

## **Will you observe the Passover on the 16th in 2011 and 2012?**

The followers of Herbert Armstrong will.

You will, if you use the current Jewish calendar, the foundation for which was adopted as religious law for devout Jews around 356 AD., and partially adopted as church law by Herbert Armstrong for his followers in the early 1940s. He died in 1986, but the custom continues.

Judaism usually has its calendar months starting on the same day as the astronomical new moon, but frequently it has important religious months starting one or two days later. These delays are known as "postponements". The postponements are now well accepted by Jewish adherents, although they were contentious for centuries after the Sanhedrin is said to have adopted Patriarch Rabbi Hillel II's recommendations. They affect everyone who adopts the dates specified by the Hillel calendar for the month of Tishri, which was accepted by Herbert Armstrong as the seventh month of the Biblical year. Unlike the Jews, the Armstrong people mostly know nothing of the postponements.

### **Why Postpone?**

The basic reason is so that Jewish customs can be observed.

The problem is that the actions associated with customs are regarded as work, and work cannot be done on a Sabbath, whether a weekly Sabbath or an annual Sabbath ( i.e. High Day).

Over a long period of time, lunar months will begin on all the days of the week: one lunar month may start on a Sunday, another start on a Monday, etc. It just so happens that at times a lunar month begins on a day which prevents the customs associated with a Holy Day from being conducted because they fall on a Sabbath.

For example, consider the Passover season in the Roman year 2011 and the two annual Sabbaths: the first day of unleavened bread on the fifteenth, and the last day of unleavened bread six days later.

According to the Royal Observatory and the US Navy (see their web sites), the new moon, which is the conjunction of the earth, the moon, and the sun (see any relevant encyclopaedia or astronomical reference), is at 2:32 pm Sunday 3rd April Universal Time (London UK). Add two hours to base this on the Jerusalem time zone, and the new moon is at 4:32 pm Sunday 3rd April. Sunset at the latitude and longitude of Jerusalem is around 5:55 pm. Therefore, with the new moon occurring between sunset Saturday 2nd

April and sunset Sunday 3rd April, the new moon day and the start of the lunar month based on Jerusalem time zone, is Sunday 3rd April.

The first day of the lunar month being Sunday 3rd April makes the fifteenth day of the lunar month, i.e. the first day of unleavened bread, Sunday 17th April, and the last day of unleavened bread Saturday 23rd April.

An unacceptable clash now is the weekly sabbath on 16th April followed by the annual sabbath on 17th April. Unacceptable because preparation for the annual sabbath would need to be done on the day before, but the day before is a weekly sabbath and no work can be done on that day. Therefore traditional preparation customs for the first day of unleavened bread cannot happen!

A typical solution built into the fixed Judaism calendar is to define the start of that month as one day later than the actual astronomical lunar month start. This would be a postponement of one day.

However, in the case of the Passover season 2011, this creates another problem. With a one day postponement, the postponed "first day of unleavened bread" becomes Monday 18th April, which allows traditional preparation customs to be done without infringing any rules against work, but the postponed "last day of unleavened bread" becomes Sunday 24th April. Thus we have eliminated one Saturday-Sunday combination (16-17 April) but have created another (23-24 April).

The solution written into the calendar is to insert a second postponement, a total of two days of postponement, into this month. The postponed "first day of unleavened bread" becomes Tuesday 19th April, and the postponed "last day of unleavened bread" becomes Monday 25th April. Problems solved!

Problems solved in the Judaism calendar, but not solved in the lunar calendar: the festivals are held two days later than specified in Leviticus 23!

## **Customs and Postponements**

The current Jewish calendar is a fixed table of nineteen of its years (not Roman years), a total of 235 lunar months, after which it repeats.

Mostly it does not use postponements for months, but it does introduce postponements such as described above, when there is a clash with traditional customs, which is quite often for Passover month and the harvest month six months after Passover season.

For Judaism thousands of years ago, the options would have been:

- 1) follow the lunar months as they occur and abandon certain customs which are considered work at times of a clash, or
- 2) follow the lunar months when they do not result in a clash, and, at other times when

they would result in a clash, abandon the lunar month and define a postponed month which appears to not have a clash.

The choice of the priests and Pharisees thousands of years ago was the second option: to retain the customs but abandon the Biblical injunctions on the dates of the festivals if there was a clash (but only when there is a clash); keep the astronomical date if there is no clash.

For Judaism, if there is no clash with holding the customs, there is no postponement.

If Judaism had no clashing customs, there would be no postponements at all.

### **The Armstrong choice**

The choice of Herbert Armstrong effectively was to not keep the customs of Judaism, but to adopt their dates for critical months, thus abandoning the Biblical specifications on dates of the festivals. By not keeping the Jewish customs, there is no need for postponements; but nevertheless Armstrong followers keep postponements whenever Judaism does. Weird, isn't it?

The custom of the Armstrong offshoots is firmly entrenched as not observing the Judaism customs but pointlessly following the postponements of Judaism, which Judaism inserts only when needed to allow them to observe their traditions..

What is your choice?