

## ROTATION OF THE PRIESTLY COURSES

*by Bill and Karen Bishop*

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**QUESTION** - How do some calendars under the name of Zadok differ from each other, and why?

There are actually several different versions of calendars now that claim "Zadok or Zadokite" as all or a part of their name. There is one particular version emerging that has caused a 1-week differential among followers of the Zadok/Zadokite calendar, resulting in 2 separate camps. This disparity arises when attempting to integrate the priestly courses from the Mishmarot portion of the Dead Sea Scrolls (henceforth DSS) with the 364-day Sabbath calendar. As attempts are made to resurrect the Mishmarot scrolls and design a viable means to implement their writings into the calendar, the resulting calendar has begun the year one week earlier than the Zadokite Sabbath calendar that we advocate.

### The Mishmarot Scrolls

**QUESTION** - What are the Mishmarot Scrolls?

The scrolls that are called the Mishmarot scrolls are manuscripts 4Q319 - 4Q330. In these scrolls, a schedule of rotating priestly courses is presented with a combination of both lunar observations and solar timing. This arrangement is thought to suggest a basis for intercalation. We will simply refer to the logistics of this rotation and intercalation as being the "Dead Sea Scroll Rotation of Priestly Courses" (henceforth DSS-RPC). The DSS-RPC application of the Mishmarot scrolls is assumed by many to have been actively used in Qumran. However, does this synchronistic compilation actually work over time? After considerable study, we have found substantial reason to question this, which we will point out throughout this writing.

### Mishmarot?

**QUESTION** - What does Mishmarot actually mean?

Mishmarot is the plural form of Strong's H4931 (*mismeret*) *watch, sentry, guard, post; act of keeping, preserving*. It is the feminine form of the masculine noun H4929 (*mismar*) with the same meanings as H4931, and their root word is *shamar* - Strong's H8104 (*samar*) *keep, have charge of, watch, protect*. This demonstrates an attitude in Qumran that the priests were to have charge of guarding and protecting that which was holy. The Mishmarot scrolls record the method for addressing this responsibility by the priests in a 6-year schema that specifies the rotation of the priestly courses, which loosely follow the Scripture in 1 Chronicles 24.

## Mishmarot of 1 Chronicles 24

**QUESTION** - How does the Bible define the priestly courses?

In King David's preparation for the first Temple to be built by Solomon, 24 chief priests were organized into courses of service for the Temple. These courses were part of a greater listing of divisions that are spelled out in 1 Chronicles chapters 24-26. Each division includes Levitical ministers, singers, and porters that serve with the chief priests. The chief priests in turn serve under the High Priest who is in overall authority. This entire Mishmarot system includes all this and more for responsibly preserving the holy.

Josephus speaks of the process for selecting the courses of the chief priests in The Antiquities of the Jews:

The Works of Josephus – The Antiquities of the Jews 7.14.7.366 – p 208

*and the courses were **distributed by lot in the presence of David, and Zadok, and Abiathar, the high priest, and all the rulers:***

His account meshes nicely with the introduction of this listing in 1 Chronicles 24:1-6. Here it is, sparing unnecessary details:

1 Chronicles 24:1a, 3, 5-6

(1) Now these are the divisions of the sons of Aaron. ...

(3) And **David** distributed them, both **Zadok** of the sons of Eleazar, and Ahimelech of the sons of Ithamar, according to their offices in their service.

(5) They **divided them by lots**, for there were officials of the holy place and officials **designated by God** among the descendants of both Eleazar and Ithamar.

(6) And Shemaiah the son of Nethaneel the scribe, one of the Levites, wrote them before the king, and the princes, and **Zadok the priest**, and Ahimelech the son of Abiathar, and **before the chief of the fathers of the priests and Levites** ... .

We would note in verse 5 that the casting of lots in these days was counted as evidence that **Yah had spoken**, and had **divinely ordained** the results of the lots. Zadok witnessed the casting of these lots, and we can be sure that he would have maintained their divinely ordained results as he handed down his heritage to his descendants.

So - this is how the list of priestly courses in 1 Chronicles 24:7-18 were designated by lot. Each course was named after the chief priest, such as course 1 being Jehoiarib:

1 Chronicles 24:7

(7) The first lot went to Jehoiarib, the second to Jedaiah,

The purpose of these courses was to govern and oversee priestly duties as shown in verse 19 which concludes the courses of the chief priests:

1 Chronicles 24:19

(19) This was the order in which they carried out their assigned responsibilities when they entered the LORD's temple, according to the regulations given them by their ancestor Aaron, just as the LORD God of Israel had instructed him.

So how did these courses work? Josephus also tells us that each course served a week at a time – from one weekly Sabbath to the next:

The Works of Josephus – The Antiquities of the Jews 7.14.7.365 – p 208

*... and he (David) ordained that one course should minister to God eight days, from Sabbath to Sabbath.*

Scholars tend to agree that **each course served for 1 week at a time, serving 2 times a year** at roughly six month intervals. This makes 48 weeks of services by course, and there is reason to conclude that all courses served for two weeks around each of the spring and fall feasts, making 52 weeks total for the year.

### **Mishmarot of the Dead Sea Scrolls**

**QUESTION** - How do these scrolls relate to the calendar system found in the Dead Sea Scrolls?

The segment of the Dead Sea Scrolls which speaks of the Mishmarot is found in manuscripts 4Q319 - 4Q330. These scrolls designate the ordering of the priestly courses from 1 Chronicles 24 with a few other caveats. The schema of the courses is established in a repeating 6-year pattern which is merged with lunar criteria onto the solar-based 364-day calendar. The scrolls also extrapolate this 6-year cycle into an even greater repeating pattern of 6 Jubilee periods of 49 years each, resulting in a 294-year overall pattern.

### **Structure of the Course Rotations in the Mishmarot Manuscripts**

**QUESTION** - How are the course duties determined in the Mishmarot manuscripts?

The DSS-RPC begin the rotation with Gamul which is the 22<sup>nd</sup> course according to 1 Chronicles 24. Each course serves for 1 week at a time, and the rotation flows in the same order as 1 Chronicles 24 without ceasing throughout the year. They disregarded the idea that a pause is needed in the flow of courses to accommodate the holy days, even though all the priests (being males) would have to be present anyway for each of the pilgrimage feasts. The charting in the scrolls indicates which courses would be serving as the festivals occur, and everyone would just assist. This means the course flow would be uninterrupted, and the 48 weeks of rotation would be over before the 52-week

year ends. This results in the next 4 of the 24 courses serving a 3<sup>rd</sup> time in a year. This 4-week overlap each year leads to a reset of the schema after 6 years with Gamul beginning in the 7<sup>th</sup> year, which is the first year of the next 6-year schema. Therefore, each course serves equally 13 times during the 6-year period. There is also additional charting in the manuscripts for specific courses in specific Holy Day services, Shemitas and Jubilee periods, according to the cycles of 6-year rotations.

Because of the detailed charting in these scrolls, it is assumed that an extra week can only be added after every 6th year so that the courses remain in their proper weeks of the pattern.

### **Mishmarot of 1 Chronicles Compared to 4Q319 - 4Q330**

**QUESTION** - How much correlation do we find from these manuscripts to the Bible itself?

**FACT** - Per 1 Chronicles 24:7, the lots ordained by Yah specifically designated the first course to go to Jehoiarib.

**PROBLEM** - The Mishmarot scrolls begin the courses with Gamul, which is #22 in the 1 Chronicles 24 listing.

The Zadokite calendar is perfectly identical each year until intercalation is needed. Even then, its symmetry is a hallmark. There are no shifts or transitions within it. It is exactly the same from one year to the next. Why would the priestly courses assigned to this calendar be any different? Our Yah is "echad", and does not change!

Rather than adhering to the Scriptural rotation, moving from #1 through #24 each year, the Mishmarot scrolls begin with #22, then proceed through 24, and circle back around to #1 and onward. Furthermore, while scholars agree that the courses served for 1 week each, 2 times per year, the DSS-RPC style of rotation method can result in 4 priestly course serving 3 times in the year, and causing the rotation to begin a year with yet a different course at the start of each calendar year throughout the 6-year cycle.

According to the DSS-RPC, the courses serving in their Scripturally designated positions is disregarded. While the sequence of courses is based on the criteria of 1 Chronicles 24, Jehoiarib never serves as course #1. It is always another chief priest. Yah may have had reasons for selecting certain priestly lines for certain course divisions. If so, this handful of Mishmarot scrolls would thwart Yah's design and intents.

Each course represents a specific timeframe of Temple service, where specific qualifications may be needed. Would there be a correlation of certain priests with certain abilities for certain courses during the year? We know Yah does not determine things arbitrarily, and his patterns are significant. Duties will vary from one week to another, so wouldn't Yah assign the specific courses for

the priests in consideration to their appropriate abilities?

While this reasoning is merely a supposition on our part, there is evidence that this ordering was not to be violated during the course of the year. This altering of the precise numbering of the lots which was Scripturally mandated is actually in direct conflict with the **eyewitness reporting** of the historian Josephus.

**FACT** – An article by Professor Kenneth Atkinson on academia.edu validates the Essene affiliation of Josephus, naming him as eyewitness to their practices in Second Temple Period:

Scripta Judaica Cracoviensia – Volume 10 (2012) – pp 7-15 - Josephus the Essene at Qumran?: An Example of the Intersection of the Dead Sea Scrolls and the Archaeological Evidence in Light of Josephus's Writings – by Kenneth Atkinson – p 1

What has largely been neglected in this debate is **Flavius Josephus, who alone among the Second Temple Period authors claims to have been an Essene.** ... This article examines **the importance of Josephus as an eyewitness to Essene beliefs and practices in the first century C.E.** ... The evidence examined in this article reveals that Josephus is **our only extant witness to life at Khirbet Qumran** during its later occupational phase (Periods II-III, ca. **4B.C.E.-73/4 C.E.**).

**FACT** – This eyewitness said the courses did not rotate from one year to the next:

In his writings, this eyewitness Josephus quite clearly stated:

*The Works of Josephus – The Antiquities of the Jews 7.14.7.366 – p 208*

*... and **the course which came up first was written down at the first, and accordingly the second, and so on to the twenty-fourth; and this partition hath remained to this day.***

Yes, this **eyewitness** to Essene practices is telling us that the precise ordering of 1 Chronicles 24 was being practiced by the Qumran community in his day during the Second Temple Period – specifically stating that the course which served first was the course written down at the first – i.e. in the Scriptures! It could not be clearer. He explicitly stated that the first course of 1 Chronicles was the first course in service in Qumran as well – year after year - just as Yah decreed them in Scripture (1 Chronicles 24) – that **the courses were static** in their service - **they did NOT shift from one year to another!**

**PROBLEM** – The DSS-RPC shows the priestly courses rotating from one year to the next, and are reset every 6 years. This too is in conflict with the way the eye-witness Josephus professes the actual flow of the courses to be.

Regarding the manner of Temple service, it is commonly understood that the

incoming course was there for Sabbath each week. Then all the courses served together during Chag HaMatzot (Unleavened Bread), Shavuot (Pentecost), and Sukkot (Feast of Tabernacles) due to all the extra people and sacrifices.

Commentaries indicate that equity was a major factor in dictating duties. It would have been somewhat unfair then for the courses that were ministering before and after the week of festivities to do all the extra work of preparation and clean-up. However, here is a scenario that aligns seamlessly. Although it is somewhat conjecture, it aligns with the standard of the Qumran community as stated by Josephus, maintaining the weekly order of the courses. Here is our scenario:

When using the Zadok/Zadokite Sabbath calendar, both of the major feast weeks occur from mid-week to mid-week. Recall that all the priestly courses (all males) were to attend the week-long spring and fall feasts anyway, and it is generally understood that they all assisted during the festival periods. Rather than reporting to duty just as the festival was beginning mid-week, we propose that all the courses would report to duty before a feast week when the normal transition occurred on the weekly Sabbath. They would all relieve the course that had just been completed, and they would all begin preparations for the festival week. They would all work throughout the festival week, and would all assist in clean-up until the following Sabbath when a new course would begin the normal duties. This would make a 2-week service period for each of the festivals - twice a year, totaling 4 weeks of corporate service by all courses. Since each of the 24 individual courses served 1 week 2 times a year, that would be 48 weeks of individual course service. Add on the 4 weeks of corporate service, and this would complete the 52-week calendar year. This would keep the courses aligned perfectly with 1 Chronicles 24 as Josephus stated.

We are not sure when the solar year morphed to become its present length of about 365.25 days which causes the need for intercalation. However, it was likely that this was the case even in Second Temple days. So - how would the courses work for the extra week in a year that needs to be intercalated? The Temple Institute may help us out here when it provides information about how the priestly courses operated:

<https://templeinstitute.org/a-day-in-the-holy-temple-part-2/>

*Each of these 24 groups was further divided into 6 clans, or family branches. Every day of the week was presided over by one family group, and on the Sabbath the week's entire priestly shift worked together. ...*

*The kohanim were exceedingly zealous in their missions, and all wanted the opportunity to conduct the Divine services. There were only a specific number of daily tasks, however, and it was impossible for everyone to attend to these at once. In order to give each priest of the shift an **equal opportunity** to officiate in these holy vocations, a system was devised whereby all those who desired to serve would receive a fair chance to qualify.*

*The assignment of which kohanim may have the privilege and honor of carrying out **the important Temple services was designated by special lotteries which was held each day in the Temple.** All the kohanim of the family clan whose (sic) were serving that day would participate in this drawing, which was conducted by an official who was entrusted with this role.*

Since the priests were treated with equity, the priestly duties of a week 53 on any calendar year might be determined by lot as well. Then the courses would fall back into place with course number one at the beginning of the new year.

Here is another important scenario where we will see why the number of these courses falling in their appropriate place year after year is very significant.

**CONNECTING THE DOTS PROVES** – that Y'shua was born in the fall. Our Yom Teruah video reveals that the Temple shepherds could only graze their sheep in the hills of Bethlehem during late summer or early fall. This means that Y'shua's birth in the manger there must have been about the time of the fall festival period, likely Yom Teruah. There is a URL at the end of the article if you'd care to view it. Then working backwards, we can see how events must have unfolded so Mary would be there at the right time for this to happen. She would have conceived some nine months before the fall festivals, which would have been around Chanukkah. Luke 1:36 tells us that Mary's conception occurred when Elizabeth was in her sixth month of pregnancy. That would place Elizabeth's conception around Shavuot. Luke 1:5 tells us that Elizabeth's husband Zechariah was serving in the Temple during the course of Abia when Gabriel appeared to him. Abia was spelled Abijah in 1 Chronicles 24:10, when it shows us that this course was course number 8 of the Temple's priestly courses. Each course was for 1 week, twice a year, with the intervening festival weeks when every course served. That means that course number 8 would have finished just before Shavuot – at just the right time for Zechariah to return home and impregnate Elizabeth. The timing fits like a glove. Given all the proofs of this video, we know that Zechariah **MUST HAVE** been serving in course number 8 (the course of Abiah) just prior to Shavuot so Y'shua could be born when He **MUST HAVE** been born.

**PROBLEM** – The DSS-RPC shows the priestly courses rotating from one year to the next, in a pattern that shifts their entire sequence to alternative times of the year.

Not everyone trying to implement the Mishmarot scrolls comes up with identical data and calendar dates. However, we have not yet seen where course 8 (the course of Abijah or Abia) **ever** comes in the position it would rightfully have in the Scriptural sequence of 1 Chronicles 24.

## **A Creation Calendar**

**QUESTION** - Do we have any idea when the Sabbath calendar was first used?

The Sabbath calendar system is engineered from the week of creation –

making it a creation-based calendar, and we would assert that this calendar was implemented right away by Yah with Adam. This 364-day Sabbath calendar was formulated from the elements of creation, and it was apparently used up through Enoch, Noah, Moses, King David, Zadok, and then preserved by the Zadokite priests at Qumran. The heavenly pattern that governs the schema of the sabbath calendar existed and was firmly established about 3000 years before the priestly courses were administered by King David, Zadok and King Solomon in the First Temple, so the DSS-RPC would not apply to this initial 3000-year timeframe at all.

**QUESTION** - Why would King David and the High Priest Zadok install the priestly courses in a manner that would be discordant with the sabbath calendar as it was previously established from creation?

As we proceed, it will become obvious that the two calendar templates do not align to one another. The 364-day Sabbath calendar maintains a perfectly balanced schema of days, months, seasons and years with a continual flow of Sabbaths, both weekly and monthly.

**FACT** – The priestly order did not originate with creation. It was not established until 1 Chronicles 24, roughly 985 BC, some 3000 years later.

**PROBLEM** – Claims regarding the DSS-RPC maintain that the Jubilee cycles noted in these manuscripts can be strung together to carry this system backward and/or forward through time – from creation to the end of time as we know it.

It seems a bit contrived to indicate a movement of the DSS-RPC system going back to creation, when there were no divisions of priestly courses ordained at that time. Due to the apparent morphing of time from a 364-day year into a 365.25-day year, only a schematic calendar that is aligned with the solar year can move back and forth through time with proper and accurate periodic intercalation. However, **the stringent 6-year intercalation of the DSS-RPC cycle prevents this from happening without further adjustment.** Intercalation must occur more often in order to keep the 364-day calendar in sync with the actual solar year. Trying to take the DSS-RPC cycles back to creation or move them forward through time without further adjustment would be like fitting square pegs in round holes, and it would eventually drift away from the reality of the solar year and the seasons.

## **Intercalation**

**QUESTION** - Since a 364-day calendar is schematic in nature, how does it adjust to the reality of the solar year?

The Zadok/Zadokite Sabbath calendar finishes a year about 1.25 days before the solar year is completed, and this requires an additional week every 5 or 6 years to stay in sync with the actual seasons which are determined by the



sun's annual solstices and equinoxes. This assures that the harvests of the land will be ready for use during Yah's ordained festivals in a timely manner.

The natural flow of the Zadokite calendar makes it a self correcting calendar. The equinox event marks the end of the exiting solar year. Then the new calendar year always begins on the first weekday-4 following the vernal equinox, or on the same day of the equinox when it occurs simultaneously. If the 52 weeks of the Zadokite calendar ends before the equinox event, then we must wait for it. Its new year cannot begin until the exiting solar year has ended. That provides a very simplistic protocol for determining the new year. It is really profoundly straightforward! We must simply advance to the first Wednesday after the equinox to begin the new year, or on the day of the equinox if it occurs on a Wednesday. We do this each and every year. It never changes.

**FACT** - The natural flow of the Zadokite Sabbath 364-day calendar can usually be intercalated every 6 years in order to be in sync with the solar reality. However, **the natural flow of time with the vernal equinox occasionally demands intercalation after only 5 years.**

**PROBLEM** – In order for the DSS-RPC flow to continue through time, its pattern of combined cycles requires intercalation **every six years without fail**. Certain weeks, feasts, years and lunar phases within certain shemitah or jubilee cycles are specifically charted for certain courses. Because of the detailed charting in these scrolls, it is determined that an extra week can only be added after every 6th year so that the courses remain in their proper weeks of the pattern. This stringent 6 year intercalation policy causes its schema to drift behind the reality of the solar year over time. **Without some further human intervention** to apply another type of adjustment, the festivals will not be in sync with the harvests.

## The Equinox

**QUESTION** - What relationship does the equinox have to the calendar?

The sign that the exiting solar year is ended and the new year can begin is the equinox, which is purely a SOLAR event. Only by considering this timing can we be assured that the heat and light of the sun will be adequate for crop maturity in time for Yah's agriculturally based festivals! Due to the agricultural nature of the festivals, the calendar year must adhere to the solar year.

Many references to the calendar of the scrolls are located in The Book of Jubilees, but one in particular stands out:

Jubilees – The Hermeneia Translation by James C. VanderKam:

*Jubilees 2:8-10:*

*8) On the fourth day the Lord made the sun, the moon, and the stars. He placed them in the heavenly firmament to shine on the whole earth, to rule*

over day and night and to separate between light and darkness.

9) **The Lord appointed the sun as a great sign above the earth for days, Sabbaths, months, festivals, years, Sabbaths of years, jubilees, and all cycles of the years.**

10) It separates between light and darkness and (serves) for well-being so that everything that sprouts and grows on the earth may prosper. These three types he made on the fourth day.

We see here that **the Lord appointed the sun as a great sign above the earth for all cycles of the years**, and this is so that everything that sprouts and grows may prosper. The crops must be ready for the festivals!! **All cycles** of the years depend on the proper timing of transition from the old year to the new. The sun (as the GREATER light of Genesis 1:16) rules over the other lights to provide the marker for this change of year - the equinox.

### **The Equilux**

**QUESTION** - What relationship does the equilux have to the calendar?

Sometimes there is confusion as to whether we should begin a year with the equilux rather than the equinox. The **equilux** is supposedly the actual timing of equal portions of light and dark, but just how is this light and darkness to be measured? It is arbitrary at best, and while there are some claims to determine it precisely, it cannot be determined by the average person. Equal daytime and nighttime can vary slightly, even in the same locale, due to differences in the horizon. Furthermore, equilux timing varies greatly depending on latitude, so it really has no relevance to the specific dating of the calendar. Please see our newly revised and updated article called Equinox or Equilux for more detail.

### **The Starry Host**

**QUESTION** - Do the stars have any relativity to the Sabbath calendar or to the priestly courses of the Mishmarot scrolls?

While there apparently WAS a correlation between the 12 houses of the Mazzaroth to the calendar year in the days of the Psalmist (as evidenced in Psalm 19), this has vanished over time due to the Precession of the Equinoxes. They have no bearing whatsoever today. Some speculate that they do, but there is no reference to stars in these scrolls. Please see our article called Sun, Moon, Stars, and Priests for further detail.

### **Lunar Data**

**QUESTION** - Why are lunar phases recorded in the Mishmarot scrolls?

In the Mishmarot scrolls, the phases of the moon are noted in conjunction with

the courses, in addition to the solar data, but nobody is really sure why. The lunar data is noted using the 4 symbols: "dwq", "x", "na" and "KUR", but even scholars who have intensely studied the scrolls disagree about what they actually mean. For example:

Lunar Calendars at Qumran? A Comparative and Ideological Study by Jonathan Ben-Dov – notes #31 - p 186

*The identity of the lunar phases recorded in 4Q320 and 4Q321 remains debated. ... Most scholars would claim that 4Q320 records the full moon date in each lunation, and that 4Q321 adds to it the phase called here **dwq**, which corresponds with the first visibility ... . Talmon and Knohl argued instead that 4Q320 records the day of last visibility and that the **dwq** of 4Q321 corresponds to the day after full moon, when the moon begins to wane: ...*

For this reason, there is little consensus on how to discern this data, and how to render these scrolls usable for us today.

Furthermore, it would appear that the lunar data used in these scrolls was that which was recorded in 4Q317, two fragments earlier. Academia's Dead Sea Scroll scholar, Dr. Helen R. Jacobus has some issues with this scroll, saying that the text was littered with "emendations" (corrections) "or unusual scribal features":

Qumran Calendars and the Creation by Helen R Jacobus – p 51

*First published, in part, by Milik (as AQAstrCrypt = **4Q317**), it was described as a "Hebrew text copied in cryptic writing ... **In it, the phases of the moon are described, on a scale of fourteenths of the area of the full moon, for the successive days of the solar year of 364 days.**" Milik published about two-thirds of frag. 1 with a translation, and without a commentary, and there was no mention that **the text was LITTERED with emendations or unusual scribal features.***

This doesn't speak too highly of the accuracy of the information the Mishmarot scrolls likely brought forward. While most people seem to think that all the scrolls are either 100% accurate, or (to the other extreme) that they are 100% fraudulent, neither of these assumptions has merit. It is wise to understand that some scrolls may not be totally doctrinally sound. Dr. Jacobus used the term LITTERED, indicating an unacceptable amount of corrections and markings in this particular scroll, prompting skepticism.

The attention to the lunar aspect in these scrolls is troubling to some scholars of the scrolls as well. One such example is shown by Dr. and Professor Jonathan Ben-Dov, one of the foremost scholars of and authors about the Dead Sea Scrolls, particularly pertaining to the calendar aspect:

The 364-Day Year in the Dead Sea Scrolls and Jewish Pseudepigrapha by Jonathan Ben-Dov p 89

**There is no function for the lunar phases in the ritual calendar.** *The religious life of the community was dictated by the 364-day calendar alone; the yahad had no festival or sacrifice which depended on lunar movements, such as the first of the month, the full moon, etc. ... Also, **when the phases of the moon are indicated in the calendrical documents, they are always indicated schematically and never by actual observation.** In sectarian circles, the schematic year [by this he would mean the solar-based 364-day schematic year] remained the **exclusive mechanism to calibrate sacred time**, although some other calculations were maintained alongside it for various other purposes.*

Likewise, other Dead Sea scholars validate his findings:

Qumran Calendars: A Survey of Scholarship 1980 2007 – by Jonathan Ben-Dov and Stephane Saulnier, p 152

*Ben-Dov and Horowitz (2005:116) maintain that, although the Qumranic calendar experts kept constant record of a schematic lunar orbit, this record had no cultic-liturgical implications. Rather, 'at Qumran, sacred time was exclusively regulated by the 364 day year'.*

Note that “cultic” (as in this quote) is simply a DSS term to indicate: *of or relating to religious practice*. Likewise, “liturgical” relates to *liturgy and worship*. These “cultic-liturgical implications” would then be associated with the observance of the sacred Feast days, etc.

### **Authoritativeness**

**QUESTION** - Are all the scrolls from Qumran worthy of consideration for theological purposes or calendar formation?

It must be noted that not every scroll written and preserved at Qumran is on equally solid footing. Though the scrolls contain many golden nuggets and numerous copies of the books of Scripture, not everything found there should be seriously considered, or actually viewed as being authoritative. For example, The Damascus Document is a beautiful writing that adheres to Scripture very well – for the most part. However, there are a few things that stand out as being problematic. Relative to the Sabbath, fragment 11 of The Damascus Document reads in part:

The Dead Sea Scrolls by Michael Wise, Martin Abegg, Jr., and Edward Cook – scroll 4Q270 - Fragment 11 – page 69

*No one should help an animal give birth on the Sabbath, and if it falls into a well or a pit, he may not lift it out on the Sabbath. ... Any living human who falls into a body of water or a cistern shall not be helped out with ladder, rope, or other instrument.*

It was a worthy principle of not working on the Sabbath - but carried to excess, it became an abomination. Did Y'shua authorize such rules? Absolutely not. He refuted such things:

Luke 14:5

(5) And answered them, saying, Which of you shall have an ass or an ox fallen into a pit, and will not straightway pull him out on the sabbath day?

This principle can carry through to the calendar as well. We were not blind to this when we entered into our study of the calendar in the scrolls. With our guard up, we were determined that if anything in the scrolls was in direct conflict with the original Scriptures, we would have to discount it. That is why the subtitle of our book The Biblical Calendar Then and Now says: Comparing and Contrasting Holy Scripture to the Dead Sea Scrolls.

We should realize that not all scrolls are worthy of theological consideration. The scrolls of the Qumran caves are a library of ancient literary works, and ancient scholars were just as prone to get lost in the weeds as modern scholars do occasionally. That's why peer-review is so important. They were a collection of writings from varied sources, some Gnostic in nature, and some were even just recipes.

In his writing Lunar Calendars at Qumran?, Dr. Ben Dov noted the nature of the various scrolls:

Lunar Calendars at Qumran? A Comparative and Ideological Study by Jonathan Ben-Dov - p173

*It is important, however, to note that, while some of the Dead Sea Scrolls represent the literature written by Yahad members for their own use, not all scrolls collected in the caves comply with this kind of inner-circle literature. Some scrolls represent earlier or softer versions of sectarianism, possibly of other sects or of predecessors to the Yahad, while others may have originated with other, non-sectarian circles.*

Dr. Ben-Dov even asserts that one of the foremost scholars of the Dead Sea Scrolls, Professor Shemaryahu Talmon and his co-writer Dr. Israel Knohl viewed the lunar text of 4Q321 as being a "heavily ideological document". He also attests to the **similarity between the rotational cycles of service in these Mishmarot scrolls to the cycles shown in the writings of other cultures:**

Lunar Calendars at Qumran? A Comparative and Ideological Study by Jonathan Ben-Dov - notes #1 - p 184

*A group of texts from this corpus ties various aspects of the calendar with the rotating service of twenty-four priestly families (henceforth: mishmarot) in the Jerusalem Temple. **This service cycle is similar to other cultic-administrative apparatus from the ancient world, such as priteniai in the Athenian calendar or phylae in ancient Egypt.***

Again, he points to a striking similarity between Egyptian practice and the Mishmarot scrolls, indicating that this was a form of “**calendrical speculation**” that was “well-grounded in the practices of Hellenistic temples outside Jerusalem” while indicating that those in Qumran simply “**did their best** to synchronize it with the 364-day year”:

Lunar Calendars at Qumran? A Comparative and Ideological Study by Jonathan Ben-Dov – pp 179-180

*Quite a few **Egyptian documents**, many of them pre-Hellenistic, **attest to the use of the lunar calendar for the purpose of regulating the service periods of priests in the temples.** ... The format of these texts, which give a list of new moons according to the civil calendar, is **remarkably reminiscent of Jewish mishmarot rosters**, especially 4Q320. They demonstrate that this type of calendrical **speculation** in Jewish texts was well-grounded in the practices of Hellenistic temples outside Jerusalem. ... The comparison with 4Q320 thus could possibly be taken to show that the lunar count maintained a normative aspect also in the eyes of the Yahad authors of 4Q320, **who did their best** to synchronize it with the 364-day year.*

So – again it is being shown to simply be an **attempt** to create a workable system by combining two schematics and overlaying course rotation.

Furthermore, a notable translator of the Dead Sea Scrolls suggests that these Mishmarot scrolls were actually just an attempt to merge solar and lunar data to form this construct for priestly course rotation. “Attempt” is the key word here. Penguin Classics provides an overview for us (emphasis ours):

The Complete Dead Sea Scrolls in English by Penguin Classics – pp 347

*Twelve fragmentary manuscripts from Cave 4, palaeographically dated to the late second century BCE, present in various forms the peculiar 'solar' calendar – constructed in six-year sequences – of the Qumran community. Their year consisted of twelve months of thirty days each, plus four extra days added to each of the four seasons ... .Some documents from 4Q(319 and 321) **ATTEMPT TO** combine this calendar with the various **priestly courses which served in turn in the Temple for a week at a time from one sabbath to the following Friday.** They also combine it with the dates of the full moon given according to the days of the week of duty of the priestly course, the date of the solar month, and the equivalent date of the **lunar calendar of mainstream Judaism.** ... .*

### **Validation Throughout the Corpus of DSS Texts**

**QUESTION** - Is there any evidence of the Mishmarot priestly rotation in other scrolls?

Are manuscripts 4Q319 - 4Q330 documenting a process that was actually

being executed in Qumran, or are they simply a portion of research by a scribe or scribes (perhaps attempting to synchronize the priestly courses with various calendars)? These scrolls simply do not mesh with the whole of the DSS in any realistic practice. Jonathan Ben-Dov provides an educated perspective in his article, *Lunar Calendars at Qumran? A Comparative and Ideological Study* when he simply said that the Yahad authors of 4Q320 **did their best** to synchronize the lunar data with the 364-day year.

The book of 1 Enoch documents both solar and lunar data, and while it discusses their relativity to each other, their movements remain independent of each other in the cosmology that it reports. Elsewhere in the scrolls, we can find **either** solar **or** lunar data, but they were always recorded separately. The scrolls of the Mishmarot are the only scrolls that attempt to combine both into one system. It appears that maybe the authors of these scrolls were trying to incorporate the movements of the two luminaries into one system for practical use with the priestly courses, but the results are incompatible for a long-term pattern. Such an attempt never appears elsewhere in the scrolls.

This handful of scrolls is truly a separate work that seems to have been in progress, and it is impossible to fully understand the purpose of these records - or the motivation behind them. There are no other indications in the scrolls to give us a glimmer as to what their relevancy might be, and we must conclude at this time that they are nothing more than charts being recorded - potentially a research study that was never completed. We continue to try to find out what the significance of these scribal notes were about, but it should be clear that they were not being used in the manner that some folks today want to say they were used.

Our choice of material to include when we worked with our calendar book was based on that which was reported repeatedly throughout the multitude of scrolls that relate to the topic, and we meticulously checked our references to Scripture itself to ensure that nothing we presented conflicted with the Holy Writ. The books of Jubilees and 1 Enoch were among the scrolls, and even though few people consider them to be canon, there is a considerable amount of good information within them for our use today. There were more copies of these books by far than of almost any other scrolls, which lent considerable credibility to them in their usage at Qumran. Even then, there is evidence of alterations that have probably occurred over time, so we had to tread carefully in our study. The basic and consistent calendar functions, however, were identifiable throughout the scrolls - except for the scrolls of the Mishmarot. Please see our article named Prescribed Pattern of the Years for further information.

The Sabbath calendar system that we understand today is reflected in its usage throughout the DSS. We have not found that the Mishmarot scrolls share any cross-references or appearances in any of the other scrolls that record priestly activity, nor do they appear to be consistent with Scripture. While the presence of these few scrolls is still a bit of an enigma, their application to the Sabbath calendar cannot be accomplished within any logical or reasonable legitimacy. In fact, it is more than reasonable to assert that

**these Mishmarot as recorded in the DSS are not intended to be included in the determination of the Sabbath calendar system that is so completely and plainly shown in the bulk of the DSS.** Realizing that Scriptural issues plus other problems with the Mishmarot scrolls were evident, we have not included the DSS-RPC in our adoption of the Sabbath calendar. Instead we choose to weigh-in heavily with the more authentic and straightforward testimony of Josephus for a proper understanding of the priestly courses from 1 Chronicles 24.

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### Concerns

Scrolls 4Q319 - 4Q330 contain very detailed information that cover a **6-year pattern**, and this pattern can be extrapolated out to form a **schema** that is **independent of and incompatible with the creation-based schema** we see being used in the bulk of the Qumran Scrolls. Therefore, **the DSS-RPC is incompatible with the Sabbath calendar.** Furthermore, this handful of scrolls **does not fit well with Scripture itself.** Calendars based on DSS-RPC **do not appear to recognize the vernal equinox** as a necessary indicator for intercalation; they often begin the year before the equinox. **This really is a huge violation of the divinely ordained heavenly courses and markers that were set in motion at creation, and it defies Scriptural references.**

The priestly courses were not a manmade institution. The system of casting lots was Yah's method of declaring His ordained input. We can be sure that whatever Yah orchestrates, He orchestrates with consistency. Yah is echad. He is unchanging. We resolutely assert a solid premise that Yah would NOT violate the patterning of His heavenly courses for timekeeping with a discordant pattern in the priestly courses; if they are to work together, their schema's must work in unison.

Since there is no evidence that the DSS Mishmarot ever functioned at Qumran, and there is no foreseeable manner in which it can function, **the DSS - RPC is NOT an accurate indicator for the proper intercalation of the Sabbath calendar.**

Josephus testifies of a different, more straightforward and simpler methodology for accommodating the weekly priestly rotations. It is the exact replica of the 1 Chronicles 24 method, which can be easily instituted on the Sabbath calendar. Their rotations have absolutely no need to be at odds with the sabbath calendar. The historian Josephus provides a very credible eye-witness testimony to the simple, straightforward implementation of the priestly courses.

The simple fact that these Mishmarot scrolls combine lunar and solar criteria is a massive contradiction to the basic structure of the calendar system as shown in its practice at Qumran, especially relative to The Book of Jubilees. It was



one of the most prominent manuscripts in the caves, and it forbids the use of lunar considerations relative to the liturgical calendar. The lunar observations recorded in the Mishmarot scrolls are a huge red flag as to the validity of the DSS-RPC in regards to the 364-day Sabbath calendar. Due to the inclusion of the lunar data, the full roster of courses cannot stay in sync with the solar year as recorded in the bulk of the DSS.

## **Conclusion**

Finally, the priestly courses of Qumran were most likely done in the way outlined by Josephus. As we have repeatedly studied this issue, we are led to the following conclusions:

**Using the information as recorded in the Mishmarot scrolls introduces discrepancy and inconsistency into the Sabbath calendar system.**

**It is a massive error to assume the usage of the Mishmarot schema for calendar intercalation.**

**The rotation of the Mishmarot as laid out in DSS 4Q319 - 4Q330 cannot be considered as a record of actual priestly practice at Qumran.**

**The Mishmarot scrolls have no relevancy for a legitimate consideration in the sabbath calendar system as revealed in the DSS.**

**A calendar built around a 6-year cycle of solar and lunar data cannot hold up over time.**

We have **connected dots**, we have quoted the carefully considered findings of academic experts in the field, and we have presented many **facts** that should not be ignored. We have also noted many **problems** that present themselves as a result of ignoring the results of these dots, these findings, and these facts. One of the most egregious problems is to begin the new calendar year before the equinox.

Even the tabernacle and Temples were built in an equinoctial fashion so the equinox could be observed from the structures themselves. The stars were of no consequence, but sighting the equinox was essential. To start the new year before the equinox is a profound violation of the principles of Psalms 19:4 and James 1:17, the mandate in Jubilees 2:8-10, and the solar gates in the writing of 1 Enoch, chapter 79. We cannot ignore such Scriptural and historical references just to begin the year when it "seems" right.

Proverbs 14:12

(12) There is a way which seemeth right unto a man, but the end thereof are the ways of death.

This is repeated in Proverbs 16:25, as though these words provide an important understanding. We take great heed to these verses, and proceed

accordingly. We would advise that others do likewise!

While the Mishmarot scrolls are interesting, we simply cannot view them as being authoritative relative to the intercalation of the calendar. We realize that the Zadokite priesthood reverently preserved and lived by the calendar of the scrolls, but we refrain from using the "priestly" calendar to describe it - largely because of the incongruency and problematic nature of this handful of Mishmarot scrolls.

We focus instead on the sanctity and sovereign nature of the weekly Sabbath in Yah's creation, and call this calendar which was built on layerings of sevens as being Yah's Sabbath calendar. Yah presented a calendar in the bulk of the scrolls that was extremely simplistic - one that a fifth grader could easily navigate. It has a built-in caveat to allow for self-correction relative to the needed intercalation. It has the ability to unite Yah's people to observe His holy days, and to know their timing far in advance. He thought of everything when He designed the heavenly patterns of days, seasons, and years for this fabulous calendar.

Yet, well-meaning folks complicate its simplicity with the intricate alternatives of misaligned ideologies, which simply cause confusion in the body of Messiah. Even those who adopt the DSS-RPC are not in agreement about where to start their schema and exactly how it works. We find it rather heart-breaking that people cannot just flow with the natural beauty of Yah's marvelously designed masterpiece that we call the Zadokite Sabbath Calendar, and we still pray for the day when the body of Messiah will unite themselves around it!

May you be blessed as you continue to study out the matter of Yah's calendar!

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VIDEO:

[Yom Teruah - A Memorial Day of Blowing Trumpets](#): a video regarding the birth of Y'shua

RELEVANT ARTICLES:  
(in the order mentioned)

[Equinox or Equilux - Which Do We Use?](#) (newly revised and updated)

[Sun, Moon, Stars, and Priests](#)

[Prescribed Pattern of the Years](#)