

Living the Lunar Calendar: Time, Text and Tradition

**The Bible Lands Museum Jerusalem,
January 30th – February 1st, 2010
Tu B'Shvat 5770**

**Call for Papers
Deadline 31st July, 2009**

The “Living the Lunar Calendar” Conference — held under the full moon of the Jewish festival of the New Year for Trees— will investigate the place of calendar reckoning in human society and culture. Focusing on the Moon as a marker of the passage of time, the conference will address a wide variety of issues regarding the application of astronomical and calendrical rules to everyday life, and beyond to the shaping of cultural identity.

The lunar calendar with its irregular pattern of 29/30 day months, requiring an uneven number of months to match the passage of an annual solar/stellar cycle brings with it a measure of uncertainty. It can be observed that the Moon is at one and the same time both constant and unpredictable, leading civilizations to adopt divergent modes of reflection on the stable and unstable components of their existence in time. With the Moon, time does not only exist in nature, but needs to be regulated by man. Human measures of day, month, and year, must live with these uncertainties. In cultures that use the lunar calendar, one must find answers to such mundane questions as: “When does the month, the year, begin? How are salaries and interest to be calculated over months of uneven length and years of unequal months? Is the date in one city the same in all cities?”

More generally, cultures had to account for the apparent anomaly in nature, defining just how much human involvement is required in fixing the central concepts of time. This ideological dilemma joined forces with the political and societal conflicts in antiquity, both within the great empires as well as smaller ethnic and cultural entities. The calendar thus participated significantly in the formation of civilization and identity.

We will gather at the Bible Lands Museum Jerusalem (BLMJ) and the site of Qumran on the shores of the Dead Sea, to address these types of issues in sessions covering the cuneiform Ancient Near East, Egypt, Ancient Israel, The Greco-Roman World, Judaism, Christianity, Islam, the Far East, Africa, and Mesoamerica. Central focus will be given to the ancient world, but with an open eye towards later periods. Papers are invited by scholars on the following general topics:

- Everyday Life in Lunar Regulated Societies
- Calendrical Principles, especially in regard to harmonizing the Lunar Calendar with other systems such as the Egyptian civil calendar, the Julian Calendar, the Jewish sectarian system of 364 day years.

- Cultural Statements about the Moon, the Sun, the Stars and the concept of Time.
- Anthropological, Sociological, and Philosophical trajectories of the above.

Submission of papers are invited by the Academic Organizing Committee:

Jonathan Ben-Dov (Haifa University), Wayne Horowitz (The Hebrew University), John Steele (Brown University), Filip Vukosavović (BLMJ), and should consist of a title and abstract of no more than 200 words.

Presentations will be between 25-45 minutes including time for questions, and are to be delivered in English. Papers from the conference will be published in electronic form. The deadline for submissions is 31st July, 2009.

The conference will be held under the auspices of the Bible Lands Museum Jerusalem and The CAENO Foundation, and will include three days of sessions and events at the Museum, with an afternoon and evening at Qumran. Technical details will be provided at a later date. For further information and submission of abstracts, please contact curatorial@blmj.org.