

History Of The Calendar

'Teach us to number our days so we may gain a heart of wisdom' (Psalm 90:12).

Not having a method to measure time and seasons would cause chaos. The divisions of the years, months, days, hours and minutes were wisely given to us by God, according to the seasons to avoid the chaos. The first month in the Hebrew calendar is not January. The Lord said, "This month will be to you the beginning of months. It will be the first month of the year to you" (Exodus 12:2). The month the Lord was referring to was the month of Nisan (Esther 3:7), also called Aviv or Abib (Deuteronomy 16:1), which coincides with the months of March and April in the Gregorian calendar used worldwide. Before the Lord gave the Hebrew calendar to His people, pagan nations already observed their own calendars.

In the Dordogne Valley in central France, archaeologists unearthed an eagle bone about 20cm long with notches running vertically down one edge in a regular pattern corresponding roughly to the thirty day phases of the moon and accurately depicting the twelve new and full moon cycles. Our ancestors measured the correct time for planting and harvesting by the seasons, tides, sun, moon, stars and agricultural cycles. The ancestors connected the lunar cycles to yearly events and eventually measured time in lunar months, giving them 354 days per year. That is the actual time it takes for the moon to complete its four phases as it orbits the earth. There are thirteen cycles once every seven years – the difference of eleven days. Babylonians created an unworkable nineteen-year cyclic calendar. To compensate for the unworkable calendar, ancient Greeks added ninety days every eight years. Sumerians had a 360 lunar day calendar with every date divisible by 6, 12, 24 & 60. They tried to match daylight hours with the thirteen signs of the ancient zodiac. The ancient Britons accurately measured the year into twelve segments and four quarters equalling 365 days. Stonehenge was designed and built in the correct location to show the sun's shadows.

Egyptians took their bearings from the sun and measured time based in the hours of sunlight and shadows, plus the yearly flooding of the Nile River. They noticed every 364¼ days, the Dog Star Sirius rose at dawn directly above, and exactly aligned with the rising sun. That day is now called the summer solstice. The pyramids were built to measure the shadows cast at various times of the year. They invented the nilometre to measure the height of the Nile River floods and carved a notch into a sturdy reed until it reached that exact peak again, 365 days later. One clever Egyptian realised the earth was spherical and travelled around the sun, and the sun was a very, very long way away from earth. For that time in history, those views were thought to be extreme. The Egyptians based their twelve-month calendar on lunar activity. Each month had thirty days and they spent five days worshipping their five main gods; Osiris, Isis, Horus, Nephthys and Set, equalling 365 days. One day every four years was set aside for the moon, creating what we now call the leap year.

Our current calendar is based on calculations made by a Roman mathematician during the time of Julius Caesar. At the time, Romans had a ten-month calendar. The names of the months were Martis, Aprilis, Maius, Junius, Quintilus, Sextilis, September, October, November and December. Januarius and Februarius were added later. The month of Julius (July) replaced Quintilus in honour of Julius Caesar. The month of Augustus (August) replaced Sextilis in honour of Augustus Caesar. Julius Caesar did not want to honour the Egyptian gods so he created alternating months of thirty and thirty-one days. Two days were taken from Februarius to honour the two Roman Emperors. Every fourth year remained a moon day – lunar day – leap day – leap year. In 46 BC, the entire known world aligned their calendars to correspond with the Julian calendar. It was called the Year of Great Confusion. From then on, the Roman Empire would be able to control and record the known world's taxes, shipping, trade, births, deaths, marriages, family lineages, holidays and interest rates. The new Julian calendar brought stability to international commerce, politics, trade, mail, marriages, building plans and other aspects of public life. The ancient world, from the far reaches of the Roman Empire to India was able to organise international trade and travel based on seasons and agriculture. The known Roman world did not extend to China or South America.

In 321AD to 325 AD the Babylonians, Persians, Romans, Anglo-Saxons and Germanians under the rule of Constantine, changed the usual Sabbath Day (in Hebrew, Shabbat, Exodus 20:8 to 11) from Saturday to Sunday. Easter and Christmas were merged with ancient pagan rituals. Passover (John 13:1) was replaced by Easter – named after Ishtar the Babylonian goddess of fertility – hence the Easter bunnies and chicks. Christmas replaced the Jewish feast of Hanukkah, also known as the Feast of Dedication (John 10:22) by merging 'Christianity' with the Persian god Mithra – called the sun of righteousness who was supposed to rise every year on their day of Saturnalia, between the 17th and the 25th of December. It was a week of

dancing, feasting and the exchanging of gifts. New Year's Day, held on the 1st of Januarius was greatly celebrated by the Romans and the world still celebrates that pagan festival today.

The Mayan calendar cycle had an even more exact calculation that ended in late December 2012. That did not mean the world was to end on that day, it meant they did not calculate any date after that time because they mostly died out. The Mayans were almost completely wiped out by the global heating event of the time period circa 975 to the year 1015. Archaeologists have found a severe drought killed most of them off – hence the cessation of their dating system. To end the drought, the Mayans tried to appease their evil gods by sacrificing thousands of young people, mainly children and cannibalism was rife. With the population greatly diminished by drought, cannibalism and human sacrifices, it was not hard for the Spanish to conquer the few hundred who remained. Such global warming had never been seen before – and it was not caused by human activity, it was a natural cyclical event. The earth did not fully recover from the severe drought until about the 1050's. The drought was written about in the countries that had newspapers. One newspaper reported in the year 975: "There came a very great famine ..." A newspaper reported in 976 to 986: "There is a great famine among all the English race and among the cattle ..." And again in 1005: "There is a great famine throughout all of England and all the world, such is that no one knows of one so grim ..." We may again be experiencing a change in weather patterns but it is not caused by human activity and there is nothing mere humans can do to change what our Creator God has put in place. He is in control of the weather, not us. It was prophesied, when the time came for the Jewish people to be healed from all they had suffered, the Lord would cause the sun to be seven times hotter and brighter than normal. The reason for this event is to bring repentance, but many people will not repent. 'The light of the moon will be like the light of the sun, and the light of the sun will be seven times brighter, like the light of seven days, in the day (time period) God binds up the fracture of His people and heals the wound they were struck with' (Isaiah 30:26). 'The fourth angel poured out his bowl on the sun and permission was given to the sun to scorch men with fire. People were scorched with great heat and people blasphemed the name of God who has the power over these plagues. They did not repent and give Him glory' (Revelation 16:8 & 9).

English friar Roger Bacon, realised the earth was acquiring hours and therefore days. In the 1200's, Roger Bacon wrote to Pope Clement 4th, to address the issue of time. According to Bacon, if left unchecked the calendar drifting against the solar year would accumulate one day every 125 years which would eventually move March into the Northern Hemisphere winter, and August into the middle of spring. He believed Christians were celebrating Christmas and Easter on the wrong days. For his trouble, Bacon was persecuted and imprisoned. In those days such speech was heresy. It was not until about 300 years later when Pope Gregory 13th removed eleven days, October 4 to 14 1582, giving us the Gregorian calendar we use today. The calendar was realigned again in 1752 when ten more days were removed. China finally adopted the Gregorian calendar on 1 October 1949 making the Roman Catholic Gregorian calendar the universal calendar. It is the way Gentiles measure time.

The Jewish calendar is more accurate than any other because God Himself gave it to them. In Israel, they currently use two separate calendars; the Gregorian or civil solar calendar for Israel's daily life and to connect with the rest of the world as necessary, and they use the Hebrew sacred or holy lunar calendar given by God in Exodus. Their Biblical, national and secular holidays are all held on their Hebrew date. All of Israel's holy feasts are held according to the Hebrew calendar. Every few years a second month of Adar is added to the Hebrew calendar to be sure their holidays occur at approximately the same time each year. The Hebrew year 5774 had Adar (1) and Adar (2).

The feasts anointed by God were pre-set dates created to usher in the coming of Messiah Yeshua (Jesus). There were some very astute Jewish people who calculated exactly when and where He would be born according to the scriptures and the holy feasts. The Old Testament informed the Jewish people, He would be born in Bethlehem from the tribe of Judah (Micah 5:2; Matthew 2:6), spend time in Egypt (Hosea 11:1; Matthew 2:13 to 23) and grow up in Nazareth and be known as a Nazarene meaning 'Branch' (Isaiah 11:1; Zechariah 3:8). They were waiting for Him. 'Behold, there was a man in Jerusalem whose name was Simeon. This man was righteous and devout, looking for the Consolation of Israel and the Holy Spirit was on him. It had been revealed to Simeon by the Holy Spirit, he would not see death before he had seen the Lord's Messiah. He came in the Spirit into the temple. When Mary and Joseph brought in the Child Yeshua to do concerning Him according to the custom of the law, Simeon received Yeshua into his arms and blessed God saying, "Now you will release your servant, Master, according to Your word, in peace, for my eyes have seen Your Salvation which you have prepared before the face of all peoples. A light for revelation to the nations and the glory of your people Israel." ... There was one Anna, a prophetess, the daughter of Phanuel of the tribe of Asher. She was of a great age, having lived with a husband for just seven years, she

had been a widow for about eighty-four years. Anna did not depart from the temple, worshipping with fasting and petitions night and day. Coming up at that very hour, she gave thanks to the Lord and spoke of Yeshua to all those who were looking for redemption in Jerusalem' (Luke 2:25 to 38).

Ancient Israel was an agriculturally based nation so the celebrations, festivals and feasts coincided with planting and harvests. The sacred calendar measures time – from day one of creation to the end of all creation on earth – approximately 7,000 years. The days of the week and the months in the Gregorian calendar are all named after Pagan gods or Roman Emperors, named before Christianity began. That is not so in the Hebrew calendar. The Hebrew days are named after the six days of creation and the rest day. 'Evening and morning were the first day' (Genesis 1:5), or as the Hebrew Bible says, 'Evening and morning were day one'. It is from that day one the Jewish people calculate their calendar and each year is counted. Yom achid (day one), yom shani (day two), yom shlishi (day three), yom ribioi (day four), yom chmishi (day five), yom shshi (day six) and yom shabbat (day seven). The first word in the Hebrew Bible is 'B'rashith' meaning, 'In the beginning' or 'Head of the year'.

Nisan also called **Abib** or **Aviv** – mid March to mid April in the Western calendar. Nisan was a month of new beginnings for the Hebrews. On the first of Nisan, the waters receded after Noah's flood (Genesis 8:13), so it was the new beginning of a new era for mankind. 'This month will be to you the beginning of months, the first month of the year to you' (Exodus 12:2). Passover, the Feast of Unleavened Bread and the counting of the barley harvest or omer occurred in Nisan. The seven-week Feast of Firstfruits began. Nisan was the season for the latter rains. The Tabernacle of Moses was raised on the first day of Nisan (Exodus 40:2 & 17), signifying a new beginning for the Hebrew people. Hezekiah re-dedicated the temple on the first day of Nisan (2 Chronicles 29:17).

Iyar or **Ziv** – April/May, is the second month (1 Kings 6:1). The Feast of Firstfruits ended during Ziv. By the second month after the waters of Noah's flood receded, the earth was finally dry (Genesis 8:14).

Sivan – May/June, is the third month (Esther 8:9).

Tamuz – June/July. This month is not named in the scriptures but is referred to as 'the fourth month' (Jeremiah 52:6).

Av or **Ab** – July/August. This month is not named in the scriptures but is referred to as 'the fifth month' (Jeremiah 52:12).

Elul – August/September, is the sixth month (Nehemiah 6:15).

Tishrei or **Ethanim** – September/October, is the seventh month (1 Kings 8:2). The Feast of Trumpets, the Day of Atonement, the Feast of Tabernacles and the Celebration of the Torah occurs during Tishrei. This month was the season for the early rains. It is the month the Jewish people currently celebrate their secular New Year's Day.

Cheshvan or **Bul** – October/November, is the eighth month (1 Kings 6:38).

Chislev – November/December, is the ninth month (Zechariah 7:1). The Feast of Dedication, also called the Festival of Lights and Hanukkah takes place during Chislev.

Tevet or **Tebeth** – December/January, is the tenth month (Esther 2:16).

Shebat – January/February, is the eleventh month (Zechariah 1:7)

Adar – February/March, is the twelfth month (Esther 8:12). The Feast of Purim is held during Adar (1) (Esther 9:26).

"As suddenly as lightning flashes from the east and is seen as far as the west, so will be the (sudden) coming of the Son of Man ... No one knows that day and hour, not even the angels of heaven but only My Father" (Matthew 24:27 & 36). Of course, Yeshua would now know exactly when He is going to return because the time is so close. When Yeshua spoke those words 2,000 years ago, He was giving us a clue to what feast-time He would return. Just as devoted Jewish people knew when He was about to come to earth the first time, so in our day some Messianic Jewish people have calculated when He will return. In His statement 'No one knows' Yeshua was using a well known Hebrew idiom saying to His genuine believers, He will come during the Feast of Trumpets which has been dubbed, 'The day no man knows'. We know He will return at the Feast of Trumpets, but the precise day, hour and year of His return, only the Lord knows. We all have to be ready for His sudden return. "Be ready, for in an hour (or a time) when you do not expect, the Son of Man will come" (Matthew 24:44).

Amen and God bless you.

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