Historical Evidence for Yahushua and the Shabbat!

FROM A GUEST HISTORICAL PROOF THAT YAHUSHUA KEPT THE CORRECT SHABBAT!

2. The Dead Sea Scrolls and Josephus

The Dead Sea Scrolls are considered by scholars to be authored by the Essenes, a sect in first century Judaism. In the Dead Sea Scrolls, there are a number of extra-biblical scrolls which appear to shed light on what this sect believed and practiced. Understanding what they believed can be helpful in determining whether or not the Lunar Sabbath was being observed by mainstream Judaism of that time.

It is generally undisputed (even by Lunar Sabbatarians) that the authors of these scrolls did not keep a Lunar Sabbath. Rather, the Calendrical scroll shows that they observed a recurring seven day weekly cycle, independent of the moon phases. I know of no one who disputes this. The Calendrical Scroll and the Songs of the Sabbath Sacrifice confirms this.

Of course, Lunar Sabbatarians generally will teach that this Jewish sect was wrong about the Sabbath.

But in the book of Josephus, he speaks much about the Essenes. Josephus was a first century Jewish historian who wrote much about life in Judea during the first century. He goes into great detail as to how practices of the Essenes were different than others. He mentions everything from how the Essenes don't carry anything with them when they travel, to how they regard oil to be defilement. In Wars of the Jews 2:119-161, Josephus speaks of them in no less than 2000 words, describing over 100 characteristics of their way of life.

So did Josephus mention that they kept the Sabbath on a day that was different than the rest of Judaism?

Wars of the Jews 2:147 ... Moreover, they are stricter than any other of the Jews in resting from their labors on the seventh day; for they not only get their food ready the day before, that they may not be obliged to kindle a fire on that day, but they will not move any vessel out of its place, nor go to stool thereon.

In this, Josephus even goes so far as to say that the Essenes are "stricter than any other of the Jews in resting from their labors on the seventh day." Does it sound like there was any disagreement as to when the Sabbath was? Wouldn't it seem strange that Josephus would mention that the Essenes were stricter in their resting from labors on the Sabbath but not bother to mention that the Essenes held the Sabbath on a totally different day than the other Jews of that period?

The fact is, if the Essenes were keeping a different day than the rest of Judaism, Josephus wouldn't have been able to say that they were even resting on the seventh day to begin with. He would have to say they were typically resting on some other day.

There is no record in the Dead Sea Scrolls of the Essenes disagreeing with other groups as to when the Sabbath was. In fact, there is no historical record of any Jewish sects disagreeing with each other on when the Sabbath was.

In another interesting note, Josephus speaks of one of the large towers that were built in Jerusalem:

Wars of the Jews 4:582 and the last was erected above the top of the Pastophoria, where one of the priests stood of course, and gave a signal beforehand with a trumpet, at the beginning of every seventh day, in the evening twilight, as also at the evening when that day was finished, as giving notice to the people when they were to stop work, and when they were to go to work again.
So his report is that a trumpet was blown at the beginning of every seventh day, to mark when the people should stop working, and begin working. As an interesting side note, archaeological finds concur with Josephus' comments about the place of trumpeting:

"When we excavated the beautifully paved Herodian street adjacent to the southern wall and near the southwestern corner of the Enclosure Wall, we found a particularly large ashlar block. On the inside was a niche where a man might stand, especially if the ashlar were joined to another which would enlarge the niche. On the outside was a carefully and elegantly incised Hebrew inscription: LBYT HTKY 'H LHH [RYZ]; “To the place of Trumpeting to (declare).” If the restoration of the world “declare” is correct, the rest of the missing part of the inscription probably went on to tell us more about the declaring of the beginning and the end of the Sabbath. The stone had been toppled during the Roman destruction of the Temple onto the street below where it had lain for nearly two thousand years until we uncovered it. It must have originally come from the pinnacle of the southwestern corner of the Temple Mount. From a spot on top of the Temple chambers a priest would blow a trumpet on Sabbath Eve, to announce the arrival of the Sabbath and the cessation of all labour, and to announce, on the following evening, the departure of the Sabbath and the resumption of all labor. The entire city was visible from this spot on the southwest corner of the Temple Mount; the clarion call of the trumpet would reach the farthest markets of the city. Such a scene is recounted by Josephus in his work, The Jewish War. (IV, 582)." Editor, H. S. 2004; 2004. BAR 06:04 (July/Aug 1980). Biblical Archaeology Society

Josephus also records that Agatharchides, a 2nd century BCE Greek Historian, wrote something quite interesting about Ptolemy's defeat of Jerusalem:

**Against Apion 1:208** "When Agatharchides had premised this story, and had jested upon Stratonice for her superstition, he gives a like example of what was reported concerning us, and writes thus:--

209 There are a people called Jews, and dwell in a city the strongest of all other cities, which the inhabitants call Jerusalem, and are accustomed to rest on every seventh day; on which times they make no use of their arms, nor meddle with husbandry, nor take care of any affairs of life, but spread out their hands in their holy places, and pray till the evening.

210 Now it came to pass, that when Ptolemy, the son of Lagus, came into this city with his army, that these men, in observing this mad custom of theirs, instead of guarding the city, suffered their country to submit itself to a bitter lord; and their law was openly proven to have commanded a foolish practice"

Ptolemy was the General of Alexander the Great, who took over Jerusalem in 332 BCE. We see that the Jews would not defend themselves or take up arms on the Sabbath, which was "every seventh day."

If I were to describe the Sabbath keeping practices of Lunar Sabbatarians, I certainly wouldn't describe their Sabbath keeping as something they did "every seventh day." Rather, I would mention that they only keep a Sabbath on certain days of the month. Therefore, it's quite evident that Josephus was describing the practice laid out for us "in the beginning" when Elohim created the first week and that is to rest every seventh day, without moon interruptions.

3. Roman Historians and Writers

There seems to be a trend among Lunar Sabbath keepers to refer to people like me who keep a recurring weekly Sabbath as "Satyr-day keepers" -- as if we are following the a pagan Roman week rather than the week that they believe to be in the scriptures.

The truth is that Jews didn't want the holy Sabbath to be associated with "Saturn," an idol that had nothing to do with Judaism. The name "Saturday/Day of Saturn" originated with the pagans, not with the Jews. The Jews repeatedly and unequivocally refer to the seventh day of the week as "the Sabbath."

However, when it comes to determining whether or not the Jews of the first century kept the Sabbath using the Lunar Sabbath or, as I believe, a recurring weekly Sabbath, examining the records of Roman historians
and other writers can be helpful. By the admission of Lunar Sabbath keepers, and clear historical record, the Romans did not follow the moon phases when determining the weeks, or even the months for that matter.

For this reason, we can look into the writings of Roman historians and other writers to see if the Romans associated the Jewish Sabbath with their "Saturday/Day of Saturn." If they did associate the Sabbath with their Day of Saturn in the first century or before, this would be undeniable evidence that the Jewish week and the Roman week were both kept on the same recurring weekly cycle.

As we will see in this section, there is no doubt that Roman historians and other writers explicitly and repeatedly consider the timing of Jewish Sabbath keeping to be linked with the seventh day of the Roman week, which was a repeating seven day cycle, independent of the moon phases.

70 - 84 CE (AD)

Frontinus, a Roman Soldier who lived from c. 40 CE to 103 CE, wrote book on military strategy called Strategematicon in 84 A.D. In it, he writes:

"The deified Augustus Vespasian attacked the Jews on the day of Saturn, a day on which it is sinful for them to do any business." Frontinus Stratagem 2.1.17.

The original Latin version of this book has "Saturnis" for Saturn, confirming that the Romans associated the Sabbath day with their "day of Saturn" which is on the seventh day of the week.

Since this book was written a mere 14 years after Vespasian's (Titus') destruction of Jerusalem, this is this is obviously very strong historical evidence directly from a first century eyewitness, tying in the Sabbath with the recurring seven day cycle of the Romans.

63 BCE - 229 CE

Cassius Dio, a Roman Historian who lived from ca. 155 to 229 CE, using the historical annals of the Roman empire, wrote about 3 battles which the Roman empire had with the Jews.

The first battle was during a time when the Hyrcanus II and Aristobulus II, two brothers who were the offspring of the Maccabees, were engaged in a dispute over who would rule. The Romans, through the actions of Pompey, came in and settled the dispute, siding with Hyrcanus. While speaking of Pompey’s battle, the Sabbath is mentioned.

The setting is 63 BCE:

"Most of the city, to be sure, he took without any trouble, as he was received by the party of Hyrcanus; but the temple itself, which the other party had occupied, he captured only with difficulty. For it was on high ground and was fortified by a wall of its own, and if they had continued defending it on all days alike, he could not have got possession of it. As it was, they made an excavation of what are called the days of Saturn, and by doing no work at all on those days afforded the Romans an opportunity in this interval to batter down the wall. The latter, on learning of this superstitious awe of theirs, made no serious attempts the rest of the time, but on those days, when they came round in succession, assaulted most vigorously. Thus the defenders were captured on the day of Saturn, without making any defense, and all the wealth was plundered. The kingdom was given to Hyrcanus, and Aristobulus was carried away." Cassius Dio Roman History 37.16.1-4

So the Romans took advantage of the fact that the Jews would not work on the Sabbath. When was the Sabbath? Again, the weekly Sabbath coincides with the Roman "days of Saturn."
The second battle listed by Cassius Dio occurred in 36 BCE, is the one that resulted in the very first King Herod coming to power:

"The Jews, indeed, had done much injury to the Romans, but they suffered far more themselves. The first of them to be captured were those who were fighting for the precinct of their god, and then the rest- Shabbat on the day even then called the day of Saturn.

And so excessive were they in their devotion to religion that the first set of prisoners, those who had been captured along with the temple, obtained leave from Sosius, when the day of Saturn came round again, and went up into the temple and there performed all the customary rites, together with the rest of the people. These people Antony entrusted to a certain Herod to govern; but Antigonus he bound to a cross and flogged,— a punishment no other king had suffered at the hands of the Romans,— and afterwards slew him." Cassius Dio

Roman History 49.22.4-6

Note that Cassius Dio reports the Jews as keeping "customary rites" at the temple on "the day even then called Day of Saturn." This indicates that the Sabbath wasn't only called the "Day of Saturn" during his lifetime, but it was called the "Day of Saturn" back in 36 BCE, well before Yahushua was born in Bethlehem.

Next, he records that the 70 CE Jerusalem destruction was on the Sabbath, which he once again calls the "day of Saturn:"

70 - 229 CE

Thus was Jerusalem destroyed on the very day of Saturn, the day which even now the Jews reverence most. From that time forth it was ordered that the Jews who continued to observe their ancestral customs should pay an annual tribute of two denarii to Jupiter Capitoline. In consequence of this success both generals received the title of imperator, but neither got that of Judaicus, although all the other honours that were fitting on the occasion of so magnificent a victory, including triumphal arches, were voted to them. Cassius Dio Roman History 65.7.2

So his report is that the Jews kept the Sabbath on the "day of Saturn" from 63 BCE up until his day, no later than 229 CE. His report also agrees with Frontinus' account of the 70 CE battle.

100 CE

The Historian Cornelius Tacitus (ca. 56CE – ca. 117CE), after suggesting that Jews kept the Sabbath out of laziness, also associated the Sabbath with the Roman idol, Saturn:

They are said to have devoted the seventh day to rest, because that day brought an end to their troubles. Later, finding idleness alluring, they gave up the seventh year as well to sloth. Others maintain that they do this in honor of Saturn; either because their religious principles are derived from the Idaei, who are supposed to have been driven out with Saturn and become the ancestors of the Jewish people; or else because, of the seven constellations which govern the lives of men, the star of Saturn moves in the topmost orbit and exercises peculiar influence, and also because most of the heavenly bodies move round their courses in multiples of seven. From The Histories, Book V

Again, the fact that a pagan associated Sabbath keeping with Saturn demonstrates that the Roman week's day of Saturn (Satur-day) was concurrent with what YHWH calls the Sabbath day. Tacitus is an eyewitness from the first century who has no "axe to grind" in regards to when the Sabbath should be observed. He wrote this a mere 30 years after the destruction of the temple in Jerusalem.

28 BCE to 1 BCE
Tibullus, a Latin Poet who lived from 54 BCE - 19 BCE, references the Sabbath in one of his Elegies. The Poet is quoted by J. Hugh Michael in his paper entitled "The Jewish Sabbath in the Latin Classical Writers." In this Journal article, he says:

"Tibullus, again, gives us a glimpse of the influence of the Sabbath on the Romans. The Poet, sick in a foreign land, complains of his loneliness; neither mother nor sister has he there to nurse him; nor is Delia with him--she who had inquired of all the gods before permitting him to leave the city. Says Tibullus:

All promised a return; yet did nothing stay her from looking back in tears and terror on my journey. Yea, even I her comforter, after I had given my parting charge, sought still in my disquiet for reasons to linger and delay. Either birds or words of evil omen were my pretexts, or there was the holy day of Saturn to detain me. (Book I, Eleg. iii 13-18 in Postgate's translation in the Loeb Classics.)

The day of which the poet speaks is of course the Saturday, or, as Postgate puts it, "the Jewish Sabbath, on which no work was to be undertaken," and the implication is clear that unwillingness to set off on a journey on the Sabbath day was no unusual thing among the inhabitants of Rome, for Tibullus is enumerating the common reasons for the postponement of journeys of which he was only too ready to avail himself."

The Bible is very clear that Yahushua' "custom was" to go "into the synagogue on the Sabbath day" (Luke 4:16). Also, Yahushua claimed to be "Lord also of the Sabbath" (Mark 2:28). There is absolutely no way that Yahushua got the day wrong. Therefore the lunar Sabbath proponent must believe that in Yahushua' time (at least up to the early 30's of 1st century AD) the Jews were observing lunar Sabbaths. Can such an argument be proved from Scripture? Let's examine the Word:

"And now when the even was come, because it was the preparation, that is, the day before the Sabbath" (Mark 15:42)

"And they returned and prepared spices and ointments and rested the Sabbath day according to the commandment: Now upon the first day of the week..." (Luke 23:56; 24:1)

Here we have a sequence of 3 days. The preparation, the Sabbath day according to the commandment and the first day of the week. This has been traditionally (and in my opinion correctly) interpreted as a Friday, Saturday and Sunday sequence. Now the lunar Sabbath proponent might say- prove it! In response I would offer the testimony of contemporary historians.

"...and gave a signal beforehand with a trumpet, at the beginning of every seventh day, in the evening twilight, as also at the evening when that day was finished, as giving notice to the people when they were to stop work, and when they were to go to work again" (Josephus 'War of the Jews' 4:582)*

"The multitude of mankind itself have had a great inclination for a long time to follow our religious observances: for there is not any city of the Grecians, nor any of the barbarians, nor any nation whatsoever, whither our custom of resting on the seventh day hath not come... As God himself pervades all the world, so hath our law passed through all the world also" (Josephus 'Against Apion', 2, 40).*

In these two quotes Josephus makes it clear that a trumpet signaled when in was time for the Jews to stop work "every seventh day, in the evening twilight" and that they had a "custom of resting on the seventh day." The language here- "every seventh day" and "the seventh day" indicates succession and definitiveness.
In other words it was the same seventh day every week. Now since Josephus says that the Jewish "custom of resting on the seventh day" was known all throughout the Roman empire we have reason to believe that the Romans were acquainted with the Jewish practice. So the next logical step is to see what can we learn from the Roman historians on the matter of the Sabbath?

Frontinus, a Roman soldier writing in 84 AD explains to us that:

"The defied Augustus Vespasian attacked the Jews on the day of Saturn, a day on which it is sinful for them to do any business" (Frontinus Stratagem 2.1.17)

Appox 100 AD Cornelius Tacitus, a Roman historian and Senator wrote about the Jewish custom of Sabbath-keeping and speculated as to why:

They are said to have devoted the seventh day to rest, because that day brought an end to their troubles. Later, finding idleness alluring, they gave up the seventh year as well to sloth. Others maintain that they do this in honor of Saturn; either because their religious principles are derived from the Idaei, who are supposed to have been driven out with Saturn and become the ancestors of the Jewish people; or else because, of the seven constellations which govern the lives of men, the star of Saturn moves in the topmost orbit and exercises peculiar influence, and also because most of the heavenly bodies move round their courses in multiples of seven. (From The Histories, Book V)*

Cassius Dio (155-229 AD) writing about a battle against the Jews in 63 BC*

"Most of the city, to be sure, he took without any trouble, as he was received by the party of Hyrcanus; but the temple itself, which the other party had occupied, he captured only with difficulty. For it was on high ground and was fortified by a wall of its own, and if they had continued defending it on all days alike, he could not have got possession of it.

As it was, they made an excavation of what are called the days of Saturn, and by doing no work at all on those days afforded the Romans an opportunity in this interval to batter down the wall. The latter, on learning of this superstitious awe of theirs, made no serious attempts the rest of the time, but on those days, when they came round in succession, assaulted most vigorously. Thus the defenders were captured on the day of Saturn, without making any defense, and all the wealth was plundered. The kingdom was given to Hyrcanus, and Aristobulus was carried away." Cassius Dio Roman History 37.16.1-4

The same author now writing about a battle in 36 BC that brought Herod to power:

"The Jews, indeed, had done much injury to the Romans, but they suffered far more themselves. The first of them to be captured were those who were fighting for the precinct of their god, and then the rest on the day even then called the day of Saturn. And so excessive were they in their devotion to religion that the first set of prisoners, those who had been captured along with the temple, obtained leave from Sosius, when the day of Saturn came round again, and went up into the temple and there performed all the customary rites, together with the rest of the people. These people Antony entrusted to a certain Herod to govern; but Antigonus he bound to a cross and flogged,— a punishment no other king had suffered at the hands of the Romans,— and afterwards slew him." (Cassius Dio Roman History 49.22.4-6)

So starting from 84 AD we have record that the 7th day Sabbath at the end of the week was the same day
that was called the day of Saturn by pagans. And it is important to note that Cassius Dio speaks of this practice back in the BC era (specifically 63 BC and 36 BC). He explained that the Jewish reverence of the Sabbath day was how Rome gained the advantage back in 63 BC and won the temple ground. Now unless one believes that he is lying (and I would be interested to know what reason there is for anyone to believe that) it is settled as to what day was the Sabbath before Messiah.

Truthfully I would not be surprised if certain lunar Sabbath adherents, in light of these records, begin advancing a theory that the Jews were apostate in the decades before Messiah (keeping the false Sabbath day) but had corrected it back to lunar Sabbaths by the time of Messiah (i.e. He went to the synagogue on the Sabbath day and claimed Lordship of that day) but then went back into apostasy shortly after His death (again keeping the false Sabbath day). Honestly it wouldn’t surprise me since they have already invented a rule to explain the 1 or 2 day break in the weekly cycle that exists in their system. As they say, necessity is the mother of invention.

Now as if all of the above were not enough I will also share some more quotes (this time from the Talmud) that indicate the impossibility of the weekly 7th day Sabbath being a lunar Sabbath.

One, the "week" was known during the time of the patriarchs. We have no logical explanation for its origin excepting the original creation week.

The conclusion we can reach is based on the fact that we know that Yahushua kept the correct Sabbath day in the 1st century. An examination of Biblical and extra-biblical evidence indicates that the Sabbath day in the 1st century was the 7th day of the week (commonly known as Saturday today).

The conclusion is inescapable because he weight of Bible evidence is clear. Remember the sabbath day, to keep it holy. Six days shalt thou labour, and do all thy work: But the seventh day is the sabbath of the LORD thy God: in it thou shalt not do any work, thou, nor thy son, nor thy daughter, thy manservant, nor thy maidservant, nor thy cattle, nor thy stranger that is within thy gates: For in six days the LORD made heaven and earth, the sea, and all that in them is, and rested the seventh day: wherefore the LORD blessed the sabbath day, and hallowed it (Exodus 20:8-11)

CONCLUSION-The PAGANS laughed mocked and recorded that the Jews IGNORED all other gods and only worshiped SATURN every 7 days. They stated clearly that Jews worshiped on the ROMAN day of Saturn from before Yahushua until the exile. They couldn’t figure out what the Jews didn’t worship other deities on other days. These pagans had no HORSE in the race. They were recording the behavior of the Jews of Yahushua’s day. Add to that the reliable witness of the Renewed Covenant Brit Chadasha and we see Yahushua joining them on that day. Again I have checked hundreds of resources and at NO TIME from Shuclan Aruch to the Talmud to Pirkey Avot to any other Jewish writer, not one used the word SATURDAY! It was always a HEBREW, ARAMAIC OR GREEK form of SABBATH OR THE SHABBAT. From this crystal clear evidence we can see that it was the pagans who mocked the Jews by calling THE SHABBAT a homage experience to SATURN but that this derogatory chiding was resented by all sects of the Jews, including the Essenes and Nazarene Yisraelites. I will share my answers to the questions posed the other day later. Shalom.