

Report On Determining Yahweh's New Year

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**This report is composed of excerpts
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God's Reckoning of Time from Creation Forward

The very first phrase of the Bible mentions time:

"In the beginning God created the heavens and the earth." Gen 1:1 NASB

An unknown amount of time that could have been an instant or billions of years are encompassed in the words "in the beginning." We just aren't told how long a period of time that was, nor did any reckoning of time even exist then by which we could know. However long it was, it was when "God created the heavens and the earth" out of nothing in their ancient primordial form. At some point after that "beginning", God set about ordering the universe during a period of seven creative days. It was not until the fourth creative day that a means was finally provided by which time could be accurately counted:

*Then God said, "Let there be lights in the expanse of the heavens to separate the day from the night, and let them be **for signs and for seasons and for days and years**; and let them be for lights in the expanse of the heavens to give light on the earth"; and it was so. God made the two great lights, the greater light to govern the day, and the lesser light to govern the night; He made the stars also.* Gen. 1:14-16 NASB

In the beginning "God created..." meaning in this instance that He brought something into existence out of nothing. Here "God made" ('asah Strong's 6213H) the sun, the moon and the stars. God made i.e., ordered what had already been created, into a purposeful form. His purpose for the heavenly bodies as ordered on the fourth day was not only to give light upon the earth, but that they would "serve as signs and for seasons (moed Strong's 4150H) and for days and years." The word here translated as "seasons" is the Hebrew word "**moed**" which, according to Strong's, has the primary meaning of "**appointed time.**" This is exactly the same word used in the Bible to describe **the holy days including Sabbaths and Festivals that God later set to meet with His people.** Therefore, a Hebrew-speaking Israelite would read this verse and understand immediately that God ordered the movement of the heavenly bodies as "signs" by which He could set His "appointed times" with His people. The movement of the sun, moon and stars were ordered from the fourth day forward to serve as God's great appointment book in the sky!

This is an amazing thing to contemplate. Before God ordered the heavens in this way the all-knowing Creator, of course, comprehended the passage of time. However, He was the only one that could, since no mechanism existed by which His creatures could comprehend it. However, now He had changed that! He had formed a mechanism in the sky, visible to all generations to come, that could put His creatures on exactly the same time He was on so that He could make appointments to meet with them. When man, who was yet to be created, was finally brought forth, he would have a means to know and comprehend God's time and be "on the same schedule" with his Grand Creator. Friends, being brought into

God's measure of time is a matter of intimate fellowship with Him!

When is a Calendar Not a Calendar?

... These ancient diaries and notations [documented in the book, Holy Time] reveal something interesting about the ancient lunar calendar. We think of a calendar as something that fixes the days in advance. In that sense the ancient "calendar" of the fertile crescent was really not a calendar at all. Rather, it was an observation and reckoning system for tracking the moon - the "calendar" in the sky. As we have seen, the length of the month could not be known with certainty until the new moon crescent was observed. Only then would it be known for sure how many days, whether 29 or 30, were in the now-previous month. There were expectations regarding when the new moon would arrive, but the diaries reveal that the moon did not always do what was expected in that regard and could only be certainly fixed after the fact by observation of the new moon crescent. Note too, that most of these diaries are from a very late date, during the last 6 centuries before Messiah till only 50 years before Messiah. This then, was the observation and reckoning system used throughout the Fertile Crescent through the entire Old Testament period. One more thing. This was not rocket science. A little kid could do it. All it took was to look at the moon and keep track of what you saw. That's all it still takes. Anyone can do it.

The lunar "calendar" is very "user-friendly" - completely intuitive. If you were the only person on the earth and you never heard of a calendar and you started watching the moon it wouldn't be long before you would notice the repeating cycle of the visible moon. You would track it from the time it could first be seen as a little sliver in the sky. You would note the first quarter 7 days later when half the moon is visible. You would notice the moon looked "full" in 7 more days. It becomes very apparent that the phases of the moon seem to work in quarters marking off 7-day periods till the moon is dark after 4 of these 7-day periods. You would watch and wait for the moon to make its appearance again. All of this is exactly what these people did. For them the moon was a "sign" marking the passing of time.

What is Intercalation?

Here is an interesting notation passed on to us by Thompson: "When at the Moon's appearance in the intercalary month Adar its horns are pointed and dark, the prince will grow strong and the land will have abundance."

This reminds us that the ancient lunar calendars used intercalation to keep the lunar year in sync with the seasons.

"Intercalation" is a fancy word for a very simple idea. Basically, when the months were slipping a little too far out of sync with the seasons, another month would be allowed to go by at the end of the year to get the year back on track with the seasons. All lunar time-keeping must do this, since intercalation is the only way to keep a lunar "calendar" in step with the seasons. Again this is very intuitive. You would know the signs of spring in your environment by when certain plants bud etc, and perhaps even by the position of the stars in relation to the moon. By observation you would know when you needed to let another cycle of the moon go by before starting to count off a new year. Its as simple as that.

At around 1000 BC Babylonian calendar priests are said to be intercalating months in an eight-year cycle, with three extra months added in eight years. This worked well, though not perfect. The "Metonic" 19-year cycle is said to have been the norm in Chaldean times, well before the time of Meton, after whom the cycle is named. The Metonic cycle includes 7 extra months intercalated over the course of 19-years. This method keeps the lunar calendar virtually in perfect harmony with the solar year.

Ancient Hebrew Time-Reckoning

The lunar calendar of Sumeria and Babylon was the dominant calendar of the ancient middle east. As such, it was also essentially the same calendar used by the ancient Canaanites and other peoples of the area. The Hebrew reckoning of time by lunar months as given to Israel by God followed the same lunar pattern used by the Sumerians, Babylonians and Canaanites, being from a common source [Eden].

Let's take a look at how Israel named the months of the year for a better understanding of this big picture. Three different sets of month names are clearly definable in the Old Testament as having been used by the Israelites.

Israelite-Canaanite Month Names

One set of month names used by Ancient Israel was that derived from the Canaanites. Of this set of month names, only four are found in the Bible. These are:

"Abib" (also pronounced Aviv) (Deut. 16:1) meaning something like "new ears of grain." This is the spring lunar month falling within parts of March and April. The name "Abib" indicates this to be the lunar month when immature ears of grain (abib) begin to grow on the stalks. The name is reported to specify the phase of growth when the grain is still green and the seeds are full of milky liquid that occurs at springtime. This month with its definite signs of spring was the first month of the year for Israel. (Ex. 9:31; Lev. 2:14)

The International Standard Bible Encyclopedia presents the following entry under the heading of Abib. *a'-bib ('abhibh, young ear of barley or other grain, Ex 9:31; Lev 2:14): The first month of the Israelite year, called Nisan in Neh 2:1; Est 3:7, is Abib in Ex 13:4; 23:15; 34:18; compare Dt 16:1. Abib is not properly a name of a month, but part of a descriptive phrase, "the month of young ears of grain." This may indicate the Israelite way of determining the new year (Ex 12:2), the year beginning with the new moon nearest or next preceding this stage of the growth of the barley. The year thus indicated was practically the same with the old Babylonian year, and presumably came in with Abraham. The Pentateuchal laws do not introduce it, though they define it, perhaps to distinguish it from the Egyptian wandering year.*

Ziv (1 Kings 6:1, 37) meaning "brightness" and falling after Aviv in our April-May.

Ethanim (1 Kings 8:2) from 'eitan and having to do with water flowing in wadis (for 'eitan in connection with wadis, see Deut. 21:4; Amos 5:24; Ps. 74:15). This month falls in our October-November.

Bul (1 Kings 6:38) likely referring to "flooding" and occurring in our November-December.

At least two of these names adopted by the Israelites from the Canaanites are also said to be known in Phoenician. The interchangeability of these month names between peoples confirms that all the cultures of the region were on a similar reckoning of the lunar months. It is also noteworthy that each month name refers to a phenomenon of nature usual in that lunar month. For the months to track so well with the seasons they identify by their names, it is clear that intercalation was being used to keep the lunar months in sync with their right place in the seasons.

Torah Numbered Month Names

The second set of lunar month names used by the Israelites is the naming system employed by the Torah. This system designates all the months by number, starting with

the first month, the month that includes spring. Thus the holy days of Passover and Unleavened Bread fall in the first month and the Day of Atonement and Tabernacles fall in the seventh (Leviticus 23). This numerical system of tracking the months through the year was established at the time of the exodus from Egypt. It is noteworthy that God established Israel on this particular lunar reckoning of time as part of His first instructions to the Israelites as a nation. This means that the touchstone from which all the months are counted is that first month when God delivered His people from bondage. Thus, the numerical month-names serve as a constant reminder through the cycles of the year of that Divine national origin.

This brings us to the only discernable difference of any consequence between the lunar calendars of the region. Namely, different peoples at different times counted the months of the year starting from different seasons. Generally, some started with the month in which spring occurs while others started at the end of summer. In this case the lunar months would still be the same as compared to one another, but the years would begin and end with different months. Same monthly time reckoning by the appearance of the new moon crescent each month - different starting points for the year.

Israelite-Babylonian Month Names

The third set of month names is found in the books of the Bible from the post-exilic period, adopted from the Babylonian calendar during the exile in Babylon (Babylonian exile began in 586 BC). These names are still in use today as the names of the traditional Jewish system.

These Babylonian names are said to be derived from Akkadian and Sumerian month names. They are thought to be based on nature, mythology, and religious practices. These names were taken over into Aramaic, which is said to have become the spoken language of most Jews.

Babylon started their year with the month of Tishri. Even though God specifically said the year should start with Abib, the spring month, the Jews in Babylon incorporated the Tishri new year into their tradition, known as *Rosh Hashanah*, meaning Head of the Year. Thus, the Jews came to have essentially two new years, one counted from the first month according to the Torah and the other, after the Babylonian custom, counted from the seventh. Despite the difference of which lunar month is chosen to be the first month of the year, the actual reckoning of the lunar months themselves remains the same. All of this interchangeability of month names from one people-group to another again suggests the universality of the lunar months among the ancient peoples surrounding the ancient Hebrews.

Below is a chart which shows the three month-naming systems employed by the Israelites. Notice the similarity of the Post-Exilic Hebrew month names with the Babylonian names. Also, notice the interchangeability of the month names, with the exception of the months of our Gregorian calendar:

Comparative Names of the Lunar Months				
Torah Numbered	Canaanite Adapted	Post-Exilic Hebrew	Sumero-Babylonian	Gregorian Solar
1.	Abib ("new grain")	Nisan	Nisannu ("first produce")	March-April
2.	Ziv ("brightness")	Iyyar	Ayaru ("rosette"?)	April-May
3.		Sivan	Simanu ("sign," "season")	May-June
4.		Tammuz	Du'uzu (a god)	June-July
5.		Ab	Abu	July-August
6.		Elul	Elulu/Ululu ("purification")	August-September
7.		Tishri	Tashritu ("beginning")	September-October
8.	Ethanim ("flowing streams")	Marheshvan	Arahsamna ("eighth month")	October-November
9.	Bul ("flooding")	Kislev	Kissilimu	November-December
10.		Tebet	Tebetu	December-January
11.		Shebat	Shabatu	January-February
12.		Adar	Addaru	February-March

Lunar Time-Reckoning of the Old Testament - Conclusion

We now have tracked ancient lunar time-reckoning from its use in the Bible, through its use in Sumeria, Canaan and Babylon and found it to be so much the same method of designating the lunar months and the annual passage of time that month names were interchangeable from one culture to another. Why not? They were all observing the same moon!

As we have pointed out, this already-ancient calendar was the one in use in the land of his birth where Abraham grew up. Abraham left Ur to follow the one true King of the Universe into what came to be the promised land. When he did, he took his knowledge of the ancient lunar calendar with him. Abraham was no unintelligent barbarian. The first century Jewish priest Flavius Josephus, being privy to the ancient records of Israel preserved into the first century by the priesthood at the Temple, confirms what an examination of the facts suggests. Josephus recounts that the patriarch Abraham when in Egypt taught the Egyptian astronomers accurate astronomy, the science on which time reckoning is based, as well as mathematics which he had learned when he resided in Sumeria-Babylonia (*Antiquities*: Bk 1:8:2). He also notes that Moses used this same reckoning of time known to Abraham, when he led the tribes of Israel out of Egypt. Josephus even states the amount of time that had elapsed from Adam to the Exodus as tracked through succeeding generations according to this very same reckoning of time! (*Antiquities*: Bk. 1:3:3).

Josephus frequently, exactly and easily translates Jewish lunar month names into month names of the other cultures and peoples that interacted with Israel. He treats them as being exactly the same lunar months by different names. Note this example; "[The] month called by the Macedonians *Dius*, but by the Hebrews, *Marchesuan*; for so did they

order the year in Egypt; but Moses appointed that *Nisan*, which is the same with *Xanthicus*, should be the first month..." (*Antiquities*: Bk. 1:3:3). Different names - exactly the same months.

The writings of Josephus thus agree with the Bible and indicate that the ancient lunar reckoning of time used throughout the entire Old Testament period from the beginning of the world forward was essentially identical to the lunar time-reckoning method still in use by the Jews at the time Josephus wrote his extensive volumes. This is exciting. It means from the beginning of time through the era of Messiah, which we call the first century, the Hebrew reckoning of time remained essentially the same.

We have shown that God put the heavenly bodies in their places in such a way that man could use them as a means of reckoning time. God taught lunar time-reckoning to Adam and this method was used from Eden forward to Israel. We have also shown that Israel and her neighbors used the same method of lunar time reckoning from the beginning till the time of the Jewish priest Josephus, which means till the destruction of the Temple in 70 AD and beyond. In other words, through the entire period of the writing of the Bible.

Hebrew sources confirm this lunar reckoning of time. For example *The Book of Enoch*, an ancient Jewish book highly regarded enough to be quoted in the Bible book of Jude, says this about the moon;

And on the first day she is called the new moon, for on that day the light rises upon her. She becomes full moon exactly on the day when the sun sets in the west, and from the east she rises at night, and the moon shines the whole night through till the sun rises over against her and the moon is seen over against the sun. On the side whence the light of the moon comes forth, there again she wanes till all the light vanishes and all the days of the month are at an end, and her circumference is empty, void of light. (BOOK OF ENOCH Chapters LXXII-LXXXII, The Book of the Heavenly Luminaries, Chapter 78, 1. From-The Apocrypha and Pseudepigrapha of the Old Testament, R.H. Charles Oxford: The Clarendon Press Section III.)

What we see here is that Israel had essentially the same method of lunar time-reckoning as the other nations of the Fertile Crescent. The month began with the new moon crescent marking the beginning of the first day of the month on the first evening of the new moon. Days were thus marked off from sunset to sunset, as the moon shined forth to rule the night. Let us now look at the Bible record of Israel and see how well it agrees with this ancient lunar method of reckoning time.

A New Nation Starts On God's Time

God had promised faithful Abraham that a great nation would come through his son Isaac. God made the same promise to Isaac regarding his son, Jacob. In course of time Jacob, renamed Israel by God, had twelve sons, the family heads of what became the twelve tribes of Israel. Israel and the twelve tribal patriarchs and their families all moved down from Canaan into Egypt, where one of the patriarchs, Joseph, had been elevated by God to the second-most position in the land. There they stayed for generations, eventually multiplying into a nation of several million people. This nation came to be called "Israel" after the patriarch from whom its twelve tribes descended.

Now a new king arose over Egypt, who did not know Joseph. He said to his people, "Behold, the people of the sons of Israel are more and mightier than we. "Come, let us deal wisely with them, or else they will multiply and in the event of war, they will also join themselves to those who hate us, and fight against us and depart from the land." So they appointed taskmasters over them to afflict them with hard labor ... But the more they afflicted them, the more they multiplied and the more they spread out, so that they were in dread of the sons of Israel. The Egyptians compelled the sons of Israel to labor

rigorously; and they made their lives bitter with hard labor in mortar and bricks and at all kinds of labor in the field, all their labors which they rigorously imposed on them. Exodus 1:8-14

Seeing the slavery by which the sons of Israel were being afflicted, Yah raised up a deliverer from among them, namely Moses. The book of Exodus tells how Moses was raised up and sent to Pharaoh in the name of Israel's God, YHWH [throughout this book we use Yahweh as the most well-known form of the Name today], to secure the freedom of Israel. Yahweh brought nine terrible plagues on Egypt, each worse than the one before, but Pharaoh would not let Israel go. We pick up the story before the tenth and final plague. With this final plague God knew that Israel would finally go free to become a new nation of its own before God. The very first thing Yahweh did anticipating this, was to put Israel on the same reckoning of time with Him!

The First Month Designated By Israel's Deliverance

This month (the month of Abib according to Ex 13:4) shall be the beginning of months for you; it is to be the first month of the year to you. Exodus 12:2

As we have seen, the name of the month *Abib* refers to the new growth of barley which appears in the month in which spring occurs. Yahweh designated this spring month to be the first month in Israel's year. The word translated month here is the same Hebrew word so translated throughout the Hebrew Bible, the word *chodesh*, which literally means "new moon." It refers to one complete cycle of the phases of the moon commencing with the appearance of the new moon i.e., a lunar month. From this time forward both God and Israel would count the passing of time from this particular new moon of Abib marking the beginning of the lunar month in which Israel was set free to become the Covenant nation of God.

Yahweh specified certain actions according to a definite schedule to prepare for Israel's deliverance and exodus from Egypt. He also indicated that these events were to be commemorated each year. The first of these events was to occur on the tenth day of the month: *Speak to all the congregation of Israel, saying, 'On the tenth of this month they are each one to take a lamb for themselves, according to their fathers' households, a lamb for each household. 'Now if the household is too small for a lamb, then he and his neighbor nearest to his house are to take one according to the number of persons in them; according to what each man should eat, you are to divide the lamb. 'Your lamb shall be an unblemished male a year old; you may take it from the sheep or from the goats. Exodus 12:3-5 NASB*

CONCLUSIONS REGARDING THE NEW YEAR

This report includes excerpts from the upcoming book *Holy Time* by Eliyahu ben David to be released from the website at www.tsiyon.org. This report is not meant to be an exhaustive treatment of the Hebrew Calendar. However, these points are clear:

1. From the fourth day of creation forward Yah has given the moon as a sign by which we can know His appointments.
2. The Hebrew word from which we translate the word 'month' is *chodesh*, which literally means "new moon." It refers to one complete cycle of the phases of the moon commencing with the appearance of the new moon, the first visible crescent, and is, therefore, an actual lunar month.
3. Abib is not just a month name. It is a word designating the new green ears of grain, barley being the first such crop of the spring.

4. Yahweh specifically says; *This month* (the month of Abib according to Ex 13:4) *shall be the beginning of months for you; it is to be the first month of the year to you.* Exodus 12:2

5. We note that Yahweh did not leave it up to us to determine when the new year would be. He tells us that the month of Abib i.e the lunar cycle when the abib barley is in evidence, is the first month of the year.

6. As with every month, the chodesh (new moon) of Abib begins with the sighting of the new moon crescent. The month of Abib is different from other months in that grain in the abib stage is present, marking that month as the month of abib. The phrase "the month of abib" is as much a description as a month name.

7. All of the appointments of Yahweh are counted from this first month. If you don't get that first month right you will miss all of the other appointments through the rest of the year.

8. Yahweh sets the appointments and tells us when to show up. The appointment times are therefore not optional to be determined by any body of men. That is why He has given us a clear sign (abib) to verify when the year begins.

9. The Jews knew all this and had a system of observation of the new moon to determine Yahweh's appointments until the fourth century. They didn't always get this perfect, however the intention was right, namely, to observe the signs that Yahweh set to mark His appointments so as to show up at the times Yahweh had set. Doing what Yahweh wants instead of what we want is called obedience.

10. In the fourth century due to Roman pressure the Jews abandoned their ancient system of observation of Holy Time. At that time they created their own fixed calendar that was based not on observation, but on their own rules by which they created their set calendar. **YAH HAD NEVER AUTHORIZED ANY BODY OF MEN TO DO THAT!** That set calendar is not, therefore, the calendar of the Bible. If you want to show up for Yahweh's Appointments you can only do so by observing the signs by which He orders His year!

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