean? We know He could not and would not ever contradict Himself. So what was He really talking about?

The solution to this riddle – the answer to this enigma – has been hiding in the HEBREW gospel of Matthew all these centuries! Until recently, it seems, no body had thought to even look there for insight to solve this problem!

Let us notice, now, the HEBREW rendition of these verses, in the original Hebrew gospel of Matthew, and see what light the Hebrew itself will shed on this controversy.

Notice!

Below is the actual Hebrew for Matthew 23:1-3. And following the Hebrew, is the English translation.



The English translation of the Hebrew of Matthew 23:1-3, line by line, reads as follows:

“Then Jesus spoke to the people and to his disciples saying, Upon the seat of Moses the Pharisees and the sages sit. Now all which (they) say to you keep and do; but (according to) their ordinances and deeds do not do because they say and do not.”

Now let's see exactly what Jesus was saying. Notice! First of all He admitted that the Pharisees and sages, or scribes, sat on Moses' seat. They were therefore in authority; they held or wielded that authority. Whether they sat themselves on Moses' seat, or how they got there, was not the issue. Jesus did not address that question. All He said was that they DID sit on Moses' seat. However they came to sit upon that seat is another question altogether, and is immaterial to the discussion. What Jesus said was that they WERE on Moses' seat. So we must DEAL with it.

The next thing He said was that we must “keep and do” what “they” said. But who is the “they” referred to here? Moses and the prophets, who went before, through whom God gave His Laws? Or the conniving, hypocritical, self-righteous Pharisees, who condemned the Son of God, and had Yeshua nailed to the crucifixion stake out of jealousy, envy, and hatred?

To answer this question, let us proceed to the next part of the passage. Jesus said, in plain language, according to the HEBREW gospel of Matthew,

“BUT (ACCORDING TO) THEIR *ORDINANCES* AND DEEDS DO NOT DO . . .”

Now this is not clear in the Greek version of the gospel of Matthew, which our English

Bibles are translated from. But the Hebrew original version of Matthew makes it crystal clear. Jesus Christ plainly said, in crystal clear terms, we are NOT BOUND BY THE “ORDINANCES” – that is, the halachic decisions and commandments – of the Pharisees and rabbis!

The “ORDINANCES” of the Pharisees and rabbis, Jesus Christ said, are NOT BINDING UPON TRUE CHRISTIANS, OR ANY OF THE PEOPLE OF GOD!

In fact, Jesus said in very plain language, “Do NOT do according to their ORDINANCES and deeds”! What “ordinances” did the Pharisees decree as legislation upon the people? Many, many “traditions of men,” and “commandments of men,” as Jesus called them. Among them were many Sabbath laws, laws of washing the hands, pots and pans, laws concerning the releasing of debts, and in 357 A.D., laws adding “postponements” to God calendar, thus changing the dates upon which His annual holy days might fall, as well as doing away with the visual observation of the New Moons each month!

Jesus Christ said in powerful terms, we are *NOT TO DO ACCORDING TO* – OR BE BOUND BY -- THESE RABBINICAL ORDINANCES AND RULES!

Now let’s understand, and get this straight! Let’s go back to these verses once again. Notice carefully. Jesus declared:

“Upon the seat of Moses the Pharisees and the sages sit. Now all which (they) say to you keep and do; but (according to) their ordinances and deeds do not do . . .”

When we carefully analyze this passage, it becomes clear that the “they” whom we are to obey is MOSES AND THE TORAH – the Word of God – as opposed to the whims, decrees, and “ordinances” enacted by the Pharisees and their ilk!

The actual Hebrew language of this passages makes this truth abundantly clear. It reads as follows:

Lamor, al kish Moshe hyoshveh haprushim vehacchochmim.  
Vatah, kol asher yomer lachem shomru veassu. Ovtachnutahem  
Umaashem al tasu. Sh hem omrim vehem anam osim.

Now, before parsing this passage word by word, let’s be sure we get the picture right. All through this chapter, Matthew 23, Jesus Christ spends 39 verses of Scripture telling us how wicked, deplorable, and serpentine, the Pharisees were! He even calls them “SNAKES” and says they are “BLIND guides of the BLIND”! Would He then want His followers to follow “snakes,” and those who are “blind”?

Of course not!

That would be like saying, as one Messianic leader put it, “Uncle Charlie is a pedophile. Uncle Charlie molests children. Uncle Charlie cannot be trusted with your children.

*Nevertheless, when you need a baby sitter, drop your children off at Uncle Charlie's house!"*

Our translations of the gospel of Matthew from the Greek are unclear in this passage. However, according to Eusebius, the Hebrew gospel of Matthew was preserved and stored at the early church library at Caesaria Philipi. It has been handed down to us today, and preserved by the Jews themselves, and appears in Shem Tov's gospel of Matthew.

Now the way some people take Matthew 23:2-3, Jesus Christ was telling His disciples that regardless of the fact that the Pharisees were hypocrites, blind, and wicked beyond measure, we must follow them anyway, since they sit on Moses' seat. However, such an interpretation clearly contradicts the rest of Jesus' saying and commandments, regarding the Pharisees and their teachings!

Could He really be saying, "Yes, the Pharisees are hypocrites and snakes. But listen to them anyway! Do whatever they tell you, regardless!"?

This same Jesus said of them: "Woe to you, scribes and Pharisees, hypocrites! For you travel land and sea to win one proselyte (convert), and when he is won, you make him *twice as much a son of hell* as yourselves" (Matt.23:15, NKJV). Therefore, if you DO follow them, Jesus says, you will become *twice as much a son of hell as they are!*

*Wow!* I might add, therefore, not only "WOE to the scribes and Pharisees, but WOE to all those foolish people who FOLLOW them!!!

Jesus also declared of the Pharisees: "But woe unto you, scribes and Pharisees, hypocrites! For you *shut up the kingdom of heaven* against men; for you neither go in yourselves, nor do you allow those who are entering to go in" (verse 13).

Yeshua also declared: "For I say to you, that unless your righteousness exceeds the righteousness of the scribes and Pharisees, *you will by NO MEANS enter the kingdom of heaven*" (Matt.5:20, NKJV). Isn't that plain enough?

Again, some people misunderstand Jesus' words in Matthew 23, and misapply them, to their own destruction and spiritual hurt. They seem to think we must blindly accept and follow the Pharisees, *right or wrong!* This, however, is a total perversion of understanding the principles of Church Authority! I know a minister who used to say, "Follow Herbert Armstrong, right or wrong!!" He later said, essentially, "Follow Joseph Tkach, right or wrong!" How did he come to that conclusion? Because, in his mind, they were "God's representatives." That is to say, in effect, he taught that they sat on Moses' seat – and therefore had to be obeyed, regardless of whether they taught the truth of God or not!

For shame! How spiritually MAD can people get? How crazy is that? Jesus Christ NEVER said we are to observe whatever the Pharisees tell us, *right or wrong!*

He never said, "Don't ask questions – just OBEY!"

Many of God's people today seem to be in bondage to a "FEAR religion," where they

fear their minister, and are AFRAID to ask questions, and DARE NOT ever disagree with a minister of their Church – lest they would be thrown out!

Well, many Jews in Jesus' day also feared the Pharisees and their "authority," and were afraid of being cast out of the synagogues, and forced to become pariahs in society, if they professed Christ (John 3:1-2; 7:11-13; 9:28-34). Some churches have a "Hitlerian" approach to Church authority. When the minister commands you, "JUMP!," you are expected to ask "How high, Sir," as you go up!

Jesus therefore was not endorsing the authority of the Pharisees, *carte blanche*, without qualification or restraint. Rather, He was simply telling His disciples, and the others who were listening, that the religious leaders – the ministry of that time – the scribes and Pharisees, specifically – ought to be obeyed and respected, in their office, *so long as they taught the laws of God in truth*.

He was not endorsing their authority any more than that!

The same principle applies to every supposed "minister" of God, today. The people are obligated to respect and follow them *only so long as and where they teach the TRUTH OF GOD, and uphold the LAWS and commandments of Almighty God, as they are revealed in His Word!* To follow ANY man when he leads you astray, away from the true laws of God, is to sign your own spiritual DEATH WARRANT!

Jesus said very plainly, of religious leaders in general, and of the scribes and Pharisees in particular: "Every plant which My heavenly Father has not planted will be uprooted. Let them alone. They are blind leaders of the blind. And if the blind leads the blind, both will fall into a ditch" (Matt.15:13-14).

To *follow* such a one, and their teachings, He implied, was a short-cut to disaster and even death!

### ***"Kol Asher Yomer"***

Now let's go over this passage again, analyzing the original Hebrew words and meaning of Christ.

"Iamor. Al kishah Moseh." -- "on the seat of Moses."

"yoshvei haprushim vehacochmin" -- "sit the Pharisees and the sages"

"Veatah, kol asher yomer lachem" -- "and now, all that is said to you, do"

"Shomru veassu. Uvtachnotahem uma-ashem al tasu."

-- "Guard and do. But their ordinances and deeds do not do."

"Sh hem omrim vehem anam osim"

-- "Because they say [Moses] but do not [do Moses]."

So, when we study the original Hebrew of this passage, the meaning of Christ becomes much clearer. The contrast between the Hebrew and the Greek is palpable. According to the original Hebrew, the meaning is: Because the scribes and Pharisees sit in Moses' seat, now all that was said by an individual *in the past, you must do*. In other words, the word "yomer" refers to "all that is said" or has been said, in the past – that is, in the Torah itself, by Moses and the prophets who followed. Christ is telling us that because the Pharisees and scribes sit in Moses' seat, we are to obey all that was said in the past, by Moses and the prophets, that they now teach – the WHOLE Word of God.

The word "yomer" is a singular form in the Hebrew for the word "said." In the Old Testament, we often read, in the Torah, "va-yomer Yahveh el Mosheh," that is, "God spoke to Moses." The word "yomer" refers to what is being said by an individual (singular) to others. Thus "kol asher yomer" is translated, "all that is said." Not "all that THEY (the Pharisees) say."

Since Jesus used the singular form, He meant that which was said by God, Moses, or God's representative" – that is what we must obey and observe and do. IF He had meant we were to do and observe whatever the Pharisees and scribes – PLURAL – commanded us to do, then He would have used the PLURAL form of the verb, which is "omrim."

If Jesus meant for us to blindly follow the scribes and Pharisees, His words would have been: "kol shehem omrim" – that is, "all that they say."

The term "kol asher yomer" speaks of an individual's commands or an individual's declarations to others!

Thus, Matthew 23:3 literally means, "all of which he has said to you." Who is the "he" spoken of? Why, Moses, of course – or, to be exact, God who was speaking through Moses!

Whatever God says, through Moses, in present tense, we are to KEEP – DO – OBSERVE! Or, the word "yomer" in the ongoing present tense can mean also what Yahveh said and continues to say, because His Law is continual, unchanging, and everlasting! God says, "For I am the LORD [Yahveh], I do not change" (Mal.3:6, NKJV). God also says of His Law, which speaks to us eternally: "All His precepts are sure. They stand fast forever and ever, and are done in truth and uprightness" (Psalm 111:7-8).

Thus Christ is saying it is GOD'S WORD which we are to obey and observe and do – whether through Moses or the prophets. He is not saying we are to follow a GROUP such as the sayings of the Pharisees, and their declarations. If He had meant this, He would have used the plural form "omrim."

Therefore, when we analyze it carefully, we find that Jesus Christ in Matthew 23:2-3 is CONTRASTING what GOD and MOSES are saying with what the scribes and Pharisees were saying! This is not a carte blanche endorsement of those hypocrites, but a clear CONTRAST between the words of God through Moses, which we must and should follow, and the words of the Pharisees, who professed to follow Moses, but did not!

Jesus plainly said of the Pharisees, “Do not think that I shall accuse you to the Father; there is one who accuses you – Moses, in whom you trust. For if you believed Moses, you would believe Me; for he wrote about Me. But if you do not believe his writings, how will you believe My words?” (John 5:45-47).

When we look at this passage in the Hebrew, therefore, it is filled with insight and additional understanding. It shows a vivid CONTRAST between the words of God, through Moses, which we are to follow, and the “ordinances” and teachings of the hypocritical scribes and Pharisees. In reality, this passage then SETS THE STAGE for the ongoing and following remarks Jesus makes in the chapter about the character and teachings of the reprehensible Pharisees and their modern-day ilk – all those “ministers” who would seek to establish their “authority” by claiming Moses’ mantle, or who claim to be the inheritors of Herbert Armstrong’s “baton,” but teach contrary to the Scriptures and the Laws of Almighty God! Herbert Armstrong had his faults; that we all know. But to my knowledge, at least, he did not deliberately teach contrary to God’s Word, and kept an open mind to the extent that he did admit and confess ERROR when he saw it proved to him!

This passage in Matthew 23:2-3, therefore, is a severe WARNING to all of those who would claim to sit in “Moses’ seat,” with “authority” from God to support their teachings. The point is, *they had better get their teachings straight from the revealed Word of God, or they are in DEEP spiritual TROUBLE – just like the hypocritical Pharisees!*

Jesus is making it clear in this verse that Rabbinical Judaism claims to be saying and teaching the same thing as Moses, and saying the same thing as Moses, but in reality, they are doing NO SUCH THING! Not in any manner, shape or form! They have gone beyond the boundaries of God’s law, and replaced them with boundaries of their own! This is sacrilege – this is an appalling abomination – this is blasphemy in the sight of God!

When referring to the collective anti-Torah teachings of the Pharisees, Christ uses the plural form in the words “*uvtachnotahem uma-asehem.*” The suffix “hem” is in the plural form, referring to their “ordinances” and their “deeds.”

If the Messiah Yeshua had wanted us to follow the Pharisees blindly, without question, and worship at the footstool of their “authority,” then He would have told us to follow “*kol shehem OMRIM*” – using the plural form of “yomer,” just as He did when referring to their collective man-made ordinances. When referring to God’s Word, or Moses, He uses the word “yomer,” for the singular, but when referring in verse 3 to the ordinances and deeds of the Pharisees, he uses the collective present plural, “omrim.”

In truth, therefore, what Yeshua is telling us in Matthew 23:2-3 is not to follow the scribes and Pharisees, but to DISTANCE OURSELVES FROM THEM! They follow their own ideas and opinions, contrary to Moses. We are to follow the explicit words of Moses and Scripture, without adding anything to them, or subtracting anything from them!

By the time of Christ, those who sat on Moses’ seat had corrupted Moses’ seat, and had forsaken the true Laws of God given through Moses. We are commanded to separate ourselves from all such corruption, and evil, done in the name of God.

Matthew 23:1-39, therefore, is a strong admonition which is completely unified in nature,

with no self-contradiction. It is a strong statement of reproof of false and cowardly religious leaders who seek to impose their own word and authority in place of that of the Word of God. The Pharisees were supremely guilty of these things in their day. Many churches and ministers professing to serve God are equally guilty, today.

It behooves each one of us, today, therefore, to do as the apostle Paul exhorts, and “*PROVE ALL THINGS*; hold fast that which is good” (I Thess.5:21). It is urgently important for us to follow the admonition of the apostle Jude, also, who declared that we must “*contend earnestly* for the faith which was once for all delivered to the saints” (Jude 3).

Matthew 23 therefore is a strong statement by the Messiah showing the difference between good and evil, godly teaching contrasted to perverted teachings. Verses 2-3 fit right into this theme, contrasting the teachings of Moses with the ordinances and sayings of the Pharisees. In a manner of speaking, this chapter contrasts the difference between God’s written Torah, His Word, and so-called “Oral Torah,” or “traditions of men.” In like manner, it contrasts the teachings of God’s word with modern-day so-called “church authority,” and those men and churches who MIS-apply Christ’s teachings on this subject, to cause men to bow down to their supposed “authority,” to support them, and to follow their erroneous teachings!

In essence, then, Christ is telling us to reject the teachings or sayings of the Pharisees, and all such self-appointed “ministers,” which are “omrim,” plural, given by many, and rather obey and follow and observe the teachings of Scripture, which are “yomer,” that is, singular, as referring direct to Moses, or God’s true representative, or God Himself.

In reality, the Pharisees rejected Moses, Jesus said – so we should reject them! But when they teach correctly, according to Scripture, then we should follow the correct teaching, regardless of the source!

### ***The Real Message for Us!***

What is the real message, then, in Matthew 23, for all of us, today? It is a warning to BEWARE of false ministers, or even supposedly “true” ministers, who “sit on Moses’ seat,” and who lead people astray by stressing their own authority but who pervert, twist, and distort the truth of Scripture and the Word of God!

The Pharisees were guilty in their day, and they will suffer great judgment as a result. Jesus said of them, “Serpents! Brood of vipers! How can you escape the condemnation of hell?” (Matt.23:33).

Orthodox Judaism says it is to be followed, since they sit in Moses’ seat. Even when Scripturally wrong, they say, because they are our covering and authority. Many churches have used the same reasoning, to Christians. “Don’t worry about doctrine, or teachings,” they say – “that is our responsibility.” But “just be loyal, and follow us – if we are wrong, that does not concern you. It is our responsibility. But since we are in authority, we sit in Moses’ seat, just follow us. We are your covering. The responsibility is ours. Not yours.”

But to follow a pernicious teaching like that – which is commonly done among churches today – is to set yourself up for the wrath and fury of God, and the pangs of the Great Tribulation – and ultimately is a veritable short-cut to hell – the fiery flames of Gehenna, which will destroy and blot out forever the lives of the wicked!

There should be no confusion, or divided sense of loyalty. Christ rejected the authority of the Pharisees, except where they taught the Word of God. He rejected every law or tradition they introduced which “abolished” or “changed” an eternal law of God. This includes their additions to the Sabbath command, and their fretting over gnats, and swallowing camels.

This means that He would REJECT also their rejection of God’s true calendar, and introduction of unbiblical “postponements” based solely on “traditions of men” and human reasoning!

Churches today are equally guilty. Many claim to follow the Jewish calendar, merely because they consider it “orthodox,” and the responsibility of the Rabbis, or modern descendants of the Pharisees. So they cease looking to God’s Word, and look to mere *men* and their man-made *traditions* instead!

Isn’t it about time we quit following the many hypocrites who claim to sit in Moses’ seat, today, and follow the pure and undefiled Word of God?

Jesus Christ, Yeshua the Messiah, said: “And you shall know the truth, and the truth shall make you free” (John 8:32). How precious is the truth of God to you? Do you fear and tremble before it? Do you love it with all your heart and soul?

In Jesus’ day, the guardians of the Law, the preservers of Moses, had long since stopped guarding the Law, and had forsaken Moses. They had plunged off the straight path. They had a semblance of righteousness, but their deeds were hypocritical and wicked.

How many churches in our day and age have professed to be guardians of God’s Law, and teachers of the truth – but have also compromised with wickedness, plunged into sin, and said, “We are in charge – just follow us!”

The apostle Paul warns us to BEWARE of such men, ministers, rabbis, and churches! He declared: “Therefore, my beloved, as you have always obeyed, not as in my presence only, but now much more in my absence, WORK OUT YOUR OWN SALVATION, WITH FEAR AND TREMBLING; for it is God who works in you both to will and to do for His good pleasure” (Phil.2:12-13, NKJV)..

We who are true Jews (Rom.2:28-29), the true “Israel of God” (Gal.6:16), must not blindly follow the past rulings of those who profess to “sit in Moses’ seat” – whether they are rabbis, or whether they are ministers of the remnant churches of God.

Matthew chapter 23, from the first verse to the final verse, from 1-39, is a scathing, withering indictment against ALL who claim to sit in Moses’ seat, as teachers of God’s Word! – whether minister, priest, rabbi, or church leader of any kind! The apostle James warned, “My brethren, let not many of you become teachers, knowing that we shall receive a stricter judgment” (James 3:1, NKJV).

### *A Karaite Jew Speaks Out*

In a new book by Nehemia Gordon, a Karaite Jew living in Israel, who used to be an Orthodox Jew, he sheds new light and understanding on the “seat of Moses” discussed in Shem-Tov’s Hebrew gospel of Matthew. Entitled *The Hebrew Yeshua vs. the Greek Jesus: New Light on the Seat of Moses from Shem-Tov’s Hebrew Matthew*, this new book is a trenchant, cogent, concise new translation of the Hebrew of Shem-Tov’s Matthew.

Gordon points out where the rabbis of the first century and others, including the Christians, vehemently disagreed. He states that a major fundamental precept of “Rabbinic/Pharisaic Judaism is the belief that the Rabbis have **absolute authority** [his emphasis!] to interpret Scripture, and what they say in religious matters is binding even if it is known to be factually untrue. This is best expressed by the Rabbinic doctrine that if the Rabbis say right is left or left is right you must obey them” (page 14). This, he relates, was a problem he faced daily when growing up. He had questions about places where the Talmud seemed to make statements that flew in the face of explicit words of Scripture. He says, “I was told time and time again that the Rabbis have interpreted it this way and we had no right to question it” (*ibid.*).

The Midrash states on the subject of Rabbinic interpretation, “Even if they instruct you that right is left or left is right, you must obey them” (see same page).

What is their reasoning? Says Gordon, “My rabbi’s conclusion from all this was that **the interpretation of the Rabbis even superceded a direct decree from God Himself**, so who was I to question them” (p.16). He says he knew right then that this was “not of God.”

What a blasphemous statement! No wonder God holds the rabbis accountable for serious misdeeds and false doctrine! Christ warned, “*Beware of the LEAVEN of the Pharisees and Sadducees*” (Matt.16:6)!

No wonder Jesus Christ declared that the Rabbis were erring greatly, and had innumerable confrontations with them concerning the interpretation of the Law and Scripture! No wonder He told them repeatedly, “Woe to you, hypocrites,” and “blind guides of the blind!” (Matt.23:13,14,15,16,17,23,24,25,26,27,29), and denounced them as “ye serpents, ye generation of vipers, how can ye escape the damnation of hell?” (v.33).

No man has authority over God, or over His Word! Be he minister or rabbi, no man has the authority to misinterpret the Scriptures, or to replace their authority with human laws, customs, or traditions!

The Scriptures interpret the Scriptures – and they do not lie and cannot be broken (John 10:35). Men, however, seem to lie and prevaricate whenever it suits their purpose, to deceive and to maintain their supposed “authority” and standing in the sight of the people!

Many so-called “Christian” ministers and Jewish rabbis alike are going to be JUDGED in this regard!

### *Where Rabbis Went Wrong*

Gordon points out that the rabbis equated customs and traditions with Laws of God, making them equal to divine decrees. The rabbis have a saying, “A custom of Israel is a law.” Or, literally, “A custom of Israel is Torah”! He states, “A classic example of this is the wearing of the *kippah* or skullcap. This was a practice unknown in Talmudic times. In the Middle Ages a custom developed to cover the head and after a few hundred years this custom became binding. Today one of the most basic Rabbinic laws is that a man may not walk four cubits without his head covered” (p.20).

Just as Jesus Christ implied, Gordon declares, “By keeping the nation busy with their man-made laws, the Rabbis were distancing people from the Torah. This is a message that rings as true today as it did 2000 years ago.” He explains, “In essence, by requiring these man-made laws, the Rabbis are driving people away from Torah” (p.22).

Rebuking this nonsense, Yeshua declared in plain, unequivocal words: “Do not think that I have come to do away with or undo the Law or the Prophets . . . For truly I tell you, until the sky and earth pass away and perish, not one smallest letter or one little hook [identifying certain Hebrew letters] will pass from the Law until all things [it foreshadows] are accomplished. Whoever then breaks or does away with or relaxes one of the least of these commandments and teaches men so shall be called least [unimportant] in the kingdom of heaven, but he who practices them and teaches others to do so shall be called great in the kingdom of heaven” (Matt.5:17-19, Amplified Parallel Bible).

### *Moses’ Seat Revealed*

Now let’s take a closer look at Matthew 23:2-3 in Shem-Tov’s Hebrew Matthew, with Nehemia Gordon’s insight and Hebrew understanding..

The King James Version states unequivocally: “The scribes and Pharisees sit in Moses’ seat: All therefore whatsoever they bid you observe, that observe and do; but do not ye after their works: for they say, and do not.”

Shem-Tov, however, is *slightly* different – but with a whole lot of difference in meaning! Its Hebrew says, carefully translated into English:

“The Pharisees and sages sit upon the seat of Moses. Therefore all that **he** says to you, diligently do, but according to **their** reforms (*takanot* תְּקוּנוֹת) and **their** precedents (*ma’asim* מַעֲשִׂים) do not do, because they talk but they do not do.”

Says Nehemia Gordon, “In the Hebrew Matthew, Yeshua is telling his disciples *not* to obey the Pharisees. If their claim to authority is that they sit in *Moses’ seat*, **then diligently do as Moses says!**” (page 48).

The Greek differs from the Hebrew here. The Greek says “they,” and can be misunderstood. The Hebrew says “he,” referring to Moses himself! In Hebrew, Yeshua told His disciples to obey “all that *he [Moses]* says to do, in the Torah!

These are two fundamentally different messages – “they” versus “he.” But amazing as it sounds, in the Hebrew there is a difference of only *one single letter!* In Hebrew, “he says” is *yomar*. But “they say,” in Hebrew, is *yomru*. The only difference in the Hebrew text is the addition of a single *vav* [ו]!!! Notice below:

“he says”	<i>yomar</i>	יֹאמֵר
“they say”	<i>yomru</i>	יֹאמְרוּ

Such a simple difference! It is easy to see how the *vav* may have been left out of the Greek translation from the Hebrew somewhere along the line by a copyist.

The point is, however, this interpretation adds so much more insight and meaning and relevance to the passage of Scripture in Matthew 23:2-3.

The Hebrew word *takanot* in Pharisee language means “enactments, reforms,” specifically, “reforms that change biblical law,” Nehemiah Gordon points out. The rabbis distinguished between Biblical law and their own invented laws which they called by the term *takanot*, “reforms.”

Says Gordon, “If Shem-Tov’s text of Matthew is correct, then Yeshua was warning his disciples not to follow the *takanot* or man-made laws of the Rabbis. . . Yeshua accused the Pharisees of putting their own invented laws above the law of the Torah” (p.50). Interestingly, says Gordon, the very word Yeshua used for “traditions” of the Pharisees in Matthew 15:3 is the same very word – *takanot*.

Yeshua also warned His disciples about the *ma’asim* of the Pharisees. This word means “precedents” or “acts or deeds that serve as precedents” (Gordon, p.51). The term is unique to Phariseism. They reasoned that if one of their teachers did an act, it must have been what the Oral Law required. (The Oral Law is that law handed down by oral communication, from generation to generation, rabbi to rabbi, later written down in the Mishnah).

The phrase *ma’asei hatorah* in Hebrew can also mean “works of the law,” something that the apostle Paul condemned in the book of Galatians in no unclear language. It also means “precedents,” as obtained from Rabbinic interpretations of the law, which could often negate the very law of God itself. As Gordon says, “ ‘works of the law’ refers to the application of the Torah as interpreted by the authors of this legal document [one of the Dead Sea Scrolls known as 4QMMT] which at times significantly differs from what the Torah actually says. Based on this explanation, Yeshua would be instructing his disciples to follow the Torah but warning them not to accept the Pharisaic interpretations of the Torah” (p.52).

However, Gordon notes, the phrase used by Yeshua was not *ma’asei hatorah* but rather *ma’asim* alone, a plural word. Thus, I believe the word alone can refer to “precedents” or

“works” of the Pharisees – in essence, the “works” of the Pharisees which Christ denounced *were their very “precedents”* which became legal obligations for the community, in their eyes.

Clearly, whether we use the Greek or the Hebrew text, however, Christ was by no means telling His disciples to “do what the Pharisees said to do,” UNLESS what they said to do came from the very Torah or Law of God itself! He clearly said NOT to do “according to their works,” but to obey God’s Law always (Matt.19:17; 5:17-19).

Gordon sums up, “According to the Hebrew Matthew, Yeshua is warning his disciples not to look to the *ma’asim*, the precedents of the Rabbis, as the standard for perfect behavior. Nor are they to follow the *takanot*, the invented laws of the Rabbis. Instead they are to listen to what Moses says, because after all the Rabbis claim to authority is that they sit in Moses’ seat. This is reminiscent of the teaching concerning the coin with the picture of Caesar on it (Matt.22:20-21). If it is Caesar’s coin, give it to Caesar. If it is Moses’ seat, do what Moses says” (p.53).

Yeshua ended this statement saying, “But do not according to their works, for they say, but do not [obey the Law].” Boiled down to its essence, as Gordon says, “Yeshua was saying that like the Samaritans of old, the Pharisees have their own statutes and judgments which they follow, while at the same time they talk Torah but they do not do Torah” (p.59).

### ***EXTREME Error***

How far did the Rabbis stray from the Word of God? In adding their enactments, precedents, and interpretations which nullified Torah, they caused the people to transgress the Laws of God (see Matt.15:3-9; Mark 7:6-13).

This was carried to the extreme. Maimonides in the 12<sup>th</sup> century went so far as to say, dogmatically, “If there are 1000 prophets, all of them of the stature of Elijah and Elisha, giving a certain interpretation, you shall ‘incline after the majority’ (Exodus 23:2) and the law is according to the 1001 rabbis, not according to the 1000 venerable prophets.” He went on, “Thus God did not permit us to learn from the prophets, only from the Rabbis who are men of logic and reason” (Maimonides, pp.27-28, quoted by Gordon on page 84).

Can you believe it? No wonder that Yeshua was furious with them and their works! If you carefully read the Scripture Maimonides cited (Exodus 23:2), you will see that it said the very opposite of his statement! It says: “You shall NOT follow a majority in wrongdoing . . . you shall NOT side with a majority to pervert justice.” God often sends prophets to WARN a “majority” when they are WRONG and going ASTRAY!

Isaiah puts it plainly. He wrote, “Bind up the testimony and seal up the law among my disciples” (Isaiah 8:16). Isaiah declares, “To the LAW [Torah] and to the testimony [of the prophets!]: if they [any rabbis or ministers or teachers] speak not according to *this word [these instructions]*, it is because there is NO LIGHT in them” (Isaiah 8:20).

In other words, the SCRIPTURES are the final authority! We must look to THEM in order to be warned, preserved, and protected from deception and false teaching! All Scripture is given by inspiration of God (II Tim.3:16). Every Word of God is reliable, truthful, and pure (Psalm 19:7-11; Psalm 119:9-11, 17, 57, 74, 89-92, 97-104).

“Prove all things,” the apostle Paul wrote (I Thess.5:21). How? As the Bereans did!!! “Now the Bereans were of more noble character than the Thessalonians, for they received the message with great eagerness and EXAMINED THE SCRIPTURES EVERY DAY *to see if what Paul said was true*” (Acts 17:11).

### *The Danger and Peril Today*

What is the real message, then, in Matthew 23, for all of us, today? It is a warning to BEWARE of false ministers, or even supposedly “true” ministers, who “sit on Moses’ seat,” and who lead people astray by stressing their own authority but who pervert, twist, and distort the truth of Scripture and the Word of God!

The Pharisees were guilty in their day, and they will suffer great judgment as a result. Jesus said of them, “Serpents! Brood of vipers! How can you escape the condemnation of hell?” (Matt.23:33).

Orthodox Judaism says they are to be followed, since they sit in Moses’ seat. Even when Scripturally wrong, they say, because they are our authority.

Many churches have used the same reasoning, applying it to Christians. Don’t worry about doctrine, or teachings, they say – that is “our responsibility.” But “just be loyal, and follow us – if we are wrong, that does not concern you. It is our responsibility. But since we are in authority, we sit in Moses’ seat, just follow us. We are your teachers, your authority. The responsibility is ours. Not yours.”

“Just pray, pay, and obey” – pray to God, pay your tithes, and obey your ministers! That is what they mean!

But to follow a pernicious teaching like that – which is commonly done among churches today – is to set yourself up for self-destruction, and the Great Tribulation, and even the wrath and fury of God. To follow men and ignore His plain Word, is to commit IDOLATRY! Such a course of action is ultimately a veritable short-cut to hell – the fiery flames of Gehenna, which will destroy and blot out forever the lives of the wicked!

There should be no confusion, or divided sense of loyalty. Christ rejected the authority of the Pharisees, except where they taught the Word of God. He rejected every law or tradition they introduced which “abolished” or “changed” an eternal law of God. This includes their additions to the Sabbath command, and their fretting over gnats, and swallowing camels. This includes their rejection of God’s true calendar, and introduction of unbiblical “postponements.”

Churches today are equally guilty. Many follow the Jewish calendar, merely because they consider it “orthodox,” and the responsibility of the Rabbis, or modern descendants of the

Pharisees. So they cease looking to God's Word, and look to mere *men* and their man-made *traditions* instead!

Isn't it about time we quit following the many hypocrites who claim to sit in Moses' seat, today, and follow the pure and undefiled Word of God?

Jesus Christ, Yeshua the Messiah, said: "And you shall know the truth, and the truth shall make you free" (John 8:32). How precious is the truth of God to you? Do you fear and tremble before it? Do you love it with all your heart and soul?

In Jesus' day, the guardians of the Law, the preservers of Moses, had long since stopped guarding the Law, and had forsaken Moses. They had veered off the straight path and had plunged down the slippery slope of perdition. They had a semblance of righteousness, on the outside, but inwardly their hearts were corrupted and their deeds were hypocritical and self-serving.

How many churches in our day and age have professed to be guardians of God's Law, and teachers of the truth – but have also compromised with false teaching, refused to repent when shown error, and plunged into sin, all the while maintaining to all who would listen: "Don't worry – we are in charge – just follow us!"

The apostle Paul warns us to BEWARE of such men, ministers, rabbis, and churches! He declared: "Therefore, my beloved, as you have always obeyed, not as in my presence only, but now much more in my absence, WORK OUT YOUR OWN SALVATION, WITH FEAR AND TREMBLING; for it is God who works in you both to will and to do for His good pleasure" (Phil.2:12-13, NKJV)..

We who are true Jews (Rom.2:28-29), the true "Israel of God" (Gal.6:16), must not blindly follow the past rulings of those who profess to "sit in Moses' seat" – whether they are rabbis, or whether they are ministers of the remnant churches of God.

The apostle Jude wrote, "Dearly loved friends . . . I find I must write [to you] . . . urging you to *stoutly defend the truth* which God gave, once for all, to His people to keep without change through the years" (Jude 3, *The Living Bible*). "Contend for the faith", NIV!

May God help us all to truly tremble before His holy Word, and fight and contend for the truth, and get back to His TRUTH, the true faith once delivered to the saints!

## Chapter Seven

# When Does the Biblical Year Really Begin?

How can we determine the beginning of a year, according to the Biblical reckoning? Can the year begin PRIOR to the spring equinox? Must it begin AFTER the spring equinox? Should we just go according to the Jewish “fixed” calendar, created in 357-58 A.D., by rabbi Hillel II? What about the “barley” crop? Why is the first month of the Jewish calendar called “Abib”? How can we KNOW for certain WHEN God’s Holy Days occur? Here is the plain TRUTH!

There are many things we must consider when looking at the calendar of God. Many people today throw up their hands, and exclaim, “It’s too complicated!” Others say, “I’ll just let my minister or church handle it,” and they simply decide to follow men or a particular church which may have no knowledge or expertise in this matter whatsoever!

What should we do? Shouldn’t we study this subject, and look into the Word of God, and quit taking everything for granted, or assuming this or that person or church is “right,” without any evidence or proof?

### *The Month “Abib”*

God says in His Word, “This month shall mark for you the beginning of months; it shall be the first month of the year for you” (Exo.12:2). In that first month Israel was commanded to take a lamb, on the tenth day, and sacrifice it on the 14<sup>th</sup> day, as the Passover lamb” (verses 2-6).

In Deuteronomy, God adds, “*Observe the month of ABIB by keeping the Passover to the LORD your God for in the month of ABIB the LORD your God brought you out of Egypt by night*” (Deut.16:1).

The month of Abib occurred in the spring. It was the first month of the religious/festival calendar. But how was its precise beginning or first day determined?

The key is found in the name of the month itself. The term “Abib” in Hebrew, is from an unused root meaning “to be *tender, green*, i.e. a young ear of grain; hence the name of the month

Abib or Nisan – Abib, ear, green ears of corn” (Strong’s Exhaustive Concordance, #24). The Gesenius Hebrew-English Lexicon defines the term, “an ear of corn, a green ear.”

This term is found first in the Bible in Exodus 9:31, “the barley was in the ear.” The New King James Version says, “the barley was in the head.” Therefore the month of *abib* is defined by its very name as the month of the first “green ears” or newly developed grain. The grain crop in Israel and the Middle East at the spring of the year is the BARLEY CROP, as seen in Exodus 9:31.

Therefore, the first month of the year must conform to the greening, ripening of the heads of BARLEY in the fields in Israel and around Jerusalem!

### ***The Barley Harvest – a Key to Understanding***

The barley begins entering the “abib” stage every year around late February to early March. The spring equinox varies from about March 20-22, each year. The first month of a new year is determined also by the first seen faint crescent of the new moon.

Therefore, the first month of the new year is that month whose new moon occurs nearest the spring equinox, when the barley has reached the “abib” stage of ripening!

This means that to determine each new year, it is necessary for God’s people in Israel – primarily the Jews – to go out in the fields and check on the ripening barley, to see if it has reached the “abib” stage of development.

Every year, the Karaites, led by Nehemiah Gordon, do this very thing, and have expeditions into the environs of Jerusalem, the Negev, and surrounding areas in Israel, to check on the status of the barley, to determine the beginning month of each new year.

Sounds rather simple, isn’t it? Not necessarily. Let’s examine this calendar issue more closely.

### ***The First Ripe Barley***

Alfred Edersheim in *The Temple: Its Ministry and Services*, observes: “As the year of the Hebrews was *lunar*, not solar, it consisted of only 354 days 8 hours 48 minutes 38 seconds. This, distributed among twelve months, would in the course of years have completely disordered the months, so that the first month, or *Nisan* (corresponding to the end of March or the beginning of April), *in the middle of which the FIRST RIPE BARLEY was to be presented to the Lord*, might have fallen in the middle of winter. Accordingly, the Sanhedrin appointed a committee of three, of which the chief of the Sanhedrin was always president, and which, if not unanimous, might be increased to seven, when a majority of voices might suffice, to determine which year was to be made a leap year by the insertion of a thirteenth month” (page 155).

In *The Essence of the Holy Days*,” by Avraham Yaakov Finkel, we read, “However, the Torah requires that Passover be observed in *the month of ‘standing grain,’* namely, the spring.”

He quotes Deuteronomy 16:1, “Safeguard the month of standing grain [Abib] so that you will be able to keep the Passover to God, since it was in the *month of standing grain* that God your Lord brought you out of Egypt at night” (page 141).

So when should the year begin? So far, we see it must be determined by the ripening of the barley, and it must be in spring, near the spring equinox. But can it begin PRIOR to the equinox? Or does it have to begin AFTER the equinox, as some say.

The truth is, as the Scriptures show, the determining factor is the RIPENING BARLEY CROP! The reason why this is true is found in the book of Leviticus, discussing the Passover and Days of Unleavened Bread, which occur from Abib or Nisan 15-21 – from the middle of the month and last one week.

### *The Wave Sheaf Offering*

We read that during the Feast of Unleavened Bread Israel was commanded to “bring the sheaf of the first fruits of your harvest to the priest. He shall raise the sheaf before the LORD, that you may find acceptance; on the day after the Sabbath [first high holy day, as the Septuagint shows, the Passover Sabbath] the priest shall raise it” (Lev.23:10-11).

This was the day of the wave sheaf offering! It occurred the day after Passover – that is, on Nisan 16. (The Passover seder was eaten at the beginning of Nisan 15, after the sun had set on Nisan 14, when the Passover lambs were slaughtered between the hours of 3:00 pm and 5:00 pm, according to the first century Jewish historian Josephus.

Notice! The barley crop had to have “first fruits” ready for the wave sheaf offering *by the time of Passover, which occurred at the middle of the month of Abib!* This required that the barley crop had to be in a ripening stage by the beginning of the month and the end of the previous month! If the barley was beginning to ripen in the fields by the last few days of Adar, the previous month, then the next month would be declared as the month of “ABIB” – the month of “standing grain” or “ripening ears.”

Since the state of the barley is the final determining factor in all of this, to produce the “wave sheaf offering” in time for Passover from the “first-fruits” of the barley crop, then the new year *could begin in some years PRIOR to the spring equinox itself – although PASSOVER had to occur in the spring, and AFTER the spring equinox!*

### ***“First-Fruits” come FIRST!***

If the barley was becoming ripe at the end of Adar, but some people decided to postpone the onset of Abib because of their theory that the new month could not begin until AFTER the spring equinox, that would mean, in their calendar, that in some years where they inserted an Adar II (leap month), the Passover feast would not fall until LONG AFTER THE “FIRST-FRUITS OF THE BARLEY CROP had matured and ripened in the fields! Yet God specifically commanded: ***“You shall eat NO BREAD OR PARCHED GRAIN OR FRESH EARS UNTIL***

**THAT VERY DAY, UNTIL YOU HAVE BROUGHT THE OFFERING OF YOUR GOD: it is a statute FOREVER throughout your generations in all your settlements” (Lev.23:14).**

If the month of Abib is postponed a whole month, when the abib barley has begun to ripen, that means that by the time Passover occurs, the harvest would be about HALF OVER! The farmers would be prohibited from harvesting ANY GRAIN for a WHOLE MONTH! Much of the barley in the fields would become old, withered, aged, and some would be withering and becoming unusable!

And it would certainly be long past the time of “FIRST-fruits”!

### *Sighting the Barley*

In an email sent out to interested people around the world, Nehemia Gordon (website [www.karaite-korner.org](http://www.karaite-korner.org)) sent out the following announcement:

“On March 11, 2005 Aviv barley was found in multiple locations in the Jordan valley including Naomi Junction and Fatzael Junction. The Aviv barley in the Alon and Ein Mabua regions were re-examined for the benefit of new Aviv searchers who had not been present on the previous occasion. One large field below the entrance of the town of Alon which had previously contained patches of Aviv barley had advanced to a uniform state of Aviv. On the March 11 Aviv Search the following people participated: Nehemia Gordon, Ruthanne Koch, Devorah Gordon, Melekh Ben Ya'aqov, Rivkah Michaeli, Glen Cain, Karl Bloodworth, Ferenc Illesy, Uri Marcus, Avi Marcus, Terry Fehr, Shlomoh Gaber, and Yosi Gaber. Aviv barley was not found in the northern Negev on March 10.”

-- Nehemia Gordon  
Jerusalem, Israel

Thus, according to the Bible, and the testimony of the Scriptures, and authoritative witnesses, the new year has begun! *Rosh Hashanah Sameach! Happy New Year!*

### *A Deeper Look at God's Calendar*

In grasping these fundamental truths, it is useful to read the works of those knowledgeable in the Jewish calendar, including Jewish rabbis. One such author is Rabbi Nathan Bushwick.

In *Understanding the Jewish Calendar*, Rabbi Nathan Bushwick wrote,

“In the time of the Sanhedrin there were no published calendars as there are today. The Sanhedrin declared the beginning of each month when the moon was actually sighted” (page 51).

Bushwick continues,

“The Sanhedrin used a similar method to determine whether the year

should be a regular year or leap year. You will recall that the reason for making a leap year is to make sure that Pesach falls in the spring. Each year, in the month of Adar, they would determine how much longer the winter would last. Their determination was based on *weather and AGRICULTURAL conditions, and upon calculations of the date of the spring equinox. IF THEY CAME TO THE CONCLUSION that the NEXT MONTH would be SPRING ALREADY, they would declare it a REGULAR YEAR* and the next month would be Nisan. If, however, they decided that it would not be spring for another month, they would declare the next month Adar Sheni [*Adar Second, or Adar II*] and it would be a leap year” (*ibid.*).

Bushwick states further,

“It was impossible to know in advance whether a particular year would be a regular year or a leap year or whether a particular month would have twenty-nine or thirty days, since the final decision of both of these things *was made by the Sanhedrin year by year and month by month.* The length of the month was never determined until the thirtieth day actually arrived and the length of the year was generally not determined until the month of Adar. So you can see it was impossible to ever publish a calendar” (p.52).

In Biblical times, sighting of the new moon, and the sighting of the barley in the abib stage of growth, were vital – crucial – to the determination of the NEW YEAR!

Arthur Spier, in *The Comprehensive Hebrew Calendar*, also addresses the calendar in the times of the Second Temple. He also shows that regarding the beginnings of new years in ancient times, a number of factors were considered. He states:

“A special committee of the Sanhedrin, with its president as chairman, had the mandate to regulate and balance the solar with the lunar years. This so-called Calendar Council (*Sod Haibbur*) calculated the beginnings of the seasons (*Tekufoth*) on the basis of astronomical figures handed down as a tradition of old. Whenever, after two or three years, the annual excess of 11 days had accumulated to approximately 30 days, a thirteenth month Adar II was inserted before Nisan in order to assure that Nisan and Passover would occur in Spring and not retrogress toward winter.”

Notice! When the days had accumulated to about 30 days, then an “extra month,” or “leap month,” was declared by the Sanhedrin. This was to keep the festivals from retrogressing toward the winter and coming earlier and earlier every year, so that Passover would always be observed *in the proper season – springtime!*

Spier continues, giving other reasons why a 13<sup>th</sup> month, Adar II, would be added in a given year, by the Sanhedrin:

“However, the astronomical observation was not the only basis for intercalation of a thirteenth month. *The delay of the actual arrival of spring*

*was another decisive factor.* The Talmudic sources report that the Council *intercalated a year when the BARLEY IN THE FIELDS HAD NOT YET RIPENED*, when the fruit of the trees had not grown properly, when the winter rains had not stopped, when the roads for Passover pilgrims had not dried up, and when the young pigeons had not become fledged. The council on intercalation considered the astronomical facts together with the religious requirements of Passover and the natural conditions of the country” (p.1-2).

### ***The Spring Equinox***

Some claim that the Hebrew calendar cannot begin a new year before the spring equinox. Is this true? If that were true, as we have seen, it would play havoc with the “first-fruits” of the “wave-sheaf offering,” and the harvesting of much of the barley crop, which would have to be delayed UNTIL the wave-sheaf offering was waved before the LORD, on the 16<sup>th</sup> day of Abib!

Can the Hebrew calendar begin the new year in the spring BEFORE the spring equinox? Yes, it most certainly can!

In *The Comprehensive Hebrew Calendar*, written by Jewish author Arthur Spier, a highly respected rabbi and academician, we find many times when the Hebrew year in the spring begins PRIOR to the spring equinox. Remember, the equinox varies from year to year as being March 20-22. Yet the Hebrew month of Nisan or Abib, in the Hebrew calendar, used by Jews all over the world, has the following dates for the beginning of Abib:

<i>Year</i>	<i>First Day</i>	<i>Roman Day</i>
1975	Nisan 1	March 13
1980	Nisan 1	March 18
1983	Nisan 1	March 15
1988	Nisan 1	March 19
1991	Nisan 1	March 16
1994	Nisan 1	March 13
1999	Nisan 1	March 18
2002	Nisan 1	March 14
2005	Nisan 1	March 12*

Notice the asterisk on the final year shown, 2005. In this case, we show the final year according to the observed New Moon calendar, according to the “Observed Hebrew Calendar”! Observation of the ripening fields of barley is done each year by the Karaite Jews in Jerusalem! On March 8, 2005, they explored the regions around Jerusalem, Israel, and found many spots of ripening barley. Therefore, the NEWYEAR this year began on March 12 (or the previous evening at sunset, when the New Moon was sighted in Israel)!

As you study the dates shown above, you can see that the Jews themselves begin the new year in some years BEFORE THE SPRING EQUINOX! It should be obvious, then, that the new year can begin before or after the spring equinox, *as long as the Passover and Days of*

*Unleavened Bread do not begin before the equinox! They must occur IN THE SPRING, “at the appointed times,” and “in their seasons”* God plainly said, “These are the feasts of the LORD, even holy convocations, which ye shall proclaim IN THEIR SEASONS” (Leviticus 23:4).

Passover must occur in the spring of the year – not winter! That is God’s plain order and directive.

### ***A Deplorable Condition***

In a recent year, the vast majority of God’s people have missed the “boat.” They followed the Jewish calendar into gross error, and therefore inserted a thirteen month when they should not have done so, thereby postponing the month of Nisan by 30 days, long after the ripening of the standing grain of barley! Thus they began the month of “Abib” *thirty days AFTER the “abib”!* *One whole month out of context – out of sync – a whole month AWAY from the Biblically mandated date and time!*

How sad! How grievous! How must God in Heaven yearn for His people to repent of their stubbornness and iniquity and folly (I Sam.15:23), and get back to the true TORAH (Deut.4:1-2), and the faith ONCE delivered to the saints! (Jude 3-4).

Could this sort of thing be why God attests to Israel, in the prophecy of Isaiah, “A sinful nation, people laden with iniquity, offspring who do evil, children who do corruptly, who have forsaken the LORD, who have despised the Holy One of Israel, who are utterly estranged!” (Isaiah 1:4).

“Why do you seek further beatings? Why do you continue to rebel? The whole head is sick, and the whole heart faint” (verse 5).

God continues, “New moon and Sabbath and calling of convocation – I cannot endure solemn assemblies with iniquity. YOUR *new moons* and YOUR *appointed festivals* MY SOUL HATES; they have become a BURDEN to me, I am weary of bearing them” (Isaiah 1:13-14).

God thunders, “Come now, let us argue it out, says the LORD: though your sins are like scarlet, they shall be like snow; though they are red like crimson, they shall become like wool. If you are willing and obedient, you shall eat the good of the land; *but if you refuse and rebel, you shall be DEVoured by the sword;* for the mouth of the LORD has spoken” (Isaiah 1:18-20, NRSV).

Jeremiah the prophet laments, “The LORD hath caused the solemn feasts and Sabbaths to be *forgotten in Zion*, and hath despised in the indignation of His anger the king and the priests” (Lamentations 2:6, KJV).

Because of transgression, God declares, “I will put an end to all her mirth, her festivals, her new moons, her Sabbaths, and all her appointed festivals. . . I will punish her for the festival days of the Baals, when she offered incense to them . . . and went after her lovers, and forgot me, says the LORD” (Hosea 2:11-13, NRSV).

God is not “happy” with the ignorance of His people. He is not pleased with their cavalier transgression of His Law – His Torah – which is the true “way of life”!

### *A Final Warning*

Nor is the true Almighty God happy with His church in these last days! He reproves them for their sad spiritual condition, *blindness, nakedness*, and spiritual poverty and ignorance! Yeshua, the Messiah, declares, to the END-time church called “Laodicean” – the very words mean “the people decide,” or “decided for the people” – in a blistering rebuke, “I know your [record of] works and what you are doing; you are neither cold nor hot. Would that you were cold or hot! So, because you are lukewarm, and neither cold nor hot, I will *spew you out of My mouth!* For you say, I am rich; I have prospered and grown wealthy, and I am in need of nothing; and you do not realize and understand that you are wretched, pitiable, poor, blind, naked.

“Therefore I counsel you to purchase from Me gold refined and tested by fire, that you may be [truly] wealthy, and white clothes to clothe you and to keep the shame of your nudity from being seen, and salve to put on your eyes, that you may see. Those whom I [dearly and tenderly] love, I tell their faults and convict and convince and reprove and chasten [I discipline and instruct them]. *So be enthusiastic and in earnest and burning with ZEAL and repent* [changing your mind and attitude].

“Behold, I stand at the door and knock; if anyone hears and listens to and heeds My voice and opens the door, I will come in to him and eat with him, and he [will eat] with Me. He who overcomes (is victorious), I will grant him to sit beside Me on My throne, as I Myself overcame (was victorious), and sat down beside My Father on His throne. He who is able to hear, let him listen to and heed what the [Holy] Spirit says to the assemblies (churches)” (Rev.3:15-22, Amplified Parallel Bible).

“He that has an ear.” “He who is able to hear.” Are you listening? Will you “heed”? It’s all up to you. You must decide.

May God give you courage, strength, and faith and trust in Him and His Word, so that you won’t be led into error and plunge down the wrong road, and ignore the witness of the truth, and go far, far astray! Really now – you know it truly *IS* up to *you!*

## *Chapter Eight*

### When Should a Hebrew Leap Year Be Intercalated?

# Can Passover Come *Before* *Spring?*

Can Passover occur before Spring? The Karaite Jews tell us that the only true key to the beginning a year is whether the barley is ripening, or at the “abib” stage – hence the first month of the year is called “Abib.” In their belief, therefore, Passover can occur before Spring begins, or March 21, if the barley begins to get ripe by that time. But is this true? Is the “barley condition” the ONLY or the MAJOR factor to begin the year?. What are the determining factors in starting a new year? What does the Bible tell us? What does the evidence of the Talmud, the record of ancient Jewish practice during Temple times, relate?

Can Passover occur before the advent of Spring? According to science, “spring” is the first quarter of the year beginning with the vernal equinox, which occurs March 21. Says the *Winston Dictionary* of “spring,” “the season of the year when plants begin to grow, usually in the northern hemisphere, from March 21 to June 22 . . . *Astronomy*, in the northern hemisphere, the period between the vernal equinox and the summer solstice, or from about March 21 to June 22.”

The Karaite Jews, however, believe that Passover can occur before the advent of Spring. They claim that only the ripening barley is used to determine the beginning of a new year.

In an email letter, Nehemia Gordon stated, “Only by examining the barley in various regions of the Land of Israel can we determine when the biblical year will begin. We must find the earliest ripening fields in the land, since Scripture speaks about the wave sheaf offering during the Feast of Unleavened Bread coinciding with the beginning of the barley harvest in the Land (Deuteronomy 16:9; Leviticus 23:10)” (email dated Jan.19, 2006).

According to the Karaites, therefore, this year if the barley is in “abib” condition by the 1<sup>st</sup> of March, then Passover and Unleavened bread will commence on March 16, 2006. If not, then it will be April 14, 2006 (beginning the previous evening).

Clearly, March 16 is 6 days before the Spring Equinox (March 21)! Can the Passover be celebrated properly 6 days BEFORE the coming of actual “Spring”? Is the state of the “barley” the ONLY “key factor” in determining the beginning of a year?

What does Scripture say? And what DO the ancient Jewish rabbis of Temple times say about this issue? First, let’s notice the relevant Scriptures which relate to this question!

### *Testimony of Scripture*

The first mention of a subject in the Scriptures is to be considered fundamental to understanding a subject. It sets the overall pattern and is the basis for whatever comes later. The first relevant Scripture regarding years is found in Genesis 1:14-16. God said: “Let there be lights in the firmament of the heavens to divide the day from the night; let them be for signs and SEASONS, and for days and years” (Gen.1:14).

The Hebrew word for “seasons” is *moadim* – the plural of the Hebrew word *moad*, which means “an appointment, a fixed time or season, spec. a festival, conventionally a year; by impl. an assembly (as convened for a definite purpose), tech. the congregation, by extension the place of meeting; also a signal (as appointed beforehand).” Clearly this Hebrew word has many related meanings. *Gesenius Hebrew-Chaldee Lexicon* says of this word: “a set time, (a) of a point of time . . . spec. a festival day . . . the feasts of Jehovah . . . and thus by meton. of the festival sacrifices . . . (b) of a space of time, as appointed, defined . . . specifically in prophetic style of a year . . . (2) an assembly . . . (3) Meton. a place in which an assembly is held . . . (4) an appointed sign, a signal.”

Genesis 1:14 suggests strongly that the sun and moon and stars are among the KEYS to determining the start of “seasons, and for days and YEARS.”

In the Hebrew calendar, each month begins with a New Moon, the first sighted crescent of the new moon as seen from Jerusalem and surrounding areas in “Israel.”

The key to beginning the year involves TWO great questions, according to the Scriptures. First, as Genesis 1:14 shows, the YEAR’s beginning is determined in part by the position of the SUN in its orbit. It also is a key factor in determining the annual “moadim” – the annual Festivals and Holy Days of God.

The other key factor, mentioned later in Scripture, is the condition of the barley harvest in Israel. God told Moses and Aaron that the month “Abib” was to be the first month of the year (Exodus 12:2). God declared elsewhere, “Observe [keep a look out for, scrutinize, pay close attention to) the month ABIB, and keep the Passover to the LORD your God, for in the month of Abib the LORD your God brought you out of Egypt by night” (Deut.16:1).

The very name of the month is “Abib” and the term “abib” refers to the condition of the growth of the barley plants. “Abib” is the month in the spring when the first-fruits of the barley harvest had to be offered up on the second day of Passover, or Abib (or Nisan) 16, to the Lord (Lev.23:10-11). To prove that this “Omer” offering was made on the 16<sup>th</sup> day of Abib or Nisan, write for our articles: “How Should We Count Pentecost?”, “Pentecost – the Final Answer,” “The Saga of Pentecost,” “Counting the Omer,” and “Sefirat Ha Omer – Key to Overcoming.”

How do these two Biblical keys to determining the beginning of a new year interface and interact with each other?

The normal Jewish year has 12 months or about 354 days, about 11 days short of a solar year (of 365 ¼ days). In about three years, the Jews add a 13<sup>th</sup> month, called Adar II, to bring the lunar calendar in line with the solar calendar, to prevent the seasons from cycling through the year, as the Muslim calendar does. In the Muslim lunar calendar, because the solar year is completely ignored, the Fast of Ramadan rotates throughout the year – it occurs about 11 days earlier every year! Muslims therefore celebrate their fast about one month earlier every three years, going from Fall to Summer to Spring to Winter! But God’s Festivals must be kept ‘IN THEIR SEASON’ (Gen.1:14; Lev.23:4; Numbers 9:2-3, 13; Num.28:2).

Why is this necessary? Because the Festivals of God have to be observed in their proper SEASON! Passover therefore must fall in the Spring, and the Feast of Tabernacles in the Fall. Adding a 13<sup>th</sup> month is called “intercalation.”

### *The Jewish Encyclopedia*

Says the *Encyclopedia Judaica*, the Jewish calendar is “luni-solar,” meaning “the months being reckoned according to the moon and the years according to the sun.” Twelve lunar months equal about 354 days, whereas a solar year is 365 and about ¼ days, a difference of 11 days.

The authority continues: “The cycles of 12 lunar months must therefore be adjusted to the solar year, because although the Jewish festivals are fixed according to dates in months, they must also be in specific (agricultural) seasons of the year which depend on the tropical solar year. Without any adjustment the festivals would ‘wander’ through the seasons and the spring festival (Passover), for example, would be eventually celebrated in winter, and later in summer . . . . In Temple times this intercalation was decided upon in the individual years according to agricultural conditions” (“Calendar,” vol.5, page 43).

The seasons themselves are determined by the sun. Says this authority, “**Tekufot** (‘Seasons’). As stated, the four seasons in the Jewish year are called *tekufot*. More accurately, it is the beginning of each of the four seasons – according to the common view, the mean beginning – that is named *tekufah* (literally ‘circuit’ . . . ‘to go round’), the *tekufah* of Nisan denoting the mean sun at the vernal equinoctial point, that of Tammuz denoting it at the summer solstitial point, that of Tishri, at the autumnal equinoctial point, and that of Tevet, at the winter solstitial point.”

Says the Encyclopedia, “the main reason d’etre of intercalation – to prevent the lunar Nisan 16 from occurring before the day of the *tekufah* of Nisan . . . on the presumption that the *tekufah* of Nisan stands for the true, not the mean, vernal equinox.”

According to the Jewish Encyclopedia, “Astronomy was, however, always a powerful factor, as the state of the crops is ultimately determined by the sun’s position in its annual path” (p.50).

### *Understanding the Jewish Calendar*

A very useful book on the Jewish Calendar is *Understanding the Jewish Calendar*, written by Rabbi Nathan Bushwick (copyright 1989, printed in Israel). In the chapter ‘Months and Years’ he points out that a year is one complete cycle of the sun through the constellations (Zodiac). This takes about 365 ¼ days. In each year, there are four special days – the longest day, the shortest day, and two days where day and night are of equal length. These are called the four *Tekufas*, in Hebrew. They are:

- |                         |                      |
|-------------------------|----------------------|
| 1. The winter solstice  | <i>Tekuva Teves</i>  |
| 2. The spring equinox   | <i>Tekuva Nisan</i>  |
| 3. The summer solstice  | <i>Tekuva Tammuz</i> |
| 4. The autumnal equinox | <i>Tekuva Tishri</i> |

Since the Hebrew calendar is normally 12 months averaging 29 ½ days each, the months would slowly fall behind the seasons. 12 months would equal 354 days, about 11 days short of a solar year. To solve this problem, the Jews add a thirteenth month every 2 to 3 years. This is done to keep the months aligned with their appropriate seasons.

If there were no intercalation or adding of a thirteenth month, the summer months would begin to fall in the spring, and the spring months would begin to fall in the winter. In three years they would be 33 days behind, a little more than a month. In twenty years, they would be 220 days behind, or more than half a year.

The Torah tells us Passover must be in the month of Aviv or Abib. “Keep the month of Spring and make Pesach” (Deut.16:1). Says Rabbi Bushwick, “*We understand this to mean that Pesach must not fall BEFORE the spring equinox, Tekufas Nisan*” (page 50).

Notice this passage more carefully. The New King James Version has it: “*Observe the month of Abib and keep the Passover*” (Deut.16:1). The month of Abib is the first month of Spring. The word Abib itself means “from an unused root (mean. to *be tender*); *green*, i.e. a *young ear* of grain; hence, the name of the month *Abib* or Nisan – Abib, ear, green ears of corn” (Strong’s Exhaustive Concordance, #24). Says *Gesenius*, “an ear of corn, a green ear, Lev.2:14, Exo.9:31, ‘the barley was in the ear,’ i.e. the ears were developed.”

“Nisan” itself is another name for this month. “Nisan” in the Hebrew, denotes “the month of flowers” (*Gesenius Hebrew-Caldee Lexicon of the Old Testament*, #5212).

Thus Nisan or Abib was identified by the ancient Rabbis and Jewish Sanhedrin as the first month of SPRING, when new life is bursting out all over! In the Song of Songs which was written by Solomon, son of David, we read:

“For lo, the winter is past, the rain is over and gone. The flowers appear on the earth; the time of singing has come, and the voice of the turtledove is heard in our land. The fig tree puts forth her green figs, and the vines with the tender grapes give a good smell” (Song of Solomon 2:10-13).

Therefore, according to the Rabbinic Jews, PASSOVER must occur AFTER the Spring equinox! What could be plainer?

How is this to be guaranteed? Bushwick continues:

“The way that we prevent this from happening is really quite simple. If we see that Pesach is going to fall too early we just postpone it for a month. We add an extra month before Nisan and we call it *Adar Sheni*, Second Adar. The day that would have been the first day of Nisan becomes the first day of Adar Sheni and we don’t start Nisan until the next new moon. This results in a year of thirteen months instead of twelve” (p.50).

In ancient times, Bushwick declares, it was the Jewish Sanhedrin which adjudicated these matters. He writes:

“The Sanhedrin used a similar method to determine whether the year should be a regular year or leap year. You will recall that the reason for making a leap year is to make sure that Pesach falls in the spring. Each year, in the month of Adar, they would determine how much longer the winter would last. Their determination was based on *weather and AGRICULTURAL conditions, and upon calculations of the date of the spring equinox. IF THEY CAME TO THE CONCLUSION that the NEXT MONTH would be SPRING ALREADY, they would declare it a REGULAR YEAR* and the next month would be Nisan. If, however, they decided that it would not be spring for another month, they would declare the next month Adar Sheni [*Adar Second, or Adar II*] and it would be a leap year” (page 51).

Bushwick states further,

“It was impossible to know in advance whether a particular year would be a regular year or a leap year or whether a particular month would have twenty-nine or thirty days, since the final decision of both of these things was *made by the Sanhedrin year by year and month by month*. The length of the month was never determined until the thirtieth day actually arrived and the length of the year was generally

not determined until the month of Adar. So you can see it was impossible to ever publish a calendar” (p.52).

Bushwick goes on, saying that because God KNEW in advance that there would be times when Israel would not have a Sanhedrin, He gave the Jews the principles by which they could calculate a calendar without having to make regular observations.

### *The Comprehensive Jewish Calendar*

Arthur Spier, in *The Comprehensive Hebrew Calendar*, also addresses the issue of intercalation of the calendar in the times of the Second Temple. He shows that regarding the beginnings of new years in ancient times, *a number of factors* -- not just one -- had to be considered. He states:

“A special committee of the Sanhedrin, with its president as chairman, had the mandate to regulate and balance the solar with the lunar years. This so-called Calendar Council (*Sod Haibbur*) calculated the *beginnings of the seasons (Tekufoth) on the basis of astronomical figures handed down as a tradition of old*. Whenever, after two or three years, the annual excess of 11 days had accumulated to approximately 30 days, a thirteenth month Adar II was inserted before Nisan in **order to assure that Nisan and Passover would occur in Spring and not retrogress toward winter.**”

Notice that the major criteria for determining when to intercalate a year and make a leap year by adding a thirteenth month was plainly based on ASTRONOMICIAL FIGURES handed down as an ancient tradition, and that this was done IN ORDER TO KEEP PASSOVER IN THE SPRINGTIME!

Notice! When the days had accumulated to about 30 days, then an “extra month,” or “leap month,” was declared by the Sanhedrin. This was to keep the festivals from retrogressing toward the winter and coming earlier and earlier every year, so that Passover would always be observed *in the proper season – springtime!*—“*to assure that NISAN and PASSOVER would occur in Spring and not retrogress toward winter,*” Arthur Spier plainly declared.

Spier continues, giving other reasons why a 13<sup>th</sup> month, Adar II, would be added in a given year, by the Sanhedrin:

“However, the *astronomical observation was not the only basis for intercalation of a thirteenth month. The delay of the actual arrival of spring was another decisive factor*. The Talmudic sources report that the Council *intercalated a year when the BARLEY IN THE FIELDS HAD NOT YET RIPENED*, when the fruit of the trees had not grown properly, when the winter rains had not stopped, when the roads for Passover pilgrims had not dried up, and when the young pigeons had not become fledged. The council on intercalation considered the astronomical facts together with the religious requirements of Passover and the natural conditions of the country” (p.1-2).

Notice that if the barley was *not yet* ripe, then a thirteenth month would be added, so the wave sheaf offering performed on Nisan 16 could be offered. However, he did NOT say that if the barley was ripe, that a thirteenth month could not be added – for instance, in a year when the barley became ripe BEFORE spring equinox, thus placing Passover and Nisan 16 before the equinox (March 21<sup>st</sup>).

Says Leslie Koppelman Ross in *Celebrate! The Complete Jewish Holidays Handbook*, “The SUN, which determines the agricultural year, grounds us in nature. The moon, waxing and waning, reflects our history and destiny of renewal after diminishment” (p.xxv).

### ***Tractate Sanhedrin, 11B***

The Jewish Talmud discusses this subject at length in Sanhedrin 11B. The Talmud shows that there were other subordinate factors which also related to deciding when to add a thirteenth month to a year. For example, the Talmud states: “The court does not intercalate the year unless it is necessary because of the roads, or because of the bridges that often are washed away as a result of heavy winter rains, thereby making it difficult, without the added month, for even the local pilgrims to reach Jerusalem in time for Pesach; or because of the Pesach ovens, used to roast the Paschal sacrifice, which are often damaged as well by rain, and in need of drying out” (The Talmud, the Steinsaltz Edition, vol.XV, tractate Sanhedrin, part 1, 11B, page 107-108).

“A number of considerations might make it necessary to declare a leap year: If the roads or bridges are in disrepair, so that pilgrims on the way to Jerusalem will be unable to reach their destination by Pesach, or will endanger themselves in the attempt; if the Pesach ovens were damaged by the winter rains, so that the people arriving in Jerusalem will not have anywhere to roast their Paschal sacrifices; or if the Diaspora Jews have already departed from home, but will not arrive in Jerusalem in time for Pesach” (Halakhah footnote, page 108).

Other subordinate factors include newly hatched pigeons which cannot fly yet, which are used in various private sacrifices brought to the Temple. The court also did not intercalate merely because of newly born lambs or goats, which can use some fattening up before being used as sacrifices, for they could be used for that person regardless.

These lesser factors may impinge on a decision of the court to add an intercalary month or not, but by themselves would not be enough. Says the Talmud, “But even though we cannot proclaim a leap year on account of these considerations, we do produce them as support for intercalations [for] the year when a *more fundamental concern* is already present, such as the fear that grain will not ripen by Pesach or fruit by Shavuot, or the fear that either Pesach or Sukkot *will not fall in its appointed season*” (p.108).

### ***“Any Major Factor”***

The two major factors, however, according to the Talmud, and mentioned directly in Scripture, are the fact that the feasts must occur during their appointed seasons, and the barley grain must be ripe enough for Passover, to make the “omer” offering.

Says the Talmud, reasons for intercalating an additional month in a year include “a delay in the ripening of grain or fruit for the arrival of a Festival PRIOR TO its appointed SEASON.” It goes on to declare, “The Rishonim disagree in regard to the difference between these two Baraitot: *Tosafa* explains that, *any single factor* mentioned in our Baraita provides sufficient reason to intercalate the year, the court would require two from those listed in the later Baraita. *Rabbenu Yona* explains that, whereas the factors listed in our Baraita allow the Sages to intercalate the year [the subordinate factors], those listed in the later Baraita ACTUALLY OBLIGATE THEM TO DO SO” (Notes, page 108).

The point is, there are TWO mandatory reasons for declaring a leap year – 1) because the grain (barley) is not ripe enough in time, i.e. too “green”, and 2) the season of Spring, which begins at the Spring Equinox, has not yet come so that Passover can be observed in its proper season – that is, Spring, which begins March 21! Therefore, these two factors must both agree in order to intercalate a 13<sup>th</sup> month.

In other words, such things as bad roads or washed out bridges, newly born goats or lambs, or fledgling pigeons, “may be considered as AUXILIARY REASONS for proclaiming a leap year IF one of the principal reasons for intercalating the year is also applicable” (same page).

In one example, Rabbi Gamaliel in Jerusalem wrote to their brothers exiled in Babylon, saying, “We hereby inform you that the pigeons are tender and the lambs are slender, and the time of the barley opening has not yet arrived. Hence, the matter appearing proper in my eyes and in the eyes of my colleagues, I have added onto this year an additional thirty days” (p.110).

Even after the Temple was destroyed, the Sages took into consideration all those factors which would be relevant to intercalation, as if the Temple were still standing, as a sign of their hope that the Temple would soon be rebuilt. This was continued until the advent of the “fixed” Jewish calendar ordained by Hillel II in 357-58 A.D.

### *Three Issues*

The Gemara portion of the Talmud continues the discussion of intercalation. We read:

“The Gemara continues its discussion of the considerations that lead to the proclamation of a leap year: **Our rabbis taught** the following Baraita: **Because of three issues** the judges of the High Court **Intercalate the year: Because** the issue of Pesach approaching before **the barley ripening**, a Biblical condition for observing the holiday (see Deuteronomy 16:1); **and because** of the issue of Shavuot approaching before **the fruit of the tree** has ripened, thus forcing the harvesters to delay bringing their ritual offering of the first-fruit, an offering associated with the observance of Shavuot (see Exodus 23:16), until their next trip to Jerusalem; **and because of** the issue of **the equinox** not properly coinciding with its designated Festival observance, *such as when the vernal equinox occurs after the 16<sup>th</sup> of Nisan, or the autumnal equinox occurs after the 21<sup>st</sup> of Tishri.* **When two of** these conditions exist, **they can intercalate** the year,

**but** when only **one of them** exists, **they cannot** intercalate the year” (p.111).

Let’s notice this CAREFULLY! Here it says when “two” of these conditions exist, intercalation is possible – unready barley, the fruit of trees not ready, and the equinox.

Going on, notice what we read under “Notes,” at the same passage. The Talmud states,

**“Because of three issues.** *Riva* suggests that all three of these issues essentially point at the same concern: *THAT THE FESTIVALS OCCUR IN THEIR PROPER SEASON*. Furthermore, he suggests that each of the three issues relates to a different Festival: The concern with the first ripening grain relates to the importance of Pesach being celebrated in its appropriate season; the concern with regard to the ripening of fruit relates to the practice of bringing the first-fruits during the Festival of Shavuot; finally, the concern with regard to the timing of the seasonal equinox relates to the importance of Sukkot commencing AFTER AUTUMN HAS OFFICIALLY BEGUN” (page 111).

Says the Talmud commentary under “Halakhah,”

**“Because of three issues.** ‘An extra month is added to the year: (1) *If it appears that the vernal equinox will occur ON OR AFTER THE 16<sup>TH</sup> OF NISAN*; (2) if it appears that the barley will not ripen sufficiently by Pesach; or (3) if it appears that the fruit that ordinarily ripens around Pesach time will not ripen by then. **THE LATENESS OF THE VERNAL EQUINOX IS BY ITSELF SUFFICIENT REASON TO ADD AN EXTRA MONTH TO THE YEAR**, following Rabban Shimon ben Gamliel. But if it does not appear that the equinox will be late, the year is **ONLY** intercalated if both of the other two factors are present.’ (*Ramban, Sefer Zemanim, Hilkhot Kiddush, HaHodesh 4:2,3*).”

This clarification is very important. Here we see that the “lateness of the vernal equinox IS BY ITSELF SUFFICIENT” to add an extra month to a year, making it a leap year! Here the passage clarifies that if it does not appear that the equinox will be late, THEN intercalation is done ONLY IF both of the other two factors are present, regarding the barley and fruit of trees!

Let’s hold it right there, for a moment! Notice with crystal clarity!

### ***Vernal Equinox –16<sup>th</sup> Nisan Equinox or After***

*“An extra month is added to the year: . . . If it appears that the vernal equinox will occur ON OR AFTER THE 16<sup>TH</sup> OF NISAN . . .”*

That is a plain and straightforward statement! An extra month is added whenever the spring equinox comes on Nisan 16 or afterward! This passage clears up the whole issue, according to the Talmud itself.

What does the date of Nisan 16 have to do with it? Nisan 16 is the SECOND DAY OF PASSOVER! It is the day of the “wave sheaf” or “omer” offering, which consisted of the FIRST-FRUITS OF BARLEY from the barley harvest in the Spring!

Notice! The Talmud clearly says, if the second day of Passover is the Spring Equinox, or if the Spring Equinox occurs AFTER that date, then AN EXTRA MONTH IS TO BE ADDED, MAKING A LEAP YEAR!

Those are the clear instructions of the Talmud itself.

This brings up a dilemma for the Karaites. According to them, the sole determining factor in beginning a new year is the ABIB factor of the barley harvest. They disregard any astronomical factors, and seemingly ignore God’s Word in Genesis 1:14.

Obviously, both cannot be right!

This year of 2006, the Karaites, according to version 1 of their projected calendars for the coming year, declare that the New Moon of Nisan or Abib will be seen March 1<sup>st</sup>, around sunset, making day 1 of Nisan March 2. The Passover would be March 15, and the 2<sup>nd</sup> day of Passover would be March 16.

March 16 is FIVE DAYS BEFORE the SPRING EQUINOX which occurs March 21! The Karaite position would place Passover six days BEFORE the Spring equinox!

But according to the Talmud,

*“An extra month is added to the year: . . . If it appears that the vernal equinox will occur ON OR AFTER THE 16<sup>TH</sup> OF NISAN . . .”*

If it appears that the vernal equinox will occur ON OR AFTER THE 16<sup>TH</sup> OF NISAN,” THEN AN EXTRA MONTH IS ADDED! Period! That is very plain, according to the Talmud itself, the ancient Jewish authority and record on the subject.

That means that the coming year MUST be a leap year, with an extra month added to the current year – an “Adar II”!

So the Karaite calendar which would begin the new year on March 2<sup>nd</sup> obviously flies in the face of the Talmud and the Rabbinical calendar rules of old – the rules in existence long before Hillel II made his changes in 357-58 A.D.!!

In a paper on the subject, a Karaite actually referred to the Talmud tractate Sanhedrin 11B. I don’t really know why. It seems rather “quaint” that a Karaite Jew would actually give a passage in the Talmud as a reference for his teachings on the leap year, when the Talmud clearly contradicts the Karaite position and conclusions, if we take every word of the Talmud passage seriously. There is no room left to doubt as to the official Jewish position of the rabbis.

### ***Josephus and the Issue of the EQUINOX***

Clearly, the important of the EQUINOX in these considerations cannot be minimized! It is of critical importance! So says the Jewish Talmud itself. The passages in Sanhedrin 11B do

NOT give license to celebrate Passover PRIOR to the Spring equinox, which would have occurred in the year 2006 IF the Karaites had failed to add an intercalary month that year!

The Jewish historian Josephus himself states that Passover must come in the Spring. He wrote:

“In the month of Xanthicus, which is by us called *Nisan*, and is the beginning of our year, on the fourteenth day of the lunar month, *WHEN THE SUN IS IN ARIES* (for in this month it was that we were delivered from bondage under the Egyptians,) the law ordained that we should every year slay that sacrifice which I before told you we slew when we came out of Egypt, and which was called the *Passover*: and so do we celebrate this Passover in companies, leaving nothing of what we sacrifice till the day following. The feast of unleavened bread succeeds that of the Passover, and falls on the fifteenth day of the month, and continues seven Days, wherein they feed on unleavened bread . . . But on the SECOND DAY of unleavened bread, which is the SIXTEENTH DAY OF THE MONTH, they first partake of the fruits of the earth, for before that day They do not touch them” (Antiquities, Book III, chapter X, part 5).

“Aries” is the heavenly constellation which begins at the Spring Equinox, and continues 30 days. Thus Passover, according to Josephus, could not come before the Spring Equinox! “Aries” is the sign of the Lamb, or Ram – which is the sign of the “Lamb of God” who took away the sins of the world, bearing them upon Himself when He was slain for us, as our “Passover Lamb” (I Cor.5:7; John 1:29).

The Lamb of God was not slain in the winter. The Jews knew Aries must follow the Spring Equinox. So they made a rule that Passover cannot occur before Aries comes, which begins March 21. So the Karaites, who could have celebrated Passover BEFORE Aries, in 2006, before the Spring Equinox, are in GRAVE ERROR! That year if they had not intercalated, then they would have celebrated Passover on March 15 – *six days* before Spring begins, according to the astronomical cycle.

### *The Testimony of Philo*

Philo was a highly educated Jew from Alexandria, Egypt, who lived in the first century. He also wrote about the timing of the annual holy days of God, and the seasons in which they were to be observed.

In *The Works of Philo, Complete and Unabridged, New Updated Version*, translated by C.D. Yonge, we read of the Feast of Unleavened Bread. He connects it with the spring equinox (“The Special Laws, II, the Fifth Festival,” page 582). Says Philo, “The *vernal equinox* is an imitation and representation of that beginning in accordance with which this world was created. Accordingly, every year God reminds men of the creation of the world, and with this view puts forward *the spring*, in which season all plants flourish and bloom” (p.582). Thus he connects the first month, Nisan, with the spring (vernal) equinox, as this is the time of the flourishing of new life, blossoming and blooming and replacing the barrenness of winter. The Feast of Unleavened Bread, he says, “is begun on the fifteenth day of the month, in the middle of the month, on the

day on which the moon is full of light. . .” Thus Philo shows the Passover and Days of Unleavened Bread must fall in the springtime, the time of the “vernal equinox.”

Philo also says, of the Feast of Tabernacles, “The last of the annual festivals is that which is called the feast of tabernacles, *which is fixed for the season of the autumnal equinox*” (page 587).

### ***The Equinox Factor***

The Orthodox Jews and their ancestors, the Rabbis and Pharisees and Scribes, have given much thought to these issues. They have wrestled with them, debated them, and considered all the consequences, and have determined that in order for Passover and Sukkot to be celebrated at the proper time, in the proper season, the ISSUE OF THE EQUINOX IS OF PARAMOUNT IMPORTANCE!!!

Because in some years, the weather might cause crops to begin to ripen earlier than Spring, this meant that occasionally there would be some hardship among farmers, for if a month was intercalated, even though the barley had begun to ripen, then the “first-fruits” of the barley would be delayed, and no harvesting could begin until the offering was made on Nisan 16. This would not make for happy farmers, but they would have to resist the urge to begin harvesting before the appointed time.

The Talmudic authorities even address this problem. When a leap year was declared and an extra month inserted to delay the beginning of a new year, because the BARLEY is *not ready* for Passover harvesting, when the first month of the new year would normally be due, then people are HAPPY, because this gives them one more month before the grain is ready for harvest. But what if the grain is ready, but the proper time has not yet come, because of intercalation?

Says the Talmud: *“If, however, the grain did ripen by Pesach, and nevertheless the year was intercalated on account of the other two issues, then people would indeed be unhappy since the harvestable grain would have to remain in the field for an additional month without any benefit to its grower”* (p.112).

This was a concern. However, it was deemed better to push Passover later, rather than cause it to occur earlier, before the Spring-time, or Spring Equinox!

Why was this the case? I suspect it was for RELIGIOUS REASONS – to keep the months in alignment with the SEASONS which God commanded (Gen.1:14). Unknown to the Jews, the true Lamb of God was going to come, and be sacrificed on Nisan 14, in the Spring, in the sign of Aries!

The Equinox is, therefore, the major key to determining the official beginning of Spring – not the barley harvest, which might begin a little earlier some years due to a warm winter and ample rainfall.

A similar problem occurred in the fall of the year.

Says the Talmud:

**“It was asked of those Sages discussing this Baraita: Does this last statement of Rabbi Shimon ben Gamliel’s imply that when the year is intercalated because of the issue of the autumn equinox commencing after the Festival of Sukkot has begun, we are happy as well; since otherwise, were autumn to begin before Sukkot and the year nevertheless be intercalated for other reasons, it would mean having the Festival pilgrims return to their homes in the midst of the rainy season? Or perhaps Rabbi Shimon ben Gamliel meant to argue with the first Tanna of the Baraita in maintaining that over the issue of the equinox alone, the High Court can intercalate the year without recourse to any of the other two reasons mentioned? The Sages of the Gemara offer no solution to this query, and so it is concluded that we let the problem stand unresolved”** (p.112).

In other words, the question of the motives of Rabbi Gamliel were not clear to the sages that came later, so they decided to just let the matter or question lay unresolved. They did not know the answer, and knew they did not know, so further discussion was considered useless.

### ***“The Feast of Ingathering”***

The Feast of Sukkot or Tabernacles was also called “the Feast of Ingathering” (Exo.23:16). By definition, this festival was to occur at the END of the harvest, during or at the conclusion of “ingathering” of the harvest. Its dating clearly was the seventh month, Tishri 15-21 (Lev.23:34-41).

But if the year began so early that Passover fell before the Spring Equinox, this would bring the Fall Festival very early, cutting into the time of harvest. This concerned the rabbis. “So Rabbis were given the option of intercalating the year whenever it appeared to them that, if they did not do so, there would be insufficient time to ‘ingather’ the fruits before the advent of Sukkot”, says the Talmud (p.112).

It would be very difficult in Israel for farmers to go up to Jerusalem to celebrate the Feast of Ingathering when there was not yet any “INGATHERING” or “HARVEST”, or in the MIDDLE of the harvest! How can you observe the festival of Harvest BEFORE the actual harvest? The Feasts of Israel all revolve around the harvest seasons!

In the year 2006, if the Karaites had gone with their “early” calendar, they would have had the Feast of Tabernacles occurring from September 9-15 – completely before the beginning of the autumn or time of harvest!

### ***Further Rabbinic Discussion***

This problem of an early Feast was thoroughly debated among the rabbis. The issue revolved around the equinox. They debated the phrase, **“Because of the equinox.”**

Just what did this mean? Says the Talmud:

“*Rashi* explains that Rabban Shimon ben Gamliel might have meant that *an extra month can be added to the year if it appears that the equinox will be late*, even if no other conditions are met, *because this is a stipulation of Torah law*. *Remah* rejects this explanation, arguing that the other factors are also matters of Torah law. Rather, **the late occurrence of the equinox might be sufficient reason for adding an extra month to the year because the equinox occurs at a fixed time, and the times at which the grain or fruit ripen are usually related to the time of the equinox**, although they also depend on the year’s rainfall and other climatic conditions. *Rabbenu Yonah* explains that *the year might be intercalated because of the equinox, EVEN IF THERE IS NO OTHER REASON* for adding another month to the year, *because the time at which the equinox will occur can be calculated precisely*, but the time at which the grain or the fruit will ripen can only be *estimated*. Hence an extra month can be added to the year only if it appears that neither the grain nor the fruit will ripen in time” (*ibid.*, emphasis mine).

Clearly, the whole discussion showed the vital importance of the Equinox. The rabbis concluded the extra month could be added simply because it appeared the Equinox would be late (compared to weather and its effects), 1) because of the Torah Law, 2) because the Equinox occurred at a fixed time, and 3) even if there is no other reason for adding another month to the year! In other words, the sacred calendar considerations “trump” the agricultural considerations, whenever there is a conflict, which seldom occurs, but can happen occasionally.

Normally, the date of the equinox comes right about the time of the “abib” of the barley harvest, which places Passover in the official time of Spring. Once in a while, the growing season might be a little out of adjustment, or there could even be a crop failure, but in such cases the factor of the Spring Equinox would be the governing factor, all by itself, as the final arbiter on the matter.

### ***Final Evidence***

The final evidence that the Karaites are wrong to begin the month of Abib when it would require Passover to fall BEFORE the spring equinox is Jewish rabbinic practice during Second Temple times. That is, the Talmud shows that the Pharisees and normative Jewish practice was to always begin the new year so that Passover would fall after the spring equinox. Karaites may argue otherwise, but there is no evidence that the Pharisees ever allowed Passover to fall before spring/the vernal equinox. This was the opinion of the Jewish Sanhedrin.

Jesus Christ declared, as to this matter, “The scribes and Pharisees sit on Moses’ seat; therefore, do whatever they teach you and follow it” (Matt.23:2, NRSV). In other words, as I show in my article “What Do You Mean, Moses’ Seat?” Christ was endorsing the teachings of the PHARISEES *so long as they agreed with the laws of Moses – i.e. the TEACHINGS of Moses!*

The scribes and Pharisees taught that the Passover must be in the spring, and the Talmud shows that to be the decisions of the Jewish rabbis. **NOWHERE IN THE NEW TESTAMENT DOES JESUS CHRIST OR THE APOSTLES EVER QUESTION OR ARGUE OVER THIS**

*POINT!* Therefore, they seem to have accepted the conventional Jewish wisdom on this important issue. Why should we not follow their example?

In particular, the apostle Paul declared, in A.D. 60, about twenty five years after his conversion in A.D. 35, “I am a Jew, born in Tarsus of Cilicia, but brought up in this city at the feet of Gamaliel [the leading Rabbi of the time], educated *strictly according to the ancestral law*, being zealous for God, just as all of you are today” (Acts 22:3) Notice! Paul did not follow the Karaites, or, that is, their predecessors, the Sadducees! He followed the teachings of Orthodox Judaism of the time, so long as they followed the ancestral LAW – the law of Moses! His main teacher was Rabban Gamaliel, the leading Orthodox Jew of that time, a follower of Hillel (Hillel I, not Hillel II who lived some 300 years later and who changed the calendar!).

Later, before the Sanhedrin, Paul asserted, “Brothers, I am a Pharisee, the son of Pharisees” (Acts 23:6). He wrote to the Philippians, saying, “[I was] circumcised on the eighth day, a member of the people of Israel, of the tribe of Benjamin, a Hebrew born of Hebrews; *AS TO THE LAW, A PHARISEE . . . as to righteousness under the LAW, BLAMELESS*” (Phil.3:5-6).

Paul followed the Pharisees on calendar matters in that day. The Pharisees kept the Passover in the SPRING, as Josephus plainly says – after the spring equinox! Rabbinical commentary in the Talmud shows that Passover could not occur in winter, but had to be in the spring!

Who will you choose to follow? Modern day Karaites, the spiritual descendants of the Sadducees? Or the apostle Paul, and our Saviour Jesus Christ, who said the PHARISEES sat in Moses’ seat, not the Sadducees? Write for my free article, “Sadducees or Pharisees – Who Controlled Temple Worship During the Time of Christ?”

### *God is not a God of Confusion*

God’s Law is not intended to cause hardship among God’s people. However, sometimes we must “gird up our loins,” tighten up our belt, and suffer a little, in order to obey God, knowing that in the end it is the best thing to do. Future reward and ultimate salvation are far more important than present day considerations!

God’s Laws always work together for our ultimate good, if we obey them, and trust in Him! For example, it may seem hard to let the land lie at rest every seventh year, to celebrate the land Sabbath, but it is God’s Law, and is important to allow the land to rebuild itself and rest (Lev.25:1-7).

Likewise, it may seem unduly hard to have the last land Sabbath, a year of rest, with no planting and real harvest to be followed by the Jubilee Year, another year of no planting or harvest, every 50 years (Lev.25:8-17). But God declares, “You shall observe my statutes and faithfully keep my ordinances, *so that you may live on the land securely*. The land will yield its fruit, and you will eat your fill and live on it securely. Should you ask, ‘What will we eat in the seventh year, if we may not sow or gather in our crop?’ I will order in my blessing for you in the

sixth year, so that it will yield a crop for THREE YEARS. When you sow in the eighth year, you will be eating from the old crop; until the ninth year, when its produce comes in, you shall eat the old” (Lev.25:18-22, NRSV).

Our God is not the God of confusion. Nor is He a God who imposes undue hardship. But He does, at times, test our faith! But, as the apostle Paul declared, “For God is not a God of disorder but of peace” (I Cor.14:33, NRSV). The word “peace” in the Greek of this verse is *eirene* and like the Hebrew *shalom* literally means “peace, prosperity, quietness, rest.”

“O the depth of the riches and wisdom and knowledge of God! How unsearchable are his judgments and how inscrutable are his ways! For who has known the mind of the Lord? Or who has been his counselor? Or who has given a gift to him, to receive a gift in return? For from him and through him and to him are all things. To him be the glory forever. Amen” (Rom.11:33-36, NRSV).

How clear God’s Word is! How wonderful are His judgments, and His ways past finding out!

## *Chapter Nine*

# **The Feast of Trumpets, the International Date Line, and God's Holy Calendar**

Since God has revealed that the modern Roman calendar is not of Him, and the modern fixed Jewish calendar is also changed from the original Biblical calendar observed in the days of Jesus Christ, this new truth -- new to many of us, at least -- causes other questions to come to the surface, in our desire to obey God and keep His commandments.

Since according to God's calendar, New Moons -- the first visible crescent of the New Moon -- is the beginning of a new Biblical month, and must be sighted from Jerusalem, this poses a dilemma -- at least on the surface -- for people who live eastward from Jerusalem as far as the Mid-Pacific Ocean. This would include people from Iran to China, from India to Australia and New Zealand. What is the problem? Simply this: The nations of the world agreed during the late 1800s to establish an "International Date Line" half-way around the world from the Greenwich Meridian, running north to south in the mid-Pacific ocean! This means the hours of a new day begin first in the mid-Pacific, and then sweep westward, coming to Jerusalem about 10-12 hours later than in some of these countries.

Since the New Moon sighting must be done by God's people, from Jerusalem or Israel, this means that by the time it is sighted there, the New Moon has already begun in these areas, retroactively, as it were! This could cause a problem for those observing God's New Moons, as semi-festivals, and even more for those observing the only annual holy day which always falls on a New Moon -- Yom Teruah, or the Feast of Trumpets, which occurs on the first day of the seventh month -- Tishri (see Lev.23:23-24; Num.29:1; Psalm 81:1-5).

The question is really very simple, and very basic: How are those living EAST of Jerusalem to know when the New Moon or Holy Day of Yom Teruah is to begin, when it must be first sighted and proclaimed from Jerusalem, since Jerusalem is hours behind them in the world's time zones? Also, what about those living WEST of Jerusalem, but do not or cannot get the official news of the sighting of the New Moon in time before the day starts? It could be hours, or in some cases even days, before some receive the announcement of the sighting of the New Moon of Yom Teruah, the Feast of Trumpets! What should they do about this problem?

A "fixed" calendar, of course, does not face this problem. But a "fixed" calendar does not depend on New Moons, but only on mathematical rules and equations. God's sacred calendar was to be governed by the HEAVENLY BODIES! God plainly said, "Let there be lights in the firmament of the heavens to divide the day from the night; and let them be for signs and seasons, and for days and years" (Gen.1:14). The sun rules the day, the moon rules the night. The sun rules the tropical (solar) year, and the moon rules the lunar month, which may be either 29 or 30 days, and therefore must be sighted by knowledgeable observers who are properly instructed and who live in the proper region.

This arrangement caused problems which had to be solved even in the time of the Second Temple period.

### *The "International Date Line"*

The International Date Line is an imaginary line on the earth extending from the north pole to the south pole, where the nations have decided that a new calendar day begins. Thus, the calendar date to the west of the line is one day later (newer) than the date to the east of the line. For example, it would be Monday to the west of the line, but Sunday to the east of the line, at the same moment.

The International Date Line follows the 180° meridian for the most part, but zigzags occasionally. The meridian is half way around the world from the Greenwich meridian (or prime meridian) which is 0° longitude and runs through Greenwich, England (a borough of London).

As the sun seems to travel over 15° of the earth's surface each hour, for each 15° west of Greenwich meridian, the time is set back one hour; for each 15° one travels eastward, the clock is advanced one hour. Therefore, if two travelers -- one going east and one going west -- meet at the 180° meridian (the International Date Line), the one going west will have passed through 12 time zones and lost 12 hours, whereas the person going east will have passed through 12 time zones and gained 12 hours. At the Date Line, if one stood on one side and the other on the other side, the one on the west side (or who had traveled eastward) would be 24 hours ahead of the person on east side, who had traveled west to the east side!

A new date begins on the west side of the date line. As the earth rotates on its axis, this new date sweeps westward across the globe, and covers the entire earth in 24 hours. As the earth is approximately 24,000 miles in circumference, this means in one hour the sun will sweep over about 1,000 miles -- thus each time zone is about 1,000 miles wide.

According to this arrangement, January 1 occurs first just to the west of the date line. As a result, people in New Zealand, just to the west of the date line, would celebrate New Year's Day 22 hours before people in Hawaii, on the eastern side of the date line.

How did the International Date Line originate? The location of the date line was established by agreement among the world's larger nations, to facilitate international commerce

and trade, and international relations. When created by the nations, it was decided to make the date line zig zag in order to prevent the line from falling within single nations. Thus although the northeastern corner of Siberia extends 10° east of the 180th meridian, so the date line was moved to run east of Siberia. Since part of the Aleutian islands belonging to the United States extends west of the 180th meridian, the date line was curved to cause all the Aleutians to fall east of the date line. The date line jogs again, to allow all the Fiji islands to fall on one side of the line, so they would all be on the same day.

Obviously, when the International Date Line was established, it was done without any regard to the Scriptures, or the Word of God. The Biblical calendar was considered of no significance to the nations involved. It was done as part of the "commercial system" of modern "Babylon the Great" -- the world system which originated in ancient Babylon!

How does this convention affect Biblical days and time keeping?

### *What the Scriptures Reveal*

We read that when the Messiah returns, "He will be great, and will be called the Son of the Highest, and the Lord God will give Him the *throne of His father David*" (Luke 1:32).

The throne of David was in Jerusalem! In fact, the Messiah will rule over ALL the nations from His royal city of JERUSALEM!

Isaiah the prophet tells us:

"Now it shall come to pass in the latter days that the mountain of the LORD's house shall be established on the top of the mountains, and shall be exalted above the hills; and all nations shall flow to it. Many people shall come and say, 'Come, and let us go up to the mountain of the LORD, to the house of the God of Jacob; He will teach us His ways, and we will walk in His paths.' For *out of ZION shall go forth the LAW, and the word of the LORD from Jerusalem*" (Isaiah 2:2-3).

Micah the prophet also records a very similar prophecy:

"Now it shall come to pass in the latter days that the mountain of the LORD's house shall be established on the top of the mountains, and shall be exalted above the hills; and peoples shall flow to it. Many nations shall come and say, 'Come, and let us go up to the mountain of the LORD, to the house of the God of Jacob; He will teach us His ways, and we shall walk in His paths.' For out of Zion the law shall go forth, and the word of the LORD from Jerusalem" (Micah 4:1-2).

Notice! God's Law and His Word *shall* go forth from ZION -- from the city of JERUSALEM! God's Law and His Word *includes His sacred CALENDAR, and the proclamation of every NEW MOON, every NEW MONTH, every annual HOLY DAY, and every WEEKLY SABBATH DAY!*

Judging by this Biblical criteria, then, it would certainly appear that in God's great Plan *everything should begin with His people Israel -- Mount Zion -- and His headquarters city,*

*JERUSALEM! -- and it WILL, in the Kingdom of God!*

Would God then sanction an International Date Line in the Mid-Pacific Ocean, and begin the NEW DAY every day in the MID-PACIFIC?

Or would God's system of day and time keeping, cause the new day, weekly Sabbath, and Holy Days to arrive FIRST AT JERUSALEM, and then be proclaimed there, and THEN follow the sun and moon around the globe of the earth, westward, until all the earth then observes that very same day, *as it arrives at their location?*

This is a very important consideration! Man's International Date Line, created in ignorance of God's calendar, and without respect to the importance of Jerusalem in God's eyes, has in effect created a situation where people in the Orient observe God's Sabbaths and annual Holy Days BEFORE GOD'S PEOPLE IN JERUSALEM -- even *before the New Moons, Sabbaths, and annual Holy Days have been PROCLAIMED in Jerusalem!*

Will Christ allow things to continue this way, in His soon-coming Kingdom? I don't think so!

In God's system, time -- and the DAY itself -- will most likely first BEGIN in Jerusalem, in the land of modern Israel. The first "time zone" on the planet would most likely begin in the Middle East, with the area stretching a thousand miles east to west, from the Euphrates to the Mediterranean Sea -- the land God promised to His people Israel.

As God told the children of Judah, upon the conquest of Canaan, their inheritance in the "Promised Land" stretched as far as "the brook of Egypt and the Great Sea with its coastline" on the west (Joshua 15:47). "The west border was the coastline of the Great Sea" -- the Mediterranean (v.12). But the inheritance of the 12 tribes was far greater. God told Joshua:

*"From the wilderness and this Lebanon as far as the great river, the river EUPHRATES, all the land of the Hittites, and to the GREAT SEA toward the going down of the sun [in the west], SHALL BE YOUR TERRITORY"*  
(Joshua 1:4).

This vast stretch of land in the Middle East was promised to ISRAEL! And, in the coming reign of the Messiah, it will belong to them -- all twelve tribes!

Jerusalem, of course, is Israel's capital. Jerusalem is mentioned more than any other city in the Bible -- 666 times in the Old Testament, and 144 times in the New Testament! Why this strange number of occurrences? "666" is the number of the Beast of Revelation. Jerusalem, at the present time, has rejected the Messiah, and He was even crucified there. Therefore, in its human, carnal form, Jerusalem represents the evil city, " which spiritually is called Sodom and Egypt, where also our Lord was crucified" (Rev.11:8).

Old Testament Jerusalem was a wicked, filthy, idolatrous city, condemned by the prophets, and judged by God, sent into captivity, and punishment. It is the symbol of rebellion, sin, lawlessness, and death!

### *Jerusalem Transformed*

But Jerusalem is mentioned 144 times in the NEW Testament -- showing it will be TRANSFORMED into God's own spiritual headquarters city, the capital of the New Messianic Reign on earth! The number "144" has special significance -- it is 12 X 12, the number "12" being the number of organizational beginnings, foundations, and strength. The "New Jerusalem" will have 12 foundations, according to the 12 apostles of Christ -- and 12 gates or entrances, according to the 12 sons of Jacob (see Rev.21:12-14). 12 X 12 X 1000 also gives us the number of the 144,000 -- 12,000 out of each of the tribes of Israel, who will become a leadership corps of the Kingdom of God, during the beginning of the Millennium (see Rev.7:1-8). For a fuller explanation of the 144,000, write for our article, "Who Are the 144,000 of Revelation?"

It is certainly true that the central focus of Almighty God is the city of Jerusalem -- much more so than any other city on earth! Revelation 21 speaks of the New Jerusalem "coming down out of heaven from God, prepared as a bride adorned for her husband" (Rev.21:2).

Jerusalem has a great destiny in God's eyes. God says to her:

"Awake, awake! Put on your strength, O Zion; put on your beautiful garments, O Jerusalem, the holy city! For the uncircumcised and the unclean shall no longer come to you. Shake yourself from the dust, arise; sit down, O Jerusalem! Loose yourself from the bonds of your neck, O captive daughter of Zion!" (Isa.52:1-2).

"Break forth into joy, sing together, you waste places of Jerusalem! For the LORD has comforted His people, He has redeemed Jerusalem. The LORD has made bare His holy arm in the eyes of all the nations; and all the ends of the earth shall see the salvation of our God" (Isa.52:9-10).

God thunders:

"For Zion's sake I will not hold My peace, and for Jerusalem's sake I will not rest, until her righteousness goes forth as brightness, and her salvation as a lamp that burns. The Gentiles shall see your righteousness, and all kings your glory. You shall be called by a new name, which the mouth of the LORD will name. You shall also be a crown of glory in the hand of the LORD, and a royal diadem in the hand of your God. You will no longer be termed Forsaken, nor shall your land any more be termed Desolate; but you shall be called Hephzibah [literally, "My delight is in her"], and your land Beulah [literally, "married"]; for the LORD delights in you, and your land shall be married. For as a young man marries a virgin, so shall your sons marry you; and as the bridegroom rejoices over the bride, so shall your God rejoice over you" (Isaiah 62:1-5).

These Scriptures, of course, apply in a dual sense as well: They show that God will redeem His people, and His land, and the city of Jerusalem; but they also show that He will redeem His Church, the "bride of Christ," when He returns (II Cor.11:2; Eph.5:23-27; Rev.19:6-9).

### *Jerusalem and the Calendar*

Jerusalem will soon be the capital city of the entire world. Jesus Christ -- Yeshua the

Messiah -- will make it so. At that time, *all things will be restored*. Peter declared of the coming of the Messiah, to the Jews at the Temple,

"Repent therefore and be converted, that your sins may be blotted out, so that times of refreshing may come from the presence of the Lord, and that He may send Jesus Christ, who was preached to you before, whom heaven must receive until **THE TIMES OF RESTORATION OF ALL THINGS**, which God has spoken by the mouth of all His holy prophets since the world [or, "time"] began" (Acts 3:19-21).

Will this "restoration of ALL THINGS" not include GOD'S TRUE CALENDAR? Will it not also include God's true "International Date Line"? Exactly how and where Christ will rule the International Date Line will be placed, we can surmise, guess, and speculate -- but nevertheless, that is knowledge only He has at this time.

However, we do know that in ancient times, God's calendar was based on sighting the New Moons *at Jerusalem*, having them verified and sanctioned by the supreme court of the land, the Sanhedrin, and then proclaimed to all the surrounding nations where there were Jews. This proclamation was made also to the Jews living in nations EAST of Jerusalem, such as Babylon and Persia!

In the old days, this was done by lighting bonfires or signal fires on the tops of mountains or hills, thus the New Moons were announced. But after the Samaritans began lighting their own fires, to cause confusion and chaos, the method of proclamation had to be changed, and riders were sent out on horseback, much like the "Pony Express," in the early United States, carrying the mail throughout the far-flung western territories.

### *New Moon Sightings Today*

Today, of course, we have the computer, the internet, e-mail, the telephone, and many ways in which we can communicate virtually instantaneously around the world.

Every month, the Karaites at Jerusalem are sighting and proclaiming the New Moons, and posting each sighting immediately on their website on the internet, and also sending out e-mail messages to all on their mailing list.

The Karaites are religious Jews who follow the teachings and traditions of the ancient Sadducees, of the time of Christ. Their monthly New Moon sightings may be found on the Internet, at their website address:

Karaite-korner.org

As soon as the Karaite Jews in Israel sighted the New Moon for Tishri, 2000, they posted the information on their website and sent e-mails to those on their mailing list. In this way, we in Pasadena received the knowledge of the New Moon sighting just after sunset, as Tishri 1 began -- and knew it was therefore the correct day for Rosh Hashana or Yom Teruah! When we receive the information, we post it on our own website at:

Triumphpro.com

### *Waiting for the New Moons*

However, what about those living EAST of Jerusalem, or those who cannot receive this information in time? What should they do?

According to the present system the nations have devised to count the beginning of the "day," with the first hours of a new day beginning at the International Date Line in the Mid-Pacific, this creates a special problem for brethren living in New Zealand, Fiji, Australia, Japan, Korea, China, Malaysia, the Philippines, and India.

According to the present world system, they begin observing the Sabbath, and Holy Days, BEFORE God's people in Jerusalem! When God's people in Jerusalem announce the "New Moon," as many as ten hours may have already passed in some of those parts of the world, such as New Zealand.

*How can they know the Feast of Trumpets, which falls on a New Moon, has begun -- if it hasn't yet been announced in Jerusalem?*

The answer, of course, is that they can't! Under this present system, they have to begin to keep a day as the "new Moon," assuming it will be so declared in Jerusalem. In other words, astronomical indications may suggest that the New Moon will be the day after "Elul 29" -- that is, the 30th of Elul would become the 1st of Tishri. However, if the New Moon is NOT sighted on the eve of Elul 30, then it will stay Elul 30, and the New Moon would be declared on the following day -- which would then become Tishri 1.

Of course, this will pose a problem for people who live between the International Date Line and Jerusalem -- such as people in New Zealand, Australia, Malaysia, the Philippines, India, etc. What this means is that under the present system, with the International Date Line being in the mid-Pacific, these people living in these countries would sometimes have to keep TWO days, in cases where a sighting is expected on one day, but does not really occur until the following day!

### *A Historical Problem*

Does this seem sort of "strange"? It shouldn't, really. The fact is, this SAME PROBLEM had to be dealt with by the Jews during the time of the second Temple -- from the time of Ezra, about 520 B.C., till the destruction of the Temple in 70 A.D. How did they deal with the problem of those Jews living in nations eastward from Jerusalem?

In historical times, the Jews had to face the problem that the sighting of the New Moon in Jerusalem posed for Jews who lived EAST of Jerusalem -- such as those in Persia and Babylon! In some months, the New Moon could not be predicted with total confidence, the Jews living east of Jerusalem would begin to observe the "30th" of the month as a possible "New Moon" -- and if that did not turn out to be correct, then of course they would observe the next day as the

correct "New Moon" and first day of the following month.

Says Alfred Edersheim in *The Temple: Its Ministry and Services*:

“And this brings up yet another difficulty. Jews calculated the month according to the phase of the moon, each month consisting of either twenty-nine or thirty days, and beginning with the appearance of the new moon. But this opened a fresh field of uncertainty. It is quite true that every one might observe for himself the appearance of a new moon. But this would again partly depend on the state of the weather. Besides, it left an authoritative declaration of the commencement of a month unsupplied. And yet not only was the first of every month to be observed as 'New Moon's Day,' but the feasts took place on the 10th, 15th, or other day of the month, which could not be accurately determined without a certain knowledge of its beginning. To supply this want the Sanhedrin sat in the 'Hall of Polished Stones' to receive the testimony of credible witnesses that they had seen the new moon. To encourage as many as possible to come forward on so important a testimony, these witnesses were handsomely entertained at the public expense. **If the new moon had appeared at the commencement of the 30th day -- which would correspond to our evening of the 29th, as the Jews reckoned the day from evening to evening -- the Sanhedrin declared the previous month to have been one of twenty-nine days, or 'imperfect.'** Immediately thereon men were sent to a signal-station on the Mount of Olives, where beacon-fires were lit and torches waved, till a kindling flame on a hill in the distance indicated that the signal had been perceived. Thus the tidings, that this was the new moon, would be carried from hill to hill, far beyond the boundaries of Palestine, to those of the dispersion, 'beyond the river.' **Again, if credible witnesses had not appeared to testify to the appearance of the new moon on the evening of the 29th, the next evening, or that of the 30th, according to our reckoning, was taken as the commencement of the new month, in which case the previous month was declared to have been one of thirty days, or 'full.'** It was ruled that a year should neither have less than four nor more than eight such full months of thirty days" (*The Temple*, pages 156-157).

All this is well and good. But the Jews ran into problems. Enemies tried to thwart their system of notification. Edersheim continues:

#### "THE SEVEN MESSENGERS OF THE NEW MOON

"But these early fire-signals opened the way for serious inconvenience. The enemies of the Jews lit beacons to deceive those at a distance, and it became necessary to send special messengers to announce the new moon. These were, however, despatched only seven times in the year, just in time for the various feasts -- in *Nisan*, for the Passover on the 15th, and in the month following, *Iyar*, for the 'Second Passover,' kept by those who had been debarred from the first (Num. 9:9-11); in *Ab* (the fifth month), for the fast on the 9th, on account of the destruction of Jerusalem; in *Elul* (the sixth month), on account of the approaching solemnities of *Tishri*; in *Tishri* (the seventh month), for its festivals; in *Kislev* (the ninth month), for the Feast of the Dedication of the Temple; and in *Adar*, for Purim" (p.157).

But what about the Feast of Trumpets -- the only annual Holy Day to fall on a New Moon? Obviously, this would constitute a unique problem for those far away from Jerusalem!

Says Alfred Edersheim:

"Thus, practically, all difficulties were removed, except in reference to the month *Elul*,

since, as the new moon of the following month, or Tishri, was the 'Feast of Trumpets,' it would be exceedingly important to know in time whether Elul had twenty-nine or thirty days. But here the Rabbis ruled that Elul should be regarded as a month of twenty-nine days, unless a message to the contrary were received -- that, indeed, since the days of Ezra it had always been so, and that accordingly New Year's Day would be the day after the 29th of Elul. To make, however, assurance doubly sure, it soon became the practice to keep New Year's Day on two successive days, and this has since been extended into a duplication of all the great feast days (of course, with the exception of fasts), and that continues, although the calendar has long been fixed, and error is no more possible" (p.157-158).

In other words, it was assumed that the day following the 29th of Elul was Tishri 1, and preparations were made accordingly to celebrate that day as the Feast of Trumpets. But if the New Moon did NOT appear that evening, then the following day was ALSO observed, because it then had to be the actual day of the New Moon!

Thus during the Second Temple, and during the time of Christ, the Jewish custom was to OBSERVE TWO DAYS FOR THE FEAST OF TRUMPETS!

The Mishnah also corroborates this fact. We read in the Mishnah, translated by Danby, in the section titled *Menahoth*:

"The Two Loaves were consumed never earlier than the second and never later than the third day. Thus if they were baked on the eve of the Festival-day and consumed on the Festival-day, that would be the second day. If the Festival-day fell on the day after the Sabbath, they must be consumed on the third day. The showbread was consumed never earlier than the ninth and never later than the eleventh day. . . . IF THE TWO FESTIVAL-DAYS OF THE NEW YEAR [fell before the Sabbath] it is consumed on the eleventh day" (*Menahoth* 11:9).

Therefore it was the established practice of the Jews of Christ's time to observe TWO DAYS FOR YOM TERUAH each year!

We also read in the Mishnah as follows:

"Beforetime they used to admit evidence about the new moon throughout the day. Once the witnesses tarried so long in coming that the Levites were disordered in their singing; so it was ordained that evidence could be admitted only until the afternoon offering. And if witnesses came from the time of the afternoon offering onwards, THEN THIS DAY WAS KEPT HOLY AND ALSO THE MORROW WAS KEPT HOLY" (Mishnah, *Rosh Ha-Shanah*, 4:4, page 192).

In a footnote to this passage, Danby explains:

"Of the New Year. After sunset on the night after the 29<sup>th</sup> of Elul they treated the coming day as a Festival-day in case witnesses arrived the next day to report that the new moon was visible the previous evening. If they did not come that day, the next day was made a Festival-day, and the day before was counted as the 30<sup>th</sup> of Elul."

How plain it should be that Yom Teruah, or Rosh Hashanah, because it fell on a New Moon, was observed for TWO DAYS when no report was received of the New Moon on the first day!

### *In the Time of David*

However, we have more evidence that the Jews sometimes observed TWO DAYS for the monthly New Moon, as well. We have BIBLICAL EVIDENCE that two days were observed at times, undoubtedly due to the fact that in some months the Jews could not be sure exactly when the New Moon would be seen – but they knew it had to be one of two days – the day following the 29<sup>th</sup> day of the previous month – or the following day.

During the time of David, we read that Saul was plotting to kill him out of jealousy. David and Jonathan, Saul’s son, conceived a plan to determine whether or not Saul intended to do away with David. We read in I Samuel 20 as follows:

“David said to Jonathan, ‘TOMORROW IS THE NEW MOON, and I should not fail to sit with the king at the meal; but let me go, so that I may hide in the field until the THIRD EVENING’ . . .” (II Sam.20:5).

“Jonathan said to him, ‘TOMORROW IS THE NEW MOON, you will be missed, because your place will be empty’ . . .” (v.18).

“So David hid himself in the field. WHEN THE NEW MOON CAME, the king sat at the FEAST to eat. The king sat upon his seat, as at other times, upon the seat by the wall. Jonathan stood, while Abner sat by the king’s side; but David’s place was empty.

“Saul did not say anything THAT DAY, for he thought, something has befallen him; he is not clean, surely, he is not clean. BUT ON THE SECOND DAY, *the day after the new moon*, David’s place was empty. And Saul said to his son Jonathan, ‘Why has the son of Jesse not come to the FEAST, *EITHER YESTERDAY OR TODAY?*’ . . .” (vs.24-27, NRSV).

“Jonathan rose from the table in fierce anger and ate no food on the SECOND DAY OF THE MONTH . . .” (v.34).

Let’s understand this passage! The *Interlinear Bible* has I Samuel 20:27 rendered as follows: “. . . the new moon, second . . .”, or, that is, “THE SECOND NEW MOON [day] . . .”

The original Hebrew is simply: *Ha Chodesh Sheniy*, which literally is, “the New Moon, second.” Most translations put this as “the second day of the month,” since *chodesh* can also refer to the month. However, it is obvious here that the king had a FEAST at the New Moon, and it lasted TWO DAYS.

In verse 34, the expression in Hebrew is *B’Yom-HaChodesh Sheniy* – “on the Day [of] the New Moon, Second,” or, that is, “on the SECOND DAY OF THE NEW MOON.”

Herb Solinsky in his research paper on the Calendar, points out:

“The Hebrew syntax of a phrase in I Sam.20:27, 34 is different from all others in the Bible. The phrase is *ha chosesh ha shaynee*, which literally means ‘the new moon the second.’ Most translations render this ‘the second day of the month,’ but this is inconsistent with other examples for expressing this in the Hebrew Bible. For example, in both Leviticus 23:32 and II Kings 25:3 the phrase *b’teshah la chodesh* occurs; it literally means, ‘on [the] ninth [day] of [the] month.’ It should be expected that the unique phrase in I Sam..20:27,

34 might have significance” (page 29).

It is interesting to note that David and Jonathan KNEW in advance that a New Moon was coming the next day – and that they set aside TWO DAYS before they were to get back together on the THIRD DAY to counsel once again with each other (I Sam.20:5).

Thus the observance of two days for a New Moon goes back to at least the time of David and king Saul!

### ***More Historical Evidence***

Ronald H. Isaacs, in *Every Person’s Guide To The High Holy Days*, writes about this historical situation:

“In the Bible the festival lasts for one day only, the two-day festival arose out of the difficulty of determining when the new moon actually appeared. Long ago, the beginning of a new month was declared when two independent witnesses reported to the Sanhedrin (rabbinical court) that the crescent of a new moon had appeared. The declaration was relayed from city to city by lighting signal fires on the hill tops” (p.41).

This author declares that this holiday was “celebrated for TWO DAYS in Palestine *since the days of the former prophets*,” citing the Jerusalem Talmud (*Eruvin*, chapter 3) as evidence for this assertion (page 46).

In *The Jewish Holidays, A Guide and Commentary*, Michael Strassfeld states:

“*Why Is Rosh haShanah Two Days?* Unlike other festivals which are celebrated in the Diaspora for two days because of uncertainty about the calendar, Rosh haShana is the only holiday celebrated for two days in Israel. The reason is the same as with all the other festivals – that is, the uncertainty involved in a calendar that depended on when the new moon was promulgated by the rabbinic court in Jerusalem. The problem of Rosh haShanah is heightened by the fact that it falls on Rosh Hodesh – the new moon itself; therefore, *even in Jerusalem, it would have been difficult to let everyone know in time that the New Year had begun. To solve this problem, a TWO-DAY Rosh haShanah was practiced even in Israel*” (page 102, emphasis mine in latter part).

Rabbi Shlomo Yosef Zevin, in *The Festivals in Halachah: An Analysis of the Development of the Festival Laws*, gives us even more insight and understanding of the problem relating to Rosh Hashanah/Yom Teruah. He writes:

“Unlike the other *Yamim-Tovim*, Rosh Hashanah falls on the first day of the month, Rosh Chodesh; and during the period when the proclamation of Rosh Chodesh was dependent upon the testimony of witnesses who had observed the first appearance of the moon, the beginning of Rosh Chodesh always remained in doubt pending events in the supreme court, the Sanhedrin in Jerusalem. Either witnesses would come and Rosh Chodesh would be proclaimed based on their testimony; or no witnesses would come. Alternatively, would-be witnesses might have their evidence rejected for one reason or another . . . with the result that Rosh Chodesh would be proclaimed for the following day, the thirty-first day since the previous Rosh Chodesh.

“This means of determining the date, however, gives rise to serious problems with regard to Rosh Hashanah. Since its beginning remains in doubt, what effect has this on the halachic requirements of the day – prohibition of labor, blowing the *shofar*, special prayers and blessings, and sacrifices?” (page 68).

How was this problem solved in early times? Says Zevin:

“Originally, testimony about the new moon was accepted all day long’ [Mishnah]. This *mishnah* characterizes the first of the four eras of Rosh HaShanah. During this era – and within the bounds of the city of Jerusalem – Rosh HaShanah was observed sometimes for one day, and sometimes two. How so?

“Every year, with the onset of the evening which began the thirtieth of Elul, the people would desist from labor and behave as though the sanctity of the festival had begun – because there was a strong possibility that witnesses would testify the next day regarding the new moon, and be accepted. Were that to occur, the preceding evening would turn out to have been, indeed, Rosh HaShanah, the first of Tishri, and the following day, the thirty-first from the previous Rosh Chodesh, would be *chol*, an ordinary day. Rosh HaShanah would thus have been observed only one day. If, on the other hand, the thirtieth day passed without the appearance of witnesses, this meant the month had been ‘full,’ that is, thirty days and it was the thirty-first day that was Rosh HaShanah. In the latter case, the residents of Jerusalem would have observed two days of Rosh HaShanah: the thirtieth, because of doubt up to the very end of the day as to whether witnesses would come; and the thirty-first, because of certainty that it was the Scriptural Rosh haShanah” (p.69).

This applied to residents inside the city of Jerusalem and nearby areas or towns. But what about observance of Yom Teruah OUTSIDE the city of Jerusalem, and in outlying regions and cities?

At one time, beacons being lit up on hillsides provided evidence that the new moon had been seen and verified at Jerusalem. If no beacon fires were lit, that was evidence that the new moon had not been seen, meaning the Holy Day would have to be the following day (the thirty-first day since the previous Rosh Chodesh). However, when the Samaritans began to light false beacon fires, this could no longer be a viable means to determine the correct day.

The question arises, could the entire Diaspora be linked up in this way? Says Jeffrey M. Cohen:

“Definitely not. The Jewish diaspora at the time of the Second Temple encompassed large communities in Egypt and Syria, in the important cities of Asia Minor, in Cyprus and Crete, in Greece and Macedonia. Jews began arriving in Rome in the second century B.C.E., from where they spread to other cities in Italy, and even to Rome’s western provinces of Gaul, Spain, and Africa.

“Thus the reference in the Mishnah to ‘the entire diaspora’ being lit up [with bonfires] refers exclusively to the Babylonian communities, about 600 miles east of the Holy Land. Babylon was unique, after Palestine, for its autonomy and strong organization, under the supreme authority of a hereditary *Resh Galuta* or *Exilarch* who claimed descent from the royal house of David. Hence, the calendrical information flashed to Babylon by means of the fire signals would be utilized promptly in order to regulate religious life there.

This was not the situation, however, in the other far-flung communities of the dispersion. Hence, the restricted direction in which notice of the particular day of the new moon, or Rosh Hashanah, was communicated” (1001 *Questions and Answers on Rosh Hashanah and Yom Kippur*, page 12).

It would seem, on this basis, that the Jews living in other far-flung outposts of the world, throughout the Mediterranean, would have had to observe the New Moons locally, in order to observe God’s Festivals. This would have been necessary due to the fact they had no means to get the news from Jerusalem in time to be useful. Since these communities had no idea of which day the ecclesiastical court in Jerusalem had declared as sanctified, as the New Moon, each month, this was why they observed two days for the annual Holy Days instead of just one, including Yom Teruah/Rosh Hashanah.

### *A One or Two Day Festival?*

A fascinating discussion of the Yom Teruah/Rosh Hashanah problem is found in 1001 *Questions and Answers on Rosh Hashanah and Yom Kippur*, by Jeffrey M. Cohen. In answer to the question of how many days Rosh Hashanah is celebrated, he answers:

“There is indeed evidence that Rosh Hashanah was observed in ancient Israel on some years as a one-day festival, and on other years over two days. The Talmud expressly refers to this difference between the respective practices of Babylon and Israel on this matter, with the former always celebrating two days and the latter frequently celebrating only one.

“Originally, the number of days of Rosh Hashanah was determined in the land of Israel on the usual basis of whether or not witnesses appeared before the court in Jerusalem to testify that they had seen the appearance of the new moon the previous evening. The court at Jerusalem, charged with fixing and consecrating the new moon (and, in the case of Rosh Hashanah, the festival itself, since it corresponded with the appearance of the new moon of Tishri), always sat on the thirtieth day of the month. The court would, in the case of Rosh Hashanah, always declare that day (the thirtieth of Elul) as holy, and the sanctity of Rosh Hashanah would commence from the previous evening. This was done in a precautionary manner, in case witnesses appeared late on that thirtieth day, to testify that they had seen the first appearance of the moon the previous night. The court would then confirm and sanctify that very day as the first day of Tishri and Rosh Hashanah. The following day would then be an ordinary working day, so that there would be only one day of Rosh Hashanah that year. If the court had not declared the thirtieth day as Rosh Hashanah, and the witnesses were delayed, and only appeared late in the day, after the time for offering festival offerings had passed, then it would have meant that the festival day would have passed without being consecrated by the special and proper offerings.

“However, if the witnesses failed to appear that day, then the court would declare the previous month a ‘pregnant month’ (*me’ubar*), that is an extended month of 30 days, and they would consequently consecrate the following day as the first of Tishri and Rosh Hashanah. In that situation, the Jerusalemites would have had to observe two days as Rosh Hashanah, with the precautionary day turning out to have been, with hindsight, unnecessary.

“Thus it is clear that originally there were times when Jerusalem celebrated only one day of Rosh Hashanah, and other times – when witnesses did not appear in

time – when they celebrated two days” (pages 10-11).

Therefore, during the time when the beginning of the month was determined by witnesses, most of the Land of Israel observed Yom Teruah/Rosh Hashanah as two days of Yom Tov, since they did not know which day had been proclaimed by the Beit Din (court) as Rosh Chodesh. The custom in the Diaspora, lands distant from Jerusalem, was to always observe Yom Teruah/Rosh Hashanah as a TWO DAY festival.

### ***Evidence from Nehemiah's Time***

In the days of Nehemiah, we read that on the first day of Tishri, Yom Teruah, Ezra the scribe mounted a podium, and read from the book of the Law to all the assembled people, “on the first day of the seventh month,” “from early morning until midday” (Neh.8:1-4, NRSV).

Verse 13 goes on, “On the SECOND DAY the heads of ancestral houses of all the people, with the priests and the Levites, *came together* to the scribe Ezra in order to study the words of the law.” What is this? This would have been the SECOND DAY of Tishri – or, the SECOND day of the New Moon! Now, this verse does not absolutely prove the feast lasted two days – but consider! Why were they meeting together, to study the Scriptures, on the *second day*, if the Holy Day was over and finished? It would seem likely that they were indeed observing two days. This may have been their custom while in captivity in Babylon, and while living outside Jerusalem.

Here, then, is Biblical evidence suggesting that the Jews during the time of Ezra, observed at least on this occasion TWO days for the festival of the New Moon of Tishri – Yom Teruah!

### ***The Mystery of Yom Teruah***

This unusual situation, of course, brings many questions to mind. One question might be, why would God place a Holy Day on a New Moon? He obviously knew in advance the difficulties this would cause! Did He do this as a “test” to His people? And also to teach them a very important lesson in obedience and faith?

Interestingly, the Jews called Yom Teruah or Rosh Hashanah by other names as well. It is known as *Yom HaDin* (Day of Judgment), *Yom HaDat Olam* (Day of the Birth of the World, or the Ages), *Yom Zikhron Teruah* (Day of Memorial of Shouting, Blowing or Sounding the Ram's Horn). But perhaps most interestingly, it is known as *Yom HaKeseh* (Day of Concealment)!

This last name alludes to the position of the new moon on the first of Tishri, as well as the limited information provided in the Word of God as to its nature and significance. It is also as if God said for us to learn, pray, meditate, and figure it out for ourselves! It is a Day of Mystery – a day involving judgment, repentance, creation, memorials, and beginnings (as it begins the civil year, for which it is New Year's Day). As Solomon wrote in Proverbs, “It is the glory of God to conceal things, but the glory of kings is to search things out” (Prov.25:2, NRSV).

Philip Goodman, in *The Rosh Hashanah Anthology*, provides this insight into the meaning of this Holy Day:

“On the first day of Tishri is New Year for years.

“R. Nachman b. Isaac explained the Mishnah to refer to the Divine judgment, as it is written, *From the beginning of the year to the end of the year* (Deuteronomy 11:12), which means, From the beginning of the year sentence is passed as to what shall be up to the end of it. How do we know that this takes place in Tishri? Because it is written, *Blow the horn at the new moon, at the COVERED TIME for our feastday* (Psalms 81:4). Which is the feast on which the moon is COVERED OVER? You must say that this is New Year; and it is written in this connection, *For it is a statute for Israel, an ordinance for the God of Jacob* (v.5).

“Our Rabbis taught: *For it is a statute for Israel, an ordinance for the God of Jacob* teaches that the heavenly court does not assemble for judgment until the court on earth has sanctified the month” (Rosh Hashanah 8a-b, quoted on page 17).

Why does this passage refer to the moon as “COVERED” on the Feast Day? The King James has, “Blow up the trumpet in the new moon, in the time appointed, on our solemn feast day” (Psalm 81:3). The word “appointed” here is the Hebrew word *keceh* which means “fullness,” i.e., “festival, time appointed.” It is apparently from #3680, *kacah*, meaning “to plump,” “fill up hollows,” by implication, “to cover (for clothing or secrecy).” It is variously translated “clad, clothe, conceal, cover, hide, overwhelm.”

Since the verse says to blow the shofar on the New Moon, and calls it “the covered time,” this suggests that the the moon is covered over and concealed, and just beginning to emerge from darkness – that is, the first faint crescent. Light is just beginning to emerge from being completely concealed or “covered over.”

Why then would God place a holy day – count *as holy time* – a day which we cannot predict in advance – a day which invariably “sneaks up” on us? Why would He give us a *holy day* which we must sometimes observe “two days,” in order to be sure we have got the right day?

Of course, we could be like some, and only keep “one” day, based on the fixed modern Jewish calendar – but even the Jews do not do that. They observe TWO days, regardless! But if we did this, we would often be stuck with the wrong day – we would be leaving it to chance – we would not be ensuring that we observed the right day! Remember, God’s calendar is based on the first visual appearance of the New Moon – and this is especially important for Yom Teruah, the Day of Blowing Trumpets and Shouting!

What does the “concealment” of this day, to the very last moment, as it were, teach us?

In physics, there is a law known as Heisenberg’s ‘Uncertainty Principle.’ In essence, it states that if you know the position of a subatomic particle, you cannot know its speed; or if you know its velocity, you cannot know at the same time its precise location. There is ‘uncertainty’ involved in viewing what we refer to as the building blocks of matter.

Likewise, the ‘uncertainty’ surrounding the day of Yom Teruah should teach us many lessons. First, we probably don’t know as much as we think we know! As Solomon wrote: “I have observed the business that God gave man to be concerned with: He brings everything to pass, precisely at its time; He also puts eternity in their mind, but without man ever guessing, from first to last, all the things that God brings to pass” (Eccl.3:11, Tanakh). Solomon added: “[The secret of] what happens is elusive and deep, deep down; who can discover it?” (Eccl.7:24).

There is so much meaning to the day of Yom Teruah, that it overwhelms us – it is a fountain of study, meditation, and an eternal source of knowledge – like a foundation stone of time itself. But the uncertainty principle seems most appropriate in understanding its nature. It is, in fact, a holy day which we literally must begin observing “IN FAITH,” for the day we begin observing could become the day announced as the holy day – or it could be the NEXT day! Either way, we cannot always know in advance, so we must “cover our bases” – that is, we must do as the Jews do and sometimes observe BOTH days!

An old adage says, “Better be SAFE than sorry.” Thus, we had better observe “Elul 30,” just in case it really turns out to be “Tishri 1”! We certainly don’t want to take any foolish “chances,” and wind up not observing God’s Holy Day!

Therefore, the supreme lesson of FAITH is written all over this Holy Day! It’s “concealment” is very much like God Himself. Isaiah says of God, “Truly, you are a God who *hides* Himself, O God of Israel, the Saviour” (Isa.45:15, NRSV). The Tanakh has it, “You are indeed a God who *concealed* Himself, O God of Israel, who brings victory!”

The major lesson of God for man is the lesson of *faith in God*. Evolutionists, because they cannot see Him, deny His existence – foolishly so! For all Creation witnesses to His existence (Rom.1:18-22). Notice! Faith – even with uncertainty all around us – is the key building block of righteous character. God tells us in Hebrews:

“Now faith is the assurance of things hoped for, the conviction [evidence] of things *not seen*. Indeed, by faith our ancestors received approval. By faith we understand that the worlds were prepared by the word of God, so that what is seen was made from things that are *not visible*. . . .

“And without faith it is impossible to please God, for whoever would approach him must believe that he exists and that he rewards those who seek him. By faith Noah, warned by God about events *as yet unseen*, respected the warning and built an ark to save his household; by this he condemned the world and became an heir to the righteousness that is in accordance with faith” (Hebrews 11:1-7, NRSV).

Consider this fundamental principle of faith. It is so intimately tied up with the celebration of God’s Feast of Yom Teruah/Rosh Hashanah. The blowing of the trumpets or shofars on this day call us to repentance – to return to God and His ways, at the beginning of a “new year” (the fall or civil new year). As we search ourselves, and heed the call to repentance, we know *by faith*, faith in Christ’s shed blood, that our sins have been forgiven, and we have “peace with God” (Rom.5:1, 6-9). We know also that we have fellowship with God the Father and Christ the Son through the sacrifice of Christ, and through His being our High Priest in heaven who ever lives to make intercession for us! (I John 1:2-3; Heb.4:14-16).

Yom Teruah, then, symbolizes our entire Christian Messianic life – revealing the “way of faith.” As Paul wrote, “For we walk by faith, not by sight” (II Cor.5:7). And as we also know, “The just shall live by faith” (Hab.2:4; Rom.1:17; Gal.3:11).

Observing the “Day of Concealment” in the proper manner requires FAITH and provides a foundational lesson in true faith and obedience to God! Since it also pictures the Day of Judgment, and God’s final warning call to repent, the uncertainty of the day itself reveals we cannot know in advance *exactly when or what day* judgment will come, or when the Messiah will return to judge the world! As He Himself said so clearly, “But of that day and hour knows no man, no, not the angels of heaven, but my Father only” (Matthew 24:36).

The Messiah also told us: “Watch, therefore, for you do not know what hour your Lord is coming. But know this, that if the master of the house had known what hour the thief would come, he would have watched, and not allowed his house to be broken into. Therefore you also be READY for the Son of Man is coming at an hour you do not expect” (Matt.24:42-44).

The lesson, then, is we must have faith – and diligently “WATCH” (Mark 13:37)! The lesson is that we must “keep on our toes,” spiritually, and NEVER NEVER NEVER take anything for granted, as human beings are wont to do! We must not slip into a lackadaisical, lazy, slipshod attitude. We must always be awake, watchful, vigilant, and OBSERVANT!

The “concealment” of the day of Yom Teruah should help teach us this very important lesson.

## Chapter Ten

# “What Shall We Do?”

Amazing -- but true! Once human beings begin a pattern of error, it is exceedingly difficult to correct the error, and to come to the truth!

Herbert W. Armstrong, pastor of the Worldwide Church of God, had much experience in this regard. He himself wrote several years ago,

"We are all human. We are all fallible. I have been wrong. I have made mistakes. The same is true of all those God is using in HIS WORK."

Mr. Armstrong continued, saying:

"God says, 'PROVE all things.' That means *you* are fallible. This means all the 'great' men are fallible! ALL are human. ALL can be wrong -- and nearly all are. The *whole world* is DECEIVED (Rev.12:9). . . .

"The very recognition of that fact is the *beginning of* right knowledge. We do recognize it -- that we ourselves could be wrong. That is the *first step* toward coming out of the fog of error and deception, starting toward truth."

Herbert Armstrong went on,

"The second step, if you would know TRUTH, is to be willing to admit being deceived or in error, and to reject it and accept truth new to me -- when proved even though unpopular . . . To find and live the TRUTH requires a HUMBLED mind" (January 1985, *Good News*).

Those words make sense. They should be an obvious truth. But how many of us really practice and listen to these words of wisdom?

The apostle Jude wrote 1900 years ago, "Beloved, when I gave all diligence to write unto you of the common salvation, it was needful for me to write unto you, and exhort you that ye should EARNESTLY CONTEND (fight, struggle, strive) FOR THE FAITH which was once delivered unto the saints" (Jude 3).

It is not easy to be a true, genuine Christian. It is not easy to stand apart, to be separate from the crowd, to accept and practice NEW TRUTH, even when unpopular!

Nevertheless, the facts prove that beyond any shadow of doubt that God's original calendar was twisted, distorted, and CHANGED by erring Rabbis in the fourth century, but God has now RESTORED it to our knowledge!

To God it is very important that we do things correctly, after His prescribed manner and according to His precise instructions.

In the days of David, when the ark of God was being brought from the house of Abinadab in Gibeah, the ark was placed in a cart pulled by oxen, contrary to God's command (Num.4:15, 19-20). When a non-Levite, Uzziah, tried to steady the ark when the oxen shook it, "God smote him there for his error; and there he died" (II Samuel 6:7).

It does make a difference to GOD whether we obey His Law, just as He directed and commanded, or whether we make human "changes" to it, and follow our own human ideas and traditions, instead!

### ***What About YOU?***

What about you? What are you going to do with this totally wonderful new truth? Will you observe God's annual Holy Days based on His TRUE revealed Calendar? Will you keep His commandments in TRUTH?

Or will you follow ministers of various churches who refuse to hear this truth, who close their minds, and who follow "tradition" instead?

Will you OBEY GOD? Or will you continue in error?

Herbert Armstrong wrote in a December 1976 *Good News* magazine,

*"Wouldn't it be all right to compromise, 'just a little,' on some 'unimportant minor point'?"*

That is some question! Many would answer in the affirmative. "Yes, we might as well follow the modern Jewish fixed calendar, even if it *has errors*, even if it is based on human traditions and human reasoning."

But Mr. Armstrong continued, warning God's people:

*"Nevertheless, if we begin to compromise with God's TRUTH, even in the smallest, slightest manner, we have allowed Satan to get a foot into the door of the Church, and soon he will push open the door (he is stronger than we) AND TAKE OVER THE WHOLE CHURCH."*

What a frightful warning those words are! Although Mr. Armstrong died in January, 1986, his words still speak to us from the grave, as it were. Herbert Armstrong did not live to see his warning fulfilled. But because the leaders of the church he founded, under Christ, went astray, many of God's people are now headed for severe correction and catastrophe, spiritually.

What about you? Will YOU "compromise" with this newly proven truth?

Will you allow Satan to get a toehold, a wedge, a foot in the door, by compromising with God's Word, His Laws, His CALENDAR?

***Don't Give the Devil a "Toe-hold"***

Sadly, many have followed the road of least resistance. They have spurned the pure Word of God and accepted ersatz, fake, counterfeits palmed off as "truth" instead. The various churches that came out of the Worldwide Church of God, when it plunged over the cliff of apostasy and rank paganism, have not gotten "back to the faith once delivered to the saints" (Jude 3). They have rejected this TRUTH about God's Calendar, and so Mr. Armstrong's prophecy or prediction – his warning – has come to pass!

Thousands are mired in sin, stuck fast in error. They opened the door for Satan the devil to enter and gain a foothold; and today he has *pushed upon the door and TAKEN OVER THE WHOLE CHURCH and has deceived many remnant, scattered churches and brethren!*

Since the vast majority of Church leaders have indicated that they will NOT repent, at this time, the remnant branches of God's Church are plunging into gross error and compromise.

That means, in order to remain faithful to GOD, and His WORD, there is *only one thing left for a TRUE child of God to do* -- when a church goes astray, into error, and refuses to repent -- ANY CHURCH -- then God's true people must refuse to compromise, and FOLLOW CHRIST! They must *LEAVE such a compromising CHURCH and OBEY GOD'S WORD!*

Some seem to think that they should remain with their particular church, even if it is wrong, since they feel it is "God's Church." But is a church going astray from the commandments of God still really "His" church?

The apostle Paul declares: "Do not be unequally yoked together with unbelievers. For what fellowship has righteousness with lawlessness? And what communion has light with darkness? And what accord has Christ with Belial? Or what part has a believer with an unbeliever? And what agreement has the temple of God with idols?" (II Cor.6:14-16, NKJV).

Paul goes on, "Therefore COME OUT from among them and be SEPARATE, says the Lord. Do not touch what is unclean, and I will receive you, and I will be a Father to you, and you shall be My sons and daughters, says the LORD Almighty" (verses 17-18).

*Will we obey God? Our spiritual SALVATION is at stake!!!*

Mr. Armstrong went even further, and warned in powerful words:

"A little leaven leavens the WHOLE LUMP! I have been charged with the commission of KEEPING GOD'S WORD. Keeping it inviolate -- NO COMPROMISE! I have never compromised with God's TRUTH -- regardless of the cost or the circumstances. *I never shall!*"

Mr. Armstrong made plenty of mistakes. We all know that. But we should not "throw the baby out with the bath water." He also taught a tremendous amount of truth. We should be thankful for that. And we should *heed his warnings* about compromising with truth, and refusing to repent when new truth is presented to us!

Will YOU compromise, even a "little bit," with the truth of Almighty God?

A "little leaven" -SIN -- soon leavens the whole lump of dough. The Truth has been proved.

Will you stand up, and be counted? Will you come out of BABYLON, and OBEY GOD?

Herbert Armstrong continued,

"I will CHANGE whenever proved wrong. I will accept NEW TRUTH as often as PROVED to be new truth to me or to the Church.

"But I will not compromise with the truth! I never have!  
*I won't compromise - not even 'just a little.'*"

What about YOU?

Will you "CHANGE WHEN PROVED WRONG"? Will you "ACCEPT NEW TRUTH"? Will you "compromise" with this exciting new truth about God's Calendar? "NOT EVEN JUST A LITTLE"? Will you refuse to grow in truth -- refuse to OBEY GOD?

### ***Stubbornness Is like Idolatry***

God says stubbornness is as idolatry and witchcraft. God inspired Samuel to tell king Saul, "For rebellion is as the sin of witchcraft, and stubbornness is as iniquity and idolatry. Because thou hast rejected the word of the Lord, he hath also rejected thee from being king" (I Sam.15:23).

Saul "compromised." In his own eyes, it was "just a little" matter. And as a result, he was rejected by God, and lost the kingdom!

Beware, brethren! If we compromise, like Saul did, we also will be punished, only much greater -- our punishment could be to lose out on eternal life and the real kingdom, the Kingdom of God!

King Saul, upon hearing this reproof and rebuke, confessed that he had sinned, saying that he had "feared the people, and obeyed their voice" (verse 24). He looked to the opinions of the people for guidance, instead of to God! But his problem was more than that. His problem was he feared the people MORE than he FEARED GOD!

Many today "fear" their local ministers, or pastor of their church, it would seem, more than they fear God!

Saul did not have respect for the commandments of God. He "compromised." He was so selfish, and self-centered, and full of his own EGO, that he could not bear to admit error, to humble himself before all the people. He could not admit he was wrong before all the people!

Sounds like a lot of "ministers of God," today, doesn't it?

But what about *you*, personally?

Because of this SIN, God rejected Saul from being His chosen king. Although Saul remained in office for many more years, he had already disqualified himself in God's sight.

What about Church leaders today? Will they repent? Will they change, admit they have been wrong? Will they confess their errors and sins, and begin to OBEY GOD? Will they admit this wonderful NEW TRUTH, receive it with delirious JOY and thankfulness and appreciation

and gratitude, and cling to it with conviction and earnestness?

Many have shown by their fruits that they will NOT REPENT!

But forget them for a moment. Let's look at you. What is your excuse? What about you, yourself? Where will you stand?

At the second coming of Christ, will you stand with the righteous and obedient? Or will you stand with the unholy and disobedient? Will you stand with the sheep on His right hand, who obey Him, and who will enter His Kingdom? Or will you stand with the goats on His left hand, who disobey Him, and who will be thrown into outer darkness, where there is bitter weeping and gnashing of teeth? (see Matt.25:31-46).

Herbert Armstrong wrote, many years ago, saying we should ask ourselves these very pertinent, profound questions:

"[Am I] willing to admit being deceived or in error, and to reject it and accept truth new to me -- when proved even though unpopular -- even though it cuts me off from my family, friends, associates or club members -- even though everything in my selfish and vain nature rebels against it? Am I willing to ACT *ON IT* -- *OBEY the truth* no matter what the cost?"

These are very serious words! Mr. Armstrong continued:

"To find and have the TRUTH requires a HUMBLED mind. Did you ever know a person of great intellectual powers who did not have the kind of VANITY that shrinks from confessing he has been WRONG -- and has misled others?"

Herbert Armstrong declared,

"I had to be willing, *continuously*, to confess being wrong, and to embrace truths constantly NEW to me."

It is hard to admit error. It is TEN times harder to confess error, than to learn new truth! Regardless of what others may do, what will *YOU* do with the truth? Are you willing to accept new truth, and CHANGE, even though it may cost you your church affiliation?

Would you even be willing to give up fellowship, if necessary, to embrace new proven TRUTH? Are you willing to STAND UP for the truth of God and be counted?

God tells us: "But on this one will I look: On him who is poor and of a contrite spirit, and who *trembles at My word*" (Isaiah 66:2, NKJV).

This is not mere game-playing. This is not just a game of monopoly, or poker, or "trivial pursuit." This is for *REAL!* The stakes are eternal life!

Is eternal life worth it? The decision is yours.

## ***NEW from Triumph Prophetic Ministries!***

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