

The Simple, Biblical Calendar

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This position paper explains the method and scriptural basis which the leadership of Tyler Sabbath Fellowship has voted to adopt for determining the days for commemorating YHWH's commanded appointments or festivals. This paper also explains the reasons we have chosen not to use the published modern Jewish calendar. This paper is purposely limited to the topics covered and the depth of explanation offered, and is not exhaustive of all issues studied or objections encountered so far. At the end of this paper is a complete list of the Bible scriptures referenced herein, arranged in order as they appear in the common canon.

The Scriptural Timing *Indicators* and Timing *Criteria* for YHWH's Appointments

The 23rd chapter of the book of Leviticus, the second half of the 28th chapter and essentially all of the 29th chapter of the book of Numbers, as well as the 16th chapter of the book of Deuteronomy, list and detail each of YHWH¹'s appointments (moedim²), which some people call YHWH's feasts or holy days. Among other details, these chapters of the Bible state precisely which day of a particular month of the year when each of these festivals (except arguably for one) is to be observed or commemorated on an annual basis. However, there is controversy today among those who seek to understand and use a calendar method that is supported by scripture rather than tradition. This paper will attempt to present the relatively few, but vitally relevant, Bible scriptures which seem to address the timing *indicators* and timing *criteria* for YHWH's appointments, as well as those scriptures which address units of time.

The first scripture in the Bible recording YHWH's intention for indicating time and dates both generally, and specifically for His appointments or festivals, is Genesis 1:14.

Genesis 1:14 (HCSB³) "Then [Elohim⁴] said, 'Let there be lights in the expanse of the sky to separate the day from the night. They will serve as signs for festivals and for days and years.' "

This verse about the "lights in the expanse of the sky" is the first and most specific timing *indicator* of YHWH's appointments. In fact, it is the only scripture which plainly states a timing indicator for these appointments. There are a few other scriptures which may imply timing indicators for these appointments, but these require interpretation, and so are subject to differences of opinion.

Of course, for humans to comply with Elohim's stated command that these "lights in the expanse of the sky" would serve as signs for His appointments, we would eventually have to develop rudimentary astronomy (not pagan astrology), which did not require advanced instruments, only keen unaided observation, so that we could understand and predict the natural recurring cycle of days, months, seasons, and years, especially for the purpose of observing and commemorating YHWH's appointments or festivals which were instructed and recorded later in scripture. Throughout the world, human civilization has used these natural, recurring, celestial cycles for agricultural and religious purposes. Ancient Israel was well acquainted with two such civilizations that were quite adept at basic astronomical observation and prediction -- having lived long periods of time with the Egyptians and the Babylonians -- absorbing science and technology from both nations. Only Israel received and recorded YHWH's instructions for commemorating special days of the year which teach the steps and phases of YHWH's plan of salvation for humankind, which includes the role of YHWH's promised Messiah.

Later in the Biblical narrative, YHWH told Moses and Aaron the following as recorded in Exodus 12:1-2.

Exodus 12:1-2 (HCSB) "[YHWH] said to Moses and Aaron in the land of Egypt: 'This month is to be the beginning of months for you; it is the first month of your year.' "

The remainder of Exodus chapter 12 details the Passover event which happened in this "first month". The month which is mentioned in Exodus 12 as the first month of YHWH's calendar year, is further specified in Exodus 13:3-4, as the month when the Israelites were freed by YHWH from captivity and slavery in Egypt, when they left that land.

Exodus 13:3-4 (HCSB) "Then Moses said to the people, 'Remember this day when you came out of Egypt, out of the place of slavery, for [YHWH] brought you out of here by the strength of His hand... Today, in the month of Abib, you are leaving.' "

YHWH's instructions that the Passover event was to be forever commemorated annually on specific days of the first month of the year appear in Leviticus chapter 23.

Leviticus 23:4-6 (HCSB) " 'These are [YHWH]'s appointed times, the sacred assemblies you are to proclaim at their appointed times. The Passover to [YHWH] comes in the first month, at twilight on the fourteenth day of the month. The Festival of Unleavened Bread to [YHWH] is on the fifteenth day of the same month.' "

The Passover timing instructions are repeated in Numbers 28:16-17.

Numbers 28:16-17 (HCSB) "The Passover to YHWH comes in the first month, on the fourteenth day of the month. On the fifteenth day of this month there will be a festival; unleavened bread is to be eaten for seven days."

Additionally, notice what is recorded in Deuteronomy 16:1.

Deuteronomy 16:1 (HCSB) " 'Observe the month of Abib and celebrate the Passover to [YHWH] your [Elohim], because [YHWH] your [Elohim] brought you out of Egypt by night in the month of Abib.' "

In Deuteronomy 16, the first month is both described and named by YHWH Himself as "Abib", meaning "spring". In all of the scripture passages above, YHWH commands, or instructs, that the Passover shall be commemorated every Abib, or in other words, annually. The Deuteronomy 16 passage records YHWH instructing ancient Israel through Moses about commemorating the Passover 40 years after the actual Passover event in Egypt, shortly before the succeeding generation of Israelites entered the Promised Land. This time setting is expressly stated in Deuteronomy chapter 1, verses 1-3.

Deuteronomy 1:3 (HCSB) "In the fortieth year, in the eleventh month, on the first of the month, Moses told the Israelites everything [YHWH] had commanded him to say to them."

Shortly after the children of Israel left Egypt, they and the non-Israelites (foreigners) who joined them in the exodus from Egypt were lead by Moses to Mount Horeb or Mount Sinai. At this mountain of Elohim, these people heard with their own ears YHWH speak Torah to them, until they could no longer contain their fear of YHWH's awesome voice, and demanded that Moses serve as their intermediary to relay the instructions of the covenant from YHWH. But when these same people repeatedly demonstrated their lack of faith in YHWH to accomplish all of His promises, YHWH caused the Israelites to wander in the wilderness or desert for forty years until all who had doubted YHWH had died. By the time recorded in the book of Deuteronomy, many young Israelites had been born who had not heard for themselves the words of Torah, or instruction, from YHWH. So Moses restated YHWH's Torah to them as recorded in the book of Deuteronomy, just before Moses died and Joshua lead the tribes of Israel into the Promised Land by crossing the river Jordan.

Returning to the subject of the calendar, scripture verses such as Exodus 13:4 and Deuteronomy 16:1 (both quoted before) contain some of the implied timing indicators for recognizing the first month of the year as instructed by YHWH. Correctly reckoning

the beginning of the year with the first month is crucial to counting all the other months of the year, and YHWH's appointments to meet with His people, as listed and commanded in Leviticus chapter 23. In both Exodus 13:4 and Deuteronomy 16:1, the name of the first month of the year was declared by YHWH to be "Abib", and this word is significant because this was the month of the "fresh, young ears", a reference to a grain crop (traditionally believed to be barley for several reasons) which had only begun to bud in Egypt and was destroyed by the plague of hail mentioned in Exodus 9:18-31, prior to Israel's exodus. The Hebrew word "abib", appears in verse 31 describing the stage of growth of the grain crop. This crop, almost certainly barley, growing in ancient Egypt had budded fresh, young ears, as it usually did and still does in early spring. Today this word "abib" or "aviv" is the modern Hebrew word for "spring", as the season of the year.

Notice that YHWH's instruction in Deuteronomy 16:1 is to observe the month of "Abib", or an entire month during the season of spring. Only certain days during this month were specified for commemorations of YHWH's appointments (the fourteenth through the twenty-first days), but the connotation of the word "abib" implies that the entire month was a springtime month. This also makes sense because some of YHWH's instructions for how He wanted events of this month commemorated (Leviticus 23:9-14) made it necessary to have on hand a bundle of a freshly-harvested grain crop, again believed by tradition to be barley, necessitating that this first month of the year occur in spring, when the first crop of grain was ready to harvest. As stated before, the name of the month "Abib" indicates the season of spring and announced the beginning of the season, when it was fresh or new.

Some people go a bit too far when they assume that the budding barley is a definite timing indicator, and to some people barley is the most important indicator on which to base their calendar. There are many problems with relying on barley as a timing indicator. One is that the ripening of barley depends on many variables, such as latitude, elevation, temperature, moisture, and amount of sunlight at the location where the barley grows, and most variable of all is the variety of barley sown. Some varieties of barley (there are dozens of cultivated varieties and possibly hundreds of wild varieties) ripen earlier than others, spanning up to 12 weeks difference for the same location -- that's equal to the difference between some varieties of barley budding in the month of February while other varieties don't bud until the month of May. There are people who are adamant that their chosen variety of barley planted in a particular location in modern Israel will always yield the correct timing indicator. Any farmer familiar with barley grasses knows that there will always be variability from year to year. Besides all these factors, the grain crop that was recorded as destroyed in Exodus chapter 9 had grown in Egypt, not in the Promised Land of Israel. That makes a significant difference in timing! Do not forget that Genesis 1:14 is the only scripture

which plainly states a timing indicator (the lights in the expanse of the sky) of YHWH's appointments or festivals.

Some critics of the interpretation that the month of Abib must occur entirely in the season of spring, claim instead that only the Passover and days of Unleavened Bread must occur during the season of spring, so that it is acceptable for the month of Abib to occasionally begin during the last week or two of winter. In fact, this is a regularly occurring feature of the modern Jewish calendar, that 7 years in each 19 year period (metonic cycle) the month of Abib begins in late winter, before the astronomical equinox of March 20, but nevertheless always having the Passover occur after the astronomical equinox. As rebuttal for such an interpretation that a mixed month of Abib is acceptable, notice again that in Deuteronomy 16:1, YHWH uses an imperative statement or command to observe a specific unit of time -- a month -- that YHWH apparently expected the ancient Israelites to understand by a descriptive term "abib". Based on Deuteronomy 16:1, was the entire month to be "abib", or only part of the month? Allow the Bible to help answer this question by returning to Exodus 12:1-2.

Exodus 12:1-2 (HCSB) "[YHWH] said to Moses and Aaron in the land of Egypt: 'This month is to be the beginning of months for you; it is the first month of your year.' "

If a calendar sometimes has the month of Abib, which means "spring", begin in winter rather than in spring, this seems to contradict the combination of Exodus 12:2 and Deuteronomy 16:1, along with the scriptural context and very connotation of the word "abib".

The Earth and the Sun

The star around which the Earth revolves is certainly the most dominant celestial body regulating recurring periods of time on Earth, such as seasons and years. A year is simply the duration of one orbital period of the Earth as it revolves around the Sun. Because the Earth has a rotational axial tilt (approximately 23 degrees from the axis of revolution), the Earth experiences climatic seasons, although the distinctive character of various seasons generally depends on the latitude and location of the observer. The Earth's axial tilt also results in four evenly divided portions of the year, indicated by two equinoxes and two solstices. Each of these divisions may be observed or calculated to occur at exact moments of time, as they are astronomical/geometrical events defined by precise relative positions of the Earth's rotational axis and the Earth's revolutionary (or orbital) axis. The equinoxes and solstices are generally indicative of the beginning of seasons, but the actual effect of climatic seasons varies with latitude, elevation, regional and local geography, and prevailing weather patterns for a given locality. In other words, a season such as Spring, may seem to arrive or begin at different times in different locations on Earth,

but astronomically speaking, an equinox or solstice occurs at an exact moment in time without regard to an observer's position on the Earth. An equinox or solstice on Earth is a "universal" demarcation of the natural flow of time on Earth, which is useful as a feature of the natural clock and calendar provided by the Designer and Creator of the universe. Every attempt in history to communicate a calendar that would be an accurate depiction of reality is a refinement in human understanding toward acknowledging the calendar of the Earth, Sun, and Moon that YHWH set in motion. The solar system's processes may have deteriorated since its creation, but the calendar is always a result of the spatial relationship between the Earth, Sun, and Moon.

Returning to Elohim's intention recorded in Genesis 1:14 (cited above), that the lights in the expanse of the sky would serve as the indicators of seasons, spring is that season of the year which begins when the Earth's axial tilt results in the Sun appearing to cross directly overhead at the equator and move toward either the Earth's northern or southern hemisphere which for several months immediately preceding has been experiencing the cold months of the winter season. Of course, the northern hemisphere, where YHWH's promised land is located, experiences spring beginning about March 20-21 on the widely used Gregorian calendar. This significant astronomical event of March 20-21 is the vernal equinox of the northern hemisphere, while simultaneously being the autumnal equinox for the southern hemisphere -- succinctly called the "March equinox". Approximately six months later, there is another equinox, the autumnal equinox for the northern hemisphere, while simultaneously the vernal equinox of the southern hemisphere, occurring about September 22-23 on the widely used Gregorian calendar -- and succinctly called the "September equinox".

The moon and months

One of the "lights in the expanse of the sky" mentioned in Genesis 1:14 (quoted before) is undoubtedly the Earth's natural satellite or moon. Earth's moon generates no actual light of its own, but rather reflects the Sun's light to the Earth's nighttime surface for most nights. In the Biblical calendar, the moon's cycle is the very definition of the time period known as a "month" -- in fact, the English words month and moon are cognates, meaning they have the same word origin. The New American Standard Old Testament Hebrew Lexicon (Brown, Driver, Briggs, Gesenius Lexicon keyed to the NASB, in the public domain) lists the definition of the Hebrew word "chodesh" as "the new moon, month, monthly, the first day of the month, the lunar month". In the Bible, a "new month" begins with a "new moon". A lunar month is the moon's orbital period around the Earth, from one new moon to the next new moon. In the Bible, only a few of the months were named, such as Abib, Bul, and Ethanim. The names of the months used in the modern Jewish calendar were borrowed from Babylon, absorbed into Jewish use during their captivity, and later during their continued association with the Babylonian culture (as evidenced by the Babylonian Talmud). Month names

occurring in the Jewish calendar, such as Nisan, Tammuz, Tishri, and Adar are not Biblical but pagan in origin.

No Bible scripture plainly states YHWH's definition of a new moon, whether it is a lunar conjunction between the Earth and Sun (unobservable during daylight without modern optical instruments, except when a solar eclipse occurs), or a new sliver moon (barely observable with the naked eye in the late evening sky under the "right" conditions). Defining a new moon is one of the most highly debated and contentious issues regarding the Biblical calendar. Proponents of "observation" claim a new moon must be an observable new sliver moon, but ignore the "observation" of the absence of a reflective moon in the night sky for at least one complete night, indicating a conjunction. Just as the equinoxes and solstices were derived by vigilant ancient astronomers, so too was the moon's conjunction, so that it was possible to predict its regular monthly occurrence. The use of the lunar conjunction as the new moon gives another universal standard of time, whereas an observed new sliver moon is rife with variation due to many factors, similar to insisting on using barley as a timing indicator. Note that the modern Jewish calendar does not make use of observation, but rather is calculated to predict lunar conjunctions. As the topic of new moons requires interpretation of scant scriptural evidence, suffice to say that this paper cannot settle the issue. Without explaining all of the subtle reasons (some oblique scriptures and some practical reasoning), Tyler Sabbath Fellowship has decided to begin each month with the first early morning daylight occurring after a lunar conjunction. We accept that many people will denounce this practice, even without hearing the reasons for it, which regrettably cannot be adequately summarized in this paper without adding significantly more to its length. Each of us must answer for our own decisions. We are immensely grateful that YHWH and Yeshua are merciful to those that love Them and do their utmost to follow Them, and who are willing to accept Their correction. We are not yet perfect.

Days and nights

The very definition and use of the words "day" and "night", while seeming to be opposites, is also controversial. Genesis 1:4-5 is Elohim's declaration of the definition of the Hebrew words "yom" and "layil", translated into English as "day" and "night", respectively, and meaning "light" or "darkness".

Genesis 1:4-5 (HCSB) "[Elohim] saw that the light was good, and [Elohim] separated the light from the darkness. [Elohim] called the light "day", and He called the darkness "night". Evening came and then morning: the first day."

Many well known English translations, such as the King James Version (KJV), New King James Version (NKJV), Revised Standard Version (RSV), English Standard Version (ESV), and New American Standard (NAS) Bible, do not insert the word "then" between evening and morning in verse 5, as does the HCSB. There may be good

reason for not doing so. The Hebrew text is arranged as two parts (evening and morning) being included together as separate parts of “day”, rather than definitely stating a precise flow of time from one part to the other. The typical interpretation is that evening means “night” and morning means “daylight”, and together these parts make a 24 hour “day”, which begins with sundown or darkness and ends with the next sundown or darkness. However, notice that verse 4 records that Elohim separated the light from the darkness, or made them distinct, each with a specific name, “day” and “night”, respectively. This is very different from recombining light and darkness into a single period of time that most people today call a “day” (24-hour day), despite the same verse recording Elohim’s definitions and names to the contrary. In a passing question recorded in John 11:9-10, Yeshua (Jesus) seems to reference the Genesis 1:4 definitions for day and night.

John 11:9-10 (HCSB) " 'Aren't there 12 hours in a day?' Jesus answered. 'If anyone walks during the day, he doesn't stumble, because he sees the light of this world.' (*Note that Yeshua then mentions the contrast.*) 'If anyone walks during the night, he does stumble, because the light is not in him.' "

While this scripture passage was definitely concerned with a spiritual principle, and not solely as an instruction by Yeshua regarding the definition of the words "day" and "night", it seems that He used the terms in complete harmony with Genesis 1:4-5. Yeshua was always in harmony with His heavenly Father. Yes, there are other uses in scripture of the term “yom” which seem to include multiple days (yom) along with their intervening nights (layil), but those are expressions of word usage which were convenient to convey meaning without unnecessarily stressing strict definitions. People today may say, “In six days I’ll return home,” without mentioning that there are intervening nights during the same time period that includes six days. However, insisting that a day includes both day and night (to make a 24 hour “day”) obstinately disregards the very declaration of Elohim’s word meanings in Genesis 1:4-5. Again, the text of this repeating pattern throughout Genesis chapter 1 does not explain that evening is “night” and morning is “day”. A more consistent interpretation that relies on Elohim’s right as the Creator to declare the meaning of His own terms, is that evening and morning are each parts of a single period of light, declared by Elohim as “yom” (day), which was later divided by people into 12 parts or “hours”, and this was apparently acceptable to Yeshua. Day is day, and night is night, just as Elohim separated and declared. One always follows the other, but they are distinct.

Moving on, unlike days in the Julian and Gregorian calendar, days in scripture were never named, except for the seventh day of the week, which was named the “Sabbath” day (Hebrew word "yom" for day). Instead, days in scripture were numbered, such as the first day (of the week), or the fourth day (of the week). The day before the Sabbath day was eventually referred to as the "preparation day", but this was not a proper name, only a reference to the sixth day’s use to prepare for the weekly Sabbath day. In scripture, days were also numbered from the new moon, or beginning of each month, as they were in Leviticus 23 regarding the first month of the year, Abib, and also for the seventh month of the year, Ethanim.

Leviticus 23:5-6 (HCSB) " 'The Passover to [YHWH] comes in the first month, at twilight on the fourteenth day of the month. The Festival of Unleavened Bread to [YHWH] is on the fifteenth day of the same month. For seven days you must eat unleavened bread.' "

Similarly,

Leviticus 23:33-34 (HCSB) "[YHWH] spoke to Moses: 'Tell the Israelites: The Festival of Booths to [YHWH] begins on the fifteenth day of this seventh month and continues for seven days.' "

An Integrity Check for the Proper Beginning of the Year

Another time criteria from YHWH's instructions applies to the Feast of Booths or Tabernacles (Sukkot), which occurs on the fifteenth day in the seventh month of the Biblical year (Leviticus 23:34). This feast is also called The Feast of Ingathering in Exodus 23, which means that it is a harvest feast.

Exodus 23:16 (HCSB) "...and observe the Festival (chag or feast) of Ingathering at the end of the year, when you gather your produce from the field.' "

This is essentially repeated in Deuteronomy 16 --

Deuteronomy 16:13 (HCSB) " 'You are to celebrate the Festival of Booths for seven days when you have gathered in everything from your threshing floor and winepress.' "

The mention of the winepress in this verse agrees with experts on the agriculture of the ancient Levant that this harvest was mostly a grape harvest, occurring at the end of summer. The major grain harvests in the Levant occur at the beginning of spring (barley) and the beginning of summer (wheat).

The instructions of Exodus 23:16 are repeated in Exodus 34:22 --

Exodus 34:22 (HCSB) " 'Observe the Festival of Weeks with the firstfruits of the wheat harvest, and the Festival of Ingathering at the turn of the (agricultural) year.' "

Notice in this scripture, the phrase used is "turn of the year", rather than "end of the year" as in Exodus 23:16. For Exodus 34:22, the translators of the Holman Christian Standard Bible (HCSB), added the word "agricultural" in parentheses, and for good reason. In this particular verse, a rather unique Hebrew word is used, "tequfah". The

Hebrew word “tequfah” occurs in only four scriptures of the Tanakh⁵. The word “tequfah” is commonly explained to mean “turn of the year” and has the context of a completed circuit, as when the Earth completes its revolution of the Sun. Rabbinic Jewish sages writing in the Talmud equated the Hebrew word “tequfah” with the Latin word “equinox” -- there is more about equinoxes later in this paper.

Repeating, the translators of the HCSB added the word “agricultural” in parentheses in Exodus 34:22, for a more accurate explanation of the actual time of year than their own translation of Exodus 23:16, which had to be honestly translated “...at the end of the year,...” -- a nod to the integrity of the translators of the HCSB. Therefore, this phrase in Exodus 23:16, “...at the end of the year,...” must be understood in context to mean the end of the agricultural year, or growing season, as it is rendered in Exodus 34:22 from the Hebrew word “tequfah”. In Exodus 23:16, by practical necessity and logic, it cannot actually mean at the end of the calendar year, for this would be right before the beginning of the next Biblical year -- since one calendar year begins just as the previous calendar year ends, or in Biblical terms (Deuteronomy 16:1) just as winter ends and Abib begins. Such an illogical insistence not to gather in crops until the end of the “calendar” year instead of the end of the growing season (early autumn) would require farmers to leave their crops to be ruined in the field throughout winter -- and would directly contradict YHWH's unambiguous instruction that the Feast of Ingathering occur in the seventh month of the year, not at the end of the twelfth or thirteenth month.

Taking these scripture passages together, the Festival of Booths, which is definitely commanded by YHWH to occur during the seventh month of the Biblical year, should occur after the grape harvest, which was usually at the end of the summer. Such timing would also demonstrate that the Feast of the Ingathering was after the autumnal equinox. This is because in ancient Israel, harvesting and processing of a crop such as grapes, would have taken significant time, before a farmer could travel for days to Jerusalem to celebrate the Feast of the Ingathering. The Day of the Atonements also precedes the Feast of Ingathering by only 5 days, and no one who was following YHWH's commands would have worked or traveled on the Day of the Atonements. Most Israelites living in the “Land” could travel to Jerusalem within 4 days, so they could hit the road on the eleventh day of the seventh month, and make it to Jerusalem by the fifteenth. Therefore, Deuteronomy 16:13 contains both an overtly stated timing *criteria*, and also an implied timing *indicator*. The timing criteria in this verse is the completion of the grape harvest and grape processing before traveling to arrive at Jerusalem before the Feast of the Ingathering, and the timing indicator for the feast is after the autumnal equinox.

The Feast of Ingathering occurring after the autumnal equinox serves as an integrity check that the month of Abib did not begin too early, before the vernal equinox, because if the month of Abib begins before the vernal equinox, then the Feast of Ingathering (the fifteenth day of the seventh month) will almost certainly occur before the autumnal equinox, i.e. in summertime and before the natural end of the grape growing season in the land of Israel. Remember that Deuteronomy 16:13 commands that the Feast of Ingathering must occur after the (grape) harvest at the end of the

grape growing season, which ends at the completion of summer, while still allowing enough time to process and store the grape juice (which, by the way, would naturally ferment in storage until the next year's Passover), and then allowing travel (several days for some Israelites) to Jerusalem for this harvest feast.

Astronomy and Equinoxes

Many people argue that the concept of astronomical equinoxes as timing indicators is a pagan practice associated with astrology, and therefore YHWH would never base His calendar on such a practice. However, Elohim declared in Genesis 1:14 --

Genesis 1:14 (HCSB) "Then [Elohim] said, 'Let there be lights in the expanse of the sky to separate the day from the night. They will serve as signs for festivals and for days and years.' "

When Elohim created these lights in the expanse of the sky, and stated that "...They will serve as signs for festivals and for days and years.", were there yet any pagan people doing anything degenerate? No. Pagans would later do many degenerate things, but that is the nature of human degeneration -- an attempt to copy or mock wholesome things, misusing them or counterfeiting substitutes for detestable purposes. Instead, the discerning Bible student should ask, "Exactly how could the lights in the expanse of the sky serve as signs for festivals?" Humans would have to observe these lights, the sun, moon, and constellations of stars, and learn their natural patterns, such as how much time passed between recurring patterns, such as a month or a year, and how the changing seasons of the year were also linked to these recurring patterns in the sky. Every agricultural or nomadic civilization in human history has benefitted from observing these patterns of the sky over time - ancient Israel was no different, nor are humans in the current world. Because YHWH linked His calendar to the seasons of the year, such as Abib (spring) and harvest (autumn), the simple and natural astronomical indicator of these seasons are the two equinoxes each year. These demarcations of the revolution of the Earth's path around the Sun are almost entirely invariable, not subject to climate or weather conditions, or one's location on the surface of the Earth. The astronomical equinoxes, which are a simple function (four part division along with the solstices) of the Earth's yearly trip around the greater light in the expanse of the sky (Sun), are precise and distinct events that serve as general time indicators of the astronomical seasons, as Genesis 1:16 instructed. This interpretation is far more precise and distinct than whenever barley ears may bud with hundreds of variables controlling such an event.

The astronomical equinox should not be regarded like a voodoo hex or an incantation of an evil curse. According to the United States Naval Observatory:

"An equinox is the instant of time when the plane of Earth's equator passes through the geometric center of the Sun's disk. This occurs twice each year, around 20 March and 23 September. In other words, it is the moment at which

the center of the visible Sun is directly above the equator, and this point is above the horizon for 12 hours everywhere on the Earth."

That doesn't seem too difficult to follow. And remember, it sounds something like when Yeshua said:

John 11:9 (HCSB) " 'Aren't there 12 hours in a day?...' "

Contrary to the claims of many people of faith, science is NOT the enemy of faith in a Creator or of belief in the Bible. Some scientists may deny the truth of scripture, but science itself is indifferent. Science is simply an attempt to learn truth from observation of nature, and hopefully to accumulate enough understanding of natural processes to be predictive of outcomes or future events. Is this not also what YHWH instructed when He told the children of Israel, "Observe the month of Abib..."? How were they to accomplish this "observing" without paying attention to the seasons of the year relative to the patterns of the lights in the expanse of the sky? The ability to observe, learn, understand, and refine the precision of our knowledge is a gift from the Creator that humans enjoy and from which we benefit. Aren't there numerous prophecies in scripture that just prior to Yeshua's return to the Earth, there will be unmistakable, supernatural disturbances in the heavens? Who is likely to be the first to notice such events, if not astronomers, both professionals and amateurs? Those with faith in the truth of scripture and the benefits of prophecy will be looking for such signs in the heavens.

As mentioned earlier in this paper, Rabbinic Jewish sages writing in the Talmud equated the Hebrew word "tequfah" to the Latin word "equinox", and explained that there were four tequfah each year, being the two astronomical equinoxes and the two astronomical solstices, defining the limits of the seasons of the year, and describing the complete circuit of the Earth in its annual trip around the sun. In other words, the tequfah seem to indicate the "turn of the seasons" -- refer again to Exodus 34 --

Exodus 34:22 (HCSB) " 'Observe the Festival of Weeks with the firstfruits of the wheat harvest, and the Festival of Ingathering at the turn of the (agricultural) year.' "

To counter this explanation and understanding, Karaite Jews claim that equating the word "tequfah" with equinox or solstice is anachronistic and misleading -- an on-going controversy. This may actually be a distinction without any practical difference, these terms being used by different peoples at different times, but describing the same natural phenomenon.

All attempts to render an accurate calendar indicating the recurring cycles of the Earth traveling around the Sun, and the Moon traveling around the Earth will eventually agree. The remaining knowledge, which can never be observed or derived from nature, is the length of the "week" and which day of the week is reserved by YHWH as holy, as well as which days of certain months are likewise reserved by YHWH as holy.

The word “holy” simply means set apart by YHWH for His use, and for our good. Thankfully, YHWH has instructed us plainly in His Word which days are important to Him for our good.

Summary of The Simple, Biblical Calendar

Putting together all of the information so far quoted from scripture, the timing *criteria* for the first month of each Biblical year, which, together with the overt and plain instructions in scripture (Leviticus 23, Numbers 28, and Deuteronomy 16) about the specific numbered days of the months counted from the proper starting point, using the timing *indicators* of the lights in the expanse of the sky, will lead to the proper reckoning of all the appointment dates of YHWH. So, the first month of the Biblical calendar year will start with the morning light of the first day after the first new moon (indicating a new month) after the March equinox, with Passover occurring on the 14th day from the new moon, the first Day of Unleavened Bread occurring on the 15th day from the new moon, and the last day of Unleavened Bread occurring on the 21st day from the new moon. The remainder of YHWH's appointments mentioned in Leviticus 23, Numbers 28, and Deuteronomy 16 are counted from the first month of the Biblical year as determined by the method described in this paper. These include the Feast of Weeks or Pentecost (Shavuot) occurring in the third month of the year (being 50 days counted from the weekly Sabbath during the Days of Unleavened Bread), The Day of Alarm, Shouting, or Trumpets (Yom Teruah) on the first day (new moon) of the seventh month of the Biblical year, the Day of the Atonements (Yom ha-Kippurim) on the tenth day of the seventh month of the Biblical year, and so on. The result is a simple, Biblical calendar for commemorating YHWH's appointments.

Why vary from the calculated and published modern Jewish calendar?

In certain years, the calculated and published modern Jewish calendar does not meet all of the criteria of scripture which is presented earlier in this paper. The years 2013 and 2021 of the Gregorian calendar are such a years. While the Holy Day festival commemorations of the first month of this calendar do occur after the March equinox, the first month of this calendar begins before the equinox, actually beginning in Winter, according to the signs of the “lights in the expanse of the sky” (Genesis 1:14). Some think that this is a minor matter. Perhaps, but the effect of this timing later in the year results in the Festival of Tabernacles starting before the September equinox, before the end of the growing season and time of harvest/processing/storage. This variance with scripture is why the Tyler Sabbath Fellowship decided to observe a thirteenth month of the previous year (2012-2013) before beginning the new year with the first new moon after the March equinox, which in 2013 occurred in April, and the same is true for the year of 2021 and similar years. This results in Tyler Sabbath Fellowship commemorating YHWH's appointments one month later than the modern

Jewish calendar in certain years, but according to our understanding, in compliance with all of the seasonal indicators and timing criteria of YHWH's instructions in scripture.

End notes:

¹ YHWH is one possible transliteration in the English language of the four letter name of the creator “God”. This four letter name of the Eternal Creator, as passed down from the ancient Hebrew texts, is known as the Tetragrammaton (Greek for “four letter word”), and appears throughout the Biblical scriptures, but is traditionally rendered in English translations as “the LORD”. Throughout this paper, “YHWH” is used to restore awareness of the traditional substitution of “the LORD” for YHWH’s declared name.

² Moedim is the Hebrew word for appointment or appointed time. Moedim is the plural form of the singular “moed”. This word is sometimes associated with the Hebrew word “chag” or feast. According to scripture, there are three chags or feasts commanded by YHWH during each calendar year (Exodus 23:14), the Feast of Passover/Unleavened Bread (Chag ha-Matzot), the Feast of Weeks (Shavuot), and the Feast of Booths/Ingathering/Tabernacles (Sukkot). All commanded chags or feasts are moedim, but there are other commanded moedim which are not chags. The Day of Alarm/Shouting/Trumpets (Yom Teruah) and the Day of the Atonements (Yom ha-Kippurim) are moedim which are not chags or feasts.

³ HCSB - Holman Christian Standard Bible, published by Holman Bible Publishers, 2007. This relatively recent Bible translation was chosen for use throughout this paper due to its reputation among many Bible scholars (though not necessarily theologians) for its excellent accuracy of translation into English of scriptural meaning without awkward word order, although no translation is anywhere close to perfect. The New American Standard Bible (NASB) is of similar reputation, but is sometimes regarded as having awkward word order for English readers.

⁴ Elohim is the English transcription of the ancient Hebrew word representing “god” or “the God”, (actually translating in meaning as “mighty one”) and is most commonly translated into English as “God”. Elohim is a title, rather than a name, and is a distinct word from YHWH, though certainly most uses of Elohim in scripture refer to YHWH. Elohim is sometimes applied in the scriptures to created persons or pagan deities. "Elohim is the plural form of 'Eloah', from a root or basis of the Hebrew word 'El', meaning 'to be strong' and/or 'to be in front' ". K. van der Toorn, Bob Becking, Pieter Willem van der Horst (eds), *Dictionary of Deities and Demons in the Bible* (revised 2nd edition, Brill, 1999) ISBN 90-04-1119-0, p. 274, 352-3.

⁵ “Tanakh” is simply an acronym referring to the scriptures of the “Old Testament”, including the Law (Torah), the Prophets (Nevi'im), and the Writings (Ketuvim). Using the first letter of each of these Hebrew words, “T”, “N”, and “K”, and adding a vowel sound to create a pronounceable acronym, results in the word “tanakh”. “Tanakh” is not an ancient Hebrew word.

Recommending reading on the subject of the Biblical Calendar:

I would like to give credit to two men who, more than anyone else that I know of, devoted a significant portion of their lives and energy to studying YHWH's calendar as revealed in scripture, and writing about it for the benefit of others' understanding. These two men are Herb Solinsky and Frank W. Nelte. I have never met either, but I have read much of their writings, which are available (thankfully) on their own websites (noted below). I will cite Herb Solinsky and Frank W. Nelte, along with one other man, Arthur Spier, as subject masters from whom I have selected those facts and points of argument that have persuaded me, and helped me form my own opinions regarding the Biblical calendar. These men were certainly not in agreement with each other regarding all issues of the calendar, although Solinsky and Nelte have far more in common with each other than with Spier, since Spier was a devout orthodox Jew who was naturally an unapologetic supporter of the modern Jewish calendar. I also don't agree entirely on all points with any of these men, so while I give these men credit for their extensive work, I believe that each person must take responsibility for their own understanding and belief, and definitely appeal by prayer to YHWH for His blessing of true understanding. I am not qualified to judge the work of these human authors, but I am deeply grateful for their efforts. In the case of Nelte and Solinsky, I wholeheartedly recommend exploring their writings, because these will challenge any reader to pay more careful attention to the scriptures regarding YHWH's appointments, and above any human experts, His instructions.

Finally, please note that Solinsky and Nelte grew in knowledge throughout their adult years, as we all should, and so some of their later writings adjusted, modified, or even corrected statements or positions within their earlier writings. I can only assume that the same is true of Spier. I hope that any readers of this paper will be understanding and forgiving if later I grow and arrive at different conclusions.

A. Herb Solinsky: <http://biblicalcalendar.org/>

As of April 2021, there are at least 11 calendar articles (downloadable in PDF format) by Mr. Solinsky on his website.

B. Frank W. Nelte: https://franknelte.net/view_articles.php?type=calendar

As of April 2021, there are more than 60 calendar articles (readable as HTML text) by Mr. Nelte available on his website.

C. Arthur Spier: For those wanting a good introduction and understanding of the mechanics and minutiae of the modern Jewish calendar, there is The Comprehensive Hebrew Calendar, Third Revised Edition, by Arthur Spier, 1986, Feldheim Publishers. While this book is over 440 pages in length, most of the bulk are simply printed parallel Gregorian and Jewish calendars for the years from 1900 to 2100 CE. Only the first 2 pages are used to explain Spier's historic remarks on the modern Jewish calendar, and a total of 10 pages delve into the mind-numbing "Elements of the Calendar Calculations" (a rudimentary algorithm) which explains the mechanics or rules of the modern Jewish calendar. Any Bible student who examines this essay by Spier writing about the calendar will undoubtedly note that almost none of it is directly based on Bible scripture. Rather, the modern Jewish calendar is claimed to be the product of documenting calendar rules and procedures which were previously known to and controlled by the Levites, Priests, and Sanhedrin as part of the oral law.

Bible scriptures used in this paper:

Genesis: chapter 1, verses 4, 5, and 14;

Exodus: chapter 9, verses 18 through 31;
chapter 12, verses 1 & 2;
chapter 13, verses 3 & 4;
chapter 23, verses 14 & 16;
chapter 34, verse 22;

Leviticus: chapter 23, verses 4 through 6, and 9 through 14, and 33 & 34;

Numbers: chapter 28, verses 16 & 17;

Deuteronomy: chapter 1, verses 1 through 3;
chapter 16, verse 1 & 13;

John: chapter 11, verses 9 & 10.