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QH 8.2

WHY USE THE COMPLETE BELIEVER'S CALENDAR

In recent years there has been a great return of the people of YHWH to His Torah and to His way of living. Yisrael is finally awakening from her long slumber, and with this awakening has come the realization that she has strayed from many of the clear teachings of Torah and its simple truths, leaning instead upon her own understanding and devising her own ways. One of the many ways in which she has done this is by observing a flawed calendar, devised by the desires of men. It has been said that whoever controls a people's calendar controls that people. This is surely true. We can walk in the rhythm and ways of our Creator or according to the dictates of men, but we cannot do both.

The *Complete Believer's Calendar* is based upon the ancient method of determining days and months and seasons and years as set forth by YHWH in His Torah. It is the calendar which was most used by the people of Yisrael from the time of Moshe until the destruction of the Temple in 70 CE and their subsequent exile from the land. The Karaite Jews, among others, have carefully preserved and continued to use this method for centuries, and it contains no man-made additions or changes. The Karaites do not, however, produce a complete yearly calendar, but only publish their tentative estimates for new moons and holy day dates. We have found that this poses a great difficulty for many people who do not understand the mechanics and intricacies of the calendar and who need one that is plainly printed and easy to use. To that end, we publish yearly *The Complete Believer's Calendar* for the people of Yisrael in order that they might more perfectly keep the commandments and festivals of YHWH, the Holy One of Yisrael. Blessed be He, and blessed be His name.

"Thus says YHWH, Stand in the ways and see, and seek the ancient paths, where the excellent way is, and walk in it and find rest for your souls." (Yermeyahu 6:16)

The *Complete Believer's Calendar* is not the same as the fixed mathematical Jewish calendar currently in use by the majority of Judaism. It is based upon visual sightings of the new crescent moon from Yerushalayim, while the latter is calculated on a 19-year metonic cycle devised in Babylon. That calculated calendar is based upon the conjunction (darkness) of the moon, and also has numerous additional non-biblical rules and "postponements" included in it. The calculated calendar was established by Hillel II in the 4th century C.E. to preserve unity among the Jewish people in exile until such time that they returned to the land and could resume using the ancient method of sighting of the new crescent as was done by their forefathers. The Jewish homeland was reestablished in 1948 and, with the recent establishment of a new Sanhedrin, there is no further reason not to return to using the observed crescent calendar of biblical origin. Indeed, this issue is now on the agenda of the new Sanhedrin, and there is a growing grass-roots movement of people worldwide who are already returning to the ancient method.

Both secular and religious dictionaries and encyclopedias are in agreement that the original Hebrew calendar is based upon observation of the new crescent moon. The *Encyclopedia Britannica* has the following to say under "Jewish Calendar" and "Jewish Religious Year".

"In the Jewish calendar, the commencement of the month was determined by the observation of the crescent New Moon and the date of Passover was tied in with the ripening of barley. The actual witnessing of the New Moon and observing of the standing crops in Judea were required for the functioning of the religious calendar... After the destruction of the Temple in AD 70, Rabbinic

leaders took over from the priests the fixing of the religious calendar. Visual observation of the new moon was supplemented, and toward AD 200, in fact supplanted by secret astronomical calculation... To preserve the unity of Israel, the patriarch Hillel II, in 358-359 AD, published the secret of calendar making, which essentially consisted of the use of the Babylonian 19 year cycle with some modifications required by the Jewish ritual... The Karaites, a sect founded in the 8th century refused, with some exceptions, to recognize the fixed calendar and re-introduced observation of the new moon. Leap years were determined by observing the maturation of the barley crops in Palestine. Consequently Karaites often celebrate the festivals on dates different than those fixed by the Rabbis.”(Encyclopedia Britannica, 2008, DVD)

The biblical evidence for observing the new crescent moon in order to determine the new month and holy days is quite clear:

“And Elohyim said, Let lights come to be in the expanse of the heavens to separate the day from the night, and let them be for signs and appointed times, and for days and for years, and let them be for lights in the expanse of the heavens to give light on the earth. And it came to be so. And Elohyim made two great lights: the greater light to rule by day, and the lesser to rule by night, and the stars also” (B’reishyith 1:14-16)

The sun quite obviously rules the day and determines the years. The moon is the light that determines signs and appointed times. The psalmist says: “He made the moon for appointed times.” (Tehillah 104:19) The Hebrew word for “appointed times” is *moadim*. This is the same word used in Torah to tell us when to keep the festivals of YHWH, as it says,

“These are the appointed times of YHWH, holy gatherings which you are to proclaim at their appointed times.” (Vayyiqra 23:2)

There is an additional biblical command regarding the setting of times for YHWH’s festivals, and its importance cannot be overstated:

“Guard the month of Aviv, and perform the Passover to YHWH your Elohyim, for in the month of Aviv YHWH your Elohyim brought you out of Egypt by night.” (Devarym 16:1)

The word for “month” in Hebrew is *chodesh* and means “new,” always as regards a new crescent moon. In fact, the English word “month” itself derives from the word “moon.” The word *Aviv* means “green ears,” and refers specifically to a particular stage of growth of the barley crop, which is the first grain to grow each spring in the land of Israel. Thus the verse means we must guard to observe the new moon of green ears of barley, and perform Passover in that month. Each year the Karaites and others in the land of Israel go out at the end of the 12th biblical month into the fields and check the state of the new barley crop. If the barley is at the stage of *Aviv*, green ears 2-3 weeks from maturity, the next new moon is declared the “beginning of months” and the Passover occurs 14 days later. If the barley is not *Aviv*, a 13th month is declared and the new year will begin 29 or 30 days later. No system of mathematical calculations can predict these events with perfect precision, and no fixed calendar of men’s devising can ever hope to perfectly anticipate YHWH’s plans for us. We must simply wait on Him, and it is He who decides and commands when we are to observe His new moons and festivals, seasons and years, as He says,

“And YHWH spoke to Moshe and to Aharon in the land of Egypt saying, This month is the beginning of months for you, it is the first month of the year for you.” (Sh’moth 12:1-2)

Many people reason that it makes no great difference which system we use to determine the new moon, as long as we sanctify it. However, the proverb says “*There is a way that seems right to a man, but in the end it is the way of death*” (Mishle 14:12). The clearest example in scripture of the seriousness with which YHWH holds the proper date-keeping of His appointed times is probably in Vayyiqra, where He says in speaking of *Yom Kippur*,

“It is a Sabbath of rest to you; you shall afflict your souls. On the ninth day of the month at evening,

from evening to evening, you shall observe your Sabbath” (Vayyiqra 23:32)

Again, the word “month” in this passage is *chodesh*, which means “new moon”; and is the sanctifying of the month after observing the new visible crescent. The penalty for violating this commandment is called *karet*, and is worse than death, as it says,

“For any soul who is not afflicted on that same day, he shall be cut off from his people. And any soul that does any work on that same day, that soul I shall destroy from the midst of his people.”
(Vayyiqra 23:29-30)

It makes no difference whether a person observes the Sabbath and festivals of YHWH incorrectly by one day or by one month, either is wrong. Using any other than the biblical system of observing the new visible crescent in order to determine the day of the new moon will result in keeping the wrong days. To do so knowingly and willfully is a grievous sin.

Still other people reason that since the majority of believers have decided to observe the Sabbaths and festivals a certain way, it must be okay. And they reason that since a particular rabbi or other authority has sanctioned a calendar, it must be correct. About this the Torah has to say, *“Thou shalt not follow a multitude to do evil.”* (Sh’moth 23:2) No man has the authority to set aside the commandments of Elohyim for the sake of their own traditions (Mattithyahu 15 & Marcos 7). It will be argued that these things must be done for the sake of *unity*. But this argument has, from the time of the sin of the golden calf, to the sin of Yeroboam when he changed the festivals of YHWH to “the month which he had observed in his own heart, and to this present day” always failed and incurred the wrath of YHWH. The truth is, YHWH is our King and Lawgiver. We have no right to change that which He has decreed. Any new moon or festival observed other than as He has commanded is no new moon or festival of His at all.

There is one final reason above all others that most otherwise Torah observant people have resisted returning to YHWH’s own prescribed method of calendar keeping – it can be inconvenient. Often men’s best predictions of when the new moon will be sighted turn out to be wrong. That is the reason the Karaites do not print a complete calendar, because of the potential for error. When a new moon is spotted early or is delayed a day it spoils and changes men’s plans. We have a selfish and rebellious need to be in control of our own lives and the lives of others, but this is not of YHWH. The psalmist says time and again that we should *“wait on YHWH”*, and the prophet says, *“YHWH is my portion, says my soul, therefore I wait for Him.”* It is a measure of our faith and humility that we submit to Him and wait for Him in all things, regardless of how it affects our plans or convenience. We have used the best information available to produce *The Complete Believer’s Calendar*, and over time it has proven itself to be more accurate than any other we have seen. Nevertheless, some new moons and festival dates in it may turn out to be incorrect. If they are, we will provide updated information in a timely manner, both on our website and by email to those who have purchased our calendar and have requested those updates from us. This is not convenient for us to do. We do it because we love YHWH and His people. And we do it because He commands us to wait on Him. It is our hope that all of Yisrael will soon return to YHWH, keep His commandments in humility and grace, and will wait on Him.

B’Shalom,

Ovadyah