

What's Wrong with the Jewish Calendar?

What's All This Furore over "POSTPONEMENTS"?

Are the "postponements" added to the sacred calendar in the fourth century of the present era justified? Did Hillel II and his compatriots in 358 A.D. wisely add new regulations to the calendar, causing Yom Kippur to never fall on a Friday or Sunday, or Hoshana Rabbah never to fall on a weekly Sabbath? What about these so-called "postponements"? WHY were they added? Were they observed in the days of the Second Temple? Were they observed during the time of Jesus Christ?

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(Proof Read For Typographical Errors & Updated June 2018)

The apostle Paul declared, "What advantage then hath the Jew? or what profit is there of circumcision? Much every way: chiefly because that unto *them* were committed the ORACLES OF GOD. For what if some did not believe? Will their unbelief make the faithfulness of God without effect? Certainly not! Indeed, let God be true but EVERY MAN a liar. As it is written, 'That You may be justified in Your words, and may overcome when You are judged'" (Rom.3:1-4).

Jesus Christ also affirmed, "The scribes and Pharisees sit in Moses' seat: All therefore whatsoever they bid you observe, that observe and do; *but do not ye after their works: for they say, and do not*" (Matt.23:2-3).

How do these statements relate to the Jewish calendar? Everybody admits that the Jewish calendar today is far different from the calendar of Biblical times. It is based on mathematical formulas, whereas in Christ's time the calendar was based on observations of the new moon every month. The

calendar was changed in 358 A.D. by Hillel II and his compatriots, because of the fear that the Jewish religion would become extinct, due to persecution of the Romans, and due to the widespread scattering of Jewish communities throughout the world, which would have no central authority. Jews had been banished from Jerusalem, except to visit one day a year.

Therefore, the Jewish authorities decided to make public the calendar calculations which had been kept secret for generations, so that the calendar principles would not be lost. However, they did much more than that. They also devised and added NEW calendar rules never heard of in the time of the second Temple, or Christ's day -- they added several new laws called "postponements." These laws made it necessary to actually *delay the Feast of Trumpets, called Rosh Hashanah, to keep Yom Kippur from falling on a Friday or a Sunday, and to keep Hoshana Rabbah -- the seventh day of the Feast of Tabernacles -- from falling on the weekly Sabbath.*

Was this change in the holy calendar justified? Was it "kosher"?

Some would say, "Yes, because the Jews sat in Moses' seat." However, does the fact that the Pharisees sat in Moses' seat give them authority to CHANGE THE CALENDAR? Daniel warns us about those who would "seek to *change times and laws*" (Dan.7:25).

Concerning Jesus' remarks in Matthew 23, where He said the Pharisees sat in Moses' seat, the Critical-Experimental Commentary has this to say:

"... **the scribes and Pharisees sit.** The Jewish teachers *stood* to read, but *sat* to expound the Scriptures . . . **in Moses' seat** -- that is, as INTERPRETERS OF THE LAW given by Moses. **All therefore** -- that is, all which, as *sitting in that seat and teaching out of that law, they bid you observe, that observe and do.* The word 'therefore' is thus, it will be seen, of great importance, AS LIMITING THOSE INJUNCTIONS HE WOULD HAVE THEM OBEY AS TO WHAT THEY FETCHED FROM THE LAW ITSELF. In requiring implicit obedience to such injunctions, He would have them to recognize the authority with which they taught over and above the obligations of the law itself -- an important principle truly; but HE WHO DENOUNCED THE TRADITIONS OF SUCH TEACHERS (ch.15:3) CANNOT HAVE MEANT HERE TO THROW HIS SHIELD OVER THESE. It is remarked by Webster and Wilkinson that the warning to *beware* of the scribes is given by Mark and Luke WITHOUT ANY QUALIFICATION; the charge to respect and obey them being reported by Matthew alone. . . ."

In other words, we should obey the injunctions of the scribes and Pharisees *so long as they are in accord and agreement with Scripture itself!* But when they begin to contradict the laws of Moses, or misinterpret them, then we must "obey GOD rather than men" (Acts 5:29).

Adam Clarke's Commentary says along the same lines:

"Verse 2. *The scribes and Pharisees sit in Moses' seat.* -- They sat there formerly by Divine *appointment*; they sit there now by Divine *permission*. What our Lord says here refers to their expounding the Scriptures, for it was the custom of the Jewish doctors to *sit* while they *expounded* the law and *prophets* (chap.5:1; Luke 4:20-22) and to *stand up* when they *read* them.

"By the *seat of Moses*, we are to understand authority to teach the law. Moses was the great teacher of the Jewish people; and the scribes, etc., are here represented as his successors.

"Verse 3. *All therefore whatsoever.* That is, all those things which they read out of the law and the prophets, and *all things which they teach CONSISTENTLY WITH THEM.* This must be our Lord's meaning: *He could not have desired them to do everything, without restriction, which the Jewish doctors taught; because himself WARNS his disciples AGAINST THEIR FALSE TEACHING, AND TESTIFIES THAT THEY HAD MADE THE WORD OF GOD OF NONE EFFECT BY THEIR TRADITIONS.* See chapter 15:6, etc. Besides, as our Lord speaks here in the past tense -- *whatsoever they HAVE commanded* -- he may refer to the teaching of a former period, when they taught the word of God in truth, or were much less corrupted than they were now."

Remember, we cannot use one Scripture to contradict another one! "The Scripture cannot be broken" (John 10:35). Jesus nowhere, and at no time, gave us a command to follow the Pharisees and scribes in ALL that they taught! His command to do whatsoever they taught refers ONLY to those things they taught correctly, out of and regarding the LAW of Moses! When they taught error, we are to disregard them and obey God's Word instead!

This overall fact being acknowledged, however, another question remains. What about the "postponements" which were added to the overall Jewish calendar in 358 A.D. by Hillel II and his rabbinical associates? Remember, these additions were made to the calendar laws THREE CENTURIES AFTER the time of Christ and the apostles! Are these laws binding upon us

today? Should God's Church be bound to follow the modern "Jewish calendar" and all its additions and "postponements"?

This is another question altogether, and needs investigating!

What about this matter of calendar "postponements"?

But What about "Postponements"?

How, then, should we view questions about the "postponements"? First, let's carefully notice just what these "postponements" are.

Notice! Arthur Spier in *The Comprehensive Hebrew Calendar* tells us:

"12. These are the four Dehioth (postponements):

"a. When the Molad Tishri occurs on a Sunday, Wednesday, or Friday, Rosh Hashanah is postponed to the following day.

"b. When the Molad Tishri occurs at noon (18h) or later, Rosh Hashanah is postponed to the next day. (Or if this day is a Sunday, Wednesday or Friday, to Monday, Thursday or Sabbath because of Dehiah a.)

"c. When the Molad Tishri of a common year falls on Tuesday, 204 parts after 3 A.M., i.e., 3d 9h 204p or later, Rosh Hashanah is postponed to Wednesday, and, because of Dehiah a., further postponed to Thursday.

"d. When, in a common year succeeding a leap year, the Molad Tishri occurs on Monday morning 589 parts after 9 A.M., i.e., 2d 15h 589p or later, Rosh Hashanah is postponed to the next day."

Spier goes on:

"Dehiah a mainly fulfills the following three religious requirements: Yom Kippur

(Tishri 10) shall not occur on the day before or after the Sabbath and Hoshana Rabbah (Tishri 21) shall not occur on the Sabbath.

"By tradition the Hebrew calendar year must be of a certain number of days, neither more nor less, which accomplishes the balancing of the solar year with the lunar, according to the rule of intercalation. To make Dehioth a and b possible, so as to postpone Rosh Hashanah by 2 days occasionally, Dehioth c and d were established, so that in such a case a year will not be too short or too long" (Spier, p.15, emphasis mine except in the final paragraph).

Arthur Spier points out the *fact* of postponements, when they occur, but not much about the *why*. The "why" of postponements is explained more in another volume, *Understanding the Jewish Calendar*, by Rabbi Nathan Bushwick. He writes:

"The second *dechiah* prevents Yom Kippur from falling the day before or the day after Shabbos. **This is avoided so that there will not be two days in a row on which it is forbidden to prepare food or do the other sorts of work** that are permitted on Yom Tov. Since Yom Kippur is one week and two days after Rosh Hashanah, Rosh Hashanah cannot fall on Wednesday or Friday in order that Yom Kippur not fall on Friday or Sunday. The second *dechiah* also prevents Hoshana Rabbah from falling on Shabbos, **in which case we would not be able to perform the custom of Arava and the seven hakofos**. In order to prevent this, Rosh Hashanah is not permitted to fall on Sunday.

"There are therefore three days, Sunday, Wednesday and Friday, on which Rosh Hashanah can never fall. If the *molad* falls on one of these days, then Rosh Hashanah is *nidcheh* -- pushed off -- until the next day. In case the *molad* falls after noon on Shabbos, Tuesday or Thursday, Rosh Hashanah is pushed off one day because it is a *molad zoken*, and since that would put it on one of the three days on which it cannot fall, it is pushed off yet another day. In such a case we find that Rosh Hashanah has been postponed two days from the *molad* (*Understanding the Jewish Calendar*, p.80-81, bold emphasis mine).

Now let's notice these "postponements" more closely.

In the days of Hillel II, the Jewish leadership had already rejected Christ as the Messiah. They had rejected His reinterpretation of the Sabbath laws. He was much more permissive and lenient, and Himself "broke" their stringent Sabbath regulations (see Mark 2:23-28; Matthew 12:1-8; Luke 6:1-11; John 5:1-10, 16). Jesus said many of their "Sabbath laws" were a yoke of bondage, contrary to God's original intent.

However, in the centuries that followed, the Jewish leaders became even more hostile toward the Christian elements in their society. Messianic Jews were banished from the synagogues following the rebellion in 70 A.D. By 135 A.D., a "CURSE" had been written into the daily synagogue prayer, the Amidah. This "curse" was against all "heretics" and "Nazarenes" -- meaning those who followed Jesus Christ, the "Nazarene."

By the time of Hillel II, Judaism had become more and more legalistic. To the legalistic Jewish leaders, if you celebrated Yom Kippur on a Friday, a day of mourning and repentance of sin, you could not leap right into a festive day of joy and rejoicing that very Friday evening. Therefore, they *moved the Day of Atonement*, so it could not fall on a Friday!

Stroke of a pen -- change in a divine law! How this must have made them feel powerful, and authoritative! "Kinda cool," as some might say, today!

The rabbis reasoned, how could you prepare food, and a meal fit for a king, for that Sabbath evening, if you were fasting on Friday?

And what about celebrating Yom Kippur right on the heels of the weekly Sabbath? If you had been celebrating the Sabbath with joy and rejoicing, and that very evening Yom Kippur begins, the Jews felt that you would have no opportunity to "prepare" for it -- to get into the right mental and spiritual frame of mind, repenting of sins, and fasting. They reasoned, how can you jump immediately from feasting to fasting? Or, from fasting to feasting -- without a day in between?

The Jewish Book of WHY has this to say about the "postponements":

"Why does the first day of Rosh Hashana never fall on a Wednesday, Friday, or Sunday?

'When the calendar was finally issued by Hillel II in 359 C.E., it was arranged so that the holidays would not interfere with the observance of the Sabbath and so that the Sabbath would not interfere with holiday observance.

"If Rosh Hashana (1 Tishri) were to fall on a Wednesday, Yom Kippur (10 Tishri) would fall on a Friday. If Yom Kippur were to fall on a Friday, that would make it impossible for Jews to prepare for the Sabbath.

"If Rosh Hashana were to fall on a Friday, Yom Kippur would fall on a Sunday, which would allow no time for Jews observing the Sabbath to prepare for Yom Kippur, which would begin immediately after the Sabbath" (p.227-228).

Nevertheless, the question remains: Is this reasoning of the Jewish leaders really sound-minded, according to the Scriptures? Or were the decisions on these "postponements" added to the calendar laws because of Jewish legalism and false thinking?

Solomon wrote: "There is a way which seemeth right unto a man, but the end thereof are the ways of DEATH" (Proverbs 14:12; 16:25).

The Jewish Book of WHY also explains about the postponement for Hoshana Rabba, the seventh and final day of the Feast of Tabernacles:

"Rosh Hashana never falls on a Sunday because that would mean that Hoshana Rabba (the last day of Sukkot, which *always* falls on 21 Tishri) would fall on a Saturday, which would not be desirable.

"In talmudic times Hoshana Rabba was regarded as a day much like Yom Kippur. It brought to an end the long holiday period beginning with Rosh Hashana, and was considered to be the one final opportunity to reverse an unfavorable decree issued against the individual on the High Holidays. If Hoshana Rabba were to fall on the Sabbath, this would interfere with the ceremony of beating a bunch of *hoshanot* (willows) during the *synagogue services, an action forbidden on the Sabbath*. Beating the willows was an act of self-flagellation and a sign of remorse, similar to the *malkot* ceremony practiced on Yom Kippur" (p.228).

Here again, this postponement was made due to Jewish Sabbath halacha -- the stringent and onerous Jewish Sabbath rules. Jesus Christ did NOT endorse the Jewish Sabbath technical regulations and restrictions, but rather He reprovved the Jewish religious leaders for making the Sabbath a "yoke of bondage" (compare Matt.15 and Mark 7). He upbraided and censored them over their "traditions of the elders"!

A Look at Psalm 81

The Talmud has a story, much like a parable, to teach us a sublime and precious truth about the calendar. Writes Arthur Herzog in *Judaism*:

"Rabbi Pinhas and Rabbi Hilkiah said in the name of Rabbi Simon: Each year all of the ministering angels appear before the Holy One, praised be He, and ask: 'Lord of the Universe When does Rosh Hashanah occur this year?' And He answers them, 'Why do you ask Me? Let us inquire of the earthly court' (which in ancient times set the date of each new month and thus the entire calendar).

"Rabbi Hoshayah taught: When the earthly court decrees 'Today is Rosh Hashanah,' the Holy One, praised be He, tells the ministering angels, 'Set up the court room, and let the attorneys for defense and prosecution take their places, for My children have stated 'Today is Rosh Hashanah.' But if the earthly court should reconsider and decide that the following day should be declared the first of the year, the Holy One, praised be He, tells the ministering angels, 'Set up the court room and let the attorneys for prosecution and defense take their places on the morrow, for My children have reconsidered and decided that tomorrow is to be declared the first of the year.'

"What is the reason for this? 'For it is a statute in Israel, an ordinance of the God of Jacob' [Psalm 81:5]. However, if it is not a statute in Israel, it is not an ordinance [for] the God of Jacob" (*Judaism*, "The Cycle of the Year," p.191-192).

No doubt this was a basic, true principle, during the time of Christ, and the Second Temple period. Let's notice Psalm 81 more closely. What is God telling us here? Beginning in verse 3, God says, "Blow up the trumpet in the new moon, *in the time appointed*, on our solemn FEAST DAY. For this was a statute in ISRAEL, and a *law of the God of Jacob*" (Psa.81:3-4, KJV).

"In the time appointed" means the time or date that GOD appointed (*His "appointed feasts"* -- see Lev.23:2-4). Obviously, the blowing of the trumpet occurs primarily on the "Feast of Trumpets," the "Day of Blowing," called *Rosh Hashanah* (the "head of the year"), and *Yom Teruah* (the "day of blowing"). The new moon of this date determines the rest of the entire year.

But notice the sequence, then. First, God "appoints" the day. Then, determining the new moon or Tishri 1, the "Feast of Trumpets," was the duty of the children of Israel -- first, THEY declared the new year, making it a "statute," a "statute of Israel." Then, once they have done that, God Himself endorsed their action -- their decision became "a *law* of the God of Jacob."

This passage of Scripture shows that God normally backs up His priests and the elders and judges of His people when they make decisions *based and founded in His Law* regarding His sacred calendar! But if they make decisions *contrary to the Law*, then their decisions are NOT VALID OR LEGALLY BINDING!

But what about their decisions concerning the "postponements"? Should we follow the Jewish authorities on these matters as well?

Whose AUTHORITY "Counts"?

As the servants of God, we are required by God's own authority to preach the TRUTH, and adhere to the TRUTH, no matter what the Jews do! Yes, they do sit in Moses' seat. But their authority is not compulsory, if they teach contrary to the Torah, the Scriptures, and the Law of God! In such cases, we must evaluate carefully what they are teaching, and analyze it in the light of the Scriptures themselves.

As Isaiah the prophet wrote: *"To the law and to the testimony: If they speak not according to THIS WORD [THE SCRIPTURES], there is NO LIGHT in them"* (Isaiah 8:20).

Jesus Christ plainly gave *His apostles* the power and authority to make halachic decisions whenever necessary, upon this earth. He plainly said, "Whatsoever thou shalt *bind* on earth shall be *bound* in heaven: and whatsoever thou shalt *loose* on earth shall be *loosed* in heaven" (Matt.16:19). This authority was given to His true apostles and the true leaders of His Church! In cases where Jewish authorities go astray, or wrongly interpret the laws of God, the apostles and leaders of the Church Jesus founded have authority from Him to "bind and to loose" -- to explain what is Scriptural and obligatory, and what is not! Compare also Matthew 18:18 and John 20:23. God's TRUE ministry has authority to "bind and loose." But again, this authority must be used in accordance with and agreement with the LAW and Scriptures of God -- according to TRUTH!

The apostle Paul warns us that we must beware, "Lest Satan should get an advantage of us: for we are not ignorant of his devices" (II Cor.2:11). One of his greatest weapons is to appeal to human pride and vanity -- personal "ego." We must beware of the "pride" of the "novice" who thinks he knows more than he really does.

The so-called "calendar experts" -- and there are many of them -- have fallen victim to Satan's seduction and suggestions that appeal to human vanity.

We ought to thank God for the Jews, who have preserved and safeguarded His holy, sacred calendar, and brought it to us so that we can know when God's "holy festivals" and appointed times occur. But when it comes to the matter of the "postponements," we need to be very careful and

circumspect. As Paul wrote, "See then that ye walk circumspectly, not as fools, but as WISE, redeeming the TIME, because the days are evil" (Eph.5:15-16)..

Are the "postponements" valid today?

The Calendar in Christ's Time

Hillel II did not invent a "new" calendar in 358 A.D. Rather, because of onerous Roman persecution against the Jews, in order to *preserve the calendar and Jewish unity amongst the Diaspora*, Hillel II and the rabbinical council agreed to make the age-old calendar calculations, used to verify the visual sightings of the new moons each month, which had come down from the time of Aaron and Moses, public information, so that the sacred calendar would never be lost, even during the galut, or time of Jewish dispersion and banishment from the land of Israel.

Hillel's publication of this knowledge in no way "destroyed" the sacred calendar. Rather, it *preserved the calendar* by making it possible for generations to come to verify the true dates of the calendar, leap years, and new moons, and annual holy days, without the need of a Sanhedrin, or an official court to do "new moon" observances from Jerusalem, during the many centuries during which the Jews were banished from living in Jerusalem!

As we have already seen, Arthur Spier in *The Comprehensive Jewish Calendar* tells us what happened. Originally, he says, the beginning of months was determined by direct observation of the new moon from Jerusalem. These dates were then announced and sanctified by the Sanhedrin, or Jewish Supreme Court in Jerusalem, after witnesses had testified they had seen the new crescent, and after their testimony had been "thoroughly examined, confirmed by calculation, and duly accepted." Let's review Arthur Spier's seminal points one final time:

Spier explains:

"A special committee of the Sanhedrin, with its president as chairman, had the mandate to regulate and balance the solar with the lunar years. This so-called Calendar Council (*Sod Haibbur*) calculated the beginnings of the seasons (*Tekufoth*) on the basis of *astronomical figures which had been HANDED DOWN AS A TRADITION OF OLD . . .*" (Spier, *The Comprehensive Hebrew Calendar*, p.1).

Spier tells us what the Jews had to do in the fourth century to preserve the calendar. He asserts:

"This method of observation and intercalation was in use throughout the period of

the second temple (516 B.C.E.-70 C.E.), and about three centuries after its destruction, *as long as there was an independent Sanhedrin. In the FOURTH CENTURY, however, when oppression and persecution threatened the continued existence of the Sanhedrin, the patriarch Hillel II took an extraordinary step to PRESERVE THE UNITY OF ISRAEL. In order to PREVENT the Jews scattered all over the surface of the earth from celebrating their new moons, festivals and holidays at DIFFERENT TIMES, he made PUBLIC the system of calendar calculation which up to then had been a CLOSELY GUARDED SECRET. . . .*

"In accordance with this system, Hillel II formally sanctified all months in advance, and intercalated all future leap years *until such time as a new, recognized Sanhedrin would be established in Israel*" (p.2).

These facts confirm the usage of the Hebrew calendar calculations, therefore, to ascertain the dates of Passover, and the other holy days and new moons, in the years before Hillel II, including the holy day dates during the time of Jesus Christ. They give us a clear view of why certain changes were made in the fourth century.

What about the "Postponements" in the Calendar?

However, what about the "postponements" added to the calendar by Hillel II and the Sanhedrin of his time? Rabbi Hillel II did institute certain changes in the calendar, when going from an observational calendar to a mathematical one. The major change he inaugurated was the introduction of "postponements" of the New Year (Rosh Hashanah) and subsequent holy days.

Accordingly, when the molad (new moon) of Tishri occurs on a Sunday, Wednesday or Friday, the 1st of Tishri is postponed to the following day. This legality was introduced mainly to prevent Yom Kippur occurring on the day before or after the weekly Sabbath, and to prevent Hoshanah Rabbah (the seventh day of the Feast of Tabernacles) from occurring on a Sabbath.

This change or innovation was supposedly made, based on the authority given to the Sanhedrin to interpret and rule on technical legal matters for the good of the community during every generation or circumstance. Jesus Christ Himself accepted this authority, *so long as it did not contradict Torah or the Word of God* (Matt.23:2-3).

This authority is based on God's provisions as stated in the Torah. The Scriptures themselves clearly give this authority to the presiding rabbinical authorities of each generation -- the authority to

make judgments and binding decisions -- *so long as they are not contrary to the Scriptures themselves* (John 10:35).

A NEW LOOK at the "Postponements"

Because of the decisions made by the Rabbinical Council and Rabbi Hillel II in 358 A.D., in the modern astronomically-based Jewish calendar, Passover (Nisan 14) can only fall on a Monday, Wednesday, Friday, or Sabbath.

Therefore, Nisan 16 -- the day of the wave sheaf offering -- can only fall on a Wednesday, Friday, Sunday, or Monday. This is because of the "postponements" made for the calendar for the time of the dispersion or Diaspora of the Jewish people. But did God actually give the Jewish leaders the authority to make such arbitrary "postponements"? Or are they based on mere "human reasoning," which can end in "death" (Proverbs 14:12)?

To answer this question, let's examine the calendar used during the time of Christ, and the Second Temple period. Were these postponements also in effect in the calendar *before* Hillel II, or during the time of Christ?

Further Evidence from the Mishnah

Further evidence from the Mishnah, the Jewish "Oral Law" which was handed down and orally transmitted from generation to generation -- and which was finally published from about 150-200 A.D., about 150 years before the time of Hillel II -- proves conclusively that *Nisan 16 could fall on a Sabbath during second Temple times*. This, of course, would put Nisan 14 -- Passover -- on a Thursday, which cannot happen in the modern calendar.

In the Mishnah, in *Pesahim* 7:10, we read, "The bones and sinews [of the Passover or chagigah offering which often accompanied the Passover] and what remains over must be burnt on the 16th. *If the 16th falls on a Sabbath they must be burnt on the 17th, since they override neither the Sabbath nor a festival day*" (*The Mishnah*, Danby, p.146).

Since the 16th of Nisan could fall on a Sabbath, the 14th would have been on a Thursday. Thus in Bible times, the day of the Passover sacrifice could fall on a Thursday, even though it could not do so today, because of the "postponements" added by Hillel II.

For another example, according to the Mishnah, although circumcision of a male child is normally performed on the eighth day after birth (Gen.17:10-14), there are circumstances when it must be performed later. Says the Mishnah:

"A child can be circumcised on the eighth, ninth, tenth, eleventh, or twelfth day,

but never earlier and never later. How is this? The rule is that it shall be done on the eighth day; but if the child was born at twilight the child is circumcised on the ninth day; and if at twilight on the eve of Sabbath, the child is circumcised on the tenth day; if a Festival-day falls after the Sabbath the child is circumcised on the eleventh day; *and if the two Festival-days of the New Year fall after the Sabbath* [that is, on Sunday and Monday] the child is circumcised on the twelfth day" (*Mishnah, Shabbath 19:5*, Danby, page 117).

According to this statement, then, in the times *before* Hillel II, the Jewish New Year (Rosh Hoshanah), could fall on a *Sunday*, the day after the weekly Sabbath. Yet in the Hillel II calendar, this cannot occur because of the "postponements."

Clearly, the later postponements were not part of the calendar law prior to Hillel II.

Does this fact therefore invalidate the "postponements" for God's people, today? How valid are the postponements added by Hillel II and his compatriots, since they were not valid during the time of Christ?

The Ninth of Av

Similarly, under the present Hebrew calendar, the 9th of Av never falls on a Friday. Yet, in the Mishnah, it relates, "They may not decree a public fast on the first day of a month or during [the Feast of] the Dedication or at Purim. But if they had begun they may not interrupt the fast. So Rabban Gamaliel. R. Meir said: Although Rabban Gamaliel has said, 'They may not interrupt the fast,' he admitted that they need not fast the whole day. So, too, with the Ninth of Av *if it fell on the eve of a Sabbath* [i.e., a Friday]" (*The Mishnah, Taanith 2:10*, Danby, p.197).

The 9th of Av could fall on a Friday during those times, although it cannot, today. When it did, the Jews cut short their fast on that day -- "they need not fast the *whole day*," if the day fell on a Friday.

Since the days of Hillel II, however, this problem no longer exists, since the 9th of Av can no longer fall on a Friday, due to the "postponements."

This halachic requirement, *which was extant in Temple times*, permitted Jews to cut short their fast on the 9th of Av, when it fell on a Friday. But they did not change the calendar itself to solve this problem! They did not postpone the day! They merely abbreviated the fasting edict!

Therefore, there is no evidence that the "principle" of "postponements" was ever applied in the centuries prior to Hillel II. In those days, Hoshana Rabbah could fall on a Sabbath, and Yom Kippur could fall on a Friday or a Sunday!

Clearly, this evidence from the *Mishnah* itself indicates that the "postponements" of the modern Hebrew calendar, instituted by the Rabbinic Council in the days of Hillel II, *did not apply to earlier times*. They were a *new innovation* brought about in the fourth century of the present era!

However, even though "postponements" were not applicable to the calendar during the time of Christ, does this fact invalidate the usage of the mathematical Jewish calendar to determine holy days, today? Not at all!

However, the historical evidence does prove that the "postponements" of the annual Holy Days, as they are practiced in modern Judaism, were only introduced in 359 A.D., three centuries after the time of Christ and the apostles, and have NO BIBLICAL BASIS for their existence!

So What Difference Does It Make?

What difference, then, does this truth make, for us today?

All the difference!

Should we follow the Jewish "postponements," even if they are NOT sanctioned by the Word of God itself?

Or, as Peter and the apostles said, should we, "Obey God rather than man"? (Acts 5:29). Christ Himself said, "You will know the *truth*, and the *truth* will make you FREE" (John 8:32). Yeshua also declared: "But the hour cometh, and now is, when the true worshippers shall worship the Father *in spirit and in TRUTH*: for the Father seeketh such to worship him. God is a Spirit: and they that worship him must worship him in spirit *and in truth*" (John 4:23-24).

"Truth" is very important to God. How important is it to you? Wise Solomon wrote in Proverbs, "There is a way which seemeth right unto a man, but the end thereof are the ways of DEATH" (Proverbs 14:12).

Jesus Christ said man must live by "every word that proceedeth out of the mouth of God" (Matt.4:4; Luke 4:4).

He also said of the Father, "Thy WORD is TRUTH" (John 17:17).

Whenever there is a clear cut conflict between God's Word, His Law, and rabbinical "tradition," or Jewish halacha, we must obey GOD rather than man!

Paul tells us in direct warning, that the time is coming, and now is, that many will become deceived, and seduced by Satan's wiles and stratagems. He wrote: "For the mystery of iniquity doth already work: only he who now letteth [margin, "hindereth"] will let ["hinder"], until he be taken out of the way. And then shall that Wicked be revealed, whom the Lord shall consume with the spirit of his mouth, and shall destroy with the brightness of his coming.

"Even him, whose coming is after the *working of Satan [perhaps even Satan-bred?] with all power and signs and lying wonders, and with ALL DECEIVABLENESS of unrighteousness* in them that perish: because they received not the *love of the truth, that they might be saved*. And for *this cause* God shall send them *strong delusion* that they should believe a LIE: that they might all be damned [Greek, "judged, condemned, sentenced"] who *believe not the TRUTH*, but had pleasure in unrighteousness" (II Thessalonians 2:7-12).

VAIN WORSHIP!

Clearly, the Jews during the time of Hillel II changed the ancient calendar by adopting the "postponements" of Rosh Hashanah in order to accommodate their views on how to observe the weekly Sabbath. They actually altered the calendar, which God had given to them, in order to preserve their own "traditions" of Sabbath keeping.

Would Almighty God approve of such changes? Or did the Jewish leaders go too far?

This is no matter of mere historical curiosity. This is a matter of whether we observe the true holy days God intended, or some man-made alternatives, calling them "holy"!

Concerning the principle behind such matters, Jesus Christ declared:

"HOWBEIT IN VAIN DO THEY WORSHIP ME, *teaching for doctrines the commandments of MEN*" (Mark 7:7).

He added,

"For laying aside the commandment of God, ye hold the traditions of men, as the washing of pots and cups: and many other such like things ye do. And he said to them, Full well ye reject the commandment of God, that ye may keep your own tradition . . .making the word of God of none effect through your traditions, which ye have delivered: and many such like things ye do" (v.8-13).

Those who wish to change, alter, or tamper with God's holy calendar, as given to Moses and ancient Israel, are guilty before God of insubordination and rebellion. They put *tradition* before the Laws of God. They emphasize "traditions" of men before the Torah itself!

This would include such man-made innovations as the "postponements" of the fourth century. Jewish leaders themselves are accountable before God for these changes in the law of God.

Those who make such changes, without any justification in God's Word, are misusing their God-given authority. They are perverting the truth. They are "thinking to change times and laws" (Daniel 7:25), and will be held accountable before the throne of God Himself !

Whether Jewish or Gentile, whether rabbi or minister, any who tamper with and alter the calendar of God, without divine approval, are standing on trembling ground. They are treading where even angels fear to tread. They are leaping to false conclusions, and jumping off a spiritual precipice -- leaping off a cliff, and hurtling to their own destruction on the jagged, sharp rocks below.

To mess around with the calendar of God is to twist and distort and violate HOLY TIME. This statement applies whether the perpetrator is Jewish OR Gentile -- rabbi or minister or layman! Such men create CONFUSION among the people of God; they create an environment of CHAOS! By their own stubborn will, and rejection of God's Law, they lead others into sin and error. They begin to observe the annual holy days on the wrong days! And when they tamper with the "leap year" cycles, they observe the annual holy days a WHOLE MONTH away from the appointed times God decreed they should be observed!

It is high time we get a BALANCE in these things! Yes, the Jews preserved the calendar, and its computations and laws. But they also went *too far* when they used their ecclesiastical authority and added the unbiblical "postponements" in the fourth century!

Tampering with God's calendar -- even if intended for good -- is still a SIN! Truly, calendar confusion, today, is a clear example of Satan the devil's incredible deceptive power! Millions have fallen for Satan's diabolical cunning and clever "changes" in the calendar.

Some, because of Jewish sins and errors, want to throw out the entire calendar, which has been preserved, and start all over, with their own ideas combined with various historical theories and assumptions.

In essence, they want to throw out the baby with the bath water, and start all over!

God warns in His Word: "There is a way that seemeth right unto a man, but the END thereof are the *WAYS OF DEATH*" (Proverbs 16:25).

Wisdom says we can accept the Jewish calendar, even though we do not need to accept the invalid "postponements" added in reference to Yom Kippur and Hoshana Rabbah. When it comes to making postponements, merely to avoid certain activities on the Sabbath, or to keep Yom Kippur from falling on a Friday, or a Sunday, we can ignore such man-devised rules and keep the days God originally intended. But that does not mean we must also reject the Jewish calendar completely, going to the opposite extreme!

What about you? Do you see the difference between rejecting the Jewish calendar completely, and simply rejecting the invalid, manmade "postponements"?

May God help us all to understand the difference -- and to do the right thing!

A prophecy of this "changing" of God's laws, by His people, was actually made by Ezekiel. The prophet relates God's own warning, saying of Israel and Judah:

"Notwithstanding the children rebelled against me: they walked not in my statutes, neither kept my judgments to do them, which if a man do, he shall even live in them; they polluted my sabbaths. . . .

"I lifted up mine hand unto them also in the wilderness, that I would *scatter them among the heathen* [which He did in 70 A.D. and 135 A.D.], and disperse them through the countries; because they had not executed my judgments, but had despised my statutes, and had polluted my sabbaths . . .

"Wherefore I gave them [over to] also statutes which were

NOT good, and judgments whereby they should NOT live;
and I polluted them in their own gifts. . . ." (Ezek.20:21-26).

The "postponements" added to the calendar laws in the fourth century are nothing but "pollutions," in the sight of God! These are among the statutes which are "NOT good," and judgments whereby God's people should "NOT live"! A holy day of God must not be changed merely for the sake of human convenience, or to "safeguard" the weekly Sabbath day from imagined infringements.

We must not change God's Law merely to honor human "traditions."

Do you have the "love" of the truth? How valuable is it to you? The *New Revised Standard Version* says the ones who will be deceived during this turbulent, tremulous, end-time world age, are deceived "because they *REFUSED to love the truth* and so be saved" (II Thess.2:10, last part).

Many things have been done in ignorance, in the past. But when the knowledge of the truth comes into our lives, what are we going to do about it?

Will we continue to follow Jewish traditions, even when they are not justified?

Will we go to the opposite extreme, and throw out the baby with the bath water?

Or will we get a balance in these things -- and put God's Law before human tradition?

Solomon wrote very wisely, about such matters: "Be not righteous over much; neither make thyself over wise: why shouldest thou destroy thyself? Be not overmuch wicked, neither be thou foolish: why shouldest thou die before thy time?" (Eccl.7:16-17).

Let's put first things first -- the Law of God before "tradition"!

Now that we have leaned these things, let's do them -- with all our heart! As Paul said to the Athenians on Mars' Hill in about 53 A.D.,

"And the times of this ignorance God winked at; but *NOW commandeth all men everywhere to REPENT*: because he hath appointed a day, in the which he will judge the world

in righteousness by that man whom he hath ordained . . ."

(Acts 17:30-31).

What about you? Are you willing to repent and change -- even if it takes a little effort, and study, and persistence, and willingness to **STAND UP**, and not follow all the other fish downstream? Are you willing to fight your way upstream, against the current of the majority?

Are you really willing to **REPENT** of error?