



Investigating the “Lunar Sabbath” Theories

By Set Apart Ministries Community & Barbara L. Klika, MSW

Undershepherd

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We in our community here have just completed a third time around evaluating the “Lunar Sabbath” theory and again determined that it is not what we believe is an accurate interpretation though we did learn something new this time that has led to a change for us. Our first review of it was about 4 years ago, the second 2 years ago, and the most recent just a few weeks ago, at the request of some newcomers to a Hebraic understanding of their faith in Messiah.

This evaluation process has been covered in prayer for His leading since we want to remain teachable, but with wisdom and discernment, more than one of us in this community have read and done word studies for the relevant Scripture, read the supporting articles, made notes and comparative points, considered academic sources and checked citations, considered and compared Scripture references, considered interpretation principles and sound exegesis, considered the presence or absence of sound reasoning, considered the presence or absence of emotional manipulation, and checked on the origins of the theory.

Before continuing on in summarizing our findings, it might be helpful to explain why we consider all these various factors as we are examining the Scriptures. We see that this is a step that does not seem to be commonly observed. It has to do with the instructions found in several places in Proverbs:

*My son, hear the instruction of thy father, and forsake not the law of thy mother:
For they [shall be] an ornament of grace unto thy head, and chains about thy neck.*

Proverbs 1:8-9

An examination of the Book of Proverbs led to an in-depth word study of these verses. Without trying to reproduce it all here, let me just comment that we understand it is important to take into account both aspects noted. The instruction of the Father generally comes after the Mother, and is generally accepted to be that of studying the finer points of the Law. The law of the Mother has to do more with character development, bonding and relationships. It is the combination of these two as they complement one another that leads to greater understanding and growth and maturity. To attempt to reach deeper understanding of the Word without having first attended to the “law of your mother” to

us is a potentially dangerous thing as some pretty unusual interpretations can result if the Word is being viewed and interpreted through the eyes and ears of one who has not addressed maturity issues. Together, personal character and study of the Word result in crowning/ornaments of blessings as well as guidance for direction in life, like the chains of a bridle directing the head. The study also revealed some connections with these two areas of instruction/law with the two Great Commandments, on which all others rest:

And Jesus answered him, The first of all the commandments [is], Hear, O Israel; The Lord our God is one Lord:

And thou shalt love the Lord thy God with all thy heart, and with all thy soul, and with all thy mind, and with all thy strength: this [is] the first commandment.

And the second [is] like, [namely] this, Thou shalt love thy neighbour as thyself. There is none other commandment greater than these.

Mark 12: 30-32

And to nearly identical statements as recorded by both Mark and Luke, Mathew added:

On these two commandments hang all the law and the prophets.

Mathew 22:40

So, we try to take all the factors into account when evaluating any teaching, which includes the personal character and integrity of the teacher themselves. Yes, we know that all of us make mistakes and can be positively changed as a result, though this is certainly not automatic and merits consideration. This is a standard for us personally, as well as a standard for any teaching we consider.

Then, if a teaching is accompanied with indications of poor scholarship, poor exegesis and interpretive understanding it certainly causes us to be very careful as we study the Word to confirm or disprove what has been taught. This does not mean that any teaching is automatically dismissed or accepted on the basis of these matters, just that the degree of caution increases as needed.

We know that those who support the lunar Sabbath theory are generally very avid and **we do not desire to be disrespectful toward them**. If one is a mature believer with discernment and the ability to clearly understand what the Word and the Spirit are saying to them, and they believe they have been instructed to follow this theory, we would not argue with them. It seems evident throughout the Scriptures that our Father will at times ask His people to do things that seem to make no sense to others.

On the other hand, if one does not have such a solid background, and this teaching appeals to them for other reasons that may not be so positive, we would want to intervene.

For many, it took some time period of their own evaluation and when they finally “see” it, they become very convinced. Here is an attempt at summarizing our findings, along with the things we found to be reasons for caution, but it is still important for everyone to check things for themselves.

There is not just one “lunar Sabbath” theory, but several variations. Basically, the view is that

- The “static” and “continuous cycle” seven day week as we know it is not what Scripture teaches but a political invention that early Rabbis were willing to accept for expediency. Some say that there is proof that First Century Judaism, in Yeshua’s time here, was following what is called the “lunar Sabbath” cycle rather than the “static” “continuous” cycle.
- The moon should be used to determine both the beginning of the month AND the division into four weeks, rather than counting an evening and a morning as one day, and counting to seven.
- There is usually an aspect of the teaching that questions how Shabbats, the preparation days and Feast days line up, saying that God would not have designed a calendar in which He would allow a preparation day or a day of sacrifices to fall on a Shabbat. They usually then say that using the “lunar Sabbath” method would avoid these issues.
- The “challenge” question is generally something along the lines of how would we know when the Sabbath is if all current “keys” to our past were lost to us, say on a desert island after being shipwrecked. Therefore, they say that counting the days, to 7, isn’t enough but the only thing that COULD be done is to watch the cycles of the moon, and divide it into four groups, for the month.
- There seem to be several ancillary teachings here too: One being that the heliocentric model of the universe is false and a conspiracy to undermine faith, obedience, and the Word, and another that we are to be counting the days from sunrise to sunset, **not** evening and morning, one day. Related to this is the assertion that the sign of Jonah being 3 days and 3 nights has no bearing on counting the calendar days because this is a Hebrew idiom, not meaning 3 literal days and nights. There also seems to be a connection with those who are saying that they understand that God only does His work in the light, never in the darkness.

Jesus answered, "Are there not twelve hours in the day? If anyone walks in the day, he does not stumble, because he sees the light of this world. John 11:9

This statement seems to be taken to mean that only the part of the time period that has light is really called a day, and the darkness/night is just not considered at all.

- The variations have to do with whether one counts the new moon as beginning with the sighted sliver, as is traditional in Judaism, or with the darkened time of conjunction, which is really only a 3-4 minute period. And then, within that, whether one counts only the single “day” time period (one 24 hour time period) of a conjunction as day one, or if one considers however long it takes from the darkened conjunction time, however many sunsets and sunrises that takes until the sliver appears, counting that entire period as one day, the first day.

I have probably forgotten something but I think these are the main points that will come up along the way, only VERY briefly stated, considering that some of these concepts have been covered over multiple articles of many pages each.

We believe that the credibility of the messenger has a bearing on the message and so have looked into the origins of this theory as was explained earlier. It has been difficult to locate this information, though a number of the resources seem to be coming from those with Seventh Day Adventist background or doctrinal beliefs. Wikipedia has the clearest statement, as follows:

Jonathan David Brown was the first known Sabbath keeper to begin the practice of counting the Sabbath from the New Moon day rather than using the modern seven day week. He published the book Keeping Yahweh's Appointments in 1998, which explained the practice. The Lunar Sabbath movement has grown among the [Messianic Judaism](#), [Armstrong/Worldwide Church of God](#) and [Christian Identity](#) movements.¹

According to Wikipedia, Mr. Brown is known as a Christian musician and sound engineer who has worked with many Christian and secular artists. There is no clear indication of his study, background or training as to his credibility as a teacher of the Word. He has a criminal history of helping friends evade arrest after their involvement in Klu Klux Klan activity of a drive-by shooting at a synagogue for which he served his sentence in the early 90's.

Mr. Brown is a friend of Steve Butt, known recently as "Eliyahu ben David" in his current *Road to Tsiyon Ministries*, where he also teaches the lunar Sabbath practice. Mr. Butt/Eliyahu has been secretive about his background, which has been brought out through the efforts of many people in a thread on an online Christian forum, www.christianforums.com Messianic Judaism sub forum.

I have known several other less public people who have been proponents of this theory.

In defense of the theory, some of us here think that it may just be possible that the two methods of counting to determine Sabbath may have had the same result, **prior** to the entrance of sin and the cataclysmic damage of the flood, though others believe this would not lead to such a difference.

As we looked at the materials recommended to us and compared them with Scripture in light of the various issues outline above, we saw many concerns.

- 1)** lack of awareness of sound interpretive principles for Scripture, resulting in the failure to recognize poetic, metaphoric or allegorical language. (Using such reasoning, we would view our God as a rock with feathers, just for an example)
- 2)** lack of credible resources and citation. (*Some of the citations that are listed are not real. Check them out for yourself.*)

¹ http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Jonathan_David_Brown

3) lack of the ability to follow or outline a sound and logical argument; with many examples of logical fallacies. (*Information on Logical Fallacies can be found in basic textbooks on Logic, or online.*)

4) evidence of emotional manipulation, innuendoes and threats that people who do not agree are at risk of losing their salvation; that such teachers want others to look to them, and them alone, rather than teaching others how to examine the Scriptures for themselves; indication that there are other agendas involved that are not clearly stated.

Much of the material on the lunar Sabbath theory/teaching seems to us to be based in literal interpretations of what we see as not intended to be literal. There are many references to the sun moving, but to our understanding, these words are written to be recognizable as man's experience; as it is seen from our physical/human reality. The two times in which the cycle was stopped: halted and turned back, we would view as miraculous instances, not something on which to base the interpretation of normal time.

In review of the Scriptural directions on establishment of the weekly Shabbat and the establishment of the moedim, we believe that there is a clear indication that these are **two separate processes**. The weekly pattern is determined by the counting of the evenings and mornings, while the moedim are determined by the counting of the moons cycles. We see no indication that they **must** fall in certain patterns in order to avoid the various complications that have been raised. Please check on this when you do your study.

The ancillary idea that a day should be counted morning to evening, from sunrise to sunset, we have been told is based on the "correct" translation of Genesis 1: 5,8,13,19,23,31, "*and the evening and the morning,*" as more correctly being "*and evening **FOLLOWS** morning.*" However, on examining the Scriptures we do not see any way that the Hebrew word would be legitimately translated as "follows," which would make it "*follows evening follows morning.*" We also think that would not be translated as "follows" and as "and" in the same sentence: "***and evening follows morning.***" Examine the Hebrew word and see what you understand.

Those who have told us that there is proof that First Century Judaism DID follow what is now being called a lunar Sabbath cycle have yet to provide the documentation. Some use the Jewish Encyclopedia as a resource for this, but we see interpretation questions there. Other credible sources have not been brought to our attention here.

We do NOT yet see confirmation that is incontrovertible. Some of the sites that concentrate on the astronomical viewpoint of calendation seem to be more sensible in the discussion than those that claim a Scriptural perspective and we do know and agree that there have been many cultures that have used both a seven day week and other models, a 10 day week among them. We have learned of the efforts now being made toward establishing a new "World Calendar" which we would see as no less inaccurate than anything else mankind has tried.

As far as we can see at this time, we believe that our Elohim established the seven day week, by counting seven evenings to mornings so we do not see this as an invention of others. Arguments about the weekend of a 7 day week being convenient would only apply in an industrial age where the idea of a leisure “weekend” took shape. As the various calendars have changed, our understanding has been that the days of the week were not changed though the numbering was. (Perhaps this became confusing as they were just referred to by number, with only Shabbat being named?) However, we wonder if it isn’t the same as today, where we live under a calendar that differs from Scripture as it pertains to our life within that culture, but honor the Scriptural calendar as to the counting of the moedim. We view it as part of living in exile and look forward to the time of restoration!

There are frequent Scriptural references to the sun’s movement and we have learned that there is a rather large following for what is called the “**Hoax of Heliocentrism.**” They instead prefer a Geocentric model of the universe, which was the dominant view prior to Galileo in the 1600’s. One of the proponents here has an apparently valid degree in Astronomy, with a specialty in Geocentrism. He has a Baptist background. Many of those who subscribe to the geocentric model have Roman Catholic background, which would make some sense as the Roman Catholic Church has only just in 2000, 400 years later, apologized for their rejection of Galileo’s teachings. We do still think that many of the Scriptural references provided for support of this are not intended to be literal.

One of these sites even went on to recommend the construction of sun circles. The diagram looks much like Stonehenge, and then an actual picture of Stonehenge is provided. Yes, this is the same practice that is found in Druidism, but the author of this site was quick to assert that it was an earlier practice that the Druids took up. We haven't seen evidence that would make us comfortable with setting up sun circles, but perhaps others will.

For those who make an argument that our Creator only does work in the daylight, we would observe that everything He ever did began in the dark, as pictured in the creation account itself, the image of a seed being buried in order to grow, and the spiritual picture of our own darkness into which He enters with His truth. If we had to wait for light FIRST before He could work, all creation would indeed be without hope.

Review led to an Unanticipated Change of Understanding

This aspect of darkness did lead to one surprise for us however. During our review, we also came to a teaching on the calendar that did seem to be based in humility, the ability to reason well, a good understanding of exegesis and interpretive skills which did cause us to change our understanding and practice in one way. 119 Ministries has recently completed a teaching on ***Time: Our Creators Calendar.***

They have not yet addressed the specifics of the lunar Sabbath theories but their detailed and reasoned presentation is generally easy to follow and quite thorough, and we think it does indirectly answer some of the claims made by those who promote lunar Sabbath counting. As we have studied thematically we have seen the above picture of His work beginning in darkness, later to be revealed. When Scriptural support and related evidence was put together that indicates that the new moon day was acknowledged

to be the actual dark conjunction time rather than the sighting of the sliver, we were taken aback, yet almost immediately recognized truth. We believe this picture fits with our Elohim Who behaves in an orderly manner, and has told us the end out of the beginning as Isaiah states.

We see the new moon day then to be the period from evening to morning during which the 2-3 minute conjunction of the moon actually occurs as the actual day to be counted as day one. This is different from our previous understanding and practice that acknowledged the **sighting of the sliver** as the first day, the method traditionally observed in Judaism and transferred over to many/most in the Messianic movement. After hearing and examining what was presented here, we understand now that the sighting of the sliver was the confirmation of what was already believed to have occurred, and thus the end of the time period, rather than the beginning. We would further state that we see this period to be concluded in that one "day" period, and not how ever many evenings and mornings occur before the sliver is seen then counted all together as one day.

Though we do not follow any one teacher or ministry, we have been blessed in what we see in this ministry whose premise is based in the following:

Test yourselves to see if you are in the faith; examine yourselves! Or do you not recognize this about yourselves, that Jesus Christ is in you -- unless indeed you fail the test?

2 Cor.13:5

Beloved, do not believe every spirit, but test the spirits to see whether they are from God, because many false prophets have gone out into the world.

1 John 4:1

They seem to be gifted in study, discernment and presentation so although we don't agree 100 percent with every detail, we have a great deal of respect for what they are doing. Caution to every listener about their own responsibility to study to know is a welcome position. www.testeverything.net

Which bring me to perhaps the most difficult aspect of reviewing these materials: the frequent use of emotional manipulations and logical fallacies in the presentation of the material. **If you are not familiar with what these things entail, it would be well worth the time to learn of them.**

- You may have heard the term "straw man" and not known that it is a logical fallacy: ignoring the true position of an opponent, representing it in an exaggerated or distorted way, and then refuting that position, proving one's own point: which in fact is no proof at all.
- The observance of two things that are correlated does NOT automatically mean that one is causative of the other.
- Claiming that something **must** be true because it cannot be proven false, or the opposite, is a logical fallacy.

- Related to this, arguing from the ***point of silence***, or from the *absence* of evidence rather than the *existence* of evidence was seen repeatedly in these materials. Sometimes the authors used silence to *prove their point was correct*, and then concluded that the silence on a matter *others believe means their point is incorrect*.
- Watch for these things as you review this or any other teaching in question. Now knowing about it may make it easier to spot.

Dire sounding threats that one is at risk of losing their salvation if they don't understand and practice the Scriptures the same way as the author does, are an immediate cause of alarm. The underlying agenda of such language nearly always appears to be a subtle threat and assertion that this person is the only one who knows the TRUTH. **Whether they are sincerely intended or not, we cannot judge for certain, but we can be certain caution is needed.**

We do not think that we have the final answer but believe that we have studied diligently and do continue to choose to apply what we understand as best we can. I hope this attempt to summarize what we have seen will be of help to others in the same process of reviewing the Lunar Sabbath theory.

In any case, all Praise to our Creator Who knows all and sees all and has promised not to leave us orphaned. Kumi ori, Yeshua!

If you would like to contact us regarding

- our evaluation process or results here,
- arranging a personal telephone contact time
- arranging a teleconference discussion on this topic

we can be reached through the contact form on our site or just by email info@set-apart-ministries.org

We can also be reached at (920) 336-7005.