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Frank W. Nelte

FURTHER COMMENTS REGARDING QUOTATIONS FROM THE TALMUD THAT APPLY TO THE CALENDAR

My previous article with quotations from the Talmud was probably not as clear as it could have been. [Can ANY lengthy quotation from the Talmud ever be really "clear"?] Also, in that article I did not demonstrate conclusively that the quotations which show that Atonement could and did fall on both, Fridays and Sundays, actually applied to the time of Christ's ministry and to the time of the early N.T. Church. So here are some more quotations, as well as some of the previous ones, with comments that make clear that these quotations do, very much so, apply to the time of Christ's ministry.

Understand this: the time when Atonement fell on Fridays and on Sundays is referred to as the time when there was no "fixed" calendar. Since the time when the calendar was "fixed" (i.e. by Hillel II), it has not been possible (for those in the Jewish religion) for Atonement to fall on either a Friday or a Sunday. The "fixed" calendar was specifically designed to prevent this.

I have no disagreement with anyone who may wish to argue that the fixed calendar with its rules of postponements was not even introduced at the time of Hillel II ... that this calendar was only introduced MUCH later. That only strengthens the point I am making.

So here are some quotations from a man who fully supports the use of the present Jewish calendar. He is Mr. Ken Burrell.

On August 25, 1996 Mr. Ken Burrell (in his second rebuttal paper to my calendar article) wrote the following:

"... here is what the Encyclopedia of Religion and Ethics has to say, under the heading "Calendar":

"Moreover, from the early post-Talmudic age we have dates which "can not be reconciled with the regular calendar in use today." (one such date is the year 506 AD, and another the year 776;" cf Bornstein, Warsaw, 1904, p. 18)

"In point of fact, everything goes to indicate that the calendar "... passed through a developing series of forms"

This article goes on to demonstrate that the calendar, as it exists TODAY, could not have existed prior to 776 AD. It should be obvious that the calendar was constructed for dates AFTER 776 AD, and was not meant to be extrapolated backwards. There is NO PROOF that the calendar TODAY is the same as it was in the days of Hillel II." [end of quotations from Ken Burrell's paper]

Note carefully that here Mr. Burrell pointed out, by quoting the Encyclopedia of Religion and Ethics, that the present Jewish calendar APPARENTLY cannot even be traced back to Hillel II in the 350's A.D.. His statements that ...

"it should be obvious that the calendar was constructed for dates AFTER 776 AD"

and that ...

"There is NO PROOF that the calendar TODAY is the same as it was in the days of Hillel II"

... are something I have no argument with. If people wish to argue that the present Jewish calendar doesn't go back even as far as Hillel II, that it only goes back as far as the 700's A.D., then that is fine with me!

That only SUPPORTS MY POINT, that the present Jewish calendar, with its postponements, etc. certainly was not something that Jesus Christ and the New Testament Church used in determining when to observe God's Holy Days.

So here are some more quotations from the Talmud and from some other sources as well.

SOME MORE QUOTATIONS

1) Talmud - Mas. Shabbath 75a

"A curtain which was attacked by a moth was torn [round the moth hole] and resewn. R. Zutrab. Tobiah said in Rab's name: He who pulls the thread of a seam 1 on the Sabbath is liable to a sin-offering; and he who learns a single thing from a Magian 2 is worthy of death; 3 and he who is able to calculate the cycles 4 and planetary courses but does not, one may hold no conversation with him. 5"

HERE IS FOOTNOTE 5:

"(5) The science of astronomy was necessary for the fixing of the calendar, upon which Jewish Festivals depended. In early times this was done by observation, but gradually calculation took its place. Hence Rab's indignation at one who fails to employ such knowledge."

COMMENT:

Notice that "IN EARLY TIMES" the calendar was based on "OBSERVATION"! Notice also that "GRADUALLY" calculation replaced observation.

2) Talmud - Mas. Rosh HaShana 7a

"Why did not our Tanna 22 [reckon the first of Nisan as the New Year for months]? Our Tanna speaks only of years, he does not speak of months. For leap years. Do we reckon [a New Year] for leap years from Nisan? 23 Has it not been taught: A leap year is not decreed 24 before New Year, 25 and if such a decree is issued it is not effective. In cases of emergency, 26 however, the decree may be issued immediately after New Year, and even so the intercalary month must be [the second] Adar! 27"

HERE IS FOOTNOTE 24

"(24) In the time of the Second Temple the calendar was not fixed, but the Beth din declared any year a leap year (i.e. inserted an intercalary month) according as they judged necessary, subject to certain rules."

COMMENT:

Here is a clear statement that "IN THE TIME OF THE SECOND TEMPLE THE CALENDAR WAS NOT

FIXED"! The "SECOND" Temple is the one that existed at the time of Christ's ministry, the one that was later destroyed in 70 A.D.. This is a clear statement from the Jewish authorities that they understand that prior to 70 A.D. the calendar was "NOT FIXED"!

3) Talmud - Mas. Beitzah 4b

" R. Zera said: Logic supports R. Assi; for we are now well acquainted with the fixing of the new moon and, nevertheless, we do observe two days. 20 Abaye said: Logic supports Rab; for we have learnt: In early times they used to light bonfires, 21 but on account of the mischief of the Samaritans 22 the Rabbis ordained that messengers should go forth. 23 Now if the [mischief of the] Samaritans ceased 24 we would [all] observe only one day; and [even during the Samaritan mischief] wherever the messengers arrived 25 they observed [only] one day. 26 But now that we are well acquainted with the fixing of the new moon, 27 why do we observe two days? "

HERE IS FOOTNOTE 27

"(27) The calendar was fixed about the beginning of the fourth century. [This has been ascribed to Hillel II, v. Graetz IV, pp. 316-318.]"

COMMENT:

Here we have a clear statement that the calendar was (only?) fixed about the beginning of the fourth century (i.e. sometime after 300 A.D.). That is more than 250 years after Christ's ministry and the founding of the New Testament Church.

4) Talmud - Mas. Chagigah 18a

" ... therefore Scripture teaches: And on the seventh day shall be restraint [of work] only the seventh day is under restraint in respect of all manner of work, but the six days are not under restraint in respect of all manner of work. Thus Scripture left it to the Sages 25 to tell you on which day [work] is forbidden, and on which day it is permitted; 26 which manner of work is forbidden, and which is permitted. 27 "

HERE IS FOOTNOTE 26

"(26) I. e. which day is a festival day proper, and which only a mid-festival day. For the fixing of the calendar, V. J.E. vol. III, pp. 498f."

NOTE: This footnote refers to "J.E. vol III, pp. 498f". This is a reference to the Jewish Encyclopedia. So here are quotations from the volume of the Jewish Encyclopedia, which encyclopedia is referenced by this footnote.

THE JEWISH ENCYCLOPEDIA, vol. III, page 498 onwards:

"After the destruction of the Temple (70 C.E.) Johanan ben Zakkai removed the Sanhedrin to Jabnah. To this body he transferred decisions concerning the calendar, which had previously belonged to the patriarch. After this the witnesses of the new moon came direct to the Sanhedrin." (page 499)"

COMMENT:

Here we have a quotation from the Jewish Encyclopedia which states very clearly that AFTER 70 A.D. the start of each month was STILL based on "WITNESSES" who came to the Sanhedrin, which had relocated to Jabnah. Again, this makes clear that prior to 70 A.D. the calendar was not fixed. Also, it

makes very clear that there could not have been the present postponement rules. For those years where the Jewish calendar TODAY invokes a 2-day postponement, the witnesses would always have come one day earlier than what the 2-day postponement requires.

5) Talmud - Mas. Baba Bathra 121a

"R. Jose b. Nathan 3 studied this Baraitha and did not know [how] to explain it. Going after R. Shesheth to Nehardea and not finding him, he followed him to Mahuza [where] he found him. He said unto him: What [is meant by] the appointed seasons of the Lord were said [but] the weekly Sabbath, 4 was not said [unto them]? [The other] replied unto him: [This is the meaning:] The appointed seasons of the Lord 5 require a proclamation by a court 6 [but] the weekly Sabbath does not require proclamation by a court; 7 for, it might have been assumed, since it 8 was written 9 near the appointed seasons, 10 that it required a proclamation by the court as [do] the appointed seasons, [this,] 11 therefore, had to be taught."

HERE ARE FOOTNOTES 6 & 7

"(6) Lit., "the sanctification of the house of law". The calendar not having been fixed, the dates of the New Moons and Festivals were determined by the court in Jerusalem on the evidence of witnesses who saw the "birth", of the new moon. If the court was satisfied, after due investigation and cross-examining of witnesses, that the evidence was reliable, the New Moon, was proclaimed, thus determining also the date of the festival which happened to fall in that month, since the Festivals always occurred, in accordance with the Biblical injunction, on the same day of the respective month."

"(7) Sabbath has been divinely ordained and sanctified at the Creation (Gen. II, 3), and is not subject to the proclamation of a human court."

COMMENT:

Here is another statement that the calendar had not yet been fixed. The previous quotations make clear that this refers to the time before the fourth century A.D. The system in use was based on witnesses who saw the first crescent. A system based on observation negates postponements for the sake of inconvenience.

6) Talmud - Mas. Menachoth 64a

"For we have learnt: Whether [the new moon] was clearly visible or not, they may profane the Sabbath because of it. 10 But R. Jose says. If it was clearly visible they may not profane the Sabbath because of it. 11"

HERE ARE FOOTNOTES 10 & 11

"(10) Any who saw the new moon may transgress the Sabbath limits to go and give evidence before the court of the appearance of the new moon. As the calendar was not fixed the evidence of witnesses was a matter of the greatest importance for the determination of the dates of the Festivals."

"(11) As it is most probable that the members of the court themselves had also seen the appearance of the new moon, so that it would be unnecessary for any to profane the Sabbath for this purpose; R.H. 21b."

COMMENT:

This statement about the calendar not being fixed certainly refers to the time of the Second Temple, as well as beyond the destruction of the Temple in 70 A.D. Note also that "the evidence of witnesses" was considered to be a matter "OF THE GREATEST IMPORTANCE"! It was considered so important that they even made allowance for such witnesses to break (their own humanly imposed) "Sabbath limits".

7) Talmud - Mas. Menachoth 68b

" R. Papa and R. Huna the son of R. Joshua used to eat the new corn on the night of the sixteenth day which is really the beginning 4 of the seventeenth day, for they hold the view that the prohibition of the new corn outside the land [of Israel] is only Rabbinical 5 and that the doubt 6 need not be taken into account. The Rabbis of the school of R. Ashi used to eat it on the morning of the seventeenth, for they hold that the prohibition of the new corn outside the land of Israel is Biblical, 5 but that the ruling of R. Johanan b. Zakkai was only a Rabbinic ordinance; and this ordinance, they maintain, was intended to apply only to the actual day of the waving but not to the day of doubt. 7"

HERE ARE FOOTNOTES 6 & 7

"(6) Owing to the absence of a fixed calendar the duration of a month varied between twenty-nine and thirty days; consequently the day that is regarded as the seventeenth of the month may really be the sixteenth, if the preceding month consisted of thirty days."

"(7) Accordingly after daybreak on the seventeenth day the new corn is permitted."

COMMENT:

Again this refers to the absence of a fixed calendar. Note also the comment that the night of the sixteenth day is really the beginning of the seventeenth day. This understanding also applies to when the original Passover was killed in Egypt ... at the beginning of the 14th of Nisan.

8) Talmud - Mas. Chullin 18b

" But does not R. Zera accept the rule: [When a person arrives in a town] he must adopt the restrictions of the place which he has left and also the restrictions of the place he has entered? 9 This rule applies only when one travels from town to town in Babylon, or from town to town in the land of Israel, or from the land of Israel to Babylon, but when one travels from Babylon to the land of Israel, inasmuch as we are subject to their authority, 10 we must adopt their customs."

HERE IS FOOTNOTE 10

"(10) Particularly with regard to the fixing of the Calendar. V. however, Tosaf. s.v."

COMMENT:

This quotation tells us that, "particularly" where calendar matters are concerned, those who travelled from Babylon to "the land of Israel" (i.e. Palestine) must adopt the customs and the calendar of those in the land of Israel. But this implies that the Jews in Babylon had a different calendar from the Jews in Palestine . It seems the Apostle Peter spent some time in Babylon (see 1 Peter 5:13). So when he was in Babylon, did the Apostle Peter observe the Holy Days by the calendar that was in use in Jerusalem, or did he go by the calendar that was in use in Babylon? The answer seems to be that, since the calendar at that time still depended on witnesses reporting the sighting of the new crescent, Peter simply could not have adhered to the calendar in use in Palestine! People in Babylon could not have found out about when the witnesses reported seeing the new crescent in Palestine until far too late. The only possibility is

that Peter must have observed the Holy Days in Babylon based on the calendar that was employed by the Jews in Babylon.

We could ask the same question for the Apostle Paul when he went to Rome. Since the calendar in his time was still based on observation, he too could not have followed the calendar in use in Palestine. During his two years in Rome Paul must have observed the Holy Days based on the visibility of the new moons in Rome ... since the quotations I have already presented make quite clear that during Paul's lifetime there was no fixed calendar.

9) Talmud - Mas. Arachin 8b

" MISHNAH. THERE ARE NEVER LESS THAN FOUR FULL MONTHS IN THE YEAR, NOR DID IT SEEM RIGHT TO HAVE MORE THAN EIGHT. 10 THE TWO LOAVES 11 WERE CONSUMED NEVER EARLIER THAN THE SECOND, NOR LATER THAN THE THIRD DAY. THE SHEWBREAD 12 WAS CONSUMED NEVER EARLIER THAN THE NINTH NOR LATER THAN THE ELEVENTH DAY. AN INFANT MAY NEVER BE CIRCUMCISED EARLIER THAN THE EIGHTH NOR LATER THAN THE TWELFTH DAY. 13"

HERE IS FOOTNOTE 10

"(10) A full month (lit., "a prolonged one") is one of thirty days, a defective one is one of twenty-nine days. The average year has six months of thirty days each, and six of twenty-nine days each. For there are about twenty-nine and one half days between one new moon and the other, whence a month of thirty days, to restore the balance, must be followed by one of twenty-nine days. However, there are more than twenty-nine and one half days between one new moon and the other, approximately twenty-nine days, twelve hours and forty minutes; furthermore, there are other causes influencing the fixing of the calendar, as the result of which the arrangement of six full and defective months undergoes certain variations, so that one year might have a larger number of full, the other more than the half of defective months. In the time of the Mishnah the Sanhedrin decreed the beginning of the new months on the basis of the testimony of witnesses who had actually seen the new moon. But even then conditions would arise (such as non-visibility of the new moon, due to cloudy weather) when the Sanhedrin would be guided by its own astronomical calculations. For such a decree the principle was adopted that no year may have more than eight, nor less than four full months."

AND HERE IS FOOTNOTE 13

"(13) The circumcision performed on the eighth day overrides both Sabbath and Holy Day. Here, however, we deal with a boy born Friday eve at twilight. Hence his birthday is doubtful: it maybe either Friday or Saturday. The twilight may be considered as belonging either to the day past or to the following one. The Sabbath following may therefore be the eighth or the ninth day after the birth and the circumcision must be postponed (for a doubtfully eighth day circumcision does not override the Sabbath) to the following, the tenth day. If the following day be a Holy Day, the circumcision could not take place before the eleventh day. If the two days of New Year fall on Sunday, the circumcision is postponed to the twelfth day. V. Shab. 137b."

COMMENT:

Notice this statement in footnote 10 : " In the time of the Mishnah the Sanhedrin decreed the beginning of the new months on the basis of the testimony of witnesses who had actually seen the new moon. But even then conditions would arise (such as non-visibility of the new moon, due to cloudy weather) when the Sanhedrin would be guided by its own astronomical calculations."

As far as "the time of the Mishnah" is concerned, here is a quotation from the article "MISHNAH" from:

"The Software Toolworks Multimedia Encyclopedia" (this is the Grolier Encyclopedia):

"Between 400 BC and the beginning of the Christian Era, the biblical laws (see TORAH) were intensively studied, applied to new situations, and supplemented by traditions of popular observance and by precedents established by prominent leaders. This material, long transmitted by word of mouth and known as the Oral Torah, defined the meaning of biblical laws. After the fall of Jerusalem and the destruction of the Temple in AD 70, the Jewish scholars and teachers called tannaim continued to elaborate and systematize the Oral Torah. About AD 200, Rabbi JUDAH HA-NASI promulgated a collection of the most reliable traditions. This work, the Mishnah, became the official text out of which further Jewish legal development occurred."

From this quotation we see that "about 200 A.D." the Mishnah became the official text So our quotation in footnote 10 certainly applies to the time of the New Testament Church ... that the beginning of new months was based on the testimony of witnesses at the time of Christ's ministry.

Note also from this quotation that the biblical laws were "SUPPLEMENTED BY TRADITIONS OF POPULAR OBSERVANCE"! Now where did I read something about taking up "popular observances"? Hmmm.

Notice also that the Sanhedrin had "astronomical calculations" which would verify the witness of those who claimed to have seen the new crescent. This makes clear that their "astronomical calculations" must have been for "FIRST VISIBILITY" and not for the molad (the invisible conjunction), otherwise they would ALWAYS have been at odds with the witnesses. In fact, the emphasis seems to be always on ensuring that the month was never started too early. But the present calendar is ALWAYS based on a time earlier than visibility (except when for convenience's sake postponements are invoked).

10) "THE YEAR'S END" OF EXODUS 34:22

I have repeatedly stated that the instruction in Exodus 34:22 ("... and the feast of ingathering at the year's end") means that the Feast of Tabernacles may never precede the autumn equinox of the northern hemisphere. In approximately 18 months of writing about the calendar only one person has challenged this understanding. It revolves around understanding the meaning of the Hebrew word "tekufah" (plural is "tekufot"). Alternate spellings for this Hebrew word are "tequphah" and "tequfah".

I have stated that "tekufah" refers specifically to the solstices and the equinoxes. Incidentally, Dr. Herman Hoeh agreed with this meaning in his 1981 Good News article on the calendar, as did also Mr. Raymond McNair in his recent article on the calendar for the Global Church, as did also Mr. Stephen Flurry in his calendar article in the April 1996 Philadelphia Trumpet.

The person who challenged me claims that there is no proof that the Hebrew term "tekufah" has an exact connection to the autumn equinox, and that I have tried to force such a connection. So I would like to take this opportunity to clarify this matter regarding "tekufah".

The following quotation is from ENCYCLOPEDIA JUDAICA, VOLUME 5, ARTICLE "CALENDAR", which is on pages 43-50 (actually there are two columns on each page and it is the columns that are numbered in this encyclopedia). This edition was copyrighted in 1971.

Column 46, sub-heading "Tekufot":

"Tekufot ("Seasons"). As stated, the four seasons in the Jewish year are called tekufot. More accurately, it is the beginning of each of the four seasons --- according to the common view, the mean beginning --- that is named tekufah (literally "circuit", from kuf related to nakuf, "to go around"), the tekufah of Nisan denoting the mean sun at the vernal equinoctial point, that of Tammuz denoting it at the summer solstitial point, that of Tishri, at the autumnal equinoctial point, and that of Tevet, at the winter solstitial point."

[The above quotation is as it appears in the encyclopedia, except that I have transliterated the Hebrew letters for the words "kuf" and "nakuf". These words are sometimes also transliterated as "quph" and "naquph".]

Here is a clear statement about what the Jews understand the word "tekufah" to mean! Notice that "tekufah" ... "MORE ACCURATELY REFERS TO THE BEGINNING OF EACH OF THE FOUR SEASONS"! That is precisely what I have been saying all along! The "mean beginning" of autumn in the northern hemisphere is September 23rd.

Thus: the tekufah of Tishri refers to THE BEGINNING OF AUTUMN! That is what the Encyclopedia Judaica spells out.

I do not believe that there is any justification to argue with this understanding of the word "tekufah" which is stated here by authors who were obviously well acquainted with the Hebrew language. They could not have had an ulterior motive in presenting this explanation of the word "tekufah", since in their own practices the Feast of Tabernacles does in fact at times start during summer! They had nothing to gain by telling us that the "tekufah" of Tishri refers to the START of the autumn season, at the autumn equinox. It does nothing to support their religious practices in any way.

Any dates between June 21 and September 22 are a part of the "tekufah of summer", the summer season.

In volume 3 of the same Encyclopedia Judaica, in the article "ASTRONOMY", the following is stated on page (really column) 798:

"THE FOUR SEASONS (Tekufot). The change of season and the comparison of day and night are fairly well described: 'there are four seasons of the year, from the Nisan season to the Tammuz season the day borrows from the night, and from the Tammuz season to the Tishri season the day repays the night; from the Tishri season to the Tevet season the night borrows from the day, and from the Tevet season to the Nisan season the night repays the day; during the Nisan season and Tishri season, neither one owes anything to the other' (Mid. Ps. 19:3)."

This article also illustrates that the tekufah of Tishri refers to THE SEASON that starts with the autumn equinox. Tekufah refers to either: the season in general terms, or to the STARTING DATE of that specific season. Notice from the word tekufot in parentheses that it is considered a synonym for "seasons".

It should really be quite clear that "the feast of ingathering at the TEKUFAH of the year" (Exodus 34:22) simply cannot be something that falls partly into one tekufah (the tekufah of Tammuz, being summer), and partly into another tekufah (the tekufah of Tishri, being autumn). Keep in mind that the Jews clearly understand the term tekufah to refer primarily to THE BEGINNING of each season, as we saw in the Judaica article.

This should suffice to show that the Jewish understanding of tekufah means that the feast of ingathering

must be at or after the autumn equinox. Tabernacles is, after all, AN AUTUMN FESTIVAL!

11) THE UNIVERSAL JEWISH ENCYCLOPEDIA, VOLUME 2

ARTICLE "CALENDAR", PAGE 632:

Here are some quotations from this encyclopedia, which was published in the United States in 1939:

"Little is known of the procedure of determining the calendar up to the 2nd cent. C.E., when a description is given of the traditional practice. It ran as follows: On the thirtieth day of the month a council would meet to receive the testimony of witnesses that they had seen the new moon. If two trustworthy witnesses had made deposition to that effect on that day, the council proclaimed a new month to begin on that day, that is, the day on which the testimony was given became the first day of the new month instead of the thirtieth of the old month. If no witnesses appeared, however, the new moon was considered as beginning on the day following the thirtieth. Once the council had proclaimed the new month, announcement was made far and wide by means of fire-signals ..."

A little later the article states:

"Witnesses might be overzealous and imagine they had seen the new moon too soon; or malicious witnesses might purposely give false testimony."

To guard against such problems, the article continues with:

"Rabban Gamaliel II (2nd cent. C.E.) would test the witnesses by showing them pictures of the various phases of the moon and asking them which appearance they had seen. Disputes arose between those who depended on witnesses and those who relied on calculation; a noted instance of such a dispute between Gamaliel and Joshua is recorded in the Mishnah (R.H. 2:8-9). Eventually the calendar was determined entirely on the basis of astronomical calculations, and the hearing of the evidence of witnesses was merely retained to encourage individuals to perform their religious duties."

Regarding Gamaliel II, here is what THE ENCARTA 96 ENCYCLOPEDIA tells us about the time when he lived:

"Gamaliel of Jabneh or Gamaliel the Younger (flourished late 1st century AD), scholar, grandson of Gamaliel the Elder. He was the head of the school of Jabneh, a town near Jaffa (now Tel Aviv-Jaffa, Israel), which became the centre of Judaism and Jewish studies after the destruction of Jerusalem in AD 70. Gamaliel's authority over the Jews was recognized by the Romans, who designated him "patriarch". He dedicated himself to the preservation of Judaism and made notable contributions to its ritual; these included a revision of the 18 Benedictions recited thrice daily by orthodox Jews and the substitution of the present simple Pesach, or Passover, service for the paschal sacrifice that was forbidden after the destruction of the Temple."

[The information about Gamaliel II is very similar in Funk & Wagnall's Encyclopedia and in Merriam Webster's Biographical Dictionary, both of which I have checked.]

So here we have a key Jewish leader who lived in the second half of the first century A.D. and on into the next century. His grandfather had been the teacher of the Apostle Paul before Paul's conversion to Christianity (Acts 22:3). This man, Gamaliel II was thus a contemporary of the Apostle Paul.

And the Universal Jewish Encyclopedia, with a reference to the Mishnah, makes clear that Gamaliel II relied on witnesses who had seen the new moon before he would pronounce the next month to have started. Gamaliel II was so zealous in wanting to ensure that the witnesses were correct, that he even tested them by showing them pictures of the various phases of the moon.

CLEARLY GAMALIEL II WAS USING A CALENDAR THAT DEPENDED ON THE FIRST VISIBILITY OF THE NEW MOON!

Note also the encyclopedia's reference to the dispute between Gamaliel and another leader named Joshua, which dispute is recorded in the Mishnah. The point to keep in mind here is that this dispute was about FIRST VISIBILITY of the new moon: Gamaliel relied on witnesses whereas Joshua relied on calculation for this information. It is clear that BOTH focused on visibility and NOT on the invisible molad, because the next statement shows the evidence of witnesses was "RETAINED" even after "the calendar was determined entirely on the basis of astronomical calculations".

When both, witnesses AND astronomical calculations are used, then this can only mean that the astronomical calculations are for THE FIRST VISIBILITY OF THE NEW MOON, something witnesses would then be able to verify.

But I believe we can go one step further with this information. Here we have a man who was VERY STRONGLY in favour of using visual observations (which automatically negate any postponements) for determining the calendar. It is clear that he was continuing the practice he had learned from his grandfather. And his grandfather had been the teacher of the Apostle Paul. So what type of calendar was the Apostle Paul used to? Why, he would have followed the one his teacher Gamaliel had always applied, UNLESS Paul felt that there was some problem with the calendar Gamaliel accepted. But there is no indication that Paul had any conflict with what Gamaliel taught about the calendar. The calendar never features in Paul's writings. Besides, all of those who argue for retaining the present Jewish calendar are in full agreement with this, that Paul and the whole New Testament Church used exactly the same calendar as was used by the Jews at that time ... and Gamaliel II was a leader with some influence over that calendar.

Another interesting thought!

We know that after the death of the original apostles the truth of God was very rapidly suppressed and perverted. IF Satan was the one behind instigating this perversion of the true teachings of the Bible, wouldn't Satan also have done his utmost to pervert THE CALENDAR by which God's Holy Days are determined? And as we see the dispute between Gamaliel II and Joshua unfolding in the latter part of the first century A.D., doesn't it almost sound like Gamaliel II was "a defender of the faith that was once delivered" ... AS FAR AS THE CORRECT CALENDAR IS CONCERNED?

While I do not believe that there is anything inherently wrong with correctly calculating the calendar in advance, a calendar that is based totally on calculations nevertheless OPENS THE DOOR FOR ABUSES TO ENTER THE PICTURE ... in the form of "postponements" for the sake of the "traditions of our fathers". That is something that simply could not happen as long as the calendar depended on faithful witnesses who had seen the new moon.

We should be able to immediately see a parallel to our age today. Satan hasn't changed his tactics very much. Many of the early changes that WCG introduced after Mr. Armstrong's death were not an end in

themselves, although they were always presented as such. THE REAL PROBLEM with many of those "early changes" was that THEY OPENED THE DOOR for further changes, changes which then really were "big problems"!

Well, it's just an interesting thought.

I hope that these quotations clarify some of the questions that may have arisen after my first article with quotations from the Talmud.

A MATTER OF ATTITUDE!

One thing that has concerned me personally throughout this period of examining and discussing the Jewish calendar is THE ATTITUDE of so many people. I find it absolutely staggering that people can, AT THE SAME TIME, have two totally opposite attitudes.

ON THE ONE HAND:

They will do their utmost to defend and to justify every single problem with the present Jewish calendar that is brought to their attention. Every time they will give the present Jewish calendar the benefit of the doubt! ("Well, why couldn't God have given the calendar to Moses?" or "How do we know that it wasn't the Babylonians who got their calendar from the Jews?" or "If history doesn't prove a 31 A.D. crucifixion date, maybe we can still prove a 31 A.D. date by reasoning from John chapters 7-10?" or "Well, if the Bible doesn't specifically condemn the postponement rules, why shouldn't we have them in the calendar?" or "Well, why shouldn't a part of the Feast of Tabernacles precede the start of autumn ... as long as at least the Seventh Day of Tabernacles reaches into autumn?" etc.)

Real problems are never faced! Instead, such problems are swept aside by trying to change the focus onto something else. Any possible straw is grasped at as a justification for the present Jewish calendar. Grandiose claims are made for the calendar with not so much as a whisper of proof for these claims, claims which the Jews themselves never make about their own calendar. ("It's GOD's calendar, you know?" or "It is the SACRED calendar." or "The present Jewish calendar was given by God to Moses." etc.)

Also, in order to justify the present Jewish calendar, any number of things are WILLINGLY READ INTO THE SCRIPTURES, things the Scriptures are clearly not even speaking about ("The oracles of God in Romans 3:2 must obviously include the calendar." or "The calendar in the days of King Saul and King David must have been fixed, because King Saul would organize banquets at the time of the new moon." or "The Talmud shows that the sons of Issachar already knew how to calculate the calendar ... so why can't the present Jewish calendar go back to Moses?" etc.)

[Comment: Talmud Mas. Eirubin 100b states: "And the children of Issachar, men that had understanding 33 of the times, to know what Israel ought to do ...". Footnote 33, next to the word "understanding", reads as follows: "a type that could not be found in the days of Moses." So here is a comment in the Talmud, which claims that the sons of Issachar had some kind of understanding WHICH WAS NOT AVAILABLE IN THE DAYS OF MOSES, and this understanding had to do with knowing what Israel ought to do. But any number of people have taken this rather vague claim and tried to read knowledge of a God-given calendar into it, supposedly given to Moses.]

[Comment: When you analyze information found in the Talmud, you should realize that this information falls into one of two categories.

A) There are claims and assertions about people and events that are supposed to have happened in

biblical times to biblical characters. When such statements claim to present information that is NOT FOUND IN THE BIBLE, then ALMOST ALL OF THESE CLAIMS ARE FABRICATED AND UNRELIABLE! In fact, very many of them can be shown to contradict what is revealed in the Bible. There simply is not one shred of evidence available that the Jews had access to extra-biblical information about Old Testament characters. Many of the assertions about when specific biblical personages were conceived or born are plain ludicrous! As are also many other claims.

B) Then there are claims that various leaders of the Pharisees, POST-OLD TESTAMENT teachers, said or did certain things. The majority of those claims refer to people who lived after the founding of the sect of the Pharisees around 150 B.C.. That is the information the Talmud has preserved fairly accurately, the sayings and teachings of its own leaders. There is little reason to doubt that "Pharisee X" said or did certain things in the course of his time as a leader of the Jews, things that are recorded in the Talmud.

So we need to be careful before we give credibility to claims found in the Talmud.]

AT THE VERY SAME TIME ON THE OTHER HAND:

Every piece of evidence that is brought against the present Jewish calendar is viewed with suspicion and attacked! The motives of those who bring forward such evidence are questioned. Every attempt is made to find faults with such evidence, and in many cases, to also find faults with the people who have presented the evidence.

In many cases the possible alternatives to the present Jewish calendar are ridiculed and scorned. It is like: no man having drunk the old wine will straightaway desire the new because he feels the old is better ... where did I read something like that?

There is nothing about the present Jewish calendar that gives it any veto status ... there is nothing that guarantees its automatic acceptance before God! IF it is the right calendar before God, THEN it will also stand up to scrutiny and to thorough examination. If it cannot stand up to such scrutiny, it is because this calendar contains some inherent problems!

If we are not willing to honestly face valid questions that are presented to us, then we are losing our integrity before the Almighty Creator God of heaven and earth!

WHAT IS MY PERSONAL VIEW?

Having pointed out all of the quotations above from the Talmud and from other reference works, does this mean that I myself believe we today should have a calendar that is based on visual observations of the new moon?

NO, I DON'T!

I have nothing against visual observations. But I at this stage do not believe that today God would necessarily want us to have a calendar that is tied to visual observations in one specific locality on earth (i.e. Jerusalem) ... when hardly any of God's people today have anything to do with that locality. Very few true Christians, if any, today live in Jerusalem, where they would actually "see" the first crescent of the new moon.

What about people observing the Holy Days in their specific localities based on when the visible new moons appear to them? That may very possibly have been the way it was at the time of Peter in Babylon and Paul in Rome. If either one of them returned to Jerusalem, he would then have had to fall in line with the calendar in use there.

I believe that TODAY such a system would cause chaos and confusion. TODAY we make adjustments, not when we travel from Babylon or Rome to Jerusalem; today we make adjustments when we cross the International Date Line. Today it is FAR EASIER to cross the International Date Line in our travels, than it was in Paul's time to travel from Jerusalem to Rome.

With our instant communications (phones, internet, etc.) we are frequently in direct contact with people on the other side of the globe. That was not the case in biblical times. It would have taken Peter several weeks to travel from Babylon to Jerusalem, plenty of time to adjust to a slightly different (i.e. possibly by one day) calendar, if necessary. But his weeks of travel amounted to him having gone to a totally different part of the world. We today fly from one continent to the next in just a few hours. And then it is one thing to cross the International Date Line; but it is quite another to cross imaginary datelines.

EXAMPLE:

If you live in Denver, Colorado, you may possibly see the first faint crescent of the new moon on September 14th. It was visible for just a very few minutes shortly after sunset of September 14th (thus this new moon will be your Day of Trumpets for September 15th). BUT hundreds of miles to the EAST of you (e.g. in Kansas City and in St. Louis and in Atlanta, etc.) there will be people who will only see the first crescent the following evening (i.e. shortly after sunset on September 15th). Therefore for people in Kansas City the Day of Trumpets will be on September 16th.

Now IF we bring the International Date Line into this equation, it will only create confusion. But there is more to come.

Two (or three or four or more) months from now people in Kansas City will be able to see the first faint crescent on (let's say) February 10th ... and so will people to the west of Kansas City; BUT the people in St. Louis and in Atlanta will not see it till the following evening. So where one month we had a dateline run through Denver (i.e. every place to the west of Denver kept the Day of Trumpets on the same day as people in Denver, but all those to the east of Denver kept it one day later), NOW we have a dateline run through Kansas City (i.e. all those west of Kansas City will start the month the same day as people in Kansas City, but those to the east of Kansas City will start the month one day later).

So for people in Kansas City: SOMETIMES they are on the same calendar as people in Denver and sometimes they are on a calendar one day later than Denver; SOMETIMES they are on the same calendar as people in Atlanta and sometimes they are on a calendar one day ahead of Atlanta.

Just think the whole thing through very carefully in its practical application. I believe it is impractical in our age today to insist on observing God's annual Holy Days based on the local visibility of the first new crescent of the moon. Every month you will be at variance by one day, either with some people to the east of you or with some people to the west of you.

The comparison with observing the Sabbath from sunset to sunset at your locality is not valid. The only reason you can observe the Sabbath from sunset to sunset at your specific location is because you are in agreement with the rest of the world about where the International Date Line is located. Without the International Date Line you would have confusion trying to keep the Sabbath from sunset to sunset.

Now IF you are going to keep the Holy Days based on local visibility of the new moon, THEN YOU HAVE NO INTERNATIONAL DATE LINE! In effect the appearance of the new moon crescent becomes your dateline ... but it (locally visible) also does so for everyone else on earth. But first visibility of the new moon is a constantly shifting thing (i.e. it constantly shifts in relation to places east or west of us). The appearance of the new moon in your locality signals the first day of the month in your calendar, but not necessarily for people east or west of you.

What this would mean in practical terms is this: local visibility would require people in Denver to sometimes have a month of 30 days, while for people in Kansas City the same month could only have 29 days. Let's look at that for the month Nisan, the first month of the year: based on local visibility in your area Nisan should be 30 days long, but in another part of the USA Nisan should only be 29 days long ... in the very same year! For the second month, Iyyar, you may be at variance with people in another part of the USA. Then you come to the third month, Sivan. That's when the Feast of Pentecost occurs. Are you still in line for keeping this Holy Day at the correct time? And will you again be at variance with other areas in the USA? Then you come to the new moon of Tishri, and again you will keep it on a different day from some people to the east or west of you. But NEXT YEAR you might very possibly keep Trumpets (and therefore FoT as well) on the same day as the areas you differed with this year ... but on a different day from the areas that kept Trumpets on the same day as you did last year. Put another way: starting each month based on local visibility of the new crescent would mean that the length of your year would differ from the length of the same year in other areas of the United States.

To me such a state represents confusion!

I wish to make quite clear that I myself do NOT believe that we today should observe the Holy Days based on a calendar that is determined by local visibility of the new moon crescents. My point is simply this:

The Jewish calendar, in its present form (with postponements and with the Feast of Tabernacles at times beginning in the summer), is NOT the right answer either!

THEREFORE I BELIEVE THAT THOSE MINISTERS WHO HAVE POSITIONS OF AUTHORITY AND OF RESPONSIBILITY WITHIN THE VARIOUS CHURCH ORGANIZATIONS TODAY NEED TO GET TOGETHER TO SORT OUT THE VARIOUS VALID QUESTIONS IN THIS REGARD! I ALSO BELIEVE THAT THIS IS REALLY NOT GOING TO HAPPEN!

Strange, isn't it? There are churches in this world, which have different doctrines in some regards, and yet they at times are able to get together to discuss matters of common concern. And then there are God's people: in recent years we have scattered in different directions and we now associate with different organizations, but we sure can't get together to sort out something as absolutely vital to our religious practices as the calendar which we will use to determine the Holy Days we all are desirous of observing correctly, as we feel God would want us to observe them.

That's something I find very sad.

Frank W. Nelte