

## Major faults with Biblical Research Institute study on Lunar Sabbath

The purpose of this document is to raise awareness of the issues with the Biblical Research Institute of the General Conference of Seventh-day Adventists study called “Weekly Sabbath or Lunar Sabbath: Are Adventists Keeping the Wrong Sabbath?”. It is important that these issues are addressed so that people are not misled concerning the seventh-day Sabbath doctrine.

It is a discredit to the church to defend its position using this document which appears to have been put together on the sentiment of tradition and unverified research from third-parties. It gives the impression the church is biased and not interested in the truth.

**Below is presented the issues from the Biblical Research Institute’s own study:**

### Issue # 1

“a. All the ceremonial Sabbaths were assigned to certain dates. The Passover on the fourteenth day of the first month (Lev 23:5); the Feast of Unleavened Bread on the fifteenth day of the first month (Lev 23:6); the Feast of Firstfruits on the sixteenth of the first month (Lev 23:10, 11); the Feast of Weeks or Pentecost 50 days after the Feast of Firstfruits (Lev 23:16); the Feast of Trumpets on the first day of the seventh month (Lev 23:24); the Day of Atonement on the tenth day of the seventh month (Lev 23:27); the Feast of Tabernacle on the fifteenth day of the seventh month (Lev 23:34).”

...

“c. That the weeks in the Old Testament were continuous unbroken cycles uninterrupted by the New Moon is shown in Leviticus 23:15, 16.

Biblical Research Institute

If the Festival of Firstfruits is always on the 16<sup>th</sup> day of the first month (confirmed by De specialibus legibus 2:162 and Antiquities of the Jews 3:250); then Leviticus 23:15-16 in conjunction with Deuteronomy 16:9-10 is proof that the seven-day weekly cycle is interrupted because when you count seventh Sabbaths until the day after the seventh (Leviticus 23:15) and then Seven Weeks (Deuteronomy 16:9) both from the same day (the “sixteenth day”); they will rarely ever end on the same day; neither will you be able to count off number fifty days (Leviticus 23:16).

Below are two examples for determining the “Festival of Weeks” superimposed against the Gregorian calendar (with an uninterrupted week cycle); counting begins from the 15<sup>th</sup> day of the first lunar month.

Deuteronomy 16:9; To count the seven weeks

April 2011

SUN	MON	TUE	WED	THU	FRI	SAT
					1	2
3	Conj. 4	NM 5	6	7	8	9
10	11	12	13	14	15	16
17	18	19	20	21	22	23
24	25	26	27	28	29	30

May 2011

SUN	MON	TUE	WED	THU	FRI	SAT
1	2	3	NM 4	5	6	7
8	9	10	11	12	13	14
15	16	17	18	19	20	21
22	23	24	25	26	27	28
29	30	31				

June 2011

SUN	MON	TUE	WED	THU	FRI	SAT
			1	2	NM 3	4
5	6	7	8	9	10	11
12	13	14	15	16	17	18
19	20	21	22	23	24	25
26	27	28	29	30		

When we count seven weeks, the "Festival of Weeks" begins on 8th June 2011

Leviticus 23:16; Seven Sabbaths complete there shall be; Even to the day after the seventh Sabbath; Shall you number fifty days

April 2011

SUN	MON	TUE	WED	THU	FRI	SAT
					1	2
3	Conj. 4	NM 5	6	7	8	9
10	11	12	13	14	15	16
17	18	19	20	21	22	23
24	25	26	27	28	29	30

May 2011

SUN	MON	TUE	WED	THU	FRI	SAT
1	2	3	NM 4	5	6	7
8	9	10	11	12	13	14
15	16	17	18	19	20	21
22	23	24	25	26	27	28
29	30	31				

June 2011

SUN	MON	TUE	WED	THU	FRI	SAT
			1	2	NM 3	4
5	6	7	8	9	10	11
12	13	14	15	16	17	18
19	20	21	22	23	24	25
26	27	28	29	30		

The day after the seventh Sabbath is 5<sup>th</sup> June 2011. However we are unable to count off 50 days so this method of determining the “Festival of Weeks” is impossible with a continuous seven-day week cycle.

The only way to consistently get these two counting methods to harmonize with each other is if the fifteenth day of the first month is always a weekly Sabbath every year and that is only possible if the week cycle was interrupted due to observing lunar weeks instead of a continuous weekly cycle like on a Papal calendar.

## Issue # 2

“b. According to Numbers 33:3 the Exodus took place on the fifteenth day of the first month. The fifteenth day was the day after Passover, “They departed from Rameses in the first month, on the fifteenth day of the first month; on the day after the Passover the children of Israel went out with boldness in the sight of all the Egyptians.” They began their journey on the 15th while it was still night. Ellen White says, “Before the morning broke, they were on their way.”<sup>8</sup> If the 15th was a Sabbath it would have been their first full day of travel. In light of Matthew 24:20 where Jesus told the disciples “And pray that your flight may not be in winter or on the Sabbath,” **it is hardly likely that God began the Exodus from Egypt on a Sabbath.”**

*Biblical Research Institute*

According to scripture it took place at night on the 16th day; which would be the first day of the lunar week (Exodus 12:6,22, Numbers 33:3, Deuteronomy 16:1). It could not have been the night of the 15th day as God expressly prohibited the Israelites from leaving their homes during the night of Passover (Exodus 12:22).

## Issue # 3

“c. The children of Israel arrived in the wilderness of sin “on the fifteenth day of the second month after they departed from the land of Egypt” (Exod. 16:1) **Again, they travelled on the 15th; therefore it cannot have been a Sabbath.”**

*Biblical Research Institute*

According to scripture the Israelites arrived at the wilderness of Sin on the 15th day of the second month. The account continues with the Israelites complaining of hunger. God said to Moses that He shall rain bread from heaven; a certain rate each day with a double portion on the sixth day; and that this would begin on the next day in the morning (Exodus 16:1-7). The Israelites then gathered food for six days and the Sabbath was on the seventh day (Exodus 16:22-27). This confirms the weekly Sabbath occurred on the 22nd day of the second month (counting from the day after the 15th day) which also confirms the 15th day of this month was also the Sabbath making this claim invalid.

#### Issue # 4

“d. In Joshua 5:10-12 we are told that the manna ceased on the 16th of the first month: Now the children of Israel camped in Gilgal, and kept the Passover on the fourteenth day of the month at twilight on the plains of Jericho. And they ate of the produce of the land on the day after the Passover, unleavened bread and parched grain, on the very same day. Then the manna ceased on the day after they had eaten the produce of the land; and the children of Israel no longer had manna, but they ate the food of the land of Canaan that year.

The Passover was the 14th day of the first month. On the 15th they ate the produce of the land, and on the 16th the manna ceased. **If the manna ceased on the 16th of the first month, it must have fallen on the 15th otherwise the text would have said it ceased on the 14th or on the 15th. Hence the 15th cannot have been a Sabbath because God never gave manna on the Sabbath.<sup>9</sup>**

*Biblical Research Institute*

The new moons not being mentioned is not proof of anything because these events occurred in the middle (not near the end) of the second month when the Israelites complained about their hunger (Exodus 16:1-3). They were given instructions concerning the week which was about to begin; the third week of this month (Exodus 16:4-5). Then the Israelites carried out these instruction; collecting manna each day and twice as much on the sixth day (Exodus 16:21-23).

#### Issue # 5

**“a. According to Genesis 1:1-2:3, God created only two classes of days: six working days and the Sabbath. This is confirmed in in the Ten Commandments in Exodus 20 and Deuteronomy 5. “Six days you shall labor and do all your work, but the seventh day is the Sabbath of the LORD your God. In it you shall do no work” (Exod 20:9, 10).”**

*Biblical Research Institute*

Other scripture mentions a third day class and it is misleading to not include them. Ezekiel 46:1 talks about the gate to the inner court being shut for six days and opened only on the Sabbath and New Moon days. Isaiah 66:23 talks about everyone coming before the Lord every Sabbath and New Moon. This third day class; the New Moon day is most likely when the tree of life yields its fruit according to Revelation 22:2.

## Issue # 6

“b. There is evidence for a New Moon festival among the nations in ancient Mesopotamia as far back as the third millennium B.C.<sup>11</sup> In the Bible, however, the New Moon celebration is not mentioned until the time of Moses. The only legislation concerning the New Moon in the Old Testament is in the prescribed burnt offering of Numbers 28:14. While Amos 8:5 seems to indicate that no work was to be done on the New Moon day, other texts show that it was not a day of rest. For example, Moses was told to set up the tabernacle on the first day of the month (Exod 40:2); Ezra began his journey to Jerusalem on the first of the month (Ezra 7:9). William Hallo says, “Only the first day of Tishri had the character of a special holiday, and even here the biblical text, as is well known, avoids the term *rōš haššānā*, head of the year.”<sup>12</sup> ...

... Even if the New Moon was a day of rest like the Sabbath, there is no indication that it was not reckoned as part of the 6-day week, as were all the other ceremonial Sabbaths of Leviticus 23. Why should all the other yearly Sabbaths be part of the 6-day week but not the New Moon day?”

*Biblical Research Institute*

Just as the Israelites were obviously observing lunar months; they were also observing lunar weeks. The seven day week comes from nature. In a 29½ day lunar cycle; when you deduct the New Moon days you have remaining exactly 4 weeks. All New Moon days were treated as feast days according to Philo Judaeus (De specialibus legibus 2:41) and he also said the full moon occurs at the end of the second week which confirming the weeks were fixed to the lunar cycle; so they were observing lunar weeks (De congressu eruditionis gratia 1:106).

## Issue # 7

“c. That the weeks in the Old Testament were continuous unbroken cycles uninterrupted by the New Moon is shown in Leviticus 23:15, 16.

And you shall count for yourselves from the day after the Sabbath, from the day that you brought the sheaf of the wave offering: seven Sabbaths shall be completed. 16 `Count fifty days to the day after the seventh Sabbath; then you shall offer a new grain offering to the LORD.

Seven Sabbaths are forty-nine days and the day after the last Sabbath is the fiftieth day. This can only be so if the weeks are counted as uninterrupted cycles of seven days. This is confirmed by the timeline for the Flood. According to Genesis 7:24, “the waters prevailed

on the earth one hundred and fifty days.” It began to rain “in the six hundredth year of Noah’s life, in the second month, the seventeenth day of the month” (Gen 7:11). The ark came to rest on Mount Ararat five months later “in the seventh month, the seventeenth day of the month” (Gen 8:4). This is clear evidence that the biblical month has 30 days; therefore, 150 days are five months, uninterrupted by New Moon days.”

*Biblical Research Institute*

The months recorded in the story of Noah's Ark were not all thirty days (like a prophetic month). The start of the flood occurred on the 17<sup>th</sup> day of the second month (Genesis 7:11). This flood was reported as being 150 days from the start until the Ark rested on the mountains of Ararat (Genesis 8:3). The Ark came to a rest on the 17<sup>th</sup> day in the seventh month (Genesis 8:4) which is a duration of 5 months and 1 day. If each month had exactly 30 days; the duration between these two days would be 150 days instead of 149 days. Bible reckoning counts any part of a day as a complete day such as in the prophecy of the death of Jesus Christ being 3 days (John 2:19, Matthew 27:50,62,28:1).

This explanation shows not all months had exactly thirty days. However it is still not normal to observe this many conjunction days in one specific location; however the “Ark” (being a large vessel) is moving and can cross boundaries to observe other conjunction days that otherwise would not have been observed by being in a fixed location. The tide during the flood may have caused the “Ark” to circumnavigate the world at least once; resulting in the gaining of an extra day.

The idea of every month always having thirty days is absurd as we know the lunar cycle is 29½ days; it would be unsustainable to maintain a thirty day month cycle against the moon (having the New Moons align to the months); or for the months to start in the same positions for the seasons each year.

Also the lack of a conjunction day would reintroduce the same problem with the Gregorian calendar; the need to have an International Date Line when settlers travel around the world in different directions and meet each other on the other side; they would disagree as to the week day and day of the month.

## Issue # 8

“ ...

The Roman eight-day calendar was changed to a seven-day calendar early in the imperial period not in the time of Constantine.<sup>15</sup> Now, if the Jews were forced to give up their lunar Sabbath calendar in exchange for adopting the pagan Julian calendar either in the days after A.D. 70 or since the time of Constantine, there should be a huge amount of evidence in existence today that this change occurred.”

...

When differences arise between two groups, there is always a split, with some believing one way and others believing the other way. With such conflicting changes to the belief structure of the Jews, we should see such a split among them. There was a split between Jews, but it wasn't over the lunar Sabbath theory. It was the split between the Karaite and Rabbinical Jews – and that was mainly over how to calculate the feast days.

...”

*Biblical Research Institute*

According to Popular history of the Jews (1919); Graetz 410–411; the Jews were forced to give up their lunar calendar. This was due to Roman persecution and the split involved how to calculate the feast days on the new fixed calendar.

*“The deplorable condition of Judaea led the then patriarch Hillel II to perform a deed of great self-denial. The method hitherto in vogue of notifying the distant Jewish communities through messengers of the days appointed for the festivals in accordance with secret rules which determined the appearance of the new moon and the intercalation of the month had become impracticable and often impossible on account of Constantius' persecutions. The rules by which a leap year was determined had been made public under the stress of circumstances; the rules for determining the appearance of the new moon were still kept secret. As a consequence, the days on which the most important festivals were to fall remained in doubt. To put an end to all the difficulties and uncertainties, Hillel II introduced a fixed calendar for all time, i. e., he published the rules that had guided the Sanhedrin hitherto in the computations of the calendar and in the determining of the festivals.” Popular history of the Jews (1919); Graetz 410–411*

The Jews stopped observing these feast days on the proper days; going against the ordinances of God and at the same time history is almost silent.

It is misleading to not mention that the dispute came about because they changed calendar.

## Issue # 9

“Lunar Sabbatarians claim that the luni-solar calendar is the true biblical calendar in which the Sabbath falls always on the 8th, 15th, 22nd, and 29th of the month. Furthermore, the New Moon and the 30th day of the month are not counted as part of the week. They also claim that the Jews under the Romans were forced to give up the lunar calendar and accept the Julian calendar with its continuous cycle of seven-day weeks.

Our investigation has shown that these claims cannot be substantiated from Scripture or history. The biblical Sabbath, as the seventh day of the week, was instituted in Eden and was celebrated by the Jews in Old and New Testament times without interruption. Like the feast days the new moon days were part of the weekly cycle. Ellen White clearly stated:

Like the Sabbath, the week originated at creation, and it has been preserved and brought down to us through Bible history. God Himself measured off the first week as a sample for successive weeks to the close of time. Like every other, it consisted of seven literal days.<sup>16</sup>

In conclusion, all the arguments of lunar Sabbatarians seem to boil down to whether God tied the Sabbath to the lunar calendar, as He did with the feasts, or if He set up a weekly cycle at Creation for the Sabbath and preserved it to our day. There is no conclusive evidence in Scripture pointing to the Sabbath being tied to the moon. On the contrary, the Bible is clear that the week has a recurring cycle of seven days ending with the Sabbath. This is supported by the plain statements of God’s word, the Spirit of Prophecy, and history.

*Biblical Research Institute*

The Biblical Research Institute claims the Sabbath was never interrupted. However Bible history confirms it was forgotten numerous times.

Scripture is also laden with verses that talk about God causing his people to forget his Sabbaths (such as Hosea 2:11, Jeremiah 18:15, Lamentations 2:5-6, Daniel 7:25).

The Gregorian calendar and the International Date Line (IDL) has no scriptural support and greatly affects the reckoning of a week day outside of the middle-east. In recent times the weekly cycle observed today has been interrupted multiple times with the moving of the International Date Line (IDL); which is a man-made solution to a problem caused by using a man-made calendar. The most recent change included moving the Line Islands west of the International Date Line in 1995 AD.



Book of Jubilees which is considered canonical by the Ethiopian Orthodox Church as well as Beta Israel warns us of the following:

*“For I know and from henceforth will I declare it unto thee, and it is not of my own devising; for the book (lies) written before me, and on the heavenly tablets the division of days is ordained, lest they forget the feasts of the covenant and walk according to the feasts of the Gentiles' after their error and after their ignorance. For there will be those who will assuredly make observations of the moon--how (it) disturbs the seasons and comes in from year to year ten days too soon. For this reason the years will come upon them when they will disturb (the order), and make an abominable (day) the day of testimony, and an unclean day a feast day, and they will confound all the days, the holy with the unclean, and the unclean day with the holy; for they will go wrong as to the months and sabbaths and feasts and jubilees. For this reason I command and testify to thee that thou mayst testify to them; for after thy death thy children will disturb (them), so that they will make\* the year three hundred and sixty-four days only, and for this reason they will go wrong as to the new moons and seasons and sabbaths and festivals, and they will eat all kinds of blood with all kinds of flesh.” Jubilees 6:35-38*

\* Translator R. H. Charles, D.D. indicated in the notes “will not make” wrongly omit the negative; and therefore originally said “they will make the year three hundreds and sixty-four days only”. This is confirmed in another Ethiopic translation by Rev. George Henry Schodde which left out the negative.

“Three hundred and sixty-four days only” is a reference to a solar year.

*“And the sun and the stars bring in all the years exactly, so that they do not advance or delay their position by a single day unto eternity; but complete the years with perfect justice in 364 days.” 1 Enoch 74:12*

This clearly warns that moving the calendar away from using the Moon to a Solar only calendar (fixed number of days in the year) will cause future generations to no longer keep the Sabbath; and they will not be aware of the problem. A disruption to a weekly Sabbath can only occur if moving away from lunar weeks to fixed weeks.

Simple fact is all weekly Sabbaths recorded in scripture that can be linked to a calendar day occurred on either the eighth, fifteenth, twenty-second or twenty-nine day of the month only.

### **Summary of the issues with the Biblical Research Institute study:**

There are three major issues (2, 3 & 7) where the Biblical Research Institute have made false claims. The remaining ones are false assumptions or misleading to the reader.

Because of this the research presented by the Biblical Research Institute is unsound, dangerous and gives the impression of being bias.

When used for correcting and proving church doctrine; it will only have two consequences.

- a) The member will be led astray; convinced into believing something based on an unsound understanding of scripture and being unable to properly correct others regarding Lunar Sabbath using truth (as instructed by Jesus).
- b) The member finds fault with the document due to its numerous errors. The church loses credibility with the member; and this can lead to disagreements between members because they will be trying to disprove a new teaching using misleading arguments.

I recommend that the BRI document be retracted to avoid leading people astray.

God bless!

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to be 'P. Heinlein', with a long horizontal stroke extending to the right.

Paul Heinlein