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SCRIPTURAL REQUIREMENTS FOR THE CALENDAR

In all of the discussions about the calendar it seems that the actual Scriptures that apply to the calendar are hardly ever mentioned. In my article titled "SCRIPTURES THAT HAVE BEEN USED AS A BASIS FOR ACCEPTING THE PRESENT JEWISH CALENDAR", located in the Calendar Articles directory, I have examined all the Scriptures that have been used by the Church of God from 1940 till 2000 in its defence of the present Jewish calendar.

That examination is very revealing, showing how the defence has moved almost totally away from any Scriptures that actually do apply to the calendar. Instead the focus has changed towards being directed almost exclusively on faith, accepting the Jewish calendar on faith, in spite of open conflicts with known biblical requirements. Demanding evidence to prove that the Jewish calendar actually complies with scriptural requirements is equated with a lack of faith.

In this short article I want to present in one place all the Scriptures that do have a bearing on the calendar. Here they are:

Genesis 1:14-16

And God said, Let there be LIGHTS IN THE FIRMAMENT of the heaven to divide the day from the night; and let them be for SIGNS, and for SEASONS, and for DAYS, and YEARS: And let them be for lights in the firmament of the heaven to give light upon the earth: and it was so. And God made TWO GREAT LIGHTS; THE GREATER light to rule the day, and THE LESSER light to rule the night: he made the stars also. (Genesis 1:14-16 AV)

God is here speaking about TWO great lights, an obvious reference to THE SUN and THE MOON. These are the two that are stated as having some kind of "RULE". The Hebrew here translated as the verb "to rule" is in fact the Hebrew NOUN "memshalah", which means "dominion, power, government". In order to establish exactly WHAT the sun and the moon were to have a certain amount of power over, we need to look at THE FIVE PURPOSES that God has spelled out for these lights.

These five God-ordained purposes are:

- A) to DIVIDE the day from the night
- B) for SIGNS
- C) for SEASONS
- D) for DAYS
- E) for YEARS

Let's look at these five purposes more closely.

- A) TO DIVIDE THE DAY FROM THE NIGHT

The division between the day and night must be controlled by one or both of these lights. It is in fact controlled by THE SUN! The "day" part of a full 24-hour day is defined by when THE SUN IS VISIBLE. In other words, the "day" part of that 24-hour period STARTS when the sun rises in the morning, and it ENDS when the sun has set.

This statement here in Genesis 1:14 already tells us that with God A DAY must start with either sunrise or else with sunset. It CANNOT start "with darkness" because then neither the sun nor the moon is actually exerting any influence over that DIVISION. The moon is simply not consistently available to have any influence in this decision; therefore it must be exclusively THE SUN that plays the deciding role here.

The sun only starts its rule "when it comes up in the morning", and it ceases to rule the moment it goes down in the evening.

From God's PREVIOUS statements about "THE EVENING AND THE MORNING WERE THE ... DAY" we understand that it must be SUNSET, rather than sunrise, with which God marks THE START of a 24-hour day.

B) FOR SIGNS

The Hebrew word here translated as "signs" is derived from a verb that means "to agree" or "to consent". In other words, God tells us that these two lights (the sun and the moon) are to help us achieve AGREEMENT ABOUT SOMETHING! We have often made the point that "a sign" helps us TO IDENTIFY SOMETHING!

So let's put this together. God is telling us with this statement that these two lights are "for signs" that THEY AGREE IN WHAT THEY IDENTIFY! What the sun "identifies" will AGREE with what the moon "identifies". There can never be a conflict between what is identified by the sun and what is identified by the moon. They can never produce CONFLICTING "SIGNS". They must work together towards the same goal. The sun CONSENTS to what the moon "identifies", and the moon CONSENTS to what the sun "identifies". But the sun is THE GREATER; it must have a FOUNDATIONAL influence on which the influence of the moon is then built. The moon derives all its light from the sun, remember? It is the sun that is more important than the moon.

This statement about being "for signs" tells us that they will work together to achieve agreement. They will IDENTIFY the next three items listed.

C) FOR SEASONS

The Hebrew word here translated as "seasons" is "mow'ed", and it has NOTHING AT ALL TO DO WITH "SEASONS"! Nothing at all! This is a very unfortunate mistranslation. The word really means "meeting together, gatherings, assemblies", etc. This is the word that God uses to refer to commanded assembling before Him on the Holy Days and on the weekly Sabbath Days.

BUT IT HAS NOTHING TO DO WITH "SEASONS"!

So with this statement God is telling us that THE DAYS FOR ASSEMBLING BEFORE HIM would also be controlled by these two lights. All the "mow'ed" days of Leviticus chapter 23 are controlled by these two lights. The moon pinpoints the months for these days, and the sun determines when those days start and end.

D) FOR DAYS

These two lights determine when days start and end. Where the previous statement about "dividing" the day from the night referred to the most basic spheres of influence of these two lights (sun by day, moon by night), THIS STATEMENT here now refers to DETERMINING WHEN DAYS START AND END.

It is quite obvious that the moon is totally unsuitable for that task because at times it is totally invisible for more than 24 hours. Therefore this particular task must be accomplished by the sun without any input from the moon.

So when the sun sets, one day comes to an end and the next day starts. It is the SUN and not twilight that controls the end of a day, and therefore the immediate start of the next day.

E) FOR YEARS

NOW WE HAVE COME TO THE CALENDAR!

The determination of years is to be controlled by these two lights, the sun and the moon. Years are NOT to be controlled by only the sun or by only the moon. They are to be controlled by BOTH of these lights working in agreement with one another. But they are NOT "equal partners" in that process; one is greater than the other. It is THE SUN that provides all of the light for the moon, and without the sun the moon would always be invisible.

Now the only way you can have a calendar that is luni-solar is if the solar year starting with an equinox or with a solstice is THE FOUNDATION for such a calendar. If you do not have the solar year with an equinox or a solstice as the foundation, it is IMPOSSIBLE to have anything that you could call a luni-solar calendar. Without the equinoxes you can have a lunar calendar, but you simply cannot have a luni-solar calendar.

This is probably the most basic point we need to understand: without the equinox there can never be a luni-solar calendar. It is THE RECOGNITION of, and THE COMPLIANCE with, the equinox that turns a lunar calendar into a luni-solar calendar.

People who acknowledge that the calendar is "luni-solar", need to recognize very clearly that they are appealing to a calendar system which is based on the recognition of the equinoxes and the solstices! THAT IS ABSOLUTELY BASIC, LIKE "CALENDAR 101"!

Let's get back to this statement in Genesis 1:14. God did not make it so that the sun would EVER play second fiddle to the moon! Think of the places where both of these lights are mentioned, and without fail the sun is always more important. God wants us to know in an unmistakable way that THE SUN COMES FIRST, AND THE MOON COMES SECOND!

So when both of them, the sun and the moon, are to be used to determine "YEARS", then it cannot be otherwise but that THE SUN COMES FIRST!

The sun simply MUST be the foundation for the year. It cannot be otherwise! And the sun can ONLY be the foundation of the year IF the year has a very clearly identifiable starting point in the solar cycle, before which a year can NEVER start. The sun can only be the foundation for the yearly cycle if AN EQUINOX (or a solstice) is recognized as that starting point for the year. Otherwise the sun simply does NOT RULE in the process of determining the year. And God does NOT want the sun to play second fiddle to the moon.

But since God wants each month of the year to start with a new moon, THE ONLY POSSIBILITY is that the first month of every year must start with the new moon within the first 30 days of the solar year, i.e.

within the first 30 days following the spring equinox.

IF THE YEAR COULD START WITH A NEW MOON BEFORE THE EQUINOX, THEN THE RULE OF THE SUN OVER THE MOON HAS BEEN DESTROYED!

THE MOON has become more important than the sun! THE MOON decides the start of the year with a TOTAL DISREGARD FOR THE SUN! It doesn't (supposedly) matter that the sun has not yet completed its circuit; THE MOON has decided that it is time to start a new year. The moon RULES as to when the year starts, and the sun has had its RULE taken away from it. THE LESSER light has MORE RULE over the year than THE GREATER light.

Can you understand what I am explaining?

Genesis 1:14-16 requires the moon to be subject to the sun, rather than the sun being subject to the moon. In THE PERFECT YEAR the sun and the moon will always start the year on the same day; every year will start with a new moon on the spring equinox. The sun and the moon will then be "perfect signs"; they will be in perfect agreement. But until then the moon has to take second place to the sun. It is more important that the sun has completed its circuit than deciding that, because 12 new moons have passed, therefore a new year is to start.

IT IS THE SUN THAT DETERMINES THE SEQUENCE OF INTERCALATING A 13TH NEW MOON INTO THE YEARLY CYCLE! THAT SHOULD BE SELF-EVIDENT!

That is part of the sun's "RULE"!

Let's now look at the next Scripture that applies to the calendar.

Exodus 12:2

This month shall be unto you the beginning of months: it shall be the first month of the year to you. (Ex 12:2 AV)

The word "chodesh", which is here translated as "month", really means "NEW MOON". And so a correct translation of this verse should read:

This NEW MOON shall be unto you the beginning of NEW MOONS: it shall be the first NEW MOON of the year to you. (Ex 12:2 AV)

In this verse in the Hebrew text God calls Nisan "ROSH HA SHANAH". So any calendar that calls any OTHER month "Rosh Ha Shanah" doesn't meet this "requirement", does it? Some people may wish to argue for Tishri 1, the day the Jews refer to as "Rosh Ha Shanah". But understand that they will be disagreeing with GOD and not with me. Check the Hebrew of this verse for yourself. God clearly refers to Nisan as "the head of the year".

This verse is a requirement for THE TIME OF YEAR within the solar year, at which God wants the year to start. From this verse it is ABSOLUTELY CLEAR, no reservations of any kind, that it is indeed God's intention for the year to ALWAYS, not just 75% of the time, start in the spring, which means that it is to NEVER start before the spring equinox. It is not a matter of that "month" having to be in the spring; it is really a matter of that "NEW MOON" having to be in the spring. And the new moon is at the very start of the month.

Here is the next Scripture that applies to the calendar.

ISAIAH 1:14

YOUR NEW MOONS and your appointed feasts MY SOUL HATES: they are a trouble unto me; I am weary to bear them. (Isaiah 1:14 AV)

This verse must obviously mean SOMETHING! God is clearly expressing INTENSE DISPLEASURE about something!

The Hebrew here for "new moons" is "chodesh", and the Hebrew for "appointed feasts" is "mow'ed". Now the only Old Testament Hebrew word that could possibly be used to designate "the calendar" is the word "chodesh". The context in which "chodesh" is used will indicate whether it should refer to the actual new moon, to the month, or to the calendar, a year being nothing more than a collection of either 12 or 13 "chodesh"s.

In Exodus 12:2 we understand that God was speaking about THE CALENDAR, yet in that verse "the calendar" is only identified by references to two things:

- the word "chodesh", which means first and foremost "new moon", and then by extension it also means "month";
- the word "shanah", which means "year".

In Exodus 12:2 God has very clearly used the word "chodesh" to identify THE CALENDAR.

Now in Isaiah 1:1 God addresses JUDAH (i.e. the vision was "concerning Judah"). So this chapter is addressed to the Jews. "Vain customs" are referred to by God ("vain oblations" in Isaiah 1:13), but idolatry is not really mentioned in this chapter.

So Isaiah 1:14 is NOT speaking about idolatrous practices which the Jews supposedly engaged in at the new moons. The emphasis in this verse is really on "YOUR new moons" and "YOUR religious days". But yet it is speaking about SOMETHING that GOD WITHOUT RESERVATION "HATES"! Recognizing that the whole Book of Isaiah is largely devoted to prophecies for the end time makes the interpretation of "idolatrous practices at the new moon times" even more remote and more unlikely. God hates the Jews' "new moons" AT THE END TIME!

In the absence of any references to pagan idolatrous customs and practices, the only alternative is that God is here addressing THE JEWISH CALENDAR! That calendar embodies some ENORMOUS INSULTS FOR GOD! For a start, the Jewish "chodesh's" don't actually have anything to do with the REAL "chodesh's" as they occur month after month. This is very vividly demonstrated on the page where I analyse the Jewish calendar for the 121 years from 1900 to 2020.

In Isaiah 1:14 God is expressing hatred for both, the Jewish calendar, and also all the Jewish religious days. They are not of God; they trouble God and God is getting tired of putting up with these things. The Jewish custom of referring to Tishri 1 as "Rosh ha Shanah" is also included here in the things God hates, because it is a slap in the face for God's plain statement in Exodus 12:2.

Isaiah 1:14 MUST be considered in any discussion about the Jewish calendar!

Here is the next Scripture that applies to the calendar.

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. (Exodus 34:22 AV)

The Hebrew here tells us that the Feast of Tabernacles is to be observed "AT THE TEKUFAH OF THE YEAR". This expression "at the tekufah OF THE YEAR" is only used twice in the Bible (also in 2 Chronicles 24:23). The other two places where "tekufah" is used (1 Samuel 1:20 and Psalm 19:6) do NOT apply the word "tekufah" to "A YEAR"!

Both the places that speak about "at the tekufah of the year" (Exodus 34:22 and 2 Chronicles 24:23) make very clear, beyond any doubts, that in both cases A VERY SPECIFIC TIME OF YEAR IS MEANT! Harvests can fluctuate. This expression is a very clear reference to autumn, which starts with the autumnal equinox. All Jewish astronomers and calendar authorities clearly understand this.

Exodus 34:22 expresses a requirement for the Feast of Tabernacles which the Jewish calendar does not consistently meet. The present Jewish calendar repeatedly starts the Feast of Tabernacles before the end of summer. This Scripture is discussed in more detail in the article entitled "The Meaning of Tekufah".

Here is the next Scripture that applies to the calendar.

LEVITICUS 23:10-11

Speak unto the children of Israel, and say unto them, When ye be come into the land which I give unto you, and shall reap the harvest thereof, then ye shall bring A SHEAF OF THE FIRSTFRUITS of your harvest unto the priest: And he shall wave the sheaf before the LORD, to be accepted for you: ON THE MORROW AFTER THE SABBATH the priest shall wave it. (Leviticus 23:10-11 AV)

This instruction, to bring a sheaf of barley to the priest DURING the Days of Unleavened Bread, TAKES FOR GRANTED that the year will never start so early that no ripe barley would be available for this ceremony.

This "requirement" is taken care of if the year is NEVER started in the winter. It is not by any means "THE deciding factor" as to when the year should start; it only prohibits the year from starting TOO EARLY! There is no indication that, should the barley really start to ripen a few days earlier in some years, it could not stand in the fields to dry out a little longer before harvesting, even as it does today in our age.

Note carefully:

The correct intent in looking at these two verses is to avoid starting the year TOO EARLY. But in practice the people who look at this passage actually come to it with the opposite frame of mind. They look at these verses to try to find THE EARLIEST POSSIBLE TIME when they could meet this "requirement".

That is a misuse of this Scripture!

It was NOT God's intention for us to use Leviticus 23:10-11 in order to find the earliest possible time by which we can meet this "requirement". THESE VERSES ARE NOT A CALENDAR DETERMINATION

SCRIPTURE! They simply highlight the importance of NOT starting the year too early! And never starting the year in the winter will generally take care of this "requirement".

It is ONLY when someone attempts to start the year TOO EARLY that these verses actually come into play. But they NEVER prevent a year from starting somewhat later. There is no requirement of any kind from God that we simply MUST harvest the barley "as early as possible". So beware of people who misapply this Scripture to justify starting the year EARLIER.

Consider also the following point:

IF this Scripture was indeed a key determination for the correct calendar, THEN "RULE OVER THE YEAR" (as per Genesis 1:14) will have been wrested away from the sun and given to the barley. Genesis 1:14 is a key for establishing a right calendar, and the barley harvest takes care of itself when the year is never started too early. But there is no scriptural support anywhere to justify the barley harvest ruling over the sun.

Here is the next Scripture that applies to the calendar.

EXODUS 23:14-17

Three times thou shalt keep a feast unto me in the year. 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:) And the feast of harvest, the firstfruits of thy labours, which thou hast sown in the field: and the feast of ingathering, which is in the end of the year, when thou hast gathered in thy labours out of the field. Three times in the year all thy males shall appear before the Lord GOD. (Ex 23:14-17 AV)

This Scripture makes the same point we saw in Exodus 34:22. The Feast of Tabernacles must be in the season of autumn. The expression "in the end of the year" in verse 16 is discussed in more detail in the article on "Exodus 23:16" in the section that deals with Mistranslated Scriptures.

Here is one more Scripture that applies to the calendar.

LEVITICUS 23:32

It shall be unto you a sabbath of rest, and ye shall afflict your souls: in the ninth day of the month at even, from even unto even, shall ye celebrate your sabbath. (Le 23:32 AV)

This Scripture is speaking about the Holy Day of Atonement. In the process it clearly states the principle that with God days are counted "from even unto even". Days start and end at sunset.

That about covers the main Scriptures that have a bearing on the calendar. One Scripture that does not have anything whatsoever, in any way, to say about the calendar, but which is constantly bantered about by those who try to defend the present Jewish calendar is Romans 3:1-2. So let's also look at that passage.

ROMANS 3:1-2

What advantage then hath the Jew? or what profit is there of circumcision? Much every way: chiefly, because that unto them were committed the oracles of God. (Ro 3:1-2 AV)

This Scripture has nothing whatsoever to do with the calendar. It doesn't mention the calendar, and Paul was certainly not thinking of the calendar when he wrote these words to the Romans. Also, the Jewish people themselves will very readily acknowledge that the knowledge of their calendar is NOT a part of "the oracles" they have preserved.

It is precisely because the calendar is not in any way referred to or even implied in this verse, that this Scripture has been identified as THE ONLY "SAFE" SCRIPTURE TO USE FOR THOSE WHO WISH TO DEFEND THE JEWISH CALENDAR! Any Scripture that actually in some way applies to the calendar is automatically unsafe to appeal to in any defence of the Jewish calendar.

This Scripture is discussed at length in the article entitled "The Greek Words 'Logos' and 'Logion" ... Understanding the Meaning of 'The Oracles of God"', located in the Calendar Articles directory.

TO SUMMARIZE

From an examination of these Scriptures we get the following simple guidelines for what a correct calendar must comply with:

- 1) THE DAY starts at sunset (the sun rules).
- 2) THE WEEK starts at sunset at the end of the Sabbath (the sun rules).
- 3) THE MONTH starts with the new moon (the moon rules).
- 4) THE YEAR starts with the first new moon in the spring (the sun rules over the moon).

This makes THE SOLAR YEAR the foundation for the calendar. And the LUNAR MONTHS are accommodated within the context of the solar year. The start of the solar year can never be compromised, by attempting to start the new year before the end of the previous solar year.

Because an exact number of lunar months does not fit into the solar year, therefore the year can start at any point within the first 30 days of the solar year. But it could never start both, sometimes before and at other times after the start of the solar year at the spring equinox; that would be confusion, because it would erase the very distinct starting point for the solar year.

So how difficult is it really to apply these four simple rules to establish a calendar that will meet with God's approval?

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