

COUNTING PENTECOST

by

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[1] Common sense Thinking

This document is written for those who already have a reasonably good background on the laws of the Pentateuch and who recognize that the Tanak (Hebrew Bible with a few passages in Aramaic) is our guide for understanding correct practice.

The prolific writer Origen (c. 185 - 253/254) wrote that in his time there were three major versions of the Septuagint (LXX) with minor variations among those versions, and that he was often unable to determine which was closer to the original LXX for different passages. We do not possess any handwritten copy of the LXX of Leviticus from before c. 350 CE. We do not know what the original LXX had in Lev 23:9-16 which discusses the wave sheaf offering and the count to Pentecost.

Philo of Alexandria did explain that his interpretations of Judaism were a mixture of what he found in Scripture along with what his Jewish teachers in Alexandria taught. Philo favored the count to Pentecost that agrees with later surviving copies of the LXX which disagrees with the Tanak in Leviticus 23. Leading scholars who specialize in the writings of Philo believe that he did not understand the Hebrew language and could not read the Tanak. Philo's language was Greek, not Hebrew. Philo's Bible was some version of the LXX that we do not possess.

Neither Philo nor the later surviving copies of the LXX are our guide to the correct understanding of how to count Pentecost. Josephus declares that he was following the program of the Pharisees, and hence, when he gives his interpretation of how to count Pentecost, he was copying the Pharisees, which disagrees with the Tanak. The Pharisees and Sadducees disagreed on how to count Pentecost. Modern day mainstream Judaism follows the Pharisees in how to count Pentecost because the Talmud promotes the viewpoint of the Pharisees in this matter.

In the Tanak the Hebrew word *Shabbat* (Sabbath) occurs 111 times, and no context among these 111 times indicates that it can mean anything other than the Day of Atonement, the seven year land Sabbath, or the seventh-day Sabbath. The word *shabbat* is not used in Scripture for a festival day. The word *shabbat* is never used in the Tanak to mean "week" or "seven". Details of translation will be supplied below.

Even when counting toward the Jubilee year in Leviticus 25 you count "seven Sabbaths of years", which is seven cycles of years, each cycle ending in the land Sabbath year, thus 49 years, and there is no need to claim that it means a "week" of years. This is very similar to the count to Pentecost stated as "seven complete Sabbaths" in Leviticus 23:15, which is a unique phrase not seen elsewhere except as a parallel to the count to the Jubilee year. The Sabbath is the seventh day, which completes the count to seven, so that the concept of completion is seen in the Sabbath cycle. Thus Leviticus 23:15, by stating "seven complete Sabbaths" is implying that from the first day of the week until the seventh day of the week is counted seven times to make seven complete Sabbaths.

Later chapters in this document will go into fine detail about the count to Pentecost, but here in this introductory chapter a common sense simplified explanation will be presented.

Leviticus 23:6 and Numbers 28:17 show that the feast of unleavened bread is a feast that lasts seven days according to the Tanak, not eight days. Deuteronomy 16:16 shows that the people of Israel (from all parts) were to appear before YHWH during the days of unleavened bread. In order for them

to appear during the wave sheaf offering, the wave sheaf offering would have to be on one of the seven days of unleavened bread. If the wave sheaf offering could occur one day after the seven days of unleavened bread, then the people would be free to leave the festival grounds and go home, and thus not witness the wave sheaf offering. Hence the common sense view is that the day of the wave sheaf offering must be on one of the seven days of unleavened bread.

[2] Hebrew *achar* (Strong's 310)

The Hebrew word *achar* (# 310, BDB pp. 29-30) in the context of *time* means 'after' or 'afterward'. Several other Hebrew words have this word *achar* as its internal stem or root. Some examples with *achar*:

Genesis 10:1 has “after [= *achar*] the flood”.

Judges 1:1 has “after [= *achar*] the death of Joshua”.

Joel 2:28, “And it shall come to pass afterward [= *achar*] that I will pour out My Spirit upon all flesh...”

On the day of Pentecost, Peter, in Acts 2:17-21 quotes Joel 2:28-32 where the Hebrew word *achar* is rendered “last days”. Perhaps the reason for this is that Peter recognizes that the context of Joel is the end-time battle of the last days (Joel 2:1; 3:14-18), and he is inspired to quote from this context. There are two Comings of the Messiah, and the context of Joel is the Second Coming, However, the context of Acts 2 is the First Coming and Pentecost. The Hebrew word that links Joel 2:28 to Acts 2:17 as the element of “time” is *achar*, where it becomes “last days”. Some people have interpreted this to mean that the Last Days begin with the First Coming, although this is not the context of Joel. The word *achar* is also important in the count to Pentecost, as will be seen below.

[3] Hebrew *machar* (Strong's 4279)

When the Hebrew letter *mem* is placed before the word *achar* it becomes the Hebrew word *machar* (# 4279, BDB pp. 563-4).

In Exodus 19:10 *machar* is translated "tomorrow"

In Deuteronomy 6:20 *machar* is translated "in time to come".

In Ester 5:12 *machar* is translated "tomorrow".

In Isaiah 56:12 if *machar* is translated "tomorrow" (as in the NKJV), then it predicts the perverted replacement of the Sabbath with Sunday by the drunken shepherds in that context.

In all cases the beginning reference point of *machar* is the current time, and *machar* is *after* the current time. The English word “after” does not have to appear in the translation of *machar* because it is implied from the word “tomorrow”.

The word *machar* is not the standard Hebrew word for "day" which is *yom*. The Sabbath *yom* is from sundown to sundown. The word *machar* often confuses people in its translation because it is **not** *yom* but translations sometimes fail to make the distinction between *machar* and *yom*, in its translation.

[4] Hebrew *ba-erev* in context with a numbered day of the month

The two examples below show that when a numbered day of the month is mentioned with the Hebrew expression *ba-erev*, that Hebrew expression refers to the end of that numbered day. If it could also refer to the beginning of that numbered day, then the Hebrew would be ambiguous and hence would lose its intended comprehension.

The first day of the seven days of unleavened bread occurs on *Aviv* 15 (Leviticus 23:6; Numbers 28:17). Thus unleavened bread (= *matzot* [plural form]) is eaten from the *end of* the 14th day until the *end of* the 21st day. This shows that in the following literal translation, the Hebrew expression *ba-erev* must refer to the end of the numbered day.

Exodus 12:18 In [the] first [month] on [the] 14th day of [the] month *ba-erev* you shall eat *matzot* until the 21st day of the month *ba-erev*.

The Day of Atonement occurs on the 10th day of the seventh month. This means that it occurs from the *end of* the ninth day until the *end of* the tenth day.

Leviticus 23:32 It [shall be] to you a Sabbath of rest and you afflict your souls in [the] ninth [day] of [the] month *ba-erev* from evening until evening you shall keep your Sabbath.

[5] Hebrew *macharat* (Strong's 4283) in relation to Passover

The last letter of the Hebrew alphabet is *tav*, and when this is added to the end of *machar* it becomes the Hebrew word *macharat* (#4283, BDB p. 564).

This word *macharat* almost always has the Hebrew word prefix *mee* so that it is pronounced *mee macharat* when read with the word prefix. This is most often literally translated "on the morrow", and it refers to the daytime that follows the present reference point in time. Sometimes the present reference point is an event that occupies part of a day, and sometimes it refers to the whole day from sundown to sundown.

The word *macharat* typically refers to the time *after* you wake up from a normal night's sleep, and refers to the daytime that follows after the beginning reference time. Hence the concept of 'after' is also part of the meaning of the word as indicated by the stem *achar* that is within it.

Genesis 19:34 is important because it shows that when the current reference point is an event that occupies part of the night, mee macharat refers to the daytime that follows that night. Here is a literal translation that includes the context...

Genesis 19:30 And Lot went up from Zoar, and dwelt in [the] mountain, and his two daughters with him, for he was afraid to stay in Zoar. And he stayed in a cave, he and his two daughters.

19:31 And the firstborn said to the younger: Our father is old and there is not a man on earth to come-in into-us after-the-manner of all the earth.

19:32 Come, let us make our father drink wine, and we will lie with him that we may-preserve [the] seed of our father.

19:33 And they made their father drink wine in [the] night. And the firstborn went in and lay with her father. And he did not know when she lay-down or when she arose.

19:34 And it-came-to-pass on-the-morrow [= *mee macharat*] that the firstborn said to the younger: Indeed I lay yester night with my father. Let us make him drink wine also tonight and you go-in [and] lie with

him that we may-preserve [the] seed of our father.

The Passover has several meanings, and the most frequent meanings are the animal to be sacrificed and the ceremony of killing the lamb along with eating the lamb and the explanations that accompany the eating of the lamb (Exodus 12:27-28).

Jonah 4:7 is an interesting context for *macharat* because it shows that after Jonah awakens from a night's sleep and the sun comes up in the morning so it begins to get hot (see verse 8) the daytime is involved that follows (is after) the beginning reference point. Here is a literal translation of Jonah 4:7, "And the Almighty prepared a worm when the dawn arose upon the morrow [= *macharat*], and it attacked the plant that it withered." The beginning reference point in time is the previous daytime when the plant gave shade to Jonah in Jonah 4:6. The literal English translation in Jonah 4:7 does not need to explicitly show the word "after" because it is implied by the word "morrow". In some contexts the translation "after" needs to be supplied for clarity (showing *achar*), while in other contexts it is understood and does not have to be present.

The expression "on the morrow after the Passover" occurs only twice in the Tanak: Numbers 33:3 and Joshua 5:11, both having *mee macharat*, translated "on the morrow after". The translated word "after" does not have to be in italics because it is a recognition that it comes from the stem *achar* that is within *macharat*.

In translating Numbers 33:3 and Joshua 5:11, the timing element should recognize the meaning of Passover from the context as well as the timing significance of Genesis 19:34 applied to those contexts. Josh 5:10 speaks of keeping the Passover, which implies that it is the ceremony context. Since the next verse also has the word Passover, it is only sensible that this verse also refers to the ceremony of the Passover. Since the whole expression "on-the-morrow-after [= *mee macharat*] the Passover" is identical in the Hebrew in both Numbers 33:3 and Josh 5:11, it also makes sense that Num 33:3 refers to the ceremony of the Passover. Since the ceremony of the Passover begins with killing the lamb, then roasting the lamb whole without breaking any of its bones, and then eating it, the entire process certainly extends into the night because it takes some hours to roast it whole without breaking any of its bones. Hence "on-the-morrow-after [= *mee macharat*] the Passover" refers to the daytime that follows the night of the ceremony.

Numbers 33:3 They set out from Ramses in the first month on the 15th day of the first month on-the-morrow-after [= *mee macharat*] the Passover, [the] children of Israel went out with a high hand in [the] sight of all [the] Egyptians. 33:4 And [the] Egyptians were burying those that YHWH had smitten among them, all [their] firstborn. On their deities YHWH executed judgments.

Verse 3 above indicates that the burial occurred during the daytime of the 15th. The burial would have occurred during the daytime that followed the death of the firstborn in Egypt. The death occurred shortly after the ceremony of the Passover.

Joshua 4:19 mentions the tenth day of the first month, and there is a continuous narrative from that date through to Joshua 5:10. Although Josh 5:10 does not mention the word "first", this is implied by the continuation from Joshua 4:19.

The next verse has a numbered day of the month with *ba-erev*, showing from above that it refers to the *end of* that day [= *yom*].

Joshua 5:10 And [while the] children of Israel encamped in Gilgal they kept the Passover on [the] 14th day of [the] month *ba erev* in [the] plains of Jericho.

5:11 And they ate from [the] produce of the land on-the-morrow-after the Passover, *matzot* and roasted grain on that very day.

5:12 And the manna ceased on-the-morrow in their eating from the produce of the land, so that the children of Israel no longer had manna, but they ate from the yield of the land of Canaan that year.

Verse 11 above has “on-the-morrow-after the Passover” exactly as in Numbers 33:3 where that latter verse shows it to refer to the 15th day of the first month.

In order to eat “*matzot* and roasted grain” on that very day (verse 11), according to Leviticus 23:14 and its context, the wave sheaf offering must have been offered on that 15th day of the first month. Note the full context below. YHWH was in the process giving the whole land of Canaan to Israel, so that the grain in the area of Gilgal was considered to be theirs even though they did not plant it. They needed to offer the wave sheaf offering using that crop in order to eat it.

One technical point needs comment that should be addressed because the typical translations give rise to an apparent contradiction. Exodus 12:22 states: “none of you shall go out at the door of his house until the morning.” This is a literally correct translation and stands as it reads. Thus they departed in the morning of *Aviv* 15 as recognized by Numbers 33:3. The translation problem lies in Deuteronomy 16:1 and the correction is in the following literal translation.

Deuteronomy 16:1 Keep [the laws of] the month of *Aviv* and celebrate [the] Passover to YHWH our Almighty, because in the month of *Aviv* YHWH your Almighty freed you from Egypt [by] night. In the above translation the word “freed” is the Hebrew word *yatsa* (# 3318) which can have multiple meanings. This meaning of freedom from servitude is seen in Exodus 21:3 (twice) and 4 (and there are other places). Here the context involves going out from slavery, which implies freedom. They had freedom by night because Exodus 12:31-33 shows that at night Pharaoh gave the command for the Israelites to leave Egypt and the people also urged them to leave.

Exodus 12:35-36 was actually fulfilled earlier in Exodus 11:2-3 so that no delay in departing was necessary in taking items from the Egyptians.

[6] The Count to Pentecost (Feast of Weeks)

Leviticus 23:10 Speak to [the] children of Israel and say to them, ‘When you come into the land which I am going to give to you and reap its harvest / crop, then you shall bring [the] first [= *raysheet*] sheaf [= *omer*] of your harvest / crop to the priest.

23:11 And he shall wave the sheaf before YHWH for your acceptance on-the-morrow-after [= *mee macharat*] the Sabbath the priest shall wave it,

23:12 on [the] day that you wave the sheaf you shall offer a year old male lamb without blemish for a burnt offering to YHWH

23:13 and a cereal offering with it, two-tenths [of an ephah] of fine flour mixed with oil, an offering by fire to YHWH, a pleasing odor and its drink offering of a fourth of a hin of wine.

23:14 You shall not eat bread, nor roasted/parched-grain, nor fresh grain until this same day, until you have brought [the] offering of your Almighty. It is a statute forever throughout your generations in all your dwellings.

23:15 And you shall count for yourselves on-the-morrow-after [= *mee macharat*] the Sabbath, from [the] day that you brought the sheaf of the waving, seven complete Sabbaths,

23:16 until on-the-morrow-after [= *mee macharat*] the seventh Sabbath you shall number 50 day[s], and you shall offer a new grain offering to YHWH.

In today's language the morrow after the seventh Sabbath is called Sunday, and thus the first day of the count is Sunday. Josh 5:11 (with Numbers 33:3) shows that *in the first year that the Israelites entered the land*, the wave sheaf offering had to occur on that 15th day of the first month, which was a Sunday based on their eating the new grain of the land. Leviticus 23:14 shows that they would not be permitted to eat the unleavened bread until the wave sheaf was offered. Hence in that year the morrow after the Sabbath that began the count was on Sunday *Aviv* 15.

The Sabbath is the seventh day, which completes the count to seven, so that the concept of *completion* is seen in the Sabbath cycle. Thus Leviticus 23:15, by stating "seven complete Sabbaths" is implying that from the first day of the week until the seventh day of the week is counted seven times to make seven complete Sabbaths.

BDB has a comment on the use of "after" with *mee-macharat ha-shabat*. On p. 564 of BDB within the word *macharat* we note: "*mee-macharat ha-shabat on the morrow of (= after) the sabbath, Lv 23:11, 15, 16*".

The key in all this is that *machar* and *macharat* refer to the daytime that is *after* the beginning reference point in time, which is sometimes a whole sundown to sundown day, as it is in the count to Pentecost.

[7] Conclusion

Leviticus 23:6 and Num 28:17 show that the feast of unleavened bread is a feast that lasts seven days according to the Tanak, not eight days. Deuteronomy 16:16 shows that the people of Israel were to appear before YHWH during the days of unleavened bread. In order for them to appear during the wave sheaf offering Sunday, the wave sheaf offering would have to be on one of the seven days of unleavened bread. If the wave sheaf offering could occur one day after the seven days of unleavened bread, then the people would be free to leave the festival grounds and go home, and thus not witness the wave sheaf offering. Hence the Sunday of the wave sheaf offering must be on one of the seven days of unleavened bread.

The first time that the Israelites entered the land under the command of Joshua, the first day of the count was on Sunday *Aviv* 15.

First Month for 2019

by

Herb Solinsky April 27, 2019

[1] The Recent Sanhedrin

Some time soon after the year 2000 an unofficial Sanhedrin was set up in Israel. The two qualifications for appointment to this body of 70 were a high level of Jewish scholarship and a general recognition of personal piousness. Perhaps the greatest problem in this enterprise is that its members were not required to be Orthodox Jews, although some were. The goals for membership were generally recognized respect in high scholarship in Jewish law, no blot on their personal record of behavior, and their high personal character. Its members represented different branches of Judaism so that was intended to minimize antagonism between the different branches of Judaism along with the general acceptance of this Sanhedrin among Jews generally over time. Various issues were to be considered by this Sanhedrin as the years progressed. Since it was recognized by Jewish scholarship that the modern Jewish calculated calendar was drifting out of astronomical consistency over time, the calendar was one of its early issues to consider improving. The deliberations of this Sanhedrin were not made public.

Since Orthodox Jews typically do not recognize other Jews as true Jews, it was predictable that this Sanhedrin would have much difficulty in being generally accepted among nearly all Jews.

One Orthodox Jew who promoted this Sanhedrin in a general way is Dr. Roy Hoffman, a professor at Hebrew University in Jerusalem. He was a founder of the Israeli New Moon Society (this may not be the official exact title, but it is close). He managed a website that reported on monthly sightings of the new moon from shortly before 2000 until about 2011 when Dr. Hoffman ceased being involved with that website. This website soon closed down. There is secrecy surrounding his lack of continued involvement with that website. His goal was that the newly formed Aaronic priesthood in training would question observers of the new moon for the beginning of a month and thus train for the time when actual sighting of the new moon in Israel would determine the start of each Jewish month among Jews generally, and thus the modern calculated calendar would be partly or wholly replaced. Of course there were issues to resolve such as the postponement rules and how to determine the first month.

Messianic believers who did not like the calculated calendar were more interested in the website established by Dr. Hoffman than other Jews, and official Judaism showed no interest in accepting dates based upon the visual sighting since it had no official recognition. There is no information publicly available concerning the position of the current unofficial Sanhedrin on the revision of the calendar. When Dr. Hoffman's website was abandoned, it was a great disappointment to those who wanted to know when the new moon was sighted in Israel. Jews who were not Karaites were not motivated to report to some segment of the Karaites about sighting the new moon. This greatly reduced the numbers of people involved in looking for and reporting about the sighting of the new crescent.

[2] The Karaite Korner Website

The Karaite Korner Website was founded by Nehemia Gordon shortly before 2000, and its two main points of interest were reporting on the sighting of the new moon in Israel and its annual search for barley in its declaration of which new moon should be considered the first new moon of the year.

Nehemia trained some Messianic Jews on how to test barley that would supposedly meet the requirements for using barley to determine the first month. After a few years these trained people went on barley expeditions of their own without Nehemia. It soon became apparent that Nehemia and some of the Messianic groups were not in agreement on how to judge which new moon should be accepted as the first about every two or three years. Even some of the Messianic groups often did not agree with one another on this matter.

Nehemia did not like being part of an unofficial institution that frequently *disagreed* on how to determine the first month of the year. He was criticized for his conclusions on the internet. The result of this criticism of Nehemia is that he abandoned the Karaite Korner website and gave up his involvement in attempting to determine the first month. Now Devorah Gordon does this annual search for barley without Nehemia, but she does not utilize the Karaite Korner, which has ceased.

When Nehemia published monthly sightings of the new moon, he was often very detailed in providing the name of the observer, the minute, and the location. Deborah does not provide such details, but she has known personal contacts.

Nehemia kept it a secret that members of the Jewish Karaite community had rejected his participation with them. Nehemia is a runaway Karaite although he bills himself as a Karaite. The result is that only a small number of actual Karaites communicate with Devorah Gordon concerning the sighting of the new moon each month.

[3] The year 2019

The circumstances that prevailed in 2019 have never happened since the data on new moon sightings became available on the internet to the best of my knowledge.

Most of the people who were looking for the new crescent for the first month were looking in March because of their interest in the barley to start the year. The greater majority of them were four or five groups of Messianic believers rather than Karaites, although there may have been a large number of true Karaites who were the silent majority. Their silence is their lack of reporting in whether they saw the new crescent where the weather was clear. The Gordon group that is interested in barley did disagree with the majority and did begin the new year in April instead of in March 2019. The very vast majority of Jews have no interest in sighting the new moon or reporting about it.

From the above considerations very few people were reporting about the new moon in Israel in April. The problem was that there were clouds in Israel except in some of the western parts where very few people were reporting. How many is very few? We do not know. There may only have been one person who reported about this in western Israel in April. For this reason this was not a normal year for sighting the crescent.

Only one person in western Israel where it was not cloudy reported having seen the new crescent in April. If others had been reporting, there might have been thousands. The new crescent was reported to have been sighted in April in Australia and many other places from Australia to Israel. It was not a borderline case to see.

[4] Modern Technology

Technology has made a difference in some ways. Without communication technology we in the U. S. would not know what people were seeing in Israel. Experts in Israel use computer programs to know a pinpoint spot of where to look in the sky when they look for the new crescent as each minute passes. Anciently people could not know to do this. Today some people use binoculars on a tripod to first spot the crescent, and then move their head away from the binoculars to see if they can spot it with the naked eye. Here again technology helps for some people.

Another way in which technology helps is that in 1928 the German astronomer Karl Schoch published a paper in which he explained the nature of a calculation that would enable people to predict whether the new moon could be sighted in Israel if the weather is clear. Over many years the periodical *Sky & Telescope* published early sightings of the new crescent giving the time and coordinates (latitude and longitude) of the observer as well as the height above sea level. Using Karl Schoch's methods with computer programs it was possible to use the data in *Sky & Telescope* to develop confidence in being able to accurately predict the visibility of the new crescent unless it was borderline to Karl Schoch's curve. I have gathered much information on predicting the sighting of new crescent in Israel, and I use computer programs to do this, but not as a substitute for people in general. There is a formula that may be used by computer astronomy software to know whether the sighting of the new moon is **borderline** or **not** borderline for sighting in Israel. About seven percent of the time it is borderline. Whenever the weather in Israel is clear and the computer shows that it is **not** a borderline case to see the new crescent, then the computer agrees with sighting since the year 2000 when sighting information became available from the internet.

Scripture does not specifically discuss the use of two witnesses to start the month by sighting. Orthodox Jews use their Talmud for this, and this document is dated no further back than c. 200 CE. This question is not discussed by Philo or Josephus. It does make sense to use the concept of two witnesses.

Most people do not realize that the modern calculated Jewish calendar was first put into practice c. 800

CE and that the belief that it was done by the patriarch Hillel II in the year 358/359 CE is a false legend.

Since computer prediction shows that it was not a borderline case in April 2019 in Israel (meaning that if the weather is clear it should be seen) and there was one known witness where the weather was clear, that is good enough for me to start the new month at the end of the first Sabbath this April. The key here is that we do not know that anyone besides this one person was trying to report seeing the new crescent in the part of Israel that was not cloudy.

If it was a borderline case, I would personally want to have two witnesses. Computer programs determine whether it is borderline. In effect, the computer program acts as a second witness based upon borderline. This is another application of modern technology.

If there are no witnesses, then the month has a maximum of 30 days regardless of computer programs. However, it becomes a future question of what to do if the weather is very clear and no one is reporting, and it is *not* a borderline case (thus it should be seen).

During the years 1982 to 1999 I used computer prediction from the coordinates of Jerusalem to determine the start of a month because I did not know of human observers during those years.

ADDITIONAL BOOKLETS

Biblical Holy Days...by YAIM

A Calendar Discussion

Is Barley Used to Determine the First Month...taken from Herb Solinsky

Life & Death of Yahshua...by Mike Abbaduska

Is The Equinox Scriptural...taken from Herb Solinsky

thebiblicalcalendar.org...Herb Solinsky