

Rawsh Kh'dash

Those Dark Moon Days

By Sha'ul bayn Yahukhenun ha Yahudah

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“Exalting belief in our Father, the Most High יְהוָה (YaHUAH), through His Turah, the 5 scrolls of M'shah (Moses).”

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Most Scriptural believers know that there are a number of calendar festivals which the Most High commanded His people to keep in Wa'y'qora (Lev.) 23. While there is no Tent of YaH with the active priesthood of L'wi (Levi) at the moment to fulfill such texts and duties, it is clear that there is still much we can do. We can observe the sun, moon, agriculture, and constellations as markers of time and spiritually significant points of Scripture. They can be refreshing times for our family, and most importantly, times for us to worship our Almighty Father. But these feast days, their appointed times, and exactly when to observe them have been controversial. For this reason, we have produced a number of articles dealing with calendar issues. In this article, we will examine the controversy of when to observe the New Moon festival, known in Aibreeth (Hebrew) as “Rawsh Kh'dash.” We will deal with two choices, New Moon festival observed during the variable dark days of the moon’s cycle, and the New Moon festival observed the day following the first visible crescent sighting. There are a handful of people who believe that the full moon in the middle of the moon cycle is to be observed as New Moon festival, but we have already dealt with that false teaching in our article *The Full Moon is New Moon Theory*.

For a number of years, Alish'bai and I didn't bother to consider the idea that New Moon festival, Scripturally-speaking, was according to the sighting of the first visible crescent. This year (2010) we decided to really dig deep and see if there is any merit to the crescent-observers' theory, not only for our sake, but for others. We noticed over the years that many honest people, for a number of strong reasons, believe that the first visible crescent of a moon cycle is to be observed and kept as a festival DAY called New Moon DAY. And for a short time, we also believed in the crescent method of keeping New Moon festival. But here, we will illustrate the major arguments for and against both methods of keeping the New Moon festival, with a prayer that people will be able to make an educated stand in this regard.

See For Yourself

Those who have read our calendar document on *The Calendar of YaH* would know that the weekly cycle is but a fourth of a moon cycle or month. The moon’s cycle is called a “month,” and the weekly cycle is thus contained within it, and is unrelated to the modern day solar Roman calendar. But whether you believe that or not, this article should be helpful to understand whether the New Moon festival refers to one or two dark days of the moon’s cycle, or the first visible crescent. And you will have to see for yourself which one of the two it really is. We have tried both methods to see which is most accurate.

Each weekly Sh'bayt (Sabbath) day is signaled in the evening prior to it, by specific positioning and lamination on the moon. The first Sh'bayt (Sabbath) is signaled by a half moon, about 1/4 distance from its western point when the crescent was first sighted (for those living in western countries). The second Sh'bayt (Sabbath) is signaled by the full moon, and is the 15th of the moon cycle, corresponding to the day YaH’s people were delivered out of M'tsrayim (Egypt) in the first moon cycle (see Sh'moot (Ex.) 12:22,37; 16:1; B'medbayr (Num.) 33:3). We have explained all of this in previous articles, and it should be firm in our minds that the moon’s position and lumination should line up with the half moon on the first Sh'bayt, full moon on the second Sh'bayt,

half moon on the third Sh'bayt, and last crescent on the last Sh'bayt of each moon cycle. But going by the crescent - that is, observing New Moon after the crescent sighting as opposed to during the dark moon - pushes this time period over by one full day, causing the Sh'bayt to be out of alignment with these phases of the moon. We know this from personal experience and observation. If you don't believe us, watch it for yourself. Some of those who go by crescent observation realized they had no choice but to try to change the numbering of Sh'bayt in Scripture in order to line the phases of the moon with their Sh'bayt. This only compounds the problem. They change Sh'bayt to the 7th, 14th, 21st, and 28th of each moon cycle. But these numbers cannot be found for Sh'bayt in Scripture. Rather, we find that the 7th day of the festival of Unleavened bread, being the 21st of the 1st moon cycle, was not the weekly Sh'bayt day, but rather the 6th day of the third week of the 1st moon cycle. We find also that the 14th day of the 1st month is Passover, a festival which is clearly in preparation for the 7 days of Unleavened Bread, and certainly doesn't correspond to the weekly Sh'bayt day. There are some who go by the crescent for New Moon festival DAY rather than a variable one or two New Moon festival. But if you look at the moon on THEIR Sh'bayt counting from the first visible crescent, they do not have an accurate moon phase signal on the evening prior to their Sh'bayt morning. It only took us one single moon cycle to see that this method was wrong.

Is New Moon Festival Visual?

Usually the first thing that a person encounters in this discussion is the crescent observer's opinion on B'rasheet (Gen.) 1:14. While we agree that the moon literally shows us when the appointed times are to occur, their assertion is that the dark moon days cannot be seen in the expanse above us, signaling the New Moon festival. In actuality, this is not true. **On rare occasions, we can actually see the outline of the dark moon during the New Moon day. But prior to New Moon festival, we do see the last visible crescent of the moon's cycle, and we can have a rough estimate as to how long the dark days will be, before the crescent appears.** So that is also a visible sign to us. The idea that there is no visible sign or signal for us who go by the dark moon days is a false accusation.

One author who wrote about the importance of the last visible crescent of the moon's cycle had this to say: "As a general rule of thumb (and this will work 90% or more of the time) on the 29th day of the Creator's month which is the last Sabbath of the month (this is not to be confused with Gregorian months) if you can see a crescent moon up in the EAST right before dawn, it is going to be a 30 day month. If you cannot see that sliver up in the east before dawn, it is going to be a 29 day month. In the first scenario, the Sabbath of the 29th would be followed by day 30 (as it is still old month) then day one (the first day of the new month). In the second scenario, day 29 would be followed by day 1 of the new month.

Here's why. If you can see that sliver up in the east right before dawn that means that the moon will conjunct with the sun the following day. If you cannot see that sliver up right before dawn, that means conjunction will take place within the next 12 hours or so. The day after conjunction is always day one of the new month. The moment of conjunction the moon is new, but there is a problem. The reason for this is conjunction day is split in two. It is part old month and part new month. A day that began in the old

month cannot under any circumstances be considered a "new" day. It is part old. ... So, the first day that actually begins IN the new month would be day one. ...

There is a new person in a mother's womb the moment of conception. You can't see him/her yet, but he/she is there nonetheless. There is corn in that first green shoot as the stalk breaks the confines of the earth. You can't harvest, see or taste it yet, but they are there nonetheless."¹

Determining conjunction is second to looking at the last visible crescent of the moon's cycle, and also helps to estimate when the crescent will reappear. However, this method is often useless in that process, and should be taken with a grain of salt. I should say that much of the time, the crescent cannot be seen in the last week of the month sometime one or two mornings prior to the last Sh'bayt (Sabbath). In theory, what is quoted above makes sense. In practicality, no. We still have to look to the first visible crescent to signal the end of our dark moon New Moon festival.

Crescent observers often assume that sighting the crescent is a simple process, but that ancient people would not have been able to know exactly when the dark days would end, or how to determine the dark days. Ancient calendars went by conjunction or the dark moon. They assume therefore that ancient people must have gone by crescent observance. Although it is true that the exact moment of conjunction was not learned by calculation until roughly one thousand years from the time of M'shih (Moses), as recorded in the history of B'bayl (Babylon), it is not true that people didn't know how long the dark days of the moon cycle would be, or how to celebrate New Moon festival in this way. That is an assumption again, and we have shown that judging by the last sliver of the moon cycle people had a fair understanding of when the crescent would re-appear. And to say that they could not calculate that using their fingers is nonsense. These types of rationalizations are based only on a cursory look at history, rather than reasoning based on Scripture. Let us give Scripturally wise and ancient people the benefit of the doubt, considering that we are fairly accurate today at predicting when the crescent will be seen, by observing the last visible crescent of the moon's cycle, and other methods of mapping the moon cycle.

The Dark Moon, 1 to 2 Days

Before we came to understand that we ought to return to YaH and the Turah (Law) alone, we had examined 1 Sh'mu'Al (Sam.) 20 with regards to the dark moon period being a variable 1-2 day period. Those who consider 1 Sh'mu'Al (Sam.) 20 to be authoritative Scripture may read this text on their own. But it is at this point of our article that we want to talk about the variable 1 to 2 day dark moon period. Now it is admitted that during the time when the Turah (Law) was given, there was a perfect 360 day year, made up of 12 perfect 30 day moon cycles. At some point the moon had lost half a day of time, timing of the lunar clock was clearly damaged or altered, becoming a 29.5 day cycle. With this loss in speed/time, the moon would not have a perfect 30 day cycle, but rather a variable cycle, depending on when conjunction takes place. In truth, we do not need Scripture or rocket science to figure this one out. It is for this reason also that we have a 13th Moon Cycle inserted every few years, in order that the festivals stay in their

¹ <http://www.creationcalendar.com/FAQ.html>

proper moon cycles, as opposed to the Islamic calendar which does not make such a change, but always has a 12 moon cycle year.

Now let us consider the last Sh'bayt (Sabbath) and the New Moon logically for a moment. The idea that one would observe the last crescent Sh'bayt (Sabbath), and then go back to work the next day or until the first visible crescent shows up would be nonsensical. It makes so much more sense to begin our rest on the last crescent Sh'bayt (Sabbath), and continue our rest and worship on the following 1-2 days until the crescent is seen, and then go back to work. Moreover, the moon cycle phases line up perfectly when we do this. It is the only way this stuff works.

Estimating the Crescent's Appearing

The alternative to celebrating the day following the crescent sighting as New Moon festival is the observance of New Moon festival during the time that the moon is dark. Some people mistake this for "conjunction." But conjunction is simply a short moment in time, when the sun, moon, and our planet are aligned. To understand conjunction better, see the article from our website on *How to Determine the Day of the Next Conjunction, Easily*. In short, conjunction is calculated by measuring the distance between the sun and moon during the last week of the moon's cycle.

As my wife and I have learned over the years, conjunction cannot tell us when the crescent is going to re-appear. Often times, conjunction is useless in this prediction. Because of this, some people wonder why we should bother calculating and understanding conjunction at all. Well, conjunction gives us an idea as to when we can expect the visible crescent to appear, and is accurate sometimes, but not all the time. It helps us to get out there, look at the sun and moon during the last week of the moon's cycle, and to make an estimate as to when we might see the first visible crescent of the next moon cycle. But conjunction is NOT how we are to determine New Moon festival. Conjunction usually occurs during the last Sh'bayt of the moon cycle, on the 29th. We do NOT interrupt our celebration of Sh'bayt to start celebrating New Moon festival. That would make no sense whatsoever.

Even as the first work day of the creation week began with the creation of light, so also our first work day of the first week of a new moon cycle is signaled by the first visible crescent. Our New Moon festival is preceded by the disappearance of the last visible crescent.

Troy Miller has pointed out some invaluable information with regards to the moment of conjunction as well, as opposed to the moment that the crescent is sighted. He writes that "It is true, if months were observed from the visible crescent, then depending on what point over earth the moon conjuncts, it might be from 17 to 40+ hours after conjunction before you spot the first visible crescent, which presents a problem. There is always a full moon on the first day of Unleavened Bread, the evening that separates the 14th and 15th of Abib. If we wait until the visible crescent to start counting the days of the month, we will miss having the full moon at the "appointed time" by 24-48 hours. Understanding conjunction eliminates this problem."²

² http://www.creationcalendar.com/CalendarIssue/5-Conjunction_Study.pdf

In order to understand our position better, it is important to understand that the crescent is not always seen, due to weather, even though we know that it is there. This should be a sign that something is wrong with believing that New Moon festival is a one day festival from the sighting of the crescent. Those who go by the sighting of the first visible crescent of the New Moon have a big problem with this information though, and have attempted to debunk it rather lightly. Nehemiah Gordon has had a poke at it, feebly writing that “it was only 1000 years after Moses that the Babylonian astronomers discovered how to calculate the moment of conjunction. ... It has been suggested that the ancient Israelites could have looked at the ‘Old Moon’ and determined the Day of Conjunction by when the Old Moon was no longer visible in the morning sky. However, such a method would not work in the Middle East where the so-called ‘concealed moon’ can remain concealed for as many as 3.5 days! It is in fact common for the moon to stay concealed for 2.5 days and in such instances how would the ancient Israelites have known which day was the Day of Conjunction?”³ This is actually quite interesting, because Nehemiah is actually confirming what we have shared in this article, in opposition to the crescent-sighting method which he goes by. As we shared already, historical records for numerous things only go back so far. In the case of crescent-sighting, we find that it goes back to the time of B'bayl (Babylon). But we find the same thing with regards to the dark moon days and the moment of conjunction. This is not the way to approach this subject. Moreover, Nehemiah has admitted the moon can be dark for 2.5 days. That means that it is possible for the last visible crescent to be seen on the morning of the 28th of the moon cycle, and not the morning of the Sh'bayt on the 29th, and that the moon would be dark on the 30th, as well as on the 1st, the two days following the last Sh'bayt of the 29th. And then the crescent would be seen on the night of the 1st. This actually confirms our method. Thanks Nehemiah.

Going by Time in Y'rush'lam (Jerusalem)

A lot of people believe that we should follow time as it stands in Y'rush'lam (Jerusalem). While we respect people's love for the middle east, there is nothing in Scripture that states we must observe a moon cycle based on witnesses from Y'shr'Al (Israel) in exile. There are those who say that when Y'shr'Al (Israel) was in captivity to B'bayl (Babylon), they went by the moon cycles based on time from the land of Y'shr'Al (Israel). I have never been presented evidence of this tradition, but I would like to point out something important, assuming that this rumor is true. B'bayl (Babylon) is in the same time zone and in an area not too far from Y'shr'Al (Israel)... modern day Iraq. Rationally speaking, it makes sense that those who were in captivity in B'bayl (Babylon) could go by witnesses to the moon's cycles in Y'shr'Al (Israel). But what about us who live in other areas of the world amongst captivity to the nations today? It would not be accurate to the light and position of the moon in South America to observe festivals by time in Y'shr'Al (Israel). However, it should be said that in our experience, being in Ontario, Canada, a northern area, our phases of the moon cycle happen to line up in better with sightings in the Middle East. does in Y'rush'lam (Jerusalem). This is why usually we observe the Sh'bayt (Sabbath) a day later than those who are living in the United States, who tend to see the crescent a day ahead of us.

³ http://www.karaite-korner.org/new_moon.shtml

The Crescent Mindset

Observing New Moon festival on the day following the first visible crescent sighting is appealing to some people for a number of reasons. As we have examined already, people are confused by the phrase “New Moon Day,” seeing as there are one to two dark days in the moon’s cycle. They also feel that crescent sighting is simpler than determining the dark days by the last visible crescent, although this is only a matter of perspective. Another thing that rests in the crescent mindset is the idea that Rawsh Kh'dash, as it means Head of the Month, corresponds to the bull’s head. They look at the horns on the bull’s head, and they look at the crescent, which sometimes appears as like the horns of a bull, in a bowl shape on the bottom of the moon. But there is a lot of “eisegesis” going on here. “Eisegesis” means to read into something what isn’t there. Firstly, the symbol for “head” is the letter “rawsh,” which written in ancient script literally looks like a head - . It is not the head of a bull though, and its meaning is simply “leader, authority, Adawm (man) or the father (abba).” Thus, their theory that Rawsh Kh'dash corresponds to the bull’s horns and the crescent is not strong enough in our opinion to hold water. It is however significant to note that the first visible crescent is always in a bowl shape like the horns of the head of the ox -  as in the letter Al (a) - .

Beyond this, the only real clincher for those who are crescent-minded is the fact that certain offerings coincide with New Moon festival. Examples of this are found in B'medbayr (Num.) 10:10; 28:11-15; 29:1-5 and Wa'y'qora (Lev.) 23:24. There is no problem with this, as explained earlier in our explanation of how to determine the dark days by looking at the last visible crescent of the moon’s cycle, and determining the moment of conjunction. Emphasis on the former method mentioned. Thus, it is not really a clincher at all for those who oppose the dark days as the New Moon festival.

We really can’t understand why people can consistently observe the day after first visible crescent as the New Moon festival for more than one moon cycle. One moon cycle should be enough to prove that going by the first visible crescent pushes the Sh'bayt (Sabbath) days off their proper phases of the moon, being the half, full moon, half moon again, and last visible crescent of the moon’s cycles. These phases correspond to the examples in Scripture of the 8th, 15th, 22nd, and 29th, especially in Sh'moot (Ex.) 12-19:1. Those who go by the full moon for their New Moon festival change this numbering model to the 7th, 14th, 21st, and 28th. But such a model does not keep in line with the dates we find in the Scriptural Exodus or otherwise.

As a friend pointed out to us, if we go by the crescent to determine Sh'bayt, “The quarter phases will almost always be seen after your Sabbath is over. If you continue with this plan to let the first visible crescent announce your new moon, the only time you will ever have a quarter phase announce your Sabbath is when there is a short phase that is closer to 6 days rather than the average of 7.3 days (between phases). The phases range from 6.3 to 8.3 days between them, the average is about 7.3 days.”

It seems to us that the only reason why most people go by the first visible crescent is because it has been done that way for so long by Karaite Jews and Orthodox Jews alike. But as one historical site candidly states, “the Babylonian calendar until the end preserved a vestige of the original bipartition of the natural year into two seasons, just as

the Babylonian months to the end remained truly lunar and began when the New Moon was first visible in the evening. The day began at sunset. Sundials and water clocks served to count hours. The Jewish adoption of Babylonian calendar customs dates from the period of the Babylonian Exile in the 6th century.”⁴ Thus, it is quite evident that modern day Israel, different from ancient Y'shr'Al (Israel), is following modern day Orthodox Judaism, a religion and way of understanding the Turah (Scriptures) which was molded along the lines of B'bayl (Babylon). It developed at the same time as Catholicism/Christianity. It adopted methods of calendar determination from B'bayl (Babylon), such as the day beginning at sunset.

While the religions and customs of ancient times were often a reflection of truths that are found in Scripture, we find that the observance of the crescent moon, the repeating 7 day cycle that ignores the moon, along with beginning the 24 hour Scriptural “day” period at sunset, and the names of the months which Judaism adopted from B'bayl (Babylon), do not fall in this category of truth. Rather, they are falsehoods which were inherited through the captivity of Y'shr'Al (Israel) to B'bayl (Babylon), and the ingenuity of rabbis who compromised with Rome, for religious and economic reasons.

⁴ <http://www.ancienthistoricalsociety.org/CalendarsBabylonian.html>

Sources

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