

# The Beginning of the Current Jewish Calendar

Jennifer Sager Gertman

Thesis Submitted in Partial Fulfillment of Requirements for  
Ordination

Hebrew Union College-Jewish Institute of Religion  
Graduate Rabbinical Program  
New York, New York

February 1, 2010

Advisor: Dr. Martin A. Cohen

## Table of Contents

Acknowledgments.....	3
Preface .....	5
Chapter One – The Biblical Calendar.....	7
Chapter Two – The Fixed Rabbinical Calendar.....	14
Chapter Three – The Fluid Calendar.....	22
Chapter Four – The Festivals of Rosh Hashanah, Yom Kippur, Succoth and Pesah....	54
Chapter Five – The Enigma of Shavuot.....	82
Conclusion.....	106

## Acknowledgements

I never would have finished this thesis without the help of some very important people in my life. I am grateful to Tina Weiss for helping me to compile my bibliography and find books in other libraries. Her help during my many months of research is greatly appreciated.

This summer I had the opportunity to work for the youth movement of the Union of Reform Judaism. It was an extremely busy summer, yet my amazing co-worker, Hilary Olean, was sure I had the time and space to work on my thesis. Her support was invaluable in this process.

I could not have begun a thesis, let alone completing it, without the unstinting advice, encouragement and assistance of my HUC advisors Dr. Carole Balin and Dr. Alyssa Gray. There were many times when I was unsure of my abilities and they always encouraged me to persevere! I especially want to thank Dr. Gray for helping me resolve the conflicts in my schedule that allowed me to with Dr. Cohen as my Thesis advisor.

The translations for this Thesis would never have been accomplished without the help of Anat Katz. She sat with me week in and week out, experimenting in strategies that would improve my Hebrew skills. Under her tutelage my abilities greatly improved as did my confidence. Her belief in me and her patience were invaluable in my completion of this program.

Attending rabbinical school, and writing a thesis both involve a great investment of time, energy, heart and soul. One needs much support and love to complete both. I am lucky to have amazing friends and an incredible family who have supported me along

the way. Gram and Grandpa, I learned my love of Judaism spending Shabbat and holidays with you. You taught me the importance of ritual and family. Your dedication to Judaism, community and family shaped who I am and led me down this path. Bubbie, your love of reading, teaching and learning is contagious. Your example taught me to always be curious and ask questions. Robyn and Michael, Billy and Joanna and Rachel, thank you for your love and support, for visiting me or allowing me to escape to visit you, for your wisdom on issues of life. Marian and Bill, thank you for your encouragement and for always being proud of me. Jonathan, thank you for making me laugh, for keeping me on my toes, and for ensuring that I did not allow school to keep me from enjoying life. Mom and Dad, without your love, guidance and generosity, none of this would ever have been possible. You are always there when I need to talk, when I need an editor, when I need to brainstorm. You are the best “cheerleaders”, always believing in me and pushing me to be my best self. I love you and thank you more than words could ever express.

Holly, you are never far from my thoughts or my heart. I often think about what you would say if you knew I entered rabbinical school. Somehow, I do not think you would have been surprised. Your kindness, beauty and faith inspire me always.

To my amazing thesis advisor, Dr. Cohen, I have the deepest respect and gratitude. Dr. Cohen taught me all that I know about academic research. He kept me focused, directed, and motivated even when other things in my life pulled at my attention. He helped me to develop and grow as a student, rabbi and person while working on my thesis. He taught me to think critically and push the envelope. This thesis is dedicated to him, without whom it would never have been finished!

## Preface

Throughout Jewish history and until it was finally fixed in the early middle ages the Calendar was a source of political power and a challenge to political power.

Throughout this period of Jewish history, from early biblical times to Gaonic times challenges to the establishment were made through calendrical positions.

The number of calendars of Israel that existed at any given time was almost surely greater than the number that was preserved, but even this number is impressive from the biblical period on, as we shall see.

The purpose of my study is twofold, first, to trace the variety of calendars in ancient and early medieval Judaism to see what political positions they represent. And secondly, and much more importantly, to study what the emerging and ultimately victorious pharisaic-rabbinic tradition did with the content of the calendar once its general calendar was established. Unlike other calendars, the calendar of proto-rabbinic and rabbinic Judaism represented a fundamental change in the nature in the faith which the calendar was supposed to frame. Indeed, the proto-rabbinic Jews utilized their calendar to inculcate within the faith a whole new view of tradition and of the relationship of tradition to the daily exigencies of daily life.

We can learn many lessons from a study of the calendar in this way. We can come to understand that until the calendar was fixed it had a strong political component which, of course, even in its fixed state it continues to have. But at the same time we can recognize that the purpose of a calendar is to create a matrix for appropriate and meaningful religious involvement. In so doing we can raise questions about the nature of the Jewish calendar today and the content of Sabbath and its holiday cycle to see whether

our contemporary life can suggest modifications in either the calendar or the way in which the calendar is implemented in daily life for the purpose of enhancing the spiritual life of Jews today.

Accordingly I have devoted this thesis to an analysis of the biblical calendar, the fixed calendar and its development, the many calendars in place at the origins of rabbinic Judaism and ultimately of the changing content within the calendar that was created at the beginning of rabbinic Judaism.

## Chapter One: The Biblical Calendar

In a series of magisterial articles Professor Julian Morgenstern posited that there were three calendars in ancient Israel. He refers to these calendars by number, I, II and III. The calendars are differentiated by the way they distinguish months. Calendar I uses Canaanite names, calendar II uses numbers and calendar III uses Babylonian names. According to Morgenstern, Calendar I had given way to Calendar II by the time of the Babylonian Exile in 586 B.C.E. or shortly thereafter, while the transition from Calendar II to Calendar III took place toward the end of the fourth century, that is after the conquest of the Near East by Alexander the Great and the establishment of his successor polities. With the switch in calendars there also came a switch from solar to lunar dating and from fixed festivals to fluid festivals.

With the help of contemporary social scientific techniques we are in a position to raise some questions about Prof. Morgenstern's analysis. It is clear that in dealing with Israel's various calendars Dr. Morgenstern regards ancient Israel as at least a de facto political unit, which in reality it was only for a brief time, namely under the united monarchy of ancient Israel beginning possibly with Saul, but most certainly with David and going through Solomon. The reason we use the term —possibly' in reference to Saul is that Saul's monarchy was essentially a confederation and not a united polity. Until this brief period of unity ancient Israel was regionally fragmented, and, while the similarities in the life realities of its divisions would suggest a similarity in calendrical organization, there is no basis to assume the adoption of a common calendar by all of these entities.

On the contrary, a more defensible supposition would be that the different polities in ancient Israel prior to its united monarchy would have calendars which, however similar, would be diversely nuanced. The reason for this is simple: Until the Jewish calendar was “canonized,” that is, fixed and universally imposed, this no earlier than the Middle Ages, as we shall see, it was utilized as a political tool by polities seeking to distinguish themselves from others, and, perhaps more importantly, by dissident groups seeking to impose their own authority over their respective reigning establishments. By this reasoning as well it is justifiable to conjecture that with the split of the United Monarchy at the death of Solomon, the calendar of the northern kingdom was deliberately changed.

Looking at the Bible with a sociopolitical lens and the realization that the Bible contains a record of events that transpired during the course of close to two thousand years, we would expect there to have been a variety of calendars and the record of at least some of them. Indeed, it is possible to discern at least parts of seven different calendars in the Bible. These calendars, in the order of their chronology, are as follows:

- 1) The calendar of the K Code imbedded in the J document and found in Exodus 34: 18-23;
- 2) The calendar of the C code, imbedded in the E document and found in Exodus 23:12-17;
- 3) The calendar Deuteronomy found in Deuteronomy 16:1-17;
- 4) The calendar IV in Ezekiel 45:18-end,;
- 5) The calendar of the Holiness code, found in Leviticus 23:3-44
- 6) The calendar in Ezra and Nehemiah in Nehemiah 8:2-9:1 ff.



7) The theocratic calendar, found in Numbers 28:9 to 29:40.

The K calendar emphasizes the Sabbath and its celebration by the cessation of all labor and three festivals: the Feast of Unleavened Bread, the Feast of Weeks, also known as Feast of First Fruits of the wheat harvest and the Feast of the Ingathering. In the present order of this calendar within the Bible the Feast of Unleavened Bread comes first, then the Sabbath and then the two other festivals. The calendar indicates that the Feast of Unleavened Bread comes at the *moed* (a word which merits the discussion to be given to it later) in the springtime month of Aviv (the only month mentioned in this calendar) and that it commemorates the exodus from Egypt. It indicates as well that the feast of ingathering takes place at the *tekufat ha-shanah*, that is, the “turn” of the year, probably meaning the end of the year. The Feast of the First Fruits is not specifically dated. This calendar leaves us with a dilemma: If the Feast of Ingathering comes at the turn or end of the year, why is the Feast of Unleavened Bread listed as the first of the holy days, even preceding the Sabbath. To put the question in different terms: During what season of the year did this calendar begin? We shall see that this is not a tangential question, since throughout biblical Israel and perhaps beyond, different political elements supported the spring and the fall as the beginning of the year and were prepared to impose their organization of the calendar upon attaining establishment position.

The C code records the same festivals with similar details. It mentions the Sabbath first, then the three festivals: Unleavened Bread, at the *moed* of the month of Aviv, in commemoration of the Exodus; the Feast of the First Fruits, again not specifically dated; and the Feast of Ingathering “at the end of the year.” Of course, this calendar sustains the dilemma of its predecessor.

The Deuteronomic calendar focuses on the three Festivals with considerable novelty over its predecessors. Its spring holiday turns out to be a juxtaposition of two festivals, the first called *Pesah*, identified as the commemoration of the Exodus, and the second, implicitly called either *matzot* or *hag ha-matzot*, the latter of course being the Feast of Unleavened Bread. The *matzot* festival, however, lasts not seven days but six, immediately following which, on the seventh day, there is an *atzeret*, a solemn assembly, which is clearly considered a separate holiday. Then, the spring harvest festival is now called the Festival of Weeks, and is scheduled to take place exactly seven weeks after —you begin to put the sickle to the corn,” though no specific dates or its concluding ceremony are indicated. Also without specificity as to date is the fall harvest festival, which is now called the Feast of Tabernacles, designated as a seven day observance for whose title, however, no explanation is given.

The Ezekiel calendar 45:18-end discusses only two of the three major festivals, namely the Passover in the spring and —the feast of the seven days” in the fall. The Feast of Weeks is not mentioned at all. And while the feast of the seventh month is not embellished, that of Passover contains a number of interest elements. In the first place, it combines *Pesah* and *Matzot* and prescribes the eating of unleavened bread for seven days and fixes the celebration of Passover at the fourteenth day of the first month. In addition, it prescribes sin offerings for the Temple on the first day of the first month and for all sinners among the people on the seventh day of the month.

The Nehemiah calendar is strikingly unusual in its record of three festivals. It mentions, without title, a holiday on the first day of the seventh month, at which time Ezra has a public reading of the Torah he had brought from Babylonia. It records a

popular assembly on day two of the seventh month followed by the seven-day Feast of Booths and its conclusion in an *atzeret*, a solemn assembly on the eighth day. However, the dates in the month for this fall festival are not given, but the implication is clear that it began not long after the second day. The calendar records a third holiday, located on the twenty-fourth day of the month, which is devoted to fasting, sackcloth and ashes, confession of personal and ancestral sins, hearing the Torah, worshipping God, acknowledging the sinfulness of previous generations of Israel and solemnly renewing the covenant with God.

The Holiness Calendar 23:2-44. Leviticus 23 begins with the Sabbath and proceeds with great specificity to detail the other holidays in its calendar. These begin with the “Lord’s Passover” on the fourteenth day of the first month followed immediately by the seven-day Feast of Unleavened Bread. The next significant entry is the priestly waving of the sheaf before

God, this to take place “on the morrow after the Sabbath,” a phrase that was to become a subject of great importance and controversy. This sacred occasion is given neither name nor specific date. The next holiday occurs fifty-days after the aforesaid Sabbath, also without name but to pre proclaimed as a *mikra kodesh*, a holy convocation. Following is a holiday on the first day of the seventh month is a holiday, again not named but described as a Sabbath, a holy convocation and a “~~a~~ memorial of the blowing of trumpets.” The calendar then goes on to record the seven-day Feast of Booths or Tabernacles, set on the fifteenth day of the seventh month, followed by an eighth day of solemn assembly. A distinctive feature of this calendar is the mention of the “~~four~~ species,” i. e. “~~the~~ boughs of goodly trees, the branches of palm trees, the boughs of thick

trees and willows of the brook” (verse 40) wherewith to rejoice before God for seven days.

The theocratic calendar, focusing in detail on the sacrificial offerings at the Temple for each holy occasion, begins with the Sabbath and proceeds to the New Moon, neither of which holy occasions require an indication of month or day. It then proceeds with —the Passover of the Lord, fixed on the fourteenth day of the Month I and, immediately following beginning on the fifteen, the seven day festival of *matzot*. The text follows with —the day of first fruits,” otherwise not named, —when your weeks have been completed,” without indicating the date of observance or the time from which the counting of the weeks was to begin.

The next holy occasion on the theocratic calendar, fixed at the first day of the seventh month, is simply called “the day of the blowing of the trumpets,” without any further content or explanation given. This, of course, is the holy day that becomes Rosh ha-Shanah. This is followed on the tenth day of the seventh month by an unnamed holiday, described as a day —when you shall afflict your souls,” containing a —sin offering of atonement” and obviously the foundation and precursor of our Yom ha-Kippurim.

And finally, on the fifteenth day of the seventh month there begins a seven-day holiday, here unnamed (!), but obviously our festival of Sukkot, followed by a solemn assembly on the eighth day, otherwise unnamed.

In addition to the lack of nomenclature for the holy occasions, this theocratic calendar is noteworthy for its total concentration on the sacrificial cult, and within it more precisely, the type of sacrifices to be offered on each holy occasion, and its omission of

the popular participation in these festivals, perhaps most notably the Sukkot celebration outlined in the Holiness Calendar. Also noteworthy in this connection is the elaborate sacrificial system organized for the fall festival of seven days, in which the number of bullocks to be sacrificed each day begins with thirteen on day one and, reduced by one each day, ends with seven bullocks on the seventh.

As is obvious even from this brief sketch, the history of the calendar, or, more correctly, calendars of ancient Israel, is highly complex. The complexity is the result of divergences in the nature of the festivals these calendars include, including their names, their dates, their content (for example, the New Years' day shifting from one festival to another), and the respective role of clergy and populace in the observances connected with each of them. It is of utmost importance to recognize that this diversity corresponds to the diversity of polities which these calendars served across space and time, their respective contexts, and not least, their ideological and political agendas.

## Chapter Two: The Fixed Rabbinical Calendar

The Jewish calendar as we presently have it was not fully completed until the beginning of the tenth century. Its completion is attributable to two factors: first, the ascendancy of the Babylonian Academies, namely Sura and Pumbeditha, both already located in Baghdad, and especially, by the tenth century, the superiority of Pumbeditha over Sura; and second, in the struggle for authority within the Jewish world, the victory of the Babylonian community in general over the Palestinian community which had its own calendrical agenda. To be sure, there had in the previous centuries been significant movement toward a fixed calendar, as is attested in the Jerusalem Talmud Megillah 1:20 (70b), fixing the festival of Purim in challenge to its more fluid dating in the Mishnah Megillah 1:2. But unquestionably the consummation of this movement did not take place until the zenith of the Geonic period in Baghdad.

The Babylonian community had been growing in numbers and in power ever since the beginnings of the decline of the Roman Empire in the second and third centuries and the advent of Christianity in Palestine and in the west. The Babylonian Jewish community had grown under the Parthians and the Sassanians and established its own Yeshivot the details of whose history are not fully recoverable, but whose continued support by the regional non-Jewish governments is indisputable. It appears that the rabbinic community of Babylonia which enjoyed such support might well have been a minority within the Babylonian region. It certainly did not reflect or attend to the needs of the majority of populations whose views were rooted in a non-rabbinic lifestyle. It is equally clear that the support of the non-Jewish communities gave rabbinic Judaism a chance to survive and thrive. The ultimate success of the Babylonian community,

orbiting around Baghdad, in spreading its influence throughout the expanded Muslim world played a decisive role in the universalization of its calendar among the Jewish communities of the world.

We do not know much about the calendrical developments in Babylonia, but one matter seems quite clear, namely that the attribution of the completion of the Jewish calendar in 385 CE to the patriarch Hillel seems to have more mythology connected to it than reality. It would appear the much of the calendar had already been fixed, but the calendar was still very much in dispute at that time. The disputes over calendar continued for several additional centuries. This is evident in Babylonia in the ninth century and the beginning of the tenth in two major disputes over calendar that the Babylonian Jewish leadership had to contend with. The first was with the Karaites, whose ascendancy beginning in the ninth century was reflected in their distinctive calendar. The second, perhaps more serious because it was within the Rabbinic group, were the differences stirred by the Ben Meir group in Israel, who by virtue of their location in the Holy Land, claimed exclusivity as the spokesmen of the faith and utilized calendrical difference as a demonstration of their rights.

The struggle between Ben Meir and the Babylonians, led in Babylonia by the redoubtable Gaon of Sura, Saadia al-Fayyumi<sup>1</sup>, was brought to clearest light by documents of the Cairo Geniza, the discovery of whose treasures has enriched our knowledge of Jewish history in multiple dimensions. Based on these documents, the struggle was detailed in 1904 by H. Y. Bornstein's magisterial work on *The Dispute*

---

<sup>1</sup> H. Y. Bornstein. *The Dispute between Rav Saadia Gaon and Ben Meir*. Varsha: 1904. 882-942

*between Rav Saadia Gaon and Ben Meir.* The substantive essence of this dispute is best summarized by Sacha Stern in his equally impressive *Calendar and Community*: —The calendrical dispute arose from the definition of *molad zaqen*. In the present-day rabbinic calendar, the same as upheld by R. Saadya, *molad zaqen* is a *molad* of Tishre that occurs on or after the 18<sup>th</sup> hour of the 24<sup>th</sup> hour period (i.e. noon), in which case the beginning of the month must be postponed (see section 4.4.1, item 4). The anticipated occurrence of such a *molad* in 924 CE should have dictated, already in 922CE, the postponement of Passover to Tuesday. Ben Meir, however, defined the *molad zaqen* as only on or after 18 hours and 642 parts. The difference between his calendar and R. Saadya's was thus only slight, but in this case, significant, for in 924 CE, the *molad* of Tishre was to occur on a Saturday at 18 hours 237 parts. Since Ben Meir considered this not to be a *molad zaqen*, he ruled that the calendar dates from 922 CE to 924 CE should *not* be postponed; Passover of 922 CE was hence to occur on time, on Sunday.”<sup>2</sup>

Of course, these calendrical details, whatever their intrinsic merit, were the justification for the dispute's political essence.

We also know that in the ninth century there were still many arguments regarding the new moon, intercalation and the process of determining the holidays. And we even have a report that the Maharanis, a little known group of Jews first mentioned by the Karaite al-Kirkisani in the middle of the tenth century and then by al-Biruni at the beginning of the eleventh, began the months of their calendar began with the full moon.

---

<sup>2</sup>Sacha Stern. *Calendar and Community: A History of the Jewish Calendar, 2nd Century BCE to 10th Century CE*. USA: Oxford, 2001. 265-266



All of this points to the existence of multiple calendars during the centuries between the close of the biblical period and the heights of the Geonic period in addition to the calendrical differences that have come down to us in documents. Unfortunately, our information for these centuries is sporadic and woefully incomplete. We must therefore recognize that much of the history of the Jewish calendar in the first millennium of the present era is lost to us.

The standard Jewish calendar that emerged from all of this activity is a luni-solar calendar. The classical theocratic calendar and all its related calendars, notwithstanding, the luni-solar calendar was not without its precedents. There is evidence of intercalation in the early calendar in the Bible, in its sections on Prophets<sup>3</sup> and in the Sacred Writings<sup>4</sup> sections of the Bible. Several post-biblical books also include the present names of the months.

The big problem with the luni-solar year is that it lasts for eleven days less than the solar year. Therefore, in order to keep the Jewish holidays during the correct agricultural season, the luni-solar calendar requires adjustment every few years. At first, intercalation happened irregularly and was effected on an ad hoc basis based on agriculture and social conditions. The regularization of the calendar was often based on the seven year sabbatical cycle.<sup>5</sup> A Tannaitic plan of having years with 354 days with one leap year of 383 days was also not accepted as it was too simple.

---

<sup>3</sup> Example I Kings 12:32–3 and Ezekiel 1:1, 3:15, 4:4–6 and 8:1

<sup>4</sup> II Chronicles 30:2–3 and Psalms 104:19

<sup>5</sup> Licht, Jacob. "Calendar". *Encyclopedia Judaica*. Corrent. 1974

The Book of Enoch<sup>6</sup> had an eight-year cycle, as is attested by the *Baraita de Shmuel* and the *Pirke de Rabbi Eliezer*. In the latter work the origins of intercalation are retrojected to Creation, to the formation of the sun and the moon (on the 28<sup>th</sup> day of Elul, says that text [!]) and then transmitted in a chain of tradition from Enoch to Noah to the Patriarchs and from Jacob to Joseph and his brethren, –who intercalated the year in the land of Egypt...on account of three things...on account of trees, grass and the seasons.<sup>7</sup>”

R. Abbahu (279-320) invented a calendric cycle of 1176 years<sup>8</sup>. According to R. Abbahu’s homily on I Chronicles 9:22, this complex cycle was devised by the biblical worthies David and Samuel. Abbahu’s plan ultimately failed to take root due to its cumbersome length. The addition of an extra month, Adar II, now standard clearly and classically stated in the *Pirke de-Rabbi Eliezer*, occurs at fixed intervals every seven out of 19 years. The addition take places with regularity on years 3, 6, 8, 11, 14, 17, and 19.

In this fixed calendar there are two types of months, one type with thirty days and called –full” (*maley*) and the other with twenty-nine days and called –defective” (*haseyr*). The months of Nissan, Sivan, Av, Tishri, Shevat and Adar I (only in a leap year) are *male*, while Iyyar, Tammuz, Elul, Tevet, Adar, and, in a leap year, Adar II, are *haseyr*. Heshvan and Kislev can be either. As a result, the normal year has 353, 354 or 355 days, while the leap year has 383, 384 or 385 days. The earlier calendars included more variations in the number of days in a month than the current calendar.

---

<sup>6</sup> 74:13-16

<sup>7</sup> Pirkei D’Rabbi Eliezer Chapter 8

<sup>8</sup> Licht, Jacob. –Calendar”. *Encyclopedia Judaica*. 1974

The Rabbis established guidelines for the day on which Rosh Hashanah falls. The acronym for these guidelines is *Lo A”D”U ROSH*: That is, Rosh Hashanah may not start on a Sunday, Wednesday or Friday. If it fell on Sunday, it would suggest the need for preparation on the Sabbath. If it fell on Wednesday, it would move Yom ha-Kippurim to Friday and run into the Sabbath. If it fell on Friday, it would move Yom ha-Kippurim to Sunday and run into the problem of Sabbath preparation. For parallel reasons they established guidelines for Passover, the acronym for which is *Lo B”D”U Pesah*: that is Passover cannot begin on a Monday, Wednesday or Thursday.

If the birth of the new moon, the *molad*, occurs after noon Rosh Hashanah is postponed one to two days as the *molad* signifies the beginning of the new month. If the *molad* in an ordinary year, meaning a year other than a leap year, falls on Tuesday then Rosh Hashanah is postponed two days to Thursday. If the *molad* of the year after a leap year happens on a Monday then Rosh Hashanah is held on a Tuesday

In the early rabbinic centuries the new moon was determined by observation (see chapter four, below), but from the fourth century on it came to be based on calculation.

The phasis of the moon is determined by four astronomical factors. First there is an examination of the time from the conjunction to the ensuing sunset. Minimally, the interval between the conjunction and the ensuing sunset occurs in twenty hours and, maximally, seventy-two hours. Second, the rabbis take the seasons of the year into account. Third, they examine the lunar latitude. Fourth, they consult the geographical longitude and latitude at the place of observation. The phasis occurs a short time after sunset either before or after the appearance of the stars. Rosh Hashanah usually occurs on the day of the phasis, but it can occur before or after it.

Tekufot denotes the beginning of each of the four seasons. Each season occupies one quarter of the complete year. The tekufah of Nisan marks the mean sun at the vernal equinoctial point. The tekufah of Tammuz marks the summer solstitial point. The tekufah of Tishri marks the autumnal equinoctial point and that of Tevet marks the winter solstitial point. Every year the tekufot move forward in the week by one and one quarter days. After 28 years they occur at the same hour on the same day of the week as originally. The length of the solar year is important for determining when to start the prayer for rain in the Diaspora and when to say the blessing of the Sun on the day of the tekufah of Nisan.

According to a widely accepted tradition intercalations became set in 358/9 C.E, when under the Patriarch (*Nasi*) Hillel, a.k.a. Hillel ben R. Jehuda II, the rabbinic calendar achieved its fixed, classical form. Yet the first source that mentions this is a responsum from Rabbenu Hai Gaon (early eleventh century), cited by R. Abraham bar Hiyya at the beginning of the twelfth century in his book on intercalation (*Sefer ha-Ibbur*). The wide acceptance of this tradition is puzzling, since there were other competing traditions on intercalation.

All things considered, it appears that the established form of intercalation was consummated by the early tenth century.

One of the knottiest problems in the study of the ancient Jewish calendars is the place of the Shavuot festival. The problem may be stated as well as the problem of the fixing of the date of the Omer ceremony, because the Omer ceremony begins the count of seven weeks that culminates with Shavuot. The problem can best be observed by

beginning with the passage in Leviticus 23:15 which states that the Omer ceremony is to take place ~~on~~ the morrow after the Sabbath.”

The study of the ancient calendars raises two major questions. The first question is: Which Sunday is meant by ~~the~~ morrow after the Sabbath?” the Sunday within the Passover week or the Sunday immediately thereafter. There are two lines of answer to this question.

For the Book of Jubilees, the intended Sunday is the one after Passover. In its fixed solar calendar Jubilees sets Shavuot on the fifteenth day of the third month, which places the Omer ceremony on Sunday, the twenty-sixth of Nissan, and therefore after the week of Passover. Apparently, as we learn from Menahot 10:3 the Boethusians appear to have essentially agreed with this reckoning, and, we may assume, so did other groups, especially those influenced by a basically solar calendar. On the other hand, and contrary to some opinions, the Sabbath in the theocratic calendar of Leviticus can only mean the Sabbath within Passover, which means the first day of Passover, since the theocratic calendar clearly started on a Sabbath (i.e. Friday night). This is confirmed by the Tannaitic tradition (Menahot 65b) and the Septuagint to Leviticus 23:15, both of which sources fix the Omer ceremony on the second day (!) of Passover.

The second question is: Does the word Sabbath really mean Sabbath or does it mean a festival day. Both the Menahot passage and the Septuagint to Leviticus 23:15, which agree with the theocratic calendar that the Omer ceremony must take place on the second day of Passover, interpret the word ~~Sabbath~~” as ~~—~~festival day” and therefore permit the Omer ceremony on a day (actually days) other than Sunday. Both of these

positions correspond to a major innovation in the calendar, the product of the Pharisees and proto-rabbis. This will be discussed in the next chapter.

### Chapter 3: The Fluid Calendar

The fluid calendar is an appropriate term to use for the many different calendars that we know of or can reconstruct during the great period of turmoil in Israel, as it was throughout the Near East, in the centuries following the conquest of the region by Alexander the Great. Essentially out of this conquest came a number of great revolutions, political as well as ideological, throughout the Greek and subsequently the Greco-Roman world. Within these revolutions, none is more important for the history of Judaism than the revolution which led to the creation of Pharisaic Judaism and through it the movements that converged into the constellation of Christianity as we know it today.

The actual revolution which marks the first stage in these changes, itself the result of a long pre-history, is the Hasmonean Revolution. Its beginnings, *pace* to its pre-history, is conventionally dated in the year 168 BCE and although the Hasmonean Revolution is conventionally concluded with Judah the Maccabee's stirring victories in 165 BCE, or perhaps more appropriately with his death five years later, its aftermath can arguably be said to have continued at least until the revolt of the Jews against Rome in the year 65 CE<sup>9</sup>.

This revolution corresponded to the rise of new groups and classes in the Holy Land pursuant to the new influences of the Greco-Roman world. The cluster of new groups, originally, as always happens, a nuisance minority, grew in importance to the point where it could repeatedly challenge the establishment within the Jewish group, namely the old priestly establishment. This establishment came to be known as the

---

<sup>9</sup> Dr. Martin A. Cohen *Two Sister Faiths: Introduction to a Typological Approach to Early Rabbinic Judaism and Early Christianity*. Assumption College, 1985. 14

Sadducees (after the priest Zadok in David's time) and their followers who clearly, despite propagandistic claims by their upstart and ultimately dominant opponents, constituted the majority of the population in their time. The upstart constellation is best labeled as the proto-Pharisees, whose successors were the Pharisees, the proto-rabbis and the rabbis<sup>10</sup>.

Within each segment or constellation, the Priestly-Sadducean and the Proto-Pharisaic and Pharisaic, there were competing calendars, even though one can cogently argue that the competing calendars within each segment did not differ from one another as much as they differed from the calendars of the other segments. Basically the two calendrical divisions can be called respectively the Theocratic division and the Pharisaic-Rabbinic division. All of these calendars had a solar and a lunar dimension. However, the theocratic calendars were primarily solar whereas the Pharisaic calendars were more heavily luni-solar. All of these calendars claim authenticity and exclusivity via appeals to their antiquity and divine origin. Especially in their differences they reflect the respective political agendas of the groups of their production.

Between these two calendrical constellations stood the towering figure of Philo, whose works, beyond their originality, reflect the Alexandrian, and indeed to a considerable extent, the general mentality of the Diaspora Jewish community.

Within the dominantly solar calendars, the most prominent, in addition to the theocratic calendars of the Torah<sup>11</sup>, are those of First Enoch, Jubilees the Qumran

---

<sup>10</sup> Ibid 6

<sup>11</sup> See above pages 6-9



communities, the Therapeutae and the Isaurians, and the insufficiently emphasized calendar of Philo.

First Enoch, also known as the Ethiopic Book of Enoch, is one of the premier and most influential books of the Apocrypha. It dates from the period of the Second Temple and is doubtless one of the earlier works of this period, very likely deriving from the mid second century B.C.E. or even slightly earlier. A combination of many different texts, including the Book of Noah, and a consideration of the end of time and the Messiah, whom the author of the text regards to have been preexistent, the Ethiopic Book of Enoch reflects the position of a dissonant theocratic group rallying behind the iconized biblical figure of Enoch. It is highly dependent on the Tanakh and also related to other apocalyptic Jewish works. It is of interest to note its special influence on early Christianity, and therefore the political propinquity between dissident groups on the Jewish spectrum and minoritarian groups of early Christian groups also seeking to establish their own identity.

Of chief interest to us here is the calendar of the book of Enoch. In this calendar the sun is dominant. We find this in the beginning of book three which is called —The book of the Itinerary of the Luminaries of Heaven: the position of each and every one, in respect to their ranks, in respect to their authorities and in respect to their seasons; each one according to their names and their places of origin and according to their months, which Uriel, the holy angel who was with me, and who (also) is their guide, showed me —

just as he showed me all their treatises and the nature of the years of the world unto eternity, till the new creation which abides forever is created.<sup>12</sup>”

Enoch explains the entire calendar as follows: —This is the first commandment of the luminaries: The sun is a luminary whose egress is an opening of heaven, which is (located) in the direction of the east, and whose ingress is (another) opening of heaven, (located) in the west. I saw six openings through which the sun rises and six openings through which it sets. The moon also rises and sets through the same openings, and they are guided by the stars; together with those whom they lead, they are six in the east and six in the west heaven. All of them (are arranged) one after another in a constant order. There are many windows (both) to the left and the right of these openings. First there goes out the great light whose name is the sun; its roundness is like the roundness of the sky; and it is totally filled with light and heat. The chariot on which it ascends is (driven by) the blowing wind. The sun sets in the sky (in the west) and returns by the northeast in order to go to the east; it is guided so that it shall reach the eastern gate and shine on the face of the sky. In this manner it rises in the first month through the major gate; it proceeds (through this gate) which is fourth (among) those six opening which are (located) in the direction of the east. By this fourth gate through which the

---

<sup>12</sup> James H. Charlesworth, ed. *The Old Testament Pseudepigrapha vol. 1*. New York: Doubleday, 1983 (Enoch). 50

sun rises during the first month there are twelve open windows from which a flame flows, when they are opened at the appropriate time. When (the sun) rises (in the east) in the sky, it goes out through this fourth gate for thirty morning and descends faithfully through the fourth gate in the western sky. During those (thirty) days the day daily becomes longer and the night nightly shorter, for thirty days. On that day, the day is longer than the night by one ninth; so the day turns out to be exactly ten parts and the night to be eight parts. The sun rises from the fourth (eastern) gate and sets in the fourth (western) one, and then it turns and comes into the fifth gate of the east for thirty days, through which it rises, and sets in the fifth gate. At that time the day further becomes longer and becomes eleven parts and the night shortens and becomes seven parts on account of the sun. It then returns to the east and comes into the sixth (gate), rising and setting through that sixth gate for thirty-one days, according to the principle of (the gate). On that day the day becomes longer than the nights still further, so the day becomes twelve parts and the night shortens and becomes six parts. Then the sun is raised in such a way that (its duration) shortens and night occurs; the sun returns to the east and enters the sixth gate, rising and setting through it for thirty days. When thirty days are completed, the day decreases exactly by one part, and becomes eleven parts, and the night seven. Then the sun, leaving the west by that sixth gate and going to the east, rises through the fifth gate for thirty mornings and sets again in the fifth gate in the west. On that day the day decreases

by two parts; so (the day) becomes ten parts and the night eight parts. Then the sun, departing from the fifth gate and setting in the fifth gate, in the west, rises in the fourth gate for thirty-one days, according to the principle of (the gate), and sets in the west. On that day the day is aligned with the night, so that they become equal; so the night becomes nine parts and the day nine parts. Then the sun, departing from that gate and setting in the west, returns to the east and comes out through the third gate for thirty days, and sets in the third gate in the west. On that day the night becomes longer than the day it becomes longer than the (previous) day for thirty day; so the night turns out to be exactly ten parts and the day to be eight parts. Then the sun, departing from the third gate in the west and returning to the east, comes out through the second gate in the east for thirty days, and in the same manner it sets through the second gate in the western sky. On that day the night becomes eleven parts and the day seven parts. Then the sun, departing on that day from that second gate and setting in the west in the second gate, returns to the east and rises in the first gate for thirty0one days, and sets on that day in the western sky. On that day the night lengthens and becomes twelve parts, whereas the day (shortens and becomes) six parts. Thus the sun competes its appearances, and goes through those same cycles of appearances a second time, coming out through all the openings for thirty days and setting also in the west opposite to it. On that night the length of the night decreases by one ninth, so the night becomes eleven parts and the day seven parts. Then the sun,

returning and entering the second gate which is in the east, resumes its appearances for thirty mornings, rising and setting (as usual). On that day the nights becomes shorter, so the night becomes ten parts and the day eight parts. On that day the sun departing from this second gate and setting in the west, returns to the east and rises through the third gate for thirty –one days, and sets in the western sky. On that day the night shortens and becomes nine parts and the day nine parts. Then the night becomes equal with the day, and the days (of the year) add up to exactly three hundred sixty-four days. The lengths of the day and the night as well as the shortness of the day and the night are (determined) by (the course of) the circuit of the sun and distinguished by it. The circuit becomes longer or shorter day by day and night by night (respectively). Thus this is the order for the course of the movement and the settlement of the sun 0 that great luminary which is called the sun, for the duration of the year(s) of the universe – in respect to its going in and coming out. It is that very (luminary) which manifests itself in it appearance as God has commanded that it shall come out and go in, in this manner. And neither does it diminish (in respect to its brightness) no take rest but continue to run day and night. As for the intensity of its light, it is sevenfold brighter than that of the moon; nevertheless (the sun and the moon) are equal in regard to their (respective) sizes.<sup>13</sup>

---

<sup>13</sup> Ibid 51-52

The personality of Enoch is very important in the book of Jubilees. According to the book of Jubilees, Enoch is the person ~~who~~ first learned writing and knowledge and wisdom, from (among) the seed of men, from (among) those who were born upon earth. And who wrote in a book the signs of the heaven according to the order of their months, so that the sons of man might know the (appointed) time of the years according to their order, with respect to each of their months. This one was the first (who) wrote a testimony and testified to the children of men throughout the generations of the earth. And their weeks, according to jubilees he recounted, and the days of the years he made known. And the months he set in order, and the Sabbaths of the years he recounted, just as we made it known to him. And he saw what was and what will be in a vision of his sleep as it will happen among the children of men in their generations until the Day of Judgment. He saw and knew everything and wrote his testimony and deposited the testimony upon the earth against all the children of men and their generations.<sup>14</sup>”

The Book of Enoch profoundly influenced another pseudepigraphic work, the Book of Jubilees. The Book of Jubilee is a late second century work which purports to contain an account given to Moses during the forty days that he spent on Mt. Sinai being instructed in the Torah. Very probably originally titled ~~The~~ Book of the Division of the Seasons according to their Jubilees and their Weeks, it focuses on the grant to Moses of what it claims to be ~~the~~ correct calendar” and an admonition about the many challenges to the groups behind this calendar from their ~~heretical~~” opponents. The book promises Moses a restoration of his dispersed people at some time in the future on the condition that they follow the correct calendar, which, of course is that of Jubilees.

---

<sup>14</sup> Ibid 62

The Book of Jubilees emphasizes the Sabbath, by which it really means a Sabbath observed in accordance with the perspective of the priestly Sadducean leadership. It also preserves a fixed calendar with 12 months, each of 30 days, giving us a total of 360 days plus four additional days which are to be added one at the end of each quarter, thus giving us 364 days which is precisely 52 weeks. According to this calendar, each quarter begins on the same day of the week, and the festivals all fall on the same day, primarily Wednesday and secondarily Sunday. In this calendar the first day of each quarter is regarded as a sacred occasion. We read:

And on this first of the first month and on the first of the fourth month and on the first of the seventh month and on the first of the tenth month are the days of remembrance and they are the days of appointed times in the four parts of the year. They are written and inscribed for an eternal witness. And Noah ordained them for himself as feasts for eternal generations because they were a memorial for him. And on the first of the first month, he was told to make an ark. And on it the land dried up, and he opened up and sees the land. And on the first of the fourth month, the mouths of the deeps of the abysses which were beneath were shut. And on the first of the seventh month, all of the mouths of the depths of the earth were opened, and the water began to go down into them. On the first of the tenth month the heads of the mountains appeared, and Noah rejoiced. And therefore he ordained them for himself as feasts of remembrance forever, and thus they are ordained. And they set them upon the heavenly tablets. Each one of them is thirteen weeks from one to another of the

remembrances, the first to the second, and from the second to the third, and from the third to the fourth. And all of the days which will be commanded will be fifty-two weeks of days and all of them are a complete year. Thus it is engraved and ordained on the heavenly tablets, and there is no transgressing in a single year, from year to year.

And you command the children of Israel so that they shall guard the years in this number, three hundred and sixty-four days, and it will be a complete year. And no one shall corrupt its (appointed) time from its days or from its feasts because all (of the appointed times) will arrive in them according to their testimony, and they will not pass over a day, and they will not corrupt a feast. But if they are transgressed, and they do not observe them according to his commandment, then they will corrupt all of their (fixed) times, and the years will be moved from within this (order), and they will not find the way of the years. And they will forget the new moons and (appointed) times and Sabbaths. And they will set awry all of the ordinances of the years. For I know and henceforth I shall make you know – but not from my own heart, because the book is written before me and is ordained in the heavenly tablets of the division of days – lest they forget the feasts of the covenant and walk in the feasts of the gentiles, after their errors and after their ignorance.

And there will be those who will examine the moon diligently because it will corrupt the (appointed) times and it will advance from year to year ten days. Therefore, the years will come to them as they corrupt



and make a day of testimony a reproach and a profane day a festival, and they will mix up everything, a holy day (as) profaned and a profane (one) for a holy day, because they will set awry the months and Sabbaths and feasts and jubilees. Therefore, I shall command you and I shall bear witness to you so that you may bear witness to them because after you have died your sons will be corrupted so that they will not make a year only three hundred and sixty-four days. And therefore, they will set awry the months and the (appointed) times and the Sabbaths and the feasts, and they will eat all of the blood with all flesh.<sup>15</sup>

Furthermore, the basic cycle of seven day weeks in Jubilees is extended philosophically to embrace periods of seven years, which was their equivalent of a week of years and then seven times seven years, which would give them forty-nine years, after which there would be a jubilee year. So, too, the book of Jubilees is opposed to the idea of the lunar month of 29 or 30 days because of its variations and, with it, implicitly, the shifting days of festivals.

That the Book of Jubilees belongs to the theocratic camp is witnessed by its strict, highly literal interpretation of the Torah, especially in the case of its Sabbath laws, but also in other areas, notably among them an emphasis on the necessity of distancing from Gentiles.

Five characteristics of the Book of Jubilees are worthy of note in connection with the calendar. First is the retrojection of the observance of the Day of Atonement and the

---

<sup>15</sup> Charlesworth, James H., ed. *The Old Testament Pseudepigrapha vol. 2*. New York: Doubleday, 1985 (Jubilees) 67-68

festivals of Shavuot, Sukkot and Passover to patriarchal times, and in the case of Shavuot, even to Noah. Second, is the transformation of Shavuot from a spring harvest festival to a commemoration and reenactment of the renewal of the covenant between God and humanity after the great flood.

Here we have a clear indication of the transformation in proto-rabbinic times of Shavuot from a harvest festival to a time of the recognition of the giving of the Torah. This, as we know, is a centerpiece of proto-rabbinic Judaism. One can only conclude that the idea of the transformation of Shavuot was something that was either in the air on both the theocratic and proto-rabbinic side as opposed to the official calendar practice of the Sadducees, or that it was indeed a proto-rabbinic idea, which was more likely, which was co-opted by elements of the theocratic side including Jubilees. Indeed the book of Jubilees reads:

Therefore, it is ordained and written in the heavenly tablets that they should observe the feast of Shabuoth in this month, once per year, in order to renew the covenant in all (respects), year by year. An all of this feast was celebrated in heaven from the day of creation until the days of Noah. And from the day of the death of Noah, his sons corrupted it until the days of Abraham, and they ate blood. But Abraham alone kept it. And Isaac and Jacob and his sons kept it until your days, but in your days the children of Israel forgot it until you renewed it for them on this mountain.

And you, command the children of Israel so that they might keep this feast in all of their generations as a commandment to them. One day

per year in this month they shall celebrate the feast, for it is the feast of Shebuot and it is the feast of the first fruits. This feast is twofold and of two natures. Just as it is written and engraved concerning it, observe it. This is because I have written it in the book of the first law, which I wrote for you, so that you might observe it in each of its appointed times, one day per year. And I have told you its sacrificial offering so that the children of Israel might remember them and observe them in their generations in this month<sup>16</sup>.

Third is its interpretation of the words —~~th~~ tomorrow after the Sabbath [of Passover]”<sup>17</sup> for beginning the countdown to Shavuot. According to this interpretation —the morrow after the Sabbath” means the morrow after the Sabbath following the conclusion of the Passover festival.

We shall argue that while similar to the official theocratic calendar in Leviticus 23, it does represent a variation of some consequence with respect to the determination of the Sabbath involved. And fourth, its rejection of the idea of resurrection, but its embrace<sup>18</sup> of the concept of the immortality of the soul, a concept unknown in the Bible but implicit in the resurrectionist theologies and derived from Greek, and more specifically, Platonic thought.

In the Dead Sea Scrolls we find the confirmation of the Theopeuta calendar. In the Damascus covenant we learn of the commitment of the Damascus group to the

---

<sup>16</sup> Ibid 68

<sup>17</sup> Leviticus 23:16

<sup>18</sup> Jubilees 23:21

Zaddokite priesthood and to an illusion to the people departure from God's ~~holy~~ Sabbaths and his glorious feasts, his just stipulations and his truthful paths."<sup>19</sup> All of this can mean only that the traditional calendar was followed by the Zaddakites. In the same vein, the Hoshea Peshar, clearly theocratic in its outlook, speaks of disloyalty of the present generation who ~~fix~~ all celebrations in agreement with the celebrations of the nations."<sup>20</sup> The Karaite Judah Hadassi, around the middle of twelfth century observed that the Isunian sect, the followers of the seventh-century Abuj Isa, followed a calendar ~~just~~ like the Sadducees."

Within the theocratic calendars, one of the most interesting groups is the Therapeutae, of whom we have a record in Philo's work called the contemplative life. The Therapeutae were a type of ascetic group living in solitude, but obviously an offshoot from the theocratic world of Eretz Israel. They were known for their mystical tendencies and their renunciation of all private property. Their connection to the theocratic elements in Eretz Israel derive in no small measure from their insistence of following the directions of Moses although here we see their chief feast is different from anything we find in the Bible. Their chief feast is called the Fifty which is apparently the same as Shavuot and to which they give a great deal of devotion. Philo describes their celebration of the Fifty as is said in Philo. ~~So~~ then they assemble, white robed and with faces in which cheerfulness is combined with the utmost seriousness, but before they recline, at a signal from a member of the Royal which is the name commonly given to

---

<sup>19</sup> Martinez, Florentino Garcia and Eibert J.C. Tigchelaar, ed. 1998. *The Dead Sea Scrolls Study Edition* vol. Boston: Brill. 555

<sup>20</sup> Ibid 331

those who perform these services, they take their stand in a regular line in an orderly way, their eyes and hands lifted up to Heaven, eyes because they have been trained to fix their gaze on things worthy of contemplation, hands in token that they are clean from gain-taking and not defiled through any cause of the profit-making kind. So standing they pray to God that their feasting may be acceptable and proceed as He would have it. After the prayers the seniors recline according to the order of their admission, since by senior they do not understand the aged and grey headed who are regarded as still mere children if they have only in late years come to love this rule of life, but those who from their earliest years have grown to manhood and spent their prime in pursuing the contemplative branch of philosophy, which indeed is the noblest and most god-like part. The feast is shared by women also; most of them aged virgins, who have kept their chastity not under compulsion, like some of the Greek priestesses, but of their own free will in their ardent yearning for wisdom. Eager to have her for their life mate they have spurned the pleasures of the body and desire no mortal offspring but those immortal children which only the soul that is dear to God can bring to the birth unaided because the Father had sown in her spiritual rays enabling her to behold the verities of wisdom.”<sup>21</sup>

The connection of this concept to that of the New Testament is Virgin Birth is of great interest though beyond the scope of this essay.

It is also of interest to note that on their feast the Therapeutae have a type of Greek banquet which resembles the Greek banquet that is the prototype of the Passover meal experience. What is of special interest here is the importance of the celebration of

---

<sup>21</sup> Philo. *Philo* vol. 7. Translated by F.H. Colson, M.A. Massachusetts: Harvard, 1937. 154-155

the fifty because this forms a type of transition between the biblical expression of Shavuot and the rabbinic expression of Shavuot.

With Philo we in a real sense find ourselves in a transition between the calendrical world of Eretz Yisrael centered in the theocratic and the rabbinic world prisms through the main center of thought of the Diaspora, namely Alexandria. In the case of Philo we find a rabbinic calendar which carries a philosophy distinctive of Philo and Alexandria and highly influenced by Greek thought.

For Philo there are ten different sacred occasions or feasts. —There are in all ten feasts which are recorded in the law. The first, the mentions of which may perhaps cause some surprise, is the feast of every day. The second is that held on the seventh day with six days between, called by the Hebrews in their native tongue Sabbath. The third is the new moon which follows the conjunction of the moon with the sun. The fourth is the —crossing” festival called Pascha. The fifth is the offering of the first ears, the sacred sheaf. The sixth is the Unleavened Bread. Then comes what is emphatically a seventh, being the feast of Sevens or Weeks. Eighth is the Sacred-month-day, ninth is the Fast, tenth the feast of Tabernacles which concludes the yearly festivals and thus ends up with a perfect number ten”.

We must begin with the first of these. Every day is a Festival that —accommodates itself to the blameless life of righteous men”<sup>22</sup>. Yet, people’s vices overcome them and keep them from following this Festival. Those who live the closest

---

<sup>22</sup> Ibid 335

to nature come the closest to following the festival. These men are able to disregard illness and lust.

—When the law records that every day is a festival, it accommodates itself to the blameless life of righteous men who follow nature and her ordinances. And if only the vices had not conquered and dominated the thoughts in us which seek the truly profitable and dislodged them from each soul – if instead the forces of the virtues had remained unvanquished throughout, the time from birth to death would be one continuous feast, and houses and cities dwelling in security and leisure would have been full of all good things with everything tranquil around them.”<sup>23</sup>

—Such men filled with high worthiness, inured to disregard ills of the body or of external things, schooled to hold things indifferent as indeed indifferent, armed against the pleasures and lusts, ever eager to take their stand superior to the passions in general, trained to use every effort to overthrow the formidable menace which those passions have built up against them, never swerving under the blows of fortune because they have calculated beforehand the force of its assaults, since the heaviest adversities are lightened by anticipation when the mind ceases to find anything strange in the event and apprehends it but dully as it might some stale and familiar story – such men, we say, in the delight of their virtues, naturally make their whole life a feast. These are indeed but a small number left in their cities like an ember of wisdom to shoulder, that virtue may not be altogether extinguished and lost to our race. But if only everywhere men had thought and felt as these few, and become what nature intended them to be, all of them blameless

---

<sup>23</sup> Ibid 333-335

and guiltless and lovers of sound sense, rejoicing in moral excellence just because it is what it is and counting it the only true good and all the other goods but slaves and vassals, subject to their authority, the cities would have been brimful of happiness, utterly free from all that causes grief and fears, and packed with what produces joys and states of well-being, so that each season as it comes would give full opportunity for cheerful living and the whole cycle of the year would be a feast.”<sup>24</sup>

It is of interest to compare this utopian view of life on earth with the proto-rabbinic and rabbinic view of the immortality of the soul.

On the Sabbath one must abstain from work. Therefore, one must work harder during the six days of the week. If one slacks he is punished. ~~Its~~ Its object is to give men relaxation from continuous and unending toil and by refreshing their bodies with a regulatory calculated system of remissions, to send them out renewed to their old activities. Some have given to it the name of virgin, having before their eyes its surpassing chastity. They also call her the motherless, begotten by the Father of the universe alone, the ideal form of the male sex with nothing of the female. It is the manliest and doughtiest of numbers, well gifted by nature for sovereignty and leadership. Some give it the name of the ~~season~~,” judging its conceptual nature from its manifestation in the realm of sense.”<sup>25</sup> The day of rest allows people to study to improve their soul. Of all the subjects to study on the seventh day, the two that take propriety are: ~~one~~ one of duty to God as shown by piety and holiness, one of duty to men as shown by

---

<sup>24</sup> Ibid 337-339

<sup>25</sup> Ibid 343-5



humanity and justice, each of them splitting up into multiform branches, all highly laudable.”<sup>26</sup> It is forbidden to light a fire as fire is seen as the progeny of life. Servants are also forbidden to work on the Sabbath, which Philo says is like giving them a semblance of security and freedom once per week. This teaches masters that they must be accustomed to work in case they can no longer have servants. The servants should find a spark of freedom and look forward to their liberation. This is seen as a step forward toward perfection of human conduct. Cattle are also free on the Sabbath as is the Ox. The Sabbath is so important that there is a cancelation of debts every seventh year. This is a ~~–~~succor to the poor as a challenge to the rich to show humanity”.

The feast of the New Moon begins the new month. It is also celebrated because it brings light to the sky and because ~~–~~the stronger or more powerful element at that time supplies the help which is needed to the smaller and weaker...this is surely an obvious lesson inculcating kindness and humanity and bidding men never grudge their own good things...”<sup>27</sup> Philo teaches about the new moon stating that ~~–~~the moon traverses the zodiac in a shorter fixed period than any other heavenly body.”<sup>28</sup> This teaches that in ~~–~~the conduct of life the end should correspond to the beginning”<sup>29</sup> This can only happen if people are controlled by reason. The new moon is important because the rise of the water corresponds to the increasing size of the moon and crops grow to maturity according to the cycle of the moon.

---

<sup>26</sup> Ibid 347

<sup>27</sup> Ibid 393-4

<sup>28</sup> Ibid 393

<sup>29</sup> Ibid 393

Next is —the Crossing feast also called Pascha.” This festival is marked by the offerings the people give. All the people are allowed to give sacrifices, not only the priests as at other times. This is because: —the festival is a reminder and thank-offering for that great migration from Egypt which was made by more than two million men and woman in obedience to the oracles vouchsafed to them.”<sup>30</sup> In the people’s joy they sacrificed without the priest and therefore this was sanctioned once a year to remind the people of their duty of thanksgiving. The festival also suggests the purification of the soul. People clean out their homes like they would the Temple and purify their bodies. This festival takes place on the fourteenth of the month and one eats unleavened bread. The month is the seventh month in number and ordered according to the cycle of the sun, but it is the first month in importance. The first and the last day are declared holy. Philo explains: —The bread is unleavened either because our forefathers, when under divine guidance they were starting on their migration, were so intensely hurried that they brought the lumps of dough unleavened, or else because at that season, namely, the springtime, when the feast is held, the fruit of the corn had not reached its perfection, for the fields are in the ear stage and not yet mature for harvest.”<sup>31</sup> It is noteworthy that Philo makes no mention of the Passover meal.

The Sheaf festival occurs on the second day of the Crossing festival. One brings a sheaf as a first fruit to the altar. A first fruit of the land and one of the whole earth is to be brought. This shows that this is a feast of thanksgiving for the Jewish nation and the

---

<sup>30</sup> Ibid 395

<sup>31</sup> Ibid 403

Jewish world. As Jews they give thanks for no longer wandering, for having a land of good soil. The offering is in thanks for the abundance of the land and represents a remembrance of God and that the people made a requital to God who is the cause of the great harvest. The sheaf is of barely ~~showing~~ that the use of the inferior grains is not open to censure”.<sup>32</sup>

The sheaf festival foreshadows the Fiftieth day. The fiftieth day is seven sevens after the sheaf festival. This feast is called first-products and two unleavened loafs of wheat bread are brought to the Temple. The name is because the first produce of the wheat and the earliest fruit is brought as a sample offering. The crop is not to be eaten from until a sample is brought to the ~~Donor~~” (God). Another reason for name is that wheat is the best product and also the first. Food that has been consecrated can only be eaten by the priests. The two loaves represent the past when we have had abundance and the future because we have resources to meet it. ~~But~~ within the feast there is another feast following directly after the first day. This is called the ~~Sheaf~~” a name given to it from the ceremony which consists in bringing to the altar a sheaf as a first-fruit, both of the land which has been given to the nation to swell in and of the whole earth, so that it serves that purpose both to the nation in particular and for the whole human race in general. The reason of this is that the Jewish nation is to the whole inhabited world what the priest is to the State. For the holy office in very truth belongs to the nation because it carries out all the rites of purification and divine laws, which restrict the pleasures of the belly and the parts below it and the horde...setting reason to guide the irrational sense,

---

<sup>32</sup> Ibid 415

and also check and rein in the wild and extravagant impulses of the soul, sometimes through gentler remonstrance and philosophical admonitions, sometimes through severe and more forcible condemnations and the fear of punishment which they hold over it as a deterrent.”<sup>33</sup> —We have shown, then, that the Sheaf was an offering both of the nation’s own land and of the whole earth, given in thanks for the fertility and abundance which the nation and the whole human race desired to enjoy. But we must not fail to note that there are many things of great advantage represented by the offering. First, that we remember God and what thing more perfectly good can we find than this? Secondly, that we make a requital, as is most fully due, to Him Who is the true cause of the good harvest. For the results due to the husbandman’s art are few or as good as nothing, furrows drawn, a plant dug or ringed around, a trench depended, excessive overgrowth cropped, or other similar operations. But what we owe to nature is all indispensable and useful, a soil of great fruitfulness, fields irrigated by fountains or rivers, spring-fed or winter torrents, and watered by seasonable rains, happily tempered states of the air which sends us the breath of its truly life-giving breezes, numberless varieties of crops and plants. For which of these has man for its inventor or parent? No, it is nature, their parent, who had not grudged to man a share in the goods which are her very own, but judging him to be the chiefs of mortal animals because he has obtained a portion of reason and good sense, chose him as the worthiest and invited him to share what was hers to give. For all this it is meet and right that the hospitality of God should be praised and revered, God Who provides for His guests the whole earth as a truly hospitable home ever filled not merely with necessities, but with the means of luxurious living. Further,

---

<sup>33</sup> Ibid 405-7

we learn not to neglect benefactors, for he who is grateful to God, Who needs nothing and is His own fullness, will thus become accustomed to be grateful to men whose needs are numberless.”<sup>34</sup>

The fiftieth day of the festival is of course the exact equivalent of Shavuot. But in Philo it clearly represents a derivation of and enhancement of the biblical account. Philo makes no mention of the connection of the festival to the giving of the Torah, but at the same time it is clear that the festival of the fiftieth day has acquired a special status of importance in Philo. It is also of note that its importance, at least formally, recalls the Pentateuch calendar.

On the festival of the Opening of the Sacred month the trumpet is sounded in the Temple at the time of the sacrifice. Therefore, it is also called a trumpet feast. It is a reminder of the laws given to the Israelites. —For then the sound of the trumpet pealed from heaven and reached, we may suppose, the end of the universe, so that the event might struck terror even into those who were far from the spot and dwelling well nigh at the extremities of the earth, who would come to the natural conclusion that such mighty signs portended mighty consequences. And indeed what could men receive mightier or more profitable than the general laws which came from the mouth of God, not like the particular laws, through an interpreter? This is of significance peculiar to the nation. What follows is common to all mankind. The trumpet is the instrument used in war, both to sound the advance against the enemy when the moment comes for engaging battle and also for recalling the troops when they have to separate and return to their respective

---

<sup>34</sup> Ibid 413-15

camps. And there is another war not of human agency when nature is at strife in herself, when her parts make onslaught one on another and her law-abiding sense of equality is vanquished by the greed for inequality. Both these wars work destruction on the face of the earth. The enemy cut down the fruit-trees, ravaged the country, set fire to the foodstuffs and the ripening ears of corn in the open fields, while the forces of nature use drought, rainstorms, violent moisture—laden winds, scorching sun-rays, intense cold accompanied by snow, with the regular harmonious alternations of the yearly seasons turned into disharmony, a state of things in my opinion due to the impiety which does not gain a gradual hold but comes rushing with the force of a torrent among those whom these things befall. And therefore the law instituted this feast figured by that instrument of war the trumpet, which gives it its name, to be as a thank-offering to God the peace-maker and peace-keeper, Who destroys faction both in cities and in the various parts of the universe and creates plenty and fertility and abundance of other good things and leaves the havoc of fruits without a single spark to be rekindled.”<sup>35</sup>

The Fast is on the tenth day because this is considered to be an all perfect date. It is referred to as the Sabbath of Sabbaths because it entails self-restraint, the day is devoted to prayers and supplications, it occurs when all of the fruits of the earth have been gathered together and then fast from eating them in order to show piety.

The Feast of Tabernacles is the last of the annual feasts. It takes place at the autumn equinox, on the 15<sup>th</sup> day of the month which is the day the sun and the moon rise together. It shows that we should honor equality and hate inequality. During this time

---

<sup>35</sup> Ibid. 425-427

the Israelites are commanded to dwell in booths. This is a seven day festival and then an eighth day is added called the closing which closes all of the yearly feasts.

Philo's calendar is a representative of the Diaspora calendars, which could not have failed to be cognizant of the Palestinian rabbinic calendar, but whose calendrical and inferentially all halakhic decisions were independent of Palestine.

Remarkably, the proto-rabbinic or Pharisaic calendar is nowhere fully described in the early literature of this constellation, although its presence and initial strata are discernible in the Mishna-Tosefta. Arguably, the first full listing of its holy days and festivals derives from the Gospel of John in the New Testament, itself. Regardless of the uncertain place of its composition the Gospel of John is the product of the Greek-oriented and especially Alexandrian Jewish Diaspora. We can only speculate on the reasons for this phenomenon, of which two reasons appear to have a degree of substantiality. First, the proto-rabbinic calendar, which emerged in Judea, was revolutionary in its challenge to theocratic calendars in general, and more specifically, its establishment version in Judea. And second, because within the ranks of the proto-Pharisees and their positional descendants, there appear to have been serious differences over a considerable period of time on the placement of Judaism's sacred occasions. We see all these in literary shreds that have been preserved in the literature of the Tannaim, all with clear evidence of editorialization and even legendization.

Four entries in this literature are of especial importance for our understanding of this calendar. The first of these items, recorded in three places<sup>36</sup> with slight variations,

---

<sup>36</sup> *Tosefta Pesahim 4:1, Bavli Pesahim 66a and Yerushalmi Pesahim 6:1*

records, in highly legendized form, the circumstances surrounding the imposition of the proto-rabbinic calendar in Erez Israel, apparently at the beginning of the first century C.E., while the Temple was still standing. It records that one year the fourteenth day of Nissan fell on a Saturday, which, of course means, that Passover was to begin on day one of the week, namely Saturday night/ Sunday. The occurrence of Passover on a Sunday was, we unmistakably infer from the account, a novelty, and indeed such a novelty, that according to the backward account, the legal leadership of the Jewish polity, the Pharisaic Bnai Bathrya, did not know how to deal with the preparations for the Passover sacrifice, since these preparations involved an obvious violation of the sabbatical laws forbidding work. The critical elements in these preparations were the carrying of the sacrificial knife, the slaughter of the animal and the rinsing and roasting of its intestines. And the critical question was: Does the Passover offering override the Sabbath?

Apparently [SIC!] caught by surprise [SIC!], the Bnai Bathrya, asked an apparently public assembly whether anyone in its midst knew the proper procedure, the *halakha*, for such a circumstance. Amazingly, the Bnai Bathrya had failed to take advantage of the preceding days and even months to prepare for this occasion. The story goes on to tell us that no sage, of for that matter, no one else in the audience seemed to be able to come up with the *halakha* except for one person, an apparent outsider, named Hillel, later to be revered as the great sage, Hillel the Elder. Hillel declared that indeed the Paschal sacrifice overrides the Sabbath, and proceeded to make his case via the application of the hermeneutic principles of *gezerah shavah* and *kal va-homer*. His explanation was so convincing that the Bnai Bathrya abdicated their leadership positions and immediately elevated Hillel to the top position of leadership in the polity, as Prince,



with the title of Nasi. Hillel then provided an answer to the dilemma of carrying the sacrificial knife on the Sabbath by allowing for the sticking of the knife in the wool of sheep or connecting it to the horns of goats. Hillel claimed support for this, not from logical deduction from hermeneutic rules, but from Tradition, in this case from procedures he had learned from his teachers, Shemayah and Abtalion.<sup>37</sup>

Now obviously things could not have happened the way they are described in this infantilized legend. It is inconceivable for leadership, in this case the Bnai Bathyra, not to have been aware of the forthcoming calendarical anomaly, let alone to take measures to deal with it. When examined with analytic objectivity, the legend appears to attempt an obscuration of the reality that the occurrence of Nisan 14 on a Sabbath, while obviously a possibility supported by a constituency, was imposed by the proto-rabbinic faction headed by Hillel in a revolutionary coup that led to the deposition of the Bnai Bathrya and the imposition of a calendar unlike the one which had been in effect, presumptively and almost surely the theocratic calendar. In this new calendar, primarily luni-solar, Passover did not have to begin on a Friday night, but was movable, as were all the other new moons, festivals and holidays.

Another important datum is clear from this Talmudic account. It would appear that while a major calendrical shift was instituted early in the first century of the present era, certain discussions deriving from that shift continued well into the second century. These discussions, featured by the difference in opinion between the two early rabbinic giants, Rabbis Eliezer (ben Hyrcanus) and Akiba, on the question of permissible rituals

---

<sup>37</sup> See also Talmud Bavli *Eilu Devarim* Chapter 6 Pesachim 66a

on 14 Nissan when falling on a Shabbat, all reflect different political positions in the proto-rabbinic and early rabbinic leadership.

This is nowhere better exemplified than by the second of our records, namely the clash over the date of Yom Ha-Kippurim between two of the most important leaders of Judaism during the Yavneh period, namely Rabbi Joshua ben Hananiah, a centrist rabbi of priestly descent, and Rabban Gamaliel II, a descendent of Hillel and the Nasi of the Jewish polity from ca. 83 CE to his death in 115/116 CE. The record of this clash is found in the tractate Rosh Ha-Shanah 2: 9<sup>38</sup>.

This Mishna tells us that Rabban Gamaliel ordered Rabbi Joshua to appear before him with his staff and money on the day of Yom Kippur according to Joshua's calendar and thereby demonstrate his abandonment of that calendar. The difference in the calculation of Yom Kippur derived from a difference in the determination of the New Moon, and this determination in turn reflected different political positions within the Pharisaic, but actually Hillelite group, that was in charge of the Jewish polity during the Yavneh period.

According to the account in Rosh Ha-Shanah 2:9 Rabbi Akiba urged Rabbi Joshua to accept Rabban Gamaliel's calendar and thereby subordinate himself to the Nasi's authority, and Rabbi Dosa aligned himself with Akiba's position. Clearly through its calendar the Joshua group wished to assume primary authority in Yavneh. To be sure, it failed, but it was not long before coalition of leading rabbis, reacting to what they apparently regarded to be the excessive authoritarianism of Gamaliel, deposed the Nasi and elevated Eleazar ben Azariah in his stead. Before long a chastised Gamaliel was

---

<sup>38</sup> Talmud Bavli *Im Einan Makirin* Chapter 2 Rosh Hashanah

restored to his post, but the in-fighting amongst the rabbis continued at least until the Bar Kokhba Rebellion, and arguably beyond.

Of course the political divisions within the Hillelite establishment reflect the disequilibrium in the Jewish society as a whole and point to diverse calendrical positions among the non-establishment factions, rabbinically as well as theoretically oriented, in the Jewish world of the early centuries of the present era.

Rosh Hashanah 1:1<sup>39</sup> reads: —There are four New Years. On the first of Nisan is the New Year for kings and for festivals; in the first of Elul is the New Year for the tithe of animals – R. Eliezer and R. Simon say, On the first of Tishri – on the first of Tishri is the New Year for the years, for Sabbatical Years, for Jubilee Years, for planting and for vegetables; and on the first of Shevat is the New Year for Trees, according to the view of the School of Shammai, but the School of Hillel say, On the fifteenth thereof.” These four New Year celebrations correlate to the fixed solar calendar that we learned about in Jubilees.

The fourth passage, also Tannaitic, but from a Braitha found in the Babylonian Talmud, Sanhedrin 11a<sup>40</sup>, records the differences, in the days of the Nasi, Rabban Gamaliel II, well into the Jamnia period, on the problems and politics dealing with the intercalated month. It tells us that on an occasion the Nasi assembled a group of seven judges to convene a court the following year to consider the extension of the year, that is, via intercalation. During the evening Rabban Gamaliel asked his assistant to awaken the

---

<sup>39</sup> Talmud Bavli *Im Einan Makirin* Chapter 2 Rosh Hashanah

<sup>40</sup> Talmud Bavli *Dinei Mamonos Bishloshah* Chapter 1 Sanhedrin

seven judges early the next morning and bring them to the attic, or perhaps more accurately, the upper chamber, where such courts generally met. The next morning Rabban Gamaliel found eight judges in the attic. He said: —“Whoever came here without permission, leave!” This statement is of interest because it suggests that Gamaliel did not know who was supposed to be in the attic and therefore that his assistant, rather than he chose the judges. The eighth judge said that he had not come for the intercalation of a month but to learn the practical laws of how to extend the year. This eighth judge, who happened to be Shmuel Ha-Katan, simply wanted to observe the proceeding, and Rabban Gamaliel allowed him to stay. The sages countered him by declaring that a month can only be intercalated with specifically designated judges.

It is likely that in its record the Braitā in Sanhedrin, in relegating Shmuel ha-Katan to the status of an observer is minimizing the importance of this great sage and the strong possibility of his leadership of a faction strongly opposed to Gamaliel and dramatizing this opposition in its stance on intercalation. This possibility appears to have some support in the Gemara. The Gemara explains that it was not actually Shmuel HaKatan who ascended without permission, but another man, but that Shmuel HaKatan made his admission in order to save the other man from humiliation. All of this, of course, has the appearance of a socially acceptable dodge, if for no other reason, because the Gemara notes that Shmuel HaKatan felt that Rabban Gamaliel would not extend the year without him.

The Gemara then diverges to speak of the great Rabbis and what made them great before returning to a discussion on intercalation. Here we are informed that intercalation cannot take place unless the Nasi agrees. It records an incident involving Rabban

Gamaliel is delayed in returning from Syria where he went to secure permission from the Roman representative there to have jurisdiction over a community matter. Rabban Gamaliel was delayed in returning so the sages intercalated a month into the year on the condition that Rabban Gamaliel would agree. Then Rabban Gamaliel returned and said that he wanted the year extended. Thus, the year became a leap year.

The Gemara gives reasons for the extension of a year. A leap year could be proclaimed if roads and bridges damaged in the winter had not been repaired in time for people to make their Passover journey to Jerusalem, or if the ovens in which the Pesach sacrifices were roasted were ruined in the rainy season and required the additional time for them to dry or be rebuilt, or if the court in Jerusalem heard that the Diaspora community was delayed in their travels and needed the time to reach Jerusalem and offer their sacrifice. The court did not intercalate if bad weather did not severely inhibit travel or the sacrificial lambs or goats were small and insufficient for an entire family. This is because the commandment commands only the eating of an olive size portion of the meat. Nor did the court intercalate to allow for the maturation of doves since the community could bring pigeons instead. And if the court decided to intercalate it could add a month of either twenty-nine or thirty days.

The fourth passage is found at the beginning of Mishnah Rosh Hashanah<sup>41</sup>, which speaks of four New Year Festivals, on the first day respectively of Nissan, Elul, Tishri and Shevat. These four New Year periods are reminiscent of the four sacred days at the beginning of each quarter in the Book of Jubilees. The four New Year days in Rosh Hashanah, however, come at the beginning of months I, VI, VII and IX. We cannot

---

<sup>41</sup> Talmud Bavli *Im Einar Makirin* Rosh Hashanah 1:1

determine the etiology of these occasions, but it is within the realm of possibility that they represent proto-rabbinic and rabbinic recognition of the rootedness of the celebration of the four holy days in the solar calendar and an attempt to harness their energies by giving them a different place and form in their calendars. The argument over the content of these occasions, witnessed by the differences between Shammai and Hillel, testifies to the relative recency and continuing fluidity of their incorporation into the rabbinic calendar. The fluidity of the early rabbinic calendar is further attested by the possibility of Yom Kippur falling on a Friday or a Sunday<sup>42</sup>

One of the finest attestations to the rabbinical calendar is *The Date of the Last Supper*<sup>43</sup>. There is an entire book written on this subject in French by Annie Jaubert and translated into English by Isaac Raferdy, whose knowledge of French may be excellent, but whose knowledge of Scripture may be not so for the simple reason that he mistranslates proper names and theological concepts. Among the proper names that she mistranslates is the Damascus Scroll; the Book of Chronicles and among the names he does not understand is the book of the Hassidim at the time of the Maccabees. She also misspells the word Maccabean and she also mistranslates the word *alliance* as alliance instead of as covenant.

Aside from these confusions, I cannot comment on the translation.

---

<sup>42</sup> See Mishnah Shabbat 15:3 and Menahot 11:7 and 9

<sup>43</sup> Annie Jaubert. *The Date of the Last Supper*. Translated by Isaac Rafferty. New York: Society of St. Paul, 1965

However, it is clear that Madame Jaubert draws her conclusion from a literary rather than a social scientific context. Literarily she notes that in the developed liturgical and literary heritage of Christianity there is a great emphasis on connecting the date of the Last Supper with a Tuesday and many important events thereof with Tuesday, Wednesday and Friday. This would in turn connect the Last Supper with the old solar calendar which was part of the theocratic tradition as expounded in the Book of Jubilees. In other words, there is an attempt to connect the Last Supper with the theocratic calendars rather than the Pharisaic calendars.

Jaubert's research is very much on target. In fact the liturgical and literary traditions of Christianity do exactly what she says: they connect the Last Supper with the pre-rabbinic and extra-rabbinic theocratic calendar. However, this in no way demonstrates that the date of the Last Supper was based on a theocratic calendar; it merely shows the efforts of the early church to connect the Last Supper to a non rabbinic calendar.

As a matter of fact, all indications point to the fact that the Last Supper was part of a rabbinic structure and was contrary to the structure of the theocratic calendars. To begin with, the traditions regarding Jesus and the Last Supper are rabbinic traditions because Jesus was a rabbinic Jew who emphasized the signature of the rabbinic faith which was resurrection. Jesus and the early Christians were all part of the Pharisaic rabbinic tradition, not a part of the priestly traditions, the traditions that crafted the theocratic calendar. Furthermore, there is every reason to assume that the Tuesday date for the Last Supper which is compelled by the acceptance of a solar calendar is incorrect

because the official calendar of the Jewish polity which was a theocratic calendar would suggest otherwise.

Another manifestation of the connection of the Last Supper to the proto-Rabbinic calendar is the fact that the Last Supper certainly was a Passover meal and the utilization of the Greco-roman feast as the Passover meal was an innovation of the proto-Rabbis.

It seems clear that in the early first century the official calendar was a theocratic calendar which began the Passover on Friday night. The basic reason for it is that the expression *mi-mohorat ha-Shabbat* clearly meant the day after the first day of Passover and not anything else that is found in other calendars. This influenced the date of Shavuot fifty days later and mandatorily on a Sunday. Now it seems likely also that the calendar used by the Jesus group was an alternative calendar to the official calendar, an alternative calendar such as was introduced by the early rabbis, as we have seen in the legend of Hillel's succession. This early calendar challenged the later calendar and its greatest and most distinctive feature was the conversion of the official calendar with its immovable feasts into a calendar with movable feasts. Although there are no records of the utilization of this early calendar in the days of Jesus or Hillel, it would make sense for an alternative calendar to be very close in time to the official calendar because otherwise the challenge would not be as great. Therefore, it is extremely likely that the Last Supper was held on the first night of Passover according to the challenging calendar which would be one night before the regular calendar. This would also connect with the fact that Jesus would have been arrested that night, because a Passover observance on that night itself was illegal. It would also make sense that Jesus was sentenced on that night and slaughtered the next day, which was the appointed official time for the slaughter of the



official lamb. This would connect to all the details we know historically and theologically about the date of the Last Supper.

Furthermore, Jaubert makes the mistake of not recognizing the kind of body that arrested and tried Jesus. Realizing that this body is called the Sanhedrin in the New Testament she equates this Sanhedrin with the later rabbinic Sanhedrin and extrapolates from its legal processes a dichotomy between the rules of the rabbinic Sanhedrin and the way Jesus was tried. The reality is that Jesus was not tried by the rabbinic Sanhedrin because the High Priest was in charge. Instead Jesus was tried by an ad hoc Sanhedrin dealing only with cases of treason and harm to the state. This Sanhedrin did not follow rabbinic law, but could try and execute a person very quickly, all of which would make complete sense when a regime is dealing with individuals whom it regards as suspect of high treason.

Furthermore, while Jaubert may be correct in tracing the changes in the vision of the Last Supper by developing Christianity and connecting it to a solar calendar, the reality is that all of these changes and connections can only be explained as efforts to divert attention to the fact that the Last Supper was indeed a Jewish paschal meal based on a proto-rabbinic calendar which was a challenge to the establishment; that therefore Jesus' arrest, resurrection and crucifixion all took place on the eve of the official Passover; and that this coincided perhaps deliberately with the fourteenth day of Nisan so that Jesus would be regarded as the sacrificial lamb

The clarification of this entire matter is made possible only by a consideration of the social and socio- political context of Jesus own time and should not be based on later changes.

#### Chapter 4: The Festivals of Rosh Hashanah, Yom Kippur, Succoth and Pesah

The rabbinic tradition, as portrayed in the Mishnah, changed the nature of Jewish observance through its changes to the calendar. By changing the structure of the calendar, the Rabbis also changed religious practice, moving its essence from the Temple into individual homes. Rather than the High Priest being the center of the religious structure, the family became the focus. As this transition occurred, the Rabbis also took over the Temple and controlled the actions of the priests in order to ensure the changed behavior of the cult participants. We shall examine these changes in the tractates of Mishnah Yoma, Rosh Hashanah, Pesachim and Succot.

##### **MISHNAH YOMA:**

The rituals of the High Priest, as described in Mishnah Yoma are all biblical, but the meaning that is ascribed to the sacrifices and the laws that govern them are innovations of the Rabbis making Mishnah Yoma completely innovative! Mishnah Yoma is divided into five sections. It begins with the preparation of the High Priest. He is to stay awake, study, and dress in a certain way during the five days before Yom Kippur. He is also to cleanse himself, change his garments and study on the day of Yom Kippur. These laws are given in Mishnah Yoma 1:1-7, 3:3-7 and 7:1-5. The priests are also to give certain sacrifices before the start of Yom Kippur as per Mishnah Yoma 1:8-2:7. On the day of Yom Kippur, the High Priest has specific laws for how to sacrifice the animals and what prayers to say over the animals. In these two sections are interwoven and include a description of sins for which people are judged. The description of the preparation of the sacrifice is given in Mishnah Yoma 3:1-2, 4:3-6:1 and 6:3-8. We see

from this that the majority of the section is on the laws of sacrifice. In here there are prayers still used in worship today. These are given in Mishnah Yoma 3:8-4:2 and 6:2. Mishnah Yoma ends with laws for the people. Here it describes what the average person is to abstain from during Yom Kippur. It seems evident that these laws were added by the Rabbis during a time when the power of the Temple and priesthood was in decline. We see these laws in Mishnah Yoma 8:1-8.

Mishnah Yoma is truly a compilation of innovation and biblical laws. The actions of the High Priest, other than the replacement of his wife, are from the Temple. The sections on the reading of the law by the priest and in the synagogue are an innovation of the Rabbis. In addition, the entire end of the tractate, which discusses prayer and repentance, are innovations.

Seven days before the Day of Atonement, which is here listed as the tenth of Tishrei from Leviticus 16:1-34 and Numbers 29:7-11, the High Priest is removed from his house. There is a substitute Priest appointed if the High Priest cannot lead the Avodah service due to uncleanness. R. Judah wanted a new wife ready for him incase his wife dies because he must be able to atone for his wife also. The sages rejected this idea. During these seven days the priest must toss the blood of the burnt offering and offer the head and the leg of the offering. The elders of the court appear before the High Priest and recite prayers in front of him and ask him to repeat so that he will know them because the Priests were not hired for their learning but for political reasons. On the morning of the Day of Atonement the High Priest stands at the Eastern Gate and ox, rams and sheep are passed before him so that he can learn about them. The High Priest was not allowed to sleep on the eve of the Day of Atonement. The elders of the Sanhedrin

deliver the High Priest to the elders of the priesthood. The High Priest then expounds on the scriptures all night if he is learned. If he is not learned then the disciples expound on the text for him. The scripture used is Job, Ezra and Chronicles.

It was an honor to clear the ashes from the altar on the Day of Atonement. This needed to be done often as many were making offerings. It came that lots needed to be drawn for who cleared the ashes. Otherwise people trampled each other trying to get to the altar. Lots were also drawn to decide who would slaughter, toss the blood, remove the ashes from the inner Altar and clear away the ashes from the candlestick, who should take up the limbs to the Altar-slope – the head and the leg, and the two fore-legs, the rump and the leg, the breast and the neck and two flanks, the entrails, the fine flour, the cakes and the wine; thirteen priests secured each a task.<sup>44</sup> Lots were drawn for who would be in charge of the incense and who will take up the limbs from the alter-slope to the altar. The daily burnt offering was offered by between nine and twelve Priests. The ram was offered by eleven priests, the flesh by five and the inwards, the fine flour and the wine each by two. The bullock was offered by twenty-four priests.

To determine the time of the slaughter a lookout was sent to check the timing. This was necessary because there was a time when the priests thought the light of the moon was light of the sun and slaughtered the offering too early.

In order to enter the inner court of the Temple a priest needed to immerse. The High Priest immersed five times and sanctified himself ten times. The priest immersed in

---

<sup>44</sup> Philip Blackman F.C.S. *Mishnayoth: Order Moed: Yoma*. (New York: Judaica Press, 1963), 2:3

front of the people, with a white sheet between him and them. He changed from wearing Pelusian linen in the morning to Indian linen, which was white, in the afternoon.

The priest made confessions on bullock as it is written in Numbers 29:8 and Leviticus 16:3, 6. The Priest says: ~~+~~pray, O Eternal! I have done wrong, I have transgressed, I have sinned before Thee, both I and my house; I pray, O Eternal! Forgive, I pray, the iniquities, and the transgressions, and the sins, which I have wrongly committed, and which I have transgressed, and which I have sinned before Thee, both I and my house, as it is written in the Law of Moses, Thy servant, For on this day shall atonement be made for you, etc. And they responded (those assembled in the temple) after him, Blessed be His Name, the glory of His Kingdom is forever and ever.<sup>45</sup>

~~+~~The priest shook the casket and brought out the two lots – one had written on it *For the Eternal* and on the other was written *For Azazel*. The Prefect was on his right and the chief of the weekly guard on his left. If that with the Name of the Eternal came up in his right hand the Prefect said to him, My lord, High Priest, raise thy right hand; and if the one bearing the Name of the Eternal came up in his left hand the chief of the weekly guard said to him, My lord, High Priest, raise thy left hand. He placed them upon the two he goats and said, A sin-offering to the Eternal. R. Ishmael says, it was not necessary to say sin-offering but merely To the Eternal. And they responded after him Blessed be His Name, the glory of His kingdom is forever and ever.<sup>46</sup>

The High Priest then ~~+~~ tied a strip of crimson wool on the head of the scapegoat and stood it over against the departure gate, and upon the one to be slaughtered round its

---

<sup>45</sup> Ibid. 3:9

<sup>46</sup> Ibid. 4:2

throat/ He came to his bullock the second time, and placed both his hands upon it and made confession. And this he used to say, I pray, O Eternal! I have done wrong, I have transgressed, I have sinned before Thee, both I and my house and the children of Aaron Thy holy people. I pray, O Eternal! Forgive, I pray, the iniquities, and the transgressions, and the sins which I have wrongly committed, Thee, both I and my house and the children of Aaron Thy holy people, as it is written in the Law of Moses, Thy servant, *For on this day shall atonement be made for you to cleanse you from all your sins, before the Eternal shall ye be clean*, And they responded after him, „*Blessed be His Name, the glory of His Kingdom is forever and ever.*“<sup>47</sup>

The priest then slaughtered the sacrifice and received its blood in a basin. He gave the blood to another to stir on the terrace of the Sanctuary. He then went to the Alter to take coals and brought them down to the fourth terrace. The High Priest then took the blood and entered the holy of holies. He tossed or sprinkled the blood in the holy of holies and then came out and set the bowl in the sanctuary. The High Priest then took the he-goat and slaughtered it and took its blood in a bowl and took into the holy of holies and splattered it. He then emptied the blood of the bullock into that of the he-goat and poured the full bowl into an empty one. He then stood in one place at the altar and sprinkled. It is best if the two h-goats are alike in appearance and in value, but it is not required. The priest then goes to the next scapegoat and says: ~~+~~pray, O Eternal! Thy people, the house of Israel, have done wrong, they have transgressed, they have sinned before Thee. I pray, by Thy Name! Pardon, I pray, the iniquities, the transgressions, and the sins which Thy people, the house of Israel, have wrongly committed, and which they

---

<sup>47</sup> Ibid 4:2

have transgressed, and which they have sinned before Thee, as it is written in the Law of Moses, Thy servant, For on This day shall atonement be made for you to cleanse you from all your sins, before the Eternal shall ye be clean. And the priests and the people who were standing in the Forecourt, when they heard the Ineffable Name come forth from the mouth of the High Priest, used to kneel and prostrate themselves and fall down on their faces and say, \_Blessæd be His Name the glory of His Kingdom is forever and ever.<sup>48</sup>

A priest then led the scapegoat from booth to booth in Jerusalem. There were 10 booths spread over more than one mile. At each booth food and water was offered. The last bit the priest went without an escort. At the last stop the priest roles the scapegoat down a hill and then returns to the last booth and sits until nightfall at which time his garments become unclean. Any priest can lead the scapegoat, but it must be a priest. Then the priest took the sacrificial parts from the bullock and the he-goat to the Alter and burned them. The he-goat was then sent into the wilderness.

In Mishnah 7:1 the term synagogue is used showing a divergence from the Temple cult. It reads: —The High Priest came to read. If he wished to read in the linen vestments he could read this, but if not he could read in his own white garments. The sexton of the Synagogue took a Scroll of the Law and gave it to the President of the Synagogue, and the President of the Synagogue gave it to the Perfect, and the Prefect gave it to the High Priest. And the High Priest stood and received it and read standing. And he read: After the death of...<sup>49</sup> and How be on the tenth day... And then he rolled up

---

<sup>48</sup> Ibid 6:2

<sup>49</sup> Lev. 16:1-34, 23:26-32

the Scroll of the Law and put it in his lap and said More than what I have read before you is written here. And on the tenth...<sup>50</sup> which is in the book of Number he recited by heart. And thereat he pronounced eight Benedictions: For the Law, And for the Service, And for the Thanksgiving, And for the Pardon of Sin, And for the Temple separately, And for Israel separately, And for Jerusalem separately, And for the Priests separately, And for other matters a prayer”.

The High Priest read the above at the same time as the bullock and the he-goat were being burned. These were done in different places.

If he read In the garments of linen he sanctified his hands and his feet, stripped, went down and immersed himself; he came up and dried himself; they brought him the golden raiment; and he put it on, and sanctified his hands and his feet and went out; and he offered up his ram and the ram of the people and the seven unblemished lambs of one year old. This is the view of R. Eliezer, which was rejected. R. Akiba says, With the morning daily burnt-offering did they offer these, and the bullock of the burnt-offering and the he-goat which is offered outside were offered with the afternoon daily burnt-offering.<sup>51</sup> After he washed and sanctified he put on white vestments. He then took the ladle and the fire pan and reimmered himself and was dressed in gold garments.

—On the Day of Atonement eating and drinking and washing and anointing and putting on sandals and sexual intercourse are forbidden. But a king and a bride may wash their faces, and a woman after confinement (childbirth) may wear sandals; this is the

---

<sup>50</sup> Numbers 29:7-11

<sup>51</sup> Ibid 7:3



opinion of R. Eliezer; but the Sages prohibit it. R. Eliezer's views are accepted".<sup>52</sup>

Children need not fast, but should be trained one to two years before they will need to fast in order to be accustomed. Those who are sick and pregnant may eat.

—A sin-offering and a trespassing offering for sins committed wittingly atone; death or the Day of Atonement effects atonement of accompanied with penitence; repentance effects atonement for lesser transgressions against positive commands and against negative commands, whereas for graver sins it suspends punishment until the Day of Atonement arrives and effects atonement."<sup>53</sup>

—If one says, I will sin and repent, I will sin and repent, he will not be given from on high an opportunity to repent. I will sin and the Day of Atonement will effect atonement, then the Day of Atonement does not affect atonement. For transgression from man towards God the Day of Atonement effects atonement; but for transgressions between a man and his fellow man the Day of Atonement does not affect atonement until he shall have first appeased his fellow man. This did R. Eliezer ben Azariah expound, From all your sins before the Eternal shall ye be clean – for transgressions from man towards God the Day of Atonement effects atonement, but for transgressions between a man and his fellow man the Day of Atonement does not affect Atonement until he shall have first placated his fellow man. R. Akiba said, Happy are ye, O Israel, before whom do ye cleanse yourselves and who cleanses you from your transgressions? Your Father that is in heave; as it is said, And I will sprinkle clean water upon you and ye shall be

---

<sup>52</sup> Ibid 8:1

<sup>53</sup> Ibid 8:8

clean. And it says again, The hope of Israel – just as the ritual bath cleanses the unclean so does the Hold One Blessed Be He cleans Israel.”<sup>54</sup>

## **MISHNAH PESAHIM**

Mishnah Pesahim contains a mix of rituals that are from the bible and ones that are innovations of the Rabbis. We find Passover rituals practiced at the Temple and those practiced after its destruction. The portion most relevant to us today is chapter 10 which deals with the Haggadah. Within the other chapters we find an emphasis on the search for leaven and questions pertaining to work prior to the observance of the festival. The emphasis on leaven is important as it is connected to the calendar revolution. It is an element of potential control and a way to keep people busy as an alternative to the preparation for the Temple ritual and sacrifice. The Mishnah keeps the portion on the sacrifices in order to maintain a record of what occurred in the early days as a means of control.

Mishnah Pesahim is divided into four sections. At times these sections are interwoven. We see from this there is a shift from temple rituals to home rituals. The directions on leaven are for both the home and the Temple. These are in the beginning of the section, Mishnah 1:1-5 and 2:1-3:6. The Mishnah then quickly moves to numerous temple laws on both the Passover sacrifice and the purity laws. These take up the bulk of the middle section of the Mishnah. The sacrifice laws are found in 1:6-1:7, 5:1-6, 5:9-7:4, 7:10-9:2 and 9:6-11. The laws on cleanliness are in 4:1-9, 5:7-8, 7:5-9 and 9:3-5.

---

<sup>54</sup> Ibid 8:9

The section concludes with the description of a festival meal to mark the occasion. This is clearly a move away from the Temple rituals. This is in Mishnah 10:1-9.

Most of what are described in Mishnah Pesachim are innovations the Rabbis made to the celebration of the Passover holiday after the destruction of the first temple. These changes were made in order for the holiday to exist without the Temple. We see from the descriptions the tension between various rabbis and their views of the celebration of the holiday as well as their disputes with the priests. Mishnah Pesachim begins with the idea that on the night of the fourteenth of Nissan the community must search for leaven by the light of a candle in any place where they bring leaven. All of these laws about leaven are innovations of the Rabbis. This is based on the commandment in Exodus 12:19 and Deuteronomy 16:4 that says: "No leaven shall be found in your house for seven days." The text explains that surfaces where you do not bring leaven do not need to be searched, even though it is possible an animal may bring leaven to those places, because an animal can also bring leaven from town to town and then the searching would never end. Rabbi Judah, whose view is rejected, states that the people must search for the leaven on the night or the morning of the 14<sup>th</sup>. If the search has not been completed by the time of the burning of the leaven, they can search then. The sages say that if a person has not searched on the 14<sup>th</sup> then they are allowed to search during the festival and if they still have not then can do it during the festival period, but at this time must be put away and not used. The leaven found on the festival day must be burned during the days between the festival days.

Rabbi Meir and Rabbi Judah disagree on the time until which the leaven may be eaten. Rabbi Meir says that leaven can be eaten until 11am and then needs to be burned.

This is rejected. Rabbi Judah says that leaven may be eaten until 10 and then must be burned, his idea is accepted. Rabban Gamaliel distinguishes between the leaven for the priests and that for the rest of the community. He allows the priests leaven to be eaten longer than the other leaven.

The Rabbis continue with a discussion of what can be burned and when it can be burned. This connects the ritual of burning leaven with that of burning the temple sacrifices. R. Chanina and R. Akiba point out that the priest's sacrificed both animal flesh and oil that had become unclean. R. Meir thinks this means that they may burn a Passover sacrifice even if it has become unclean. R. Jose, R. Eliezer and R. Joshua all disagree saying that the unclean and the clean cannot be burned together.

The Rabbis continue with a discussion as to when leaven can be fed to the animals and sold to non-Jews. They conclude only when Jews can eat of it. This is also true for when the ashes of leaven can be used. A Jew is not allowed to eat or derive benefit from leaven. In addition, if a Jew lent a non-Jew against his leaven, he is not allowed to derive benefit from it after Passover. —The leaven of a non-Jew when Passover had gone by — he is permitted to derive benefit, but that of a Jew is forbidden to be used. As scripture says, *Neither shall leaven be seen with thee.*<sup>55</sup> —If a non-Jew lent a Jew against his leaven, he may benefit from it after Passover, but if a Jew lent a non-Jew against his leaven, he is not permitted to derive benefit there from after Passover. Leaven upon which a ruin had collapsed is considered as burned; Rabban Gamaliel says,

---

<sup>55</sup> Philip Blackman F.C.S. *Mishnayoth: Order Moed: Pesachim*. (New York: Judaica Press, 1963), 2:2

All such as a dog cannot search out.”<sup>56</sup> If an Israelites eats a priests portion of leaven on Passover then the Israelite must repay its value plus and additional fifth.

Matza may be made from wheat, barley, spelt, rye and oats. If the Israelite uses one of these grains and tithes if properly, dedicating some to the priest and some to be redeemed then the Israelite fulfills his obligation. The matza must be made with the knowledge of what it will be used for. Matza made for personal use cannot be used for a sacrifice. As for herbs, the obligation is fulfilled with lettuce, endives, chervil, snakeroot and horseradish. These may be moist or dry, but not cooked and they must be an olive size. The paschal lamb may not be boiled in liquids. They also list the beer, vinegar and pasts that must be disposed of before Passover. Any dough found in cracks that is bigger than an olive size must be removed.

The Rabbis give a detailed procedure of how to separate the priests share of the dough from the unclean dough that needs to be burned, but cannot be on a festival and it cannot be left for another day in case it ferments. R. Eliezer says, –She must not designate it until it shall have been baked. R. Judah (whose opinion is rejected) ben Bethrya says, She puts it into cold water. R. Joshua (whose ruling is not accepted) said, this is not the *leaven* concerning which they have to be observant regarding it shall neither be seen nor found, but she separates it and leaves it until the evening, and if it has becomes leaven it has become leaven.”<sup>57</sup>

The Rabbis add sour dough to the list of things that are forbidden during Passover.

---

<sup>56</sup> Ibid 2:3

<sup>57</sup> Ibid 3:3

The Rabbis list times when the leaven can be annulled, instead of searched for. ~~If~~ anyone go to slaughter his Paschal lamb or to circumcise his son or to eat the betrothal meal at the house of his father-in-law, and he reminds himself that he had leaven in his house, if he be able to return and clear away and go back to perform his ritual duty he must return and clear it away, but if not then he annuls it in his mind. If to rescue someone from bandits or from a river or from robbers or from a conflagration or from a ruin, he can annul it in his mind. But if to stay over at a place until dark of his own choice, he must return at once.”<sup>58</sup> This is the same if someone remembers that they left Jerusalem with holy flesh. If they have passed a certain lookout then they must burn the flesh where they are, but if they have not passed the lookout then they must return to the Temple. The sages say they must do this if the flesh is the size of an olive and if the leaven is the size of an egg.

The Mishnah spends much time discussing when someone can work in relation to Passover. They determine that if the custom of the place is to work until the middle of the day on the eve of Passover then this is acceptable, but if this is not the custom then they may not work. If one brings produce from a place where the sabbatical year has ended to a place where it has not ended then the produce needs to be cleared out. A Jew can choose to sell a sheep to a non-Jew based on the tradition of the place. A Jew may work on the 9<sup>th</sup> of Ab if that is the custom of the place, but in places where scholars stop working, the people must also do this. In addition, ~~the~~ Sages say, In Judea they used to carry on their occupations on the eve of Passover until noon, but in Galilee they used to do none at all. That night, the school of Shammai prohibits, but the School of Hillel

---

<sup>58</sup> Ibid 3:7

permits up to sunrise.”<sup>59</sup> Work that is started before the 14<sup>th</sup> may be finished on the 14<sup>th</sup>, but no new work may be started.

Hezekiah was praised for atoning for his father’s inequities, making small the brazen serpent and hiding the scroll of remedies. He was criticized for cutting down the doors of the Temple, damning the waters of Upper Gihon and intercalculating Nisan (he added in Adar II because the people were unclean). Not clear that he did this, but he was a big guy and good so they made him do these things, credit him with calendrical change, can be sure that change took place but not that Hezekiah had anything to do with it.

The following laws of the slaughter and offering of the Passover sacrifice are from the time of the Temple. —The daily burnt-offering was slaughtered at the eighth hour and a half and offered up at the ninth hour and a half; but on the eve of Passover it was slaughtered at the seventh hour and a half and offered up at the eighth hour and a half, whether on a week day or on the Sabbath. When the eve of Passover fell on the eve of the Sabbath, it was slaughtered at the sixth hour and a half and offered up at the seventh hour and a half, and the *Passover sacrifice* after it.”<sup>60</sup> If one slaughters or receives or carries or sprinkles the Passover sacrifice not with that purpose then it is invalid. If it is slaughtered for one who cannot eat it, or is not numbered for it, or is not circumcised or is not clean, it is invalid. It is valid if it is slaughtered for those who can have it as well as those listed above. It is invalid if slaughtered before midday, but it is valid if it is slaughtered before the daily offering. The Passover sacrifice may not be slaughtered while the person is in possession of leaven. An Israelite may slay the sacrifice and the

---

<sup>59</sup> Ibid 4:5

<sup>60</sup> Ibid 5:1

priest may receive it. As it says in the text, Exodus 12:6, they slaughtered the Paschal lamb in front of people, in three groups. After the slaughter they recite Hallel. The sacrifice was done on the same day during the week and on Shabbat.

Certain parts of the Passover sacrifice override the Sabbath. This is the sprinkling of blood, the cleansing of its entrails and the offering of its fat. This does not include its roasting or the swilling of its inwards, transporting it or bringing it from beyond the Sabbath limit or cutting away its wart. R. Eliezer believes that these do override the Sabbath, but his view is rejected. R. Eliezer said, 'Is it not self-evident, seeing that slaughtering, which is an act of work, overrides the Sabbath, should not these, which are under only a Rabbinical rest restriction override the Sabbath?' R. Joshua replied to him, 'A festival-day will prove against this, for on it they permitted functions which are acts of work, nevertheless they forbade other functions that come within the category of Rabbinical rest restriction. R. Eliezer answered him, 'Ho so, R. Joshua? What proof can you deduce from a voluntary act for a positive percept?' R. Akiba said 'The sprinkling will prove it, because it is both a commandment and a Rabbinical rest restriction, nevertheless it does not override the Shabbat, so be thou not surprised about these, because although they are an obligation and are also a Rabbinical rest restriction they do not override the Sabbath. Said R. Eliezer to him, 'And regarding just that do I make the inference: seeing that if slaughtering, which is an act of work, overrides the Sabbath, then sprinkling which is merely a Rabbinical rest restriction should certainly override the Sabbath. R. Akiba replied to him, 'Or the reverse! Seeing that sprinkling which comes within the category of Rabbinical rest restriction does not override the Sabbath, slaughter which is an act of work should not override the Sabbath?' R. Eliezer answered him, 'R.



Akiba, thou hast uprooted what is written in the Law, between the evening in its appointed time, whether it be a weekday or Sabbath! He replied to him, „Rabbi bring me an appointed time for these equal to the appointed time mentioned for the slaughtering. R. Akiba laid down a general principle: All work that can be done on the eve of the Sabbath does not override the Sabbath. Slaughtering that cannot be performed on the eve of the Sabbath overrides the Sabbath.”<sup>61</sup>

The festival offering may come from a sheep, ox or lamb and it may be eaten during two days and one night. If you slaughter on the Sabbath not for the Passover offering then you are liable for a sin-offering. Once the offering is slaughtered it may only be roasted on a skewer of wood. If priests are going to eat the offering then it can have oil on it, but for an Israelite it must be rinsed. The Passover offering, if offered during uncleanness may be eaten during uncleanness. This is not so for all offerings. The plate of the High Priest makes the Passover offering acceptable if it comes from an unclean offering, but if it comes from an unclean owner then the plate of the High Priest does not make it acceptable. Therefore, the High Priest can make acceptance for blood, but not for the person. If most of the Passover is unclean then it needs to be burned in front of the Temple. An unclean Passover offering must be offered immediately. —The bones and the tendons and the remains must be burned on the sixteenth. If the sixteenth happened to fall on the Sabbath, they must be burned on the seventeenth because they do not override the Sabbath or the Festival.”<sup>62</sup>

---

<sup>61</sup> Ibid 6:2

<sup>62</sup> Ibid 7:10

The Mishnah differentiates between different Passover sacrifices. These represent the distinction the Rabbis made. On the first Passover one must say Hallel, where on the second Passover one can have unleavened bread. The Passover offering during Egypt was eaten in haste and on one day and after that it is eaten over seven days. The difference between the Passover offering at the Exodus and after is that in Egypt they needed to acquire the sacrifice on the 10<sup>th</sup> of Nissan and needed to sprinkle blood on the lintel and doorposts and it was eaten on one night. In later generations it is observed over seven days. Akiba says that if the Paschal lamb goes missing and is found before the time of the slaughter then sell it and buy another to slaughter and if it is not found until after the slaughter then it needs to be slaughtered as a peace offering. If set aside the wrong kind of animal then need to sell it for the correct animal.

Mishnah 10 gives us the Haggadah which is completely an innovation of the Rabbis. If the eve of Passover is close to the Mincha service then one cannot eat until it becomes dark and every one in Israel, including the poor, must recline and drink at least four cups of wine. ~~When~~ When the first cup had been filled up, the School of Shammai says, He recites the Benediction over the day and then he recites the Benediction over the wine; but the School of Hillel says, He recites the Benediction over the wine and after that he recites the Benediction over the day. The participants at the table are then brought dips of salt water of vinegar, lettuce, unleavened bread, lettuce, fruit-spiced sauce and two cooked dishes. The fruit-spice is not obligator, although R. Eliezer bar Zadok says it is. When the Temple existed the bones of the Passover offering were brought before the participants.

Then the second cup is poured and the child asks the father: *—Wherefore is this night different from all other nights, because on all other nights we may eat both leavened and unleavened bread? Because on all other nights we may eat any kind of herbs, but on this night bitter herb? Because on all other nights we may eat flesh which is roasted, cooked or boiled, but on this night entirely roasted? Because on all other nights we might dip once but on this night twice?*”<sup>63</sup> The child is then to be instructed according to his abilities. The father tells the son the entire story.

*Rabban Gamaliel used to say, anyone who has not said these three things at Passover has not fulfilled his obligation, and they are these: „Passover”, „unleavened bread”, and „bitter herbs.” “Passovø” because the Almighty passed over the houses of our ancestors in Egypt; “unleavened bread” because our forefathers were delivered from Egypt; “bitter herbs,” because the Egyptians made the lives of our ancestors bitter in Egypt. In all generations it is the duty of a man to consider himself as if he had come forth from Egypt; as scripture says, „And thou shalt relate unto thy son in that day saying, Because of this hath the Eternal wrought for me when I came forth from Egypt”. Therefore we are in duty bound to give thanks, to praise, to laud, to glorify, to exalt, to honor, to bless, to extol and to adore Him Who performed for our forefathers and for us all these miracles; He brought us forth from slavery to freedom, from sorrow to rejoicing, (and) from mourning to festivity, (and) from darkness to light, and from servitude to redemption; and let us say before Him, „Praise ye the Eternal.”<sup>64</sup>*

---

<sup>63</sup> Ibid 10:4

<sup>64</sup> Ibid 10:5

With the third cup of wine the participants recite the grace over the meal and with the fourth cup the Hallel and the Benediction over Song is said. The participant is not allowed to drink between the third and fourth cups. After the Passover offering the participants cannot eat more food. The flesh of the Passover offering may not be eaten after midnight.

It is obvious from the description that Rosh Hashanah was a tradition that began after the fall of the Temple. The entire tractate is the innovation of the Rabbis. The Temple is only mentioned one time in 4:1 and here the fall of the Temple is also mentioned. In 4:2 the Mishnah refers to the fact that Yavneh, the center of rabbinic learning, surpassed Jerusalem, the center of the Temple, in importance. The Mishnah also includes one section on the lulav and its use before and after the destruction of the Temple, but it is unclear as to why this is included.

## **MISHNAH ROSH HASHANAH**

Mishnah Rosh Hashanah begins with a description of the different new year celebrations and their significance in 1:1-4. This establishes Rosh Hashanah's place in the Jewish calendar. It then goes on with rules of determining the new moon during different times in 1:5-3:1 and 4:4. It is not until 3:2-4:1 and 4:8-9 that the Rabbis insert information relevant only to the celebration of Rosh Hashanah. Here they give the laws of the shofar. They then go on to give the prayers that are to be recited on Rosh Hashanah in 4:5-7. It seems they need to legitimize the holiday before they can tell the community how it is to be celebrated.

—There are four New Years. On the first of Nisan is the New Year for Kings and for Festivals; on the first of Elul is the New Year for the tithe of animals – R. Eliezer and R. Simon say, On the first of Tishri – on the first of Tishri is the New Year for the years, for Sabbatical Years, for Jubilee Years, for planting and for vegetables; and on the first of Shevat is the New Year for Trees, according to the view of the School of Shammai, but the School of Hillel say, on the fifteenth thereof.”<sup>65</sup>

The Mishnah teaches that the world is judged at four times during the year. It is judged on Passover for grain, on the Festival of weeks for the fruits of trees, on the New Year for the inhabitants of the world and on the Festival of Tabernacles for water.

There are six times when messengers go forth to mark the new month. These times are Nisan, Ab, Tishri, Kislev and Adar. When the Temple existed they also went on Iyyar for the Minor Passover. The messengers could profane the Sabbath to go forth on Nisan and on Tishri because of when the holidays of Passover and the determination of the New Year. When the Temple still stood, the messengers could profane the Sabbath for any holiday so long as the holiday sacrifice was done at the correct time. R. Jose, whose view is rejected, does not think messengers can profane the Shabbat if the crescent moon is clearly visible, because he feels this means all people would see it and know it is a new month. When R. Akiba detained people who were traveling to tell of a sighting of the New Moon, R. Gamaliel said that he should not detain them as this will keep them from volunteering in the future.

---

<sup>65</sup> Philip Blackman F.C.S. *Mishnayoth: Order Moed: Rosh Hashanah*. (New York: Judaica Press, 1963), 1:1

A father and a son cannot be witnesses of a new moon together, but they should both travel to tell of their sighting anyway. This way if one becomes ineligible, the second can give the account. R. Simion, based on Ex. 12:2, says that in fact a father and a son, or a close kin may give witness together. R. Jose tells the story of a man and his son and his slave traveling to tell of the new moon. The priests accept the testimony of the son and the father viewing the slave as of an inferior status. The Court accepted the testimony of the father and the slave, because of close kingship. Gamblers, usurers, those who fly pigeons, those who deal in the produce of the Sabbatical Year, slaves and woman are not allowed to give testimony on the new moon. If one witnesses the new moon and cannot walk then he should be carried to the court. If one is attached on the way to give testimony, he may beat his attackers. If the journey is long one may have food and drink.

If the Beit Din does not know the person who saw the moon then they send another to vouch for him. This is because after the sectarians caused harm they could no longer accept evidence from everyone. The harm of the sectarians also caused a switch from lighting beacons to sending messengers.

All of the witnesses assembled in the large courtyard called Beth Yaazek. They were fed big meals so they would continue to come and give testimony. Once a person arrived at the courtyard they must stay within in 2,000 cubits for the day.

They examined the witnesses by bringing in the first who arrived. They brought in the elder and told him to relate how he saw the moon. They then brought in the second one and asked him the same questions. If their statements agreed then their evidence stood. They then asked all the other groups in order that they not be disappointed and therefore not return in the future. The head of the court then proclaimed it hallowed and

the people repeated after him. It was hallowed whether it was seen or by default because it was the evening of the 31<sup>st</sup>. Rabban Gamaliel would show pictures of the moon to the ignorant people asking how they saw the moon.

Rabban Gamaliel sends for R. Joshua ben Chananiah and tells him to come with his staff and money on the day he calculates as the Day of Judgment. Note tells us that by Rabban Gamaliel's calculation this would not have been on the 10<sup>th</sup> of Tishrei. R. Akiva finds R. Joshua looking troubled. R. Akiva tells R. Joshua that what R. Gamaliel says is decisive as to when the new moon will fall because the courts' ruling is final according to Lev. 23:4. Therefore, how can R. Joshua determine when the Day of Judgment falls? R. Joshua goes to R. Dosa to make sure that R. Akiva's interpretation is correct. R. Dosa says that if R. Joshua wants to argue against R. Gamaliel's court he must argue against every court since the time of Moses because Ex. 24:9 says that any court of 3 people is like the court of Moses. R. Joshua went to R. Gamaliel with his staff and money on the Day of Atonement as he determined it. R. Gamaliel accepts R. Joshua and says that he is his disciple because he accepted his words. The notes teach that R. Gamaliel only wanted the law to be upheld.

All kinds of shofar are valid except that of a cow. The shofar of the New Year was from a wild goat. It was straight and its mouthpiece was overlaid with gold. There were two trumpets at its side. The shofar sounds a long note and the trumpets a shorter one because the obligation of the day was the shofar. On a fast day they used ram horns. These were curved with mouthpieces of silver. There were two trumpets between them. The shofar sounds a short note and the trumpets a long one because the obligation of the

day was a trumpet. If a shofar is split and cemented back together it is unfit. One must hear the sound of the shofar, not its echo.

—When the Holyday of the New Year fell on a Sabbath, they used to sound in the Temple, but not in the provinces. After the Temple was destroyed, Rabban Jochanan ben Zaccai ordained that they should sound wherever there was a Court. R. Eliezer said, Rabban Jochanan ben Zaccai only instituted this for Jabneh itself. They replied to him, it is all one whether it was Jabneh or any other place where the Court was. And furthermore, Jerusalem surpassed Jabneh in this respect, that every town that could see and hear, or was near, or could come, was permitted to sound, whereas in Jabneh they used to sound it only before the Court.”<sup>66</sup>

It used to be that they would accept evidence of the New Moon at any time during the day, until onetime the witnesses delayed in coming and the Levites were misled. They then said that the evidence must be presented before Mincha. After the Temple was destroyed Rabban Jochanan ben Zaccai requested they return to accepting evidence all day. R. Joshua ben Korcha agreed.

On the New Year one must keep the laws of Shabbat. One should also teach children how to sound the shofar.

## **MISHNAH SUCCAH**

Mishnah Succah is divided into six parts. The first part describes the building of the succah from Succah 1:1-2:5. The second part describes ones obligation to spend time in the succah in Succah 2:6-8. The third section describes the species of Succot. This is in Mishnah Succah 3:1-4:6. The fourth section describes the prayers of Hallel and the

---

<sup>66</sup> Ibid 4:1-2



water-libation from 4:8-5:4. The sixth section describes the sacrifices that were given at the Temple during Succot in 5:5-5:8. We see from this structure that the Rabbis put their innovations to the practice of Succot at the beginning of the tractate Mishnah Succah and left those of the Temple to the end of the Mishnah. All of the laws on the building of the succah are the innovation of the Rabbis.

—If a Succah be above twenty cubits in height, it is invalid, but R. Judah (whose view is rejected) declares it valid; and if it be not ten handbreadths high or has not three sides or if its unshaded part be more than its shaded part it is invalid. In the case of an old succah, the school of Shammai (whose view is rejected) declares it invalid but the school of Hillel declaring it valid.”<sup>67</sup> An old succah is any one that is built thirty days before the festival. Yet, the text says that if the succah was made explicitly for the festival then it does not matter how far in advance it was built.

A succah cannot be built under a tree or under another succah unless there are no occupants in the higher succah. A sheet cannot be put over the succah or inside a succah as a tent. The succah must be covered with something that has been cut from its origin, but which grows from the earth and cannot become unclean. One cannot drag an ivy over the top, but must cut part of the ivy off from its origin and place it on top. The succah cannot be covered with bundles of brush, the bundles must be untied. R. Judah (whose view is accepted) says that the roof may be made of boards. R. Meir (whose view is rejected) forbids this.

---

<sup>67</sup> Philip Blackman F.C.S. *Mishnayoth: Order Moed: Succah*. (New York: Judaica Press, 1963), 1:1

—If there be a board-roofing with no plaster over it, R. Judah says, the school of Shammai (whose view is rejected) says that one loosens them and one is removed between every two, but the school of Hillel says that one either loosens them or removes one between each two (this view is accepted). R. Meir says, One takes out every alternate one but does not loosen them (this is not accepted).”<sup>68</sup> If the roof has spaces equal to the size of the boards between the boards then it is fine. The succah must be built from the bottom up and it must sit on the ground. A succah cannot be built in a courtyard or porch that is covered. R. Eliezer says that succah may not be made in a cone shape or against a wall because then it has not roof. But the sages say that it is valid. A mat that is used to sleep on may not be used as a roof for a succah since it can be made unclean.

A succah can be propped up with the legs or side of a bed only if it can stand by itself. If the top of the succah is unevenly arranged but the shaded part is more than the unshaded part then it is valid, and if it is thickly roofed so that the stars cannot be seen it is valid. A succah built on top of a wagon or on the deck of a ship is valid and may be used on the festival day. A succah on the top of a tree or the back of a camel is valid but may not be used on the festival day. A succah with fewer than three sides made by man is valid, but may not be used on a festival day while a succah with three sides made by man and one by a tree is valid and may be used.

The laws of whom and when people can travel and who is exempt are also the innovations of the Rabbis. People who must travel for religious reasons or who are sick or who are attending the sick are exempt from the duty of the succah. —R. Eliezer (whose

---

<sup>68</sup> Ibid 1:7

view is rejected) says, A man is in duty bound to eat fourteen meals in the Succah, one each day and one every night. But the Sages say, There is no prescribed number except only on the night of the first night of the Holyday of the Festival of Tabernacles. And R. Eliezer made a further statement (that was rejected), If one had not eaten on the first night of the Holyday of the Festival, he must fulfill his lapse on the last night of the Festival. But the Sages say, The matter cannot be rectified; regarding this Scripture says, *That which is crooked cannot be made straight; and that which is lacking cannot be numbered.*<sup>69</sup>

—If a man's head and the greater part of his body were in the Succah but his table was in the house, the school of Shammai (whose view was accepted) declares it invalid, but the School of Hillel (whose opinion was rejected) declared it valid.<sup>70</sup>

Woman and slaves and minors dependent on their mothers are exempt from observing the festival. Men must make the succah their primary dwelling place during the seven days unless there is excessive rain, extreme cold or flies.

The descriptions of the lulav and etrog, were for the most part innovations of the Rabbis. The sections that describe the lulav and etrog were mostly innovations. There are parts that fall under the category of the Temple, but even these laws were under the auspices of the Pharisees. A lulav, myrtle branch or willow branch that has been stolen or is withered is not valid. A lulav from an apostate city or idolatrous grove is invalid. If the tip of the lulav is broken off or if its leaves are split then it is invalid. The lulav should be tied at one end and three handbreadths long to be valid. —R. Ishmael says, three

---

<sup>69</sup> Ibid 2:6

<sup>70</sup> Ibid 2:7

myrtle branches, two willow branches, one palm-branch and one citron – even if two be broken off and one be not broken away (are what is needed to fulfill the obligation of the lulav). R. Tarfon (whose view is accepted) says, Even if the three of them be severed. R. Akiba says, Just as one palm-branch and one citron, even so one myrtle-branch and one willow-branch (are valid in an emergency).”<sup>71</sup>

An etrog that is dried up or has been stolen is invalid. If it is from an idolatrous city or unclean then it is invalid. If it came from second tithe fruit in Jerusalem then one should not take it, but if they do it is valid. If the end is broken or if it is covered with scabs or peeled, or cracked it is invalid. —The smallest size for a citron R. Meir says (his view is rejected) is like that of a nut; R. Judah (his view is accepted) says like that of an egg. And the largest size such as one can hold two in one hand; this is the opinion of R. Judah (which is rejected), but R. Jose (which is accepted) says, Even one in one’s two hands.”<sup>72</sup>

R. Judah, whose view is rejected, says that the lulav can only be tied with its own species where R. Meir, whose view is accepted, says it can be tied with a cord. The lulav should be shaken at the beginning and at the end and if someone is on a journey and does not have a lulav ready then they should wave it when they return and if one does not wave it in the morning then he should wave it at night.

If a man cannot read and a woman or a slave reads hallel to him then he must repeat after them. If a man reads to him then he must respond —Praise ye the Eternal”

---

<sup>71</sup> Ibid 3:4

<sup>72</sup> Ibid 3:7

after him. If the custom is to repeat Psalm 118 then it must be repeated and if it is to say it only once, then it must be said only one.

A lulav and an etrog bought during a sabbatical year cannot be used. They must be given as a gift.

—Aforetime the *lulav* used to be taken to the Temple the whole seven days but in the provinces only one day. After the destruction of the Temple Rabban Jochanan ben Zaccai ordained that the Lulav should be used in the provinces the whole of the seven days in remembrance of the Temple; and that on the whole of the Day of Waving it should be forbidden.”<sup>73</sup>

If the first day of the Festival of Tabernacles is on Shabbat then the people bring their *lulavin* to the synagogue and leave them there until the next day when they shake it. They must be sure to use their own lulav to fulfill the obligation on the first festival day. After that they may use another’s.

The blessing over the lulav and the carrying of the willow-branches over the altar was sometimes done by the priests for six days and sometimes for seven. The saying of Hallel and rejoicing took place over eight days. The observance of the Succah and the water-libation was over seven days and the flute-playing sometime happened for five days and sometimes for six. The blessing for the lulav only occurred over seven days if the first day was Shabbat. The carrying of the willow branches only occurred over seven days if the seventh day was on Shabbat.

During the time of the Temple if the first day of the festival was Shabbat then the assembly brought their *lulavin* to the Temple Mount and the attendants took them and

---

<sup>73</sup> Ibid 3:12

arranged them on the roof of the balcony where they stayed for the night and the next day the people came back and the attendants tossed them the *lulavin*. The people hurt each other doing this and thus the tradition was changed that everyone carried their lulav back with them.

—What was the rite of the *willow-branch*? There was a place below Jerusalem called Morsa. They went down thither and collected thence young willow-branches, and they came and set them upright along the sides of the Altar with their tops bent over the top of the Altar. They then sounded a prolonged blast, and a quavering note, and a prolonged blast. Each day they walked in procession once round the Altar and recited *We beseech Thee, O Eternal, save, we pray; we beseech Thee, O Eternal, send prosperity, we pray*. R. Judah says ‘*We beseech Thee, O Eternal, save, we pray*. But on that day they walked in procession round the Altar seven times. When they separated what did they say? *To thee, O Altar is beauty due; to thee, O Altar, it beauty due*. R. Eliezer says, *To the Eternal and to thee, O Altar, to the Eternal and to thee, O Altar*.’<sup>74</sup>

At the end of the first holyday of the Festival of Tabernacles there was a Libation Water-well ceremony where men and priests danced and they walked the court of the Temple and blew blasts of the shofar at designated places. They blew between twenty-one and forty-eight blasts. On Shabbat they added six more blasts.

This last section on sacrifices is the one part of the tractate that is completely under the direction of the priests. —On the first Holy-day of the Festival of Tabernacles there were there thirteen bullocks and two rams and one he-goat. There still remained (there) fourteen he lambs for the eight *Watches*. On the first day six offered two each,

---

<sup>74</sup> Ibid 4:5

and the rest one each. On the second day five offered two each, and the remainder one each. On the third day four offered up two each, and the rest one each. On the fourth day three offered two each and the others one each. On the fifth day two offered two each, and the remainder on each. On the sixth day one offered up two each, and the remainder one each. On the seventh day all were equal. On the eighth day they reverted to the casting of lots as on all other Festivals. They said, the one that had offered bullocks on one day should not offer them on the next day but must take it in turns.”<sup>75</sup> We see from this in depth analysis the genius of the Rabbis’ work. They took the traditions that the participants were accustomed to and tied them to new practices. As the participants became used to the innovation, the Rabbi’s continued to make changes. Without this innovation, the practices of Judaism would have died with the destruction of the second Temple. Instead, the Rabbis found a way to ensure the tradition lasted outside of the Temple.

---

<sup>75</sup> Ibid 5:6

## Chapter 5: The Enigma of Shavuot

Just as they did with all the other sacred occasions of Judaism, the proto-rabbis and their successors transformed the holiday of Shavuot from an agricultural festival to the date of the descent of God on Mt. Sinai, the ascent of Moses and the revelation of the Torah (see Exodus 19:20). One would consequently have expected a Mishnaic tractate on Shavuot along the same lines that we have observed for the other holy occasions, or, at least, for the two others pilgrim festivals. Of course, we would have expected a parallel tractate in the Tosefta.

Yet surprisingly we find no reference to the connection between Shavuot and Revelation in rabbinic literature that can be dated prior to the second century C.E.<sup>76</sup>, and indeed most datable Jewish references come from the third century. Here we find

Indeed the earliest reference anywhere, datable to the early second century CE, to a revelation connected to Shavuot is the account in the New Testament Book of Acts, chapter 2, which speaks of the descent of the Holy Spirit in the midst of Jews from every nation and a multitude who could hear their message of faith delivered in their own tongue.

—When the day of Pentecost had come, they were all together in one place. And suddenly from heaven there came a sound like the rush of a violent wind, and it filled the entire house where they were sitting. Divided tongues, as of fire, appeared among them, and a tongue rested on each of them. All of them were filled with the Holy Spirit and began to speak in other languages, as the Spirit gave them ability. Now there were devout

---

<sup>76</sup> See, for example, Shabbat 86b



Jews from every nation under heaven living in Jerusalem. And at this sound the crowd gathered and was bewildered, because each one heard them speaking in the native language of each. Amazed and astonished, they asked, "Are not all these who are speaking Galileans? And how is it that we hear, each of us, in our own native language? Parthians, Medes, Elamites, and residents of Mesopotamia, Judea and Cappadocia, Pontus and Asia, Phrygia and Pamphylia, Egypt and the parts of Libya belonging to Cyrene, and visitors from Rome, both Jews and proselytes, Cretans and Arabs-- in our own languages we hear them speaking about God's deeds of power." All were amazed and perplexed, saying to one another, "What does this mean?"<sup>77</sup>

This account coheres with our knowledge of the world and thought of proto-rabbinic Judaism in three significant dimensions: first, the rapid growth in the first century CE of a Jewish Diaspora; second, the idea that the Torah was given or at least could be understood in seventy languages; and third, that the dimension or extension of God, as it were, that interacted with human beings was the *Ruah ha-Kodesh*.

In addition, the expression of the revelation, as it were, of the Holy Spirit on Pentecost, proclaiming in fact the fulfillment of the Torah, transparently suggests the existence of a connection in the mainstream of rabbinic Judaism between Shavuot and the transmission of Torah, and, within the proto-rabbinic mindset, its transmission through the Holy Spirit.

---

<sup>77</sup> Bruce M. Metzger trans. *The New Revised Standard Version Bible*. USA: Oxford 2006. Acts 2:1-12

While the absence of references to this connection in the earliest rabbinic literature is puzzling, the presence, indeed, almost the ubiquity of the Holy Spirit in this literature is obvious.

The connection between *Mattan Torah* and Shavuot is not found in rabbinic literature until what appears to be an anything but an early statement in the Talmud. Here on *Pesahim* 68b we read —All authorities concede it Atzeres ... it is the day on which the Torah was given.” Aside from this quotation, there are only two others that have any remote connection to Shavuot. One is found in the Mishnah Ta’anit 4:8 where it says —.and it says moreover, *Go forth, ye daughters of Zion, and gaze upon King Solomon, even upon the crown wherewith his mother hath crowned him in the day of his espousals and in the day of the gladness of his heart. In the day of his espousals —* this is the giving of the Law.” *Pesahim* 118a —And now that there is —The Great *Hallel*,” which is superior to the standard *Hallel*, why do we recite this standard *Hallel*? Because it contains these five matters: the Exodus from Egypt, the splitting of the Sea of Reeds, the giving of the Torah, the resurrection of the dead and the travails of the prelude to Messiah.”

The rest of the connections between *Mattan Torah* and Shavuot are therefore post-Talmudic, but almost without exception they appear to recapture or at least attest to a much earlier grounding of this connection although they do not all do this in the same way. For example, we find the *Mattan Torah* identified with the Atzeret, which is Shavuot, in texts like that of Rashi to Exodus 24:12, Toledot Yitzhak Numbers 28:26, Midrash Zuta Ruth portion 1 of Rabbi Tanchuma, Pesikta Zutra Numbers (Pinhas) page

137 number one, *Yalkut Shimoni* Ruth page 408. We find one clear indication of the 50 day count between Passover and Shavuot on the second day of Passover<sup>78</sup>.

Furthermore, and getting more specific, we have various dates assigned to Shavuot<sup>79</sup>, they both connect the *Mattan Torah* to the month of Sivan without specifying the date. On the other hand we also see that the *Mattan Torah* is connected with the 7<sup>th</sup> of Sivan<sup>80</sup> the 8<sup>th</sup> of Sivan<sup>81</sup> and the now traditional date of the 6<sup>th</sup> of Sivan. Rambam places the *Matan Torah* between the first and eighth of Sivan. Recanati connects the *Mattan Torah* with Shavuot<sup>82</sup> and, in another passage, he also places the *Mattan Torah* between the first and the eighth of Sivan.<sup>83</sup> Ibn Ezra places the *Mattan Torah* early in Sivan in one spot and in another he connects it with Shavuot<sup>84</sup>. Ibn Ezra's statement in his comment to Exodus 24:17 records the moveable calendar of rabbinic Judaism by stating that the seventh day, i.e. Shabbat, was the day after *Mattan Torah*.

Other noteworthy statements include Rashi's statement that God's voice at the time of the *Mattan Torah* was received by the Israelites in accordance with their own strength<sup>85</sup>; Ibn Ezra's that at the time of the *Mattan Torah* the heavens quaked<sup>86</sup>;

---

<sup>78</sup> Recanati to Leviticus 23:36

<sup>79</sup> Torah Temimah to Song of Songs 2: 39, Otzar Hamidrashim Esther page 53 portion 3:1, Pitron Torah portion V'yidaber page 111

<sup>80</sup> Torah Temimah to Exodus 24:33

<sup>81</sup> Torah Temimah to Exodus 24:6

<sup>82</sup> Recanati to Leviticus 23:17

<sup>83</sup> Recanati to Leviticus 23:17

<sup>84</sup> Ibn Ezra [Perush H'kazer] Exodus 5:1

<sup>85</sup> Rashi to Psalms 29:4

Metsudah David's statement that at *Mattan Torah* the hills skipped like rams<sup>87</sup>; Torah Temima's statement that with *Mattan Torah* God opened the heavens<sup>88</sup>; Radak's statement that at *Mattan Torah* Israel saw Ezekiel's chariot<sup>89</sup>; The statement in Pesikta de Rav Kahanah that the nations fled on the day of *Mattan Torah*<sup>90</sup>; and Bereshit Rabbah's statement that with the *Mattan Torah* the Ruah Ha-Kodesh departed from the nations<sup>91</sup>; the Boteh Midrashot records that endless miracles that occurred at the moment of *Mattan Torah*. And several passages, like in Leviticus Rabba, emphasize the conversion of Moses' father-in-law Jethro at the time of *Mattan Torah*<sup>92</sup>. One of the most interesting records on this general subject is found in Pesikta Zutra<sup>93</sup> which contains a rabbinic argument against the Sadducees who claimed that the *Mattan Torah* was not given on Shavuot.

All of this supports the rabbinic calendar in two ways. First it reveals the moveable dimension of the rabbinic calendar and second it connects *Mattan Torah* with Shavuot. And we may add that the emphasis on Shavuot in the later literature reveals a deep puzzle because if Shavuot's connection to *Mattan Torah* was as early as it appears

---

<sup>86</sup> Ibn Ezra to Psalms 68: 8

<sup>87</sup> Metsudat David to Psalms 114

<sup>88</sup> Torah Temimah to Song of Songs 2:112

<sup>89</sup> Radak to Jeremiah 1:28

<sup>90</sup> *Pesikta D'Rav Hahanah* 12

<sup>91</sup> *Gen Rabba* Lech Lecha page 74

<sup>92</sup> *Yalkut Shimoni D'vrai Hayamim* 1:1182

<sup>93</sup> *Pisikta Zutra* to Numbers Pinchas 137:1

to be, why do the telling references come mostly from post-Talmudic times? And again, why is there no Mishnaic/Talmudic tractate for Shavuot?

In rabbinic literature the *Ruah H'kodesh* (RK) is variously defined. Thus for example we read that the RK has ten names<sup>94</sup> which are rhetoric, speech, utterance, unit, weight of glory, imperative, prophecy, vision<sup>95</sup>. Elsewhere the RK is made equivalent to knowledge<sup>96</sup>; loving kindness, hen<sup>97</sup>; and the primal light<sup>98</sup>. We are told that God speaks through the Holy Spirit<sup>99</sup>. That the Holy Spirit resides only in a happy heart<sup>100</sup>. And that God places the Holy Spirit in the mouth of those who fear him<sup>101</sup>. But, we also learn that the Holy Spirit will at times work even with the unrighteous<sup>102</sup>. At the same time we learn that it recognizes only Israel in this world<sup>103</sup>; that it informs Israel because of its trust in God; Because of this the Holy Spirit tells Israel to set God as a seal on its heart, fills Israel as they prepare to sing the Song of the Sea<sup>104</sup>; Set me as a seal<sup>105</sup>; counsels

---

<sup>94</sup> משל מליצה חידה דיבור אמירה תפארת ציווי משא נבואה חזיון

<sup>95</sup> Otzar han Midrashim (Eisenstein) page 117

<sup>96</sup> Rashi to Genesis 47:9 and Mekhilta D'rabbi Shmonei bar Yochai 15:5

<sup>97</sup> Yalkhut Shimoni Torah Parsha 21:208

<sup>98</sup> Otzar han Midrashim (Eisenstein) page 306

<sup>99</sup> Rashi to Joshua 21:10

<sup>100</sup> Radak to 1Samuell 10:5 and Yalkut Shimoni to Jonah allusion to 550

<sup>101</sup> Otzar han Midrashim (Eisenstein) page 407

<sup>102</sup> Song of Songs Rabbah (Vilna) Portion 2

<sup>103</sup> Batei Midrashot part 2 Midrash Alpha Beta

<sup>104</sup> Tosefta Masehet Sotah (Lieberman) 6:2 and Otzar han Midrashim (Eisenstein) page 78

<sup>105</sup> Tosefta Masekhet Sotah (Lieberman) 9:8

Israel<sup>106</sup>; reassures it<sup>107</sup>; stays with them on their march in the desert<sup>108</sup>; and inspires its leaders to prophesize<sup>109</sup>.

Many passages attest to the relationship between the Holy Spirit and prophecy<sup>110</sup>. Of interest is its general presence in Israel before the departure of Elijah and its inspiration to Ezekiel when he prepared for the dead bones<sup>111</sup>. We also learn that the Holy Spirit is not present when the prophets are not present<sup>112</sup> that it departed from the nations when the Torah was given to Israel<sup>113</sup> and that it left Israel after its exiles<sup>114</sup> and that in fact it was missing during the second temple<sup>115</sup>. We also learn that the Holy Spirit leaves Israel when it is not performing Torah and Mitzvot; that it does not inform a sage when his generation is unworthy and that its connection with a prophet or sage is often

---

<sup>106</sup> Yalkut Shimoni to Ecclesiastes allusion to 978

<sup>107</sup> Mekhilta D'rabbi Ishmael 21

<sup>108</sup> Mekhilta D'rabbi Ishmael to B'shalach

<sup>109</sup> Even Ezer Perush Ha-katzer Exodus 25:7

<sup>110</sup> Radak to I Chronicles 25:1, Ralbag to 1 Samuel 19:20, Sekhel Tov (Bubr) to Exodus 11, Rashbam to Exodus 32:4

<sup>111</sup> Pirkei D'rabbi Eliezer (Higger) perek 32

<sup>112</sup> Yalkut Shimoni Ruth allusion to 577

<sup>113</sup> Seder Olam Rabbah (Leaner) 21

<sup>114</sup> Rashi to Ecclesiastes 12:7, Midrash Zuta to Ecclesiastes (Buber) 12, Yalkut Shimoni to Ecclesiastes allusion to 987

<sup>115</sup> Song of Songs Rabbah

situational as in the case of David who cries when the Holy Spirit departs from him<sup>116</sup> or when there is false prophecy<sup>117</sup> or when a person is in mourning<sup>118</sup>.

In the literature we see that the Holy Spirit came upon many of the worthies of the Bible, thus we find that it is connected to Abraham<sup>119</sup>, Sarah<sup>120</sup>, Isaac<sup>121</sup>, Jacob<sup>122</sup>, Joseph<sup>123</sup>, Moses<sup>124</sup>, Phinea<sup>125</sup>, Pinchas<sup>126</sup>, Joshua<sup>127</sup>, Rehab<sup>128</sup>, Saul<sup>129</sup>, David<sup>130</sup>,

---

<sup>116</sup> Yalkut Shimoni to 2Samuel allusion to 165

<sup>117</sup> Midrash Tannaim l'divarim 21:8

<sup>118</sup> Radak to Joshua 3:2

<sup>119</sup> Pesikta Zutra (L'kach Tov) to Genesis 15:2, Genesis Rabbah (Vilna) 45:2, Genesis Rabbah (Theodor – Aback) 35, Yalkut Shimoni to Lech Lecha allusion to 79

<sup>120</sup> Sekhel Tov (Buber) Genesis 18:15

<sup>121</sup> Midrash Tehilim (Buber) Mizmor 10, Perek De Rabbi Eliezer (Higger)

<sup>122</sup> Radak 1Samuel 3:2, Rambam Genesis 43:14, Radak Joshua 3:2, Song of Songs Rabbah 1:1, 1 Rashi to Genesis 37:33

<sup>123</sup> Rashi to Genesis 48:9, Ramban to Genesis 43:14, Mekhilta D'Rabbi Ishmael B'shalach, Midrash Tanchuma (Buber) Omer Siman 32,

<sup>124</sup> Radak to Jeremiah 45:3, Mekhilta De Rabbi Ishmael B'Shalach, Leviticus Rabbah (Vilna) 35:7, Leviticus Rabbah (Margliot) 3, Numbers Rabbah (Vilna) 13:20, Song of Songs Rabbah (Vilna) 6:2, Midrash Tanchuma (Buber) Portion Hukat, Pitron Torah Portion Zat chokat h'torah page 188, Midrash Tanhuma (V'rasha) Amar Siman 24, Midrash Aggadah (Buber) Exodus 33:15, Midrash Aggadah (Buber) Exodus 39:33, Pitron Torah Portion v'yelech page 304, Yalkut Shimoni Torah Portion Ki Tisa allusion to 391, Yalkut Shimoni Torah Portion Pikudei allusion to 417, Yalkut Shimoni Torah Portion Pikudei allusion to 420, Yalkut Shimoni Torah Portion Nassah allusion to 713,

<sup>125</sup> Radak Chronicles 1:9

<sup>126</sup> Yalkut Shimoni to Judges allusion to 42

<sup>127</sup> Yalkut Shimoni Torah bet-aleph allusion to 187

<sup>128</sup> Sifre Deuteronomy Pisikta 32:34, Midrash Tannaim to Deuteronomy 1:34, Radak to Joshua 2:15

<sup>129</sup> Radak to 1 Samuel 1:28

Solomon<sup>131</sup>, Job<sup>132</sup>, Ruth<sup>133</sup>, Esther<sup>134</sup>, Baylim<sup>135</sup>, Balach<sup>136</sup>, Urim and Turim<sup>137</sup>, Gideon<sup>138</sup>, Eilsha<sup>139</sup>, Eldad and Mided<sup>140</sup>.

With regards to individuals the holy spirit comes to a person who studies in order to act<sup>141</sup>; to a person who succeeds in being righteous<sup>142</sup>; to those who fear God<sup>143</sup>; to a person who studies Torah regularly –like an ox in a yoke or a donkey with a burden”<sup>144</sup>.

In the literature we find examples of the Holy Spirit acting in a variety of different ways. For example the Holy Spirit mediates a dispute between Beit Hillel and Beit

---

<sup>130</sup> Ramban to Numbers 15:5, Radak to 1 Samuel 15:13, Yalkut Shimoni to Psalms allusion to 695, Midrash Tanhuma (Buber) to Noach 28, Yalkut Shimoni Mishlei allusion to 947, Otzar han Midrashim (Eisenstein) page 407, Midrash T'hillim (Buber) Mimor 24

<sup>131</sup> Yalkut Shimoni Mishle Remez Titkanah, Seder Olam Rabbah (Milikovski) Perek 15, Numbers Rabbah (Vilna) Portion 17

<sup>132</sup> Ecclesiastes Rabbah (Vilna) 7:4

<sup>133</sup> Ruth Rabbah (Vilna) 2:1

<sup>134</sup> Rashi to Esther 5:1, Talmud Bavli Masechet Megillah 15a

<sup>135</sup> Ramban to Numbers 22:31

<sup>136</sup> Midrash Tanhuma (and Rasha) to Belek Siman 11

<sup>137</sup> Radak to 2 Samuel 15:24

<sup>138</sup> Ralbag to Judges 6:34

<sup>139</sup> Midrash Tannaim to Deuteronomy 5:14, Yalkut Shimoni to Jeremiah allusion 329

<sup>140</sup> Otzar han Midrashim (Eisenstein) page 138

<sup>141</sup> Leviticus Rabbah (Vilna) 35:7, Yalkut Shimoni to B'chokoti allusion to 671

<sup>142</sup> Otzar han Midrashim (Eisenstein) page 386

<sup>143</sup> Otzar han Midrashim (Eisenstein) page 407

<sup>144</sup> Yalkut Shimoni to 2 Samuel allusion to 165



Shammai<sup>145</sup>; it gives testimony to hidden things<sup>146</sup>; it extracts a promise for Israel not to revolt against the decrees of the government unless it is involved in the abolition of Torah, Mitzvot or Shabbat<sup>147</sup>. We find in numerous places in the literature that the Holy Spirit appears in the academies of Shem, Samuel and Solomon<sup>148</sup>. Furthermore, it appears in the academy of the Beit Din Shel Matah<sup>149</sup>. The Holy Spirit is otherwise involved in human acts, for example we read that the Holy Spirit declares that it is better to have a dry morsel and peace than a house full of feasting and strife<sup>150</sup>. The Holy Spirit appears in Hannah's prayer<sup>151</sup>.

There are many additional interesting involvements of the Holy Spirit. For example, the Holy Spirit appears in various academies. It appears in the academy of Shem<sup>152</sup>, Samuel and Solomon<sup>153</sup> and in the academy of the Beit Din Shel Matah<sup>154</sup>. It mediates a dispute between the house of Hillel and Shammai<sup>155</sup>. It plays a role in the

---

<sup>145</sup> Pirkei D' Rabbi Eliezer (Higger) "Horev" verse 19

<sup>146</sup> Ecclesiastes Rabbah (Vilna) 10:1

<sup>147</sup> Midrash Tanhuma (Buber) to Noah 15:15

<sup>148</sup> Radak to 1 Samuel 12:5, Yalkut Shimoni Torah Portion V'yashev allusions to 145, Yalkut Shimoni to 1 Samuel allusion to 112

<sup>149</sup> Rashi 1 to Samuel 12:5, Radak 1 Samuel 12:5

<sup>150</sup> Yalkut Shimoni to Balak allusion to 765

<sup>151</sup> Radak to 1 Samuel 1:28

<sup>152</sup> Yalkut Shimoni Vayashev 145

<sup>153</sup> Yalkut Shimoni to 1 Samuel 112

<sup>154</sup> Rashi to Exodus 31:3, Radak to 1 Samuel 10:5

<sup>155</sup> Pirkei D' Rabbi Eliezer (Haggar) "Horev" 19

resurrection of the dead<sup>156</sup>. It says that a person who studies in order to act is worthy to be a recipient of the Holy Spirit<sup>157</sup>. These are just a number of examples of the varied role of the Holy Spirit.

The following passages from Rabbinic literature exemplify the range of its treatment of the Holy Spirit.

Rashbam to Exodus 32:4 – THESE ARE YOUR GODS [WHO BROUGHT YOU OUT OF EGYPT]

Did the Golden Calf not bring them forth from Egypt? Rather all idol worshipers know that [it was] our God in heaven [who] created the world. But in the following they were mistaken for the idols contained a spirit of uncleanness in contrast to the prophets who have the Ruah Ha-Kodesh in them. And they [the idolaters] thought that the calf which was speaking in the spirit of uncleanness was speaking through the Holy Spirit on high and therefore they said these are your God's or Israel who brought you forth. That is as if to say the Holy Spirit was in them...

Radak to 2Samuel 15:24 AND ABIATHR WENT UP

RETURN THE ARK OF GOD TO THE CITY. And why was it removed on that day? Because when [Abiathr] inquired of the urim and the thummin it did not return an answer. Now when Zaddok asked he was answered as it was explained in the book of Joshua. Now, for when an inquiring priest is asking the urim and the thummin the Ruah

---

<sup>156</sup> Midrash Tannim to Deuteronomy 23:15

<sup>157</sup> Leviticus Rabbah to 35:7

Ha-Kodesh alights upon him and in it and through it he is directed and he brings back the answer in accordance with what appeared to him in the urim and the thummin as it is explained in the book of Judges. And when David saw that the Ruah Ha-Kodesh had departed from Abiathr he knew that the time of curse had come.

#### Radak to Jeremiah 5:13 THE WORD WAS NOT AND THE PROPHESTS

The prophets who were leading them astray and saying you will have peace they will be like the wind, as if to say like chaf before the wind. AND THE WORD IS NOT WITH THEM: When the word [of God] is not in them. That is to say, the Holy Spirit. How can they tell one from the other? Rather, when they rely on their dreams or their sorceries and promise good for the people in order to find favor in their sight. —~~When~~ they pervert their deeds and say evil will not come upon you.”

#### Radak to Haggai 2:5 MY SPIRIT STANDING

The bible says the word. That means if you do the thing which I have covenanted with you then ~~MY SPIRIT STAND IN YOUR MIDS~~” that is the Holy Spirit, but if after they have sinned and not performed the Torah and the mitzvoth, the Holy Spirit is separated from them. In this way prophecy was removed in the day of Zachariah and Malachi. And God said ~~-(the covenant)~~ that I have made with you” that is with your ancestors. It is as if, just like with them, I have made the covenant with you. As it is written in the Torah ~~not~~ only with our ancestors has God made this covenant but with us”, and it means my spirit still continues among you.

Ralbag to Judges 6:34 And Spirit

–THE SPIRIT OF GOD CLOTHED GIDEON”. That is to say the spirit of divine Power. That is to say it was appropriate for the Holy Spirit to be on him. And he sounded the shofar and all of the families of Abiezer were assembled around him and they were residents in Ophra because he was part of their family and he was the lord and for this reason it was not necessary for him to send messengers [to inform them].

Ralbag to 2 Samuel 21:21 THE THIRTY AND SIX

When David heard this amazing message which God was informing him through his prophet he was stirred to pray to God on high that he should fulfill this promise because David’s prayer could be helpful in this regard because prior to this time the Holy Spirit had dwelt on him as he had said ~~the~~ “the spirit of God had spoke in me and his word is upon my tongue” and this is already well known from the book of Psalms which David remembered through the Holy Spirit and for this reason it is found in this place and the perpetrators were not able to destroy him.

Tosefta Pesachim 4:14

I have received from my teachers the instruction that the paschal sacrifice overrides the Sabbath. Not in the case of the first Passover, but in the second Passover. Not the public Passover, the Passover of the individual. So they said to him [Hillel] what should the people do if they have not brought knives or the paschal sacrifice to the Temple. He said to them ~~let~~ “let them be the Holy Spirit is upon them. If they are not prophets they are the sons of prophets.” Then what did the children of Israel do at that

time? Whoever has a sheep for a paschal sacrifice hid the knife in its wool and whoever had a goat tied it between its horns so in this way they brought knives and paschal sacrifices to the Temple and made their paschal offering there.

Talmud Yerushalmi to Masekhet Shekalim 3.47.3

Diligence leads to cleanliness and cleanliness leads to purity and purity leads to holiness and holiness leads to modesty and modesty leads to fear of sin and fear of sin leads to piety and piety leads to the Holy Spirit and the Holy Spirit leads to resurrections and resurrection leads to Elijah of blessed memory.

Mekhilta of Rabbi Ishmael Pisha 13 AND GOD SENT

Rabbi Jose Haglili said: [the children of Israel] believe in [God's words] from the three days of darkness because they used to say ~~perhaps~~ at the time when we were in darkness and they [the Egyptians] were in the light and they did not suspect anything, but now, they are suspicious [they are in the darkness]. Rabbi Eliezer son of Jacob said the Holy Spirit alighted upon them.

Mekhilta of Rabbi Ishmael to Beshalakh 6 THEN MOSES AND THE CHILDREN OF ISRAEL SANG

Rabbi Nehemiah said ~~that~~ whoever takes upon himself a single mitzvah in faithfulness becomes worthy for the Holy Spirit to rest upon him". For thus we find in the case of our forefathers that in payment of the faith which our forbears had in God they became worthy and the Holy Spirit rested on them and they sang song as it is said

and they had trust in God and Moses his servant. And it is said ~~—~~Moses and the children of Israel sang.” And thus you can find that Abraham our father did not inherit this world and the world to come accept through the merit of his faith.

Mekhilta of Rabbi Ishamel to Beshalah SAID THE ENEMY...”MY HAND”

With five things did Pharaoh strongly threaten [the Israelites] in Egypt. ~~—~~The enemy said I will pursue, I will overcome, I will divide the booty, my lust will be satisfied, I will unsheathe my sword, my hand will over power them.” In return for these five things the Holy Spirit answered him and said, ~~—~~you blew with your wind the sea covered them. They sank like lead in the mighty water. Your right hand oh God will crush the enemy and in the greatness of your Excellency you will set down those who rise against you. You will send forth your wrath and it will consume them like stubble. You will stretch forth your right hand ...”

Mekhilta of Rabbi Ishmael to Beshalach ~~—~~MIRIAM TOOK AND THEY TOOK A POSITION.” ~~—~~AND MOSES WENT AND SO DID JOSHUA AND THEY TOOK THEIR POSITION IN THE TENT OF MEETING.” FROM A DISTANCE

The word FROM A DISTANCE means nothing other than the Holy Spirit. Thus it says in the bible ~~—~~from Far God appeared unto me in order to know.” (Jeremiah 31:3) The word de‘ah means nothing other than the Holy Spirit —because the land will be filled with the knowledge [da‘at] of God”. (Isaiah 11:9) It also says ~~—~~because the earth will be filled to know [la‘ da‘at] the glory of God as the waters cover the sea.” (Habakkuk 2:14)

And when the bible said what will be done for him the word for doing means nothing other than the Holy Spirit.

Seder Olam Rabba DAYS WHEN [SOLOMON] RULED (1Kings 1:10)

—And Solomon loved” (1Kings 11:1) In connection with this you will find in the Bible because on my anger and on my wrath” (Jeremiah 32:31) but at the time of Solomon’s old age when he was near death, the Holy Spirit dwelt on him and he dictated these three books: Proverbs, Song of Songs and Ecclesiastes.

Lamentations Rabba Introductions Rabbi Joshua [said] —AN ENEMY AND AN ADVERSARY OF THE HOLY ONE BLESSED BE HE

Who is this? This is Nebuchadnezzar (Ecclesiastes 12). —And the dust will return to the earth as it had been.” They were from Babylonia and to Babylonia they returned. And the Spirit will return to God. This is the Holy Spirit. When the Holy Spirit was removed from them they went into exile and when they went into exile Jeremiah was intoning Lamentations —How the city sits solitary.” (Lamentations 1:1)

Otzar Ha-Midrash (Eisenstein) BEHOLD YOUR DAYS ARE DRAWING NIGH [TO DIE]

And he [Moses] said, —We is to me, to whom shall I go for mercy from who do I ask for mercy?” Said Rabbi Simlai —At that moment the spirit of God was filled with compassion and Moses cried out God has passed by his face and he cried out —~~Oh~~ God, Oh God”. At that time the Holy Spirit cooled. It said to Moses, —~~oh~~ Moses, I have made

two (contradictory) promises. One, that you will die and one that I will destroy Israel. It is impossible to nullify both of them, if you want to live then all Israel will perish". Then Moses said to it...

Yalkut Shimoni to Beshalah MOSES AND THE CHILDREN OF ISRAEL SANG ~~THIS~~ SONG"

It is said ~~all~~ the women from all the cities of Israel went out for song and dances saying Saul has killed his thousands and David his tens of thousands". In this case they were speaking to God and not to a person of flesh and blood. THEY SPOKE AS FOLLOWS': ~~R~~abbi Nehmiah said the Holy Spirit alighted on Israel and they sang a song like human beings who are reciting the Shema. Rabbi Akiva says ~~they~~ said it like people sing Hallel.

Yalkut Shimoni to Hosea 2:22 – I WILL BETHROTH THEE UNTO ME IN FAITHFULNESS

This means as a reward for faithfulness just as it is said [in the bible] ~~a~~ bride has come from Lebanon, from Lebanon she has come and she looks out from atop Emunah [= faithfulness]." Now great is the faith before God who spoke and created the world because in recompense the Holy Spirit rested on them as it is said —~~A~~d they had faith in God and Moses his servant: And they sang and Moses sang with them." Thus you find that our forbears were redeemed from Egypt only because of their faith.



These various and varied appearances of the Holy Spirit in rabbinic literature suggest a number of important factors that pertain to the area of Jewish Christian polemics. All of these examples point to the effort of the early rabbis to establish that the Holy Spirit was always present among the children of Israel, that it was present from ancient times on that it had continuous contact with the Children of Israel and was therefore not the case of a onetime appearance. All of this serves to emphasis that the Holy Spirit was well established in Israel long before the incident alluded to in the Book of Acts.

## Conclusion

The study of the Jewish calendar is, as can be seen from the foregoing pages, highly convoluted and extremely complex. This is because the calendar of the Jews, like that of many ancient and medieval groups, was frequently utilized as a political tool and a litmus test for adherence to the group that claimed a specific calendar. Therefore, to understand the changes and proposals for change in the calendar one has to appreciate the full context of the society in which these calendars were present. To put it in other words, such calendars were a reflection of a total society, including its aims, aspirations and conflicts.

Accordingly, the most ancient Biblical calendars reflect the agricultural societies for which they were intended and the leadership struggles within these societies. The calendars of the proto-rabbinic and rabbinic periods reflect a society which was still largely agricultural, but now tonally urban.

For the proto-rabbis and their successors the urban tonality of society provided an opportunity to incorporate their radically new world view, the result in general of an accommodation to their inherited tradition of the impact of the ideas and realities of the Greco-Roman world in which they lived. Their work in this area is reflected in Tannaitic literature, which clearly reveals the processes by which the calendar, biblically theocratic, parochial and Temple-centered, yielded to the individualistic, universal and synagogue-and-home centered Judaism which has been our inheritance. In often stunning detail, the various calendrically driven tractates of the Mishnah and its related literature reveal the new understanding of God and man, of Torah and halakhah, of Israel and its mission that have been dominant in Judaism ever since.

Interesting in all of this and enigmatic is the absence in this literature of a separate tractate of the holiday of Shavuot, which rabbinic tradition transformed from an agricultural festival to the commemoration of the Revelation of the Torah. The many passages in early rabbinic literature, most of them post-Tannaitic in their record, though not necessarily in their origin, suggest in their treatment of *Mattan Torah* and its related concept of *Ruah Ha-Kodesh*, a polemic with early Christianity, whose Book of Acts contains the earliest datable record of the relationship between Pentecost, the descent of the Holy Spirit and, of course, its distinctive understanding of Revelation.

## Bibliography

- Blackman, Philip F.C.S. *Mishnayoth: Order Moed*. New York: Judaica Press, 1963
- Bornstein, H.Y. *The Dispute between Rav Saadia Gaon and Ben Meir*. Varsha: 1904
- Charlesworth, James H., ed. *The Old Testament Pseudepigrapha vol. 1*. New York: Doubleday, 1983 (Enoch)
- Charlesworth, James H., ed. *The Old Testament Pseudepigrapha vol. 2*. New York: Doubleday, 1985 (Jubilees)
- Cohen, Dr. Martin A. *Two Sister Faiths: Introduction to a Typological Approach to Early Rabbinic Judaism and Early Christianity*. Assumption College, 1985
- Jaubert, Annie. *The Date of the Last Supper*. Translated by Isaac Rafferty. New York: Society of St. Paul, 1965
- Licht, Jacob. "Calendar". *Encyclopedia Judaica*. Coronet. 1974
- Martinez, Florentino Garcia and Eibert J.C. Tigchelaar, ed. 1998. *The Dead Sea Scrolls Study Edition vol.* Boston: Brill.
- Metzger, Bruce M. trans. *The New Revised Standard Version Bible*. USA: Oxford 2006
- Morgenstern, Julian. "Additional Notes on 'The Three Calendars of Ancients Israel.'" *Hebrew Union College Annual* 3(1926): 77-107
- Morgenstern, Julian. "Supplementary Studies in the Calendars of Ancient Israel." *Hebrew Union College Annual* 10 (1935): 1-147
- Morgenstern, Julian. "Three Calendars of Ancient Israel." *Hebrew Union College Annual* 1(1924): 13-78.
- Morgenstern, Julian. "The Calendar of the Book of Jubilees, Its Origin and its Character." *Vetus Testamentum* v. 5.1 (1955): 34-76
- Philo. *Philo vol. 7*. Translated by F.H. Colson, M.A. Massachusetts: Harvard, 1937
- Stern, Sacha. *Calendar and Community: A History of the Jewish Calendar, 2nd Century BCE to 10th Century CE*. USA: Oxford, 2001
- Talmud Bavli Schottenstein Edition Brooklyn: Mesorah 1992. *Dinei Mamonos Bishloshah* Chapter 1 Sanhedrin

Talmud Bavli Schottenstein Edition Brooklyn: Mesorah 1992. *Eilu Devarim* Chapter 6  
Pesachim

Talmud Bavli Schottenstein Edition Brooklyn: Mesorah 1992. *Im Einan Makirin* Chapter  
2 Rosh Hashanah