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THE JEWISH CALENDAR IS OUT OF SYNC. FIX IT.

Almost 12 years ago, on May 21, 2007 Stephen Gabriel Rosenberg wrote an opinion article about the Jewish Calendar which was published in **THE JERUSALEM POST**. Rosenberg was at that time a Fellow of the Albright Institute of Archaeological Research in Jerusalem. Rosenberg, an observant Jew, is a highly qualified archaeologist who is clearly well-informed about the history of his people.

The title of the article is: **"THE JEWISH CALENDAR IS OUT OF SYNC. FIX IT"**. The drop-head under the title reads: "The next 'Blessing of the Sun' will occur in April 2009 - 19 days ahead of schedule." The article is available on the internet at The Jerusalem Post website. Check it out for yourself.

Below is the entire short article as it appears on THE JERUSALEM POST website, with two changes that I have made.

1) The whole article appears as one paragraph. So I have divided the article into 20 different paragraphs for easier reading. It is about 3 pages in length.

2) I have converted key statements in the article that I wish to highlight into **bold text** for emphasis. Except for the title, there is no bold text in the original article. However, none of my bolded text is intended to in any way misrepresent the author's point of view. I am in fact in full agreement with the author regarding the present Jewish calendar needing to be corrected.

In a few places the original article uses CAPITAL LETTERS for emphasis. I myself have not capitalized any words in the article.

Here is the full article:

THE JEWISH CALENDAR IS OUT OF SYNC. FIX IT

We observant Jews count the Omer - 50 days from Pessah to Shavuot - because the Torah commands us to. Every night we've been reciting the number of days and weeks that have passed and look forward to the coming festival, rightly called Shavuot, or Weeks. In Greek it is Pentecost - the counting of 50. This counting of 50 days between festivals seems to have been an ancient custom among farmers. Many of the festivals are two months apart. If the farmer celebrated seven days of harvest festival, added an extra day, as the eighth day of Shemini Atzeret is added to Succot, and if he then counts 50 days, he is on to the eve of the next festival. This basic count of 59 days, or just two full months, would have applied between Pessah and Shavuot if we counted as the pre-rabbinic Ethiopians did, taking "from the morrow of the Sabbath" (Leviticus 23:15) to be the day after the whole festival, thus bringing Shavuot to 15th of Sivan.

It was the Pharisees who changed all that so as to bring Pentecost forward to coincide with their date for the Theophany at Mt. Sinai. THE JEWISH calendar has been a lunar one, confirmed by the sighting of the new moon, at least from the time of the little tablet, the so-called Gezer Calendar excavated in 1908, considered to be of the 11th century BCE, which counted the agricultural year in consecutive months, four of them in pairs.

In matters of time, the month is a natural phenomenon, as are the day and the solar year, although the three are difficult to correlate. The month is actually 29.530588 days long and the solar year 365.2422 days, which makes calculation difficult.

In the early Roman Empire the year was still counted as a lunar one and correlation with the seasons was chaotic and unwieldy. It was so until the time of the Emperor Julius Caesar, who was advised by astronomers to scrap the lunar count and fix a solar year of 365 and 1/4 days. That fraction of a day was not practical so it was decreed to have three years of 365 days, and one of 366 days every four years. Known as the Julian Calendar, it had the desired effect of regulating the days and months with the seasons.

The new reckoning was introduced in 45 BCE and was expected to be correct for time everlasting. But it was not to be. THE CALENDAR year was more than 11 minutes too long, which meant an increase of one day in about 130 years. Thus by medieval times, after a period of say, 1,000 years, the calendar year was already seven days in advance of the sun. By the time reform came, under Pope Gregory XIII, the calendar was 10 days ahead of the solar system, and consequently in March 1582, the new Gregorian Calendar took 10 days out of the month of October of that year.

It was **not an easy reform to swallow**, and Great Britain was the last major country to adopt it, not doing so until nearly 200 years later in 1752. It was then that **popular riots** called for "the return of our 11 days," that led to the Treasury being forced to move the tax year 11 days forward from the quarter-day of March 25 to April 5.

As the Julian year had been too long by about three days in 400 years, the Gregorian Calendar solved the problem by declaring that the leap day should be ignored at every century year and only used in those centuries divisible by 400, as is still the practice today.

SO FAR, so good, but **how does that impact on the Hebrew calendar?**

We are very meticulous in our counting, as for instance in counting the Omer between Pessah and Shavuot; and, after all, we did invent the seven-day week. It is now adopted all over the world, while the 10-day week of the ancient Egyptians and the five-day week of the more recent French Revolution never took hold.

Our calendar has been a very ingenious one, having solved the problem of relating the lunar counting to the solar reality, and ensuring that festivals did not fall on unsuitable days of the week, like Yom Kippur on a Friday or Pessah on a Monday. But **its very ingenuity should not lead us into thinking it infallible**.

When confirming the calendar by sighting of the moon became impractical, tradition has it that **a fixed calendar was set down by the Patriarch Hillel II in 358 or 359 CE**. It is not certain that this was so as, for instance, Maimonides does not mention it, though he says that **monthly sightings did cease some time before the end of the Babylonian Talmud**.

Although some flexibility may have continued, it is clear that **by the time of the Geonim in the ninth century a fixed calendar was being adhered to**. That calendar, like all previous ones, **divided the year into four tekufot or seasons, which conformed to the solstices and equinoxes** of the earth around the sun. The first division was the tekufa of Nissan, or the spring season.

It was in that season that the festival of Pessah had to fall, as the Torah tells us to "Observe the month of Aviv (Spring) and make Passover" (Deuteronomy 16:1), so **the calculation of the four seasons** was of paramount importance. **ALTHOUGH we do not know when the fixed calendar started, whether in**

the fourth century or not, it is our guiding light today and 26 years ago it told us that the "Blessing of the Sun" was to be on April 8, 1981. It is a ceremony held every 28 years, when the sun is considered to be in the same position as the one it held in the days of Creation, that is, on a Wednesday.

If the year is held to be 365 days long, then the date of its "birth" - its birthday - falls on the same day of the week every 28 years. But when we celebrated that **in 1981**, the tekufa date was April 8, or 18 days after the true astronomical equinox of March 21. In other words, **the Jewish calendar was 18 days out of sync with the heavenly facts**.

How did this happen?

Quite simply because **the original calculations, whether by Hillel II or others, were based on the Julian Calendar of their time** and, as we have seen, the Julian Calendar would now also be about 15 days out of line with the sun. Does this really matter?

As **the tekufa of Nissan, or Spring, continues to progress ahead of the sun, by more than 11 hours a year**, we shall find that in time it will approach nearer and nearer to the astronomical summer, and **the festival of Pessah will no longer fall in our tekufa of Nissan**.

It can be calculated that **this will occur in about 640 years, and then we will be in breach of the Torah law**. The festival may still be in the spring, but **the tekufa of Spring will be in the summer**. SO GREAT BRITAIN was not the last country to adopt **the Gregorian correction** of the Julian calculations.

The Hebrew calendar has not yet recognized the discrepancy but it is something we should consider very carefully and quite soon, for the next "Blessing of the Sun" will occur in two year's time, in April 2009, so it would be sensible to reform the calendar before then, so that our prayers will be in line with God's Creation, and not 19 days ahead of it.

As in England, **that change may well cause riots in the streets**, this time in Jerusalem and Bnei Brak - but is it sensible to let **this time bomb** go on ticking any longer?

The writer is **a Fellow of the Albright Institute of Archaeological Research, Jerusalem**.

End of article.

So much for the article. The article presents two different things: on the one hand it presents some of the author's religious beliefs, and on the other hand it also presents objective and factual information about the present Jewish calendar and how that relates to "the Torah Law". The factual information in this article about the calendar is independent of the author's specific religious beliefs.

In plain language, whether or not we count Pentecost the same way the author counts Pentecost, and whether or not we believe in "the blessing of the sun", etc. has no effect on the correctness of the factual information about the calendar.

There are just two points I wish to make regarding this article.

First, the Jewish author freely states the indisputable fact that the present Jewish calendar is astronomically flawed (e.g. being **18 days** out of sync with the heavenly facts in 1981, etc.). That is why the author is rightly lobbying for those flaws to be corrected. **The present Jewish calendar must be changed**, if it is to become astronomically accurate, to avoid the annual festivals drifting into the wrong seasons. At present it is **a flawed calendar**.

Second, all Jewish authorities know and freely admit that the present Jewish calendar did not exist in Old Testament times. They acknowledge that **the calculations are based on the Julian Calendar** in use at the time of Hillel II. **Anyone, minister or otherwise, who tells you that the present Jewish calendar was used by the Jews at any time before 100 A.D. is knowingly lying to you.**

It is well-known amongst the Jews that their present calendar did not exist before the time of Hillel II. The article by Stephen Gabriel Rosenberg is one more acknowledgment of this fact. And nobody amongst the churches of God has ever succeeded in presenting proof for the supposed existence of the present Jewish calendar in B.C. times, **ludicrous arguments** about totally hypothetical ancient dates notwithstanding. This claim for antiquity is in fact unconditionally rejected by Jewish scholars, who really do know more about the history of their own calendar than do all the Church of God groups that wish to claim divine authority for that calendar.

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