

Rosh Hodesh / Head of the Month

ROSH HODESH DEFINITION

Rosh Hodesh means head of the cycle, and is a Biblical term often translated *new moon*. Each Biblical month starts with a dark phase of the moon – preceding when the first crescent of light is witnessed and certified (not to be confused with full moon). It is not simply calculated astronomically, but based on observation by reliable witnesses and then sanctification by the Sanhedrin. During this present period of time while the Sanhedrin is not functioning due to lack of a Temple, we are using a pre-established calendar. Our word month means moon, though our Julian Calendar has obscured this meaning. The Biblical months are called: Nisan, Iyyar, Sivan, Tammuz, Av, Elul, Tishrei, Heshvan, Kislev, Tevet, Shevat, and Adar. In leap years, which occur seven out of nineteen years, there is an added month called Adar II.

ROSH HODESH CELEBRATION

Shabbat Mevarekhim: *Sabbath of Blessing*

The last Sabbath of each Biblical month is called Shabbat Mevarekhim, and on that Sabbath we announce the coming new month: "The New Month (name of month) will begin on (day of week) evening; may it hold blessings for us and for all His people," and we sing Exodus 12:12: "I gave to you the circle of the seasons 'round the sun. And by the cycles of the moon you'll know which month has come. You can make time sacred . . ."

Rosh Hodesh Eve

On the evening of Rosh Hodesh (Head-of-the-month / New Moon), we meet and read scriptures relating to the event, sing certain related Psalms, and blow the Shofar (ram's horn trumpet) accompanied by prescribed blessings. The scriptures that are read include instructions on observing this day, and prophecies of its observance in both the Millennium and on the Renewed Earth. For program, see end of [SABBATH SIDUR](#) .

Observing Rosh Hodesh is about making time sacred. It is about learning by doing – learning to live by God's timetable. We are told not to be in a rush to get "Sabbaths and New Moons" over with (Amos 8:5) so we can do our own thing. We should rejoice in them in our love for our Savior. This is partly why Sabbath is observed as a twenty-five hour day: we can lengthen it in love, we should not shorten it to do other things – that is idolatry (putting the other things before God).

ROSH HODESH SIGNIFICANCE

Heads-of-the-months determine ALL of the annual Holy Days. For example, the Passover lamb is prepared on the fourteenth day from the head-of-the-month Nisan (Exodus 12:6), to be eaten on the fifteenth; Shavuot is the fifteenth plus fifty days after head-of-the-month Nisan (this could vary relating to head-of-the-month Sivan, which it follows by a few days); Yom Teruah IS at the head-of-the-month Tishrei, Yom HaKippurim is the tenth day and Hag Sukkot starts on the fifteenth day (Leviticus 23:24,27,34).

The weekly Sabbath pictures (among other things) the Sabbath Millennium, when Yeshua will reign for 1000 years on this earth. The annual seventh-day of Sukkot (Feast of Tabernacles) pictures the same thing in greater detail

In like manner, the monthly observance of Rosh Hodesh (head-of-the-month) pictures the renewal of life. Rosh

Hodesh literally means "head of the cycle" and refers to renewal. The annual feast Yom Teruah (Day of Trumpeting) pictures in more detail this renewal of life. It is the day of which it is said, "Nobody knows the day or the hour. But we know the season and we are to watch." Does this sound like something familiar that Yeshua might have referred to (Matthew 24:36-44)? This day comes when we hear the announcement of the sanctification of the new month. Do you see why it can't be based on astronomical calculation? Everyone would know beforehand!

On this day we blow several different trumps on the shofar (ram's horn trumpet). The Last Trump is preceded by a shout, "Tekiah Gedolah!" which translates something like "The return of the Great One!" Does this sound like something Paul might have referred to? At the last trump, with the shout of the archangel, Messiah shall return, and the righteous dead shall be raised (1 Thessalonians 4:16, 1 Corinthians 15:52)! The renewal of life -- from the dead! That is what Rosh Hodesh pictures. We announce the head of every new month in Synagogue except Tishrei – Yom Teruah: we stay awake up to 49 hours waiting and watching for that one crescent moon each year. One year we may hear the archangel shout "Tekiah Gedolah" and hear God blow the Last Trump! HalelluYah! Even so come, Adonai Yeshua (Revelation 22:20)!

DETAILS of NEW YEAR and NEW MONTH DETERMINATIONS

There are four New Years during each calendar year: the New Year for Festivals begins on Nisan 1 (Exodus 12:2); the New Year for Tithe of Animals is Elul 1; the New Year for Calendars, Sabbatical and Jubilee Years is Tishrei 1 (Feast of Trumpets / Rosh haShannah); the New Year for Trees (Arbor Day) is Shevat 15. This may be less confusing if understood in the light of our Julian Calendar year (starting January 1), a business fiscal year starting March 1, a school year starting June 15, and one's year-of-life starting with his birthday: yet only one annual calendar may be used.

There are no separate sacred and civil calendars: civil is sacred in Biblical/Hebrew understanding.

The Sanhedrin performed intercalation based on various Biblical principles. The New Year for Kings and Festivals – Nisan 1 – began with the crescent moon nearest the time when the day and night were equal lengths in Israel (this is later than the equatorial vernal equinox) if the barley on Mount Zion was near enough to ripe: therefore a year could have twelve or thirteen months. Yom haKippurim (Day of the Atonements) could not be adjacent to the weekly Sabbath – Friday or Sunday: therefore the New Year for Calendar Years – Tishrei 1 – would not be sanctified on a Wednesday or Friday.

New moon is defined in modern astronomical terms as the point in the moon's earth orbit when it is nearest the sun – totally dark from an earthling's perspective. A total solar eclipse (when the sun's corona is seen around a dark moon) would represent the perfect new moon. Ancient rabbis knew the time of this astronomical conjunction from the Torah – more accurately than modern scientists until times of man-made earth-orbiting satellites!

However, Rosh Hodesh, the beginning of the Biblical month, is not defined astronomically. It is normally later than the astronomical New Moon date shown on Julian calendars or computer-generated lunar conjunctions. The moon being "covered" or "hidden" (Psalm 81:3) does not mean conjunction (astronomical new moon).

The Biblical authority for head-of-the-month determination is part of halachic authority (judging how we should walk to fulfill Torah) that rests with the Great Sanhedrin. God gave Moses and the Great Sanhedrin His Spirit (Numbers 11:17) for this purpose. Individuals are forbidden to take such authority on themselves.

Following the twenty-ninth day of each month, the Sanhedrin met in a courtyard at the Temple called Beit Ya'azek (Ringed – with a stone wall). If at least two reliable witnesses testified to them of sighting the reappearing crescent of the moon, the New Month would be sanctified, and that would be the first day of the next month. Otherwise, following the thirtieth day of the month, the New Month would be sanctified regardless of sightings. Other factors were also considered in determining when a month would have twenty-nine or thirty

days, including intercalation (see 4 paragraphs up).

Once sanctified, the New Month was announced with Shofar (ram's horn trumpet) blasts from the Pinnacle of the Temple. Beacon fires were kindled on Signal Mountains to repeat the announcement to far-reaching areas. Thus all of Israel started each month at the same time – Pharisees, Sadducees, Essenes, etc. – regardless of agreement.

Without the Temple there is no sitting Sanhedrin. Therefore, a temporary calendar was established for use until the Temple is rebuilt. The design was to keep as close as possible to the calendar the Sanhedrin would intercalate, and establish a common calendar for all – a necessity for Festival observance among other things. Some historians place this action about AD 358-359, at a Beit Din in the time of R. Hillel II.

Today we are impugned by many who are unfamiliar with Torah principles: ordinances of the Temple (including the Sanhedrin), Sacrifices, and Festivals, that are inseparably linked. Often, with virtually no knowledge of Hebrew language or history, they vehemently insist on their own private interpretations, or their authority to establish times and seasons. Sometimes this is due to following a cult leader's doctrine, even though they may have come out of the cult.

May you know the blessing of making time sacred!

References:

Torah: Exodus 12; Leviticus 23; Numbers 9
Talmud: Rosh HaShannah 2a, 23b; Sukkah 54b
Jerusalem Encyclopaedia Judaica: Calendar, Bet Din and Judges, New Moon

GOD'S TIME versus WORLD'S TIME

Biblical Days of Week

sunset to sunset

First Day of the Sabbath
Second Day of the Sabbath
Third Day of the Sabbath
Fourth Day of the Sabbath
Fifth Day of the Sabbath
Sixth Day of the Sabbath
Holy Sabbath
(‘Sabbath’ also means week)

Biblical Months

Festival Year
begins in Spring,
Jubilee Year
begins* in Fall

(Babylonian names)

Nisan
Iyyar

Roman Days of Week

midnight to midnight

Sunday - day of the Sun god
Monday - day of the Moon god
Tuesday - day of Tiw or Mars, god of war
Wednesday - day of Woden or Odin, supreme deity, god of art, culture, and death
Thursday - day of Thor (son of Odin), god of thunder and strength
Friday - day of the goddess Frig or Venus (wife of Woden)
Saturday - day of Saturn, god of agriculture (husband of Ops, god of harvest)

Gregorian Months

Year begins in Winter

January - month of Janus, Roman god - guardian of portals,
patron of beginnings and endings (had temple in Rome)
February - from Februa, the Roman month of purification
March - month of Mars (Latin Martius), god of war
April
May - month of Maia, goddess of increase or growth

Sivan
Tammuz
Av
Elul
*Tishrei
Heshvan
Kislev
Tevet
Shevat
Adar

June
July - month of Julius Ceasar
August - month of Augustus Ceasar
September - seventh month from March
October - eighth month from March
November - ninth month from March
December - tenth month from March

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