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WHEN SHOULD THE FIRST MONTH OF THE YEAR START?

One important question in this whole discussion about the calendar is: exactly when should the year start? Must it always start in the spring? Can it sometimes or even always start in the winter? The Jews do call the Day of Trumpets "New Year". Since the Day of Trumpets is sometimes in the summer and sometimes in the autumn, does this mean that the year can start in either the summer or in the autumn? Exactly what does the Bible reveal about the start of the year?

THE BASIC SCRIPTURE

When God was ready to lead Israel out of Egypt through Moses, we read the following instruction:

And the LORD spake unto Moses and Aaron in the land of Egypt, saying, THIS MONTH shall be unto you the beginning of months: IT SHALL BE THE FIRST MONTH OF THE YEAR TO YOU.
(Exodus 12:1-2 AV)

So here we have, right at the time of Moses, a very clear statement from God that God wants the year to start with a specific month (or new moon)!

The Hebrew expression translated into English as "THIS MONTH" is "ha-chodesh ha-zeh". The word "zeh" is a demonstrative pronoun meaning "this" or "this one". I mention this here because this demonstrative pronoun makes quite clear that God is specifically singling something out. It is not just the definite article (as in "the month") that is used here, but it is a specific reference to "THIS month".

Next, the word "chodesh" means BOTH, "new moon" and also "month". The reason is that God wanted EVERY MONTH to start with "a new moon". So it is perfectly correct to translate Exodus 12:2 in two possible ways: firstly, as above in the KJV, which also happens to be identical to the JPS translation of this verse; and secondly as rendered below:

"THIS NEW MOON shall be unto you the beginning of new moons (or months): it shall be THE FIRST NEW MOON of the year to you." (Exodus 12:2)

The key is to remember that in biblical Hebrew there simply is no distinction made between the concepts of "new moons" and "months". So it is equally correct to say that in Exodus 12:2 God was specifically singling out TWO things: THIS NEW MOON and also THIS MONTH!

The Hebrew word "chodesh" simply does not allow you to divorce "the new moon" from "the month". They go together. A month is only a month BECAUSE it starts on the new moon!

So when we have a clear statement from God that THIS NEW MOON is to be the first new moon of the year to us, then we obviously have A VERY CLEAR RESPONSIBILITY to determine exactly when God wants that new moon to occur! We cannot pass this responsibility off to other people (such as the Jews) by reasoning: well, it is really up to God to make sure that these other people (i.e. the Jews) pick the right new moon for us.

God listed the weekly Sabbath days right alongside the annual Sabbath days in Leviticus chapter 23. The one group is as important as the other. Now we wouldn't dream of allowing someone else to determine for us which day of the week we should keep as the Sabbath day. Just because the Jews happen to identify the weekly Sabbath days correctly, this does not mean that we didn't check up on them TO MAKE SURE that their claim that Saturday is the Sabbath is in fact correct. We have carefully examined historical records (e.g. our old booklet "Has Time Been Lost?") to make quite sure that the Jewish claim for Saturday as the weekly Sabbath is correct. We certainly didn't just accept "on faith" that the Jews have got the weekly Sabbath right; we thoroughly verified this against all the facts to which we have access. And having made such a thorough investigation, it is certainly nice to have been able to reach the conclusion that regarding the weekly Sabbath the Jews ARE indeed right. And we know they are right BECAUSE we have checked up on the facts, not because we somehow trust the Jews "on faith".

In the same way:

We also need to check up and make sure that the Jews faithfully abide by God's instructions in Exodus 12:2 that "THIS NEW MOON" IS ALWAYS THE FIRST NEW MOON OF THE YEAR TO US. That is not something God would want us to accept "on faith" without making the slightest effort to verify the facts.

By the very fact that "the new moon" and "the month" are exactly the same word in Hebrew it means the following:

- 1) IF "this month" starts in the winter, THEN "this new moon" is also in the winter.
- 2) IF "this month" starts in the spring, THEN "this new moon" is also in the spring.
- 3) YOU SIMPLY CANNOT HAVE "this month" starting in the winter, but "this new moon" somehow being in the spring.
- 4) Likewise, YOU SIMPLY CANNOT HAVE "this new moon" fall into the winter, but somehow have "this month" in the spring. It is THE START of a month that determines which season that month is in and which season it belongs to.

The Hebrew word "chodesh" simply does not allow you to divorce "the month" from "the new moon".

So let's now look for further clues in the Bible that will show us exactly when God wants "this new moon" and "this month" to occur.

THE NAME OF "THIS NEW MOON"

The month and new moon God was singling out in Exodus 12:2 is actually named three times in the Book of Exodus and once in Deuteronomy. It is called by the Hebrew name "Abib". For example:

Thou shalt keep the feast of unleavened bread: (thou shalt eat unleavened bread seven days, as I commanded thee, in the time appointed of THE MONTH ABIB; for in it thou camest out from Egypt: and none shall appear before me empty:) (Exodus 23:15 AV)

The other three verses where the name "Abib" is used are: Exodus 13:4; Exodus 34:18 and Deuteronomy 16:1.

Most of us have at one time or another been told that the word "Abib" means "a green ear of grain". But

that is simply NOT CORRECT! I have explained this at length in my short article titled "HOW DO 'GREEN EARS OF CORN' AFFECT THE START OF THE YEAR?" The point is that the translators provided the word "green" when they translated "abib" in Leviticus 2:14 without any justification at all! And as a result of that mistranslation people have assumed that "abib" refers to YOUNG, IMMATURE grain. But that is simply not correct. Let's briefly examine the only text that seems to imply that "abib" could mean "GREEN ears of grain".

And if thou offer a meat offering of thy firstfruits unto the LORD, thou shalt offer for the meat offering of thy firstfruits ABIB ("green ears") OF CORN DRIED BY THE FIRE, even CORN BEATEN OUT OF FULL EARS. (Leviticus 2:14 AV)

How on earth can anyone POSSIBLY infer some "UNRIPE" grains into Leviticus 2:14? Can't we see that this verse is speaking about grain that has ALREADY been dried by the fire? Grain that has ALREADY been beaten out of the ears?

How can anyone possibly infer that Leviticus 2:14 is speaking about UNRIPE ears of grain? Do we understand that "corn beaten out of FULL EARS" and thereafter DRIED BY THE FIRE must obviously refer to ripe and mature grain? There is no way that Leviticus 2:14 is speaking about immature and unripe ears of grain.

It should be quite clear that the word "green" in Leviticus 2:14 is totally inappropriate. This verse is plainly speaking about dried grain that had been harvested and then "beaten" out of the ears. It is NOT speaking about "immature ears of corn" at all, as the translators implied by adding the word "green" into the English text.

So "abib" refers to "ears of grain", but WITHOUT implying that those ears of grain are still young and immature. Leviticus 2:14 uses the word "abib" in a way where it must OBVIOUSLY refer to fully mature grains. You simply don't beat out immature grains and then try to dry them by the fire. And you certainly would never ever complete this beating out process and this drying process IN THE WINTER, BEFORE THE FIRST DAY OF SPRING!

Leviticus 2:14 is a vital passage if we hope to clearly understand what THE BIBLE means by "abib". People who are looking for immature young plants before the end of winter to show them when the time of "abib" is are clearly ignoring how God inspired the word "abib" to be used in Leviticus 2:14.

Anyway, Exodus 23:15 means that God identifies "THIS NEW MOON" as being equated with "ears of grain", and Leviticus 2:14 equates "abib" with MATURE ears of grain! Read the article I have referred to above for more details.

Now here are some quotations from past literature published by the Church:

1) Good News June 1961 Vol. X, Number 6 article "The TRUE Reason WHY the Jews Rejected Christ" by Herman L. Hoeh

"Also, Jesus and the Galileans observed Passover on Nisan 14, the correct day. The Jews in Judaea celebrated it one day late, on the night of the Feast, the 15th of Nisan or Abib. Today the

Jews do not really keep any passover. They observe only the Feast. This is the real reason why the Jews as a nation forgot their God!"

Notice Dr. Hoeh's clear admission that "TODAY THE JEWS DO NOT REALLY KEEP ANY PASSOVER"!

[Comment: This quotation has nothing to do with when the month Abib is to start, but the unequivocal admission that the Jews today don't really keep ANY kind of Passover was too good to pass up when I came across it. Keep this quotation in mind when some people want to convince you that the Passover should be at the end of the 14th.]

2) Good News November 1957 Vol. VI, Number 11 article "Why AMERICA Is Cursed!" by Herbert W. Armstrong

"People today don't even know what the month "Abib" is. It is God's first month of the year, but it is not the same as the pagan January. IT BEGINS IN THE SPRING, when new life is budding forth in nature. But the nation has deserted God's calendar, and accepted the pagan calendar."

Notice Mr. Armstrong's statement that Abib "BEGINS IN THE SPRING"!

3) PERSONAL CORRESPONDENCE DEPARTMENT Letter 013

"The true SACRED year of the Bible begins with the month of Nisan (also called Abib), IN THE SPRING (Exodus 12:2). The sacred year portrays God's great plan."

Notice again the statement that "the true sacred year BEGINS ... IN THE SPRING".

4) MYSTERY OF THE AGES by Herbert W. Armstrong 1985 Hardbound Edition

" The final plague followed the sacrifice of the Passover on the 14th day of the first month of God's sacred calendar -- STARTING IN THE SPRING. The Israelites went out of Egypt during the night part of the 15th. They reached the Red Sea."

Notice again Mr. Armstrong's comment (and he wrote this very shortly before his death) that the first month of "God's sacred calendar" STARTS IN THE SPRING.

5) HOW OFTEN SHOULD WE PARTAKE OF THE LORD'S SUPPER? by Herbert W. Armstrong , 1952, 1974 edition

"On the 10th day of the first month (the Hebrew, or sacred year, BEGAN WITH THE NEW MOON IN THE SPRING, near the equinox, not midwinter), they were told to take a young lamb without spot or blemish, a type of Christ, the Lamb of God."

Notice again Mr. Armstrong's statement that the Hebrew year began with THE NEW MOON IN THE SPRING.

6) Pagan Holidays -- or God's Holy Days -- Which? by Herbert W. Armstrong 1976 edition

"And so, on delivering His people from Egypt (sin), God straightened them out as to time. And, as the beginning of our salvation was wrought by Christ's death on the cross, so God said, "This month [in the spring] shall be unto you the beginning of months ..." (Ex. 12:2). "

Notice Mr. Armstrong's parenthetical comment that the first month is to be IN THE SPRING.

7) THE BIBLE STORY VOLUME 5 1987

"Today many churches have summer "camp meetings" instead of observing the Festival of Tabernacles in the fall. They keep Easter instead of Passover, Whitsunday instead of Pentecost. They celebrate the

beginning of a new year in the winter, whereas God tells us that THE NEW YEAR BEGINS IN THE SPRING."

Again notice the statement that God tells us that the new year BEGINS IN THE SPRING.

8) AMBASSADOR COLLEGE BIBLE CORRESPONDENCE COURSE LESSON 33

(1964, 1965, 1969) GOLGOTHA -- the Place of the Skull

"They were forced to work seven days a week and to adapt themselves to the Egyptian calendar and holidays. Therefore, God had to reveal that the month of Abib -- THE FIRST MONTH IN THE SPRING of God's Calendar -- was to be the BEGINNING of the sacred year."

Again the comment made is that the first month is to be IN THE SPRING.

9) Good News March 1953 article "God's Sacred Calendar" by Kenneth C. Herrmann, page 8, column I

"The first day of this month [he is speaking about Abib] -- which occurs AT THE BEGINNING OF SPRING -- then would be the first day of the year."

Notice Kenneth Herrmann's statement that the first month is to start AT THE BEGINNING OF SPRING.

10) Good News February 1957 article "Which Is The Calendar Christ Used?" by Kenneth C. Herrmann, page 4, bottom of column III. The subheading in bold type reads:

"SPRING BEGINS THE SACRED YEAR"

11) Same article, page 5

"The first day of this month [he is speaking about Abib] -- which occurs AT THE BEGINNING OF SPRING -- then would be the first day of the new year." (Kenneth Herrmann's own emphasis. Note that here he has added the word "new" in the expression "the new year".)

These two quotations from Kenneth Herrmann's 1957 article state unequivocally that the year is supposed to start AT THE BEGINNING OF SPRING!

To summarize:

It is quite clear that the name "Abib" means "ears of grain". It is equally clear from the above quotations that the Church has repeatedly stated that the year BEGINS IN THE SPRING. The Church has NEVER stated that God wants the year to start in the winter. We have NEVER taught that.

This is in spite of the fact that we actually misunderstood the word "abib" to mean "GREEN ears of grain", thereby implying an immature state. When we understand that "abib" simply means "ears of grain", without implying any immaturity to the grain, THEN it should become even more obvious that mature grain is certainly not available in winter. So had the Church understood Leviticus 2:14 correctly 50 years ago, then the case for "the year must start in the spring" would have been even stronger.

Now let's look at some facts about the present Jewish calendar.

FACTS ABOUT THE PRESENT JEWISH CALENDAR

The Jewish calendar falls into a pattern of "19-year cycles"; i.e. every 19 years the dates for Holy Days basically repeat themselves, with a gradual shift of everything going to 1 day later in the seasons for every 216 years (or about 9 days later in the seasons for every 2000 years).

So now let's examine in which season the present Jewish calendar has started the year. First let's examine the time when this fixed calendar was instituted by Hillel II and then let's look at 19-year cycles in our age.

According to the present Jewish calendar:

Cycle #217 was 344 - 362 AD

This is the cycle during which Hillel II established the present fixed calendar.

Cycle #218 was 363 - 381 AD

Cycle #219 was 382 - 400 AD

Cycle #303 was 1978 - 1996 AD

Cycle #304 will be 1997 - 2015 AD

Now keep in mind that the Jewish postponement rules, when they come into effect, always place the start of the year one day or two days LATER in the seasons. So without these postponement rules some years might start one day or two days earlier. This becomes especially important when without the postponement rules the year might be placed to start on the last day of winter, but with the postponement rules it then starts on the first day of spring, thus making it look better. But keep in mind that the reasoning underlying the postponement rules has absolutely nothing to do with wanting the year to start in the right season; they are purely concerned with THE DAY OF THE WEEK, wanting to avoid "awkward days" for Atonement, etc.

Here are the facts:

1) For cycle #217 (344 - 362 AD) TEN YEARS STARTED IN THE WINTER! They were the years: 346, 348, 349, 351, 354, 356, 357, 359, 360 and 362.

2) For cycle #218 (363 - 381 AD) TEN YEARS STARTED IN THE WINTER! They were the years: 365, 367, 368, 370, 373, 375, 376, 378, 379 and 381.

3) For cycle #219 (382 - 400 AD) TEN YEARS STARTED IN THE WINTER! They were the years: 384, 386, 387, 389, 392, 394, 395, 397, 398 and 400.

4) For cycle #303 (1978 - 1996 AD) FIVE YEARS STARTED IN THE WINTER! They were the years: 1980, 1983, 1988, 1991 and 1994.

5) For cycle #304 (1997 - 2015 AD) FIVE YEARS ARE SCHEDULED TO START IN THE WINTER! They are the years: 1999, 2002, 2007, 2010 and 2013.

The above data demonstrates clearly how the passage of over 1600 years (i.e. from cycle #217 to cycle #303) has placed all the Holy Days in the year from 7-8 days later in the seasons. The result is that after these 1600 years since the time of Hillel II, today ONLY FIVE YEARS start in the winter.

I suppose "the good news" is that another 1800 years from now EVERY YEAR WILL START IN THE SPRING (except for the occasional year when 'no postponements' still cause a year to start on the last day of winter [e.g. 3742 AD and 3856 AD], though all other years in between those two years are scheduled to start in the spring). However, "the bad news" is that very few amongst us are likely to have 1800 years available for waiting for that to be the case!

Anyway, let's get back to examining the above facts.

When Hillel II instituted his fixed calendar, he placed OVER HALF of the years to start in the winter (10 out of every 19 years). He caused the year to start more often in the winter than in the spring! Clearly this is something the people who wrote the quotations I presented earlier (i.e. Mr. Herbert W. Armstrong, Kenneth Herrmann, and the authors of the Correspondence Course and the Bible Story and the PCD letter, etc.) did not know!

Would Mr. Armstrong really have said: "Abib begins IN THE SPRING" if he had known that over 50% of the time it actually started IN THE WINTER when Hillel II first instituted it? Would Mr. Armstrong have said this if he had grasped that even TODAY the Jewish year still starts in the winter over 25% of the time? Even today the Jewish calendar still starts more than one in four years in the winter, and that is with the postponements being applied. Without postponements it would be at times 6 years out of 19 years that would still start in the winter.

Let's now analyze the data we have seen.

WHAT WAS GOD'S REAL INTENTION?

When God told Israel:

"THIS 'CHODESH', THIS NEW MOON, WHICH I WANT YOU TO IDENTIFY AS 'ABIB', i.e. AS EARS OF GRAIN, IS TO BE THE FIRST 'CHODESH', THE FIRST NEW MOON OF THE YEAR TO YOU"

... what did God mean?

The answer to this question depends on YOUR ATTITUDE!

IF you approach this question totally on its own merits, and without feeling any necessity to have to defend any particular position, THEN you will reach the same answer that Mr. Armstrong and Kenneth Herrmann and the authors of the Bible Story and the Correspondence Course lessons reached, that the first month of the year must start IN THE EARLY PART OF SPRING!

But IF you approach this question from your preconceived position of having to defend the present Jewish calendar at all costs, THEN YOU WILL ARGUE that "it's okay with God AS LONG AS AT LEAST THE PASSOVER is in the spring". You will not be approaching this question on its own merits. No, you will INTERPRET God's instructions to fit in with whatever the Jews have done with their calendar. And you will also overlook that Hillel II placed EVEN THE PASSOVER INTO WINTER FOR 3 YEARS IN EVERY 19 YEARS! (In cycle #218 this was in the years: 368 = March 19, 376 = March 20, 379 = March 18.) Even as late as 854 AD (when the equinox was on March 17) Hillel's fixed calendar STILL PLACED THE PASSOVER INTO WINTER (i.e. on March 16)!

IF you approach this question with the desire to defend the present Jewish calendar, then you will overlook that FOR A PERIOD OF 500 YEARS Hillel II placed the Passover into winter in a repeating

pattern of years. You will accept this even though you yourself today would be totally unwilling to ever keep the Passover in the winter. You will overlook that it took over 500 years for just this one major flaw "to work itself out of the system"!

So back to our question:

What REALLY was God's desire and intention when HE said: "THIS MONTH and THIS NEW MOON shall be the first month and the first new moon of the year to you"?

Did God really mean:

"It's okay by Me as long as you have at least SOME years starting in the spring"?

Is GOD aware of the fact that there are FOUR distinct seasons in the year? Did HE have anything to do with instituting those four seasons? Is GOD aware of the four 'turning points', the four 'tekufoth', in the year? Does GOD want certain things to take place in certain seasons? WHY did GOD tell them that this new moon was to be known as "ears of grain"? Is GOD going to be CONSISTENT, or will GOD leave things up to chance, sometimes having the year start in one season and sometimes having it start in the other season? What REALLY is God's will in this regard?

All of the early authors in this present age of the Church (i.e. Mr. Herbert W. Armstrong, Kenneth Herrmann, writers in the 1950's, etc.) came to exactly the same conclusions when they examined the relevant Scriptures, THAT GOD WANTS THE YEAR TO START IN THE EARLY SPRING! As long as they did not feel the pressure to defend a certain position, they always reached this same conclusion!

It is only AFTER they realized that the present Jewish calendar actually does not comply with this requirement that they changed their explanations, interpreting the Scriptures to accommodate the Jewish violations of the PLAIN AND OBVIOUS AND INDISPUTABLE INTENT BY GOD for the year to start in the spring! I don't think that Mr. Armstrong EVER realized this problem, and so he still wrote in 1985 in the "Mystery of the Ages", just a few months before his death, the quote we saw earlier: "the first month of God's sacred calendar -- starting in the spring". He didn't really grasp, I believe, that 25% of the time what he called "God's sacred calendar" actually STILL begins in the winter. And that calendar is not, and never has been, "sacred"!

Let's look at one of "the arguments" people present to justify the present Jewish calendar.

HOW DO WE KNOW WHEN SPRING IS SUPPOSED TO START?

One of the corniest arguments I have heard used in an attempt to justify the present Jewish calendar transgressing clear biblical instructions goes as follows:

"How do you know when autumn starts and when spring starts? In our area (e.g. anywhere in the northern United States) winter starts by the end of November. We even sometimes have snow before the end of the Feast of Tabernacles. And we sometimes still have snow by the beginning of April; so for us spring starts far later than March 21. And what about the seasons being reversed in the southern hemisphere? etc., etc."

My reply to this is:

Who has made YOU the judge of when the seasons start and end? Are we going to look at what is right in YOUR eyes (e.g. Judges 21:25) or are we going to try to establish what is right in GOD'S eyes (e.g.

Isaiah 55:8)?

Where do you get the idea from that the start of the season of winter is determined by "when it gets cold"? Is it all of a sudden the season of winter because some part of the state of Oregon had an unexpected snow blizzard in August? Is it all of a sudden the season of summer because there is some unexpected hot weather in February in Texas? The seasons are not determined by the temperatures that may prevail.

THE CAUSE for the seasons is the tilt of the Earth's axis. This tilt is about 23 and one half degrees from the vertical. Without this tilt we would not have any seasons. It is the Earth's revolving around the sun once every year combined with this tilt of 23 and one half degrees from the vertical that produces our four seasons. Since this is THE CAUSE for the four seasons, it follows that the start of each of those four seasons must be marked by some specific point in the Earth's annual revolution around the sun. This is independent of whether YOUR area may have snow or a heatwave at those specific points in the Earth's journey around the sun.

And this is a well-known and recognized fact.

For example, Webster's Dictionary defines the four seasons as follows:

Spring: the season between winter and summer comprising in the northern hemisphere usu. the months of March, April and May or as reckoned astronomically extending FROM THE MARCH EQUINOX TO THE JUNE SOLSTICE.

Summer: the season between spring and autumn comprising in the northern hemisphere usu. the months of June, July, and August or as reckoned astronomically extending FROM THE JUNE SOLSTICE TO THE SEPTEMBER EQUINOX.

Autumn: the season between summer and winter comprising in the northern hemisphere usu. the months of September, October, and November or as reckoned astronomically extending FROM THE SEPTEMBER EQUINOX TO THE DECEMBER SOLSTICE.

Winter: the season between autumn and spring comprising in the northern hemisphere usu. the months of December, January, and February or as reckoned astronomically extending FROM THE DECEMBER SOLSTICE TO THE MARCH EQUINOX.

The seasons are determined NOT by how hot or cold it is on any given day; that's what we call "weather". The seasons are determined by the precise position of the Earth in its path around the sun. The seasons all start, as Webster's Dictionary also makes clear, at either an equinox or at a solstice.

These definitions for "the seasons" are well recognized in our modern world. But it goes much further than this. After all, we are not really looking for how the seasons may be defined TODAY, in our context. We are really looking for how GOD wants us to define the seasons, right? Remember Isaiah 55:8, we want to know GOD'S THOUGHTS, right?

So let's see what God tells us.

HOW THE SEASONS ARE DEFINED IN THE BIBLE

It is a waste of time to argue about "this is what spring means to me, and this is how I understand autumn", etc. Let's see what THE BIBLE has to tell us.

Let's look again at Exodus 34:22.

And thou shalt observe the feast of weeks, of the firstfruits of wheat harvest, and the feast of ingathering at the year's end. {year's end: Heb. REVOLUTION OF THE YEAR} (Exodus 34:22 AV)

The expression here translated as "at the end of the year" is "at the TEKUFAH of the year". This word "tekufah" refers to: a coming round, a circuit, a turning point, etc. It is formed from the Hebrew verb "naqaph", which means: to go around, to compass about, etc. Here are two verses where this verb "naqaph" is used.

And ye shall compass the city, all ye men of war, and go ROUND ABOUT (Hebrew naqaph) the city once. Thus shalt thou do six days. (Joshua 6:3 AV)

So the ark of the LORD compassed the city, going ABOUT IT (Hebrew naqaph) once: and they came into the camp, and lodged in the camp. (Joshua 6:11 AV)

These verses are from the account when Israel went around the city of Jericho before the walls fell down. This should illustrate sufficiently that the root word of tekufah does indeed mean "to go around in a circuit".

So back to Exodus 34:22.

It is well known that already in antiquity people were familiar with the two solstices and the two equinoxes in every year. They could be pinpointed by the movements of a shadow in the course of a year, noting the positions of the shadow at sunrise and at sunset for every day of the year. And at the two solstices there are distinct TURNINGS, the movements of the shadows change direction.

So when GOD speaks about "the TEKUFAH of the year" it is very clear, beyond any question, that GOD was speaking about one of the four "turning points" in the year. The context makes clear that this has to be "the tekufah OF TISHRI" in Jewish terminology, which is a reference to the autumn equinox, and ALSO to THE SEASON of autumn (because it starts with that equinox). This fact (that the tekufah of Tishri is equal to the season of autumn, starting with the autumn equinox) is recognized in many passages in the Talmud. It is equally clear that "the tekufah of Nisan" is a reference to the season of spring, starting with the spring equinox.

So here is the point!

Even if someone wants to argue about what constitutes "the season of spring" or "the season of autumn" in the English language as applied to our various geographic locations, it is quite clear that GOD IN THE BIBLE was equating the season of autumn (in Exodus 34:22) with THE TURNING POINT, with THE EQUINOX! This is clear from the meaning of the Hebrew word "tekufah". It follows that if God uses one equinox to identify the start of ONE season (i.e. autumn), that therefore THE OTHER SEASONS must of necessity also start at the other three "turning points", the remaining equinox plus the two solstices.

So the only possibility is that GOD views spring as starting with the spring equinox, the spring "turning point", the spring "tekufah".

What "spring" and "autumn" may mean to you or to me is not important one way or the other. Nor does the area where we live (in a cold climate like the northern United States or a hot climate like the Middle

East) make a difference to these definitions for the seasons. Nor does it make a difference as to whether we live in the northern hemisphere or whether we live in the southern hemisphere. All that matters is what GOD said and what GOD intended.

It is quite clear that:

1) God was speaking about a specific new moon in the year, by using the expression "THIS new moon" (or "THIS month").

2) God was speaking to the people of Israel in a specific geographic location, the Middle East.

3) For the people God was speaking to in that specific part of the world (i.e. the people of Israel), God identified that new moon with the name "ears of grain", an obvious reference to the season of spring. This does not mean that "that specific new moon" has to be the time of "ears of grain" for other parts of the world (e.g. Finland, Norway, Alaska, Chile, Australia, South Africa, etc.).

4) In Exodus 34:22 God identified "the season of autumn" by a clear reference to the autumn equinox, one of the four "turning points" in the year. This information is also readily available in many Jewish reference works. God identifies the seasons as each starting with one of the four "turning days".

5) Whether in YOUR part of the world "this new moon" also happens to be "the time of ears of grain" or not is immaterial. "THIS NEW MOON" is to be "the first month of the year"; and whether you choose to move further north in the world (into Scandinavia or the northern United States or into Canada), or whether you choose to move further south in the world (to Egypt or Southern Africa or Singapore or Australia or South America, etc.) THIS NEW MOON is to remain "the first new moon of the year".

6) God does not expect us to accept "on faith" that the Jews still have the Sabbath on the seventh day of the week. This is something God expects us to prove and to verify! And at no stage has the Church EVER discouraged us from "proving" that the Jewish Sabbath is indeed the seventh day of the week. Likewise, God expects us to PROVE that the Jewish calendar is in full compliance with God's COMMAND that "THIS is the first new moon of the year", and the Church should NEVER attempt to discourage anyone from examining the Jewish calendar for compliance with God's commands.

7) A lack of compliance with God's commands should NEVER be overlooked! If something goes against God's clearly stated commands, then it always becomes a matter of Acts 5:29, that we must obey God rather than adhere to human traditions.

8) The fact that 14 years in every 19-year cycle of the present Jewish calendar start in the spring, while 5 years in every cycle still start in the winter, is an inconsistency! Such an inconsistency implies that it doesn't really matter in which season the year starts. And IF it is acceptable for 5 years (or at Hillel's time for 10 years!) to start in the winter, then there is absolutely no reason why EVERY YEAR couldn't start in the winter. If the year can SOMETIMES start in the winter WHY could it not ALWAYS start in the winter? And IF it is okay for the year to start ONE DAY into winter, then where would you possibly draw the line: at 2 days or at 4 days or at 14 days into winter (as in 398 AD) or at 30 days into winter? UNLESS you have a clear-cut rule that "the year may start THIS EARLY AND NOT A DAY EARLIER", you don't have any guidelines AT ALL! Without such a clear cut-off date it becomes a very subjective matter (e.g. I feel it should be this, but you feel it should be that, etc.).

THE ONLY POSSIBLE CUT-OFF DATE ANYWHERE ON THE HORIZON IS "THE TEKUFAH", THE TURNING-DAY, THE EQUINOX! It is the only objective date available for the purpose of starting the year. Any other date would be totally arbitrary and subjective.

For a further discussion of the meaning of "tekufah" see my article on that subject. That article presents extensive documentation from the Talmud, which makes the meaning of "tekufah" abundantly clear.

In conclusion: There can be no doubt that God INTENDED "THIS NEW MOON" to be in the SPRING of the northern hemisphere. This is also apparent from the name "Abib". This is also the conclusion ALL of the writers in the Church came to as long as they did not perceive the need to defend a certain position. The fact that Hillel II started over 50% of all years in the winter and that he even placed the Passover repeatedly into winter should be a real shocker for most people who are desirous of obeying God's instructions for the calendar.

And while we can find many statements where Mr. Herbert W. Armstrong freely said that the year is to start in the spring, there is not one single statement where Mr. Armstrong EVER indicated that he felt that the year could POSSIBLY "start in the winter"! He just never said anything of the kind! Yet even today the Jewish calendar still starts the year in the winter over 25% of the time. For that matter, while the Church has freely and repeatedly stated that the year is to start in the spring, where has THE CHURCH ever publicly stated that it is permissible for the year to start in the winter, and then provided PROOF for such a claim?

So when should the year start?

THE NEW MOON for the first month of the year must be AT OR AFTER THE SPRING EQUINOX! If a new moon occurs one day before the spring equinox (i.e. on the last day of winter), THEN the following new moon will be the first new moon of spring and THAT new moon will have to be the start of the first month. That is what God INTENDED in Exodus 12:2.

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