

## 6. Did Philo and Josephus Go By a “Fall-to-Fall” Calendar?

As we have previously mentioned, we do not dispute that sects within first-century BCE Judaism and beyond have recognized a fall-to-fall calendar for observing Sabbatical years and Jubilee years. I have never stated that I agree with everything practiced by first-century BCE Judaism, and this is one of those items of disagreement. Certainly, if anything practiced by ancient Judaism aligns with my interpretation of Scripture, I will regard such an agreement as substantiating evidence supporting my interpretation. Glenn, of course, disagrees with my interpretation and believes that the Scriptural account supports a more ancient fall-to-fall calendar. Thus, it is only natural that he would cite first-century BCE Judaism as evidence substantiating his interpretation. I’m okay with that approach, but I believe we will see that Scripture in no way supports a fall-to-fall calendar, thus rendering Glenn’s reliance on first-century BCE Judaism’s fall-to-fall reckoning a fruitless exercise.

Glenn continues to cite first-century BCE evidence in support of his position:

Another chronologist, Roger Beckwith, in his book *Calendar and Chronology, Jewish and Christian*, points out that it is not just the opinion of the Rabbis that forms the basis of a fall New Year, but historical documentation from a wide assortment of sources both prior to and contemporaneous with the days of Messiah:

The Jews had four new-year days, (M. Rosh ha-Shanah 1:1), but much the most important were Nisan 1, the New Year for feasts, etc., and Tishri 1, the New Year for sabbatical and jubilee years etc. The former of these is the more prominent in the Old Testament, but the later is also found there, and has lately been the centre of a great deal of attention. It was recognized at Qumram, as well as in mainstream Judaism: in the Qumram literature also, "Rosh ha-Shanah" (New Year's Day) is a title for the feast on Tishri 1.<sup>f</sup> First century evidence for the Tishri New-year is provided by Philo . . . and Josephus . . . and in the rabbinic literature it is attested from the outset.<sup>1</sup>

In addition to the scriptural evidence for the use of a fall to fall calendar, and in addition to Rabbinic tradition (as given in the Talmud and Mishna), we should look also more closely at the historical evidence. Josephus in *Antiquities* Book 1, Chapter 3, Section 3 (as previously mentioned regarding Genesis 7) clearly states that the calendar used before the exodus was a fall calendar. Please check this also with *Antiquities*, Book 3, 237-357. The Qumram community also made use of a fall to fall calendar (please see *Calendar and Chronology, Jewish and Christian*, by Roger T. Beckwith, p. 83.) Philo also mentions the use of a fall to fall calendar: (Philo in *De Specialibus Legibus* 2:150, 153; *Quaestiones et Solutiones in Genesis* 2:31, 47; *in Exodum* 1:1). It would seem that history confirms the use of a Tishri (fall to fall) calendar in ancient Israel.

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<sup>1</sup> From “Do Sabbatical Years Start in the Spring (Abib) or the Fall (Tishri)?” (August 2009 revision) by W. Glenn Moore. This study may be read by accessing the following URL: [http://www.itsaboutthattime.net/year\\_begins\\_fall.htm](http://www.itsaboutthattime.net/year_begins_fall.htm). Note: Glenn offered this footnote for his citation from Beckwith’s article: “*Calendar and chronology, Jewish and Christian*, by Roger T. Beckwith, p. 83. References by Philo in *De Specialibus Legibus* 2:150, 153; *Quaestiones et Solutiones in Genesis* 2:31, 47; *in Exodum* 1:1 and by Josephus in *Antiquities* 1:3:3, or 1:80f; 3:10:1-7, or 3:237-257.”

Once again, as pointed out earlier, it appears that Glenn is allowing the practice and belief of first-century BCE Judaism to determine his interpretation of the key texts of Scripture. As we will see shortly, the final text of his “key texts” is about to be dismantled.

I had not previously been aware that either Philo or Josephus reckoned the New Year as beginning in the fall, so Glenn’s commentary to the contrary took me by surprise. Nevertheless, although there are certainly some ambiguous statements on this subject by both Philo and Josephus, at the same time, there is sufficient room to question how they really believed. In a study that June and I put together several years ago (“Balancing the Calendar”), I remember addressing Philo’s comments as to when the Scriptural year begins, and he is on record as stating that it begins in the *spring*, following the vernal equinox. Here is one of at least three quotes that we offered validating this fact:

(Scripture) thinks it proper to reckon the cycle of months from the vernal equinox. Moreover, (this month) is said to be the ‘first’ and the ‘beginning’ by synonymy, since these (terms) are explained by each other, for it is said to be the first both in order and in power; similarly that time which proceeds from the vernal equinox also appears (as) the beginning both in order and in power, in the same way as the head (is the beginning) of a living creature. And thus those who are learned in astronomy have given this name to the before-mentioned time. For they call the Ram the head of the zodiac since in it the sun appears to produce the vernal equinox.”<sup>2</sup>

Philo also wrote that, at the time of the Flood, the second month of Scripture was actually the seventh month, and that this “seventh month” fell in the spring. This is rather confusing, but it is what he wrote. Since Scripture validates that the Flood occurred in the second month of the year, I will allow Scripture to override Philo’s statement to the contrary. However, I agree with Philo who, to Glenn’s apparent dismay, believes the Flood began in the *spring*. Glenn believes the Flood began in the fall. Here is the pertinent quote from Philo:

The deluge took place in the seventh month, not according to time but according to nature, having for its principle and commencement the spring season.<sup>3</sup>

While I disagree with Philo’s comment that the Flood took place in the seventh month, I nevertheless agree with him in that this month occurred in the *spring*, not the fall. Keep in mind that Glenn Moore, on the other hand, believes the Flood occurred in the *fall*. It would appear that Glenn either didn’t read Philo’s commentary very carefully or else he simply misunderstood what he read. Nevertheless, it is true that Philo also refers to the month of Abib as being both the first month and the seventh month, although he takes special care to note that, according to *Scripture*, it is designated the first month of the year:

This month [Abib], being the seventh both in number and order, according to the revolutions of the sun, is the first in power; (151) on which account is also called the first in the sacred scriptures.<sup>4</sup>

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<sup>2</sup> From *Philo*, Supplement II, “Questions and Answers on Exodus,” translated by Ralph Marcus, Ph.D., Harvard University Press, Cambridge, MA:, 1953, pp. 2-3.

<sup>3</sup> From *The Works of Philo*, “Questions and Answers on Genesis, II,” (31), translated by C. D. Yonge, Hendrickson Publishers, Peabody, MA, 1993, p. 824.

<sup>4</sup> From *The Works of Philo*, “The Special Laws, II” (150-151), translated by C. D. Yonge, Hendrickson Publishers, Peabody, MA, 1993, p. 582.

What about Josephus? We already know that Glenn must not go along with Philo's reasoning, since Glenn disagrees with him as to the season of the year in which the Flood began. Does Glenn also misunderstand Josephus? Let's take a look at Glenn's commentary pertaining to Josephus' understanding of how years were reckoned in ancient times:

In the research of ancient Judaism, scholars typically will make use of the testimony of Josephus, a Jew living at the time of Yahushua. His testimony is considered generally reliable. Josephus, in speaking about the events surrounding the flood, actually pinpoints the date mentioned in Genesis 7:11, and in so doing establishes when they started the year in the days of Noah. His understanding is that at the time of the flood they used the "original order" for calculating the months and years--an order decidedly different than what was commanded to be used after the exodus. Since there is no evidence that the Jews ever followed the ancient Egyptian method of counting the years (the Egyptian Sothic cycle, which began in the summer of a certain year and drifted over the centuries), we can hardly be inclined to believe that this was the "original order" Josephus had in mind. It is true that some today believe that the original calendar was a "spring to spring" calendar, but according to Josephus there was another calendar that came first (the "original order"). Consequently, we have shown both Scriptural and historical evidence that Israel used both an Abib calendar (spring) and a fall calendar (Tishri), and that the fall calendar was the "original" and was already in existence prior to the exodus, in the days of Noah.

Having already made reference to the statement of Josephus, it is important to demonstrate that Josephus has *clearly and without ambiguity* indicated that the flood of Noah came in the second month of a Tishri (fall to fall) calendar, the month we know as October. Please notice how this is proven with his complete statement:

3. This calamity happened in the six hundredth year of Noah's government, [age,] in the second month, called by the Macedonians Dios, but by the Hebrews Marchesuan: *for so did they order their year in Egypt.* But Moses appointed that · Nisan, which is the same with Xanthicus, should be the first month for their festivals, because he brought them out of Egypt in that month: so that this month began the year as to all the solemnities they observed to the honor of God, although he preserved the original order of the months as to selling and buying, and other ordinary affairs.

Josephus is often found using what is called the Macedonian calendar, which is similar to that used by the Hebrews--only the names of the months are different. According to the statement of Josephus found here, the flood came in the month Dios. According to our understanding of the Macedonian months, the month Dios is the same as our October.<sup>2</sup> Therefore, the calendar used at the time of the flood was none other than a fall to fall calendar--starting from the month of Tishri in the Hebrew calendar, the first month starting about mid September and the second month starting about mid October. Since the Jubilee cycles start from the time of Creation, and can be clearly seen prior to the exodus in the days of Jacob and

[Joseph](#), this would also lend credence to the belief that the Sabbatical and Jubilee years follow a fall to fall calendar.<sup>5</sup>

Please notice that with all of Glenn's efforts to demonstrate how Josephus believed the "original order of the months" was observed, nothing is mentioned with regard to how Josephus believed the Sabbatical years and the Jubilee years were reckoned. This, after all, should constitute the core of Glenn's purpose in citing Josephus' writings. Josephus mentions an "original order" as it relates to selling and buying, as well as "ordinary affairs," but he mysteriously omits commenting on Sabbatical years and Jubilee years. Does Josephus, in his writings, validate how Sabbatical years were ordained to be reckoned (*i.e.*, which month they were ordained to begin)? If so, I have not seen such a statement from him.

Did Josephus recognize fall-to-fall Sabbatical and Jubilee cycles? He does not say one way or the other. For us to form a conclusion based on what Glenn has presented is premature at best. For now, I believe it sufficient to allow Josephus to state when Jews of his day understood as "the beginning of our year":

In the month of Xanthicus, which is by us 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, the law ordained that we should every year slay that sacrifice which I before told you we slew when we came out of Egypt, and which was called the *Passover*; and so we do celebrate this passover in companies, leaving nothing of what we sacrifice till the day following.<sup>6</sup>

Regardless of when Josephus believed the "original order of the months" was, he understood the "beginning of our year," *i.e.*, the beginning of the Jewish year, was in the spring. Even *if* the "original order" began in the fall, then even Josephus would have agreed that it was changed to a spring New Year shortly before the Exodus, and that "Nisan should be the first month for their festivals."

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<sup>5</sup> From "Do Sabbatical Years Start in the Spring (Abib) or the Fall (Tishri)?" (August 2009 revision), by W. Glenn Moore. This study may be read by accessing the following URL: [http://www.itsaboutthattime.net/year\\_begins\\_fall.htm](http://www.itsaboutthattime.net/year_begins_fall.htm).

<sup>6</sup> *C.f.*, *The Works of Flavius Josephus, Antiquities of the Jews*, Book III, chapter X, section 5, translated by William Whiston, A.M., Vol. II, Baker Book House, Grand Rapids, MI, 1992, p. 218.