

Yahweh's Calendar: Solar or Lunar?

Matthew Janzen | emjanzen@ministersnewcovenant.org

NOTE: This article was originally written (8-12-04) for an internet discussion on whether Yahweh's calendar was solar based or lunar based. It rebuts those of a strictly solar calendar persuasion. I have placed this essay into article form for your consideration and hope it is beneficial to you.

There are extremes on both sides of the calendar issue. Some people opt for a total solar calendar, while others opt for a total lunar calendar. If we choose to love Yahweh's word more than our pre-conceived biases and prejudices we are forced to believe that the Scriptures speak of a calendar consisting of the sun, moon, and stars. Here are 7 *proofs* to back up this claim.

PROOF #1

In Genesis 1:14-16 we are told that Yahweh made two great lights. We are not told specifically what these two great lights are in the Genesis passage, but we do know that the stars are mentioned (Genesis 1:16). The understanding of the two great lights is seen by examining additional passages in Scripture:

Jeremiah 31:35-36 "Thus saith Yahweh, which giveth **the sun for a light by day**, and the ordinances of the **moon and of the stars for a light by night**, which divideth the sea when the waves thereof roar; Yahweh of hosts *is* his name: If those ordinances depart from before me, saith Yahweh, *then* the seed of Israel also shall cease from being a nation before me for ever."

Psalms 136:7-9 "To him that made great lights: for his mercy *endureth* for ever: **The sun to rule by day**: for his mercy *endureth* for ever: **The moon and stars to rule by night**: for his mercy *endureth* for ever."

We thus see through the witness of Scripture that the lights mentioned in Genesis 1:14-16 are the sun and the moon (and even the stars). Not just the sun, and not just the moon, but both. Therefore it is both the sun and the moon that is to "...be for signs, seasons, days, and years..." Both are used in determining the Scriptural calendar. A calendar that does not use one or the other is a purely

man-made calendar. For someone to go by such a man-made calendar is vain worship (Matthew 15:9).

PROOF #2

The word translated month (most commonly) in the Old Testament is the Hebrew word *chodesh*. This word is defined by Hebrew Lexicons as follows:

Strong's Exhaustive Concordance: "H2320 / chodesh / *kho'-desh*
From H2318; the *new* moon; by implication a *month*:—month (-ly),
new moon."

Brown, Drivers, Briggs: "chodesh 1) the new moon, month,
monthly 1a) the first day of the month 1b) the lunar month"

What this shows is that when the Scriptures speak of a certain day of the month they are speaking of a specific day of the moon. This is further seen by noticing a couple of other passages in Scripture.

1 Kings 8:2 "And all the men of Israel assembled themselves unto king Solomon at the feast in the month^{H3391} Ethanim, which is the seventh month^{H2320}."

1 Kings 6:38 "And in the eleventh year, in the month^{H3391} Bul, which is the eighth month^{H2320}, was the house finished throughout all the parts thereof..."

Notice that in both of these scriptures the word *chodesh* (#2320) is used interchangeably with #3391. What is #3391? Brown, Drivers, Briggs Hebrew lexicon defines it as, "...1) *month (lunar cycle), moon* 1a) *month* 1b) *calendar month*..." This word in the Hebrew is *yerach* and is the exact same word translated moon in both Deuteronomy 33:14 and Isaiah 60:20. This further confirms the use of the moon in Yahweh's calendar.

PROOF #3

Further proof that the moon was used in counting days on Yahweh's calendar is found in Psalm 81:3. This passage reads as follows in the 1901 *American Standard Version* of the Bible.

Blow the trumpet at the new moon, **At the full moon, on our feast-day**. For it is a statute for Israel, An ordinance of the God of Jacob.

He appointed it in Joseph for a testimony, When he went out over the land of Egypt, *Where* I heard a language that I knew not. **I removed his shoulder from the burden: His hands were freed from the basket.**

This passage shows that the full moon was a feast day in ancient Israel. The word full moon in the Hebrew is defined by Strong's Exhaustive Concordance as:

H3677 "kese kesh / keh'-seh, keh'-seh / Apparently from H3680; properly *fulness or the full moon, that is, its festival*:—(time) appointed."

We know this festival is speaking specifically of the Feast of Unleavened Bread and the Feast of Tabernacles which both begin on the 15th day of the moon, i.e. the full moon. This is seen by noticing Psalm 81:6 mentioning the removing of the burdens and baskets. When was Israel delivered from Egypt? Numbers 33:3 states that it was on the 15th day of the month/moon. Therefore Israel was delivered on the 15th day of the moon, or as Psalm 81:3 states the full moon festival. This clearly shows that the moon was used in numbering days on Yahweh's calendar.

PROOF #4

It is very easy to show that ancient Israel had a festival on the first day of the scriptural month, and this festival was known as the **new moon** festival. Some passages which show this new moon as a festival are as follows:

Ezekiel 46:1 "Thus saith the Master Yahweh; The gate of the inner court that looketh toward the east shall be shut the six working days; but on the sabbath it shall be opened, and in the **day of the new moon** it shall be opened."

Isaiah 66:23 "And it shall come to pass, *that* from **one new moon to another**, and from one sabbath to another, shall all flesh come to worship before me, saith Yahweh."

Amos 8:4-5 "Hear this, O ye that swallow up the needy, even to make the poor of the land to fail, Saying, When will **the new moon** be gone, that we may sell corn? and the sabbath, that we may set

forth wheat, making the ephah small, and the shekel great, and falsifying the balances by deceit?"

2 Kings 4:23 "And he said, Wherefore wilt thou go to him to day? *it is neither new moon, nor sabbath. And she said, It shall be well.*"

These passages are meaningless if one attempts to say new moon simply means a month. These passages are to be understood as meaning that there was a special festival in ancient Israel on the first day of the lunation or moon.

PROOF #5

Along with this reasoning let's notice a verse in the New Testament which concerns itself with the festival of the new moon; Colossians 2:16.

"Let no man therefore judge you in meat, or in drink, or in respect of an holyday, or of **the new moon**, or of the sabbath *days*:"

The underlying Greek text for the word new moon in this passage is the word *noumenia* defined by Strong's Exhaustive Concordance as, "...noumeônia / *nou-may-nee'-ah* / Feminine of a compound of G3501 and G3376 (as noun by implication of G2250); **the festival of new moon**:—new moon." The word *noumenia* is used in the ancient Septuagint translation of the Scriptures in such passages as Numbers 10:10 and 1 Samuel 20:5 in reference to the new moon festival.

It is because of this overwhelming evidence that scholarly sources as *Ungers Bible Dictionary* state the following:

It is evident from the writing of the prophets and from post Exilian documents that the New Moon was an important national festival. It was often called a feast along with the Sabbath (Psalm 81:3; Isaiah 1:13; Ezekiel 46:1; Hosea 2:11) on which all business ceased (Amos 8:5), the pious Israelites waited on the prophets for edification (2 Kings 4:23), many families and clans presented their annual thank offerings (1 Samuel 20:6, 29), social gatherings and feasting were indulged in (1 Samuel 20:5, 24). (*UBD, under heading Festivals, pg. 352*)

PROOF #6

We must also notice the heavenly phenomena of the cycle of the moon. The moon cycles in approximate seven day intervals (7.3) after the new moon

festival. This brings one to a half moon, full moon, half moon, and then last sliver before the new moon festival arrives again.

In Ezekiel 46:1 we find that the new moon and the sabbath were not considered to be part of the six working days. This means that after the new moon, the six working days commenced, bringing you to the sabbath on the eighth day of any given month. The sabbaths follow to be the 8th, 15th, 22nd, and 29th days of the lunar months. These days were revealed to Moses in Exodus 16 when Yahweh spoke on the 15th day of the 2nd month/moon. Israel began to receive manna on the morning after the 15th (16th) for six consecutive days (Exodus 16:4-5,13). This brings them to the seventh day sabbath which was on the 22nd day of the moon. The same sequence is mapped out in the week of Messiah's impalement. Messiah was impaled on the 14th day of the moon, with the 15th being the weekly/annual sabbath, and the 16th being the first day of the week as well as the day of the annual first-fruit offering. There is much more to say concerning this, but this proves that the moon was involved in reckoning ancient scriptural weeks.

Let me briefly mention a lunar-based sabbath in regard to beginning the count to the feast of Pentecost. The priesthood was to lift up the sheaf of the first-fruits to begin the count to Pentecost of the day after the sabbath (Leviticus 23:11). However the ancient Septuagint translation (250 B.C.) shows that the sheaf was to be waved on the day after the first day of the feast of unleavened bread (Leviticus 23:6,7,11 – LXX) This shows that the first day of the feast was **the** sabbath each and every year on Yahweh's calendar. Thus we have the first month with a fixed sabbath on the 15th day, and Yahweh revealed the weekly Sabbath to Moses on the 15th day of the second moon. The only way to have a weekly sabbath on the 15th day of the 1st and 2nd month is to keep a lunar based sabbath. Any other sabbath reckoning is a mathematical impossibility.

PROOF #7

A calendar based on the moon and the sun requires a 13th month approximately every 3 years. A 13th month is proven from scripture in the inspired book of the prophet Ezekiel. In Ezekiel 1:1-2 we are told that Ezekiel received a vision from Yahweh on the 5th day of the fourth month, in the fifth year of king Jehoiachin's captivity. In Ezekiel 2:7 Yahweh again speaks unto Ezekiel telling him to warn Israel concerning their treachery against Yahweh. Then in Ezekiel 3:15 we find that Ezekiel dwelt by the river Chebar for seven days bringing us to the 11th day of the fourth month, in the fifth year of king Jehoiachin's captivity.

Now, in Ezekiel 4:1-11 he is given instructions by Yahweh to lay on his left side 390 days and when he accomplishes this he is to then lay on his right side 40 days; equaling a total of 430 days. The next time reference in Ezekiel is found in

chapter 8:1 where we see that Ezekiel was sitting in his house in the sixth year (of king Jehoiachin's captivity) on the 5th day of the sixth month. This shows that Ezekiel had finished his instructions given in chapter 4 because he was *sitting* in his house not *lying* on either his left or right side. If Ezekiel was using a strictly solar calendar he could not have possibly obeyed Yahweh's instructions by the time reference given in Ezekiel 8:1.

From the 11th day of the fourth month, in the fifth year of Jehoiachin (Ezekiel 1:1-2; 2:7; 3:15) to the 5th day of the sixth month in the sixth year of Jehoiachin (Ezekiel 8:1) is only 413 days on a strictly solar calendar. If Ezekiel used a strictly solar calendar he disobeyed Yahweh. However, had this particular year been one consisting of 13 months (lunar-solar year) Ezekiel obeyed the instructions from Yahweh, plain and simple.

Keep in mind that Ezekiel 4:9-10 shows that Ezekiel was told to make enough bread to last him the entire 430 days. I have given the solar only people the best possible scenario available, taking for granted that Ezekiel made all this bread in one day, i.e. the 11th day of the fourth month. If we factor in the making of twenty shekels of bread (Ezekiel 4:9-10) for each day this even further destroys the notion of the strictly solar calendar, because the time span would decrease for the solar only people.

Furthermore, when you recognize the obvious fact that the scriptural months are lunar, but that the new year is determined by the spring equinox it is a necessity that a 13th month be added approximately every third year. If this is not done the festivals will be 11 days shorter every "strict-solar year" that goes by, placing the festivals out of their seasons. This is exactly what happens with the Islamic calendar which ignores the 13th month. Their festivals travel throughout all seasons of the year.

CONCLUSION

Why not just accept the two great lights Yahweh ordained in Genesis? Many people say that the heathens use the moon in their calendar so it is not to be used. This is absurd argumentation seeing many heathen nations use or used the sun in their calendar as well. The fact is that the sun and the moon were first used by Yahweh in Genesis 1:14-16 for **His** calendar. If heathens take the originally pure time pieces of Yahweh and corrupt them that is their problem, not mine or yours. We must use the road map Yahweh has given us in His Scriptures and learn to love Yahweh's time-pieces; both the sun and the moon.