



No Man Knows The Day or The Hour

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The ancient Jewish or Biblical calendar was primarily a lunar calendar, very different from today's Jewish calendar. The current calendar is set by a mathematical computation that has been in use for approximately 1700 years. This calendar was initiated by Hillel II due to a breakdown in the previous system. Up to this time the beginning of each month (*Rosh Chodesh*, literally Head of the Month) was set by a visual sighting by two witnesses before a Rabbinical court. These witnesses had to be of upstanding character, meeting qualifications very similar to those listed in the third chapter of First Timothy concerning *zekenim*, elders. They presented themselves before the Sanhedrin of which the *Nasi* or president then declared the New Month as having begun. The importance of the sighting of the New Moon was considered to be so imperative to the religious life of Israel that these witnesses were allowed to travel on horseback great distances even on the Sabbath.

The coming of the New Moon was absolutely essential to the structure of the religious life, for G-d had commanded the observance of certain days as *Moedim*, Appointed Times. These *Moedim* were also known as the *Haggim*, Festivals. Each festival had a specific time it was to be observed. For example, *Yom Kippur*, the Day of Atonement, falls on the 10th day of the 7th month (*Tishri*). If the Sanhedrin started the new month on the incorrect day, all of Israel could find themselves observing the fast on the day before or after G-d had specified and feasting on the actual 10th. Therefore, the setting of each festival depended upon the decree that came forth from the Sanhedrin at the beginning of the month. Thus, each festival listed in Leviticus 23 could not be set before the arrival of the month that it was to be held in. An example of this is *Pesach*, Passover, which is to be observed on the 14th day of *Aviv* (*Nisan*). It would be impossible to state in the previous month, *Adar*, on which day of the week *Pesach* would fall until the Sanhedrin declared which day began the month of *Aviv*. Likewise, once *Aviv* arrived, having been instituted by the Sanhedrin from the visual sighting, it would then be known by all on which day of the week that each festival within that month would fall. Of course, this scenario would have to be repeated for each month of the year.

The seventh month, *Tishri*, has three inter-linked festivals. The first festival occurs on the first day of the seventh month which of course would also be a *Rosh Chodesh* or New Moon. This festival is generally called *Rosh haShanah* which means the Head of the Year, and is commonly celebrated as the Jewish New Year. Among most Christians this festival is known as the Feast of Trumpets. This title somewhat misconveys the actual Biblical name of the festival, *Yom Teruah*, which means the Day of the Awakening Blast. The next festival is *Yom Kippur*, the Day of Atonement, and occurs on the 10th of *Tishri*. Five days later the Festival of *Sukkot* begins and is celebrated for 7 days from the 15th of *Tishri* through the 21st. An additional day is attached to *Sukkot* but is viewed as being separate from these 7 days. This day is known as *Shimini Atzeret*, the Eighth Day and occurs on the 22nd of *Tishri*. Therefore, once the Sanhedrin has set the *Rosh Chodesh* for *Tishri*, the rest of the festivals could be calculated. *Rosh haShanah* stands alone during *Tishri*, as well as the rest of the year, as being the only festival of which no man knew the

day or the hour. It could only be determined by the decree from the court declaring the the New Moon had been spotted.

The Sanhedrin, the highest court of Israel, received its authority as a mandate of G-d:

If there arise a matter too hard for thee in judgment, between blood and blood, between plea and plea, and between stroke and stroke, being matters of controversy within thy gates: then shalt thou arise, and get thee up into the place which the L-RD thy G-d shall choose; And thou shalt come unto the priests the Levites, and unto the judge that shall be in those days, and enquire; and they shall shew thee the sentence of judgment: And thou shalt do according to the sentence, which they of that place which the L-RD shall choose shall shew thee; and thou shalt observe to do according to all that they inform thee: According to the sentence of the law which they shall teach thee, and according to the judgment which they shall tell thee, thou shalt do: thou shalt not decline from the sentence which they shall shew thee, to the right hand, nor to the left. And the man that will do presumptuously, and will not hearken unto the priest that standeth to minister there before the L-RD thy G-d, or unto the judge, even that man shall die: and thou shalt put away the evil from Israel. And all the people shall hear, and fear, and do no more presumptuously.

Deuteronomy 17.8-13

Based upon the above passage, a court was developed that determined judgements of religious and legal disputes and controversies. During the time of Yeshua, the highest court of Israel was called the Sanhedrin. This court consisted of 71 judges who met within the Chamber of the Hewn Stone in the Temple. It was overseen by a president who bore the title “*Nasi*.” The Sanhedrin was the only court that had the authority to declare the New Month’s beginning.

This court on earth, authorized by G-d, is modeled after a heavenly court. The heavenly court is overseen by the Father Himself as told by the prophet Daniel.

I beheld till the thrones were cast down, and the Ancient of days did sit, whose garment was white as snow, and the hair of his head like the pure wool: his throne was like the fiery flame, and his wheels as burning fire. A fiery stream issued and came forth from before him: thousand thousands ministered unto him, and ten thousand times ten thousand stood before him: the judgment was set, and the books were opened.

Daniel 7.9-10

Yeshua also spoke of the heavenly court in relation to a court that was instituted in the eschatological congregation. This congregation is the body of believers who would receive the *Ruach haKodesh*, the Holy Spirit, at *Shavuot* following Yeshua’s resurrection. It was of the eschatological congregation the Yeshua referred when He addressed Peter in Matthew 16.18-19.

And I say also unto thee, That thou art Peter, and upon this rock I will build my congregation; and the gates of hell shall not prevail against it. And I will give unto thee the keys of the kingdom of heaven: and whatsoever thou shalt bind on earth shall be bound in heaven: and whatsoever thou shalt loose on earth shall be loosed in heaven.

Matthew 16.18-19

Frequently with the faith today, the expressions “binding” and “loosening” are heard. Usually these are in reference to binding Satan or loosening angels or blessings, etc.; however, the terms “binding” and “loosening” during the time of Yeshua referred to the function of the courts of Israel. Their responsibility as the judges of the people was to make decisions based upon G-d’s

Torah. Whatever decisions they reached were put forth as either binding upon the people, or in the case of debts, vows, obligation etc., the people or an individual plaintiff being loosed from a binding obligation. Therefore, whenever the Sanhedrin decreed that the new month had begun, it became binding upon Israel. There is one instance where a decree of the court does not stand: if a decision was made that contradicted G-d's Torah. This is what Yeshua was referring to in the following passage:

Then came to Yeshua scribes and Pharisees, which were of Jerusalem, saying, Why do thy disciples transgress the tradition of the elders? for they wash not their hands when they eat bread. But he answered and said unto them, Why do ye also transgress the commandment of G-d by your tradition? For G-d commanded, saying, Honour thy father and mother: and, He that curseth father or mother, let him die the death. But ye say, Whosoever shall say to his father or his mother, It is a gift, by whatsoever thou mightest be profited by me; And honour not his father or his mother, he shall be free. Thus have ye made the commandment of G-d of none effect by your tradition.

Matthew 15.1-6

As mentioned earlier, the modern Jewish calendar is very different from the calendar used during the time of Yeshua. During the age of the Temple and for a number of years following, the court would declare the beginning of each month. Each month, following the decree of the Sanhedrin, signal fires were lit from the top of a mountain letting Jews in the far distance know that the New Month had begun. In turn, additional fires were lit from mountain top to mountain top. However, complications arose from the enemies of the Jewish people. The Samaritans and others began to light signal fires from the tops of the mountains several days before and following the expected time of the New Moon causing great distress to all the Jewish world. It was for this reason that the sages under the guidance of Hillel II (c. 360 C.E.) worked out the arrival of the New Moon based upon mathematical computation.

Other than the mathematical computation for the arrival of the New Moon, the new calendar differed from the previous one in another way. The new calendar took into consideration the religious convenience of the worshippers and allowed that certain festivals could not fall upon certain days of the week. For example, *Hoshanna Rabbah* (the last day of *Sukkot*) was not permitted to fall on a Saturday or *Yom Kippur* to fall on a Friday. By this action the courts, by means of the new calendar, were making null and void the Biblical commandment to observe the dates of the festivals at the specific appointed time. Each *Moed*, appointed time, was of critical importance in its relation to the Messiah, for it is on these dates that the messiah keeps His appointments with man to achieve the restoration of man and the earth. In Yeshua's first coming, He was slain on *Pesach*, buried on Unleavened Bread, and He rose from the dead on the Firstfruits of the Barley Harvest. Fifty days later at *Shavuot* (Pentecost) the eschatological (last days) congregation received the *Ruach haKodesh* (the Holy Spirit) empowering them to be witnesses as the Kingdom of Heaven came down to dwell in men's hearts. The fall festivals, likewise, are the appointments for Yeshua's second coming, each teaching on different aspects of His coming, and the Messianic Kingdom here on earth.

When Yeshua spoke of His second coming during His Olivet discourse, there is a strong probability that He referred to *Rosh haShanah* when He spoke of that day that no man knows.

But of that day and hour knoweth no man, no, not the angels of heaven, but my Father only.

Matthew 24.36

It is impossible to speculate the exact day or year on which the appointed *Rosh haShanah* will arrive because of the complications of the existing Jewish calendar. In all probability the year that begins the kingdom will begin when the current Jewish calendar's *Rosh haShanah* and the *Rosh haShanah* decreed by the Heavenly court coincide. Oftentimes, it seems the emphasis is placed on which year, or which date on a given year, this will occur. It is obvious through history and scripture that no one can pinpoint the exact time these events will take place. However, G-d never misses His appointments with man, and it is for us to understand the significance of these Appointed Times and Seasons.

But of the times and the seasons, brethren, ye have no need that I write unto you. For yourselves know perfectly that the day of the L-rd so cometh as a thief in the night. For when they shall say, Peace and safety; then sudden destruction cometh upon them, as travail upon a woman with child; and they shall not escape. But ye, brethren, are not in darkness, that that day should overtake you as a thief. Ye are all the children of light, and the children of the day: we are not of the night, nor of darkness. Therefore let us not sleep, as do others; but let us watch and be sober. For they that sleep sleep in the night; and they that be drunken are drunken in the night. But let us, who are of the day, be sober, putting on the breastplate of faith and love; and for an helmet, the hope of salvation. For G-d hath not appointed us to wrath, but to obtain salvation by our Master Yeshua haMashiach, Who died for us, that, whether we wake or sleep, we should live together with him. Wherefore comfort yourselves together, and edify one another, even as also ye do.

1 Thessalonians 5.1-11