

# Biblical Calendar

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When should we observe the Feasts of Yahweh?

# Introduction

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- This presentation will NOT definitively resolve Biblical Calendar concerns
- The information presented is MY personal opinion, supported where possible with Biblical references and extra biblical sources
- This presentation will be an overview of my research, time does not permit a full analysis of all my research, but research notes are available to anyone interested
- A decision regarding which calendar approach this Congregation will use moving forward will be determined at a future meeting of the Elders and presented to the Congregation to hopefully achieve consensus

# In the Beginning

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- While there are indications of sacrifices and possibly first fruit offerings early in Genesis, the Feasts of Yahweh we memorialize today were not codified until after the Exodus from Egypt (See Gen 3:21; Gen 4:3-5; Lev 23)
- There is scholarly debate about the keeping of the feasts during the 40 year wandering in the wilderness. The Bible only reflects the keeping of Passover in the second year and not again until entering the land. (See Num 9:1-2; Josh 5:10)

# Do We Really Keep the Feasts?

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- The Biblical Calendar debate can be heated at times and many adherents become VERY legalistic and some even insist that obedience to their particular viewpoint is salvific
- There are a few problems with this approach
  - We have no physical temple, so the required sacrifices outlined in the Torah are impossible
  - We have no active Levitical priesthood to properly perform the sacrifices
  - We have no High Priest of the lineage of Aaron with access to the Ephod, Urim and Thummim to receive direct instructions from Yahweh
- I therefore suggest it is IMPOSSIBLE for us to KEEP the Feasts of Yahweh as originally presented to Moses, we simply memorialize them

# What is the Source of the Controversy?

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- Two factors form the basis of ALL Biblical Calendar disputes
  - When does the Month begin?
    - At the lunar Conjunction
    - At the sighting of the first sliver of the “new” moon
  - When do you insert an intercalary month?
    - Based on Aviv Barley
    - Based on the Full Moon following the spring equinox
    - Based on the first sliver of the “new” moon following the spring equinox
    - Based on the heliacal rising of constellations
    - Using a combination of some of the above

# What is a Lunar Month?

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- A lunar month is the time it takes the moon to complete one orbit around the Earth.
  - The time it takes varies from month to month because the orbit is elliptical. The average is slightly more than 29.5 days.
- Two methods are used to determine the beginning of the lunar month
  - Conjunction (Calculated Astronomical New Moon)
  - Sighting of the first sliver of the Renewed Moon (Physical sighting by the naked eye)

# Conjunction

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- Astronomical term for the New Moon
  - The moon is totally dark and cannot be seen by the naked eye
- Some object to this view on two counts
  - It begins in darkness
    - Supporters point to the creation that began in darkness and was followed by light (Gen 1:1-3)
  - It must be calculated and cannot be physically observed
    - Could not be easily observed without access to technology

# Physical Sighting of the Renewed Moon

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- There is no direct Biblical support for physically observing the new moon however observing the new moon is mentioned over 15 times in the Bible
  - Rabbinical writings contain detailed instructions on determining the beginning of the month by physically sighting the renewed moon (Talmud/Mishneh)
- Some suggest sighting the first sliver of the moon is related to Messiah being the light as opposed to the darkness associated with the Conjunctionist view. (See John 1:4-5)
- Atmospheric weather can effect the accuracy of the observations (can be obscured by cloud cover etc.)
- This approach can be used anywhere without the aid of technology
- Can vary by location (due to time zones and weather conditions)

# Lunar/Solar Calendar

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- A lunar month can be 29 or 30 days and many times alternates between these lengths
- A strictly lunar year is about 11 or 12 days shorter than the solar year
- Because the lunar calendar is shorter than the Solar calendar, in order to keep the timing of the Feasts in the appropriate agricultural season, adjustments must be made to align the calendar accordingly
  - Metonic Cycle (19 year cycle where seven months are intercalated)
    - Intercalary Months

# Intercalary Month

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- Seven of the 19 years of the Metonic cycle require the intercalation of a month to align the lunar calendar to the solar calendar
- The question at hand is how does one decide which years to intercalate?
  - We previously mentioned four methods
    - Aviv Barley
    - The Full Moon following the spring equinox
    - The first sliver of the “new” moon following the spring equinox
    - The heliacal rising/setting of stars and/or constellations

# Aviv Barley

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- This method has **SOME** Biblical support. Aviv is mentioned eight times in the Pentateuch.
  - Most references merely provide the name Aviv for the first month of the Biblical year
  - Two references give some indication that it is an agricultural term for a stage of the ripeness of barley (See Exodus 9:31-32; Lev 2:14)
  - The Karaite Jewish community primarily drive this approach

# Aviv Barley Pros and Cons

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- Pro

- There is some Biblical support
- It is tied to the agricultural aspect of the feasts
- It has some support in Rabbinical writings (e.g. Sanhedrin 11b)

- Cons

- Limited to observation in the land of Yisrael only
- Different varieties of Barley have different germination and maturation times... Which to use?
- The state of the barley maturation is subjective (we do not have a precise Biblical definition of Aviv)
- How much barley must be sufficiently mature?
- Is the location of the Barley fields in Yisrael a factor?

# Full Moon Following Spring Equinox

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- This method states that Passover is to be held on the first full moon following the spring equinox
- This is a fully calculated calendar and is the basis of the Hillel II calendar used by modern Jews

# Full Moon Following Spring Equinox Pro/Con

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- Pro
  - Very accurate calendar within one day per century
  - Can be used anywhere throughout the world
  - Well established and easily obtainable and used (as long as we have Internet or other communication)
- Con
  - Developed by the Rabbis
  - Was likely NOT the method used by ancient Yisrael until Babylonian captivity
  - Intercalations are predetermined (3<sup>rd</sup>, 6<sup>th</sup>, 8<sup>th</sup>, 11<sup>th</sup>, 14<sup>th</sup>, 17<sup>th</sup>, and 19<sup>th</sup> years of Metonic Cycle)
    - This can cause Passover to be a month late in some years

# First Sliver of the “New” Moon Following the Spring Equinox

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- This method states that the month of *Aviv* begins on first sliver of the renewed moon following the spring equinox
- This is a fully calculated calendar but may have pagan Babylonian origins

# First Sliver of the “New” Moon Following the Spring Equinox Pro/Con

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- Pro
  - The calendar currently used by our congregation
  - Can be used anywhere throughout the world
  - Easily obtainable and used (provided we have Internet or other communication means)
  - Uses sliver of the renewed moon rather than conjunction
- Con
  - May have pagan origins connected to Babylonian festival of Akitu. It was likely revived by early adherents to the Seventh Day Adventist sect in the mid to late 1800s
  - May place Passover several weeks late as it inserts an entire month (plus) after the Spring Equinox
  - This is also a calculated calendar and not likely the original calendar followed post Exodus.
  - I have found no historical record of its use prior to 1800s (excepting the Babylonian festival noted above)

# Heliacal Rising

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- Biblically supported by using the Sun for determining the Days, the Moon to determine the Months and the Stars to determine the Year (Genesis 1:14)
- This method uses the stars and constellations to determine the cycle of the year
- The stars and constellations follow an annual cycle as they move throughout the night sky
- This method is accurate to within one minute per year
- Can be observed and used anywhere in the world
- May have pagan roots tied to the Zodiac (possible ties to Enoch Calendar)

# Heliacal Rising/Setting Pro/Con

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- Pro
  - Very Accurate
  - Observable anywhere in the world
- Con
  - Must be skilled in the knowledge of the stars and constellations and their rising/setting times surrounding the spring equinox
  - Slightly affected by procession of stars (can make a difference about every century)
  - May have pagan roots tied to the Zodiac
  - No historical use found (except possibly tied to Enoch Calendar)

# Calendars to Consider

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- Aviv Calendar (primarily advocated by Karaite Jews)
- Anthony's (for lack of a better term) Calendar (The one this Congregation currently follows)
- Hillel II (e.g. Jewish Rabbinical Calendar)
- 119 Ministries Calendar

# Aviv Calendar

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- This calendar is subject to variation:
  - Subjective evaluation of the state of Aviv
  - Subjective evaluation of the type of barley examined
  - Subjective evaluation of the quantity of Aviv barely required
- This calendar makes pre-planning very difficult as you have two weeks or less to prepare for Passover
- Requires people to physically search for Barley in the land of Yisrael
- Results of search must be transmitted quickly world-wide

# Anthony's Calendar

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- Calendar currently in use in this Congregation
- Can be calculated well in advance
- May have Pagan origins
- My place Passover nearly a month late

# Hillel II Calendar

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- Fully calculated calendar
- Based on first full moon following Spring Equinox
- Uses Conjunction versus First Sliver
- Intercalated months predetermined and not based on actual lunar cycle
- Feast dates are further adjusted based on dechiot (four rabbinical rules for ensuring feast dates do not fall on certain inconvenient days)

# 119 Ministries Calendar

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- Calculated calendar very similar to Hillel II calendar
  - Uses Conjunction
  - First Full Moon following Spring Equinox
- Allows the lunar cycle to determine intercalation of months
- Does not include the dechiot of the Rabbis

# Conclusion

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- **Mat 24:36** "But concerning that day and hour no one knows, not even the angels of heaven, nor the Son, but the Father only."
- Yahweh has NOT provided us exact instructions for determining the months and years, I believe this may be intentional based on the above scripture
- We do not have the physical temple and priesthood required to keep the feasts as originally given
- I believe we fall under the new covenant and the temple has migrated from a physical location to the hearts of the believers, I further believe observances of the feasts of Yahweh have likewise migrated to the Spiritual realm
- I believe unity of the body is more important than when we observe the feasts of Yahweh, therefore I will follow the calendar that is decided and accepted by the congregation
- When we observe the feasts of Yahweh is not a salvific issue, because of the scant Biblical information provided we are left to use our own intellect and do the best we can through faith in Messiah

# Recommendation

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- This is MY personal recommendation and is NOT binding on anyone or any group
- It was obvious from my research that Yahweh has intentionally veiled the Biblical calendar
- We have two issues to consider:
  - How will we observe the new moon Conjunction of First Sliver?
  - How will we determine the intercalation of Months (e.g. Which calendar to follow?)
    - My opinion is that the 119 Ministries calendar provides an accurate method to determine the first month of the year and falls closest to the Spring Equinox and is not encumbered by Rabbinic traditions
    - We may modify this calendar, if desired, to accommodate the use of the First Sliver of the Moon
- My view is it is more important to keep the Spirit of the Feasts, when we do it is of little consequence, since Yahweh has not provided the necessary guidance to know when exactly to memorialize the Feasts
- Unity within the body is of paramount importance to me, therefore, regardless of my position or recommendation I will adjust to the decision of the elders and the consent of the congregation

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Questions?