

FAQ

FROM THE MESSIANIC APOLOGETICS ARCHIVES (2000-2018)

J.K. McKee

MESSIANIC APOLOGETICS
messianicapologetics.net

Frequently Asked Questions

FROM THE MESSIANIC APOLOGETICS ARCHIVES

© 2021, 2024 John Kimball McKee

All rights reserved. With the exception of quotations for academic purposes, no part of this publication may be reproduced without prior permission of the publisher.

Cover Image: nullplus via Istockphoto

ISBN 979-8317009786 (paperback)

ASIN B09F1MWGB7 (eBook)

Published by Messianic Apologetics, a division of Outreach Israel Ministries

P.O. Box 516

McKinney, Texas 75070

(407) 933-2002

outreachisrael.net / outreachisrael.blog

messianicapologetics.net / messianicapologetics.blog

Fair Use Notice: This publication contains copyrighted material the use of which has not always been specifically authorized by the copyright owner. We make use of this material as a matter of teaching, scholarship, research, and commentary. We believe in good faith that this constitutes a “fair use” of any such copyrighted material as provided for in section 107 of the US Copyright Law, and is in accordance with Title 17 U.S.C. Section 107. For more information go to: <https://www.law.cornell.edu/uscode/text/17/107>

Outreach Israel Ministries is a non-profit 501(c)3. All prices listed on the publications of Outreach Israel Ministries and Messianic Apologetics are suggested donations.

Abbreviations and Special Terms

The following is a list of abbreviations for reference works and special terms which are used in publications by Outreach Israel Ministries and Messianic Apologetics. Please familiarize yourself with them as the text may reference a Bible version, i.e., RSV for the Revised Standard Version, or a source such as TWOT for the *Theological Wordbook of the Old Testament*, solely by its abbreviation. Detailed listings of these sources are provided in the Bibliography.

- ABD: *Anchor Bible Dictionary*
AMG: *Complete Word Study Dictionary: Old Testament, New Testament*
ANE: Ancient Near East(ern)
Apostolic Scriptures/Writings: the New Testament
Ara: Aramaic
ASV: American Standard Version (1901)
ATS: ArtScroll Tanach (1996)
b. Babylonian Talmud (*Talmud Bavli*)
B.C.E.: Before Common Era or B.C.
BDAG: *A Greek-English Lexicon of the New Testament and Other Early Christian Literature* (Bauer, Danker, Arndt, Gingrich)
BDB: *Brown-Driver-Briggs Hebrew and English Lexicon*
C.E.: Common Era or A.D.
CGEDNT: *Concise Greek-English Dictionary of New Testament Words* (Barclay M. Newman)
CGL: *Cambridge Greek Lexicon* (2021)
CHALOT: *Concise Hebrew and Aramaic Lexicon of the Old Testament* (Holladay)
CJB: *Complete Jewish Bible* (1998)
CJSB: *Complete Jewish Study Bible* (2016)
DRA: Douay-Rheims American Edition
DSS: Dead Sea Scrolls
EDB: *Eerdmans Dictionary of the Bible*
EJ: *Encyclopaedia Judaica*
ESV: *English Standard Version* (2001)
Ger: German
GNT: *Greek New Testament*
Grk: Greek
HALOT: *Hebrew & Aramaic Lexicon of the Old Testament* (Koehler and Baumgartner)
HCSB: *Holman Christian Standard Bible* (2004)
Heb: Hebrew
HNV: *Hebrew Names Version of the World English Bible*
IDB: *Interpreter's Dictionary of the Bible*
IDBSup: *Interpreter's Dictionary of the Bible Supplement*
ISBE: *International Standard Bible Encyclopedia*
IVPBBC: *IVP Bible Background Commentary (Old & New Testament)*
Jastrow: *Dictionary of the Targumim, Talmud Bavli, Talmud Yerushalmi, and Midrashic Literature* (Marcus Jastrow)
JBK: *New Jerusalem Bible-Koren* (2000)
JETS: *Journal of the Evangelical Theological Society*
KJV: *King James Version*
Lattimore: *The New Testament by Richmond Lattimore* (1996)
LITV: *Literal Translation of the Holy Bible* by Jay P. Green (1986)
LES: *Lexham English Septuagint* (2019)
LS: *An Intermediate Greek-English Lexicon* (Liddell-Scott)
LSJM: *Greek-English Lexicon* (Liddell-Scott-Jones-McKenzie)
LXE: *Septuagint with Apocrypha* by Sir L.C.L. Brenton (1851)
LXX: *Septuagint*
m. Mishnah
MT: *Masoretic Text*
NASB: *New American Standard Bible* (1977)
NASU: *New American Standard Update* (1995)
NBCR: *New Bible Commentary: Revised*
NEB: *New English Bible* (1970)
Nelson: *Nelson's Expository Dictionary of Old Testament Words*
NETS: *New English Translation of the Septuagint* (2007)
NIB: *New Interpreter's Bible*
NIDB: *New International Dictionary of the Bible*
NIV: *New International Version* (1984)
NJB: *New Jerusalem Bible-Catholic* (1985)
NJSB: *Tanakh, A New Translation of the Holy Scriptures* (1999)
NKJV: *New King James Version* (1982)
NRSV: *New Revised Standard Version* (1989)
NLT: *New Living Translation* (1996)
NT: *New Testament*
OT: *Old Testament*
REB: *Revised English Bible* (1989)
RSV: *Revised Standard Version* (1952)
t. Tosefta
Tanach (Tanakh): the Old Testament
Thayer: *Thayer's Greek-English Lexicon of the New Testament*
TDNT: *Theological Dictionary of the New Testament*
TLV: *Messianic Jewish Family Bible—Tree of Life Version* (2014)
TNIV: *Today's New International Version* (2005)
TWOT: *Theological Wordbook of the Old Testament*
UBSHNT: *United Bible Societies' 1991 Hebrew New Testament revised edition*
v(s). *verse(s)*
Vine: *Vine's Complete Expository Dictionary of Old and New Testament Words*
Vul: *Latin Vulgate*
YLT: *Young's Literal Translation* (1862/1898)
WMB: *World Messianic Bible* (2020)

Lunar Sabbath

What do you think of the Lunar Sabbath theory?

A lunar Sabbath is not practiced by anyone in today's Messianic Judaism or the One Law/One Torah sub-movement, but it may be favored by people here and there on the fringes of the Two-House sub-movement. Generally speaking, those who have rejected the mainstream Jewish calendar used by the Synagogue today, as well as the vast majority of Messianic Jews—in favor of their own calendar¹—are those who are open to later questioning the placement of the seventh-day Sabbath, on the day of the week known on our secular calendar as Saturday. The basic argument in favor of a Lunar Sabbath is: *the Jews were wrong about the calendar, and so they must be wrong about the Sabbath*. The Lunar Sabbath theory posits that with the beginning of a new month via the New Moon, all one has to do is count seven days to the Sabbath, seven days to the next Sabbath, and so on. This would mean that the Sabbath day could actually appear on any day of the secular week.

There has been very strong criticism issued against the Lunar Sabbath theory, from various Seventh-Day Adventists,² as well as from those who teach on the Jewish Roots of Christianity.³ While there is fertile ground for adoption of a Lunar Sabbath in the fringe sectors of the Two-House sub-movement, the Sacred Name Only movement, and among various others—the Lunar Sabbath theory has actually received broad rejection from various Sacred Name Only groups.⁴

Since hearing about the Lunar Sabbath theory in the mid-2000s, Outreach Israel Ministries and Messianic Apologetics have totally dismissed it. Academic resources discussing the history of Sabbath development, while widely recognizing the dismissal of the seventh-day Sabbath by the emerging Christianity of the Second and Third Centuries C.E., do not argue that the Ancient Israelites observed a seventh-day Sabbath based off of the determination of the New Moon.

The Lunar Sabbath theory does not have any coherent logic to it, given the Biblical prescription of how the Sabbath is to take place every seven days. What if there is a New Moon sighted on the sixth day of one's counting cycle to the Sabbath, and the counting cycle to the Sabbath has to be reinitiated? This would mean that it is possible for there not to be a Sabbath day of rest for a period of thirteen days. If a lunar month were exactly twenty-eight days, then there might be some reason to consider a kind of Lunar Sabbath. But, the Moon's cycle is twenty-nine-and-a-half days.

Both liberal and conservative Bible scholarship are widely agreed that a Lunar Sabbath is not at all what is witnessed within the Hebrew Scriptures, and are most dismissive of such a proposition:

- *IDBSup* (broadly liberal): "The appearance of the new moon marks the first day of the lunar month. The full moon usually occurs on the fourteenth or fifteenth day, and the dark of the moon follows on the twentieth-eighth or twenty-ninth. Thus, seven-day intervals such as the first, eighth, fifteenth, twenty-second, and twenty-ninth of the month or the first, seventh, fourteenth, twenty-first, and twenty-eighth of the month can be correlated to lunar phases. However, if the sabbath originated as a seventh-day interval fixed by the appearance of the new moon, it could not have recurred every seventh day. A 'lunar' sabbath would have been

¹ Consult the Messianic Apologetics FAQ, "Biblical Calendar."

² Terry Heagy, *The Lunar Sabbath Conspiracy* (GATE Publishing, 2011).

³ Bruce R. Booker, *The Lunacy of the Lunar Sabbath* (Author, 2008).

⁴ Consult (2014). *Beware of the "Lunar Sabbath."* *Eliyah.com*. Accessible online at <<http://elijah.com/>>; *The Lunar Sabbath Illusion* (Yahweh's Restoration Ministry, 2013) [eBook for Amazon Kindle].

recycled each month, because a lunar month is not evenly divisible by seven days. Yet the oldest biblical traditions suggest that the sabbath did occur every seven days (Exod. 23:12; 34:21). Thus, the sabbath was ordinarily out of phase with the moon.”⁵

- *ISBE* (broadly conservative): “A [particular] theory proposes an ancient Arabic origin [for the Sabbath]...In their worship of the moon the ancient Arabs supposedly paid particular attention to the four monthly phases of the moon, i.e., where the moon ‘sat.’ The Arabic word for ‘sit,’ *tabat*, supposedly became Akk. *šabattu* and later Heb. *šabbāt*. Regular human rest at approximately seven day intervals thus would be patterned after the moon’s rest...[T]he etymology is suspect. Moreover, this theory shares the same weakness as any lunar theory, namely, that a regularly recurring seventh-day sabbath will almost always be out of phase with the moon, since the lunar month contains twenty-nine days instead of twenty-eight.”⁶

In his famed work, *The Sabbath*, Abraham Joshua Heschel summarizes the widespread Jewish theological view of how while the new month in the Torah begins with the New Moon, that the Sabbath is something independent from the New Moon:

“While the festivals celebrate events that happened in time, the date of the month assigned for each festival in the calendar is determined by the life in nature. Passover and the Feast of Booths, for example, coincide with the full moon, and the date of all festivals is a day in the month, and the month is a reflection of what goes on periodically in the realm of nature, since the Jewish month begins with the new moon, with the reappearance of the lunar crescent in the evening sky. In contrast, the Sabbath is entirely independent of the month and unrelated to the moon. Its date is not determined by any event in nature, such as the new moon, but by the act of creation. Thus the essence of the Sabbath is completely detached from the world of space.”⁷

In an endnote, Heschel indicates how, “The Babylonian seventh day was observed on every seventh day of the lunar month.”⁸ Generally speaking, those who have wished to associate the Israelite Sabbath with some kind of lunar cycle, have done so with the intention of trying to establish some kind of extra-Biblical, or even Mesopotamian pagan origin, for the Sabbath.⁹

⁵ B.E. Shafer, “Sabbath,” in Keith Crim, ed., *Interpreter’s Dictionary of the Bible: Supplementary Volume* (Nashville: Abingdon, 1976), pp 760-761.

⁶ J.C. McCann, Jr., “Sabbath,” in Geoffrey Bromiley, ed., *International Standard Bible Encyclopedia*, 4 vols. (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1988), 4:248.

⁷ Abraham Joshua Heschel, *The Sabbath* (New York: Farrar, Straus and Giroux, 1951), 10.

⁸ *Ibid*, en#11.

⁹ Cf. Gerhard F. Hasel, “Sabbath,” in David Noel Freedman, ed., *Anchor Bible Dictionary*, 6 vols. (New York: Doubleday, 1992), 5:850-851.

“Which Day is the 7th?” *Messiah Magazine* Issue 87, Devarim 5765 (2005):33 was widely and properly dismissive of the Lunar Sabbath theory.