

PASSOVER—A MONTH LATER?

by Avram Yehoshua

[The Seed of Abraham](#)

I have had some people ask me why our Passover in 2018 is a month (and two days) later than the Rabbinic and Messianic Passover. There are three reasons for this that need to be discussed:

1. When does a New Moon, which begins a new biblical month, begin?
2. Which New Moon becomes the New Moon for the biblical New Year?
3. Why is there a 13th Month?

When is the New Moon?

The biblical lunar calendar has New Moon sightings as *time markers*, which begin a biblical month (e.g. Gen. 1:14; Num. 10:10; 28:11).¹ The sighting of the first crescent (New Moon) in the western sky after sunset, begins the first day of the biblical month. Most of the time, though, the traditional Jewish Rabbinic calendar (which Messianic Jews follow) is a day or two early for the biblical New Moons.²

When Yeshua lived in Israel the Jewish people went by the sighting of the first crescent New Moon in the western sky after sunset to begin each biblical month. The Rabbis, though, haven't done that for more than 1,600 years. About 350 AD they began using a calculated calendar (called the Hillel calendar). For the first thousand years or so it was accurate, but today it's early, by a day or two, 78% of the time. That's why the Rabbinic New Moon date for March is Friday night, March 16th, in the evening, but the biblical date for that New Moon is actually Sunday night, March 18th, two days later. Sunday night is when the New Moon will be seen in Israel, in the western sky just after sunset (barring inclement weather).

In other words, only 22% of the time do the Rabbinic New Moons actually coincide with the sighting of the New Moon over Israel. The Rabbis know this is wrong, but say they are helpless to change it because the calculated calendar was authorized by a Sanhedrin, and only a Sanhedrin³ with similar authority can alter it. So, they have to wait until it runs out. If they ever correct their calendar it still won't solve which New Moon determines the first New Moon of the biblical year.

¹ There are some who think the astronomical conjunction determines the time of the New Moon, but this is a modern understanding of a 'New Moon.' Ancient man could not accurately determine the conjunction until about 300 BC, so we know that Israel did not go by that in the time of Joshua and King David.

² The Messianics follow the Rabbis in their calendar and other perverse practices, like the wearing of the kipa. See [The Kipa](#) for why the kipa or yarmulke is wrong to wear. For why the Messianic Community should not be following the Rabbis, see The Messianic Community on page 4.

³ *Sanhedrin* is the Hebrew name for the assembly or council, as many English Bibles translate it, that in the days of the Roman occupation of Israel, was the chief Jewish religious and political authority, under Roman authority. It was made up of 70 Elders of Israel (Priests, Pharisees and Scribes). It was a Sanhedrin that condemned Yeshua to death, but brought Him to Pilate because the Sanhedrin's authority to kill a man had been taken away from them by Rome. Therefore, all Jews, represented in the High Priest of Israel, and all Gentiles, represented in Pontius Pilate, condemned and crucified the Prince of Life. All stand guilty before God and in need of the Savior.

When Does The Biblical Year Begin?

There's controversy, as with just about everything biblical, as to which New Moon constitutes the New Moon for the biblical year, or how to know when the biblical year begins (Ex. 12:1-2). Some think that 'barley in Abib' (a Karaite concept)⁴ constitutes which New Moon begins the biblical year, but this isn't so.⁵ Others think a cow has to give birth to a chicken when the New Moon is seen in the proximity of Mars...no, I'm just kidding.⁶

Biblically and historically, the first month of the biblical year is determined by the New Moon (first crescent) that occurs *on or after* the Vernal Equinox. In 2018 the Rabbinic New Moon begins *before* the Vernal Equinox, and hence, why the Rabbinic and Messianic Passover is a month too soon. This is not the first time I've personally witnessed the traditional Jewish and Messianic Communities begin their biblical year a month early. In my 35 years of walking in The Hebraic Perspective it's happened about three times. Whenever they, or any other religious organization, takes the New Moon *before* the Vernal Equinox to be their first month of the biblical year, they're not biblically correct because the New Moon for the New Year is the 'spring' New Moon, but any date before the Vernal Equinox is in the winter. The Vernal Equinox determines when winter ends and spring begins.

The Jewish (Rabbinic and Messianic) Passover, and all their Feasts for 2018, including Hanuka, will be a month earlier than it should be. The difference of a month boils down to *which New Moon is* the first New Moon of the biblical year.

This year the traditional Jewish Passover Meal will be on Friday night, March 30th. Counting 14 days back from the Jewish Passover of March 30th you have a New Moon on March 16th⁷ which is four days *before* the Vernal Equinox (of March 20th):

March 30th minus 14 days for Passover, which is on the 14th day of the first biblical month of Aviv, now known in Judaism as Nisan, is March 16th.

March 16th is when the first 'day' (in the evening) begins for the traditional Jewish first month of the biblical year this year. (Nisan 1 begins on Friday evening, March 16th, 2018 for the Jewish community.)

March 16th, 2018 is four days before the Vernal Equinox, and so, that New Moon should be the last or 13th New Moon of the year, not the first New Moon of the biblical year.

Passover, 14 Aviv/Nisan, is when the Passover lamb is sacrificed. 15 Aviv/Nisan, in the evening, is when the Passover lamb is eaten at the Passover Meal.

The biblically correct date for the Passover Meal will be on Tuesday night, May 1st, 2018.

⁴ Karaites are Jews who don't believe the Talmud is authoritative and so they don't follow the Rabbis. See p. 5 for why the Karaite concept is wrong.

⁵ See [Barley in Aviv and the Ten Plagues](#).

⁶ According to the Talmud, it's written that the *ripening* of the barley crop; the age of the kids, lambs, and doves; the ripeness of the fruit trees, and the relation of the date to the *tekufah* (in this case, the Vernal Equinox) determine the New Moon for the New Year. At least two of the four conditions must be met for it to be the New Moon for the biblical year. See Talmud Sanhedrin 11b.

⁷ The New Moon sighting is not on Friday night, March 16th, 2018, but on Sunday night, March 18th, a full two days later. Again, the Jewish community begins their month too soon, with their calculated New Moon calendar.

The 13th Month

Because the biblical New Year cannot begin before the Vernal Equinox there is a 13th month in the biblical year, 7 times every 19 years (approximately once every three years). This extra month is done in order to bring the lunar calendar year into synchronization with the solar year so that the first month always begins in the spring; not in the winter. The additional month is always *after* the 12th lunar month, and hence, why it's called the 13th month.

The determination for the extra month comes when the New Moon after the 12th New Moon begins *before* the Vernal Equinox.⁸ If that New Moon begins before the Vernal Equinox it becomes the 13th month, but if it begins *on* or *after* the Vernal Equinox, it becomes the first month of the biblical New Year (Ex. 12:1-2). That's why in 2018 there will be 13 months. The first New Moon of the biblical year will be on Tuesday night, April 17th, 2018. The Passover Meal will be on Tuesday night, May 1st.

The solar Gregorian calendar, which always has 12 months, has an interesting aspect to it that parallels, in a smaller way, the lunar calendar's adjustment for the extra month (7 years out of every 19 years). It's the Gregorian calendar's *extra day* every four years, the so-called 'Leap Year,' when February, the shortest of the months by two or three days,⁹ is given an extra day. This is the Gregorian calendar's way of adjusting to the solar reality that the time it takes for the Earth to revolve around the sun is not exactly 365 days, but about 365.25 days. The lunar year has only about 354 days for its 12 months, and hence, the addition of the 13th month to compensate for the shortage.¹⁰ With the lunar 13th month every 7 years in a 19 year cycle, it works out fairly accurately.

Conclusion

With the Jewish Community beginning their biblical year before the Vernal Equinox in 2018, their Passover is a month earlier than it should be. With them also not using the actual sighting of the New Moon as their criterion for when a new biblical month begins, their first month is also two days early. That's why their Passover Meal, on Friday night, March 30th, is a month and two days earlier than it should be.

The biblical Passover Meal is on Tuesday night, May 1st, 2018. This begins the seven day Feast of Unleavened Bread. Glory to Messiah Yeshua!

⁸ The Vernal Equinox is usually March 20th in the Northern Hemisphere, which Israel is in. Israel is where God brought the Hebrews to keep His Torah and His Feasts, which are all determined by which New Moon begins the biblical New Year.

⁹ Every Gregorian month has 30 or 31 days except February, which only has 28 days. In a Leap Year February has 29 days.

¹⁰ Actually, a Jewish lunar year can have 353, 354 or 355 days. A leap year is always 30 days longer, and so can have 383, 384, or 385 days.

The Messianic Community

It's a blatant sin, and grievous to God, that the Rabbis continue to ordain the keeping of Passover (and all the other Feasts of Israel) on the wrong dates almost 80% of the time. In this the Jewish people are sinning against God and don't even realize it, as most Jews don't realize that their dates for Passover and the other Feasts are wrong. They just follow the Rabbis, but it's a greater sin for the Messianic community because they were told by Yeshua not to follow the Rabbis in their teachings. They have chosen instead to disregard the voice of the Master and to follow the Rabbis instead of Yeshua, *The Rabbi*. Yeshua said to His Apostles, about the Pharisees and Scribes (the Fathers of the Rabbis), to beware of their doctrines and not to follow them:

“Then the Scribes and Pharisees who were from Jerusalem came to Yeshua, saying, ‘Why do Your disciples transgress the Tradition of the Elders?!’ (This was known as the Oral Law or in its written form, the Talmud.) ‘For they do not wash their hands when they eat bread’ (with the Pharisaic understanding that they must say the Pharisaic blessing, which if not said would make their hands ‘unclean,’ and therefore, in Pharisaic eyes, any and all biblically kosher food that they might eat.)¹¹ ‘Yeshua answered and said to them, ‘Why do you also *transgress the commandment of God because of your tradition?*...Hypocrites! Well did Isaiah prophesy about you, saying: ‘These people draw near to Me with their mouth and honor Me with their lips, but their heart is far from Me. In vain they worship Me, teaching as doctrines the commandments of men!’” (Matthew 15:1-3, 7-9)

Yeshua also said of the Scribes and Pharisees:

“Woe to you, Scribes and Pharisees—hypocrites! For you travel land and sea to win one proselyte, and when he is won, *you make him twice as much a son of Hell as yourselves!*” (Matthew 23:15)

Yeshua also said to His Apostles:

“‘Take heed and *beware of the leaven* of the Pharisees and the Sadducees!’ And they reasoned among themselves, saying, ‘It is because we have taken no bread.’ But Yeshua, aware of it, said to them, ‘Oh you of little faith! Why do you reason among yourselves because you have brought no bread?!...How is it you do not understand that I did not speak to you concerning bread?—but to beware of the leaven of the Pharisees and Sadducees.’ Then *they understood* that He did not tell them to beware of the leaven of bread, but of the *teaching* of the Pharisees and Sadducees.” (Matthew 16:6-8, 11-12)

In too many things like the dating of Passover, Messianic Judaism wrongly follows the Rabbis and causes its people to sin against the Lord by keeping Passover and all the other Feasts of Israel on the wrong dates. With Messiah Yeshua's specific warnings about the teachings of the Pharisees and Scribes it is inexcusable that the leaders of Messianic Judaism continue to sin by following the Rabbis in this, and other areas (e.g. the wearing of the kipa/yarmulke, and the teaching of Kabbalah, etc.).¹²

¹¹ For a greater understanding on what the Pharisees were actually wanting of the disciples, see [Law 102](#), p. 6, *Jesus and the Pig*.

¹² See [G-d: The Missing 'o'](#), [Kabbalah](#), [Kosher—Biblical vs Jewish](#), [Talmud and Authority](#), [Tefillin—To Wear or Not to Wear?](#), [The Kipa](#), and [The Star of David](#), for a number of sins the Rabbis condone.

The Karaite Concept

The Karaites are a Jewish sect that rebelled against the Rabbis and their Talmud in the 8th century, in what is today northern Iran, and while they do follow the biblical sighting of the new moon over Israel to determine the biblical months, unfortunately for their New Moon for the biblical year, they, like the Rabbis, can use the new moon *before* the Vernal Equinox. This makes their Passover, in the years that they do this, a month earlier than it should be. They don't always begin a month early, though. This depends on their 'barley in Abib.'

Barley goes through a number of stages before it's ripe for harvest. Abib (Hebrew Aviv) is one of them. The Karaite understanding is that when the barley is in the Aviv stage for the New Moon, either before or after the Vernal Equinox, that New Moon becomes the first month.¹³

The Karaite concept is flawed for several reasons.¹⁴ Because the Karaites use an agricultural factor (barley in the stage of *aviv/abib*), to determine their New Moon for the New Year, it seems rather strange that there's no mention in Scripture of what percentage of Israel needs to have barley in that stage at the New Moon before the Vernal Equinox. The Karaites, realizing this, say that barley only has to be found in one or two places, in all Israel, for that New Moon to be the first of the year, but this means that most all of Israel wouldn't have the barley in that stage.

It would seem reasonable that all of Israel would have to have the barley in the *Aviv* stage so that all Israel could take their tithe and offering of ripe and harvested barley to Jerusalem 14 days later (after the New Moon) for Passover in Jerusalem, but that's something the Karaites don't speak about.¹⁵ Nor that fact that even if all Israel had barley in the *Aviv* stage for their New Moon before the Vernal Equinox, it wouldn't give the barley enough time to ripen *and* be harvested, *and* for Israel to make their journey to Jerusalem on foot, in order for all of them to be there for the start of Passover and the Feast of Unleavened Bread on the 14th of the first biblical month, when the Passover lamb would be sacrificed and the Feast of Unleavened Bread would begin.¹⁶

¹³ When the Karaites announce their New Moon after the Vernal Equinox, it'll be the right date, but any New Moon of theirs before the Vernal Equinox that they declare to be the New Moon for the New Year is wrong.

¹⁴ If you'd like to know why the Karaite 'Barley in Abib' is not the correct way to determine which month is the biblical month for the first month of the biblical year, see [Barley in Aviv and the Ten Plagues](#).

¹⁵ Aside from the Karaites, there are Gentile Christian groups that use the New Moon which is *closest* to the Vernal Equinox as their New Moon for the biblical year. It doesn't matter to them which side of the Vernal Equinox the New Moon is on, just as long as it's the closest one to the Vernal Equinox (in days to it or from it.) This concept fails for ancient Israel because when a New Moon would be 12 to 15 days before the Vernal Equinox, it would have been impossible for them to know if *that* New Moon was the closest New Moon to the Vernal Equinox, or the New Moon after it would be.

As an aside, Easter isn't calculated like the biblical Passover. In 325 AD the Council of Nicaea established that Easter would be held on the *first Sunday after the first full moon* occurring on or after the Vernal Equinox. Sometimes Passover and Easter coincide, while at other times they are separated by days or weeks or even a month.

¹⁶ For an authoritative study on why the New Moon after the Vernal Equinox is the biblical concept, see Herb Solinsky's website, [The Biblical Calendar](#). There are a number of studies you can download. You might want to begin with the *Concise Biblical Calendar* or *Barley and the Calendar*, or the *Historical Departure from the Biblical Calendar*, or whatever you're led to.

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