

True New Year: Barley Harvest Law vs. Vernal (Spring) Equinox



Fireworks. Confetti. Drunken revelers. Colored eggs. Bunnies. Fertility goddesses. Human sacrifice. Different cultures have welcomed the new year with various rituals. Pagan cultures always celebrated the New Year with riotous parties, drinking, noise, exchange of gifts and revolting fertility rites. By contrast, those who worshipped the God of Heaven welcomed the New Year reverently, with gratitude for the blessings of the past year and recommitment to their Maker for the upcoming year

Depending upon the particular culture, the year began at different times. All ancient calendars were originally luni-solar. Because the lunar year is 11 days shorter than the solar year, it is necessary to have an anchor point which ties the lunar year to the longer solar year. Without this anchor point, holy festivals drift backward through the year by 11 days, from one year to the next. An example of this is the Muslim lunar calendar: Ramadan drifts all through the solar calendar year.

There are only four points in a solar year to which the lunar year may be anchored: vernal (spring) equinox; summer solstice; autumnal equinox; and winter solstice.⁽¹⁾ Different pagan civilizations used these different points as anchors, tying the lunar year to the longer solar year. Egyptians, watching for the rise of the star, Sirius, tied the beginning of their year to the summer solstice. The Indians of South America used the winter solstice. They believed the sun had died and in order to bring the sun back and continue life, they offered human sacrifice. These four anchor points were repeatable and predictable. The priests could easily lead the superstitious populace to worship the planets by which they marked the time rather than the Creator God who made the planets.



Satan has always placed his counterfeits as close to truth as he can in order to confuse the mind. The most dangerous, difficult-to-discern error is that which most closely resembles the truth. Most ancient time-keeping methods used the vernal equinox. This included the Sumerians, the Babylonians and the pagan Romans, among many others. It was natural to start a new year when new life was springing forth. The ancient fertility symbols of bunnies and colored eggs are still seen at Easter. The Creator's calendar also starts in the spring. However, it is not tied to the vernal equinox. The vernal equinox is Satan's counterfeit of the true

beginning of the New Year.

Exodus 12:1-2 states:

And the Lord spake unto Moses and Aaron in the land of Egypt, saying, This month shall be unto you the beginning of months: it shall be the first month of the year to you.

Exodus 12 establishes that Passover is to occur in this "first month of the year." Taken in combination with Leviticus 23, which delineates the annual festivals, it is possible to establish which lunation is to be the very first month. Yahuwah Himself made the designation of the first month, and the Passover, dependent upon agriculture. The 14th day of the first month was the Passover. The 16th day of the first month was when the Wave Sheaf offering was waved before the Lord. In order to have barley to wave, the barley had to be ripe.



This dependence upon the crops of the field for determining the start of the year was a loving way to remind the people that their bounty came from the hand of their loving Maker.

In ancient Israel, the "early rains" fell in the fall for the springing up of the seeds. The "latter rains" came during the last month of the year, in the spring, and brought the barley to maturity. Even the Hebrew paschal song, taken from Song of Solomon 2:10-13, included the phrase: "The rain is over and gone."

The Jews doubtless had known the length of the year from Egyptian times, but their method of intercalation was different on account of their Passover feast. This they regulated by the "maturity of the barley."² Moses commanded that they should not even reap their barley until the first fruits of it had been offered to the Lord at the time of the Passover [i.e., Wave Sheaf on the 16th of the first lunation.]³

David Sidersky, well-known and respected Jewish chronologer, emphatically stated:

The aim of the Mosaic [barley harvest law] command was to regulate the months according to the course of the moon, and the whole year in accordance with the course of the sun – by assigning as a starting point the lunar month coinciding with the beginning of a determined solar season.⁴

The historical record establishes that at the time of Christ, and clear up until the dispersion after the destruction of Jerusalem, the ripeness of the barley determined the beginning of the year. It was only after the dispersion of the Jews that they themselves set aside the barley harvest law and adopted instead "the observation and calculation of the [spring] equinox."⁵

The ceremony of the barley harvest was the divine rule by which the position of the [first] month Nisan was located. If by the first of Nisan, the barley was not sufficiently advanced for the Passover festival, then a leap-month was added, and the feast period of the year was delayed until the following month. The Lord had promised Israel, when He ordained the Passover, that He would send rain in due season in order that the corn should be reaped in time for the feast.⁶

This requirement of having ripe grain in the middle of the first month encouraged everyone to acknowledge the loving generosity of the Creator. In time of famine, there was no grain to offer with their worship on Wave Sheaf and they knew that disobedience was the cause. The Creator's divine blessing of sending the latter rains had been withheld due to their apostasy.

The priests, who controlled the calendar, were very careful to use this method of intercalation. A field of barley was sown in the Ashes-Valley across the Kidron for the priests use in determining the ripeness of the barley.⁷ It is this very

rule of the barley harvest that provides the certainty that the Abib/Nisan paschal moon could not come until the barley was ripe – after the latter rains were over. "The modern Jewish calendar is based upon an equinoctial moon which came in March, in direct opposition to the barley-harvest moon of the first century, which came in April." ⁸



Joseph Scaliger states that in the time of Christ the time frame in which the Passover's full moon occurred fell between April 8 and May 6. He established that people who used the Dionysian moon tables for determining the New Year made a mistake. They thought that they were observing Passover in Abib when they actually celebrated it in Adar (the 12th month) ten times within the 19-year cycle! He learned this fact from the Jews themselves. ⁹

The common practice of setting aside the barley harvest law and anchoring the New Year to the vernal equinox is reverting to the pagan practice of using the equinox. This practice was adopted by the Jews only after their dispersion. The modern Jewish method of determining Passover places it on the full moon nearest the vernal equinox. Because it is tied to the full moon nearest the vernal equinox, it can even come before the equinox! This never occurred by the original method of barley harvest reckoning.

It is true that people in Israel still search for the barley and have, at times, reported finding mature barley before the vernal equinox. However, such is only going through the motions to confirm the modern method of time calculation. It is certainly possible to plant different varieties of barley at different times in order to have them ripen earlier or later. However, the historical fact remains that the latter rains fell through the first week of April. Pilgrims journeying to Jerusalem to celebrate Passover and Feast of Unleavened Bread waited until the spring rains had ended.

Roman Catholics celebrate Easter on the first Sunday following the first full moon on or after the vernal equinox. Easter may come anytime between March 22 and April 25. This insures that Easter Sunday and the modern rabbinical Passover never coincide.

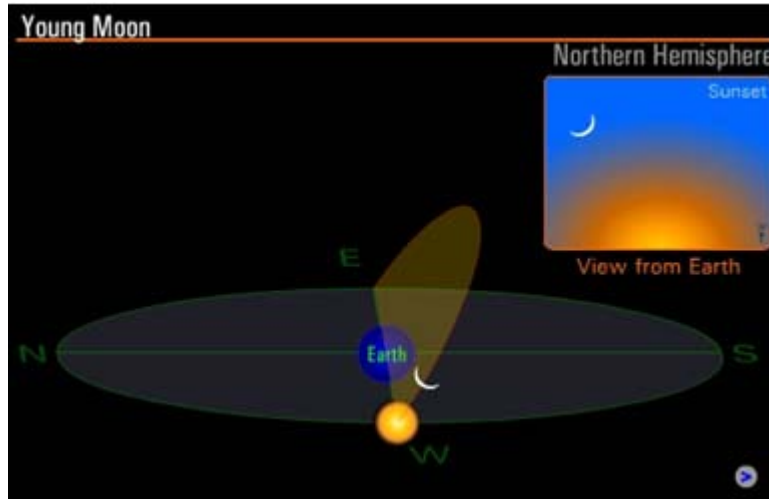
Some have thought that the position of the moon and its relationship to the path of the sun, as well as its appearance (bowl-shaped, saucer shaped, or at an angle) is the determining factor which establishes the first month of the year. This is not so. It is true that the angle of the crescent changes throughout the year and it certainly can look like a bowl in the spring. However, the paschal season of the first month uses the [barley harvest law](#), not strictly the moon's visual appearance. Throughout the 19-year cycle the appearance of the new moon will change depending upon the timing of the paschal lunation relative to the vernal equinox.



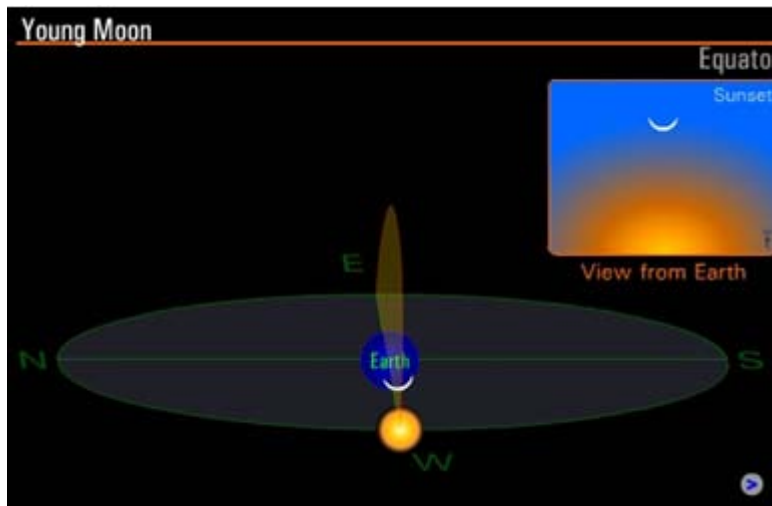
It should be remembered that the crescent moon for all lunations appears as a bowl for those living on the equator. For people who live in the Northern hemisphere, the first crescent follows the curvature of a capital D. Those who live in the Southern hemisphere see the crescent moon as a C. The tips, or "horns" of the moon, will always point to the pathway of the setting sun.

Following are three illustrations ¹⁰ demonstrating the appearance of the first visible crescent for both hemispheres and the equator.

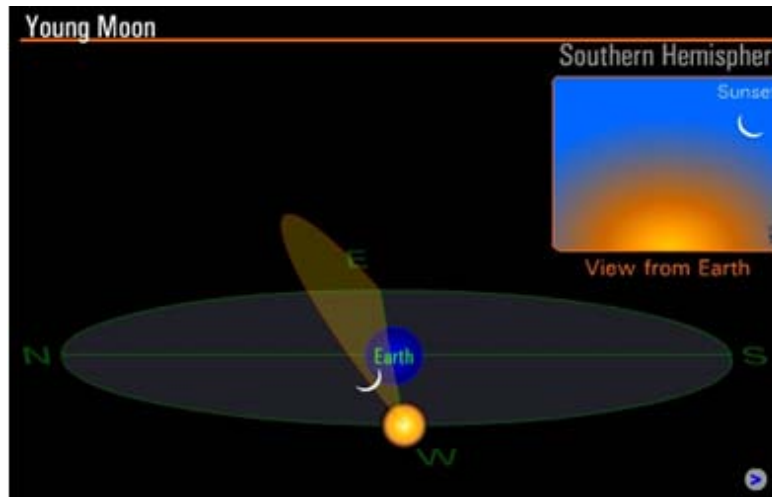
Northern Hemisphere:



Equator:



Southern Hemisphere:



Because the appearance of the moon varies depending upon: 1) one's location on earth, and 2) the timing of the first crescent relative to the vernal equinox, Yahuwah did not design the shape of the moon to mark the beginning of the year. This function was assigned the barley harvest which ripened only after the spring (latter) rains had completed their

finishing work which, in turn, was dependent on the Creator's blessing on an obedient people. These criteria place the paschal full moon squarely between April 8 and May 6. Only one lunation meets these requirements. Consequently, the very earliest Abib new moon, on the Gregorian calendar, is March 25. Any new moon before then begins either Adar or Ve-Adar, depending on the position within the 19-year cycle.



¹The following Guide to the Equinoxes and Solstices is taken from www.athropolis.com/sunrise/def-sol2.htm.

SOLSTICE

SUMMER SOLSTICE: The first day of the Season of Summer. On this day (JUNE 21 in the northern hemisphere*) the Sun is farthest north and the length of time between Sunrise and Sunset is the longest of the year.



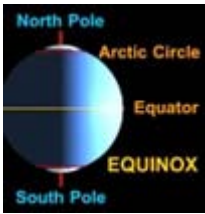
WINTER SOLSTICE: The first day of the Season of Winter. On this day (DECEMBER 22 in the northern hemisphere*) the Sun is farthest south and the length of time between Sunrise and Sunset is the shortest of the year.



* In the southern hemisphere, winter and summer solstices are exchanged. Summer: December 22. Winter: June 21

EQUINOX

Two times of the year when night and day are about the same length. The Sun is crossing the Equator (an imaginary line around the middle of the Earth) and it is an equal distance from the North Pole and the South Pole.



⁽¹⁾ **VERNAL (SPRING) EQUINOX:** The first day of the Season of Spring - and the beginning of a long period of sunlight at the Pole. In the northern hemisphere: MARCH 20 (the Sun crosses the Equator moving northward). In the southern hemisphere: SEPTEMBER 22 (the Sun crosses the Equator moving southward).

AUTUMN EQUINOX: The first day of the Season of Autumn - and the beginning of a long period of darkness at the Pole. In the northern hemisphere: SEPTEMBER 22 (the Sun crosses the Equator moving southward). In the southern hemisphere: MARCH 20 (the Sun crosses the Equator moving northward).

² David Sidersky, "Etude sur l'origine astronomique de la chronologie juive," in *Memoires presents par divers savants a l'Academie des Inscriptions et belles-lettres de l'Institute de France*, Vol. XII, part 2, Paris, 1913, pp. 615, 623.

³ Grace Amadon, *Report of Committee on Historical Basis, Involvements, and validity of the October 22, 1844, Position*, Part V, Sec. B, p. 7, Center for Adventist Research, Andrews University, emphasis supplied.

⁴ Sidersky, *Chronology of the Jews*, op. cit., p. 615.

⁵ *Ibid.*, p. 623.

⁶ Grace Amadon, *Report of Committee*, op. cit., p. 8.

⁷ Alfred Edersheim, *Life and Times of Jesus the Messiah*, New York, 1896, Vol, II, p. 619.

⁸ Grace Amadon, *Report of Committee*, op. cit.

⁹ Joseph Scaliger, *De Emendatione Temporum*, Francofurt, 1593, p. 107.

¹⁰ © Nick Strobel, www.astronomynotes.com.