Rules for the New Moon

Many followers of Yahweh recognize the significance of accurately observing His sacred calendar. However, there seems to be widespread confusion about how to determine the beginning of a scriptural month.

We know that Abraham was justified to receive the Promised Land "because Abraham obeyed my (Yahweh's) voice, and kept my charge, my commandments, MY STATUTES, and my laws." (Gen. 26:5)

Observing Yahweh's Festival Days is a statute that Abraham would have adhered to as a requirement for justification and obtaining salvation and eternal life.

One must also conclude that Abraham surely observed the Festival Days correctly; otherwise, he would not have fulfilled this requirement, and Yahweh would not have justified him.

This raises an important question: Why would Yahweh presently allow his instructions regarding the sacred calendar to be so unclear that many people err and are unable to obey his commands?

The answer becomes evident after thoroughly examining the Scriptures: Yahweh provides clear instructions for his sacred calendar. Unfortunately, mankind has failed to adhere correctly to the scriptural method for discovering Yahweh's truth as presented in the Scriptures.

Accordingly, we will now focus on the guidelines outlined in Scriptures to determine the scriptural new moon, essential for following Yahweh's instructions in keeping his sacred calendar.

Uncovering Scriptural Knowledge

How does one determine the beginning of the scriptural month? At first glance, it may appear that there is little information in the Scriptures regarding this topic. However, the importance of these calculations becomes clear when we realize that all of Yahweh's festival days, as well as the Sabbath and Jubilee years, depend on them.

Why would Yahweh provide so little information on a matter of such significance? The truth is that He has given us more than sufficient guidance to address these issues. The challenge lies in the fact that many individuals have relied on the interpretations popularized by various Jewish and Christian religious institutions instead of following Yahweh's instructions for uncovering scriptural knowledge.

To refresh our understanding of the scriptural approach, we must first consider what the prophet Isaiah tells us:

> Whom shall he teach toward knowledge? And whom shall he explain toward the message? Those weaned from milk, those moving from the breasts. Because precept is upon precept, precept is upon precept; line is upon line, line is upon line, a little here, a little there. (Isa. 28:9-10)

Along with this guide, Isaiah adds a companion passage:

> Search throughout the book of Yahweh and read it. Not one of these (passages) is missing; each one does not lack her mate. Because he (Yahweh) has commanded my mouth, and his *ruach* has assembled them (the passages). And he has made a lot fall for them, and his hand divided to them by its line. Until *olam* (world-age lasting) they shall possess it; to generation and generation they shall live in it. (Isa. 34:16-17)

To these instructions, we must add those which command:

> Ask, and it shall be given to you; seek and you shall find; knock, and it shall be opened to you. (Matt. 7:7; Luke 11:9)

To accomplish our goal, we need to seek out and assemble all of the relevant scriptural passages. By setting aside the various human interpretations often associated with these texts and focusing solely on the information provided by Scripture, the instructions become straightforward and clear.

1 The Hebrew word מארת (*maroth*) comes from אור (*aur*), meaning "to be (caus. make) luminous (lit. and metaph.) . . . illumination or (concr.) luminary (in every sense, including lightning, happiness, etc.)" (SEC: *Strong's Exhaustive Concordance*, Heb. #215-216), "light, brightness, lightning, luminary . . . fire, the light of fire" (HEL: Zondervan Edition, 1970, p. 9); " The word מארת (*maroth*) refers to "light," "a luminous body or luminary, i.e., (abstr.) light (as an element); fig. brightness, i.e. cheerfulness; spec. a chandelier—bright, light" (SEC, Heb. #3974).

2 The term חק (*khoq*), fem. חקות, חקת (*khoquth*), collective noun חקים (*khoqim*), etc., means "an enactment; hence an appointment (of time, space, quantity, labor or usage)" (SEC, Heb. #2706, 2708); "statute, law . . . custom, privilege" (HEL, p. 93).

The Scriptures clearly address this issue, leaving little doubt about how to determine the beginning of scriptural months and years. This study will specifically focus on how to identify the new moon or the beginning of a month.

Basic Rules

The fundamental rules for defining the start of daytime, nighttime, a 24-hour day, a month, and a year are established in Genesis:

> And *eloahim* said, Let there be מארת (*maroth*; luminaries)[1] in the open expanse of the heaven to divide between the daytime and the night and let them be for signs and for *moadim* and for days and years; and let them be for illuminations in the open expanse of the heaven to give light on the *eretz* (land); and it was so. And *eloahim* made the two great luminaries: the great מאר (*maor*; luminary) for ruling the day and the smaller מאר (*maor*; luminary) for ruling the night, and the stars. And *eloahim* set them in the open expanse of the heaven to give light upon the *eretz* and to rule over the daytime and over the night, and to separate between the light and the darkness. (Gen. 1:14-18)

This understanding is enhanced in Psalms:

> Give thanks to Yahweh . . . to him who made the great lights; for his mercy is for *olam* (world-age lasting); the *shemesh* (sun) to rule in the day, for his mercy is for *olam*; the *yerakh* (moon) and the stars to rule in the night, for his mercy is for *olam*. (Ps. 136:1, 7-9)

The sun, moon, and stars—referred to as מארת (*maroth*; luminaries) in the open expanse of the first heaven—play a crucial role in regulating daytime and nighttime for the *moadim*, as well as defining 24-hour legal days and years. The מאר (*maor*; luminary) of the sun can only provide regulation during the daytime, while the מאר (*maor*; luminary) of the moon, along with the light from the stars, is responsible for regulation during the nighttime.

In the book of Jeremiah, it is noted that the statutes of the moon and the stars provide guidance for the light given at night.

> Thus says Yahweh who gives the sun for a light by daytime and חקת (*khoquth*; statutes)[2] of the *yerakh* (moon) and stars for a light of the night. (Jer. 31:35)

Ancient Writers

Ancient Jewish and Christian writers recognized that the sun could only govern during the daytime, while the moon and stars held authority exclusively during the nighttime.

Rabbi Eliezer (fl. 100 C.E.), for example, states:

> Just as the moon's light does not rule over the sun's light by daytime, nor does the sun's light rule over the moon's light by night, likewise the calculation of the moon does not rule by daytime nor does the calculation of the sun by night, and the one does not trespass on the boundary of the other.[3]

Philo writes:

> All time having been divided into two portions, daytime and night, the father (Yahweh) assigned the sovereignty of the daytime to the sun, as to a great king, and that of the night to the moon and the host of the other stars.[4]

The Christian writer John of Damascus similarly states that the sun's illumination was created "to have rule and authority over the day." He adds:

> . . . for it is by it (the sun's illumination) that daytime is made: for it is daytime when the sun is above the earth, and the duration of daytime is the course of the sun over the earth from its rising until its setting. And he (Yahweh) also created the lesser luminaries, that is, the moon and the stars, to have rule and authority over the night, and to give light by night. For it is night when the sun is under the earth, and the duration of night is the course of the sun under the earth

3 Pirkei DeRabbi Eliezer 7:12.

4 Philo, *De Opificio Mundi*, 18:56.

> from its rising until its setting. The moon, then, and the stars were set to lighten the night: not that they are in the daytime under the earth, for even by day stars are in the heaven over the earth: but the sun conceals both the stars and the moon by the greater brilliance of its light and prevents them from being seen.[5]

Bound by Covenant Agreement

The statutes provide for a 12-hour period of day and a 12-hour period of night—although the length of each hour under the ancient system was variable[6]—and a covenant agreement binds these periods.

Yahweh states:

> If you can break my covenant of the day, and my covenant of the night, and that there should not be a day and night in their time then can my covenant be broken with David my servant. . . (For) if my covenant is not with day and night, then I have not appointed the statutes of heaven and earth. (Jer. 33:20, 25)

To these passages, we must add Psalm, 104:19, which has:

> He (Yahweh) made the moon for the *moadim*, the sun knows where he enters in.[7]

These instructions and statements clearly show that only the moon is used to determine the day of the month for the *moadim* (appointed times) and the assembling of Yahweh's people, i.e., the festivals and sacred days.[8] Indeed, in Scriptures, the days of the month as well as all the *moadim* are always counted by the 24-hour legal days of the moon, which begin at sunset.[9]

The חקת (*khoquth*; statutes) of the moon, which control the legal 24-hour days—whether regular days, Sabbaths, or the festival days—were ordained by Yahweh,[10] which means they were among those kept by Abraham.[11] At the same time, the year is anchored to a *tequphath* (season).[12]

A *tequphath* is a solar event and, therefore, can only be regulated by the sun. Since the seventh month and the Khag of Ingathering are clocked to the autumnal *tequphath* of a year,[13] the moon and the sun must work together to determine the beginning of a year.

Further, the place on the *eretz* from which all dates must take their beginning is calculated from the royal city of Jerusalem, i.e., within the Promised Land. In both Isaiah and Micah, for example, we are told:

> And many people shall go and say, Come you, and let us go up to the mountain of Yahweh, to the house of the *eloahi* of Jacob; and he will teach us of his ways, and we will walk in his paths: because out of Zion shall go forth the Torah, and the *debar* (word) of Yahweh from Jerusalem. (Isa. 2:3; Micah 4:2)

This Torah referred to in this passage, of course, is the Torah of Trust, not the Torah of Moses.[14] It includes the statutes established by Yahweh during the six days of "making" the heaven and the land and were part of the statutes kept by Abraham, as found in the Abrahamic Covenant. Within these statutes

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5 John of Damascus, *De Hearesibus*, 2:7.

6 An in-depth discussion of the evidence will be presented in a forthcoming work, FSDY (The Festivals and Sacred Days of Yahweh), Vol. 3.

7 The LXX version (LXX Ps. 103:19) reads, "He appointed the moon for appointed times, the sun knows his going down."

8 Lev. 23.

9 An in-depth discussion of the evidence will be presented in a forthcoming work FSDY, Vol. 3.

10 Lev. 23:1-44; Gen. 1:14-18.

11 Gen. 26:5.

12 Exod. 34:22. An in-depth discussion is presented in the Articles titled Beginning the New Year - Part 1 and Beginning the New Year - Part 2.

13 Exod. 34:22; compare with Exod. 23:15-16; Lev. 23:34, 39, 41; Num. 29:12-39; Deut. 16:13.

14 Rom. 3:27. Also see FSDY, Volume 1.

are those pertaining to the *moadim*, which are controlled by the moon, which rules during the night.[15]

Khodesh

How does one determine the first day of the month (i.e., a new moon day)? We begin to understand this process with the Hebrew term חדש (*khodesh*), which is translated as "moon," "new moon," and "month."[16] *Khodesh* is used explicitly as a calendrical term for the month and must not be confused with the terms *yerakh*, the name of the moon, or *maor*, which is used to describe the illumination of the moon.

Under the Torah of Moses, the monthly recognition of a new moon day was commemorated with sacrifices and was a matter of regular observance.[17] Exactly how it was originally calculated has been an issue of much debate. We have two ways of understanding the use of the word *khodesh*.

First, there is the basic Hebrew definition.

> • חדש (*khodesh*), "a prim. root; to *be new*; caus. to *rebuild*:—renew, repair . . . *new*:—fresh, new thing . . . the *new moon*; by impl. a month";[18] *renew, restore . . . new, recent, fresh*";[19] "**make new, restore . . . new, fresh . . . new moon . . . month**";[20] "TO BE NEW . . . to produce something new . . . Piel to *renew* . . . especially *to repair* or *restore* buildings or towns . . . It often means *fresh of this year*; of grain . . . *the new moon, the day of the new moon* . . . a lunar *month*, beginning at the new moon."[21]

Accordingly, a new moon (new month) differentiates itself from the previous month's lunation in that it is defined as a moon that has been "renewed" or "rebuilt," i.e., a fresh, new lunar cycle. Obviously, the physical orb, the *yerakh*, which we call "the moon," does not rebuild.

That detail brings us to our second important definition. In Genesis 1:14–18, and Jeremiah 31:35 as demonstrated above, it is not just the *yerakh* that is said to regulate legal days and *moadim* but, more particularly, the moon's מאר (*maor*; luminary).

This מאר (*maor*; luminary) of the moon served two purposes.

1. It was placed "in the open expanse of the heaven to give light upon the *eretz*."[22]

2. It was given authority to regulate.

Restricted to Nighttime

Nonetheless, this regulation by the moon is restricted to nighttime (i.e., between sunset and sunrise).[23] Accordingly, the rebuilt moon is, in fact, the rebuilt מאר (*maor*; luminary) as referenced from the *eretz* in Jerusalem and the Promised Land.[24]

It is also clear that the moon cannot start to rebuild itself until after its conjunction with the sun. Consequently, it cannot be considered officially "rebuilt" (indicating the start of a new month) until it has fully transitioned past what can be described as its "transitional phase."

A conjunction of the moon occurs when the moon

15 Jer. 31:35; Ps. 104:19.

16 YAC: *Analytical Concordance to the Bible*. Robert Young. 22nd American Edition, rev. Wm. B. Eerdman's Publishing Company, Grand Rapids, Michigan, reprint 1968., pp. 667-668, s.v. s.v. MONTH, MONTHLY, MOON, and MOON, new; SEC, pp. 687-688, s.v. month, monthly, months, moon, moons, and compare with p. 716, s.v. new, Heb. #2320.

17 Num. 28:11-15; 1 Sam. 20:5, 18-24; 2 Kings 4:23; 1 Chron. 23:31; 2 Chron. 2:4, 8:13, 31:3; Ezra 3:5; Neh. 10:33; Ps. 81:3; Isa. 66:23; Ezek. 45:17, 46:1, 3, 6.

18 SEC, Heb. #2318, 2319, 2320.

19 HEL., p. 80.

20 CHAL: *A Concise Hebrew and Aramaic Lexicon of the Old Testament William L. Holladay*. William B Eerdmans Publishing Company, Grand Rapids, Michigan, 1971, pp. 96-97.

21 GHCL: *Gesinius's Hebrew and Chaldee Lexicon to the Old Testament Scriptures*. Samuel Prideaux Tregelles. Samuel Bagster and Sons, Paternoster Row, 1846, p. CCLXIII.

22 Gen. 1:15, 17.

23 Gen. 1:16; Ps. 136:1, 7-9.

24 Isa. 2:3; Micah 4:2.

and the sun have the same ecliptic longitude, i.e., at the point when the moon is in a direct line between the earth and the sun. A transitional phase occurs when the moon gives the appearance, as seen from the earth, of closely approaching, meeting with, and then leaving the position of the sun.

In that part of the transitional phase where the moon appears to be leaving the sun, the luminary begins to rebuild. At some point thereafter, positioned far enough away from the sun, it is declared *khodesh* officially (rebuilt). But is *khodesh* a reference to the moon's orbital position or purely based upon visibility?

The ancient Jews interpreted this broader transitional phase to encompass both the time before and after the moon's conjunction when it is no longer visible in the sky. One thing is certain: a lunar conjunction marks a significant event, representing a point of transition for the moon as it orbits the Earth. As we have already mentioned, this lunar event can only be regulated at night when the moon has authority.

Meanwhile, there is no statement in all of Scriptures that the moon's luminary had to actually be viewed by a man before it could be officially designated as the beginning of a month. This detail is implicit in the statement that Yahweh "made the moon for the *moadim*"[25] and by the fact that it was already designated as regulating the night before Adam was created.[26]

The original purpose of the moon, which has existed long before any human walked on Earth, was to serve as a mechanism for calculating time. Its function does not depend on the existence of humans.

Even when the crescent moon is large enough to be seen from the ground, visibility can be obstructed by clouds, snow, smoke, poor eyesight, and other factors. This highlights that visibility is not a requirement for determining the new moon; instead, it emphasizes the moon's position in its orbit.

Rebuilding After Conjunction

More importantly, despite visibility, the rebuilding of the moon was recognized, even by the ancients, as actually beginning immediately after the moment of conjunction.

Rabbi Eliezer, for example, writes:

> The moon disappears from heaven only for one moment, like the twinkling of the eye. Otherwise, however, it continues to run its course and be it only in the width of a thin thread, either in the east (before the conjunction) or in the west (after the conjunction). But the human eye has no strength to perceive the moon for 8 large hours (i.e., 16 hours).[27]

The Pharisees had differing views on when the moon became visible to the human eye, with opinions ranging from 6 to 18 hours after conjunction. However, they all agreed that the entire transitional phase—encompassing both the approach to and the exit from conjunction—lasted 24 hours.[28]

The concept that the light of the moon was itself required to be seen by the human eye before it could be declared a new moon day was a late Pharisaic invention born out of interpretation. Nowhere in Scriptures is such an instruction offered, indicating that Yahweh required another approach.

The opinions held by the Pharisees are not only inconsistent, but they are also unnecessary. The term חדש (*khodesh*), which means "rebuilt" or "new," only signifies the start of the official new moon cycle. Technically, the process of rebuilding begins immediately after the conjunction. The critical question is: On which day does Yahweh officially recognize the moon as "rebuilt" to mark it as the first day of the month?

Next, a conjunction of the moon occurs when the moon aligns directly between the sun and the Earth, causing the side of the moon facing the Earth to be completely dark. As it moves out of conjunction, a thin sliver of light begins to illuminate the moon's edge. While the moon continues moving away from the sun, it remains relatively close, making this growing crescent of light difficult to see, as it is obscured by the sun's brightness. Eventually, the moon will travel far enough away for its crescent to become visible to the naked eye.

25 Ps. 104:19.

26 Gen. 1:14-18.

27 Eliezer 7.

28 Babylonian Talmud, Rosh ha-Shanah, 20b.

The real issue becomes the scriptural view regarding just how long the moon remains in its transitional phase before it is officially counted as חדש (*khodesh*; rebuilt). In reviewing this issue, we must keep in mind that Scriptures nowhere directly speaks of the moon's conjunction, its transitional phase, or how long this phase lasts. Yet as we shall see, it does address this issue howbeit, in another form.

Visiblilty

At the same time, although the visual sighting of a new moon's crescent is not necessary to define a "rebuilt" lunation, we know that the crescent can be seen as early as 15.53 hours after a conjunction.[29]

Therefore, since the first light of a new moon's crescent is always seen during *arab* (twilight, the hour or so following sunset), and it requires at least 15.53 hours before a large enough crescent forms far enough away from the sun to be visible, the new moon's crescent became a basis for the later idea that one could see the new moon on the next day after the night of a conjunction.

Any conjunction taking place during the daytime, on the other hand, comes too early to make the crescent visible that next night. No doubt, this general factor served as one of the bases for the developing Hasidic and Pharisaic views on requiring the visibility of the moon's crescent.

This much is for sure, somewhere between the conjunction and the visual sighting of a new moon's crescent comes the scriptural definition for the moon becoming officially חדש (*khodesh*; rebuilt), designating a day as the first day of the month. For this definition, we must examine the evidence from Scriptures and not assume the theories of religious leaders.

The "Part Of" Rule

Since a new crescent technically begins to rebuild on the day of the conjunction, why not use this day as the first day of the moon? In Scriptures, the premise is everywhere that those things that qualify legally for some purpose must be absent of any part of the old or opposite quality.

For simplification, we shall label this the "part of" rule. For example, father Yahweh is light, "and in him there is no darkness at all."[30] Meanwhile, Yahushua emphasizes that even a small amount of darkness can condemn the entirety.

> The lamp of the body is the eye. Then, if your eye is sound all of your body is light. But if your eye is evil, your whole body shall be full of darkness. Therefore, if the light that is in you is darkness, how great is that darkness! (Matt. 6:23)

He adds to this parable:

> Watch, then, that the light in you is not darkness. If, then, your whole body is light, NOT HAVING ANY PART OF DARKNESS, all will be light, as when the lamp enlightens you with its shining. (Luke 11:35)

Clean the Next Day

Under the Torah of Moses, one could not be ceremonially clean the same day the person was unclean—even after that person had washed his body entirely, changed into new clothes, and was absolutely clean from head to toe—until the arrival of the new day at sunset and the time of *arab*.[31]

If that person waited to accomplish these chores until just after sunset, he was still considered unclean. He would be required to wait until yet another sunset arrived before being declared clean.

Other examples are as follows: A convicted criminal who was executed by being hung on a tree could not remain there beyond the 24-hour legal day of his execution. He must be taken down before sunset and the arrival of a new day.[32]

If one stumbled in only one point of the Torah, he was counted as guilty of breaking all the laws of the Torah.[33] Only Yahushua the messiah was without sin

29 It takes at least 11.67 hours with binoculars before a moon's crescent can actually be seen (*What's the Thinnest Crescent Moon You Can See?* Sky & Telescope. Bob King. December 13, 2017).

30 1 John 1:5.

31 For example, Lev. 11:24-25, 27-28, 31-32, 39-40; 14:46; 15:5-8, 10-11, 16-19, 21-23, 27; 17:15; Num. 19:7-8, 10, 21-22.

32 Deut. 21:22-23; compare with. Josh. 8:29; John 19:31-42.

33 James 2:10.

(i.e., he was righteous), for which reason he was the only man able to qualify for the Eternal Inheritance.[34] Unrighteousness (i.e., sinfulness), as we have already seen, is equated with darkness.

Therefore, if Yahushua had sinned, he would have been disqualified as an heir. This "part of" theme is also carried out in the symbolism of leavened and unleavened bread.

Saul writes:

> Your glorying is not good. Do you not know that a little leaven (false teaching, malice, hypocrisy, etc.)[35] leavens the whole lump? Therefore, purge out the old leaven, that you may be a new lump, as you are unleavened. For even the messiah our Phasekh is sacrificed for us. (1 Cor. 5:6-7)

In this context, the legal 24-hour day during which a transitional phase of the moon occurs will, by definition, always include parts of two lunar cycles. This is because the moon's conjunction does not coincide exactly with the start of a 24-hour day.[36] Thus, the day will encompass a portion of the lunar cycle from the old moon (the part before the conjunction) as well as a portion of the lunar cycle of the new moon (the part after the conjunction).

We must also consider the technical question of how long the Scriptures regard the entire transitional phase of the moon to last before officially recognizing the beginning of its "rebuilt" phase. Is this transition period seen as lasting only for a moment (i.e., at conjunction), for several minutes, or for up to several hours after the moon has left conjunction?

In this situation, the entire transition period—especially the exit phase—must be completed before the new lunar cycle can officially commence. The absence of any mention of this issue in Scriptures is telling and suggests that it is being addressed in quite another way.

New Moon Day

The circumstance is such that when we focus solelyon the conjunction during a transitional phase, both the latter part of the old month's cycle (the time before the conjunction) and the early part of the new month's cycle (the time after the conjunction) fall within the same legal 24-hour day.

Additionally, if we consider the latter half of the transitional phase (the period after the conjunction) as part of the old day, we encounter the same problem. However, in this case, the end of the transitional phase becomes the crucial point that separates the old cycle from the new one.

This duality, whether counted from the conjunction or from the end of the transitional phase, presents a problem for the monthly celebrations of new moon days and some of the *moadim*, such as the Day of Trumpets (falling as it does on the first day of the seventh moon).[37]

Festivals and new moons were celebrated in ancient Israel just after sunset. If the conjunction or the final part of the transitional phase was not over until sometime after sunset, yet that day was counted as the Day of Trumpets or the first day of the month, then those days would actually be celebrated during the time allotted to the cycle of the old moon. This contradiction breaks the scriptural "part of" rule.

Last Day of Month

This situation requires that the legal 24-hour day, which includes either the conjunction or the latter part of the transition phase (specifically, the portion

34 1 John 3:5; 1 Pet. 1:19, 2:21-22; Heb. 4:15, 7:26, 9:14; 2 Cor. 5:21.

35 Matt. 16:12; 1 Cor. 5:8; Luke 12:1.

36 The odds of absolute conjunction occurring the very second of sunset is one out of every 86,400 occurrences, i.e., once every 7,200 years. Even if we have a close calculation for a conjunction, such as within the minute (30 sec. on either side) of a sunset, the odds are only one out of every 1440 occurrences, or once every 120 years. Further, the importance of a mistake that would actually affect the dates of the *moadim* (i.e., which are only relevant to the first and seventh months of the year) would be once out of every 43,200 years for the very second and once out of every 720 years within the minute (30 sec. on either side) of a sunset. For all intents and purposes, the determination can comfortably be made within five seconds on either side of sunset (i.e., once every 4,320 years), making the possibility of a calculation so close that could be questionable almost nil.

37 Lev. 23:23-25; Num. 29:1-6.

of the transition occurring after the conjunction)—meaning a day that encompasses part of the old lunar cycle and part of the new—must fall on the last day of the month.

This fact was conceded by ancient Jewish commentators, such as in the book of 1 Enoch and the works of Philo.[38] Philo, for example, describes the lunar month as "the period ἀπὸ συνόδου ἐπὶ σύνοδον (*apo synodou epi synodon*; from conjunction unto conjunction),"[39] noting elsewhere that it "wanes into her conjunction with the sun" and "dies away into the conjunction."[40]

Accordingly, he writes, the new moon day "FOLLOWS the conjunction of the moon with the sun."[41] Yet the question remains, "How much time must pass after the conjunction before one can count a day of the moon as officially *khodesh* (rebuilt, new)?"

We start by addressing the relevant statute governing these matters, which states that the moon's luminary can only have regulatory authority during nighttime—that is, during the 12 variable hours between sunset and sunrise. Consequently, any calculation of conjunction that occurs during the daytime is considered invalid.

If the moon's conjunction with the sun occurs at night, the entire 24-hour legal day is considered the last day of the month, according to the "part of" rule. The following day, the moon is recognized as *khodesh*, meaning it is rebuilt or new.

The period of daytime that occurs between the nighttime conjunction and sunset serves as a de facto transitional phase for "rebuilding" after the conjunction. However, during this rebuilding process, the moon has not yet been officially classified as "rebuilt."

One more factor must be considered before officially recognizing a legal 24-hour last day of the month. If the conjunction of the moon and sun occurs at night, the moon must rule during the nighttime of the subsequent 24-hour period.

In other words, the moon's setting must occur after sunset, beginning the next 24-hour day.

Conversely, if the moon had set before sunset, it would not have completed its transitional phase and would not have ruled the night or held prominence.

This rare occurrence would cause the next 24-hour day to be designated as the last day of the month.

What happens if the conjunction occurs during the daytime or just a minute after sunset? If the moon's conjunction takes place during the daytime—when only the sun has the authority to regulate—it becomes apparent that the nighttime portion of the 24-hour day has already passed.

As a result, the previous night can no longer be used to determine the last day of the month. Neither the daytime conjunction nor the final part of the transition phase can be counted legally. This statute indicates that the legal count cannot resume until the following night when the moon reappears and takes prominence.

Therefore, the night after the daytime period in which the conjunction occurs is regarded as the night of the conjunction. This night marks the end of the transition phase and, thus, is considered the last day of the month. In summary, an official last day of the month must be established before an official first day of the following month can be counted.

In the story of Jonathan and David, Jonathan mentions that the following day will be a new moon day. [42] This implies that he was already aware that the day he was speaking was the last day of the old month.

This situation suggests that Scriptures do not determine the first and last days of a month solely based on the moon's conjunction or the visibility of the crescent moon. Instead, they rely on the passage of a transitional rebuilding period before the moon is officially recognized as *khodesh* (rebuilt).

38 1 Enoch, 73:1-8, 77:13-14.

39 Philo, *De Specialibus Legibus*, 2:26 §140.

40 Philo, *De Specialibus Legibus*, 1:35 §178.

41 Philo, *De Specialibus Legibus*, 2:11 §41.

42 1 Sam. 20:18.

The Scriptures imply that the moon only has authority during the night and does not officially emerge from its transitional phase of rebuilding (the phase following the conjunction) until a period equivalent to daylight, which varies throughout the year.

In this context, the following night marks the last legal 24-hour day of the moon. One must wait until this period has passed before counting the first official 24-hour day of the "rebuilt" moon or the new moon day. Consequently, since the night following a daytime conjunction is part of the next legal day, this new night-day cycle represents the last day of the month.

A Molad

Proceeding from this scriptural perspective, even the more conservative Pharisaic Jews, like Rabbi Eliezer, held that "The moon becomes new at every *molad* (conjunction), once at night and one time by day."[43] That is, the *molad* (a term used by the late Jews but not found in Scriptures) is counted first by night and then by the following daylight period.

Strictly speaking, the Scriptures require only the night. Still, it is a logical consequence that a daytime period would follow, and it is in keeping with this understanding. Even Jewish leaders mentioned in the Talmud relied upon this premise:[44]

When Rabbi Zera went up (to Judaea), he sent word back to them (in Babylonia):

> It is necessary that there should be (on new-moon day) a night and a day of the new moon (i.e., there should be no appearance of the old moon on that day).[45]

This construct suggests that if the *molad* occurs during the daytime, it cannot be considered as completing a full period of transition until sometime the following night. Since the next night is covered by the "part of" rule—where part of the day belongs to the lunar cycle counted toward the old month—it must be the last night of that month.

There can be little doubt that it is from the ancient practice of the Aristocratic priests to calculate the days of the moon by night and then declare the results during the daytime that influenced the later decision among the Pharisees only to sanctify a new moon during the daytime, that is after the night had completely finished, so that its calculation was truly known.[46]

Further, on a day when the conjunction occurs during the early daytime in Jerusalem, the following sunset finds the physical orb of the moon still so close to the sun it will appear just above the western horizon for only a few minutes. It will then set like the sun. The authority of the moon during that night lasts for only a very short time. Yet this brief period for the moon's presence will overlap with the time allotted to the final phase of the transition period.

This explains the early priestly Aristocratic and conservative Hasidic perspective. According to this understanding, if the conjunction occurred before sunrise, the transitional phase would be completed during the following daytime period. Consequently, the new moon day would begin at the next sunset.

If the conjunction occurs after sunrise, then the transitional phase won't be complete until after sunset. As a result, the new moon day will not begin until the second sunset following the day of the conjunction. This perspective naturally arises from the scriptural interpretation.

Most importantly, this scriptural interpretation is not grounded in a specific number of hours or the moon's visibility to humans for timekeeping purposes. Instead, it relies entirely on the moon's position in its orbit as calculated during the night.

The statements from Scriptures indicate that the first day of the new moon should be free of any part of the lunar cycle assigned to the old moon. Originally, the determination of the new moon's beginning was not based on the visual sighting of the crescent—though this was often the outcome. Instead, it was understood that the new moon represented a period of transition or rebuilding, after which its official renewal phase began.

This perspective was guided by the principle that this transitional period could only be regulated at night. Disputes arose between the Aristocratic and Pharisaic groups on the recognition of the new

43 Eliezer 7.

44 Babylonian Talmud, Rosh ha-Shanah 20b.

45 Hebrew English Edition of the Babylonian Talmud, Rosh ha-Shanah, 20b, n. 5.

moon, particularly when the crescent was not visible to the naked eye. These disagreements centered on which day truly marked the beginning of the lunar month.

Summary

A stark reality sets in when all of the scriptural data is considered. The criteria for establishing a new moon is amazingly straightforward.

One immediately recognizes that Yahweh established the sun, moon, and stars to act as a heavenly clock so that mankind could accurately keep His sacred calendar.

With this knowledge, mankind is able to calculate the beginning of months and years, whereby they would know how to keep Yahweh's Sabbaths and Festival Days precisely.

To arrive at the beginning of a new moon or month, many have focused primarily on a visible moon crescent along with a general idea of the moon's age.

Those who adhere to such a concept are relegated to consistent confusion, especially when trying to create a calendar in advance.

The Last Lunar Day

The critical key to calculating new moons is recognizing when the last day of the month occurs!

Scriptures have revealed the formula to us with the following:

> David said to Jonathan, "Behold, **TOMORROW IS THE NEW MOON**..." (1 Sam. 20:5)

The facts are clear: David clearly indicated that the day he spoke to Jonathan was the last day of the month. Therefore, logic dictates that the following day is the first day of the new month.

How could David be so certain? It is evident that David relied on calculations rather than a visual sighting of a crescent moon.

This principle remains valid to this day. Based on this information that we have covered, the following guidelines can be established:

1. All calculations are considered from Jerusalem per the instructions from Isaiah 2:3: "for out of Zion will the law go forth, and the word of Yahweh from Jerusalem."

2. New-moon days are determined by the moon, which only regulates during nighttime.

3. Nighttime is defined as the time of sunset to sunrise.

4. Daytime is defined as the time of sunrise to sunset.

5. If the conjunction of the moon and sun occurs during the nighttime, and the setting of the moon takes place after the next sunset, that complete 24-hour day is considered the last day of the month. The very next sunset begins the new moon or month.

6. If the conjunction of the moon and sun occurs during the daytime, the next sunset begins the last 24-hour day of the month. The second sunset begins the new moon or month.

7. No visual sighting of a moon's crescent is necessary for a new moon. It should be noted that after fulfilling the conditions of the "part of rule," a crescent will typically be visible, though not in all cases.

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