

It's Time to Start Your Life

Exodus 12:1-2 HCSB The LORD said to Moses and Aaron in the land of Egypt: (2) "This month is to be the beginning of months for you; it is the first month of your year.

Why should God have to tell the Israelites when their year began, that is, which month was to be the first in their calendar? The answer has two aspects: one is that this was not at all a settled question for them, and they therefore needed a revealed guidance on the matter; the other is that God was teaching them to link even their measuring of time to His calling on their lives.

Why was it not a settled question? The people groups of the ancient world varied in their sense of when the year should begin, with some cultures choosing a fall new year and some celebrating a spring new year. It is possible that most of the various Canaanite groups celebrated a fall new year and for that one reason alone this ruling from God was to be sure the Israelites differentiated themselves from the Canaanites, near whom they were eventually to live.

Even so, the Israelites themselves held membership in a broad culture that, informally at least, regarded the transition from summer to fall as the "end of the year" and therefore the fall as the beginning of the calendar. This sense of calendar is sometimes known as the "agricultural calendar" because it pays special attention to the time of harvest as the conclusion of the agricultural year.

Thus, passages like Exodus 23:16 "Celebrate the Feast of Ingathering at the end of the year, when you gather in your crops from the field" and 34:22 "Celebrate the Feast of Weeks with the first fruits of the wheat harvest, and the Feast of Ingathering at the turn of the year" use the language of the agricultural calendar.

It is clear that in terms of formal teaching in the Torah, the new year is firmly established as commencing in the spring, the month of Nisan (what we would call March-April) being the first month.

Here we read that God has decided that history determines the calendar, and in particular, the history of God's saving act of the exodus does so. Whatever might theoretically have been their previous thinking about a calendar, God decreed to His Old Covenant people that they would henceforth have a calendar designed to remind them of how they first became a people—it happened by reason of their deliverance by His mighty hand out of the bondage of the oppressor, an act so important that it was also to be memorialized by a special annual feast, the Passover.

Yahweh Melek, God our King, chose to make this the beginning of months – the first month of our year. Similarly, as we are made in His image and like Him can exercise our free wills, we can decide when to live. We don't get to decide when we are born, but we do get to decide when to start actually living.

1. **Orientation.** Life begins when we orient ourselves toward God and His will.

- **Matthew 6:9-10 HCSB** "Therefore, you should pray like this: Our Father in heaven, Your name be honored as holy. (10) Your kingdom come. Your will be done on earth as it is in heaven.
- **Matthew 6:19-21 HCSB** "Don't collect for yourselves treasures on earth, where moth and rust destroy and where thieves break in and steal. (20) But collect for yourselves treasures in heaven, where neither moth nor rust destroys, and where thieves don't break in and steal. (21) For where your treasure is, there your heart will be also.

- **Matthew 6:33 HCSB** But seek first the kingdom of God and His righteousness, and all these things will be provided for you.

2. **Investment.** Life begins when we start actually using the resources that God gave us properly (parable of talents; Matthew 25:14-30). That story ends with:

- **Matthew 25:28-30 HCSB** "'So take the talent from him and give it to the one who has 10 talents. (29) For to everyone who has, more will be given, and he will have more than enough. But from the one who does not have, even what he has will be taken away from him. (30) And throw this good-for-nothing slave into the outer darkness. In that place there will be weeping and gnashing of teeth.'

That servant probably laughed to himself when the other two were laboring so hard and he was sitting under the shade drinking lemonade. He might have even sighed "Ah! This is the life!" Where did the story end, though? His life ended in outer darkness. In truth, it never began for he did nothing with his life!

3. **Mindfulness.** Life begins when we begin to fully live in the now; when we begin to be content with what God has given us and by faith choose to not worry about the future. Returning to Mathew 6 we see:

- **Matthew 6:31-34 HCSB** So don't worry, saying, 'What will we eat?' or 'What will we drink?' or 'What will we wear?' (32) For the idolaters eagerly seek all these things, and your heavenly Father knows that you need them. (33) But seek first the kingdom of God and His righteousness, and all these things will be provided for you. (34) Therefore don't worry about tomorrow, because tomorrow will worry about itself. Each day has enough trouble of its own.

It is when we are still that we know God.

- **Psalms 46:1-3 HCSB** For the choir director. A song of the sons of Korah. According to Alamo. God is our refuge and strength, a helper who is always found in times of trouble. (2) Therefore we will not be afraid, though the earth trembles and the mountains topple into the depths of the seas, (3) though its waters roar and foam and the mountains quake with its turmoil. Selah
- **Psalms 46:10 HCSB** "Stop *your fighting*--and know that I am God, exalted among the nations, exalted on the earth."

When we know El Ch'aim¹, God of Life, we finally find life.

- **Deuteronomy 30:16-20 HCSB** For I am commanding you today to love the LORD your God, to walk in His ways, and to keep His commands, statutes, and ordinances, so that you may live and multiply, and the LORD your God may bless you in the land you are entering to possess. (17) But if your heart turns away and you do not listen and you are led astray to bow down to other gods and worship them, (18) I tell you today that you will certainly perish and will not live long in the land you are entering to possess across the Jordan. (19) I call heaven and earth as witnesses against you today that I have set before you life and death, blessing and curse. Choose life so that you and your descendants may live, (20) love the LORD your God, obey Him, and remain faithful to Him. For He is your life, and He

¹ Deuteronomy 5:26; Joshua 3:10; 1 Samuel 17:26, 36; 2 Kings 19:16; Psalm 42:2; 84:2; Isaiah 37:4, 17; Jeremiah 10:10; 23:36; Daniel 6:20, 26; Hosea 1:10

will prolong your life in the land the LORD swore to give to your fathers Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob."

4. **Expenditure.** Life begins when we find something so valuable that we are willing to become personally expendable.
- **Matthew 13:44-46 HCSB** "The kingdom of heaven is like treasure, buried in a field, that a man found and reburied. Then in his joy he goes and sells everything he has and buys that field. (45) "Again, the kingdom of heaven is like a merchant in search of fine pearls. (46) When he found one priceless pearl, he went and sold everything he had, and bought it.
 - **Matthew 16:25-27 HCSB** For whoever wants to save his life will lose it, but whoever loses his life because of Me will find it. (26) What will it benefit a man if he gains the whole world yet loses his life? Or what will a man give in exchange for his life? (27) For the Son of Man is going to come with His angels in the glory of His Father, and then He will reward each according to what he has done.
5. **Anticipation.** Life's greatest adventures begin when we acknowledge we are nomads and strangers in a foreign land and look forward to the city whose builder and maker is God.
- **Hebrews 11:6 HCSB** Now without faith it is impossible to please God, for the one who draws near to Him must believe that He exists and rewards those who seek Him.
 - **Hebrews 11:8-10 HCSB** By faith Abraham, when he was called, obeyed and went out to a place he was going to receive as an inheritance; he went out, not knowing where he was going. (9) By faith he stayed as a foreigner in the land of promise, living in tents with Isaac and Jacob, co-heirs of the same promise. (10) For he was looking forward to the city that has foundations, whose architect and builder is God.
 - **Philippians 3:20 HCSB** but our citizenship is in heaven, from which we also eagerly wait for a Savior, the Lord Jesus Christ.

Consider and imitate Caleb, who in his old age was still looking forward to new challenges.

- **Numbers 14:22-24 HCSB** none of the men who have seen My glory and the signs I performed in Egypt and in the wilderness, and have tested Me these 10 times and did not obey Me, (23) will ever see the land I swore to give their fathers. None of those who have despised Me will see it. (24) But since My servant Caleb has a different spirit and has followed Me completely, I will bring him into the land where he has gone, and his descendants will inherit it.
- **Joshua 14:10-14 HCSB** "As you see, the LORD has kept me alive *these* 45 years as He promised, since the LORD spoke this word to Moses while Israel was journeying in the wilderness. Here I am today, 85 years old. (11) I am still as strong today as I was the day Moses sent me out. My strength for battle and for daily tasks is now as it was then. (12) Now give me this hill country the LORD promised *me* on that day, because you heard then that the Anakim are there, as well as large fortified cities. Perhaps the LORD will be with me and I will drive them out as the LORD promised." (13) Then Joshua blessed Caleb son of Jephunneh and gave him Hebron as an inheritance. (14) Therefore, Hebron has belonged to

Caleb son of Jephunneh the Kenizzite as an inheritance to this day, because he remained loyal to the LORD, the God of Israel.

Conclusion:

Edwin Markham composed this little poem for his 80th birthday:

Now I turn to the future for wine and bread:

I have bidden the past adieu:

I laugh and lift hands to the years ahead:

Come on, I am ready for you!