

## "Conjunction" vs "first light" {part one}

I have acquired many articles on the “when” of the new moon. The articles in my possession are pretty much evenly weighed on all sides of the issue. There are those who believe a new moon is the first visible crescent of the moon, while others believe it is the conjunction<sup>1</sup> of the

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2. In *astronomy*, the meeting of two or more stars or planets in the same degree of the zodiac; **as the conjunction of the moon with the sun**, or of Jupiter and Saturn.

The New Book of Knowledge, Volume 12, published by Grolier Incorporated, Danbury, Conn. 1983, pg.447 states the following:

The moon has no light of its own. Moonlight is really sunlight reflected from the surface of the moon. Sometimes we can see the whole lighted side of the moon, like a big shining disk. At other times we see only a part of the lighted side, so the shape is no longer a disk. The different shapes are called phases of the moon. The phases occur because the moon orbits the earth. When the moon... is at... the side facing us [it] gets no sunlight. We cannot see the moon then. This phase is the new moon.

This commentary given by the authors of The New Book of Knowledge is an explanation of what I will term in this booklet, a conjunction.

Others believe it is the conjunction<sup>1</sup> of the moon with the sun that constitutes a new moon day. There are still others who although they use the conjunction, still wait a day, possibly two, before observing the new moon for certain reasons. I am not here to criticize which method you, the reader, may now use; or which method you think is the most scripturally accurate. There are some pretty good points on all sides of the issue. We will all

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Be on Yahweh's<sup>1</sup> time one day, as for now, let us take the scriptures, that which He has given us, and determine which method is most accurate.

### **The Visible Crescent**

Most fellow believers I have *personally* come into contact with over my years of studying Yahweh's calendar, advocate a **visual** sighting of a crescent moon. They feel that this is the proper, scriptural way of determining exactly when a new moon takes place. Usually, the first verse one hears when presented this argument, is Deuteronomy 16:1; this verse is as follows:

Observe the month of Abib, and keep the Passover unto Yahweh thy Almighty<sup>2</sup>: for in the month of Abib Yahweh thy Almighty brought thee forth out of Egypt by night.

The reasoning behind this passage is that the word translated as month in this passage

is taken from the Hebrew word *chodesh*; the exact same word translated as new moon in various passages throughout the holy scriptures<sup>3</sup>. Seeing that *chodesh* can be translated as new moon, and that the passage states very emphatically to “Observe ( or in their interpretation; look for) the new moon of Abib...” they conclude that because we are commanded here to observe or watch for the new moon, it must in fact be able to be seen.

There is however a problem with interpreting this verse in this manner. The problem encountered is found in the precise meaning of the Hebrew word translated observe, in this passage. If the word observe can *only* mean to visually watch for a particular object, I believe their argument would definitely be solid. However, if the Hebrew word translated as observe does not have to, or does not always mean to visually watch for something, the claim then becomes faulty, being that it is not conclusive. So... what is the Hebrew word here, translated as observe?

H8104 שָׁמַר *shamar* Shaw-mar' A primitive root; properly to hedge about (as with thorns), that is, guard; generally to protect, attend to, etc.:—beware, be circumspect, take heed (to self), keep (-ER, self), mark, look narrowly, observe, preserve, regard, reserve, save (self), sure, (that lay) wait (for), watch (-man)<sup>4</sup>

Notice, the primary definitions for the word *shamar* are to hedge about, guard, protect, and attend to. This obviously gives us a different outlook on what *observe* just may mean, in regards to the Deuteronomy passage. Unless the passage explicitly states that one **must visually see the light of the moon**, in order for it to, of a surety, be a new moon, we are left to believe that the passage is stating something else. In fact, when we read the passage through, just in the first part, we see exactly what is being commanded. Israel is commanded to guard or protect the new moon or month of Abib, seeing that this is when the Feast of Passover/Unleavened Bread is kept, which commemorates a great deliverance for the Israelite people.<sup>5</sup> There is nothing certain in this passage that teaches visual observation is the determining factor for the new moon. The new moon of Abib can be guarded, protected, and attended to, without visually sighting a crescent moon.

I believe it would also be helpful for me to give other passages in scripture which use the Hebrew word *shamar*, but do not indicate that we must visually look for a certain thing. The emboldened word in these verses, is taken from the Hebrew word *shamar*.

And the Yahweh Almighty took the man, and put him into the garden of Eden to dress it and to keep it. [Genesis 2:15]

And Pharaoh said unto him, Get thee from me, take heed to thyself, see my face no more; for in *that* day thou seest my face thou shalt die. [Exodus 10:28]

Ye shall therefore keep my statutes and my judgments, and shall not commit *any* of these abominations; *neither* any of your own nation, nor any stranger that sojourneth among you: [Leviticus 18:26]

Command the children of Israel, and say unto them, My offering, *and* my bread for my sacrifices made by fire, *for* a sweet savour unto me, shall ye observe to offer unto me in their due season. [Numbers 28:2]

Keep the Sabbath day to sanctify it, as the Yahweh thy Almighty hath commanded thee. [Deuteronomy 5:12]

And did not he make one? Yet had he the residue of the spirit. And wherefore one? That he might seek a godly seed. Therefore take heed to your spirit, and let none deal treacherously against the wife of his youth. For Yahweh, the Almighty of Israel, saith that he hateth putting away: for *one* covereth violence with his garment, saith Yahweh of hosts: therefore take heed to your spirit, that ye deal not treacherously. [Malachi 2:15-16]

As you can see, although the Hebrew word *shamar* can mean to visually watch for something, it is evident that it does not have to mean this. Thus Deuteronomy 16:1 should not be used as an attempt to prove a new moon must be a visible light.

### **Let there be Lights**

Another passage of scripture, given by some to provide evidence that a visualization of the moon is necessary for there to be a new moon, is the passage in Genesis which mentions that Yahweh made two lights; emphasis on the word *lights*. They reason that if Yahweh made lights, the only a **visual** light can be used as the new moon.

While this appears to be sound logic, let us examine it in further detail. First of all, allow me to quote from a particular article which comments on this visibility belief.

. . . there is no statement whatsoever 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"... and by the fact that it was already designated as regulating the night, before Adam was created... Therefore, the original purpose of the moon, which existed long before any man walked upon the face of the earth, was to fulfill its role as a mechanism for calculating time. Its role is not predicated upon the existence of man.<sup>6</sup>

The point to be made here is that the scriptures give us no instruction on having to visually see a crescent in order for there to be a new moon. Furthermore, a light begins to rebuild at the time of the moon's conjunction with the sun. Just because the light cannot be seen by the human eye does not mean it is not there, just as if a tree falls in the forest with no one around, it obviously makes a sound; the fact that no one was able to hear the tree fall does not mean that a sound wasn't made, it just means that no one was there to hear it! Immediately after the time of conjunction the moon begins to rebuild. The definition of rebuild is exactly what we find when we look at the Hebrew word from which the term new moon is taken.

H2320 שֶׁדֶשׁ chodesh kho'-desh From H2318; the new moon; by implication a month:—month (-ly), new moon.

H2318 שָׁדַשׁ cha'dash khaw-dash A primitive root; to be new; causatively to rebuild:—renew, repair

Anyone should be able to discern that when an old moon ends a new moon begins. At what point then does an old moon end? It would have to be at its last stage of waning, just at the time immediately prior to conjunction; when the sun and moon cross paths. As soon as the moon crosses this path with the sun it begins to be *chodesh/chadash*; that is, rebuilding.

One dilemma we face however is this: The conjunction of the sun and the moon can happen at any time of the day; i.e. 10:00 p.m. or 10:00 a.m. etc. Seeing that this lunar/solar event does not happen at the precise time the day begins, how are we to determine which day is the day of the new moon? Do we observe the day the conjunction happens in? Do we wait until the next day or day after the next? I believe the answer can be found in scripture, however, before we touch on this, let me speak a little more about the idea of a visual new moon. Seeing that most believers I have personally met believe this to be the scriptural way for the new moons determination, I want to

completely show why I have not chose to use this method. Please judge for yourself, scripturally and logically, and decide whether or not my statements are valid.

## Reference Works

Usually, those who propose the idea of a visualization of the new moon give many reference works which tell us that ancient Israel went by the visual sighting of the new moon in the evening. One reference work I found to be somewhat intriguing, stated the following:

Little is known of the procedure of determining the calendar up to the 2<sup>nd</sup> cent. C.E., when a description is given of the traditional practice, it ran as follows: On the thirtieth day of the month a council would meet to receive the testimony of witnesses that they had seen the new moon. If two trustworthy witnesses had made deposition to that effect on that day, the council proclaimed a new month to begin on that day... If no witnesses appeared, however, the new moon was considered as beginning on the day following the thirtieth.<sup>7</sup>

I find it interesting that what often goes overlooked by our visualization brethren<sup>8</sup> is that this reference work tells us that **little is known** concerning just how ancient Israel determined the calendar up to the 2<sup>nd</sup> century A.D. (C.E. = common era). Therefore what are thy basing there statements on? It is very easy to say that Israel would wait for witnesses who had seen the moon, and then declare it to be a new moon, but it is an entirely different matter to prove that to be true. Interestingly enough, we find that another reference work tells us that although seeing the new moon was involved in declaring a new moon, calculation was also used.

That is to say, when the Great Court existed in the land of Israel the first month was determined both by calculations and by seeing the new moon. With the Great Court no longer functioning in the land of Israel, the first of the month was established only by calculations.<sup>9</sup>

We see here that to at least some degree calculations had to be made. In fact, even those who strongly advocate visualization as a must, sometimes keep a new moon day without ever seeing a crescent. This is due to clouds, haze, snow, rain, smoke, poor eyesight, etc. Therefore, they really cannot believe a new moon has to be seen in order for it to absolutely be a new moon. Although they do not like to admit to this, they must. I have seen many months where a moon had a definite possibility of being seen, yet due to certain natural circumstances visibility was impaired. What did those promoting visualization do; did they have month of 31 days? No; they simply began the next month without seeing the new moon. Why? **They knew the light was there, without seeing it.**

This is exactly the point I want to make. I know the light of the moon is there after the time of conjunction. As a result, **it is a rebuilding light.**

A few paragraphs ago I mentioned that in order for a reference work to make a claim they must give sufficient historical documentation, or more importantly biblical evidence on this matter. This would prove that what they are claiming has some substance. It does not matter if one may give dozens of encyclopedia articles which claim something; the claims must be backed up by evidence. I have been shown **only one** historical document that interested me in regards to proving a visualization of the new moon. It is from the Jewish historian Philo; a very prominent Jew of Alexandria Egypt which lived before, during, and after the life<sup>10</sup> of Yahweh-shua<sup>11</sup> the Messiah. He speaks to some degree of the new moon in this manner.

. . . we proceed to speak of the third festival, that of the new moon... at this time there is nothing in the whole of heaven destitute of light... at that period the more powerful and important body gives a portion of necessary assistance to the less important and weaker body; for, at the time of the new moon, the sun begins to illuminate the moon with a light which is visible to the outward senses, and then she displays her own beauty to the beholders.<sup>12</sup>

This is definitely telling us that a new moon can be seen, but is it telling us that it has to be seen every single month of the year? Your answer would have to be an emphatic no. I have already shown that even the visualization brethren do not always see the new moon upon proclaiming the new moon. Philo would have definitely understood this as well. He seems to be an intelligent man when reading his writings. Nevertheless, we learn here, that at least in the days of Philo, if we accept his account, there were times when the new moon was able to be seen.

I must however show that Philo did know that an old moon indeed ended at the point of conjunction. If he understood this fact, then he would have also understood that a new moon began immediately after the point of conjunction. We see a mention of this where he writes...

. . . there are two motions of the moon as it continually runs its double-course – the motion of waxing until the full moon and the motions of waning until its conjunction with the sun... the moon waxes and wanes in equal intervals, both as it increases and diminishes in illumination... it receives the perfect shapes in periods of seven day – the half-moon in the first seven day period after its conjunction with the sun, full moon in the second; and when it makes its return again, the first is to half-moon, then it ceases at its conjunction with the sun.<sup>13</sup>

This shows us that Philo did indeed realize that at the point of the moon's conjunction with the sun an old moon ended; where an old moon ended a new moon began. Notice also what he states on page 25 of this particular translation of his works.

. . . all those [things] which are accomplished by the knowledge of God are moved at subsequent times. For their ends are the beginnings of other things; as, for instance, the end of day is the beginning of night. And in the same way we must look upon months and years when they come to and end as the beginning of those which are just about to follow them.<sup>14</sup>

The beginning or new moon would come after conjunction. Conjunction being the time when the end and beginning of a lunation meet; thus Philo writes...

The third [festival] is that which comes after the conjunction, which happens on the day of the new moon in each month.<sup>15</sup>

As we shall see, when placing all the statements Philo made concerning the new moon, one does not have to conclude that Philo meant for us to understand that a visualization of the moon was a **must** for determining when a new moon actually was. Thus, Philo's writings, **the only writings** I have seen that come close to proving visualization, do not prove visualization **is a necessity**.

### **What Day do we Keep?**

Seeing that we saw earlier how that the time of conjunction can be at any given hour of the scriptural 24 hour day, which day are we to observe as the new moon? First of all, we know by approved biblical example, that a new moon was calculated in advance. It does not matter what these men in scripture were actually calculating to be the new moon, the example shows that it was definitely known in advance what day the new moon would be. In I Samuel 20:18 we see that Jonathon said to David, "...*Tomorrow is the new moon...*" This phrase by itself shows us that people in ancient times knew in advance when the new moon would be; as one article mentions...

. . . in the story of Jonathon and David, Jonathon mentions that the next day is going to be a new moon day... To do so he had to have been already cognizant of the fact that the day in which he spoke was the last day of the old month.<sup>16</sup>

However, this being the case, the dilemma is still at hand; which day is kept? Before demonstrating the best possible, scriptural choices, I will now show why the choice of the day that the conjunction happens in is not the scriptural position to take.

Let's say for instance that a conjunction happened right in the middle of the day, giving approximately 12 hours on either side of the day. This would mean that there would be 12 hours in an old waning moon, and 12 hours in a new waxing moon. It is not scriptural to use this day for various reasons. *First*, part of this day is actually in an old moon. Thus, if this happened to be the 1<sup>st</sup> or 7<sup>th</sup> month of the year, the festivals in that month would be calculated from an old moon. One may suggest that this is true, but then point out that part of that day is in the new moon as well. I do agree that this is the case, but the fact remains that **the day began in an old moon**. Therefore because it began in an old moon, the day must finish out its course until the following evening, when a new scriptural day begins. *Second*, this day does not fit the phrase in scripture, "the day of the new moon". A day is defined in scripture as being from "...evening to evening..."<sup>17</sup>. A new moon is defined by various Hebrew lexicons as meaning "a rebuilding". Thus the day of the new moon is the first 24 hours (evening to evening) of the rebuilding. This could not be the day the conjunction happens in, seeing that some hours of the day were not in a rebuilding moon, but rather in an old waning moon. *Thirdly*, scriptures tell us that Yahweh is only light and that there is not any part of darkness in Him at all<sup>18</sup>. Any darkness in Yahweh would make him not all light. Using this analogy, any oldness in a new moon day would corrupt the actual first official day of the new moon. The article, "Rules for the New Moon" also makes some interesting statements in regards to this issue.

Under the Torah of Moses, one could not be ceremonially clean the same day the person was unclean – even after that person had completely washed his body, 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*... If that person waited to accomplish these chores until just after sunset, he was still counted as unclean and would be required to wait until yet another sunset arrived before being declared clean.<sup>19</sup>

Yet another reason to not take the day in which the conjunction happens can be found in examining a similar if not almost exact action in the heavens; this being the spring equinox. I believe the equinox is definitely the controlling factor to determine when the new year begins<sup>20</sup>. And I do believe we should take the first new moon after the vernal equinox for the day of Abib 1. A few reasons for you to consider doing so are here taken

from an article on the subject<sup>21</sup>.

- Assume that we live in David's time when astronomy was not what it is today – when there was some doubt as to when the equinox would occur. Because of this uncertainty, we would first be obliged to determine when the equinox occurs. Only then could we with certainty choose the correct new moon to begin the year, rather than one or two moons too soon. For this reason, we must take the new moon which comes next after the vernal equinox.

end of part 1