

AVIV

THE TORAH MOVEMENT'S EPIC STRUGGLE
TO DETERMINE A TRUE AND ACCURATE CALENDAR



KRAIG & ANNE ELLIOTT



CONTENTS

NOT TOO DIFFICULT 7

Yehovah's calendar is knowable, and obedience is within reach.

WRITTEN INSTRUCTIONS 15

The Bible was preserved in writing by eyewitnesses to enable obedience.

THE FIRST CALENDAR 27

The Patriarchs counted time faithfully, but the specifics are unknown.

THE BEGINNING OF MONTHS FOR YOU 43

At the Exodus, Yehovah defined Israel's national clock as unique from the nations.

KEEP THIS SERVICE 53

Careful observance of the calendar is essential to Yehovah's offerings.

THE LAND YEHOVAH CARES FOR 75

The biblical year is anchored in the Land of Israel and its harvests.

STANDING STONES 95

Israel was not to mix the ways of the nations with the worship of Yehovah.

RABBIS, KARAITES, AND ESSENES—OH MY! 117

Historic calendar debates shape today's disagreements.

EVERYTHING POINTS TO YESHUA 151

The appointed times testify to Yeshua, our sinless Messiah.

UNITY IN THE BODY 191

The closer we are to Yehovah, the closer we will be to each other.

BRINGING IT HOME 215

When we choose obedience, we are choosing life and blessing.

FAQS 227

Answers to frequently asked questions

Homeschooling Resources **239**

01

NOT TOO DIFFICULT

YEHOVAH HAS A CALENDAR THAT IS VERY DIFFERENT FROM THE CALENDAR WE USE IN MODERN TIMES.

While it still has times and dates, weeks, months, and years, it's so foreign that many people get discouraged when they are new to Torah and trying to learn it. They are used to buying a calendar at the store and putting it on the wall, or using the clock on their phones, so that they can plan for a dentist's appointment six months from now and know exactly when it will be.

On Yehovah's calendar, we know He has important appointments, say, on the fifteenth day of the first month. However, we must learn to use the sun and the moon as our timepieces to know when His appointments will be.

In addition, we must wait to look up in the sky at the moon to know that a month has started. It becomes much more difficult to plan for a feast date several months from now, simply because we aren't exactly sure when each month will start. We won't know until we see the month start by noting the moon in the sky. This can be very awkward



when our employer asks us what days we would like to take off for vacation this year.

Our family has been seeking to obey the Torah since 2007, by reading the commands of Scripture and trying to obey the Bible's plain reading as carefully as we could.

Sometimes the most difficult part was for us adults. We tried to overcomplicate things, to wrestle with symbolism and big

concepts, and to weed through decades of Christian theology, all before deciding to obey.

However, our seventh child was born in 2009, and he has never known any life except to obey the Torah. The calendar is much more simple for him.

We used to take walks through our neighborhood in the evening, and as we would carry him, he would point to the moon in the sky. “Moon!” he would shout. He loved looking up at Yehovah’s timepiece in the sky, and it was one of his first words.

It was very natural to begin to teach him Yehovah’s clock and calendar. He always knew when a new biblical month started or when a month was ending, simply by looking up. His toddler legs would scurry to pick up his toys on a Friday afternoon to help us with Sabbath preparation, his eye toward the setting sun out the window. He could read Yehovah’s clock in the sky much sooner than he could read a clock on the wall.

Before the people of Israel entered the Promised Land, after wandering in the desert for more than a generation, Moses gathered them together and explained Yehovah’s Torah to them. He encouraged them with a list of blessings if they would obey and warned them of dire curses if they disobeyed.

Sin is any transgression of the Torah,¹ but some sins carry heavier consequences. Some sins require an offering to be brought to Yehovah to restore the relationship between a man who sins and his Creator. Other sins are more serious, harming our relation-

ship with Yehovah as well as our relationships with others. When our sins harm our neighbor, restitution must be made in addition to offerings.

However, some sins are so harmful to the community that they could cause death and destruction. For these, the sinner is separated from everyone else before even more harm can be done to all. He is “cut off” from the community, usually by death, for the protection of all.

Moses reminded the congregation of Israel that Yehovah’s Torah was not so difficult to understand that people could use ignorance as an excuse not to obey His good laws. In fact, he told them to make a habit of gathering together every seven years to read the entire Torah aloud, so that no one would ever forget Yehovah’s commands.

And Moses commanded them, saying: “At the end of every seven years, at the appointed time in the year of release, at the Feast of Tabernacles, when all Israel comes to appear before Yehovah your God in the place which He chooses, you shall read this law before all Israel in their hearing. Gather the people together, men and women and little ones, and the stranger who is within your gates, that they may hear and that they may learn to fear Yehovah your God and carefully observe all the words of this law, and that their children, who have not known it, may hear and learn to fear Yehovah your God as long as you live

¹ 1 John 3:4



that the calendar followed in Christianity, with its worship on the first day of the week instead of the seventh, was unbiblical. We knew it was wrong to go to church and rest on Sunday while working on Saturday, because breaking the Sabbath is also a cut-off offense, a sin worthy of the death penalty according to Scripture.

You shall keep the Sabbath, therefore, for it is holy to you. Everyone who profanes it shall surely be put to death; for whoever does any work on it, that person shall be cut off from among his people.¹³

13 Exodus 31:14

NOBLE BEREANS

Sometime after the Jews returned home from captivity in Babylon, they began to build local synagogues, or meeting houses, so that even the most ignorant Jews could hear the Scriptures read and explained to them each Sabbath, and so that they could also have houses of prayer and education for their children.

Over time, regular synagogue services were conducted each Sabbath and on feast days, but also on each week day. Jewish historian Alfred Edersheim reported that Mondays and Thursdays were times for special synagogue services since the common people often came to the cities on those days for market shopping. For this reason, Mondays and Thursdays were called the days of congregation or synagogue, or *Yom haKenisah*.

Synagogues arose throughout the land of Judea but also throughout all of Asia Minor, where many Jews remained in dispersion. To a Jew, the synagogue symbolized Jerusalem and home. On Sabbath or feast days, the men would gather to read the Sabbath from the lectionary. As they read and studied from the synagogue's treasured Torah scroll, which was

We will make the case in this book that the Calendar is a *weighty matter*, worthy of our study. We will also make the case that the Calendar is *knowable* to us today.

We will show you how to use Yehovah's timepieces in the sky in a simple way, just as we taught our own children. We will use Scripture throughout so that you can study it for yourself.

We want the word to be very near you as well, in your mouth and in your heart—that you may do it.



housed in a special Ark, or case, on the southern end of the building, they were uniting with fellow Jews all across the Roman world.¹

A synagogue could not be built in a town unless it contained a minimum of ten *batlanim*, or men who had time to devote to the synagogue's worship and care. On the other hand, a place that had a *minyan*, or a minimum of ten households, was obligated under Jewish custom to build a synagogue and could enforce a local tax to pay for its construction and maintenance.²

During Paul's travels through Asia Minor, he left the city of Thessalonica and moved on to the city of Berea.

Then the brethren immediately sent Paul

1 Alfred Edersheim, *The Life and Times of Jesus the Messiah*, vol. Volume 1 (Grand Rapids, Michigan: Eerdmans, 1971), Book I, chap. 6, 71.

2 Edersheim, Book III, chap. 10, 431-434.

*and Silas away by night to Berea. When they arrived, they went into the synagogue of the Jews. These were more fair-minded than those in Thessalonica, in that they received the Word with all readiness, and searched the Scriptures daily to find out whether these things were so. Therefore many of them believed, and also not a few of the Greeks, prominent women as well as men.*³

The Berean people were “more fair-minded,” or as the King James Bible says it, “more noble” than the believers in Thessalonica. The Greek word is *eugenes* or “well born or of a noble family.”⁴ The Berean people acted like they were noblemen when they opened their Torah scroll to verify the truth of Paul’s words.

It’s easy to see why. Not every synagogue in Asia Minor in the first century had enough money to purchase a Torah scroll. As one scholar noted about Torah scrolls, each one would take between six months and a year to make, requiring a full-time סופר (*sopher* or scribe) who was paid a full-time professional wage of between \$50,000 and \$75,000 per scroll in today’s dollars. Ordinary people did not own books because they were too expensive. Jewish boys, like Yeshua or Peter, would have learned to read at Hebrew school, but one scroll per village was not uncommon.⁵

Thessalonica was evidently too poor to have their own copy of the Scriptures, but those in Berea were “more noble,” more rich.

The word “honest” or “noble” in Philippians 4:8 means “honorable or weighty,” from the Hebrew word נכבד, or *nichbad*.⁶ The first use of this word in Scripture is talking about Abraham and his wealth.

“And Abram was very rich (nichbad) in cattle, in silver, and in gold” (Genesis 13:2).

Literally, he was heavy in cattle, in silver, and in gold. He was *loaded!*

The Bereans were considered *loaded* with wealth because they could afford a Torah scroll, and they weren’t shy about using it, unrolling it meticulously to carefully check what Paul said about Yeshua being the Messiah of Israel.

Why did they check it so carefully?

Because in their Torah scroll, Yehovah had said,

“I will raise up for them a Prophet like [Moses] from among their brethren, and will put My words in His mouth, and He shall speak to them all that I command Him. And it shall be that whoever will not hear My words, which He speaks in My name, I will require it of him.”⁷

They were discerning, knowing that if they didn’t listen to the Prophet who was coming, who would speak the very words of Yehovah, then they would be guilty.

So when Paul showed up in Berea with a “new teaching” identifying their Messiah as Yeshua of Nazareth who had risen from the dead, these good Jews rushed to the synagogue. They carefully spent time in their Torah scroll, comparing each prophecy, each word, each command to the stories they had heard about Yeshua. In faith, when they saw the written Word and knew that it had come to pass, they accepted Yeshua as their Messiah, too.⁸

Those of us who live in the twenty-first century are *loaded* with benefits since we can study the Bible in the comfort of our own homes. Access to the original languages and to exhaustive study tools is as close as the cell phones we hold in our hands.

As you study about the Calendar—or any other weighty matter from the Torah—be sure to open your own “Torah scroll” and verify that the things you have heard are so!

3 Acts 17:10-12

4 “G2104 - Eugēnēs - Strong’s Greek Lexicon (Kjv),” Blue Letter Bible, accessed February 25, 2025, https://www.blueletterbible.org/kjv/gen/1/1/s_1001.

5 “The History of Writing,” accessed February 24, 2025, https://www2.latech.edu/~bimagee/460-560/history_of_writing/History_of_Writing.html.

6 “AHLB - Kaph,” accessed February 24, 2025, <https://www.ancient-hebrew.org/ahlb/kaph.html#3513>.

7 Deuteronomy 18:18-19

8 Anne Elliott, “Soapboxes and Weighty Matters,” accessed February 24, 2025, <https://anneelliott.com/2021/11/soapboxes-and-weighty-matters/>.

Be a Berean



1. According to Deuteronomy 31:10-14, how often was the law to be read before all Israel?
2. Who was to be present for that reading?
3. What 4 reasons were given for this reading? (See verses 12-13.)
 - that they may _____
 - that they may learn to _____
 - that they may carefully _____
 - that their children may _____ and learn to _____
4. According to Deuteronomy 30:11-14, why is the commandment of Yehovah “very near you, in your mouth and in your heart, that you may do it”?
 - It is not too _____ (v. 11)
 - It is not _____ (v. 11)
 - It is not in _____ (v. 12)
 - It is not beyond the _____ (v. 13)
5. Using a Strong's concordance¹ or Hebrew lexicon², look up the definition of “mysterious” in verse 11.
6. According to Exodus 12:18, on what dates were the Israelites to eat unleavened bread?

1 A free Strong's concordance and other Bible-study tools are available at Blue Letter Bible. For an example of how to use the available tools to study Deuteronomy 30:11, visit <https://homeschoolingtora.com/links/blue-letter-bible-example>.



2 A free Hebrew lexicon is available online at <https://homeschoolingtora.com/links/ancient-hebrew-lexicon>.





7. According to Exodus 12:19-20, what was the punishment for eating leaven on those dates?
8. According to Leviticus 23:27, when was the Day of Atonement? (See also verse 32.)
9. According to Leviticus 23:29-30, what was the punishment for not being afflicted or for doing any work on that same day?
10. According to Exodus 31:14-15, on what day of the week is no work to be done?
11. What is the punishment for working on that day?
12. According to Psalm 119:89-91, how long do Yehovah's word and His ordinances last?
13. According to Isaiah 53:5-8, why was the Messiah "wounded" (v. 5) and "cut off" (v. 8)?
14. According to 1 John 3:4, what is the definition of sin?
15. Copy Romans 6:1-2. Memorize this verse!



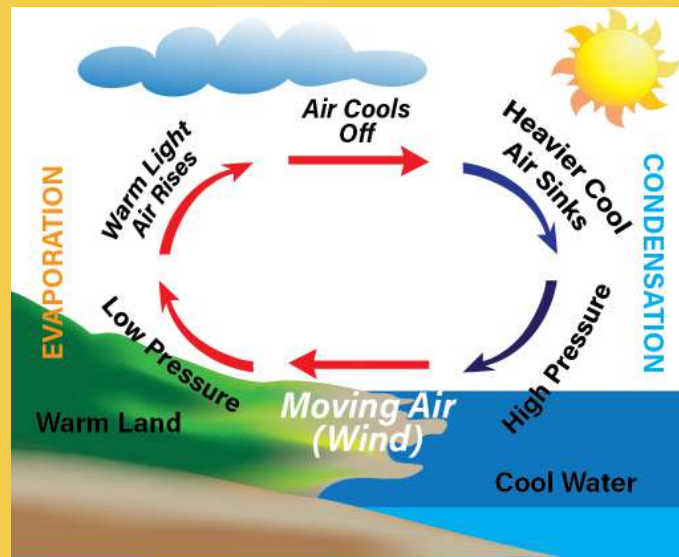
EVAPORATION

According to Genesis 8:1, after the Flood God sent a powerful wind sweeping across the earth to dry out the soaked ground. Water was everywhere, so the wind wasn't random—it was working with the water in a fascinating way. Here's how evaporation and wind teamed up to make the earth habitable again:

Water Vanished into the Air: All that floodwater started evaporating—turning into invisible vapor. As it did, it sucked up heat from its surroundings, cooling the air above it, much like how a sweaty shirt cools you off on a hot day. The chilled air became denser and heavier.

Heavy Air Dropped, Light Air Rose: The cool, heavy air sank toward the ground, creating high-pressure zones—places where the air was packed tight. At the same time, the water vapor mixed into the air, making it humid and lighter than dry air. The lighter, humid air rose, forming low-pressure zones where the air was more spread out.

Wind Kicked In: Air naturally flows from high pressure to low pressure—like water running downhill. That flow is wind. After the Flood, with massive amounts of water evaporating, the cool air sank and humid air rose all across the earth. The movement



would have fueled intense winds, helping God's plan to dry the earth.

Storms and Beyond: On a bigger scale, evaporation drives weather. Over oceans, evaporating water pumps energy into the air as vapor. When that vapor condenses into clouds, it releases heat, powering everything from breezes to monster storms like hurricanes. After the Flood, that strong wind likely got an extra push from all the evaporation happening.

So, when God sent the wind in Genesis 8:1, evaporation was the tool He used. Water vapor shifted the air—cooling it, lifting it, moving it—turning a drenched world into a windy cleanup operation.

Finally, as Noah removed the covering of the ark and looked out, he saw two things. First, the surface of the ground was dry. As dry land appeared and water evaporation slowed, the sky could have been visible again. For the first time in over ten months, Noah would have been able to use the “lights in the firmament of the heaven” to determine the exact year, month, and day.

And in the second month, on the twenty-seventh day of the month, the earth was dried. Then God spoke to Noah, saying, “Go out of the ark, you and your wife, and your sons and your sons’ wives with you.”²²

Almost two months later, after recording a very specific date in his *toldot*, Noah and his family exited the ark.

CHANGES DURING THE FLOOD

Near the end of his *toldot*, Yehovah gave Noah instruction about the Calendar that has been preserved for us. He told Noah that something new was happening on the earth—and would continue for as long as the earth remains.

*While the earth remains,
Seedtime and harvest,
Cold and heat,*

22 Genesis 8:14-16

And Yehovah said, "Shall I hide from Abraham what I am doing, since Abraham shall surely become a great and mighty nation, and all the nations of the earth shall be blessed in him? **For I have known him, in order that he may command his children and his household after him,** that they keep the way of Yehovah, to do righteousness and justice, that Yehovah may bring to Abraham what He has spoken to him."⁴⁴

The *toldot* record that Abraham faithfully passed on the commandments of Yehovah to his children and household.

Then Yehovah appeared to [Isaac, Abraham's son] and said: "Do not go down to Egypt; live in the land of which I shall tell you. Dwell in this land, and I will be with you and bless you; for to you and your descendants I give all these lands, and I will perform the oath which I swore to Abraham your father. And I will make your descendants multiply as the stars of heaven; I will give to your descendants all these lands; and in your seed all the nations of the earth shall be blessed; because **Abraham obeyed My voice and kept My charge, My commandments, My statutes, and My laws.**"⁴⁵

As we will discover, the families that scattered after building a tower at Babel did not always obey Yehovah's voice or keep His charge, His commandments, His statutes, and His laws. One way in which they departed from the instruction He gave them, likely through Noah and his sons, was by corrupting the calendar.

Nevertheless, even with a tilted Earth and months that now varied in length, the "lights in the firmament of the heaven" continued to govern time, as we will soon see. The Patriarchs faithfully kept Yehovah's calendar. They just didn't pass the specifics on to us in the *toldot*.

44 Genesis 18:17-19

45 Genesis 26:2-5

THE PHASES OF THE MOON

From our perspective on Earth, the moon circles around us once per month. The moon also rotates on its axis once per month, which makes it so we can always see the same side of the moon facing us.

Meanwhile, the sun is also on a course through the heavens that repeats once a year. The moon does not make its own light—it reflects the sun's light. Depending on where the moon is as it circles the earth, we see different amounts of that reflected light. We call these "phases" of the moon, and they happen in a cycle that repeats every month. Here's how it works:

Waxing Crescent: A tiny sliver of light appears on the right side, in the western sky after sunset. "Waxing" means growing!

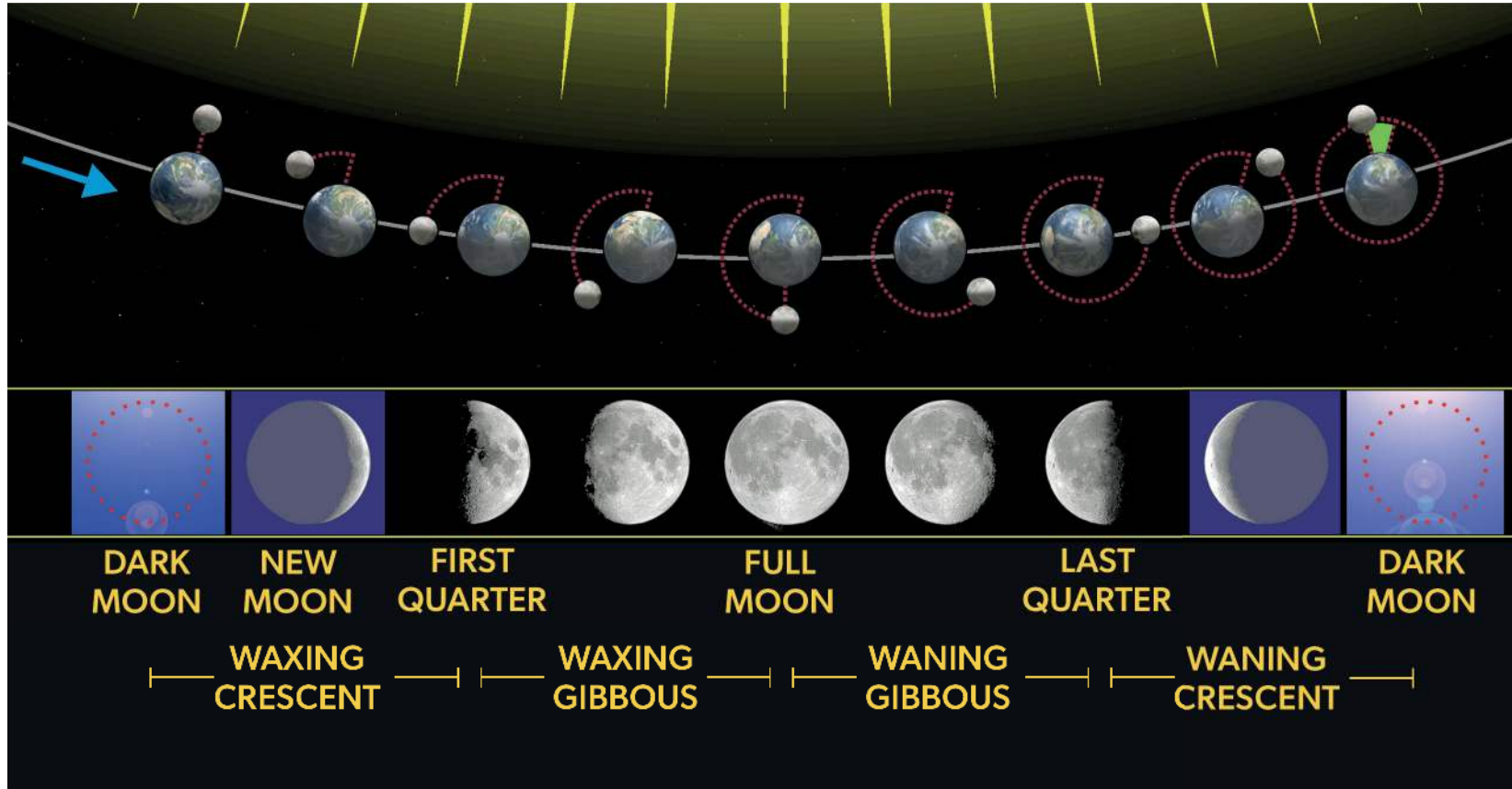
First Quarter: Half the moon is lit up on the right side. It looks like someone cut the moon in half—it's a quarter of the way through its cycle.

Waxing Gibbous: More than half is lit now, and it's still growing. It comes from an old Latin word, "gibbosus," which means "humped" or "swollen." It's like a big, lumpy ball of light.

Full Moon: The whole moon is bright and round! Earth is between the moon and the sun, so as we face away from the sun to see the moon at night, we see all the sunlight bouncing off it.

Waning Gibbous: The light starts shrinking on the left side. "Waning" means getting smaller.

Last Quarter: Half the moon is lit again, but now on the left side. It's three-quarters through the cycle.



Waning Crescent: Just a tiny sliver is visible on the left, in the eastern sky before sunrise.

Dark Moon: The moon is directly between the earth and the sun, so the side of the moon facing us is dark. It's like the moon is hiding—we can't see it! (Note: Astronomy calls this a "new moon.")

The cycle keeps going because the moon is always moving around the earth, changing how much of its sunny side we can see.

The moon takes about 27.3 days to orbit all the way around the earth—but here's the tricky part: Earth is moving, too! While the moon is circling us, the Earth and Sun are participating in their own circular courses through the sky. This means the moon has to catch up a little extra to get back to the same spot between the earth and the sun.

Think of it like this: You're running a track around a field, and your friend is walking forward at the same time. Even after you finish one lap, your friend has moved, so you need to run a couple more steps to line up with him again. For the moon, those "extra steps" take about 2 more days, making it 29.5 days total for us on Earth to see the full cycle of phases.

Israel sees the Waxing Crescent about a day earlier than observers in the United States each month. The moon's position in space is the same for everyone on Earth at any given moment, but because Earth is spinning and divided into time zones, that "moment" hits different places at different local times.

Now, here's where it gets interesting: historically, the Jewish calendar (like for *Rosh Chodesh*, the new month) starts when people first see the tiny crescent moon after the dark moon. Israel is about 7 hours ahead of where we live in Michigan (Eastern Time) because of time zones. So, if the new moon happens in the evening after sunset in Israel (when they can look for the crescent), it will still be afternoon in Michigan—too early to see it. Plus, Israel is farther east, so as the earth turns, they get to "peek" at the moon a bit sooner after it starts waxing.

Astronomically, the phases of the moon happen at the same instant everywhere. But practically—because of time zones, Earth's rotation, and when people check the sky—places like Israel might celebrate or notice the new moon's effects (like the first crescent) a little earlier than Michigan. It's like two friends watching the same movie, but one starts it a few hours ahead.

CYCLE OF THE NILE FLOODS

Egyptian farmers divided their year into three seasons, based on the cycles of the Nile River:

- **Akhet - the inundation (June-September): The Flooding Season.**

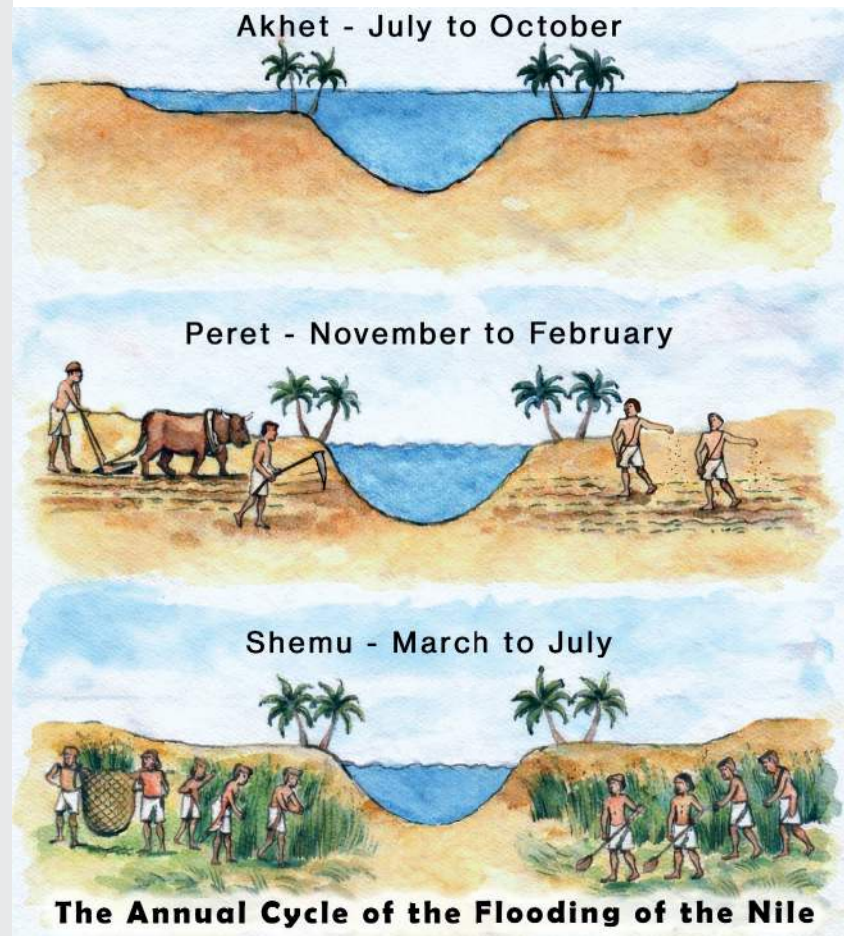
No farming was done at this time, as all the fields were flooded. Instead, many farmers worked for the pharaoh (king), building pyramids or temples. Some of the time was spent mending their tools and looking after animals.

- **Peret (October-February): The Growing Season.**

In October the floodwaters receded, leaving behind a layer of rich, black soil. This fertile soil was then ploughed and seeded.

- **Shemu (March-May): The Harvesting Season.**

The fully grown crops had to be cut down (harvested) and removed before the Nile flooded again.¹¹



Duncan explains:

The most plausible explanation is the Nile. Herodotus called Egypt “the gift of the Nile,” and anyone who has visited understands instantly the division between the green along the river and the brown of the desert, between life and death. The Nile was responsible for the crops, the commerce, and the continuity of Egypt. The ancient Egyptians called it simply “the sea.” Flooding from late June till late October, the Nile each year brought down rich silt for crops to be grown from October to February, and harvested from February until the end of June. There were three seasons of life in Egypt: flooding, growth, and harvest. The regularity of this cycle and the availability of the great river as a natural timepiece provided an easy and dramatic alternative to the moon.

...All an early Egyptian farmer needed to do was plant a tall reed in the mud along the river

*bank, cut a notch to measure the high point of the floods, and then count the days until the next high-water mark, which would occur almost exactly one year later. This simple device, called a nilometer, was then the most accurate calendar in the world, **based on the seasons as regulated by the earth’s orbit and the tilt of its axis rather than on the phases of the moon.***

*Egyptian astronomers supplemented the nilometer with another discovery that made their solar year even more accurate: that Sirius, the Dog Star and the brightest star in the sky, ascends in the dawn sky once a year in a direct line with the rising sun. Sirius’s appearance happened to coincide with the Nile’s annual flood; it also became the first day of the month of Thoth, the Egyptian New Year’s Day, commemorated annually with elaborate ceremonies that began **when Sirius appeared on top of obelisks***

¹¹ “Facebook,” accessed March 4, 2025, <https://www.facebook.com/TheArchaeologistOfficial/photos/cycle-of-the-nile-floodsegyptian-farmers-divided-their-year-into-three-seasons-b/629651175205578/>.



THE OMER OFFERING

According to the Temple Institute,

On the 16th day of [the first month], the barley to be used in the Omer offering was harvested in a grand public event. Residents of the villages surrounding Jerusalem would all come out to take part in the joyous occasion.

After completing the harvest, the kohanim, (priests), would bring baskets filled with barley to the eastern side of the inner Temple courtyard. There, the newly ripened grain was beaten, roasted, and sifted in thirteen sieves. A handful of the flour was burned on the altar, and the rest was eaten by the kohanim.

Torah states that the first grain offering must consist of fresh barley kernels roasted in a perforated pan, and then ground into a coarse meal. "You must place olive oil and frankincense on it..." (Leviticus 2:15)

Next, the kohen must "wave the Omer before G-d." (Leviticus 23:11) This was done in front of the northeast corner of the altar, the kohen facing westward.

The final step of the Omer offering involved the kohen scooping out a handful of flour from the meal mixture and placing it on the fire atop the altar. This was followed by the bringing of a single male sheep as a burnt offering. From this point on, grain from the new harvest could be eaten.

After waving the Omer at the northeast corner of the altar, the kohen presented the first grain offering before the southwest corner of the altar. This was standard procedure for nearly all meal-offerings.⁵²

flour if it was crushed.⁵⁵

Jewish sages writing around A.D. 200 give us a fascinating look at how the firstfruit offering of barley flour was carried out at that time:

How would they perform the rite of the harvest of the omer? Emissaries of the court would emerge on the eve of the festival of Passover and fashion the stalks of barley into sheaves while the stalks were still attached to the ground, so that it would be convenient to reap them. The residents of all the towns adjacent to the site of the harvest would assemble there, so that it would be harvested with great fanfare.

Once it grew dark, the court emissary says to those assembled: Did the sun set?

The assembly says in response: Yes.

The emissary repeats: Did the sun set?

They again say: Yes.

The court emissary next says to those assembled: Shall I reap the sheaves with this sickle?

The assembly says in response: Yes.

⁵⁵ "<https://Readyanswers.Org/PathfinderBibleExperience/Exodus/ConstraintsHinOmerEphah.Pdf>," accessed February 12, 2025, <https://readyanswers.org/PathfinderBibleExperience/Exodus/ConstraintsHinOmerEphah.pdf>.

WHERE IS A 13TH MONTH IN THE BIBLE?

The Torah clearly states that after sighting the first new moon after finding *aviv* barley, the new year should begin so that the proper offerings can be brought at their commanded times. However, what would be done if the barley was not *aviv* by the new moon—and thus not ripe enough for offering the firstfruits? Does the Bible ever say how many months are in a year? Does the Bible mention adding a 13th month?

We pondered these questions, but as we searched the Bible, the only two places that mentioned the number of months in a year were 1 Chronicles 27 and 1 Kings 4. (You should read these chapters.)

1 Chronicles tells about the military divisions set up during the reign of King David.

“These divisions came in and went out month by month throughout all the months of the year, each division having twenty-four thousand.”¹

The passage then lists twelve captains, one over each division, specifically naming which of the twelve months of the year each captain would serve.²

1 Kings tells about twelve governors placed over all of Israel by King Solomon. Each governor provided food for the king and his household, one governor making provisions for each month of the year, with twelve governors in total.³

We could find no command in the Bible that there could only be twelve months. Even still, King David and King Solomon were clearly only expecting twelve months.

However, as we looked closer at 1 Kings 4:1-19, we realized that a thirteenth month was provided for.

We were surprised to find a clue in a book from the 1990s on Bible chronology. The author mentioned in passing that in this case, the twelfth month would become an extended long month—a second twelfth month. He mentioned that after the Babylonian captivity, the Jewish people began to adopt Babylonian names for months. The twelfth month became known as the month of *Adar*. If there was not enough *aviv* barley to declare a new year, they would have a second month of *Adar*, known as *Adar II*, *Adar Bet*, or *Ve'Adar*.⁴

We searched for a second witness, one that was a little closer to Bible times. We went back to 1 Kings 4 and tried to understand the governors that Solomon placed over all of Israel to supply food for him and his household.

Like similar “boring” passages of the Bible, the text began naming men we had never heard of, in places we had never been.

1. Ben-Hur—governor of the mountains of Ephraim
2. Ben-Deker—governor over Makaz, Shaalbim, Beth Shemesh, and Elon Beth Hanan
3. Ben-Hesed—governor of Arubboth, over the Sochoh and all the land of Hopher
4. Ben-Abinadab—governor over all the regions of Dor
5. Baana Ben-Ahilud—governor of Taanach, Megiddo, and all the area of Beth Shean
6. Ben-Geber—governor of Romoth Gilead, the towns of Jair in Gilead, and also the region of Argob in Bashan, which included sixty large cities
7. Ahinadab Ben-Iddo—governor of the city of Mahanaim
8. Ahimaaz—governor over the region of Naphtali
9. Baanah Ben-Hushai—governor over Husai, in the region of Asher and Aloth
10. Jehoshaphat Ben-Paruah—governor over Issachar
11. Shimei Ben-Elah—governor over Benjamin

1 1 Chronicles 27:1

2 1 Chronicles 27:1-15

3 1 Kings 4:1-31

4 Jones, *The Chronology of the Old Testament: A Return to the Basics*, 108–9.

Solomon's List of Governors

1 Kings 4:7-19

- District 1:** Mountains of Ephraim
Governor: Ben-Hur
- District 2:** Makaz
Governor: Ben-Deker
- District 3:** Arubboth
Governor: Ben-Hesed
- District 4:** Dor
Governor: Ben-Abinadab (Solomon's son-in-law)
- District 5:** Taanach
Governor: Baana Ben-Ahilud
- District 6:** Ramoth-Gilead
Governor: Ben-Geber
- District 7:** Mahanaim
Governor: Ahinadab
- District 8:** Naphtali
Governor: Ahimaaaz (Solomon's son-in-law)
- District 9:** Asher and Aloth
Governor: Baanah Ben-Hushai
- District 10:** Issachar
Governor: Ben-Geber
- District 11:** Benjamin
Governor: Shimei
- District 12:** Gilead
Governor: Geber





12. Geber Ben-Uri—governor in the land of Gilead, in the country of Sihon king of the Amorites, and of Og king of Bashan

This was a long list of names and places, but the last name—Geber Ben-Uri—had a detail that was different than all the other governors. It stated that “he was the only governor who was in the land” of Gilead.

My wife and I are not from Israel, so we didn't have any context for these places, but the ancient Israelites would have certainly recognized each one. They would have known that the land, or *eretz*, of Gilead was larger than the other agricultural regions in the list.⁵ Gilead's land was also very fertile, so it could potentially grow more food than the others.⁶

Geber was listed as “the only governor who was in the land” of Gilead. Why was he alone given such a big territory from which to collect the levy of food for Solomon?

We knew that Solomon was famous for being wise and just, and we did not believe that the Scriptures would include random details without a reason.

These twelve governors would be responsible for collecting the taxes for Solomon. Being a governor over a larger, more fertile land would give Geber an easier job than all the other governors. He would have been able to ask for lower taxes from the people than the other governors—potentially making him more well-liked than the other governors.

We consulted various commentaries, and we were

excited to find something in John Gill's *Exposition of the Bible*.⁷ Gill mentioned that the Jewish writers in the Talmud say that Geber was an “officer appointed for the intercalated month, when there were thirteen months in the year.”⁸ We researched for ourselves and found this reference in the Babylonian Talmud, in the section for the Sanhedrin.

*Because it is written, Now Solomon had twelve Officers [Nezibim] over all Israel who provided victuals for the king and his household; each man his month in the year... Rabbi Nahman is of the opinion that [Geber] refers to the special officer in charge of the provisions during the intercalated month.*⁹

In other words, because the land of Gilead was exceptionally well suited to farming, though he was assigned to the twelfth month—and some years a thirteenth month—Geber would have been able to provide more food to Solomon than all the other governors. Solomon was very wise indeed!

So in conclusion, there is no “thirteenth month” called as such in the Bible. However, the evidence shows that the kings of Israel realized that they could not declare a new year if *aviv* barley was not available. The twelfth month could potentially last twice as long as the other months, so the Scriptures record that the kings ensured systems were in place to support this longer time.

5 Some regions were larger in area but contained more cities or land that was not as fertile.

6 “Agriculture - Encyclopedia of The Bible - Bible Gateway,” accessed March 2, 2025, <https://www.biblegateway.com/resources/encyclopedia-of-the-bible/Agriculture>.

7 Gill writes, “He preached in the same church as C. H. Spurgeon over one hundred years earlier, yet most people today have never heard of him. This is unfortunate since he was known as an expert on the ancient writings of the Jews.”

8 “1 Kings 4:19 - Bible Verse Meaning and Commentary,” Bible Study Tools, accessed March 2, 2025, <https://www.biblestudytools.com/commentaries/gills-exposition-of-the-bible/1-kings-4-19.html>.

9 “Babylonian Talmud: Sanhedrin 12,” accessed March 2, 2025, http://www.come-and-hear.com/sanhedrin/sanhedrin_12.html.

07

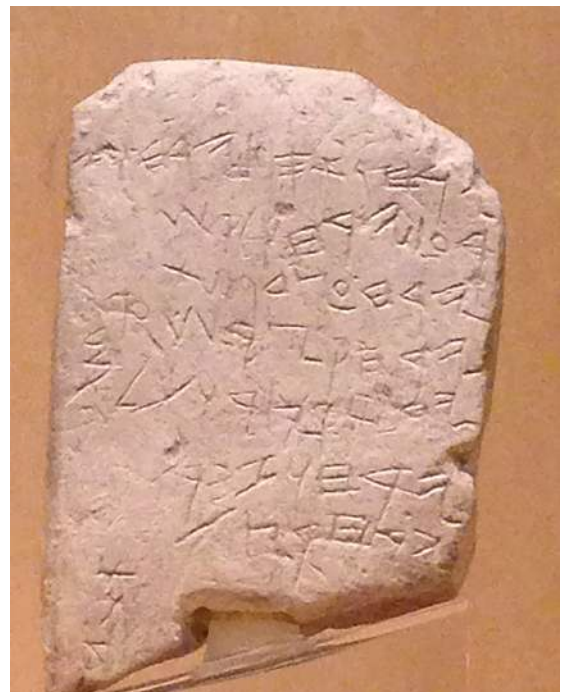
STANDING STONES

YEHOVAH WARNED HIS PEOPLE TO CAREFULLY GUARD, HIS SABBATHS—FROM THE WEEKLY SABBATH, TO THE SABBATH DAYS DURING THE ANNUAL FEASTS, TO THE SEVEN-YEAR SABBATHS FOR THE LAND.

Alongside His warning to guard His calendar, He also warned them not to make idols, carved images, or “sacred pillars” and engraved stones for the gods of the nations surrounding them.

You shall not make idols for yourselves; neither a carved image nor a sacred pillar shall you rear up for yourselves; nor shall you set up an engraved stone in your land, to bow down to it; for I am Yehovah your God. You shall keep [or guard] My Sabbaths and reverence My sanctuary: I am Yehovah.¹

These “sacred pillars,” also called standing stones or **מַצֵּבוֹת**, *matsevoth*, are found erected across the Middle East, but also across Europe, the British Isles, and through-



out Asia and the Americas. They served a variety of purposes, from inscriptions of important events and stories of the gods they commemorated, to markers for the solstices and equinoxes to better track the movement of the sun and moon across the sky.

Because the pagan nations chose to ignore

¹ Leviticus 26:1-3



the God of Creation, each invented artificial means for observing calendars, feast days for their gods, and important events such as the coronations of their kings.

OBEDIENT WORSHIP BY JOSHUA

The books of the Torah, especially Exodus, Leviticus, and Deuteronomy, explain Yehovah's calendar in detail. Moses carefully wrote all His instructions down and gave them to Joshua to carry out when Israel entered the Promised Land. These instructions would make the daily conduct of the Israelites extremely different — set apart and peculiar — from all the nations around them.

After wandering in the desert for forty years, Yehovah had finally led the people of Israel to the entrance of the Promised Land, near the city of Jericho. From where they were encamped on the eastern side of the Jordan River, they could see across to the walled city, with fields surrounding it. Some of the fields were used for growing flax, while others grew barley and likely wheat.

The previous November to December, the flax seeds were densely planted in the fields so that the flax would grow straight, making it most useful for

making fabric. After growing for 100-120 days, the flax stalks were carefully harvested by hand in the early morning, when the ground was moist with the dew, so that none of the precious flax stalks were harmed. The flax was then laid on the ground to dry in the sun for about two weeks. Next, the laborers would submerge the flax in water to “ret” it, a process by which the bacteria in the stalks would help to break down some of the pectin that bound the flax fibers to their wood stems and begin to soften the flax. Finally, the flax was laid out in the sunshine for another few weeks, to thoroughly dry it before it could be beaten and begun to be made into fibers for cloth.²

It was at this exact time of year when Joshua sent out two spies to Jericho, who were hidden under the stalks of drying flax, up on the rooftop of Rahab's home in the wall of Jericho.³ The spies safely escaped, hid for three days in the mountains, and then returned to Joshua to report everything they had heard in Jericho.⁴

At this point, Yehovah did a great miracle, as Joshua led the people of Israel to the banks of the Jordan River. The time of year was when “*the Jordan overflows all its banks during the whole time of the [barley]*

² “From Flax to Fabric: Linen in Ancient Egypt – Scarabs and Silk,” accessed March 23, 2025, <https://scarabsandsilk.com/from-flax-to-fabric-linen-in-ancient-egypt/>.

³ Joshua 2:6

⁴ Joshua 2:22-24

THE MOLAD

One of the most important—and often misunderstood—features of the fixed rabbinic calendar is the *molad*.

The Hebrew word *molad* means “birth.” In calendar terms, it refers to the calculated moment when a new lunar cycle begins—the point when the moon and sun are aligned. This is not determined by watching the sky. It is calculated mathematically.

The fixed rabbinic calendar uses a standardized lunar month of 29 days, 12 hours, 793 parts (*chalakim*).

Using this average length, the calendar calculates the molad for each month and then builds the yearly structure from those calculations.

CALCULATED, NOT OBSERVED

In earlier biblical practice, the beginning of a month was tied to observation—witnesses watching for the first visible crescent of the moon.

The molad is different. It does not depend on human testimony, weather conditions, visibility, or location. Instead, it uses a predictable mathematical model of the moon’s cycle. This allowed the calendar to function without a central court needing to receive witnesses and without dependence on observation in the land of Israel. It allowed for manmade unity as Israel was dispersed across the known world.

THE “AVERAGE” LUNAR ALIGNMENT

The molad is not the visible new moon. It is also not always the exact astronomical alignment. It is an average (or “mean”) moment. To understand this, consider this illustration:

If you track sunrise every day for a year, the time shifts slightly—earlier and later—because of Earth’s tilted axis and the slightly irregular speed of its orbit. However, you can still calculate an average sunrise time for planning purposes.

In the same way, the moon’s orbit is not perfectly regular. The exact alignment of sun and moon varies slightly each month. But over long periods, the average cycle is predictable.

The rabbinic calendar uses that predictable average, and this is what is meant by a mean calculation. It is

a standardized mathematical model representing the typical pattern, even though individual months may differ slightly in reality.

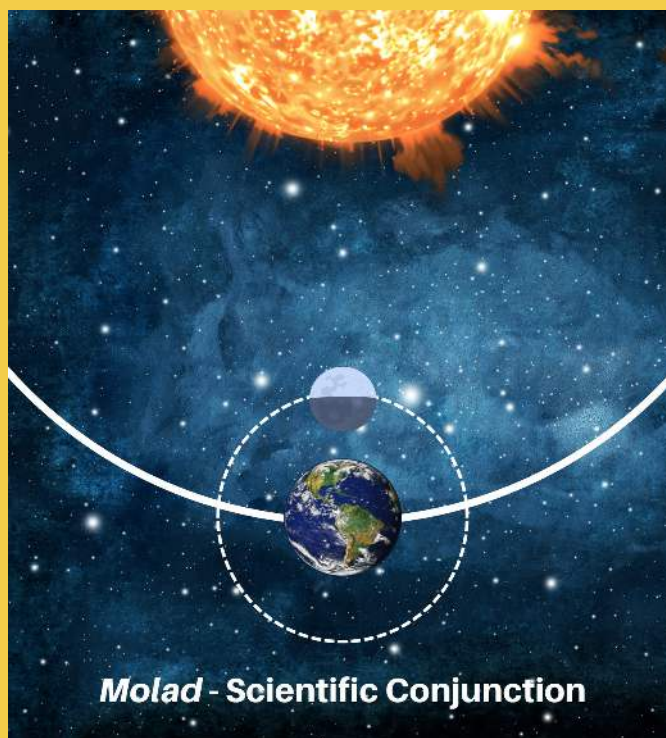
HOW THE MOLAD SHAPES THE CALENDAR

Once the molad is calculated, it becomes the structural anchor for the calendar, establishing the rhythm of lunar months. It also feeds into the 19-year (metanonic) cycle of leap years (see page 126). It helps determine when biblical feasts will fall, and provides a framework for long-term timekeeping. In this sense, the molad is not merely an astronomical idea—it is the backbone of the fixed solar calendar system.

WHAT THE MOLAD IS NOT

Because the term is often misunderstood, several clarifications are important:

- It is not the visible new moon. The visible crescent appears later, after the moon separates from the sun enough to be seen.
- It is not always the exact astronomical conjunction. Modern astronomy can calculate the precise moment of alignment for each month, but the rabbinic molad is based on an average cycle rather than each month’s exact position.
- It is a mathematical model. It represents the regular pattern of the moon’s movement rather than the precise conditions of any single night.





(Top) As barley ripens toward the *aviv* stage, the forming seeds cause the plant to bend with their weight. (Bottom Left) Like wheat, barley first enters the worm stage (not yet *aviv*), where the forming seed inside the head of barley cannot hold its shape when squished. (Bottom Middle) It continues to the dough stage (*aviv*), where the seeds have the consistency of bread dough when the head of grain is opened and the seed is pressed. (Bottom right) The worm stage is more formally known as the milk stage. The kernels have no usable seeds in them but can look further along to the inexperienced eye.

fall. He causes the barley to grow.⁶⁷ Observers are merely witnesses, testifying to what He has done in the Land. Scripture itself establishes truth “by two or three witnesses.”⁶⁸

Yet the absence of a universally recognized decision-making body means disagreements cannot be conclusively resolved. When observers disagree about the stage of barley, the quantity required, or the timing of confirmation, communities may divide—not because Scripture is rejected, but because interpretation differs.

A second challenge arises in defining *aviv*. The Torah identifies *aviv* as a stage of barley, but it does not provide a technical agricultural definition.

According to what we can read in Scripture, barley which is in the state of *aviv* has three characteristics, which Karaites affirm.⁶⁹

1. It is brittle enough to be destroyed by hail and has begun to lighten in color (it is not “dark”).⁷⁰
2. The seeds have produced enough dry material so it can be eaten parched.⁷¹
3. It has developed enough so that it will be harvest-ready 2-3 weeks later, on the day the firstfruits are waved before Yehovah.⁷²

But even with these characteristics, several questions can arise:

- What exact stage qualifies?

67 Deuteronomy 11:11-15

68 Deuteronomy 19:15; Matthew 18:16

69 Nehemia Gordon, “Aviv Barley in the Biblical Calendar,” Nehemia’s Wall, February 24, 2016, <https://www.nehemiaswall.com/aviv-barley-in-the-biblical-calendar>.

70 Exodus 9:31-32

71 Leviticus 2:14

72 Leviticus 23:10-11

12

FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS

T HIS CHAPTER IS MEANT TO SERVE AS A SIMPLE, PRACTICAL REFERENCE—A PLACE YOU CAN QUICKLY TURN WHEN QUESTIONS ARISE.

Each topic has been answered briefly and directly, with the goal of bringing clarity without unnecessary complication. More detailed explanations and the full biblical foundation for these answers are developed throughout the earlier chapters of this book.

FOUNDATIONAL CONFIDENCE

Is it possible to know the right calendar with certainty?

Scripture does not present Yehovah's commands as unknowable or out of reach, but as something near enough to be understood and obeyed: "For this commandment which I command you today is not too mysterious for you, nor is it far off... But the word is very near you, in your mouth and in your heart, that you may do it" (Deuteronomy 30:11–14). When His Word was read in the days of Nehemiah, the people were helped to understand it clearly (Nehemiah 8:8), and the writer of Hebrews reminds us that discernment



HOMESCHOOLING RESOURCES

YEHOVAH DID NOT INTEND FOR HIS CALENDAR TO BE HIDDEN. HE PLACED IT WHERE WE CAN WITNESS IT IN OUR DAILY LIVES.

The *aviv* barley in the Land of Israel marks the beginning of the year. The crescent moon in the western sky at sunset marks the beginning of each month. The setting sun marks the beginning of each new day.

For many families today, these things feel distant. We live in a society that uses calendars and clocks on our electronic devices. But Yehovah's calendar does not have to remain in the ancient past.

Your children can learn to observe and recognize how to tell time His way. It's truly simple enough for anyone to learn.



BEFORE YOU BEGIN

This study is not meant to be complicated. You are not trying to master agriculture or astronomy in a few weeks.

You are simply helping your children begin to:

- Notice what Yehovah has made.
- Recognize patterns in His creation.
- Respond carefully to what they see.

If a day feels full, do less. If your children are engaged, linger longer. Consistency matters more than completeness.