

Lunar Sabbath: New Light or Sheer Lunacy?

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Recently a number of groups and individuals have adopted what they call the "Lunar Sabbath." The belief is that each Rosh Chodesh (New Moon or beginning of a Hebrew month) starts a new cycle of weekdays.

According to most Lunar Sabbath proponents, the Rosh Chodesh, correctly so, is a special day of worship to Almighty Yahweh, Yehezkiel (Ezekiel) 46, YeshaYahu (Isaiah) 66 and (Bemidbar) Numbers 10:10. For most Lunar Sabbath proponents, the day following the New Moon is counted as Yom Rishon, the first day of the weekly cycle. Therefore, the weekly Sabbaths fall on the 8th, 15th, 22nd, and 29th days of the month respectively, without regard to the days of our current calendar. That is, the weekly Sabbath for any given Hebrew month may fall on virtually any day of the week, as we know a week. Without going into laborious detail we would like to outline several flaws we see in the Lunar Sabbath doctrine.

Lunar Sabbath proponents cite an article from the Universal Jewish Encyclopedia which alleges that the ancient Israelites kept a Lunar Sabbath. There are several serious discrepancies within this article that all who seek the truth must prayerfully consider.

1: Attribution. Who wrote this article? The author's name is missing and that should be a "red flag" to readers. What are the author's qualifications and background? Is he (or she) an "expert" in the field of Ancient Near East history? These questions are left unanswered.

2: Why is a Lunar Sabbath not addressed in the well-known "Jewish Encyclopedia, or in such recognized Jewish writings as the Talmud or Mishna?

3: The author(s) of this article, whoever he, she or they might be, offer not one shred of historical evidence to document their claim. More importantly, not one shred of Scriptural evidence is offered. The Universal Jewish Encyclopedia was in print from 1939 to 1944. The work never gained any acceptance among mainstream Judaism.

Problems with the Lunar Sabbath doctrine

Weekly Cycle Time Frame

Lunar Sabbath proponents have a serious time frame problem. A Hebrew month is 29.5 days long. Of course there is no such thing as a half-day; therefore all Hebrew months are either 29 or 30 days long. A cycle of seven days cannot be divided in to either 29 or 30 without a remainder. Therefore, when it comes to the fourth week of their lunar cycle, Lunar Sabbath believers simply take it upon themselves to ordain an eight or nine day week, or perhaps in some cases, a six-day week.

It is abundantly clear even from a casual study of Scripture that the weekly Shabbat is based on a seven-day cycle — NEVER an eight- or nine-day cycle, and never a six-day cycle. The seventh day of creation was set apart and sanctified by Almighty Yahweh. *And Elohim blessed the seventh day and set it apart, because on it He rested from all His work, which Elohim in creating had made.* Bereshith (Genesis) 2:3. The Hebrew word for "Shabbat" is: שבת. There is an etymological relation between "Shabbat" and שבעה, the Hebrew word for "seven," Strong's 7651, from שבע (sheba) "...by implication a week," or "...to be complete." Again, there is never any instance in Scripture where Israel kept an eight- or nine-day Sabbath.

Creation: Back to the Future

We must also consider the creation week. Almighty Yahweh created the sun, moon and stars on the fourth day, Bereshith (Genesis) 1:14-19. In verse 16 the moon is referred to as "...the lesser light." From the vantage point of the earth, was the moon full or new when it was created? Scripture is silent on this matter, so no one can make a doctrine of the phase of the moon at creation. However, if the moon was "new," then we must consider that the fourth day was a Rosh Chodesh, a New Moon Day or head of the month. The fourth day is perhaps better known to our society today as Wednesday, to use a "Gentile reckoning or the Roman names for the days of the week as we know them today. Therefore, according to Lunar Shabbat teaching, the fifth day of the week, commonly called "Thursday," was day one of the weekly cycle and if we count six more days the third day of the following week, the day we commonly would call Wednesday, should have been the Lunar Shabbat. However, three days later, the seventh day of creation week, Yahweh rested from His labors. He sanctified THAT Day and set it apart, Bereshith (Genesis) 2:2-3. What if the moon was "full" when created. A full moon always denotes the 15th day of a Hebrew month, and again, according to Lunar Sabbath teaching, the 15th day would have been a Sabbath. Another point we must consider is that since the sun, moon and stars were created on the fourth day of the week, then according to lunar Sabbath teaching, the earth started with a four or five-day week! In the light of all logic and all Scripture, that would be impossible according to Yahweh's Word.

We must also consider that two High Days in Yahweh's Sacred Calendar must fall on the 15th of their respective months, the first day of Chag HaMatzah (Unleavened Bread), and the first day of Sukkoth (Feast of Tabernacles). As we will later explain, these High Days, listed in Wayyiqra (Leviticus) 23, are ANNUAL, NOT weekly Sabbaths.

Chag HaMatzah: Wayyiqra (Leviticus) 23:6 *"And on the fifteenth day of the month is the Festival of Unleavened Bread to Yahweh — seven days you eat unleavened bread."*

Sukkoth: Wayyiqra (Leviticus) 23: 33, 34 *And Yahweh Spoke to Moshe saying, "Speak to the Children of Yisrael saying, 'On the fifteenth day of this seventh month is the Festival of Booths for seven days to Yahweh.'" There is not one instance in Scripture where we are told that either of these Feast Days is a weekly Shabbat. So to encapsulate Bereshith 1 and 2, Yahweh created the moon on the fourth day of creation and rested on the seventh day. He did not rest on an "eighth" or "ninth" day.*

Yet another Witness

Scripture give us another (of perhaps dozens) witness that ancient Israel did not keep a Lunar Sabbath. Consider Shemot (Exodus) 16:1-35. Read this account carefully. The events recorded here occur on the 15th day of the Second Month. The Israelites, complaining that they had no food, were given Manna. They were told to go out and collect a double portion (twice as much), or enough for two days. Lunar Sabbath proponents teach that the 15th day of a Hebrew month is a weekly Sabbath, yet in this account, we can plainly see that the 15th day was the SIXTH day of the week, a common work day, the PREPARATION day for the weekly, seventh-day Sabbath.

What About Tehillim (Psalm) 81:3?

This passage clearly indicates a relationship between the Rosh Chodesh (New Moon) the Weekly Shabbat and the Moedim (Feast Days). However, it also shows a clear distinction between them all. All these days are commanded convocations, but that are not all Moedim (appointed times). That are sanctified but not all are "weekly Sabbaths." There is a clear distinction in Scripture between weekly and annual Sabbaths.

Yahshua's Death and Resurrection

A careful study of the 24 or so hours preceding Yahshua's death on the torture stake yields another problem for Lunar Shabbat proponents. An excellent outlining of this time period is found in Bullinger's Companion Bible, Appendix 165, and is based on the events of Yochanan (John) 19 as well as parallel accounts in Matthew, Mark and Luke. Again, to clarify the chronology here we must resort to referring to the Roman names of the days of the week (Gentile reckoning) so that no doubt or confusion will remain in the mind of the reader. Please also keep in mind that Hebrew days begin and end at sunset while Roman days begin and end at "midnight" by our current time system.

Here is the chronology of that event outlined in simple and accurate terms. What we must consider are the three days AND three nights. In MattithYah (Matthew) 12, the scribes and Pharisees demanded to see a "sign" that Yahshua was the Messiah. He told them that the only sign they would see was the sign of the prophet Jonas. That sign was that He would be in the tomb for three days and three nights (a literal 72-hour time period) as Jonas was in the belly of a great fish for three days and three nights. MattithYah 12:38-40 *Then some of the scribes and Pharisees answered saying, "Teacher, we wish to see a sign from you." But He answering said to them, "A wicked and adulterous generation seeks after a sign, and no sign shall be given to it except the sign of the prophet Yonah. For as Yonah was three days and three nights in the stomach of the great fish, so shall the Son of Adam be three days and three nights in the heart of the earth.*

With the understanding that the only sign of Yahshua's Messiahship was the fact that he was in the tomb a literal three days and three nights, we can now begin to see another flaw in the Lunar Sabbath doctrine. Let us consider the following chronology.

On certain years, Pesach and Chag HaMatzah (Passover the Feast of Unleavened Bread) fall on exactly the same days of the week as the week Yahshua was impaled and died. Why it is important to know this will become clear as we read on.

Yahshua ate the Passover Seder meal (commonly thought of as 'The Last Supper') with His disciples on the beginning of the 14th of Nisan or Abib, the days we would commonly call Tuesday evening, Luke 7:7-20

After the Seder, He went to the garden to pray, Luke 22:39-46. On that night, He was betrayed by Judah, arrested by Roman soldiers and a mob of His detractors, Luke 22:47-54, and was taken before the High Priests and before Pilate. This was still the 14th of Nisan or Abib, or what we would understand as late Tuesday night through the dark hours of Wednesday morning.

Later that morning, He was placed on an upright stake to die, Luke 23:36-43. This was still the 14th of the month, but now it would be the day we commonly call Wednesday. This day was also a preparation day for the upcoming High Day, the first day of Chag HaMatzah or Unleavened Bread. Some confusion may be because due to the fact that the 15th is called a "Sabbath" in most translations. However, Yochanan (John) 19:31 plainly tells us the day was a "High Sabbath" or the annual Shabbat of Wayyiqra (Leviticus) 23. *Therefore since it was the preparation day, that the bodies should not remain on the stake on the Sabbath, — for that Sabbath was a high one* — the Yehudim asked Pilate to have their legs broken and that they be taken away.* Please note that this was still the 14th of the month, the fourth day of the week, the day we commonly call Wednesday. Yahshua was laid in His tomb before sundown, before the start of the 15th day of the month. * *Emphasis ours.*

Now considering the sign of Yahshua's Messiahship, His body was in the tomb three days and three nights. That is, he was entombed at the outset of the first High Day, the 15th, or Wednesday night, and Thursday, making one complete day. His body stayed entombed through Thursday night and Friday, (Nisan 16th), making day two. That "Friday" the 16th of the month, was a preparation day for the WEEKLY Shabbat. This was the only time the women would have had to purchase the spices for the anointing of Yahshua's body. Luke 23:56 *And having RETURNED, they prepared spices and perfumes. And they rested on the Shabbat according to the command.*

Now Yahshua, after having spent three days and three nights in the tomb, rose from the dead, as he said he would, just before dusk on the weekly Shabbat, the 17th day of the Hebrew month, or what we would term Saturday evening. When the women arrived at the tomb as dawn was cracking (early Sunday morning) the Messiah was already risen. So here's the problem Lunar Sabbath advocates face: If the 15th was BOTH a High Day and a weekly Sabbath, the Bible account says different. Clearly, the weekly Sabbath that year fell on the 17th day of the month, not the 15th. At this point, we must ask yet another question:

Did Yahshua Know?

At the risk of being sarcastic, we must ask a simple question: Did the Messiah know which day was the Scriptural Sabbath? Lunar Sabbath Advocates claim that the Lunar Sabbath was somehow "lost" during the Babylonian captivity.

They claim that the Jews of Yahshua's time erroneously observed a weekly Sabbath determined by a supposed Babylonian calendar. If this is true, then we must ask why Yahshua never once rebuked them or challenged them for keeping the "wrong" Sabbath Day. It is obvious from reading all four Gospel accounts that Yahshua kept the same Sabbath Day as all Jews of His day. Moreover, His talmidim, as we read in the book of Acts (and other books of the Brit Chadasha) also kept the same Sabbath Day as mainstream Judaism.

While we could cite much additional historical and Scriptural evidence refuting the so-called Lunar Shabbat doctrine, for lack of space we offer one final consideration. As the three days and three nights in the tomb were the sign of Yahshua's Messiahship, the Sabbath, that is the true Shabbat Day, is the sign that we are Yahweh's people. Shemot (Exodus) 31:1-2 (and on to 17) *and Yahweh spoke to Moshe saying, "And you speak to the children of Yisrael saying, 'My Sabbaths you re to guard, by all means, for it is a sign between Me and you throughout your generations, to know that I Yahweh am setting you apart.'"* Brothers and Sisters, it is observance of the true Shabbat Day that marks us as Yahweh's people. Whenever we deviate from worshipping on that day, we remove the sign. The Lunar Shabbat is a doctrine that does exactly that — it takes us away from the special sign by which Almighty Yahweh recognizes us and worshippers of Him. By removing ourselves from this special sign, we play right into the hands of Beast System and the anti-Messiah. Daniel 7:25 *"...and it wears out the set apart ones of the Most High, and it intends to change Appointed Times and law...etc.* The Beast System has already changed the Appointed times by substituting Sunday worship for worship on the Shabbat, and instituting Pagan holidays for Yahweh's Moedim (Holy Days). As we see it, the Lunar Sabbath is just another "changing of times," in the anti-Messiah's campaign of confusion perpetrated against the "religious" world. Don't be deceived by this deceptive doctrine. The spirit of anti-Messiah has succeeded in leading astray most of the world. Now its target is the very "elect," those who have up to this point remained faithful. This is predicted in MattithYah (Matthew) 24:24 *For false messiahs and false prophets shall arise, and they shall show great signs and wonders, so as to lead astray, if possible, EVEN THE CHOSEN ONES.* (Emphasis ours).

Has our calendar been changed? Certainly! Yahweh's system of reckoning time has been changed. This was predicted to happen in Daniel 7:25 *"...and it (the false prophet/beast system) intends to change appointed times and law..."* "Certainly the world now observes Roman months with Roman names and names of false g-ds. We have also named the days of the week with the names of false g-ds. However, the true Shabbat Day has NEVER been lost. The Jews (Yehudah) have preserved it unchanged from antiquity, as they were charged to do: Romans 3:2b *"...because firstly they were entrusted with the words of Elohim."* If our Jewish brethren were entrusted (commissioned) to preserve the *"...words of Elohim,"* i.e. the Torah, could they not be trusted to have preserved the correct Sabbath Day? The only answer is in the affirmative.

In the opinion of the author the doctrine of the Lunar Shabbat is not new light, it is a new darkness, and indeed, it is sheer lunacy. We urge our faithful readers to: *"...earnestly contend for the faith which was once for all delivered to the set-apart ones,"* Yehudah (Jude) 3b and reject this confusing, misleading, and heretical doctrine.