

February 2000

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## **THE CALENDAR PROBLEM SPELLED OUT IN SIMPLE TERMS**

Here is a question that was put to me:

I have been in God's Church for over 30 years. When I first came in, we still observed Pentecost on a Monday. Then that was changed to a Sunday. Now I see the Church being torn apart over this calendar issue. All around me I see people polarized for or against the Jewish calendar. I have never been someone for technicalities. I just want to be faithful to what God expects from me. I have read some of your papers and I have also read some things others have written about the calendar. But I am still confused. I have never been able to understand what all the fuss and the arguments are all about. I just want to do what the Bible says. So can you tell me in plain English what this whole big argument about the calendar is all about? What's wrong with using the Jewish calendar which we have always used in the past? What does the Bible say about the calendar?

There are probably many other people in God's Church who feel very similar to this person. So I will try to present the whole question in plain easy to follow language, although this may still seem difficult to some?

### **HOW THE PROBLEM ARISES**

As long as we all approach keeping God's Feasts and Holy Days from the premise that these days are to be observed based on the Jewish calendar, we have no disagreements amongst ourselves. We all accept the same basic assumptions, that the Jewish calendar must be "God's sacred calendar".

The problem arises when someone then looks into the Bible and finds that the Bible makes certain demands on the calendar, demands that are NOT met by the present Jewish calendar. So the person then asks the ministry WHY the Jewish calendar is at odds with what the Bible plainly requires?

Frequently the ministry will feel put on the spot by these questions and will feel pressured to uphold and to defend the Jewish calendar at all costs. It becomes a matter of "loyalty" for many ministers. The result is that in many cases the answers people receive from the ministers are very unsatisfactory. Either they don't attempt to answer the questions at all, or they attempt to justify the transgression of biblical requirements, or they simply bring up Scriptures about faith and loyalty; but the conflict between what the Bible says and what the Jewish calendar actually does is not resolved in the questioner's mind.

Unsatisfactory answers always have the same effect. They prompt the questioner to dig further. And further looking into the calendar leads people to historical information that clearly exposes the assumed premises about the present Jewish calendar to be wrong and unjustified. This in turn then leads the questioner to carefully examine ALL the attributes of the present Jewish calendar against biblical instructions. This in turn has the effect that NOW the person can see that there are additional things about the present Jewish calendar for which there are no biblical justifications at all!

So the process goes like this:

1) There are some clear biblical statements which contradict what the present Jewish calendar actually

does.

2) There were no satisfactory answers to these questions.

3) This prompted further research into historical aspects of the Jewish calendar, which only calls the Jewish calendar further into question.

4) This results in a close scrutiny of all of the features of the present Jewish calendar, and further problems become evident.

5) So what started out with perhaps one genuine question about a conflict between a biblical statement and a feature of the Jewish calendar, has developed into perhaps half a dozen or more major objections to the present Jewish calendar.

So when this person NOW goes back to the minister, the situation has changed. The minister usually still doesn't know any more about the calendar than when this person first approached him with a question. But the questioner NOW has a whole list of objections to the present Jewish calendar, usually with adequate facts to support his position. So now the person doesn't come to the minister with questions; now the person is in fact CHALLENGING the validity of the present Jewish calendar. And if in this situation the minister still refuses to focus on and to address the specific issues the person is raising, then this becomes very frustrating for the person. The minister's reaction will be interpreted by the person as a refusal to face the facts.

In the meanwhile, for other members of the congregation who have not made the same study into this matter, it will seem like this one person has taken an extreme or a fanatical stand on this whole calendar question, making a mountain out of a molehill. And so people within the congregation become polarized, with those who have made a thorough study of the subject on one side, and those who have not really looked into this for themselves on the other side.

### CLEAR BIBLICAL REQUIREMENTS FOR THE CALENDAR

The supporters of the present Jewish calendar fall into two groups: those who ASSUME the present Jewish calendar complies with all biblical requirements, and those who KNOW that it does NOT comply with all biblical requirements.

Those who have assumed that the present Jewish calendar complies with all biblical requirements have been fairly free in citing one or more of these biblical requirements in their defenses of the present Jewish calendar. They don't realize that in so doing they are exposing the flaws in their own position. By contrast, those defenders of the present Jewish calendar who KNOW that this calendar is in fact in conflict with biblical instructions have been very meticulous in avoiding all discussions about any of these biblical requirements, because they understand that the biblical requirements for a calendar condemn the position they are trying to defend. They very carefully avoid being drawn into any discussion about the biblical requirements for the calendar. This approach obviously becomes very frustrating for people who want to have their genuine questions answered.

It should be clear that initially the defenders of the present Jewish calendar all believed that it did comply with all biblical instructions. The knowledge that this is simply not the case is a more recent development, something the people who today still defend the Jewish calendar have only come to understand in the last few years.

So let's now examine some clear biblical statements, and how the Church has historically presented these.

1) IN THE 1940 GOOD NEWS LETTER, MR. HERBERT W. ARMSTRONG WROTE:

"Briefly, after very exhaustive study, and counsel with brethren who have also made through study of the question for years, the facts are these:

1) The Bible YEAR is SOLAR, while the Bible MONTH is LUNAR." (Mr. Armstrong's own emphasis)

This is correct. Mr. Armstrong then proceeded to prove both these statements. Two paragraphs later he wrote the following:

" 3) The Bible YEAR is SOLAR. This is proved by the festivals and the holydays. A month is between 29 and 30 days. A 12-month year, or a lunar year, is approximately 354 days, whereas a solar year is a little more than 365 days. Thus a lunar year is about 11 days less than a solar year. If the Bible year were lunar, always 12 months, Passover would come about 11 days earlier each

year. Thus, in about nine years it would come in the MIDWINTER; in another 9 in the FALL, and a few years later Passover would come in the SUMMER. In 34 years it and all the holydays would

make the round of all four seasons. But Passover ALWAYS comes IN THE SPRING, at time of the early grain harvest. On the morrow after the Sabbath during Feast of Unleavened Bread, the priest waved the wave-sheaf, and none of the early Spring grain could be used until this was done. (Lev. 23). Pentecost ALWAYS came in the summer, Tabernacles ALWAYS in the Fall at time of, or right after, Fall harvest. (Lev. 23:29) These were SET feasts, set for DEFINITE SEASONS of the year (Ex. 23:14-17; 34:18, 22-23; Deut. 16:9, 13, 16; Lev. 23:4; Nu. 28:2; Ex. 13:10)." (Mr. Armstrong's own emphasis)

NOTICE MR. ARMSTRONG'S CLEAR ADMISSIONS HERE:

"On the morrow after the Sabbath during Feast of Unleavened Bread, the priest waved the wave-sheaf, and none of the early Spring grain could be used until this was done. (Lev. 23)."

THIS IS A CLEAR BIBLICAL REQUIREMENT FOR THE CALENDAR!

You simply cannot have the Days of Unleavened Bread so early that NO BARLEY WOULD BE AVAILABLE for the wave-sheaf, which represented Jesus Christ's sacrifice being accepted by God the Father.

When Mr. Armstrong made this statement in 1940 he had no idea that the present Jewish calendar sometimes places the start of the year so early, that no barley would be available in Palestine (in the area of Jerusalem, where this offering would have been brought). He simply assumed that the present Jewish calendar complies with this requirement.

BUT IT DOES NOT!

I have a copy of a letter written by the "Director of Field Crops Department" of the Ministry of Agriculture of the State of Israel in June 1983, in which this Jewish official answered the question about when barley is ripe in Israel. He had no calendar to defend, no ulterior motive to stack the facts in his own favour. And this man wrote:

"Both (wheat and barley) are sown as a rule, in November and the harvest starts around the end of April - the beginning of May. As stated, this year the first wheat and barley have been harvested not before mid of May in the Jordan Valley. However, it is not right of course to make a

comparison between today and the Ancient time, not as far as concerns the variety of barley and not the way of harvesting. To-day we have to wait with the harvest until the grain is entirely dry which means a moisture content of 12-13% only. Otherwise the mechanical harvester does not perform a clean threshing and the grain cannot be stored without further drying. In Ancient times and even to-day with primitive methods the barley and wheat were harvested with a sickle (sic) and left on the land in sheaves for further drying. Therefore (sic) the crop could be harvested a couple of weeks earlier even if the barley would have been harvested with 20% moisture content. ... In the Talmud, it is mentioned that there were years that the barley was not yet ripe at Passover. In order to be able to bring the Omer sacrifice of barley [Comment: he means the wave-sheaf] in time to the Temple, they used to sow barley upon some flat roofs in the Jericho valley, which would be ready and apt to the Sacrifice on the Passover. The Omer is not a big quantity of grain."

The point is this: even with the most favourable conditions you simply didn't have barley ripe before the latter part of the first week of April AT THE VERY EARLIEST!

Notice the man's admission. The Jewish calendar sometimes simply starts the year too early! They know this, and therefore they get around the biblical instructions by planting some barley on a rooftop in a favourable location (like today growing crops in hothouses). But God didn't want a wave-sheaf from something someone was growing under controlled conditions on some rooftop! This might be ready a few weeks before the crop in the fields would be ripe. The wave-sheaf was to be taken from the fields, representative of the general crop that was growing there.

It is a fact that the present Jewish calendar at times places the date for the wave offering into the month of March (e.g. 1975 = March 30, 1994 = March 27, 2002 = March 31, etc.), far too early for any barley to be available for the wave-sheaf.

BY MR. ARMSTRONG'S OWN STATEMENTS IN 1940 THIS IS NOT RIGHT!

This is a clear case of the present Jewish calendar transgressing a biblical requirement!

2) NOTICE ANOTHER STATEMENT FROM MR. ARMSTRONG, QUOTED ABOVE:

" Tabernacles ALWAYS in the Fall at time of, or right after, Fall harvest. (Leviticus 23:29) These were SET feasts, set for DEFINITE SEASONS of the year (Exodus 23:14-17; Exodus 34:18, 22-23; Deuteronomy 16:9, 13, 16; Leviticus 23:4; Numbers 28:2; Exodus 13:10)." (Mr. Armstrong's own emphasis)

The Bible shows that Tabernacles should ALWAYS be in the autumn, and Mr. Armstrong correctly quoted Exodus 34:22 to support this statement. If Tabernacles starts in the summer, then it is simply IN THE WRONG SEASON! That's what Mr. Armstrong is pointing out!

More than 40 years after this statement by Mr. Herbert W. Armstrong, Dr. Hoeh still wrote the following in his April 1981 GOOD NEWS article entitled "The Hebrew Calendar — Authoritative for God's Church Today!" on page 29:

"Did you ever notice that the Bible requires the Feast of Tabernacles, commemorating the second and great harvest of human beings, to at least reach the beginning of autumn? In Exodus 34:22 we read from the English translation of the Hebrew Bible: 'Thou shalt observe ... the feast of ingathering at the turn of the year' (Jewish Publication Society translation). What is the 'turn of the year'? The Hebrew word translated 'turn' is tequfah, meaning 'revolution, circuit or end.' It is

used specifically for the equinoxes or solstices. It is here specifically referring to the autumnal equinox — when day and night approach equal length. It normally falls on Sept. 23 this century. But if the seven-day Feast of Tabernacles were one month earlier this year the Festival would fall on Sept. 14-20. And this is wholly in the summer and plainly contrary to Exodus 34:22. ... He [i.e. God] does reveal in the Bible more than you may be aware about His calendar."

Here Dr. Hoeh was clearly ADMITTING that Exodus 34:22 states a requirement for the calendar to abide by! By this time Dr. Hoeh understood that the Jewish calendar does in fact sometimes cause the Feast of Tabernacles to START in the summer. That is why he changed Mr. Armstrong's 1940 unequivocal statement that Tabernacles must ALWAYS be in the autumn, to read: the Bible requires the Feast of Tabernacles ... to AT LEAST REACH the beginning of autumn".

**BUT EVEN THIS IS TRANSGRESSED BY THE JEWISH CALENDAR!**

When Hillel II instituted the present fixed calendar in 358/359 AD, he repeatedly placed the entire Feast of Tabernacles into the summer! Examples that can be verified are the years:

- 360 AD = Feast of Tabernacles was September 11-17
- 368 AD = Feast of Tabernacles was September 13-19
- 376 AD = Feast of Tabernacles was September 14-20
- 379 AD = Feast of Tabernacles was September 12-18

**These are years when THE ENTIRE FEAST OF TABERNACLES WAS PLACED INTO THE SUMMER BY THE PRESENT JEWISH CALENDAR!**

And as Dr. Hoeh himself plainly stated: **THIS IS PLAINLY CONTRARY TO EXODUS 34:22!**

As late as 1196 AD, over 830 years after Hillel II had instituted the present fixed calendar, **THE ENTIRE FEAST OF TABERNACLES WAS STILL IN THE SUMMER!**

In 1196 AD the Feast of Tabernacles was from September 9-15, while the autumn equinox was still shifting from September 17 to September 16 (due to the flaws in the Julian calendar). So the Feast of Tabernacles in 1196 AD finished a full day before the end of summer, if the Jewish calendar is supposed to be correct. And this is by Dr. Hoeh's own standards, which already favour the Jewish traditions much more than the Bible allows. **THE BIBLE** requires every part of the Feast of Tabernacles to be in the autumn, not merely the last day of the seven-day period.

There is a mistake in Dr. Hoeh's statements. It concerns the word "tekufah" (also spelled as "tequfah"). This Hebrew word "tekufah" actually has TWO meanings. Firstly it refers to 4 specific days in the year: the two equinoxes and the two solstices. This definition was stated correctly by Dr. Hoeh. But the word "tekufah" is ALSO the Hebrew word for "SEASON", and this meaning is well-known. In other words, "tekufah" refers to 4 specific days in the year AND to the four seasons that start with each of those 4 specific days. Thus in the Encyclopedia Judaica, Volume 3, in the article "ASTRONOMY" a sub-heading is titled "THE FOUR SEASONS (Tekufot)". In the same encyclopedia, in Volume 5 the article "CALENDAR" has a sub-heading titled "Tekufot ("Seasons)". Similarly, Arthur Spier in his work "The Comprehensive HEBREW CALENDAR, Its Structure, History, and One Hundred Years of Corresponding Dates" states on page 223 the following sub-heading: "G. The Seasons: Tekufoth". This meaning of "seasons" is also thoroughly documented in the Talmud. [Tekufot is the plural of tekufah.]

So the point is this:

When Exodus 34:22 speaks about "the feast of ingathering at the TEKUFAH of the year", it doesn't just mean "the Feast of Tabernacles at the autumn equinox", as Dr. Hoeh implies. It really means "the Feast of Tabernacles IN THE SEASON that starts with the autumn equinox"! This Scripture is not speaking about pinpointing the Feast to a specific DAY in the year; it is really speaking about pinpointing THE SEASON in which this Feast is to take place! And if the Scripture is identifying ONE season for this particular Feast, it is only logical that therefore this Feast should NOT COVER TWO DIFFERENT SEASONS, starting in the summer and ending in the autumn! That is clearly contrary to the intent of the Scripture! As Mr. Herbert W. Armstrong had stated in 1940: " These were SET feasts, set for DEFINITE SEASONS of the year." (Mr. Armstrong's emphasis)

According to the present Jewish calendar the Feast of Tabernacles starts on the evening of:

- 1983 = September 21
- 1991 = September 22
- 1994 = September 19
- 2002 = September 20
- 2010 = September 22
- 2013 = September 18

These are all dates that are still in the summer. Autumn only starts with September 23. According to Mr. Herbert W. Armstrong's 1940 statements, which are in this regard biblically correct, it is wrong for the Feast to start that early. This means that in those years the whole year should really start one new moon later, the previous year then having a 13th month.

Let's look at the next point.

3) WHEN MR. HERBERT W. ARMSTRONG SUPPORTED THE PRESENT JEWISH CALENDAR BACK IN 1940: He did not know that the Jewish calendar frequently POSTPONES the start of the month to avoid the autumn Holy Days from falling on inconvenient days of the week. He also did not know that the Jewish calendar NEVER attempts to calculate the new moon of the first month of the year. He simply ASSUMED that the present Jewish calendar accurately calculates the times of the new moons. This is evident from the following quotation from that 1940 GOOD NEWS letter:

"The New moon occurs, IN JERUSALEM, (World Almanac), at exactly 10:18 P.M., the night of April 7th, which is the eve of April 8th. However, God had the new moon observed by the naked eye and by this method the first day of the 1st month begins the following sunset, April 8th."

The fact that Mr. Herbert W. Armstrong actually referred to THE REAL NEW MOON times, as published in a reputable almanac, shows that he obviously didn't realize that the start of the first month in the Jewish calendar only has a very loose and casual relationship with the actual new moon times. This is true whether you take the time of the invisible conjunction, or whether you take the time of first visibility; the Jewish calendar is sometimes in agreement with the one, sometimes it agrees with the other, and sometimes it disagrees with both of these times. This is because, besides the Jewish calculations being somewhat inaccurate, the postponement rules break the link with the real new moon times.

Today people who wish to defend the Jewish calendar wouldn't dream of appealing to the actual new moon times as published in an almanac! Those new moon times would only discredit the calendar they are trying to uphold. Yet that is what Mr. Armstrong did. This shows that he was unaware of the fact that, had he checked the new moon times in the almanac for a different year, THEN he would have ended up with irreconcilable dates. It was pure luck that the dates in the almanac and those of the Jewish calendar were so compatible for the year 1940.

It is clear that the Bible expects the start of a month to be linked to the new moon. Back in 1940 Mr. Herbert W. Armstrong, and even in 1953 and in 1957 Kenneth Herrmann, believed that the present Jewish calendar actually achieves this. But it doesn't achieve this consistently! Postponements move the start of a month away from the time of the new moon. So the link to the new moons is broken.

This is not right! While there may be the need for some rule to establish consistency, this does not mean that the start of the new month can be pushed around at will, to fall in line with human traditions.

Now the next point.

#### 4) THE JEWISH POSTPONEMENT RULES

These rules are designed to prevent double Sabbaths in the autumn, even though such double Sabbaths are quite common in the spring. These rules prevent any of the autumn Holy Days from falling on a Friday or on a Sunday.

#### THIS IS UNBIBLICAL AND UNJUSTIFIED MANIPULATION OF THE CALENDAR!

First of all, the Talmud shows quite clearly that in the first century AD the Day of Atonement DID fall on both, Fridays and on Sundays. So these rules were only invented after the life and times of Jesus Christ and all the original apostles.

Secondly, this fact is actually acknowledged by Dr. Hoeh in his 1981 calendar article.

Notice what Dr. Hoeh wrote in talking about Atonement on a Friday:

"So housewives would have to prepare food on a Thursday for the weekly Sabbath [i.e. if Atonement were to be on a Friday]. That would be burdensome." (Page 7, April 1981 GN)

That claim of being "burdensome" is clearly patently ridiculous!

Anyway, Dr. Hoeh continued: "If Atonement were to fall on Friday, housewives would have to prepare food for the weekly Sabbath on a Thursday. And that is exactly what the Pharisees anciently required be done!" (Top of page 28)

Dr. Hoeh here acknowledges that ANCIENTLY Atonement DID fall on Fridays!

He continued to say: "The Pharisees put major emphasis on precise visual observation of the first faint crescent of the new moon. They overlooked Leviticus 23:26-32. So whenever the first faint crescent of the seventh new moon of the year was seen just above the western horizon after sunset on Tuesday evening, for example, they declared that day, Wednesday (which begins the previous evening), to be the new moon. ... The result was the 10th day of the month — Atonement — would fall on a Friday in such a year." (page 28)

The reference to Leviticus 23:26-32 is a weak attempt to justify the postponements. There is NOTHING

AT ALL in these verses that prevents anyone from preparing food two or more days in advance. We do it all the time, and people have always prepared some food for more than one day in advance. There is "no burden at all" in preparing on a Thursday food for the Saturday, ESPECIALLY SO WHEN YOU ARE NOT GOING TO EAT ANYTHING ON THE FRIDAY!

It is no more of a "burden" to prepare food on a Thursday for a Saturday, when you aren't going to eat anything on the Friday, than it is to prepare food on a Friday for a Saturday, which will be a regular weekly situation.

But notice Dr. Hoeh's candid admissions!

ANCIENTLY the month was started with the day on which the first faint crescent of the new moon became visible. That is usually about 16-20 hours after the actual new moon conjunction. And anciently there were NO POSTPONEMENTS! And "anciently" they were very concerned about being exact! It had to be correct!

Now notice the next staggering statement by Dr. Hoeh:

"The Romans finally put an end to visual observation of the new moons by the Jews. The Jews' chief leader, Hillel II, whose responsibility it was to regulate the calendar, was forced to issue a decree for the year A.D. 358-359 to (re)institute the authority of the fixed calendar we know today as the Hebrew calendar." (Page 28)

Do you grasp what Dr. Hoeh was here admitting? [Dr. Hoeh himself put the "re" in "(re)institute" into parenthesis.]

He is admitting the following things:

A) The postponement rules didn't come into force till the time of Hillel II, in 358-359 AD. Dr. Hoeh presents Hillel's fixed calendar as solving the problem of Atonement falling on a Friday!

B) This wasn't done till more than THREE FULL CENTURIES after the time of Christ's ministry! Until then the Jews followed a calendar that had no other rules than: start each month with the day of first visibility of the new crescent, and intercalate a 13th month in such a way that the first month never starts in the winter, that it always starts in the spring. ONLY TWO RULES!

C) Dr. Hoeh acknowledges that this is the calendar the Jews "ANCIENTLY" followed!

D) He further acknowledges that THE ROMANS forced this change upon the Jews. So according to Dr. Hoeh it wasn't even the Jews' own idea to switch from visual observations to a fixed calculated calendar with postponement rules; they made this change under pressure from the pagan Romans. Did God inspire THE ROMANS to pressure the Jews to make a calendar change?

CLEARLY Dr. Hoeh is describing a calendar CHANGE in 358-359 AD. The calendar after 359 AD was different from the calendar before 358 AD.

Now consider this: From the start of the New Testament Church onwards Christians followed the same calendar as the Jews. That was the calendar in use during Christ's ministry and during the lives of the original apostles. It required only the two rules stated above.

THIS MEANT THAT THE CHRISTIANS DIDN'T NEED ANY KIND OF INFORMATION FROM

## THE JEWS! THEY COULD LOOK FOR THE NEW CRESCENTS THEMSELVES! BECAUSE THAT IS WHAT THE JEWS WERE DOING!

So for over 300 years after the Church was started in Acts chapter 2 the Church of God could determine the calendar quite easily without any input from the Jews. That is what Dr. Hoeh is acknowledging when he explains that until 358-359 AD the calendar was based on visual observations. And that is why we see the Colossians being instructed to take note of "new moons" (see Colossians 2:16); that was their only way of keeping track of the calendar in a Roman Empire that used the Julian calendar for everyday affairs.

As long as the Jews continued to use visual observations for determining their calendar, they would have been in full agreement with the Christians. When Hillel II was finally "forced by the Romans" to stop using visual observations, the Christians had not had any contact with the Jews for over 300 years! And, as is recorded in the historical records, the Jews officially rejected the New Testament as Scripture, at a conference at a little town called Jebneh in Judea in AD 90. So by the time Hillel II CHANGED the calendar from what it had been until then, and introduced his postponement rules (to avoid Atonement on a Friday, as Dr. Hoeh pointed out), and placed the Feast of Tabernacles SQUARELY into summer repeatedly (as we saw above), by then the Church of God had had nothing to do with the Jews, from a religious point of view, for well over 250 years! And God had long before this stopped using the Jews to communicate instructions to God's Church.

And it should be quite clear from Dr. Hoeh's article that during the time of Christ and of the early apostles the Jews used a calendar that was DIFFERENT from the one that has been in use since 358 AD. Before 358 AD they used a calendar with no postponement rules, a calendar in which Atonement was NEVER POSTPONED away from a Friday or a Sunday. That is even acknowledged by Dr. Hoeh.

### 5) THE JEWISH NEW MOON CALCULATIONS

A further problem with the Jewish calendar is that the times for the new moon conjunctions that are calculated are in fact flawed! The new moon calculations in the Jewish calendar referred to as "the molad". And the Jewish molad calculations may be as much as 3 hours before the actual new moon conjunction, or they may be as much as 15 hours after the actual new moon conjunction. The calculations employed in the Jewish calendar were devised by the Greek astronomer Hipparchus in the 140's B.C., and today we know that these averaged out calculations frequently result in designating the wrong day as "the new moon day". When the Jewish calendar then still applies some postponements to avoid inconvenient days, then this frequently compounds the error.

There are a number of other problems as well, but they don't change anything. The above problems are sufficiently clear and irrefutable, that we have no option but to conclude that the present Jewish calendar does not have God's approval.

I apologize that this discussion may still have been a little on the technical side, because it is the facts (i.e. the technical data) that show up the flaws with the present Jewish calendar.

So back to your original question: what's wrong with the Jewish calendar? And what does the Bible require of a calendar?

Well:

1) The Bible requires the Feast of Tabernacles to ALWAYS be completely in the autumn. This the present Jewish calendar does not do.

2) The Bible also requires the year to start late enough so that ripe barley is available every year during the Days of Unleavened Bread. This the present Jewish calendar also does not do consistently.

3) The Bible shows that the year should always start in the spring. This was clearly stated by Kenneth Herrmann in his 1953 and 1957 GOOD NEWS articles. It was also still published by the Church as late as 1974, when the reprint article "GOD'S SACRED CALENDAR" clearly stated on page 1: "The new year is to begin in the spring". This the present Jewish calendar also does not do consistently.

4) The postponement rules were not a part of the Jewish calendar until well after the first century A.D., and according to Dr. Hoeh not until 358-359 AD. Thus they did not exist during the time of Christ's ministry and during the time of the early Church. There is no biblical justification for these postponement rules at all. They are nothing more than "Jewish traditions" and do not have God's approval. Therefore Christians must reject these Jewish traditions. Prior to these postponement rules the Jews had, as Dr. Hoeh pointed out, always been VERY EXACT in establishing first visibility of the new crescent.

These points are THE START of the calendar question we face today.

Once we understand that there is nothing "sacred" or "godly" about the present Jewish calendar, THEN we are free to examine it on its own merits, without the intimidating element of possibly being critical of something GOD has installed. This opens the door to accepting the historical facts about the Jewish calendar, without having to turn a blind eye to such facts. It also opens the door to recognizing the weaknesses in the Jewish calendar, from a mathematical accuracy point of view.

But these are not the original issues.

It all starts with recognizing that there are CLEAR BIBLICAL REQUIREMENTS which the present Jewish calendar blatantly disregards. THEY (these violations of biblical instructions) are at the heart of rejecting the Jewish calendar. All the other points simply compound that rejection.

So why is there such controversy in the Church?

That is because many people will simply refuse to face the facts that the present Jewish calendar is not the same calendar as the one the Jews used in the first century A.D. They refuse to face up to the binding effect on the calendar of the various biblical requirements mentioned above. Instead they focus on people, like Mr. Armstrong having endorsed the present Jewish calendar, etc. Instead of exposing the ways in which the present Jewish calendar transgresses these biblical instructions and requirements, they condone these transgressions under the mantle of "faith that God will sort these problems out".

Does that help to put the whole question into simple terms? You don't have to be "technically minded" to understand that the Bible requires Tabernacles to always be in the autumn, and that the Bible requires the year to start in the spring, and not in the winter. These are fairly easy concepts to understand. It is a matter of "technicalities" to show that the present Jewish calendar actually goes against these easy to understand principles.

Hope this helps to make things a bit clearer.

Frank W. Nelte