

9. “Jericho: A Battle March on the Sabbath???”

Some lunar sabbatarians contend that the Biblical account of Joshua and the battle of Jericho proves that the Israelites were observing lunar sabbaths. In a nutshell, these lunar sabbatarians contend that those who observe continuously-repeating weekly sabbaths are faced with a dilemma of sorts with regard to the story of Joshua and the Jericho “Battle March.” If the Israelites marched around Jericho for seven consecutive days, one of those days must have been a weekly Sabbath day, at least from the perspective of those who, like us, believe the Israelites observed continuously-repeating weekly Sabbaths. This march, according to lunar sabbatarians, is not something Yahweh would have permitted on a weekly Sabbath day. However, for lunar sabbatarians, the seven-day march around Jericho would not have fallen on a weekly Sabbath day, and this, in their estimation, validates the lunar sabbath belief while disproving the position of those who practice continuously-repeating weekly Sabbaths. You may wonder how it works out for lunar sabbatarians that the Israelites would not have marched around Jericho on the day of the weekly Sabbath. This is because they believe that the Israelites began marching around Jericho on the first day of the month, which, for lunar sabbatarians, is not considered a weekly Sabbath day. Since the next weekly Sabbath day wouldn’t be until the 8th day of the month, this would give the Israelites seven days of marching without any of those days coinciding with a weekly Sabbath day. To help you to better understand how this concept works, here is a calendar depicting the itinerary that lunar sabbatarians believe Joshua and the Israelites followed:

Lunar Sabbatarian Calendar Depicting the Israelites’ Itinerary for Marching Around Jericho

						1 New Moon Day (not a Sabbath) Day 1 of the march
2 Day 2 of the march	3 Day 3 of the march	4 Day 4 of the march	5 Day 5 of the march	6 Day 6 of the march	7 Day 7 of the march	8 Weekly Sabbath Day Marching is over!

Not only does the above calendar vividly illustrate that lunar sabbatarians do not believe there is always a 6-day interval between Sabbaths, but it also demonstrates how they believe the Israelites were able to march around Jericho for seven consecutive days, none of which coincided with a weekly Sabbath day. Now that we see how and why lunar sabbatarians believe the “Jericho March” disproves the belief pertaining to continuously-repeating weekly Sabbaths, let’s take a closer look.

What follows is a transcript of this argument as it appeared on lunar sabbatarian Arnold Bowen’s website in 2004:

JERICHO: A BATTLE MARCH ON THE SABBATH???

By Arnold Bowen

Have you ever wondered how the children of Israel could have marched around Jericho without marching on the Sabbath? Maybe you have, maybe you have not. Maybe you have thought that it was simply allowed by Yahweh, and is a case of exemption in battle. What ever you have previously understood concerning this colossal event, here is something to consider.

Let me point out that those who believe the Sabbath to be a reoccurring seven day count, have to admit that Israel marched around the city of Jericho on the weekly Sabbath day. This is seen in the book of Joshua 6:2-4.

And Yahweh said unto Joshua, See, I have given into thine hand Jericho, and the king thereof, and the mighty men of valor. And ye shall compass the city, all ye men of war, and go round about the city once. Thus shalt thou do six days. And the seven priests shall bear before the ark seven trumpets or rams' horns: and the seventh day ye shall compass the city seven times, and the priests shall blow with the trumpets.

Seeing that the march was commanded by Yahweh to last for seven consecutive days, a weekly Sabbath would definitely fall within the period of the seven day march; at least for those who hold to a continuous seven day count, not anchored in any way by nature.

Upon realizing this, we should notice what Yahweh has revealed to us, in His holy word, concerning travel on the weekly Sabbath day. Is travel allowed on the Sabbath? Or does Yahweh explicitly condemn travel on the Sabbath?

In Exodus 16 we find the account of the giving of the manna by Yahweh to the children of Israel. He makes it known to them (in verses 4-5 of this account) that they will be receiving manna for six straight days, but on the seventh day they will find none. On the sixth day of this particular week Yahweh commands them to bake that which they will, and seethe that which they will (vs. 23). Food preparation is also found in verse 5 of the chapter. We do however find that immediately after Yahweh instructs Israel in that there would be no manna found on the Sabbath day, we find that they simply did not hearken.

And it came to pass, that there went out some of the people on the seventh day for to gather, and they found none [manna]. Exodus 16:27

Upon the children of Israel's venture Yahweh was very displeased. We see this in His statements to Moses in Exodus 16:28-29.

...Yahweh said unto Moses, How long refuse ye to keep my commandments and my laws? See, for that Yahweh hath given you the Sabbath, therefore he giveth you on the sixth day the bread of two days; abide ye every man in his place, let no man go out of his place on the seventh day. So the people rested on the seventh day.

Yahweh here specifically condemns their traveling on the Sabbath. This was merely traveling a short space to gather manna, much less instigating an attack through a battle march. Obviously Yahweh does desire us to travel to our places of worship on Sabbath, but something unnecessary, such as gathering manna or traveling for our own personal edification is something altogether different.

We also see that limited travel on the Sabbath was understood by the believers of the 1st century A.D. This can be seen in the book of Acts 1:12.

Then returned they unto Jerusalem from the mount called Olivet, which is from Jerusalem a Sabbath day's journey.

Here we see that there was a specific distance that was considered to be a Sabbath day's journey. The King James Study Scriptures states, "A Sabbath day's journey was the distance a Jew was allowed to

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travel on the Sabbath (about 2/3 mile).” *Smith’s Scriptures Dictionary* has somewhat to add on the passage in Acts as well.

...The Sabbath day’s journey of 2000 cubits, Acts 1:12, is peculiar to the New Testament, and arose from a rabbinical restriction. It was founded on a universal application of the prohibition given by Moses for a special occasion: ‘Let no man go out of his place on the seventh day.’ Ex. 16:29. An exception was allowed for the purpose of worshipping at the tabernacle...[1]

Although Mr. Smith’s opinion leans toward this being an application by man, I think we can see from the passage in Exodus 16:29 that no unnecessary travel was to be done on the Sabbath. Acts 1:12 simply shows us that this is what was understood by Israelites living in the 1st century A.D

So, did Yahweh command a battle attack consisting of a march to take place on the Sabbath? Well, once again, for those insisting on a continual unbroken seven day count for the Sabbath, the answer would have to be yes. And I’m sure one could give a few answers to why Yahweh seemed to allow this to take place. However, is there any possibility that Yahweh did not command a march to take place on the Sabbath? Yes, there certainly is.

According to the teaching which claims the Sabbath to be fixed in the heavens according to the moon and its phases, a Sabbath falls out to be on the 8th, 15th, 22nd, and 29th days of each and every lunation. Reason being is that the day of the New Moon is not counted as one of the six working days (Ezekiel 46:1-3) thus the Sabbath count stops once each month at the day of the New Moon. If the march of Jericho started on the day of the New Moon then it would have ended on the 7th day of that month! This would allow for Israel to not have traveled on the Sabbath! However, we do face a dilemma; the book of Joshua does not give us any conclusive evidence that the march began on the New Moon. This is why I would now like to direct your attention to what is known as the book of Jasher.

The book of Jasher is mentioned twice in the holy scriptures, and was considered as an honorable source of information. This is seen by noticing the context in which it was mentioned.[2]¹

Before we give our response to the above commentary, I believe it would be helpful to carefully read the account of Joshua and the battle of Jericho, as found in Joshua 6:1-21:

¹ Now Jericho was straitly shut up because of the children of Israel: none went out, and none came in.

² And Yahweh said unto Joshua, See, I have given into thine hand Jericho, and the king thereof, and the mighty men of valour.

³ And ye shall compass the city, all ye men of war, and go round about the city once. Thus shalt thou do six days.

⁴ And seven priests shall bear before the ark seven trumpets of rams’ horns: and the seventh day ye shall compass the city seven times, and the priests shall blow with the trumpets.

⁵ And it shall come to pass, that when they make a long blast with the ram’s horn, and when ye hear the sound of the trumpet, all the people shall shout with a great shout; and the wall of the city shall fall down flat, and the people shall ascend up every man straight before him.

¹ This study may be read online by accessing the following URL: <http://lunarsabbath.org/Jericho%20March%20202.html>. I have also found variations of Arnold’s study on other web sites. Arnold posted this same commentary in a thread entitled “**NEW/OLD evidence on Lunar Shabat, very compelling!**” on 04-25-2004 at 06:08 PM in the now-defunct “True Sabbath” forum at www.eliyah.com.

⁶ And Joshua the son of Nun called the priests, and said unto them, Take up the ark of the covenant, and let seven priests bear seven trumpets of rams' horns before the ark of Yahweh.

⁷ And he said unto the people, Pass on, and compass the city, and let him that is armed pass on before the ark of Yahweh.

⁸ And it came to pass, when Joshua had spoken unto the people, that the seven priests bearing the seven trumpets of rams' horns passed on before Yahweh, and blew with the trumpets: and the ark of the covenant of Yahweh followed them.

⁹ And the armed men went before the priests that blew with the trumpets, and the rearward came after the ark, the priests going on, and blowing with the trumpets.

¹⁰ And Joshua had commanded the people, saying, Ye shall not shout, nor make any noise with your voice, neither shall any word proceed out of your mouth, until the day I bid you shout; then shall ye shout.

¹¹ So the ark of Yahweh compassed the city, going about it once: and they came into the camp, and lodged in the camp.

¹² And Joshua rose early in the morning, and the priests took up the ark of Yahweh.

¹³ And seven priests bearing seven trumpets of rams' horns before the ark of Yahweh went on continually, and blew with the trumpets: and the armed men went before them; but the rearward came after the ark of Yahweh, the priests going on, and blowing with the trumpets.

¹⁴ And the second day they compassed the city once, and returned into the camp: so they did six days.

¹⁵ And it came to pass on the seventh day, that they rose early about the dawning of the day, and compassed the city after the same manner seven times: only on that day they compassed the city seven times.

¹⁶ And it came to pass at the seventh time, when the priests blew with the trumpets, Joshua said unto the people, Shout; for Yahweh hath given you the city.

¹⁷ And the city shall be accursed, even it, and all that are therein, to Yahweh: only Rahab the harlot shall live, she and all that are with her in the house, because she hid the messengers that we sent.

¹⁸ And ye, in any wise keep yourselves from the accursed thing, lest ye make yourselves accursed, when ye take of the accursed thing, and make the camp of Israel a curse, and trouble it.

¹⁹ But all the silver, and gold, and vessels of brass and iron, are consecrated unto Yahweh: they shall come into the treasury of Yahweh.

²⁰ So the people shouted when the priests blew with the trumpets: and it came to pass, when the people heard the sound of the trumpet, and the people shouted with a great shout, that the wall fell down flat, so that the people went up into the city, every man straight before him, and they took the city.

²¹ And they utterly destroyed all that was in the city, both man and woman, young and old, and ox, and sheep, and ass, with the edge of the sword.

Quickly summarizing the above account, please notice that the “men of war” (not the general populace) compassed the city of Jericho once a day for six days, followed by seven priests who were blowing trumpets of rams’ horns, as well as the priests who carried the Ark of the Covenant. Also, please notice that no mention is made of the weekly Sabbath in the above account. We mention this important fact, even though there is no question that the Israelites were in the habit of observing that day as a day of rest. The reason I’m calling these aspects of the story to your attention is because, back in 2004, while engaged in an online forum discussion about this topic with a lunar sabbatarian, he exaggerated the above account, trying to make it appear as though *all* the Israelites were burdened with heavy battle armor each of those seven days, and that they must have laboriously trudged around the immense city of Jericho, and when the grueling march was over, they returned to camp thoroughly exhausted ... and this is not a

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command one would expect Yahweh to execute on the day of the weekly Sabbath. At least this was the perspective presented by the lunar sabbatarian in the course of our discussion. Here is an excerpt from what he wrote:

Would Yahweh's people load themselves with battle armor and march to battle on a sabbath?²

The above lunar sabbatarian attempted to embellish the account of the battle of Jericho, most likely because presenting a mental picture of people trudging around in battle armor on a Sabbath day carries with it an added image of disregard for the sanctity of the Sabbath ... or to be more specific, disregard for the sanctity of the *continuously-repeating* weekly Sabbath. However, as I am about to demonstrate, in presenting the “battle march” in this light, the lunar sabbatarian distorted the account. When we carefully examine the entire story, we do not find that any Israelites carried any battle armor, thus exposing the lunar sabbatarian’s efforts as an attempt to embellish the account in order to make things seem much more arduous than they really were. If he can succeed at persuading us that this truly was a laborious undertaking, he knows we’ll be that much closer to agreeing with his point. However, we now know that he was reading a few things into this passage that simply aren't there. Again, we are simply not told that the Israelite army donned “battle armor,” and we should also be careful to note that instead of choosing the words “Yahweh’s people,” which seems inclusive of the entire nation of Israel, the lunar sabbatarian should have explained that it was the “*men of war*,” accompanied by seven priests, as well as the priests who bore the Ark of the Covenant. These were the only Israelites involved in the “Jericho march.”

As we contemplate this event, we should also consider the following facts: Marching around the city of Jericho **one time** would most definitely fall within the parameters of what is known as a “**Sabbath Days’ Journey**” (Acts 1:13). The circumference of Jericho was only around 650 yards.³ At **most**, Jericho could only have been 6/10 of a mile in circumference, which is well under the “Sabbath day’s journey” limit traditionally understood by Judaism. According to the New International Version of the Bible, footnote for Acts 1:13, a “Sabbath day’s journey” consists of ¾ of a mile. According to **Webster-Dictionary.net**, it is one mile.⁴ When combine these facts with the understanding that there are 1,760 yards in a mile, it should become very clear that neither the Israelite men of war nor the priests who accompanied them came *close* to violating the “Sabbath day’s journey” limit.

² Excerpt from an online posting submitted by Paul Kendall in the “True Sabbath” forum, which is a private forum set up by the forum owner, who goes by “EliYah,” at www.eliyah.com. This particular posting was submitted on 02-07-2004 at 12:45 PM in the forum thread entitled **Seven consecutive days of work**.

³ This information can be verified by accessing Bible Gateway’s website, where we can read the account of Joshua and the Battle of Jericho, along with the following commentary: “**Joshua 6:15** Any walled town was called a ‘city’ and its headman was called ‘a king’ in ancient times, but the fact that Joshua's army could march around the whole of Jericho seven times in one day shows that it was a very small place. Sir Charles Marston (New Bible Evidence) echoes the reports of other archaeologists when he says that the excavations of ancient Jericho do not confirm the conceptions of our youth. Though the walls were so formidable, the area they enclosed only measures seven acres. The whole circumference of the city was about 650 yards. Our disappointment is somewhat modified by the fact that Jebusite Jerusalem, which David captured, was about the same size. Schliemann experienced a similar disillusionment in 1873 when he excavated the city of Troy, which Homer tells us so long withstood the Grecian hosts. Indeed it would almost seem that these ancient cities were more in the nature of places of refuge resorted to when an enemy approached. Under peaceful conditions a large proportion of the inhabitants would dwell outside the city's walls (Sir Charles Marston, New Bible Evidence).” Taken from the following URL:

<http://bible.gospelcom.net/bible?language=english&passage=JOSH+6&version=AMP>

⁴⁴ This information was taken from the following URL:

<http://www.webster-dictionary.net/definition/Sabbath-day's%20journey>



I should add that even in ancient times, guards were regularly on duty during the Sabbath (Nehemiah 13:19-21), and when we take into consideration the fact that the high priest Jehoiada used priest-guards on the Sabbath to overthrow the evil queen Athaliah (II Kings 11 and II Chronicles 23), we can better understand that under certain circumstances, especially during times of duress, Yahweh's people must be prepared to engage in acts of violence, even on the Sabbath day. This is not to say that we believe the Israelites overthrew the city of Jericho on the weekly Sabbath day; but the men of war were certainly prepared to defend the Israelites if the people of Jericho had carried out any acts of aggression on that day.⁵ We should also point out that in the example of overthrowing Queen Athaliah, it wasn't until the queen had given orders to kill those responsible for crowning Joash king that the priests had her killed.⁶

Summing things up thus far, we see that Yahweh had the Israelite army, plus seven priests (as well as those carrying the Ark of the Covenant), marching around a city whose circumference was less than $\frac{3}{4}$ of a mile, carrying swords and trumpets. No battle gear is mentioned. We would hardly consider this a violation of the Sabbath.

However, I would like to go one step further. As we all (hopefully) know, any time Yahweh commands us to do something, it is law. In seeing to it that His law was carried out, Yahweh commanded that the priests perform certain functions on the Sabbath day that are unlawful for the general populace to do. As the Messiah stated in Matthew 12:5, "Or have ye not read in the law, how that on the sabbath days the priests in the temple profane the sabbath, and are blameless?"

As He made clear, there was a distinction between the priests and the rest of the people. However, at certain times, Yahweh gave *everyone* commandment to carry out certain functions that might otherwise have been unlawful to do on the Sabbath. One example of this involved the killing of the Passover lambs. As Philo pointed out, on that one day each year, Yahweh appointed the entire nation of Israel as priests for slaying the lambs.⁷ In the same way, if Yahweh commands me to march around a city on the Sabbath, I will do it, and I will not be violating any law ... simply because His Word *is* law.

The Book of Jasher's Account of the March Around Jericho

In reading the commentary authored by Arnold Bowen, you may have noticed a puzzling conclusion that seems disconnected from what he had previously written. If we knew nothing else about Arnold's belief on this subject, we might conclude that his mind wandered on to some unrelated topic. As it is, however, this is simply a case of Arnold not completing his thought process. I am alluding to his

⁵ Cf., I Maccabees 2:31-41, where Mattathias and his fellow Jews, after hearing the report of faithful Jews being mercilessly killed when they refused to fight on the Sabbath, resolved to fight defensively on the Sabbath day. See also Josephus in *Antiquities of the Jews*, Book XII, ch. VI, sec. 2, where he records the speech given by Mattathias, adding, "This speech persuaded them; and this rule continues among us to this day, that if there be a necessity, we may fight on Sabbath-days."

⁶ This information is not gleaned from the Scriptural account, but rather from the account supplied by Josephus in *Antiquities of the Jews*, Book IX, ch. VII, sec. 3, where we read, "But when Athaliah saw the child standing upon a pillar, with the royal crown upon his head, she rent her clothes, and cried out vehemently, and commanded [her guards] to kill him that had laid snares for her, and endeavored to deprive her of the government." As mentioned in our previous footnote, Josephus understood that Jews only acted *defensively* on the day of the weekly Sabbath (*Wars of the Jews*, Book I, ch. VII, sec. 3).

⁷ Cf., *The Works of Philo*, translated by C.D. Yonge, "The Decalogue," ch. XXX (159).

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reference of the *Book of Jasher*.⁸ Arnold mysteriously ends his study with the following brief remark: “This is why I would now like to direct your attention to what is known as the book of Jasher. The book of Jasher is mentioned twice in the holy scriptures, and was considered as an honorable source of information. This is seen by noticing the context in which it was mentioned.” The obvious question one might have after reading the above remark is, “What does the *Book of Jasher* have to do with the ‘Jericho Battle March’?” Perhaps the lunar sabbatarian best suited to answer this question is Matthew Janzen, who also participated in the lunar sabbath discussion at EliYah.com. Here is what Matthew wrote:

We keep looking and realize that Yahweh had Israel in the affirmative position of battle for seven consecutive days (Joshua 6:1-5). This was done by marching around Jericho (Jo. 6:3-4), bearing the ark of the covenant (Jo. 6:6), and being armed for battle (Jo. 6:7, 9). We wonder, “Which day was the Sabbath?” but we do not have to wonder this if the Sabbath was on set days of the month and the march began on the new moon. [It just so happens that the book of Jasher (which Scripture mentions) places the beginning of the march on the new moon (Ja. 88:14).]⁹

In the above commentary, Matthew makes reference to the *Book of Jasher*, stating that this account of the “Jericho Battle March” indicates that “day one” was on the day of the new moon. If this is true, then, according to the lunar sabbatarian model, the Israelites would not have marched on the day of the weekly Sabbath.

Lunar sabbatarian Arnold Bowen, while participating in the “True Sabbath” forum discussion at EliYah.com, added the following perspective regarding the *Book of Jasher*:

The book of Jasher records that the March began on the new moon day of the second month and lasted seven days which leaves the eighth day of the second month free from any marching or work on the eighth day Sabbath. We know from Scripture that the March probably took place in the second month because they kept the Passover and unleavened bread until the 21st and for lunar Sabbatarians the 22nd would have been a weekly Sabbath and the way the Scripture reads, Jericho was shut in and "it came to pass" Joshua

⁸ The *Book of Jasher* is referenced in Joshua 10:13 and II Samuel 1:18. Whether or not this *Book of Jasher* is the same one mentioned in Scripture is a topic of debate. According to the *Wikipedia* web site, “The Hebrew version was printed in Venice in 1625 and the introduction refers to an earlier 1552 edition in Naples of which neither trace or other mention has been found. The printer Joseph ben Samuel claimed the work was copied by a scribe named Jacob the son of Atyah from an ancient manuscript whose letters could hardly be made out. This work is not to be confused with an ethical text by the same name, which, according to the *Encyclopaedia Judaica*, Volume 14, p. 1099, was ‘probably written in the 13th century.’ Scholars have proposed various dates between the 9th century and 16th century. Some Mormon scholars consider this to be the authentic *Sefer HaYashar* referenced in the Old Testament (though in recent decades this has become a minority view). That belief comes from the preface to the 1625 version which says its original source book came from the ruins of Jerusalem in A.D. 70. A Roman officer named Sidrus discovered a Hebrew scholar hiding in a hidden library. The officer reportedly took the scholar and all the books safely back to his estates in Seville, Spain, which in Roman times was known as Hispalis, the provincial capital of Hispalensis (cf. Hispania Baetica). At some uncertain point in history (presumably after the Islamic conquest of Iberia (cf. Al-Andalus)), the manuscript was transferred or sold to the Jewish college in Cordova, Spain. Scholars apparently had preserved the book until its printings in Naples in 1552 and in Venice in 1625. Outside of the preface to the 1625 work, there is no evidence to support any of this story.” The above quotation is an excerpt taken from the *Wikipedia* article “Sefer haYashar (midrash),” located at the following URL: [http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Sefer_haYashar_\(midrash\)](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Sefer_haYashar_(midrash)).

⁹ Posted on 02-19-2005 at 07:18 AM by Matthew Janzen (under the screen name "emjanzen") in the "True Sabbath" forum thread entitled "The Mo'adiym of YHWH."

spoke with an angel etc. the only way they could have not Marched on the weekly Sabbath is with lunar weeks and sabbaths and it is too much of a coincidence that the book of Jasher records that the March began on the first day of the second month/new moon.¹⁰

Let's examine Jasher 88:14 to see if it validates the lunar sabbatarian position that the Jericho march began on the first day of the month:

¹⁴ And it was in the second month, on the first *day* of the month, that YHWH said to Joshua, Rise up, behold I have given Jericho into thy hand with all the people thereof; and all your fighting men shall go round the city, once each day, thus shall you do for six days.

As we read this verse, we need to bear in mind that we are not told which day of the month the Israelite "fighting men" began marching around Jericho. All we are told is that it was the first day of the month when Yahweh gave the "marching orders." Although I agree that it is reasonable to believe the march began on that same day (especially when Yahweh said, "Rise up"), this is nevertheless not conclusive evidence that the march was organized and initiated that same day. Moreover, we should keep in mind that the text does not explicitly say when or if a weekly Sabbath occurred (*or didn't occur*) during the march. If it did occur, I believe I have successfully demonstrated that it would not have been a transgression for the Israelite men of war, accompanied by the priests, to have carried out the order. In fact, as I previously mentioned, if Yahweh tells me to march around a city on the Sabbath, I will do it, and I will not be violating any law ... simply because His Word *is* law.

For an interesting twist, it is important to note that the *Book of Jasher*, in deference to Arnold Bowen's expressed belief, indicates that the Israelites, during the second month following their departure from Egypt, spent the 15th day of the second month (a weekly Sabbath day for lunar sabbatarians) *journeying* ... something we have already seen that Arnold believes could not have been allowed by Yahweh on the day of the weekly Sabbath. You may recall from having read Arnold's study entitled "JERICHO: A BATTLE MARCH ON THE SABBATH???" that he believes Yahweh *condemns* traveling on the Sabbath, except for attending holy convocation.

Shown below is the text of Jasher 81:47 (compare with the text of Exodus 16:1):

⁴⁷ And they journeyed from Elim and came to the wilderness of Sin, on the fifteenth day of the second month after their departure from Egypt.

In view of the fact that lunar sabbatarian Arnold Bowen has already stated, "Yahweh here specifically condemns their traveling on the Sabbath," we can discern a contradiction. Certainly, the Israelites were not journeying to a tabernacle of worship on the day of the weekly Sabbath because they already *had* the tabernacle in their possession. If, on the day prior to their arrival at the wilderness of Sin, the day of the weekly Sabbath was approaching (as agreed by Arnold Bowen), Yahweh would have had the Israelites stop *before that day ended* and set up camp in preparation for the commanded day of rest. He would not have had them journeying on the day of the weekly Sabbath. *We cannot have it both ways.* Why would Yahweh, according to *one* passage of Jasher, appear to spare the Israelites from performing a

¹⁰ Posted by Arnold Bowen in the now-defunct "True Sabbath" forum (www.elijah.com) on 09-14-2005 at 08:13 AM. The posting appeared in the thread entitled "**60 Pinpointed Sabbaths.**"

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simple march on the weekly Sabbath, while according to *another* passage of Jasher, allow them to journey on the weekly Sabbath?

For those who may be wondering whether or not lunar sabbatarian Arnold Bowen agrees with the text found in Jasher 81:47, the answer is *no*, he does not! In other words, while it is true that Arnold accepts the text of Jasher 88:14 as being legitimate, he rejects the text of Jasher 81:47 because it conflicts with his lunar sabbatarian position with regard to traveling on the weekly Sabbath. In fact, Arnold has gone to great lengths on many occasions to affirm his belief that the Israelites were *not* traveling on the 15th day of the month. One such instance of this expressed belief was in the online “True Sabbath” forum discussion found at EliYah.com. What follows is an actual screen shot excerpt from a commentary submitted by Arnold Bowen on July 11, 2006¹¹:

The Septuagint says that

“the children of Israel came to the wilderness of Sin, which is between the Elim and Sina; **“and” on the 15th day**, in the second month after their departure from the land of Egypt, all the congregation of the children of Israel murmured against Moses and Aaron”

This not only shows that the murmuring took place on the 15th day but they were not traveling on the 15th day. I think you would be more just to say the weekly Sabbath happened to fall on these days.

There is also an author and scholar who keeps the traditional Saturday Sabbath who explains how the Hebrew Masoretic text actually shows how they were not traveling the 15th but murmured on the 15th. I will give his scholarly input later.

The author of the above commentary insists that the Septuagint translation of Exodus 16:1 validates his position that the Israelites were not traveling on the 15th day of the month. The Book of Jasher, which Mr. Bowen uses to validate his position pertaining to the “Jericho March,” plainly depicts that the Israelites were traveling on the 15th (Jasher 81:47). As we can see, Arnold uses the Book of Jasher when it’s convenient to validate his position, but ignores it when it contradicts his doctrinal stand. This is a classic case of “Selective Scholarship,” which we address in a later chapter.

Moreover, still another verse in the Book of Jasher indicates that the children of Israel, having just been set free by the Egyptians who were mourning the loss of their firstborn children, encamped in Succoth on the fifteenth day of the month. Shown below is Jasher 81:5:

⁵ And the children of Israel traveled from Egypt and from Goshen and from Raamses, and encamped in Succoth on the fifteenth day of the first month.

Once again, we see the Israelites not only traveling on the fifteenth day of the month ... on a day considered by lunar sabbatarians to be a weekly Sabbath day ... but also setting up camp on that same day. We know the Israelites departed Rameses on the night of the fifteenth; they left that night and

¹¹ This commentary was submitted by Arnold Bowen under the screen name of “emjanzen” on 07-11-2006 at 10:30 PM in the “True Sabbath” forum thread entitled “**60 Pinpointed Sabbaths**.” Note: Access to the “True Sabbath” forum was blocked by the forum owner in 2007; the “True Sabbath” forum was completely removed from EliYah.com in 2008.



marched at least ten miles to Succoth¹². This was certainly more than allowed by the "Sabbath Day's Journey" rule, yet lunar sabbatarians dismiss it as "necessary work." It is puzzling that lunar sabbatarians raise an objection to continuously-repeating weekly Sabbaths based upon the Jericho march when they have to contend with an even longer march from Rameses to Succoth ... on what would have been a lunar sabbath for them.

Lunar sabbatarians will argue that, in this particular instance, the Israelites had no choice but to travel on the day of the weekly Sabbath because they were "thrust out" of Egypt. I counter that this requires believing that Yahweh, who is certainly in control of time and space, deliberately timed the Plague of the Firstborn to occur on a weekly Sabbath day. Not only did He pre-ordain that day as a day of traveling and setting up camp, but He also pre-ordained that day as the day on which millions of firstborn males would be killed by the destroyer.¹³ Why would Yahweh pre-ordain that a day of such labor and death should fall on His weekly Sabbath day?

This obvious paradox betrays the lunar sabbatarian position, for on the one hand they teach that it is a sin to travel on the Sabbath, but on the other hand, they agree that in the instance of the Israelites' deliverance from Egypt, it was allowed and even pre-ordained by Yahweh. If an exception must be allowed for departing Rameses, then why do lunar sabbatarians make such a big deal about marching around the tiny city of Jericho?

Josephus and the March Around Jericho


In addition to The Book of Jasher, another historical reference to Joshua and the Jericho March can be found within the writings of the first-century Jewish historian named Josephus. Josephus is considered by many lunar sabbatarians to have been a fellow lunar sabbatarian.¹⁴ Certainly, if Josephus was a fellow lunar sabbatarian, he should be expected to agree with today's modern lunar sabbatarians' claims that the children of Israel began marching around Jericho on the first day of the month. However, as we are about to see, such is not the case. What follows is Josephus' account of the Jericho Battle March:

¹² C.f., *Commentary on the Old Testament* by C.F. Keil and F. Delitzsch, Vol. 1, Hendrickson Publishers, Peabody, MA, 2001 (orig. pub. 1866 - 91), p. 337, "These passages show very clearly that the stages from Raëmses to Succoth, thence to Etham, and then again to Hachiroth, were a day's march each." According to *The Wycliffe Bible Commentary*, Moody Press, Chicago, IL, 1990, commentary on Ex. 12:37, p. 62, "**37. Succoth.** This is identified as Tell el-Maskhutah, ten miles east of Pithom." According to *The Anchor Bible Dictionary*, Vol. 5, Doubleday, New York, 1992, article "Pithom," p. 376, "One may ascertain certain clues from the biblical account in Exod 1:11, such as (1) Pithom is probably located close to the city of Rameses, a city which is located in the Wādi Tumilat, historically renowned as a route between Egypt and the East, and (2) Egyptian architecture should remain from the time of the Exodus in the LB Age." This information would suggest that it was at least a ten-mile journey from Rameses to Succoth.

¹³ Although we are not told how many firstborn males were killed, I believe it is not an exaggeration to say the number was in the millions due to the fact that we know there were at least two million Israelites who departed from Rameses. Certainly, the number of Egyptians vastly outnumbered the Israelites.

¹⁴ I could cite many examples demonstrating the fact that lunar sabbatarians regard Josephus as having been a lunar sabbatarian. One such comment was issued by lunar sabbatarian Arnold Bowen on 09-18-2004 03:19 PM in the EliYah's Forums "True Sabbath" forum thread entitled "**2 Sabbaths in a Row**": "**The bottom line is Josephus and the Jews in his time had to have kept lunar Sabbaths at the end of their lunar weeks** or they would not have had to eat unleavened bread eight days as we do today because as Brother Larry said the feast is only seven days but the eighth day is a day of no working according to the law of YHWH and this is where the eighth day of unleavened bread come in."

“Jericho: A Battle March on the Sabbath???”



Now while the Israelites did this, and the Canaanites did not attack them, but kept themselves quiet within their own walls, Joshua resolved to besiege them; **so on the first day of the feast [of the passover]**, the priests carried the ark round about, with some part of the armed men to be a guard to it. These priests went forward, blowing with their seven trumpets; and exhorted the army to be of good courage, and went round about the city, with the senate following them; and when the priests had only blown with the trumpets, for they did nothing more at all, they returned to the camp;¹⁵

As displayed above, Josephus had a vastly different opinion as to the date on which the Jericho Battle March began. For those who might question whether or not his reference to “the feast” was truly a reference to the Feast of Unleavened Bread (since “of the passover” is apparently added by the translator for clarification), one needs to read the entire account as recorded by Josephus. In the previous section of Josephus’ commentary, he described how the Israelites celebrated the Passover in Gilgal, which he mentions as being 10 furlongs from Jericho¹⁶. Since a furlong is considered the equivalent of 1/8 mile, this would mean that Josephus considered Jericho to be roughly one mile from where the Israelites celebrated the Passover (Joshua 5:10-11). Lunar sabbatarians expect us to believe that the Israelites observed the Passover, then continued camping out in Gilgal for another two weeks before initiating their marching campaign around Jericho. Josephus offers a much more realistic scenario: The march began on the first day of the feast (Abib 15), which is in *the middle of the month*, not the first day of the month as proposed by lunar sabbatarians.

As I previously mentioned, many lunar sabbatarians insist that the first-century historian Josephus was a lunar sabbatarian. Yet "lunar sabbatarian" Josephus maintains that the Israelite army began the "Jericho march" on Abib 15 -- which, for many lunar sabbatarians, is a weekly (lunar) Sabbath. Why would a “lunar sabbatarian” like Josephus believe the Israelites began marching around Jericho on the weekly Sabbath? Could it be that he wasn't a lunar sabbatarian after all? He certainly was not, as we will demonstrate later in our study.

When we carefully weigh and consider all the facts, the argument that it would have been a violation of the Torah for the Israelite army and the accompanying priests to have marched around Jericho on the day of the weekly Sabbath is simply another S-T-R-E-T-C-H of the truth in a weak attempt to persuade others to adopt the lunar sabbatarian position.

¹⁵ C.f., *Antiquities of the Jews*, Book V, ch. 1, sect. 5.

¹⁶ C.f., *Antiquities of the Jews*, Book V, ch. 1, sect. 4, where Josephus writes, “So the Hebrews went on farther fifty furlongs, and pitched their camp at the distance of ten furlongs from Jericho; but Joshua built an altar of those stones which all the heads of the tribes, at the command of the prophet, had taken out of the deep, to be afterwards a memorial of the division of the stream of this river, and upon it offered sacrifice to the Almighty; and in that place celebrated the passover”