

New Moons (Rosh Chodesh)

For Messianic Yisrael: Past, Present, and Future

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“This month (Chodesh) is the beginning of months for you, it is the first month of the year for you.” Shemot (Exodus) 12:2 the Scriptures

With the restoration of Yisrael in these last days¹, Believers in Yahshua are once again beginning to observe the Feast of the New Moon or *Rosh Chodesh*. Yahweh commanded Yisrael to observe the Renewed Moon in the *TaNak*². Many have questions as to how they are to calculate and observe this command from the Torah. Hopefully some answers will be found in this teaching.

The purpose of the Moon in Yahweh’s Creation

“ And Elohim said,” Let the lights come to be in the expanse of the heavens to SEPARATE (badal-to divide, distinguish, sever) the day from the night, and let them be for SIGNS (ot- a signal, flag, beacon, monument, evidence) and appointed times (mo’ed, *mo’adah*-appointments, a fixed time, season, festival, an assembly, an assembly called for a definite purpose), and for DAYS (yom- to be hot, heat of the day, from sunrise to sunset, a full year) and YEARS (shaneh, *shannah*- a whole year, age), and let them be for LIGHTS (ma’or, *me’orah*-brightness, cheerfulness, luminary) in the expanse of the heavens to give light on the earth.” And it came to be so. And Elohim made two great lights: the greater to rule the day and the lesser (qatan –diminutive, small, least, younger) LIGHT to RULE (memshalah- to have dominion, power, to rule FEMALE) the night and the stars.” Bereshith 1:14-16 the Scriptures

In the book of Beginnings we can see in the Scripture that Elohim made the moon (yareach-verach) with a PURPOSE in His creation. The moon was to divide, to be a sign, an appointed time of meeting (Wayyiqra **23** for rest of Yahweh’s mo’edim), to number days and years, and to rule over the night and stars. It was called the lesser LIGHT, in comparison to the sun, the greater LIGHT.

“He made the moon for the appointed times (mo’edim)” Tehillim 104:19a

In this Tehillim we can understand that the moon was to be used to set Yahweh’s *mo’edim* or the SCRIPTURAL HOLYDAYS (Wayyiqra 23). All the Feasts³ are related to the NEW MOON. But when the Torah of Mosheh was written, Tehillim 104 was not yet written. We must then ask ourselves, “How did the ancient Yisraelites know this?” The answer is that the Hebrew word for MONTH (CHODESH) itself indicates a connection to the moon. The word is used interchangeably with the word YERAH (moon) in the Scriptures. For example:

“In the month (YERAH) of Ziw, which is the second month (CHODESH)...” 1 Melakim 6:1

“In the month (YERAH) of Bul, which is the eighth month (CHODESH)...” 1 Melakim 6:38

Also see “A CHODESH (month) of days” Bereshith 29:14; Bemidbar 11:20-21[meaning a period of 29-30days], which corresponds to the phrase “A YERAH (month/moon) of days” Bemidbar 21:13; 2 Melakim 15:13. So, clearly *Chodesh* is related to *YERAH*, which means moon!

“Chodesh” means NEW MOON

The meaning of *CHODESH* is then actually “NEW MOON” or the “NEW MOON DAY”, and only by extension came to mean month; or the period between one new moon and another.

¹ Acts 3:21

² 1 Dibre haYamim 23:31; 2 Dibre ha Yamim 2:4 ; Tehillim 81:3

³ Shabbat is not dependent upon the New Moon, it is in the complete cycle of seven

In **1 Shemu'el 20:5**, David said to Yehonathan, "See tomorrow is the NEW MOON..." meaning a SPECIFIC DAY on which a new month begins and not the ENTIRE month. We can also see this in **Yechezqel 46:1** which says, "The day (*Yom*) of the NEW MOON (*ha-Chodesh*)." This speaks then of a specific event and the beginning of a month when the event occurs.

The New Moon is the "First Crescent"

The Hebrew word *Chodesh* comes from the root word *CH-D-SH* (*chet-dalet-shin*) which means, "new, renewed, to make new/renew". The CRESENT New Moon is called *CHODESH* because it is the FIRST time the moon is SEEN ANEW after being CONCEALED for SEVERAL DAYS at the end of the lunar cycle. At the end of the cycle the moon is close to the sun and reaches the CONJUNCTION when it passes between the earth and the sun. At this point the moon is NOT VISIBLE because of the glare of the sun. The moon then moves past the sun and continues towards the opposite side of the earth. As it moves away from the sun, a small percentage of its surface becomes VISIBLE shortly AFTER sunset one evening after being INVISIBLE for 1.5-3.5 days. The moon is then seen ANEW and becomes what our ancient fathers called a "New Moon" or *Chodesh*". At the beginning of the month the moon seems to be born again in a THIN CRESENT known in Hebrew as a *MOLAD*, a word connoting BIRTH" **The Encyclopedia of Jewish Life and Thought**".

Originally this word *CHODESH* meant the very FIRST SLIVER of the moon or CRESENT seen after the conjunction. Modern astronomers took the term and applied it to the conjunction ITSELF (when the moon is INVISIBLE). So today, to be more accurate, the scientists refer to the "astronomical new moon" and the "crescent new moon" (or the first sliver that can be observed). Any good dictionary will give BOTH as the meaning for new moon.

Because of this calculation by scientists, many have sought for Scriptural proof of the invisible moon being the New Moon. They usually sight **Tehillim 81:3** which says "Blow the ram's horn (*shofar*) at the time of the *CHODESH* (New Moon), at the *KESEH* (Full Moon), on the day of our *CHAG* (Feast)." According to the "invisible moon" observance, the term *KESEH* comes from the root word *K-S-Y* meaning to cover or conceal. Thus we have the observation of the new moon on the "covered or concealed moon". A shofar then is blown on the "concealed moon". The problem is that the Hebrew in the second part of the verse does NOT support that thought. It calls the *KESEH* as "the day of our *Chag* or FEAST". In the Scriptures the word *CHAG*, ALWAYS REFERS TO THE THREE PILGRIMAGE FEASTS OF YAHWEH (PASSOVER, SHAVUOT, AND Tabernacles see **Shemot 23, 34**).

NEW MOON DAY is **NEVER** classified as a "pilgrimage Feast". Therefore *KESEH/CHAG* cannot possibly mean New Moon Day (*CHODESH*). It has been suggested that the *CHAG* spoken of here is *YOM TERUAH* (Feast of Trumpets), which does fall on a New Moon Day. However, *Yom Teruah* is listed as one of the *MO'EDIM* NOT a *CHAG*. Therefore this verse is not talking of *Yom Teruah*!

KESEH is probably related to the ARAMAIC word *KISTA* and the ASSYRIAN-*KUSEU*, which mean FULL MOON (Brown-Driver-Briggs p.490b). This makes **perfect sense** as TWO of the three *CHAG* (Passover and Tabernacles) are on the 15th of a month or a FULL MOON!

One other point is that there is no actual day of the concealed moon. The moon stays concealed between 1.5 –3.5 days in the Middle East (Israel). It has been said that it is the day of the conjunction. NOTE: It was 1,000 years after Mosheh and the Torah that the BABYLONIANS discovered how to calculate the moment of conjunction of the moon. Therefore the ancient Yisraelites HAD NO WAY of figuring the day of conjunction UNTIL AFTER THEY CAME OUT OF BABYLON! They could not look at the "old moon" and calculate the conjunction date, as in Israel it could be as long as 3.5 days! Today it is common for the moon to stay concealed for 2.5 days in Israel.

No, the ancient Yisraelites knew the New Moon by the VISIBLE CRESENT. They would have been watching the "old moon" and notice it getting smaller and smaller in the morning sky. When the "morning moon" disappeared, they would have waited for its REAPPEARANCE 1.5-3.5 days later in the evening sky. After its observation by TWO WITNESSES and the notification of the *Sanhedrin*, the news was relayed throughout *ERETZ YISRAEL* by beacons or fires on the mountaintops, starting with the Mount of Olives in *Yerushalayim*. The *shofar* was sounded and the *mo'ed began*!

New Moons Past

"...and at the beginning of your months, you shall blow the trumpets over your burnt offerings and your peace offerings .And they shall be a remembrance for you before your Elohim. I AM YAHWEH your Elohim."

Bemidbar 10:10

We know without a doubt that ancient Yisrael observed the New Moon. It was how they set Yahweh's year. In this Scripture from the Torah, we see that special offerings and the blowing of the trumpets over the offerings observed the New Moon. This continued in the time of the First and Second Temple.

We read in **1 Shemu'el 20** and **2 Melakim 4:22-23** that the New Moon was a Festival time of family and friends to meet and hold a feast (food). It was a time to fellowship and seek out the man of Yahweh (*NAVI-prophet*). It appears in **Amos 8:5** that it was possibly observed as a Sabbath. In the Torah Revival of Ezra the observance of the New Moons were restored (**Ezra 3:5**).

We read in **Colossians 2:16** that the early talmidim of Yahshua observed the New Moons. This verse is NOT against the observance of Shabbat and New Moons! It is saying that no one is to judge us IF we DO OBSERVE these Feasts of Yahweh! These are shadows of things for the Body of Messiah of things to come! This verse has been mistranslated and misinterpreted for centuries by the "kirche".

In **Hoshea 2:11** Yahweh says that there would come a time that the House of Yisrael (Ephraim) would cease to observe the New Moon and Shabbat (**Hoshea 2:11**). He would cause ALL her (Ephraim's) rejoicing, festivals, New Moons, Feast days, and Shabbats to cease! This was her punishment for leaving the Torah and committing fornication with other mighty ones! Remember Yisrael (the Northern Tribes) set up FALSE FEAST DAYS (see **2 Melakim 17**). This happened when Ephraim became scattered into the *GOYIM* (nations) and assimilated herself into their religions, mighty ones, and holidays! Even now, the "church" does not observe the New Moon! When we leave Torah, we forget our identity as Yisrael!

New Moons Present

What about today? Should we as Messianic Yisrael celebrate the New Moons as the early Yisraelites did in the Torah? **YES!** Since we are Yisrael, then Torah was given to our ancient ancestors at Mt. Sinai. Yahshua said **Mattithyahu 5:17-19** that He did NOT come to destroy the Torah of Mosheh, but to bring it to its fullest expression. As long as heaven and earth would remain, Torah would stand! Torah is for you and me! OK then-how do I celebrate the New Moon as Yisrael?

The first thing we do is gather together on the night of the New Moon for a festival gathering, with food and fellowship. Then we go outside to actually observe the New Moon, recite **Bemidbar 10:10** and say this blessing "Blessed are you Yahweh our Elohim, King of the universe, who has kept us alive and sustained us, and enabled us to enjoy this season." Then we sound the *SHOFAR* loud and long to announce *Rosh Chodesh*. We recite the following blessing, "Blessed are the people that know the sound of the *shofar*, in the light of your countenance, Yahweh, shall they walk." Also, the blessing for the New Moon can be recited in the congregation (3-14 days after the New Moon) after Havdalah on Shabbat. The *Talmud* states that, "Whoever pronounces the benediction over the New Moon...welcomes, as it were, the presence of the *Shekinah*." It also says, "Had Israel merited no other privilege than to greet the presence of their Heavenly Father once a month (New Moons), it would have been sufficient."

The focus here is two-fold. Like the moon, Yahweh is continually renewing Yisrael. The New Moon is a SYMBOL, SIGN, and WITNESS of Yisrael's redemption and total restoration. It speaks of the hope of the restoration of the Davidic Dynasty and reign under Moshiach (more on that later under the prophetic significance). It is traditional to say, "Dawid King of Yisrael LIVES!" Speaking of the restoration of the reign of David from Yerushalayim. The New Moon also speaks of atonement. In Jewish tradition, *Rosh Chodesh* is a mini *Yom Kippur*, or a time for confession, repentance, and atonement. The *Ashrey Yoshvey Veysecho*, reinforces this when it says, "transgression being turned away from Ya'akov," quoting from **Yeshayahu 59:20**. Rav Shaul also quotes this verse in **Romans chapter 11:26**, speaking of the time when "ALL YISRAEL will be saved." So the focus during *Rosh Chodesh* is atonement and the Messianic Kingdom! It is interesting to note that these two themes are the focus of the Passover *Seder* and Yahshua's memorial meal. Interestingly enough, *Chasidic Rebbes* hold a *Tish* (Yiddish for table/the rebel's meal where bread and wine are served) on *Rosh Chodesh* and sing **Tehillim 104** (please read this wonderful Psalm of praise to Yahweh).

The sanctification of the New Moon is also one of the MAIN characteristics of the *Karaite Halakhah*. In their prayers they declare that the "beginnings of months according to SEEING the moon- TRUTH!" It is one of the main principals of faith for the *Karaites*. In the *Karaite Ketubah* (marriage contract) the *kallah and Katan* (bride and groom) swear to, "to keep the appointed times of [Yahweh] which are established according to sighting of the New Moon." Will the Wedding Feast be on *Rosh Chodesh*?

In recent years the New Moon has become a special festival for women. They form *Rosh Chodesh* groups, which meet on the New Moon to celebrate, light candles (symbolic of the ancient bonfires on the mountain tops to signal the New Moon) and study the Torah together. They have created new rituals that combine the ancient and modern symbols of the moon, water, and women. Perhaps this would be a good time for the women to under go *mikveh* (immersion to ritually cleanse) in a *mikveh pool* if available? Women's monthly cycle (*menses*) is connected to the waxing and the

waning of the moon every 28 days. We find that the moon also controls the tides, whose ebbs and flows parallels the organic rhythms of the women's female fluids. That is why the moon has from ancient times been a symbol of the woman's procreative powers and femininity. This is the reason the *Kabbalists* say the moon represents the *Shekinah*, Yahweh's feminine aspects in His character.

We can see that there are several ways then, we as Messianic Yisrael, can celebrate or observe the New Moon. It is important that we set Yahweh's Feast days by the New Moon and start the sacred calendar with the FIRST NEW MOON of "GREEN EARS OF BARLEY" (*AVIV*) seen in Israel. I think it is also needful for the women of Messianic Yisrael to begin celebrating the New Moons with study groups meeting on the New Moons. Every congregation should be observing these mini-festivals of Yahweh.

New Moons Future and the Prophetic Meaning

“ And it shall be that from New Moon to New Moon, and from Sabbath to Sabbath, ALL FLESH shall come to worship before Me,” declares Yahweh. Yeshayahu 66:23 the Scriptures

“ Thus said the Master Yahweh,” The gate of the inner courtyard facing EAST is shut the six days of work, but on the Sabbath it is opened, and on the day of the NEW MOON it is opened.”
Yechezqel 46:1 the Scriptures

We now come to the final portion of this teaching. Many people do not realize that in the Millennial Kingdom or what is known as the *Messianic Kingdom* the New Moon will still be observed by Yisrael! The above scriptures tell us that we will GO UP to Yerushalayim to stand before Yahweh (as in the *Chag*) and worship Him in the third Temple (*Biet HaMikdash*). *Melek Moshiach Yahshua* (the PRINCE of Ezek.44-48) will personally offer up the offerings on the Sabbath (**Ezek.46: 4**), the Feasts (**Ezek.46: 11-12**), and NEW MOONS. This will go on for 1,000 literal years!

Rosh Chodesh then is always associated with the renewal of the Davidic Dynasty and the rebuilding of the *Tabernacle of David* (see **Amos 9:11; Acts 15:16**). Let me quote from the Lubavitcher Rebbe Menachem M. Schneerson, "At times, even individual practices and customs are granted paramount importance and their OBSERVANCE is particularly significant, for they are INTRINSICALLY RELATED TO THE ADVENT OF MOSHIACH." The sages (*Sanhedrin 42a*) associate the moon's renewal with the ultimate renewal of the Yisraelite people in the *Era of Redemption* (reign of Messiah). They say, "The shining of the moon ANEW each month, however, reassures us of the coming of the ultimate rebirth-the REDEMPTION... Thus the rebirth of the moon also reflects a promise of renewal for that dynasty (David's), the shining forth of the LIGHT of Moshiach, who will be a descendant of David (Rambam, *Mishnah Torah, Hilchos Melachim 11:4*). Rebbe Moshiach Yahshua said He was the light of the world (**Yochanan 9:5**). **Tehillim 89** is a Psalm of Yahweh's faithfulness to His covenant with David. In **Tehillim 89:37** (speaking of this covenant) Yahweh says, "It shall be established FOREVER as the MOON, and a faithful WITNESS in the sky." Yahweh promises that the Messiah should come from David's lineage in this *Tehillim* (read it all).

The sages also explain to us that the Sanctification of the Moon should be recited with JOY and CELEBRATION that should parallel that of a WEDDING (remember the Karaite Ketubah). For the redemption of the Yisraelite people alludes to an analogy, as the renewal of the marriage bond to Yahweh at Mount Sinai (*Rama, Darchei Moshe 426; Taanis 5:7*). The prophet Hoshea says in **Hoshea 2:19**, "And I (Yahweh) will betroth you to ME FOREVER; yeh, I will betroth you to me in righteousness, and in justice, and in *CHESED* (loving kindness-covenant love) and mercies. I will even betroth you unto ME in faithfulness; and you shall know Yahweh." He is speaking to the Northern Kingdom of Yisrael (Ephraim). Ephraim will be restored in their marriage to Yahweh as in the beginning at Mount Sinai! HALLELU-YAH!

The ceremony of the Sanctification of the Moon includes the following verse: "The voice of my Beloved! See, He is coming, leaping on the mountains, skipping on the hills." *Shir ha Shirim 2:8*. The *Yalkut Shimoni* comments that, "the voice of my Beloved refers to Moshiach. He comes and tells Israel - You will be redeemed this month."

This blessing is so appropriate as *Moshiach Yahshua* will return on the New Moon at *Yom Teruah* (Feast of Trumpets/Shouting) for the final redemption of Yisrael (I Thess.4: 16; Matt.24: 31; Rev.11: 15-19). "Sound the GREAT SHOFAR for our freedom; raise a banner to gather our EXILES, and bring us TOGETHER from the FOUR CORNERS of the earth into our land." Daily liturgy *Tehillat HaShem*. Daily we are praying for this final return of *Moshiach Yahshua* and the gathering together as one the twelve tribes of Yisrael. The New Moon then is related to the message of the Two Houses as proclaimed in **Yechezqel 37**! Its observance proclaims that the Two houses of Yisrael

(Judah and Ephraim) will be reunited in Messiah Yahshua, just as the moon is renewed every month! It is a sure promise and hope of Messianic Yisrael!

In Eternity?

How about in eternity? Will we as Yisrael be observing the New Moons? We read in **Revelation 21:23** "And the city (*Yahweh Shammah*) had NO NEED of the sun, neither the MOON, to shine in it; for the esteem (glory) of Yahweh did light it, and the Lamb is THE LIGHT /LAMP of it." The REALITY of the NEW MOON-Yahshua (**Col.2: 17**) will be there as the LIGHT FOREVER! Heaven will come to earth! There will no longer be a need or purpose for the Feast, for the REALITY –YAHSHUA will be here! But until then, we will follow Yahweh's command to celebrate *ROSH CHODESH* as Messianic Yisrael! New Moons-a picture of the Restoration of Yisrael as a United Kingdom! (Ask for the FREE TAPE of NEW MOONS)

May Yahweh bless your understanding of this teaching!

Rabbi Edward "Levi" Nydle

NOTE: At B'nai Avraham we keep the Hebraic Rabbinical Calendar of Judaism. We believe it is the solution to the calendar problem and questions, and that it will be corrected when Moshiach returns. We desire to be in unity with brother Yehudah on the mo'edim and Chagim. Rav Ed



