

When Was Y'shua Born?

by Bill and Karen Bishop

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Both of us have many years behind us in which we celebrated Christmas, and for a mixture of reasons. Among them is the obvious Christian aspect. December 25 is celebrated in most Christian churches as the birth of the Christ child. But is it really? Why were the shepherds watching their flocks by night in the brutal winter weather of Bethlehem at that time of year? Why were their flocks in the fields at all? The two birthing seasons for sheep are spring and fall, so they would be carefully tending their sheep in the fields at these times – even by night. Rabbis of the region acknowledge that the sheep were in the fields from early spring to late fall, but not during the winter.

With just a tiny bit of sleuthing spirit, we were on the trail to quite a startling discovery. First, we found that the Bible itself can pinpoint the season of the birth of the Savior, and it is in the fall of the year. The puzzle pieces were not too difficult to put together.

Luke 1:5 tells us that Zechariah was of the course of Abia, who was called Abijah in the Hebrew text of 1 Chronicles 24:10. There we find that this course was the eighth of the priestly courses for Tabernacle service. The duration of each course was about one week. Accordingly, Zechariah was serving in the eighth course of Temple service when the angel appeared to him to prophesy the birth of John the Baptist. That would mean the angel's message to Zechariah during the eighth course would have been in the spring - toward the end of month 2 on the religious calendar. This passage relates that he would have completed his ministrations (which would have been at least 56 days into the religious year), and THEN he would have gone back to his home (verse 23). He lived in Hebron, in the hill country of Judea, which was about 19 miles from the Temple in Jerusalem, so it would take him a little while to get there. Then, depending on Elizabeth's ovulation, it may have been a little longer before she conceived. Verse 24 just implies that it was shortly after he arrived home. Since Father seems to favor major timing events for significant earthly manifestations, it seems likely that she might even have conceived on Pentecost that year – about half way through the third month of the religious calendar.

Luke 1 also speaks of the timing of Mary's angelic visitation and the conception of Y'shua. Verse 36 indicates this visitation came DURING the sixth month of Elizabeth's pregnancy. Now if Elizabeth conceived about half

way through month three on the religious calendar, then her sixth month would not BEGIN until about half way through month nine. That would put Mary's conception sometime shortly thereafter DURING Elizabeth's sixth month - likely near the Winter Solstice, which falls during Chanukkah. How appropriate would it be for the Light of the world to be conceived during the Feast of Lights?

The gestation period of a human fluctuates, but averages to between 270 and 280 days. If we place the conception near the winter solstice, we will find that it is about 274 days to the first day of the seventh month, or the holy day called Yom Teruah or the Feast of Trumpets in September. "Yom" is the Hebrew word for "day", and "Teruah" means rejoicing and noise, especially with trumpets. The trumpets are blown repeatedly throughout that day, in a manner that depicts the celebration of something much bigger than the beginning of the secular year. Indeed, our Father commanded that the trumpets would be blown on that day, way back in the days of Moses.

*Leviticus 23:24*

*(24) Speak unto the children of Israel, saying, In the seventh month, in the first day of the month, shall ye have a sabbath, a memorial of blowing of trumpets, an holy convocation.*

It was to be a day of noise and excitement, though it was never specified in Torah exactly why this was to be done. Maybe it was because He knew what would happen on that very day so many years later.

Y'shua is the divider of time, taking us from BC (Before Christ) to AD (Anno Domino – year of the Lord) – at least that was how time was accounted before secular society successfully erased Y'shua from the annals of time by altering the division to become BCE (before common era) and CE (common era). Likewise, the Feast of Trumpets begins the new governmental year in Jewish reckoning, hence it is also known as "Rosh HaShannah" (head of the year). On this holy Sabbath day of blowing trumpets, we believe that the trumpet announced His arrival, which would be an entirely appropriate tribute.

The trumpet is sounded at various times. It blew loud and long when God interacted with man at Mt. Sinai in Exodus 19. It will be blown when Y'shua descends from heaven to meet us in the air (1 Thessalonians 4:16-17), and it will undoubtedly be blown again when Y'shua returns to set His feet on the mount of Olives. So - why would it not be blown when he was released from the womb in His fleshly body on Earth to save us?

Others have properly identified autumn as the season for his birth, but they view the sacred birth as occurring during Feast of Tabernacles. However, if Joseph had not been in Jerusalem in time for Festival of Tabernacles to begin, he would have been in non-compliance with the feast mandates of Deuteronomy.

*Deuteronomy 16:16*

*(16) Three times in a year shall all thy males appear before the LORD thy God in the place which he shall choose; in the feast of unleavened bread, and in the feast of weeks, and in the feast of tabernacles: and they shall not appear before the LORD empty:*

Caesar Augustus had decreed that all men must report to their city of birth to pay taxes that year (Luke 2:1-3). The timing may or may not have been designed to coincide with Feast of Tabernacles, but they did fall together. Stopping at Bethlehem on the way to the feast was likely the course many would be following at that time. They probably left quite early to go to the Feast so they could deal with this tax and still find a spot in Jerusalem to erect their booth (Leviticus 23:40-42), secure all of the needed supplies, and prepare their dwelling for the week of the Feast. The Feast of Tabernacles comes 14 days after the Feast of Trumpets when we believe our Savior was born, and the trip by foot or donkey would take a few days on the crowded roads. The inns of the vicinity were probably crowded because people were still en route to Jerusalem for the festivities. If Y'shua was born on Feast of Trumpets, this would have allowed enough time for the babe to be strengthened sufficiently for the trip and for Mary to recover from the birth so that she could travel more comfortably on into Jerusalem. There Y'shua would be taken to the Temple for circumcision on day 8 of His life, the booth would be prepared, and within a week after his circumcision this holy child would tabernacle among His brethren in His human form for the first time during the Feast of Tabernacles.