

History of a Lie

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Assumptions are dangerous, particularly when they are made in the realm of religion. If a theological belief is based on a faulty assumption, the religious practice will be in error. A common assumption made by Saturday sabbatarians is that Saturday *must* be the Bible Sabbath because it is the day kept by the Jews. The reasoning goes: “The Jews would never worship on any day except the true Sabbath. Therefore, Saturday must be the true Sabbath because that is when the Jews worship.” A sterling example of circular reasoning!

It is true that the Jews have never lost track of the true Sabbath. However, by their own admission, the Jews deliberately and knowingly *changed their calendar by which the true Sabbath was calculated*. During the fourth century C.E., persecution of all who used the Biblical calendar for worship was so intense that, in the end, the Jews gave up their calendar handed down from Creation through Moses and adopted a calendar adjusted for worship on the Julian calendar.

The Jews are very open that their original calendar was set aside under intense Roman persecution of all who used the Biblical calendar in the fourth century C.E. “Under the reign of Constantius (337-362) the persecutions of the Jews reached such a height that . . . *the computation of the calendar [was] forbidden* under pain of severe punishment.”¹

There are three main areas in which the original calendar differs from the counterfeit:

The Creator’s calendar is luni-solar. This means that the year is solar, but the months are lunar, following the lunar cycle.

The year originally began with new life in the spring at the time of the barley harvest. The Julian/Gregorian counterfeits, being solar calendars, honor the sun god as they begin the year just after the “rebirth” of the sun god at the winter solstice.²

¹ “Calendar,” *The Jewish Encyclopedia*, emphasis supplied.

² This will be covered in depth later, but on the original Julian calendar, the winter solstice was December 25, VIII Kal. Jan., or eight days before the first of January.

The biggest difference between the counterfeits and the genuine calendar is found in the weekly cycle. The pagan Julian/Gregorian calendars have a continuous weekly cycle. The original calendar established at Creation does not. The weekly cycle restarts with each new moon.

These facts are freely admitted by Jewish scholars. Rabbi Louis Finklestein of the Jewish Theological Seminary of America, was selected by the Kehillas (Jewish Communities) of the World as one of the 120 top Jews who best represented “a lamp of Judaism” to the world. In a letter to Dr. L. E. Froom, dated Feb. 20, 1939, Finklestein readily admitted, “The present Jewish calendar was fixed in the fourth century.”³ Maimonides and most other Jewish chronologers agree that the modern Jewish calendar is based upon the “mean motions of the sun and moon, *the true [calendar] having been set aside.*”⁴

The New Moon is still, and the Sabbath originally was, dependent upon the lunar cycle . . . Originally, the New Moon was celebrated in the same way as the Sabbath; gradually it became less important while the Sabbath became more and more a day of religion and humanity, of religious meditation and instruction, of peace and delight of the soul.⁵

With the development of the importance of the Sabbath as a day of consecration and the emphasis laid upon the significant number seven, the week became more and more divorced from its lunar connection . . .⁶

*The months of the year were lunar, and began with the new moon (hodesh, which came to mean “month.”) During the era of the Kings the new moon was observed by a two-day festival (I Sam. 20:24-47.)*⁷

During the time of Christ, the Israelites were using the original calendar, handed down through Moses. The high priest, who was selected from the ruling Sadducee class, was in charge of declaring when a new month had begun. The Pharisees, whose “traditions of men” Christ so emphatically denounced, did *not* control the calendar. This is a very important point because the calendar in use today is a calendar devised by the Pharisees and justified by their oral tradition.

³ Box 6, Folder 4; Grace Amadon Collection, (Collection 154), Center for Adventist Research, Andrews University, Berrien Springs, Michigan.

⁴ Maimonides, *Kiddusch Ha-hodesch*, Tr. Mahler, Wein, 1889, emphasis supplied.

⁵ “Holidays”, *Universal Jewish Encyclopedia*, p. 410.

⁶ *The Universal Jewish Encyclopedia*, Isaak Landman (ed.), Vol. X, “Week,” (1943 ed.), p. 482.

⁷ *The Universal Jewish Encyclopedia*, “Calendar,” p. 631.

With the destruction of the Temple (70 A.D.) the Sadducees disappeared altogether, leaving the regulation of all Jewish affairs in the hands of the Pharisees. Henceforth, Jewish life was regulated by the Pharisees; the whole history of Judaism was reconstructed from the Pharisaic point of view, and a new aspect was given to the Sanhedrin of the past. A new chain of tradition supplanted the older priestly tradition (Abot 1:1). Pharisaism shaped the character of Judaism and the life and thought of the Jew for all the future.⁸

As a result of the extreme persecution associated with any attempt to use the Biblical calendar, Hillel II, the last President of the Sanhedrin, created a reformed calendar.

Declaring the new month by observation of the new moon, and the new year by the arrival of spring, can only be done by the Sanhedrin. In the time of Hillel II [4th century C.E.], the last President of the Sanhedrin, *the Romans prohibited this practice*. Hillel II was therefore forced to institute his *fixed* calendar, thus in effect giving the Sanhedrin's advance approval to the calendars of all future years.⁹

Since Biblical times the months and years of the Jewish calendar have been established by the cycles of the moon and the sun. The traditional law prescribes that the months shall follow closely the course of the moon . . . In the early times of our history the solution was found by the following practical procedure: *The beginnings of the months were determined by direct observation of the new moon.*

. . . *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 . . . he made public the system of calendar calculation which up to then had been a closely guarded secret. It had been used in the past only to check the observations and testimonies of witnesses, and to determine the beginnings of the spring season.*¹⁰

The Hebrew calendar was one of both calculation and observation. The moon is extremely precise and accurate. Even the various anomalies due to her elliptical orbit can be predicted.

⁸ "Pharisees," *The Jewish Encyclopedia*, Vol. IX, (1901-1906 ed.), p. 666.

⁹ "The Jewish Calendar and Holidays (incl. Sabbath)": *The Jewish Calendar; Changing the Calendar*, www.torah.org, emphasis supplied.

¹⁰ Arthur Spier, *The Comprehensive Hebrew Calendar*, (Jerusalem and New York: Feldheim Publishers, 1986), pp. 1-2, emphasis supplied.

With advanced astronomical knowledge, which the ancients possessed, the luni-solar calendar is both exact and predictable allowing past and future calculation. The beauty of this method of calendation, however, is that the shepherd on the hillside, with no astronomical knowledge whatsoever, can still use it by observation.

When Hillel II “fixed” the calendar, he moved the New Year and corrupted the weekly cycle. That is all. The principles by which a luni-solar calendar is calculated are purely astronomical. Hillel II did not create them. He merely “made public the system of calendar calculation which up to then had been a closely guarded secret.”¹¹

When the Messiah was on earth, the one thing He repeatedly and vehemently denounced was the “traditions of men” – the teachings of the Pharisees. It is frequently urged, “If the calendar were off in the time of Christ, He would have corrected it.” This is true. The fact that He did not proves that the calendar, under the control of the Sadducees, was indeed the original calendar Christ Himself established at Creation. The calendar used by Jews today is a pharisaical corruption. Rabbi Louis Finklestein stated:

Pharasaism became Talmudism ... [But] the spirit of the ancient Pharisee survives unaltered. When the Jew ... studies the Talmud, he is actually repeating the arguments used in the Palestinian academies. . . . The spirit of the [Pharisees’] *doctrine* has remained quick and vital. . . . From Palestine to Babylonia; from Babylonia to North Africa, Italy, Spain, France and Germany; from these to Poland, Russia, and Eastern Europe generally, ancient Pharasaism has wandered.¹²

The Talmud derives its authority from the position held by the ancient academies (i.e. Pharisee). The teachers of those academies, both of Babylonia and of Palestine, were considered the rightful successors of the older Sanhedrin. . . . At the present time, the Jewish people have no living central authority comparable in status to the ancient Sanhedrins or the later academies. Therefore, any decision regarding the Jewish religion must be based on the Talmud as the final resumé of the teaching of those authorities when they existed.¹³

The traditions of the Pharisees, preserved in the Talmud and from which Christ sought to free the people, teach that if one does not know when Sabbath occurs, simply keep one day in seven.¹⁴ It

¹¹ *Ibid.*

¹² Louis Finklestein, *The Pharisees: The Sociological Background of their Faith*, (Philadelphia: The Jewish Publication Society of America, 1946), Vol. 1, Forward to first edition, p. XXI, emphasis supplied.

¹³ Louis Finklestein, *The Jews — Their History, Culture, and Religion*, (Philadelphia: The Jewish Publication Society of America, 1949), Vol. 4, p. 1332.

¹⁴ Tractate Shabbat, chapter 7, Mishna 1, www.JewishVirtualLibrary.org.

is easy to see how such a tradition could be used to justify changing the calendar due to the extreme persecution facing all who worshipped by the Biblical calendar. Using his authority as president of the Sanhedrin, Hillel II tied the annual feasts to the spring equinox. Next, he adjusted the weekly seventh-day Sabbath to the Julian seventh-day Saturday. This “freed” the Jews from the condemnation of the law since they no longer knew when the true Sabbath occurred. Thus, they justified their use of the pagan calendar.

The true calendar is very user-friendly. The weekdays and Sabbaths of each lunar month always fall on the exact same *dates* of every month;¹⁵ days of the week do not float through the monthly dates as they do now on the modern calendar. After Hillel II “fixed” the calendar to fit into a Julian framework and moved the observance of the seventh-day Sabbath from the lunar week to the continuously cycling Julian week, difficulties arose. Sometimes the new moon would appear on Julian days of the week which caused the annual feasts to fall on the wrong days of the new week. As a result, rules of postponement were established – something that was never necessary when the original calendar was in use.

None who desire to worship on the true seventh-day Sabbath should look to the Jews for learning when it occurs. All who worship on Saturday because “the Jews keep Saturday” are following Hillel II’s corruption of the Creator’s calendar and thus breaking His law.

¹⁵ This explains why, whenever the date of a seventh-day Sabbath is given in the Bible, it always falls on the 8th, 15th, 22nd or 29th of the Hebrew month.