BARLEY IN AVIV

AND THE TEN PLAGUES

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The Karaite interpretation of Exodus 9:31, 'barley in *aviv'* (English–*abib*)[1] has taken hold among a number of followers of Messiah Yeshua. The Karaites teach that barley needs to be in the state of *aviv* before or on the new moon of what would become the first biblical month. If it's 'in *aviv*,' then it becomes the first month of the biblical year for them. If not, it becomes the 13th month, with the following month becoming the first month. Of course, the Passover and all the Feasts of Israel hinge on when the first month is declared (Ex. 12:1f.; Lev. 23:6f.), and so it's very important to know when the biblical new year begins. The Karaite understanding seems to make a lot of sense, but it's wrong.

One of the reasons that it's wrong is because there is no mention of beginning the first month of the year at the time of the 7th plague in Egypt when the barley was 'in *aviv'* and destroyed by the hail. It's not until sometime after the 9th plague that God speaks of 'this month' being the month that begins the new year. How long was it from the 7th plague to the time when God spoke that (Ex. 9:18, 31; 12:2)? In other words, did the 7th plague happen just before the first month, which in Hebrew is called *Aviv* (lit. *HaAviv*–The *Aviv*), or in the month prior to the last month (two months before the biblical new year)? The last four plagues upon ancient Egypt were:

1. The 7th plague of hail destroyed the barley, which was in the *aviv* stage (Ex. 9:18, 31).
2. The 8th plague brought the locusts (Ex. 10:4).
3. The 9th plague brought darkness over the land, which lasted for three days (Ex. 10:21-22).
4. The 10th plague brought the death of the firstborn of Egypt (Ex. 11:5; 12:12, 29).

It was sometime after the 9th plague, but before the 10th plague, that Yahveh said,

> "***This*** month shall be your beginning of months; it shall be the first month of the year to you." (Exodus 12:2 NKJV)

It obviously wasn't the 10th day of the first month when God spoke Ex. 12:2 because immediately after it He says,

> "Speak to all the congregation of Israel, saying: 'On the *tenth* of *this* month every man shall take for himself a lamb, according to the house of his father, a lamb for a household.'" (Exodus 12:3 NKJV)

The 10th day of the first month was still at least a day or two away, and it seems reasonable to assume that God said, 'This month,' on the first or second day of the new month. Be that as it may, even if the

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[1] R. L. Harris, editor; Gleason Archer, Jr. and Bruce Waltke, associate editors, *Theological Wordbook of the Old Testament*, vol. II (Chicago: Moody Press, 1980), p. 3. 'This noun (*aviv*) refers to barley that is already ripe, but still soft, the grains of which are eaten either rubbed or roasted…The seventh plague brought ruinous hail upon Egypt's barley crop *at least two weeks before it was fully ripened* and ready for harvest (Ex. 9:31). Abib was also the early name (later, Nisan) of the first month of the Jewish calendar (the month of Passover).'"

Lord spoke it on the 9th day of the first month, the 7th plague had to have taken place *in at least the month prior* to the first month because of the time span between the 7th plague and when God spoke of the setting aside of the lamb for Passover on the 10th day of the first month.

Time Periods Between The Plagues

Many rightly see that there were time periods *between* each plague so that all ten are considered to have happened in a period of anywhere from three weeks to a year. It's written in the Mishnah that it took 12 months.[2]

Finis Dake, of *Dake's Annotated Bible* fame, believed it was anywhere from three to seven weeks. According to Dake, the time from the seventh plague to the end of the ninth plague was *at least* 12 days (see p. 3, note 3, points 7a and 9a). Obviously, when the Lord *spoke* of setting aside the lamb four days before Passover, it had to be *before* the actual day that Israel was to do it (the 10th day of the first month; Ex. 12:3f.) so this would place the barley being 'in *aviv'* in the month prior to the first month.

Barley in Egypt is 'in *aviv'* a full month or more before it would be that way in Israel. Barley ripens and is harvested in Egypt in mid-February to early March, so, two to three weeks before that places the 7th plague in early February, which is more than a month before the vernal equinox, which means that the 7th plague happened two months before the first month of the year. This means that there is no biblical linkage to barley needing to be 'in *aviv*' on the new moon for the first biblical month.

The seventh plague of hail that destroyed the barley 'in *aviv'* did not happen in the first biblical month, even though the month is called *HaAviv*.[3] Dake's time frame, of 12 days, is the *minumum* time frame pos-

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[2] According to the Mishnah (*Eduyos* 2:10) the punishment of the Egyptians lasted for 12 months. This implies about a month for each plague; some say that each plague lasted for a week and was preceded by a three-week warning, and some say the reverse. According to both of these views, the time between the first and tenth plagues (inclusive) was at least ten months. But others say that the plagues lasted for only about 10 weeks. In fact, the Torah says that the first plague lasted seven days (Ex.7:25), and some of the plagues lasted less than seven days; the darkness lasted three days (Ex.10:23), and the firstborn of Egypt died at midnight on the night of 15 *Aviv*, when both Israel and Yeshua would eat of the Passover meal and in the day, when Israel would leave Egypt and when Yeshua would be crucified. (From http://www.torah.org/qanda/seequanda.php?id=772)

[3] From Finis J. Dake *(Dake's Annotated Bible*). The length of the Plagues:

1. "Seven days for the miracle of the waters to blood (Ex. 7:15-25)
2. Several days for frogs to cover all Egypt and accomplish the purpose in making life unbearable (Ex. 8:1-8)
   a. One day to destroy the frogs (Ex. 8:10-15).
3. Several days for the lice plague to have the desired effect (Ex. 8:16-19).
4. Several days for the flies to plague all of Egypt.
   a. Two days are mentioned for bringing and removing them (Ex. 8:23, 29).
5. Two days—one to announce and one to destroy, the animals of Egypt, besides time for Pharaoh to harden his heart (Ex. 9:1, 5, 7).
6. Several days for boils to be upon the Egyptians (Ex. 9:8-12).
7. One day to announce the next plague (Ex. 9:13);
   a. one day for the plague (hail) to begin (Ex. 9:18); and
   b. one day for Moses to be called (Ex. 9:27).
8. Two days for locusts to cover Egypt (Ex. 10:4-6, 13);
   a. one day for Moses to be called (Ex. 10:8-11);

sible for the 7th to the 9th plagues to have transpired, but it doesn't include the time frame from the 9th plague to the time when God spoke of 'this month' being the first biblical month, and he doesn't seem to have known that barley ripens by early March in Egypt.

Another man, only named Steve on his site, who has obviously studied the matter, states that the time from the 7th to the 10th plagues took about *six to eight weeks*.[4] This would place the *barley in aviv* being

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b. a day or so for the locusts to cause their destruction in Egypt (Ex. 10:12-17);

c. and two days to remove them (Ex. 10:18-19 with v. 13).

9. Three days of darkness (Ex. 10:21-23) and

a. one day to call Moses (Ex. 10:24-29).

10. One day to ask of the Egyptians and

a. one day to slay the passover (Ex. 11:1-10; 12:3-6; 29-36)."

"It took at least three to seven weeks for the ten plagues. Twenty-six days are named, besides an unspecified number of days for certain plagues to become effective and perform what they were designed to do: On the basis of ten days for the first plague (7:25) and the ninth plague (10:22), and supposing that the other plagues lasted this long, at least fifty days were needed for the plagues." Dake Publishing, Inc., 1997, from http://www.believersweb.org/view.cfm?ID=1069.

[4] Steve thinks that the ten plagues lasted about 4-5 months, but that the time frame from the 7th to the 10th plagues could have been one and a half to two months (six to eight weeks), which definitely places the 'barley 'in *aviv'* plague before the first month and the previous month. Steve says: "We do know several facts for sure. First, the Bible says in (Ex. 7:6) that Moses was 80 years old when the 10 plagues started after he spoke to Pharaoh. After the plagues were done, and Pharaoh finally let the Israelites go, they wandered in the desert for 40 years (Num. 14:33-34; 32:13). Moses died at the end of the 40 years at the age of 120 (Dt. 34:7). Therefore, if Moses was 80 at the start, wandered 40 years, and died at 120, the plagues had to have ended in under a year. I believe we can narrow this time down even more by looking at a few other facts. We know the duration of 3 of the plagues. The first plague lasted for 7 days (Ex. 7:25), the 9th lasted for 3 days (Ex. 10:21-23), and the 10th was for one night, beginning at midnight (Ex. 12:29-31)."

"While we don't know the length of the other 7 plagues, it is my guess that none of them were much longer than these…For example, I read somewhere that it would only take a few days for a swarm of millions of locusts (the 8th plague) to destroy every bit of green vegetation in sight. This being said, if we make the average length of each plague, say, 4 days, we have a total of 40 days that the plagues lasted. This is also a Biblical number that corresponds with the lengths of other punishments, i.e. 40 years of wandering in the desert (Num. 14:33-34; 32:13), 40 days of rain for Noah's flood (Gen. 7:4, 12), Goliath tormented Israel for 40 days before God helped David kill him (1st Sam. 17:16), and God gave Nineveh 40 days to repent or be destroyed (Jonah 3:4)."

"The biggest problem we have is not knowing *the length of time between the different plagues*. My feeling is that it was not a lot of time. A few other facts can help us in making this determination. I believe that the timeframe between the 7th plague (hail) and the 10th plague (death of the firstborn) was no more than a few months. I say this because (Ex. 9:31) says that when the hail came, all of 'the flax and barley were ruined, for the barley was in the ear and the flax was in bud, but the wheat and the spelt were not ruined, for they ripen late' (Ex. 9:31-32). We know that flax and barley are in bloom in February (in Egypt), with wheat and spelt being in bloom a month or two later. Also, when the 8th plague was sent (swarms of locusts), God said they would destroy 'every plant of the land that the hail left' (Ex. 10:12). This means that it shortly followed the hail, still before the wheat and spelt were in bloom (probably in late February or early March)."

"We also know that the last plague fell either in late March or early April, because that is the time of the Jewish Passover, when God passed over the houses of the Israelites and did not kill their firstborn because they had the blood of the Passover Lamb covering the doorframes of their houses (Ex. 12:21-27)." Steve is going by the traditional rabbinic calendar which can have the Passover before April, but this, like the Karaite position, isn't tenable. The Passover can only be sometime in April, but note how long Steve suggests the time between the 7th and 10th plague (below.)

"Therefore, the timeframe for the 7th plague through the 10th plague was almost certainly no more than a *month and a half to two months*. This works out to about 2 weeks at most for each (the length of the plague plus the warning proceeding it). If we carry this out to the other 6 plagues, we get 12 weeks. So, the total is 20 weeks or

destroyed by the hail two months before the month/new moon of the new year. This would mean that barley needing to be 'in *aviv'* has no direct bearing on determining the new moon for the new year.

Barley in Aviv

The phrase 'barley in *aviv*' ('barley in the head,' NKJV) only occurs once in Scripture, at the 7th plague (Ex. 9:31). *HaAviv*, the name of the first month, interprets to 'the month of *Aviv*.' There are six places in Scripture which speak of the first month being called *HaAviv:*

> "On this day you are going out, in the month *Abib*." (Heb. *HaAviv;* Exodus 13:4; also Ex. 23:15; 34:18, twice)
>
> "Observe the month of *Abib*, and keep the Passover to Yahveh your God, for in the month of *Abib* Yahveh your God brought you out of Egypt by night." (Heb. *HaAviv;* Dt. 16:1, twice)

The Karaites claim that these cites, especially Dt. 16:1, are proof enough that barley must be 'in *aviv',* on or before the new moon sighting, even though there's no direct biblical linkage for it. In other words, nowhere is it written that 'barley in *aviv*' determines the biblical new year.[5] This should raise a red flag for believers, concerning the Karaite teaching, but some prefer to brush it aside, saying that it's assumed or it's 'a given,' because *aviv* means that barley is in that stage, but this, as we'll see, is not a biblical connection.

HaAviv–The First Month

The reason that the first month is named *HaAviv* is not because barley must be 'in *aviv'*, on or before the sighting of the new moon, but simply because that's the month when the Israeli farmer *would bring* his barley 'in *aviv'* (his first sheaf) to Jerusalem for the Passover *after* he brought his barley harvest in from the field. The Karaites, nor taking the harvest into account, will declare a new biblical year, having sighted their barley 'in *aviv'*, even when it doesn't give the Israeli farmer time to harvest his crop before going to Jerusalem for Passover.

The Karaite teaching is ingenious, but it's carnal man's way of trying to understand what God is saying. Like the Pharisees and Sadducees before them, the Karaites strive against God and His Word, thinking that they understand it, but failing because they are outside God's will concerning the Messiah of Israel, and therefore, they don't have the Holy Spirit to reveal things like this to them. The Karaite teaching fails for at least five reasons:

1. God didn't say anything about beginning the first biblical month at the time of the seventh plague, when the barley was in the *aviv* stage.
2. God didn't speak of beginning the new year anytime between the seventh and ninth plagues, but waited until sometime after the ninth plague to initiate the new year, thus further revealing that there is no direct biblical linkage to when barley is 'in *aviv,*' and the sighting of the new moon for

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about 4 to 5 months for all 10 plagues." (From http://jesusalive.cc/ques219.htm)

With Steve's, as well as Dake's analysis, it would be impossible for the 7th plague to have taken place as the sign for determining the first biblical month.

[5] There is only one place in Scripture which speaks of barley being 'in *aviv'* and it speaks of the 7th plague (Ex. 9:31), although grain 'in *aviv'* is mentioned as a first fruits offering in Lev. 2:14.

the biblical year.

3. The harvest must be in before one celebrates a harvest feast.
4. Scripture validates that the new moon, on or after the vernal equinox, is the biblical method that determines the first month of the year.
5. History also validates that the new moon, on or after the vernal equinox, is the biblical method that determines the first month of the year.

Barley in the *aviv* stage will always be a reality *before* the month of *HaAviv*, just as it was in ancient Egypt. This is the prototype. It's during that time, when it is 'in *aviv,'* that some of it will be taken by the Israeli farmer, and laid aside, for use as his first sheaf offering for Passover. If we understand what God is saying in Genesis 1:14, the first biblical month begins *on or after* the *vernal equinox*, not before it.[6] That's the determining factor. This always allows the barley to mature and enables the farmer to not only take his barley 'in *aviv'* to Jerusalem for Passover, but also just as important, his tithe and offering of *fully ripened barley*, for God says that Israel was not to appear before Him empty-handed.[7]

The God of Israel aligned His three major feasts with redemptive meaning (note: feasts—where one *eats* from the harvested crop and celebrates something). The harvesting of crops literally sustained, fed and nurtured Israel, both physically and spiritually, for her God spoke of providing food for her (e.g. the 'land of milk and honey' speaks of food in abundance),[8] and she was grateful to her God for that. Both Pentecost and the Feast of Tabernacles are celebrated *after* the harvest is in. The Karaite teaching denies this for Passover (when they declare the new year before the vernal equinox). Israel, though, was to bring her tithes and offerings for the three major agricultural times at the three main feasts because God made them to coincide with each other:

1. Spring crops ……*Pesach, Hag Matzot* (Passover and the Feast of Unleavened Bread)
2. Summer crops ……*Shavu'ot* (Feast of Weeks; Pentecost)
3. Autumn crops ……*Sukote* (Feast of Tabernacles)

Israel was to have already harvested their spring barley crop *before* going up to Jerusalem to celebrate Passover so they could offer the priests their tithe of ripened barley:

> "Celebrate the Feast of Unleavened Bread; for seven days eat bread made without yeast, as I commanded you. Do this at the appointed time in the month of Abib, for in that month you came out of Egypt. ***No one is to appear before me empty-handed***. Celebrate the Feast of Harvest with the firstfruits of the crops you sow in your field. Celebrate the Feast of Ingathering at the end of the year, ***when you gather in your crops from the field***." (Exodus 23:15-16 NIV)

The Feast of Weeks commemorated the harvesting of the wheat crop (Ex. 34:22), which ripens two to

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[6] For why the vernal equinox is the determining factor, read Herb Solinsky's, *A Concise Biblical Calendar* or his *Treatise on the Biblical Calendar*, both of which can be downloaded at http://www.thebiblicalcalendar.org/. Solinsky also has an article, *Barley and the Calendar*.

With the Karaite sighting of 'barley in *aviv'* on 13 March 2013 it means that the seventh biblical month would start about 5 September, which is far too early for the autumn harvest to be in for the Feast of Tabernacles 15 days later (Lev. 23:33f.), which is the end of the harvest season. During the first part of the 7th month (and before) the Israeli farmer was to harvest his autumn crops and then he would go up to Jerusalem to celebrate the Feast of Tabernacles. No farmer goes on an eight day 'vacation,' traveling two to four days to get there and two to four days to return home, when his fields are ready for harvest.

[7] Ex. 23:15; 34:20; Dt. 16:16.

[8] Ex. 3:7, 17; 13:5; 33:3; Lev. 20:24; Num. 16:13-14; Dt. 6:3; 11:9; 26:9, 15; 27:3; 31:20; Josh. 5:6, etc.

three weeks after the barley is harvestable, just in time to harvest it on their return from Jerusalem from celebrating Passover and the Feast of Unleavened Bread. The harvesting of all the remaining summer and fall crops would be celebrated at the Feast of Tabernacles (also called the Feast of Ingathering; Ex. 23:16; 34:22), and so, should we expect that the Israeli farmer was going to go up to Jerusalem to celebrate the spring feast, Passover, when he hadn't yet harvested his spring crop? No, for he was not to come to any feasts 'empty-handed,' meaning that he was to bring his tithes and offerings, not just a tiny bit of non-ripened, roasted barley for First Sheaf (Lev. 2:14). When was he supposed to bring his tithe and offering of the spring crop, barley, to the priests, if not at Passover?

With the new moon on or after the vernal equinox one is always able, wherever the ancient Israeli farmer might have lived, to cut down and reserve some barley 'in *aviv'* and still harvest his barley crop when it ripened, and then set off for Jerusalem to celebrate Passover with his first sheaf, his tithe and his offering for the priests of fully ripened barley. The harvesting of the fully ripened barley crop *before* Passover is confirmed in Scripture:

> "Speak to the children of Israel, and say to them: 'When you come into the land which I give to you, ***and reap its harvest***, ***then*** you shall bring a sheaf of the firstfruits of your harvest to the priest." (Leviticus 23:10 NKJV)

The harvesting of the barley crop *cannot* be done by those who follow the Karaite interpretation of 'barley in *aviv*' when the Karaite new moon for the new year is declared *before* the vernal equinox.[9] For example, in 2013 the Karaites (i.e. Nehemia Gordon) declared that Wednesday night, 13 March, was the new moon for the biblical new year. 'Barley in *aviv*' had been seen in the western Negev the day before, and on 13 March, was seen in the Jordan Valley, both of which are ideal places for barley to grow because of their mild winters, unlike the Galilee and other farming areas of Israel, which don't have mild winters. There were no reports of barley being 'in *aviv'* in the farmland of Israel (Galilee) or north of that, etc.

This is not the first time that Gordon has declared a new year when only a few pockets of 'barley in *aviv*' were found in the entire land of Israel. This is another problem with the Karaite concept. In other words, how much 'barley in *aviv*' should there be in Israel for him to declare it the new moon of the new year? What is the percentage (80%? 50% 20%? 5%?) and where in Scripture does it speak of it?

When barley is in the *aviv* stage it takes ***two to three weeks for it to ripen*** in order to be harvested, and so, even with the sighting of it 'in *aviv'* in the western Negev in 2013 (specifically the wilderness next to the middle of the Gaza Strip), and in the Jordan Valley, even that barley might not have been harvestable in time to celebrate Passover only two weeks later. Of course, this leaves out the rest of Israel which didn't have barley in *aviv*, and the time that it would take the farmer to get to Jerusalem.

The Karaite teaching would not give most of the farmers in ancient Israel time for their barley to ripen *and* set out on the three to four day journey to Jerusalem (from the Galilee, the Golan Heights, the Negev and the southern areas of Judah, etc.), even if barley were 'in *aviv'* in all of Israel at the new moon before the vernal equinox. In other words, it would take,

1. 14 to 21 days for it to ripen,
2. at least one or more days for it to be harvested, and then,
3. threshed, and then,
4. winnowed, and then,
5. sieved to get it into its kernel grain form as a tithe and offering to the priest, and then,[10]

[9] The vernal equinox is usually the 20th or 21st of March.

6. four days of traveling by foot to Jerusalem for the Passover/Feast of Unleavened Bread.

At the bare minimum it's 14 days plus 2 days plus 4 days, which is 20 days. That's far too many days in order to fulfill the commandment of not appearing before the Lord empty handed. The Israeli farmer would only have 10 days to do all that befor he would have to leave for Jerusalem on 10 *Aviv* in order to get there in time for the Passover lamb being slain on 14 *Aviv* and eaten that night (15 *Aviv*).

Also, what were the ancient Israelis supposed to do, in the days of Solomon or Yeshua, without cars and cellphones? How could anyone else in Israel know, on the day the Karaites declared their new moon for the new year before the vernal equinox, that someone had sighted barley 'in *aviv'* in the Negev or the Jordan Valley, for all Israel to know that the new moon of 13 March was the beginning of the year?[11]

Even if Israel had been told, 90% of them would not have had any harvestable barley to bring to Jerusalem for the spring feast. Most would have appeared virtually 'empty handed' before Yahveh, having no ripened barley to give to the priests for their barley tithe and offering so that the priests could eat and live from the harvest (Num. 18:26). The Karaite concept denies this important agricultural commandment, as well as the logistics of it—the Israeli was to already have harvested his barley crop so that he could both celebrate the Passover, without having to be concerned about his barley rotting in his fields, and also, to be able to give his tithe and offering of ripened barley to the priests so they could eat, live and praise Yahveh. No one celebrates a harvest feast ***before*** the harvest.

The Determining Factor—The Vernal Equinox

The sighting of the new moon, on or after the vernal equinox,[12] guarantees that *all* the ancient Israeli farmers would have both barley 'in *aviv'* to give as first fruits and their barley crop harvested, in order to be able to give a tithe from it, *before* they set off to Jerusalem to celebrate the Passover. It's common knowledge that one celebrates a feast *after* the crops have been harvested, not before. We see this concept, of celebrating a feast after the harvest is in, with both *Shavu'ot* (the Feast of Weeks; Leviticus 23:15f.) and *Sukote* (The Feast of Tabernacles; Lev. 23:33f.). How could it be any different for Passover? It's not, and God Himself says so in the chapter on the feasts (Lev. 23:10).

Genesis 1:14 states that the sun and the moon were to be for determining the months, *the years* and the appointed feasts:

> "Then God said, 'Let there be *lights* in the firmament of the heavens to divide the day from the night, and let ***them*** (the sun and the moon) be for signs and ***seasons***, and for days ***and years***'" (Genesis 1:14)

The Hebrew word for *seasons* is מוֹעֲדִים (*mo'ah'dim*). The Feasts of Israel are always spoken of as *mo'ah'dim*—appointed times. *The Hebrew and Aramaic Lexicon of the Old Testament* states that it's a 'festival, time of festivity.'[13] Brown, Driver and Briggs, in their *Hebrew and English Lexicon of the Old*

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[10] Threshing the barley separates the kernel from the hull. Winnowing separates the kernel from the chaff. Sieving it separates the kernel from any dirt, particles of hay, small stones, etc., that the kernel might have picked up while being on the ground after the first two processes.

[11] The lighting of fires on hilltops, to signal the new moons, began after the return of the Babylonian captivity, but was soon changed to human runners when the Samaritans, wanting to disrupt the Jewish time schedule for new moons and feast days, lit fires on their hilltops when the new moon hadn't been sighted.

[12] The vernal equinox is God's time marker for when winter changes into spring.

[13] Ludwig Koehler, Walter Baumgartner, and J. J. Stamm, authors; M. Richardson, translator, *The Hebrew-Aramaic Lexicon of the Old Testament,* vol. 2 (Boston, MA USA: Brill Academic Publishers, 2002), p. 558.

Testament, also say that it speaks of the feasts:

> 'in particular, *sacred season*, usu. *set* feast or *appointed season*…of *appointed season* (i.e. *festivals)*…of the feast of booths'[14] (i.e. the Feast of Tabernacles).

The *Theological WordBook of the Old Testament* says that these appointed times (by God) were times where He would meet Israel at the Tabernacle of Moses (or the Temple). *Mo'ah'dim,*

> 'is used for God's meeting Israel at the sanctuary (Ex. 25:22; 29:43f.; 30:6, 36) and for the assembling of the congregation for worship in the sense of appearing (Num. 10:3; 1 Kgs. 8:5; 2 Chr. 5:6)…The people were expected to come and God promised to meet them there.'[15]

In the Beginning, God set up the sun and the moon to determine the months, and also, the biblical year, which determines the feast dates. In Exodus 12 He gave this to His people Israel.[16]

Scripture Confirmation of the Vernal Equinox

The understanding of the new moon, on or after the vernal equinox, beginning the biblical year, is the way that Moses and all Israel knew when the new moon for the new year began. This is confirmed by four books of Scripture and more than 30 specific references to days and months in the books, that is to say, the day of the Persian month and year corresponding to the Jewish time reckoning in the southern kingdom of Judah after the Babylonian captivity:

> Ezra 1:1; 3:1, 4-6, 8; 5:1; 13; 6:14-15, 19-22; 7:9; 8:31; 10:9, 17;
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> Nehemiah 1:1; 2:1; 6:15; 7:73; 8:1-2, 10-11, 13-18; 9:1 (10:31, 35);
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> Haggai 1:1, 15; 2:1, 10, 18, 20;
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> Zechariah 1:1, 7; 7:1, 5; 8:19.

All the biblical references to the calendar are in Babylonian dates (as the Persians, who freed the Jews to return to Judah, continued to use the Babylonian calendar) and there's not a single reference to any discrepancy between the Persians dates and the Jewish dates, nor the Persian dates and the biblical feast dates, many of which are explicitly mentioned.[17] It's an historical fact that in the days of Ezra, Nehemiah, Haggai and Zechariah (circa 520 BC), the new moon, on or after the vernal equinox, was the new moon of the new year for the Babylonians and Persians, and this is what the nation of Judah went by. This means that the new moon, on or after the vernal equinox, was the way that ancient Israel determined its new years (i.e. the first month of the biblical year).

Some might say that the Jews learned that in Babylon, and instead of going back to God's way (i.e. barley 'in *aviv'*), they continued in the Babylonian perversion. What dismantles that point is that the last two books are those of two prophets of Yahveh. If those dates for the feasts were wrong, if the Babylonian calendar didn't line up with God's reckoning, it's more than reasonable to think that God would have told

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[14] Dr. Francis Brown, Dr. S. R. Driver and Dr. Charles A. Briggs, based on the lexicon of Professor Wilhelm Gesenius; Edward Robinson, translator and E. Rodiger, editor, *Hebrew and English Lexicon* (Lafayette, IN: Associated Publishers and Authors, 1978), p. 417.

[15] R. L. Harris, editor; Gleason Archer, Jr. and Bruce Waltke, associate editors, *Theological Wordbook of the Old Testament*, vol. I (Chicago: Moody Press, 1980), p. 388.

[16] For more on how the sun and the moon (Gen. 1:14) determine when the new year begins, see Herb Solinsky's *Treatise on the Biblical Calendar*, which can be downloaded at http://www.thebiblicalcalendar.org/.

[17] Ezra 3:1, 4-6, 8; 10:17; Nehemiah 2:1; 7:73; 8:1-2, 10-11, 14, 18; Hag. 2:1; Zech. 7:5; 8:19.

the prophets so that they could have corrected His Jewish people.

Also, more than 500 years later, Yeshua Himself kept the feasts according to the same time reckoning (despite what some teach due to their faulty understanding of John 13, that Yeshua allegedly celebrated a commemorative meal a day before the Passover, instead of the Passover).[18] The new moon, on or after the vernal equinox, was the way that the Temple priests in Messiah's time determined the year and the feasts, and nowhere in the New Testament does Yeshua, or anyone else, say that the feast dates or months of the Temple were wrong.

Historical Confirmation of the Vernal Equinox

The historian-writer Josephus is yet another witness who confirms that the new moon, on or after the vernal equinox, was the way that the Temple priests determined the new year and feast dates in the days of Yeshua. The priests, and not the Rabbis, were the ones whom God had given authority to, to declare the new moons, new years and feast dates. This is seen in Numbers 10:8-10:

> "The Sons of Aaron, the priests, shall blow the trumpets and these shall be to you as an ordinance forever throughout your generations.…in the day of your gladness, in your appointed feasts, and at the beginning of your months, you shall blow the trumpets…I am Yahveh your God."

Josephus, of the priestly line, became an officer in the First Rebellion (war) against Rome (66-70 AD) and subsequently, would later write about the Jewish people, their God and His ways. He reveals that the new year was based on the sun, which is the biblical understanding of what God says in Gen. 1:14. Josephus mentions ***nothing*** about barley needing to be 'in *aviv'* as the sign for the new moon for the new year, or that the new year ever began before the vernal equinox:

> "In the (Greco–Roman) month of Xanthicus, which by us is called Nisan, and is the beginning of our year, on the fourteenth day of the lunar month, *when the sun is in Aries* (for in this month it was that we were delivered from bondage under the Egyptians)."[19]

Josephus confirms that the new moon before the vernal equinox was never the new moon for the new biblical year. *Aries* is the first sun sign of the Zodiac—it begins on the vernal equinox, the first day of spring. This is further proof that 'barley in *aviv*' was not how the Temple priests determined the new year in the days of Messiah Yeshua and the Apostles. Josephus, as a priest, was an eye witness to this understanding at a time when the Temple stood,[20] and also, we know it would have been a sin for Yeshua to have kept the feasts on any date other than what His Father and He mandated for Israel.

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[18] For why John 13 speaks of the actual Passover meal, and aligns itself with the three Synoptic Gospels, which declare that Yeshua kept the Passover at the right time, on 15 Aviv, not when the lambs were being sacrificed, see *Passover and the Apostle John* at http://seedofabraham.net/Passover-and-the-Apostle-John.pdf.

[19] Josephus, *Antiquities* 3:10:5, Whiston Translation, about 94 AD.

[20] The Rabbis don't follow the ancient way today because they have their own perverted understanding. After the Temple was destroyed, the priests, who were the religious authority over the Jewish people, were out of a job and the vacuum was filled by the Pharisees, the Fathers of the modern day Rabbis. After a season, they rewrote history so that it would present them as the true spiritual authorities in the days of the Temple, and not the Sadducees, and made it to sound that the Sadducees actually deferred to them on theological matters. This re-writing of history is found in the Talmud, which in the last 30 years has come to be seen, by Jewish scholars, as a most untrustworthy document, specifically in relation to what it has to say about the Second Temple period and its ways. For more understanding on this issue ask for the PDF, *Talmud–Can We Trust It?*

Conclusion

When the barley gets into the *aviv* stage the Israeli farmer cuts come down and roasts it. In that state it would survive until he gave it as his first-sheaf offering to the priest for Passover. The roasted *aviv* state symbolically pictures the tender, not-yet-fully-mature Yeshua (i.e. not yet 40 years old) being crucified and taken out of 'the land of the living.' Hence, why the name of the *first* month is *HaAviv* (The *Aviv*). It's another name for Yeshua. The *Aviv* One—it's like The Holy One.

The Karaite teaching, as good as it appears, is hopelessly flawed. Nowhere in Scripture is there a linkage between barley 'in *aviv'* (the 7th plague) and the sighting of the new moon to begin the new year. On the contrary, not only is there a significant amount of time between the 7th plague and when God declares that 'this month' is to be the first month of the biblical year, but the Lord presents both the sun and the moon as His time markers for the beginning of the months, the year and the Feasts of Israel (Gen. 1:14).

Yahveh gave the name of the first month, *HaAviv* (barley 'in *aviv'*) because it was the month in which the Israeli farmers would bring their first sheaf of roasted barley to the priests at Passover. It has nothing to do with the sighting of the new moon in March to determine if it's the new moon of the new year. The farmer would cut down some barley when it was *aviv*, roast it, save it, and then harvest his crop when it was ready, and then he would set off for Passover in Jerusalem.

The new moon, on or after the spring equinox, is the first new month of the year and it always allows for barley to be 'in *aviv'* and the Israeli farmer to harvest his spring crop of barley before Passover. This way he can bring both his barley 'in *aviv'* and his tithe and offering of ripened barley to give to the priests at Passover, as God commanded. The Karaite teaching does not take the barley tithe into consideration, nor the amount of time it takes for barley to ripen and be harvested, nor the time it would take for the farmer to travel to Jerusalem for the feast, and hence, all the Karaites, and those who follow them, would appear before God with their barley 'in *aviv'*, but virtually empty-handed.

Both Scripture[21] and history reveal that the new moon, on or after the vernal equinox, was the method for determining the new year in the days of Moses and Messiah. This is the biblically established path.

Nehemia Gordon is wrong. The new moon, on or after the vernal equinox, is the determining factor for the first biblical month of *HaAviv*. Consequently, the biblically dated Passover meal for 2013 is on Thursday night, 25 April. "Thus says Yahveh: 'Stand in the crossroads and look! Ask for the old paths, where the good way is, and walk in it! Then you will find rest for your souls…'" (Jer. 6:16)[22]

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[21] Gen. 1:14; Ezra 1:1; Neh. 1:1; Hag. 1:1; Zech. 1:1, etc.

[22] On 31 March 2013 Yakov Snyder of Cincinnati, OH USA wrote:

> Joshua 3–4 mentions something I thought reinforced your argument against the Karaite position about barley in *aviv* determining the new month for the biblical year. In Joshua 4:19 it says the people crossed the Jordan river opposite Jericho on the *tenth* day of the first month. The tenth of *Aviv*.
>
> In Joshua 3:15 it says, 'And when those who carried the Ark came into the Jordan, and the feet of the priests carrying the Ark were dipped in the edge of the water (for the Jordan overflows all its banks *all the days of harvest*)…' Here the Jordan was up over its banks, as it is known to do *all the days of the harvest!*
>
> This means that the tenth of *Aviv* is considered harvest time, and supports the barley having to be harvestable *before* Pesach. Joshua 4:18 confirms that the Jordan was overflowing its banks, as it says this about when the priests feet were up out of the river: 'that the waters of the Jordan returned to their place, and went over all its banks as before.'
>
> I was excited about a small detail, but I definitely thought it supported your position. The barley would have to be harvestable for the tenth of *Aviv* to be considered 'the days of harvest.'
>
> Revised on 30 March 2016.