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A MESSIANIC BIBLE STUDY FROM ARIEL MINISTRIES



THE NEW MOON FESTIVAL



By Dr. Arnold G. Fruchtenbaum



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In the seventh month, on the first day of the month, shall be a solemn rest unto you, a memorial of blowing of trumpets, a holy convocation. Ye shall do no servile work; and ye shall offer an offering made by fire unto Jehovah.
Leviticus 23:24-25

The New Moon Festival is a frequent feast in the Scriptures, coming once a month, but it is seldom spoken about and seldom studied. The study of this particular feast will be discussed in four major categories: the name, *Rosh Chodesh* in the Scriptures, the Jewish calendar, and Rosh Chodesh in Judaism.

I. THE NAME

The name of the feast in Hebrew is Rosh Chodesh and literally means “the head of the month,” though it is usually translated simply as “the new moon.” Basically, it marks the first day of every Jewish month. The Jewish calendar is based on the lunar system, so the first day of every month is also the day of the New Moon Feast or Rosh Chodesh; hence the feast is called the New Moon Festival.

II. ROSH CHODESH IN THE SCRIPTURES

A. The Passages

1. Leviticus 23:23-25

This passage states that the first day of the seventh month was also the Feast of Trumpets: *And Jehovah spoke unto Moses, saying, Speak unto the children of Israel, saying, In the seventh month, on the first day of the month, shall be a solemn rest unto you, a memorial of blowing of trumpets, a holy convocation. Ye shall do no servile work; and ye shall offer an offering made by fire unto Jehovah.* The only time the New Moon Festival corresponds with another festival is on the first day of the seventh month, which also happens to be the Feast of Trumpets.

2. Numbers 10:10

The second passage calls it a day of the blowing of trumpets: *Also in the day of your gladness, and in your set feasts, and in the beginnings of your months, ye shall blow the trumpets over your burnt offerings, and over the sacrifices of your peace offerings; and they shall be to you for a memorial before your God: I am Jehovah your God.*

A brief exposition of this passage will point out six things. First, the statement: *in the day of your gladness* is a reference to the Sabbath day. Secondly, the statement in: *your set feasts* is a reference to the seven holy seasons of Israel of Leviticus 23. Thirdly, the statement in *the beginnings of your months* refers to the New Moon Festival. The word *months* is in the plural because there are twelve new moons in the course of a year; in the course of a Jewish leap year, there are thirteen new moons. While other feasts, such as Passover, Pentecost, and Tabernacles were celebrated once a year, this one was observed on the first of every month. Fourthly, the statement: *ye shall blow the trumpets* refers to the two silver trumpets of Numbers 10:2. They are to blow these trumpets over their burnt offerings and over the sacrifices of their peace offerings. Fifth, *they shall be to you for a memorial before your God.* And sixth, God states the reason they should obey: *I am Jehovah your God.*

This passage leads to two observations. First, the New Moon Festival was to be announced by the blowing of two silver trumpets. And secondly, it was to be a day of sacrifices.

3. Numbers 28:11-15

The third passage emphasizes the sacrifices for Rosh Chodesh or the New Moon. The timing of the New Moon Festivals is given in verse 11a: *And in the beginnings of your months ye shall offer a burnt offering unto Jehovah.*

Moses then enumerated the offerings in verses 11b-14, beginning with the burnt offerings in verse 11b: *two young bullocks, and one ram, seven he lambs a year old without blemish.*

Next the meal offerings were described in verses 12-13: *and three tenth parts of an ephah of fine flour for a meal offering, mingled with oil, for each bullock; and two tenth parts of fine flour for a meal offering, mingled with oil, for the one ram; and a tenth part of fine flour mingled with oil for a meal offering unto every lamb; for a burnt offering of a sweet savor, an offering made by fire unto Jehovah.*

Verses 12-13a describe the meal offerings. Each offering was to be burned with the respective sacrifice. In verse 13b, this burnt offering was to be a sweet savor, an offering made by fire unto Jehovah.

Next came the drink-offering in verse 14a: *And their drink-offerings shall be half a hin of wine for a bullock, and the third part of a hin for the ram, and the fourth part of a hin for a lamb.*

Moses then draws a conclusion in verse 14b: *this is the burnt offering of every month throughout the months of the year.*

These are the New Moon burnt offerings to be offered up twelve times a year.

He then deals with the sin-offering in verse 15: *And one he goat for a sin offering unto Jehovah; it shall be offered besides the continual burnt offering, and the drink offering thereof.*

The sin-offering, consisting of one he-goat, is to be in addition to, not in place of, the daily sacrifices.

This passage leads to seven observations. First, it was a day of special sacrifices. Secondly, it was to be a day of three types of burnt-offerings: two young bullocks or calves, one ram, and seven one-year old male lambs. Thirdly, this was also to be a day of meal-offerings, consisting of fine flour mingled with oil, and there was a proportion for each sacrifice. Fourthly, there were the drink-offerings, which consisted of wine, and this too was proportioned for each sacrifice. Fifth, the sin-offering consisted of one male goat. Sixth, all of this was to be in addition to the regular daily sacrifices and offerings. And seventh, this was to be done twelve times in the case of a normal year and thirteen times in the case of a leap year.

4. I Samuel 20:5, 18, 24, and 27

The fourth passage deals with David and the New Moon. Verse 5 states: *And David said unto Jonathan, Behold, to morrow is the new moon, and I should not fail to sit with the king at meat: but let me go, that I may hide myself in the field unto the third day at even.*

Verse 18 states: *Then Jonathan said unto him, To morrow is the new moon: and you will be missed, because your seat will be empty.*

Verse 24 states: *So David hid himself in the field: and when the new moon was come, the king sat him down to eat food.*

Verse 27 states: *And it came to pass on the morrow after the new moon, which was the second day, that David's place was empty: and Saul said unto Jonathan his son, Wherefore comes not the son of Jesse to meat, neither yesterday, nor to day?*

This passage leads to three observations. First, it became customary to have a special feast on the New Moon day. Secondly, Saul ate his feast on the New Moon regularly with his generals, which included Jonathan, Abner, and David. And thirdly, because Saul had tried to kill him earlier, David skipped the New Moon Feast at the king's table.

5. II Kings 4:23

The fifth passage deals with the New Moon and Elisha the Prophet: *And he said, Wherefore will you go to him to day? it is neither new moon nor sabbath. And she said, It shall be well.*

The observation one can draw from this passage is that, by the time of the writing of II Kings, it had become customary to inquire of prophets at one of two occasions: either on the Sabbath or on a New Moon day. The strange thing in this context is that, contrary to the custom, the Shunammite woman wanted to inquire of Elisha the

Prophet when it was neither a Sabbath nor a New Moon.

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6. I Chronicles 23:31

The sixth passage has to do with David's commands: *and to offer all burnt offerings unto Jehovah, on the sabbaths, on the new moons, and on the set feasts, in number according to the ordinance concerning them, continually before Jehovah.*

There are two observations here: first, David organized or reorganized the Tribe of Levi in order to expedite the sacrificial system under the Law of Moses; and secondly, the command of David was based on the two passages in Numbers that deal with the New Moon Feast.

7. II Chronicles 2:4

The seventh passage deals with the purpose of the Temple: *Behold, I am about to build a house for the name of Jehovah my God, to dedicate it to him, and to burn before him incense of sweet spices, and for the continual showbread, and for the burnt offerings morning and evening, on the sabbaths, and on the new moons, and on the set feasts of Jehovah our God. This is an ordinance for ever to Israel.*

There are two observations here: first, one of the purposes for the Solomonic Temple was to observe the New Moon Festival; and secondly, this was in keeping with the New Moon Festival in accordance with the Law of Moses.

8. II Chronicles 8:13

The eighth passage deals with Solomon's observance: *even as the duty of every day required, offering according to the commandment of Moses, on the sabbaths, and on the new moons, and on the set feasts, three times in the year, even in the feast of unleavened bread, and in the feast of weeks, and in the feast of tabernacles.*

There are two observations here: first, Solomon provided for the New Moon sacrifices; and secondly, this was in keeping with the practices of the Law of Moses.

9. II Chronicles 31:3

The ninth passage deals with Hezekiah's observance: *He appointed also the king's portion of his substance for the burnt offerings, to wit, for the morning and evening burnt offerings, and the burnt offerings for the sabbaths, and for the new moons, and for the set feasts, as it is written in the law of Jehovah.*

Two observations can be made here: first, like Solomon, Hezekiah provided from his wealth for the New Moon Festival; and secondly, this was in keeping with the observance of the New Moon in accordance with the Law of Moses.

10. Psalm 81:3

The tenth passage points out the relationship of the New Moon to the Feast of Trumpets: *Blow the trumpet at the new moon, At the full moon, on our feast day.*

This is the only Jewish feast day or holy season day to fall on Rosh

Chodesh, the New Moon.

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11. Isaiah 1:13-14

The eleventh passage emphasizes the fact that mere formalism is rejected by God: *Bring no more vain oblations; incense is an abomination unto me; new moon and sabbath, the calling of assemblies, -I cannot away with iniquity and the solemn meeting. Your new moons and your appointed feasts my soul hates; they are a trouble unto me; I am weary of bearing them.*

Two observations can be made here: first, the Mosaic commandments on the New Moon had been reduced to ritual without reality; and secondly, it is the formalism that is condemned by God, not the New Moon observance itself, because God Himself commanded this observance.

12. Isaiah 66:23

The twelfth passage deals with the observance of the New Moon in the Messianic Kingdom: *And it shall come to pass, that from one new moon to another, and from one sabbath to another, shall all flesh come to worship before me, says Jehovah.*

The one observation that comes out of this passage is that the New Moon Festival will be observed in the Messianic Kingdom.

13. Ezekiel 45:17

The thirteenth passage is in the context of the Kingdom sacrifices: *And it shall be the prince's part to give the burnt offerings, and the meal offerings, and the drink offerings, in the feasts, and on the new moons, and on the sabbaths, in all the appointed feasts of the house of Israel: he shall prepare the sin offering, and the meal offering, and the burnt offering, and the peace offerings, to make atonement for the house of Israel.*

Two observations should be made here: first, the New Moon Festival will be observed in the Messianic Kingdom. It was required under the Mosaic Law; it is not required under grace, but it will be required under Kingdom Law. And secondly, the prince, who in the context of Ezekiel is King David, will provide and prepare all of the offerings for the millennial New Moon Festival.

14. Ezekiel 46:1 and 3

The fourteenth passage deals with the New Moon and the inner eastern gate. Verse 1 states: *Thus says the Lord Jehovah: The gate of the inner court that looks toward the east shall be shut the six working days; but on the sabbath day it shall be opened, and on the day of the new moon it shall be opened.*

Verse 3 states: *And the people of the land shall worship at the door of that gate before Jehovah on the sabbaths and on the new moons.*

Two observations are made here: first, the New Moon Festival will be observed monthly during the Millennial Kingdom; and secondly, the inner eastern gate of the Temple Compound will play a central role in the worship on the New Moon Festival in the Kingdom. Normally, it will be shut for the six working days, but it will be opened on two occasions: every sabbath day and every day of the new moon. People will gather on those occasions at this gate to worship God during the

Messianic Kingdom.

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15. Ezekiel 46:6-8

The fifteenth passage deals with the New Moon offerings in the Messianic Kingdom: *And on the day of the new moon it shall be a young bullock without blemish, and six lambs, and a ram; they shall be without blemish: and he shall prepare a meal offering, an ephah for the bullock, and an ephah for the ram, and for the lambs according as he is able, and a hin of oil to an ephah. And when the prince shall enter, he shall go in by the way of the porch of the gate, and he shall go forth by the way thereof.*

Four observations can be drawn from this passage. First, the New Moon will be observed in the Messianic Kingdom and it will be obligatory in the Kingdom.

Secondly, the sacrifices for the New Moon will be different from those of the Law of Moses. This is one reason why the sacrificial system of the Kingdom will not be a reinstatement of the Mosaic sacrificial system. For example, for the burnt offering, Ezekiel states that they will offer up one bullock, but the Law of Moses required two. According to Ezekiel, they will offer up six lambs, but the Law required seven. The one ram is the same as the Law. Furthermore, there will also be meal offerings, which will consist of an ephah for the bullock, while the Law required three tenths of an ephah. There will be an ephah for the ram, while the Law required two tenths of an ephah. For the lamb, according as he is able, while the Law required one tenth of an ephah. There will be one hin of oil to an ephah; the Law did not specify a certain amount.

The third observation is that the prince, the resurrected David, will be in charge of the sacrificial system.

And the fourth observation is that he will come and go by way of the porch of the gate.

16. Amos 8:5

The sixteenth passage deals with Israel's frustration with the New Moon: *saying, When will the new moon be gone, that we may sell grain? and the sabbath, that we may set forth wheat, making the ephah small, and the shekel great, and dealing falsely with balances of deceit.*

Two observations are made here: first, by the time of Amos the Prophet, the people viewed the New Moon as a hindrance and a bother, as a handicap; and secondly, they could not wait for it to be over with so they could again return to their business and make money.

B. Observations and Conclusions

From these sixteen passages, it is possible to draw eight specific observations and conclusions. First, the first day of each month was a New Moon Festival.

Secondly, it was to be announced by the blowing of two silver trumpets.

Thirdly, the New Moon of the seventh month was also the Feast of Trumpets, so on that day there was the blowing of the ram's horn, the shofar, as well as the two silver trumpets. The New Moon Feast was the only holy season to fall on Rosh Chodesh, since none of the others fell on the first day of the month.

Fourthly, the New Moon was to be observed with four extra sacrifices. First, the burnt offerings were to consist of two bullocks, one ram, and seven male lambs. Secondly, there were meal offerings mingled with oil. Thirdly, there were drink offerings of wine. Fourthly, there was a sin offering of one male goat. These were to be in addition to the regular daily sacrifices, not in place of them.

The fifth observation is to note what the Scriptures say about the New Moon in history. First, King Saul observed the New Moon Festival with his generals. Secondly, it eventually became a day of inquiry of a prophet. Thirdly, David reorganized the Tribe of Levi to expedite the observance of the New Moon as well as the other festivities. Fourthly, one of the reasons Solomon built the Temple was for the observance of the New Moon. And fifth, both Solomon and Hezekiah provided the sacrifices for the observance of the New Moon.

The sixth observation has to do with the New Moon and the prophets. According to the prophets, the observance of the New Moon had become a useless formality with no reality. Furthermore, the people could not wait for the New Moon to end so that they would be able to go back to trading and making a living.

The seventh observation has to do with the relationship of Rosh Chodesh and work: first, it was a day of rest; secondly, it was a day in which they would eat a festive meal; thirdly, there was to be no trading on that day; but fourthly, work was not specifically forbidden.

The eighth observation is that the New Moon will be observed in the Messianic Kingdom in four ways. First, it will be observed by all flesh; whereas under the Mosaic Law it was obligatory only for Jews, in the Kingdom, it will be obligatory for Jews and Gentiles alike. Secondly, worship on the New Moon will be led by the prince, who will be the resurrected King David. Thirdly, worship will take place at the inner eastern gate, which will be opened for this occasion. Fourthly, the sacrificial system will be observed. This will include a burnt offering of one bullock, six lambs, and one ram. There will be a meal offering of an ephah for the bullock, an ephah the ram, and for the lambs, according as he is able. Furthermore, there was to be one hin of oil mixed with each ephah of meal.

III. THE JEWISH CALENDAR

NOTES

Most people are somewhat confused about the Jewish calendar because they are totally unacquainted with this facet of biblical truth. Since Rosh Chodesh involves the Jewish calendar, it is important that the Jewish calendar be understood.

Five things will be noted concerning the Jewish calendar: the mixture of lunar and solar calendars, the Jewish leap year, the history of the Jewish calendar, the months of the Jewish calendar, and the order of Jewish observances.

A. The Mixture of Lunar and Solar Calendars

The Jewish calendar is a mixture of both lunar and solar calendars in that the months are determined by the moon, but the seasons are determined by the sun.

B. The Jewish Leap Year

Concerning the matter of the Jewish leap year, the Gentile calendar has a leap year every four years, with an extra day added to the month of February. The Jewish year also has a leap year, but it is based on a different system.

The Jewish year normally has twelve months; each month is either twenty-nine or thirty days. A Jewish year normally is between three hundred fifty three days and three hundred fifty four days. This means that the solar year is eleven days longer than the lunar year. Without some kind of adjustment, the spring festivals would eventually fall in the autumn and the autumn festivals would fall in the spring. For that reason, in a Jewish leap year, a thirteenth month is added.

The Jewish leap year system works in the following way. Nineteen solar years of three hundred sixty-five days each exceed nineteen lunar years by exactly two hundred nine days. This totals seven lunar months. For every nineteen years, there are seven leap years of thirteen months; for every cycle of nineteen years, seven years have a leap month. These seven leap years are added to the third, sixth, eighth, eleventh, fourteenth, seventeenth, and nineteenth years of the cycle.

C. The History of the Jewish Calendar

In ancient times, the calendar was determined by the direct observation of the new moon. On the thirtieth day of each month, the Sanhedrin would gather in a courtyard in Jerusalem and wait for two reliable witnesses to show up to testify that they had seen the crescent of the new moon. The two witnesses were then questioned to determine if the new moon was spotted on the twenty-ninth day, which was the day before the Sanhedrin met, or the thirtieth day, the day of the Sanhedrin meeting. If it was spotted on the twenty-ninth

or thirtieth day, then the thirtieth day was declared to be the New Moon. However, if no witnesses arrived at all on the thirtieth day, the next day was declared as the New Moon day. Later, astronomical calculations were used to determine the date of the new moon, nevertheless the new moon could still be announced only at the testimony of two witnesses, but the testimony was now checked by astronomical calculations.

When the Sanhedrin proclaimed a new moon, beacons were lit on the Mount of Olives and then lit from one hill to another until the news reached the Jewish communities, even outside the Land in the Diaspora where the New Moon is observed for two days. In the mid fourth century, the use of eyewitnesses was abandoned when the rabbis established a fixed calendar. The lunar calendar was adapted to the solar year by adding an extra month in seven out of each nineteen year cycle so that the feasts would fall on the appropriate seasons.

D. The Months of the Jewish Calendar

Jewish months are not the same as Gentile months in that a Jewish month falls in the middle of a Gentile month at the time of the new moon.

The order of the Jewish months is as follows: the first month is *Nisan*, which falls between March and April; the second month is Iyar, between April and May; the third month is *Sivan*, which falls between May and June; the fourth month is Tammuz, which falls between June and July; the fifth month is *Av*, falling between July and August; the sixth month is *Elul*, falling between August and September; the seventh month is *Tishrei*, falling between September and October; the eighth month is *Cheshwan*, which is between October and November; the ninth month is *Kislev*, between November and December; the tenth is month *Tebet* or *Tevet*, between December and January; the eleventh month is *Shevat*, between January and February; and the twelfth month is *Adar*, between February and March.

On those occasions when there is a leap year, a thirteenth month is added to the twelfth month. The thirteenth month is called *Adar Sheini*, which means “second Adar.”

E. The Order of Jewish Observances

Because these are holy days, the order of the Jewish observances follow a different order; they do not begin with the fall months like the months listed above, but they begin with the spring month of Nisan.

The order of the Jewish observances for major and minor holy days is as follows: the first holy day is Passover; the second holy day is the Feast of Unleavened Bread; the third holy day is the Feast of First-Fruits; which is then followed by the counting of the omer. The omer is counted for the forty nine days between the Feast of First-Fruits and

the next feast, the Feast of Weeks. Within the period of the counting of the omer, there are five other holy days: Holocaust Day on the 22nd of Nisan; Remembrance Day on the 4th of Iyar; Independence Day on the 5th of Iyar; Second Passover on the 14th of Iyar; and Lag Beomer, which means the thirty third day of the counting of the omer, on the 18th of Iyar. The fourth feast is the Feast of Weeks or Pentecost, followed by a three week period in which three things happen: the Fast of the 17th of Tammuz; the Fast of the 9th of Av; and the 15th of Av. The fifth feast is the Feast of Trumpets followed by the Fast of Gedeliah, which falls on the 3rd of Tishrei. The sixth holy feast is the Day of Atonement. The seventh holy day is the Feast of Tabernacles. Then comes Channukah, the Feast of the Dedication or the Feast of Lights, followed by the Fast of the 10th of Tebet. Finally comes the Fast of Esther, followed by Purim, the Feast of Lots or the Feast of Esther.

NOTES

IV. ROSH CHODESH IN JUDAISM

Concerning Rosh Chodesh or the New Moon in Judaism, five things can be pointed out: Rosh Chodesh as a Festival, the Rabbinic Laws, the synagogue service, the Sabbath blessing, and the consecration of the moon.

A. Rosh Chodesh as a Festival

The status of Rosh Chodesh as a festival in Judaism is that it is considered a *moed*, a holy day. Work is permitted for men on this day, but not for women. There is no command for feasting or joy. Eating is not commanded on this day as it is on other holy days, but fasting is forbidden. However, if one had begun the fast before the arrival of the witnesses, then it need not be broken off.

B. The Rabbinic Laws

There are four rabbinic laws concerning Rosh Chodesh in Judaism. The first rabbinic law concerns feasting. Again, feasting was not actually commanded by Scripture, but the Jewish practice of making a special meal on Rosh Chodesh is based on I Samuel 20:5, 18, and 24-27. If Rosh Chodesh falls on a Sabbath day, the feast is postponed until Sunday.

The second rabbinic law concerns fasting; while eating is optional, fasting itself is forbidden by rabbinic law.

The third rabbinic law has to do with mourning. Certain aspects of mourning, such as a funeral dirge, are allowed on the New Moon. But certain aspects, such as the type of lamenting where one woman speaks and others respond in chorus, are forbidden on this day; all eulogies are forbidden as well.

Fourthly, women are not allowed to do hard work, such as washing.

They may do light work, such as sewing. According to the rabbis, the reason women are restrained from having to do hard work on this day is because they refused to give their husbands gold jewelry to make the golden calf.

C. The Synagogue Service

The third thing about Rosh Chodesh in Judaism concerns the synagogue service. In the synagogue service, there are special additions and special readings and things of that nature. From the Mosaic Law, Numbers 28:1-15 is read. The reading from the Prophets is based upon when the New Moon falls. If it falls on a Sabbath day, they read Isaiah 66:1-23. But if the Sabbath fell before that day, then they read I Samuel 20:18-42. From the Writings, Psalm 104 is read. The *hallel*, which is from Psalm 113-118, is read among other things.

In addition to the special readings from the Law, there is an additional service called the Musaf service. So, instead of the normal three daily services, there are four. The purpose of this was to imitate the additional sacrifices that were required on this day.

D. The Sabbath of Blessing

The fourth thing about the New Moon Feast in Judaism has to do with the Sabbath blessing or the Sabbath of Blessing. By astronomical calculations, the month begins the moment the moon's position is exactly between the earth and the sun and cannot be seen. Among Jews, this moment is known as *molad*, which means "birth"; this is the birth of the moon. Six hours later, a fraction of the moon becomes visible, and so the New Moon can then be proclaimed.

With a fixed calendar, Rosh Chodesh can be determined in advance. Since the eighth century, the New Moon was announced on the Sabbath before it appeared. This Sabbath became known as *Shabbat Mevarchin*, which means the "Sabbath of Blessing." An announcement is made following the reading of the Prophets. It has become customary to stand during this announcement to imitate the Sanhedrin's standing in the courtyard in Jerusalem when they proclaimed the New Moon. The reader will then take the scroll of the Law, announce the exact time of the molad, and proclaim the day or days when Rosh Chodesh is to be celebrated. The ceremony then concludes with a prayer that the New Moon be for "life, peace, gladness, salvation, and consolation for the House of Israel." After each phrase, the congregation responds "Amen, may it be Your will."

E. The Consecration of the Moon

The fifth and last thing about Rosh Chodesh in Judaism has to do with the consecration of the moon, and five things should be noted.

1. The Hebrew Names

There are two Hebrew names for this practice: the first is *birchat halevanah*, which means "the Blessing of the Moon." The second

Hebrew name is *kiddush levanah*, which means “the Sanctification of the Moon.”

2. The Blessing

There are two key phrases in the blessing, which reflect the situation during the Amoraic period of Rabbi Judah Hanasi. The first expression is, “David, King of Israel, lives and endures,” which is recited three times in Hebrew. The second key phrase is “Peace be unto you, and unto you, peace.”

3. The Rabbinic Views of the Blessing

The consecration of the moon has to do with the rabbinic views of the blessing. The Talmud teaches that whoever says the benediction of the New Moon in its due time welcomes, as it were, the presence of the Shechinah. Rabbi Ishmael said:

Had Israel merited no other privilege than to greet the presence of their heavenly once a month by reciting the benediction of the new moon, it would have been enough.

4. The Rabbinic Laws

All together there are seven rabbinic laws that affect the consecration of the moon. First, the consecration is to be done at night because it has to be done when the New Moon is visible.

Secondly, it is to be done in the open air for the purpose of being able to see what it is one is blessing.

Thirdly, it is to be done only if the moon is clearly visible, meaning that it is not hidden by clouds, for the emphasis is on the need for seeing it.

Fourthly, it may be recited from the third evening after the appearance of the New Moon, and as late as the fifteenth day of the lunar month, but no later, because the moon actually begins to wane or disappear after the fifteenth day.

Fifth, in the month of Av, the ceremony is not performed before the 9th of Av, for the month of Av is the month of mourning. On the 9th of Av, the Jewish people observe certain catastrophes that fell upon them, such as the sin of Kadesh Barnea; the destruction of the First Temple; the destruction of the Second Temple; the failure of the Bar Cochba revolt; the expulsion of the Jews from Spain. Since the 9th of Av was always an evil day, the first nine days of the month are crucial, so in that month, the ceremony of blessing the New Moon must not be performed before the 9th of Av.

Sixth, in the month of Tishrei, the ceremony is performed at the termination of Yom Kippur, the Day of Atonement, after the tenth day of the month, because the Feast of Trumpets comes on the first

of Tishrei. In this month, the ceremony is performed only at the end of Yom Kippur.

And seventh, the key prayer is that God is praised as Creator and Master of nature, who renews the moon. All of the prayers on this day have this particular theme. In addition to these prayers that all Jews recite, there is a distinctive custom between Ashkenazi Jews and Sephardic Jews. On this occasion, Ashkenazi Jews read Psalm 148:1-6, while the Sephardic Jews read Psalm 8:4-5.

5. The Customs

The consecration of the New Moon has to do with two customs. First, the proclamation of Rosh Chodesh, the New Moon, by the Sanhedrin was celebrated by dancing and rejoicing. The New Moon was announced in the courtyard by the Sanhedrin in Jerusalem, and the two silver trumpets were sounded. This was followed by dancing and rejoicing.

Secondly, it is still customary today to rise up on the tips of the toes toward the moon while reciting three times, "As I dance toward you, but cannot touch you, so shall none of my evil-inclined enemies be able to touch me."☆

NOTES

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