

Bible Mini-course

Lesson 11 — The Bible's Calendar

To observe Yahweh's special days, one cannot use the common calendar on the wall. Neither can one go by the Jewish calendar, which has man-made additions. Yahweh specifically gave man the calendar He expects us as True Worshipers to use. It is in the Bible and it is not difficult to learn and to follow. (The answers to the questions below are on the reverse.)

1. The sun and the moon are used for signs, seasons, days, and years.
 - a. True
 - b. False
2. The scriptural calendar is a solar calendar.
 - a. True
 - b. False
3. What is the Hebrew word for month?
 - a. Chodesh
 - b. Chadash
 - c. Abib
 - d. Moed
4. According to Yahweh's Word, what qualifies as the new moon?
 - a. the conjunction
 - b. the full moon
 - c. the first visible crescent
 - d. None of the above
5. The scriptural day begins at what time?
 - a. sunrise
 - b. sunset
 - c. midnight
 - d. noon
6. The first month of the biblical calendar includes the verification of what?
 - a. barley in the head
 - b. mature wheat
 - c. vernal equinox
 - d. winter solstice
7. Which scriptural months are mentioned in the Bible prior to the Babylonian Exile?
 - a. Ziv, Bul, Heshvan, Tebeth
 - b. Nisan, Iyyar, Ab, Adar
 - c. Abib, Ziv, Bul, Ethanim
 - d. Sivan, Tammuz, Elul, Shebat
8. The scriptural calendar averages how many days per month?
 - a. twenty-eight and one-half days
 - b. twenty-nine and one-half days
 - c. thirty and one-half days
 - d. None of the above
9. The scriptural calendar uses the vernal equinox to establish the first month.
 - a. True
 - b. False
10. The scriptural calendar consists of how many months?
 - a. ten
 - b. twelve
 - c. thirteen
 - d. Both b and c
11. How does the Jewish calendar differ from the biblical calendar?
 - a. The Jewish calendar differs in that it is a lunar calendar.
 - b. The Jewish calendar differs in the use of postponements.
 - c. The Jewish calendar differs in the use of the conjunction.
 - d. Both b and c
12. What calendar did Yahshua the Messiah use during His ministry?
 - a. Jewish calendar
 - b. scriptural calendar
 - c. both, depending on the occasion
 - d. Bible doesn't specify



Score Yourself

1. a. According to Genesis 1:14 these heavenly luminaries are used for signs, seasons, days, and years, and so both sun and moon play a part in Yahweh's biblical calendar. It's important to note that the word "seasons" found in Genesis 1:14 is from the Hebrew word *moed*, which literally means "appointed time," referring to the annual Holy Days for Yahweh's people (Lev. 23). Psalm 104:19 tells us, "He appointed the moon for seasons" (*moedim*—festivals).
2. b. Unlike the sun-based Gregorian calendar in use today, the scriptural calendar is lunar-based. The biblical calendar is set by observation of the visible new moon (Ex. 12:2; Deut. 16:1). Our word "month" derives from "moon" and yet our modern calendar completely ignores the moon in setting the month. The lunar year of 12 months (354 days) is approximately 11 days shorter than the solar year (365 1/4 days). Unlike today, the lunar calendar was the standard for ancient people (*Oxford English Dictionary*, "month").
3. a. *Chodesh*, the Hebrew word for month, literally means "new moon." It derives from *chadash*, "to be new." Grammatically it's the causative of "rebuild." The biblical new moon is a new, thin crescent in the initial stages of being rebuilt. Following the conjunction, as the moon moves away from a direct line between earth and sun, it first appears as a thin crescent. To be visible a crescent must be at least 18 hours past the point of conjunction.
4. c. The scriptural new moon is the first crescent of the moon that can be observed with the unaided eye. Using the first visible crescent of the moon to start the month was the biblical practice from Abraham to Yahshua. The Jews later dropped this method when Hillel II introduced a calculated calendar, and the Jews began using the conjunction or astronomical new moon to begin the month. ("Calendar," *Encyclopedia Judaica*). This practice poses two problems: a concealed moon fails to fit the biblical criteria for the start of a month, as the rebuilding of the moon has not even begun while the moon is completely dark. Second, we are commanded to "observe the new moon," Deuteronomy 16:1, where "observe" (*shamar*) includes the meaning of "look narrowly at, mark, watch." How can one watch for or mark something that cannot be seen? Furthermore, the conjunction moon in the Middle East can go unseen from 1.5 to 3.5 days. A conjunction-based calendar presents the problem of which of these concealed-moon days begins the month.
5. b. The scriptural day starts and ends at sunset, as we see from creation (Gen. 1:5). The word evening as found in Genesis 1:5 is from the Hebrew word *ereb*, which is sunset. Therefore, the scriptural day begins at sunset and extends through the daylight hours to end at sunset. For further proof that sunset begins the day, see Lev. 23:32; Deut. 16:6; Ex. 12:18.
6. a. The first month of the biblical year is Abib. Abib, meaning "young ears of grain," describes Mideast barley found in a certain stage of development during this month. Barley in the Middle East is a winter crop, which begins to turn green about spring. Technically the vernal equinox starts spring, which may not always correspond to Abib. While the vernal equinox can be used as an indicator it cannot be used scripturally to mark Abib and there is no mention of the vernal equinox in the Word. Once the grain is in the Abib stage the new moon of that month in which it occurs marks the beginning of the first month. For barley to be considered Abib, it must have young, green ears of grain, it must be brittle enough to be destroyed by a hailstorm and be ready for harvest in 2-3 weeks (Ex. 9:31; Lev. 23:14; Deut. 6:9).
7. c. Only four months of the scriptural calendar were given names prior to the Babylonian exile, each hinging on agriculture: *Abib* (Ex. 13:4; 23:15; 34:18; Deut. 16:1). *Ziv*, spring flowers (1Kings 6:1, 37). *Ethanim*, perennial (1Kings 8:2). *Bul*, rain (1Kings 6:38).
8. b. Being lunar, the scriptural calendar averages 29 days, 12 hours, and 44 minutes per month (*Judaica*).
9. b. Some claim that the term for equinox is the Hebrew *tequphah*, No. 8622 in *Strong's*. *Strong's* defines *tequphah* as: "From 5362; a revolution, i.e. (of the sun) course (of time) lapse:-circuit, come about, end." It appears in Ex. 34:22; 1 Sam. 1:20; 1Kings 20:22, 26; 2Chron. 24:23; 36:10; and Ps. 19:6. Nowhere in these passages does *tequphah* point to the vernal equinox. In Exodus 23:16 it refers to the END of the year at the Feast of Tabernacles, not to the spring at Passover time.
10. d. The Bible never attributes a certain number of days or months to the scriptural year. However, knowing that the scriptural calendar is based on lunar observation that begins with the verification of the barley, one can determine that the biblical year consists of 12 or 13 lunar months.
11. d. The biblical calendar does not use postponements (*dehioth*) or the conjunction as does the Jewish calendar. Both of these practices are foreign to the Bible. According to the man-made postponements of the Jewish calendar, Atonement and Trumpets cannot fall on Friday or Sunday because that would place two Sabbaths in succession. In addition, Passover can fall only on Monday, Wednesday, Friday, or Sabbath. Other rules of the Jewish calendar cannot be substantiated in the Bible, including beginning the year with the Feast of Trumpets in the fall (*Rosh Hoshanah* means "head" or "first of the year" when scripturally it is the seventh month). Scripture says that Abib, in the spring and month of Passover, is the beginning of the year, not Trumpets in the fall, Exodus 12:2, 6. The Jewish calendar also goes by calculated lunar conjunctions, not by the visible new moons as is commanded in Scripture. If we are off in the observance of a Feast by even one day we are not obedient to Yahweh. The punishment is to be "cut off" from Yahweh's people, Leviticus 23:29.
12. b. From all evidence, Yahshua used only the scriptural calendar during His ministry. During His life there were at least two, and perhaps more, conflicting Jewish calendar systems at work. One Jewish sect in particular, the Essenes, calculated the calendar from solar observation. The Sadducees and Pharisees used a lunar calendar; however, both varied from each other. Yahshua followed the calendar observed by the Sadducees. This can be verified in Yahshua's observance of the new moon crescent and the 14th Passover. During Yahshua's ministry the Sanhedrin, which was governed by the Pharisees, verified the beginning of each month by the new moon crescent, not by the conjunction. Many of the rules of the Jewish calendar were established by Hillel II sometime around the reign of the Byzantine Emperor Theodosius I (379—395 CE). Not until the 9th century did the Jews completely abandon setting the calendar by the visible new moons in favor of the calculated conjunction of the modern Jewish calendar.