SHABBAT HAGADOL DRASHA

The Mistake (Mystique?) of Birkat HaChamah!

by

Rabbi Moshe Shulman

Shabbat April 4, 2009 @ 5:30pm

repeated
Sunday April 5, 2009 @ 8:00pm

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THE MISTAKE (MYSTIQUE?) OF BIRKAT HACHAMAH!
Rabbi Moshe Shulman - Young Israel of St. Louis
Shabbat Hagadol 5769

I) INTRODUCTION – The Calendar & Israel of St. Louis

1. And the Lord spoke to Moses and Aaron in the land of Egypt, saying, 2. This month shall be to you the beginning of months; it shall be the first month of the year to you.

Exodus 12 - 1. And the Lord spoke to Moses and Aaron in the land of Egypt, saying. 2. This month shall be to you the beginning of months; it shall be the first month of the year to you.

Deuteronomy 16 - 1. Observe (or Guard) the month of Abib, and keep the Passover to the Lord your God; for in the month of Abib the Lord your God brought you out of Egypt by night.

2. Solar deity - From Wikipedia, the free encyclopedia
Wikipedia Sun worship was exceptionally prevalent in ancient Egyptian religion. The earliest deities associated with the sun are Wadjet, Sekhmet, Hathor, Nut, Bast, Bat, and Menhit. First Hathor, and then Isis, give birth to and nurse Horus and Ra. The Sun’s movement across the sky represents a struggle between the Pharaoh’s soul and an avatar of Osiris. The "solarisation" of several local gods (Hnum-Re, Min-Re, Amon-Re) reaches its peak in the period of the fifth dynasty. In the eighteenth dynasty, Akhenaten changed the polytheistic religion of Egypt to a pseudo-monotheistic one, Atenism. All other deities were replaced by the Aten, including, Amun, the reigning sun god of Akhenaten’s own region. Unlike other deities, the Aten did not have multiple forms. His only image was a disk—a symbol of the sun. Soon after Akhenaten’s death, worship of the traditional deities was reestablished by the religious leaders who had adopted the Aten during the reign of Akhenaten.

A. Piankoff, The Shrines of Tut-ankh-Amon, New York 1950, 10

3. Sun – god as motif in 10 Plagues

| 7:15. Go to Pharaoh in the morning: lo, he goes out to the water... | 8:1. And Pharaoh rose early in the morning, and looked into the house, and, behold, the house of the Egyptian was turned into blood. |
| 10:5. And they shall cover the face (lit eye) of the earth, that one cannot be able to see the earth... | 8:2. And Pharaoh said, I will let them go, that they may worship me. And Pharaoh made snares for them to die in the wilderness. |
| 10:15. For they covered the face (lit eye) of the whole earth, so that the land was darkened.... | 8:8. And Pharaoh said, I will let you go; only in this will you go, worshiping me. And Moses said, You shall not go out of this place. |
| 10:21. ...that there may be darkness over the land of Egypt, darkness which may be felt. | 8:12. And Pharaoh said, I will let you go; only in this will you go, worshiping me. And Moses said, You shall not go out of this place. |
| 12:12. ...and against all the gods of Egypt I will execute judgment; I am the Lord. | 8:15. And Pharaoh said, I will let you go; only in this will you go, worshiping me. And Moses said, You shall not go out of this place. |

I Kings 6:1
And it came to pass in the four hundred and eightieth year after the people of Israel came out of the land of Egypt, in the fourth year of Solomon’s reign over Israel, in the month Ziv, which is the second month, that he began to build the house of the Lord.

4. The Mistake of Birkat Hachamah!

Sh'mot 8:13: the Egyptians were grieved, and Pharaoh’s heart was hardened. In the fourth day of the month he said...
II) What is Birkat Hachamah?

Talmud Eruvin 56a
Shmuel stated: the vernal equinox occurs only at the beginning of one of the four quarters of the day, either at the beginning of the day or at the beginning of the night, or at midday or at midnight. The summer solstice occurs only either at the end of one and a half, or at the end of seven and a half hours of the day or the night. The autumnal equinox occurs only at the end of three or nine hours of the day or the night, and the winter solstice occurs only at the end of four and a half, or ten and a half hours of the day or the night. The duration of a season of the year is no other than ninety-one days and seven and a half hours.

<table>
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<tr>
<th>Tekufat Nisan 1 @ Creation 4d 0h</th>
<th>Shift MOD 7</th>
<th>Tues. 6:00pm</th>
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<td>Tekufat Nisan 2 @ Creation 365d 6h</td>
<td>1d 6h</td>
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<td>Tekufat Nisan 5</td>
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The brachot of Nisan:

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Talmud Brachot 59b
Our Rabbis taught: He who sees the sun at its turning point, the moon in its power, the planets in their orbits, and the signs of the zodiac in their orderly progress, should say: Blessed be He who has wrought the work of creation. And when [does this happen]? — Abaye said: Every twenty-eight years when the cycle begins again and the Nisan [Spring] equinox falls in Saturn on the evening of Tuesday, going into Wednesday.
13. BIRKAT HACHAMAH – 20TH-23RD CENTURIES

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Civil Date</th>
<th>Jewish Date</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>April 8, 1925</td>
<td>14 Nisan, 5685</td>
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<td>April 8, 1953</td>
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<tr>
<td>April 8, 1981</td>
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<td>April 8, 2009</td>
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<td>April 8, 2037</td>
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14. BIRKAT HACHAMAH ON EREV PESACH

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<td>1821</td>
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<td>1905</td>
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<td>March 26, 1324 BCE</td>
<td>2437</td>
<td>March 26, 693 CE</td>
<td>4453</td>
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<td>March 26, 1240 BCE</td>
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<td>5069</td>
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<td>March 26, 624 BCE</td>
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<td>March 26, 8 BCE</td>
<td>3753</td>
<td>April 8, 2009 CE</td>
<td>5769</td>
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18. A person who sees the sun on the day of the spring equinox at the beginning of the twenty-eight year cycle that begins on Wednesday night [must recite a blessing]. When he sees the sun on Wednesday morning, he should recite the blessing “who performs the work of creation.”

R. Avraham Gombiner, 1633-1683

19. מנייא רכט סק"ח

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III) When was the World Created?

Rosh Hashanah 10b-11a
It has been taught: R. Eliezer says: In Tishri the world was created; in Nisan they were redeemed and in Nisan they will be redeemed in the time to come. R. Joshua says: In Nisan the world was created; in Nisan they will be redeemed in time to come.

Rosh Hashanah 12a
Our Rabbis taught: ‘The wise men of Israel follow R. Eliezer in dating the Flood and R. Joshua in dating the annual cycles....

Rosh Hashanah 27a
R. Samuel b. Isaac asked: What authority do we follow in saying nowadays [on New Year] the prayer, ‘This day is the beginning of thy works, the commemoration of the first day’? What authority? R. Eliezer, who said that the world was created in Tishri.

Page | 4
IV) Is Shmuel Correct?

Rosh Hashanah 25a
Our Sages taught: ...Rabban Gamliel said to them: 'I have it on the authority of my father's father that the renewal of the moon takes place after not less than twenty-nine and a half days, two-thirds of an hour, and seventy-three parts of an hour."

Rosh Hashanah 21a
R. Huna b. Abin sent an instruction to Raba: When you see that the cycle of Tebeth extends to the sixteenth of Nisan, declare that year a leap year and have no doubts, since it is written, "Observe the month [hodesh] of Abib, which signifies, See to it that the Abib of the cycle should commence in the earlier half [hodesh] of Nisan."

28. Tekufat Shmuel: 365¼d
1 Lunar month = 29d 12h 793p
(1 hour = 1080 parts, 1 part = 3 1/3 seconds)
12 Months = 354d 8h 876p
19 year Leap Year Cycle = 235 months
(7 x 13, 12 x 12 = 235 months)
19 Year Cycle = 6939d 16h 595p
19 Solar Years = 6939d 18h

Difference: 1 h 485p

Tekufat R' Ada: 365d 5h 997p 48m
Solar Year = 19 year Cycle / 19
= 235 months x (29d 12h 793p) / 19
= 365d 5h 997p 48m (m=1/76th p)

6. It appears to me that [the Sages] relied on this calculation [of the length] of the seasons regarding the institution of a leap year, in the era when the High Court held sessions and would institute a leap year because of the time [when the equinox was scheduled to occur] or for other reasons. For this calculation is more accurate than the former one. It shares a greater resemblance to the data explained by the astronomers than the first opinion, which considered a solar year to be 365 and 1/4 days.
ברכת החמה

R. Avraham Yeshaya Karelitz, 1878-1953

R. Chaim Benbenisti, 1603-1673

R. Moshe Sofer, 1762

R. Chaim Benbenisti, 1762-1839

Rabbi Shimon b. Tzemach Duran (Rashbatz) – 1361-1444, Algiers

Rabbi Binyomin Slonik, 16th Century, Poland
V) What is the Meaning of Baraishit?

Talmud Shabbat 118b
R. Jose said: May my portion be of those who recite the entire Hallel everyday. But that is not so, for a Master said: He who reads Hallel every day blasphemes and reproaches [the Divine Name]—We refer to the ‘Verses of Song’.

Rambam Commentary on the Mishnah, 13 Principles of Faith
The First Foundation is to believe in the existence of the Creator, blessed be He. This means that there exists a Being that is complete in all ways and He is the cause of all else that exists. He is what sustains their existence and the existence of all that sustains them. It is inconceivable that He would not exist, for if He would not exist then all else would cease to exist as well, nothing would remain.

Rambam, Chametz, 7:1
In every generation, a person must demonstrate as if they have emerged from the Egyptian slavery, as it says, ‘and G-d took us out...

Ramban Exodus 20:2
Who brought you out of the land of Egypt because His taking them out from there was the evidence establishing the existence and will of G-d, for it was with His knowledge and providence that we came out from there. The exodus is also evidence for Creation, for assuming the eternity of the universe it would follow that nothing could be changed from its nature. And it is also evidence for G-d’s infinite power, and His infinite power is an indication of the Unity, as He said, ‘that you [Pharaoh] may know that there is none like Me in all the earth.

R’ Nosson Gestetner - Shir ha-Luhot, 53
He said, ‘G-d’s infinite power, and His infinite wisdom is an indication of the Unity, as He said, ‘that you [Pharaoh] may know that there is none like Me in all the earth.

Ramban Commentary on the Mishnah, 2:2
What is the path to attain love and fear of Him? When a person contemplates G-d’s wondrous and great deeds and creations and appreciates His infinite wisdom that surpasses all comparison, he will immediately love, praise, and glorify Him, yearning with His infinite power, and His infinite wisdom is an indication of the Unity, as He said, ‘that you [Pharaoh] may know that there is none like Me in all the earth.

Talmud Shabbat 75a
R. Simeon b. Pazzi said in the name of R. Joshua b. Levi on the authority of Bar Kappara: He who knows how to calculate the cycles and planetary courses, but does not, of him Scripture saith, ‘and they regard not the work of the Lord, neither have they considered the operation of his hands. (Is. 5)

Isaiah 40:26
Lift up your eyes on high, and behold who has created these things; who brings out their host by number, he calls them all by names by the greatness of his might, and because he is strong in power not one is missing.

Foundations of the Torah 2:2
What is the meaning of Baraishit? (Rev. 4:8) What is the meaning of Baraishit? (Rev. 4:8)
שבת הגדולה תשס"ט, ברכת החמה