

Chapter Seven: TWO IMPORTANT "NEW MOON" TEXTS

In speaking to Saturday Sabbatarians concerning the correct timing of the weekly Sabbath day, we often direct them to a Scriptural passage in the prophetic book of Ezekiel in order to cause them to understand *a* reason for our choosing to observe the weekly Sabbath by the lunar cycle. This passage is found in Ezekiel 46:1, which states:

Thus saith the Master YHWH; The gate of the inner court that looketh toward the east shall be shut the six working days; but on the Sabbath it shall be opened, and in the day of the New Moon it shall be opened.

In this passage, we see three separate and distinct categories of days: (1) working days, (2) Sabbaths, and (3) New Moons. These days are mentioned separately for a reason. This reason should become apparent upon examining the verse.

YHWH specifies that a particular gate, a gate of the inner court of the temple, which looks eastward, is to remain shut during the six working days. This means that in each of the six working days if a person were to walk by this gate and examine this gate, he would find the gate to be closed shut and not opened, provided YHWH's directions were obeyed. YHWH then specifies that this same gate is to be opened on the Sabbath day. Therefore, this same person could walk by this gate and examine this gate on the Sabbath day and find that the gate would indeed be opened at the command of Father YHWH. Thus we have a gate that is *always closed* on the six working days and *always opened* on the Sabbath day.

The point to be made here is that **these directives never coincide or conflict**. That is, there is never a time when you will have the Sabbath coinciding (or conflicting) with a working day. You would never be at a loss for knowing what exactly you are to do with the gate. Should you open it or shut it? A person may think, "Well, after all, this is one of the six working days, but it's also the Sabbath today... what do I do?" Of course you, the reader, should know better than this. Those reading *know* that such cannot happen, for it is *impossible* for the Sabbath to fall on a working day. This impossibility makes these directions of YHWH in Ezekiel 46:1 very plain and easy to understand. The gate is open on the Sabbath, and closed on the working days. This goes on week after week with absolutely no discrepancy.

We now need to move on to the next day mentioned in Ezekiel 46:1, the day of the New Moon. YHWH directs us through Ezekiel that this gate must be opened on the day of the New Moon also. What can we make of this?

Considering the context of what YHWH has already commanded, we should be able to conclude that there is no discrepancy between the day of the New Moon and the working days either. Yet for those of the Saturday Sabbatarian persuasion, the discrepancy exists. With their method of Sabbath timing, the New Moon will predominantly fall on one of the six working days, in which they have two commands that exist beside each other in disagreement. These two commands are (1) shut the gate, and (2) open the gate. Which is to be done? Do we shut it because it is, let's say, the 4th working day of the week? On the other hand, do we open it in honor of YHWH's New

Moon day that lands on that 4th working day? What is the answer to the dilemma? The answer lies in understanding that the New Moon is mentioned in distinction to the working days in the *exact same context* as the weekly Sabbath. Seeing that YHWH already contextually placed the Sabbath in the verse, and we know that the Sabbath cannot fall on one of the six working days, we see that the same applies for the day of the New Moon. The New Moon cannot fall on one of the six working days, but is rather mentioned as separate and distinct from them, right along with the Sabbath. True enough, there are times in which YHWH's word appears to have commands that conflict, and in certain instances one overrides the other. In this case, we need not look in that direction seeing YHWH set the order of things when He first mentioned the working days and Sabbaths, **which we know never collide**. He then mentioned the day of the New Moon in the same context, and therefore this day follows suit with the Sabbath. Realizing that the day of the New Moon is not one of the six working days inevitably causes you to have the Sabbath fall out to be on set days of the lunar month, namely the 8th, 15th, 22nd, and 29th.

There are people of other Sabbath persuasions who oppose this method of a lunar-based Sabbath, and many times argumentation is presented which in actuality doesn't understand the initial argument that was made. Some people incorrectly claim that Lunar Sabbatarians believe New Moons and Sabbaths fall on the same days, but such is not technically accurate. The New Moons and Sabbaths fall on completely differing days, much like the Sabbaths and working days, or New Moons and working days. The New Moon, while not being one of the six working days, is at the same time not the weekly Sabbath. We can also say that the weekly Sabbath is not the New Moon. They are different days per Ezekiel 46:1. These days (Sabbath and New Moon) are two separate and distinct commanded holydays on YHWH's calendar.

Some objectors have stated that they could see how someone might come to the conclusion that us Lunar Sabbatarians have come to on Ezekiel 46:1 if there were no other evidence to consider. My response is that Ezekiel 46:1 is part of the Scriptural evidence that we *must* consider in making our decision on which day we will choose to observe the Sabbath. It is part of the Scriptural testimony YHWH has given us, and it is a Scriptural clue, a very fine clue, as to the *when* of the Sabbath.

For us to ignore this very clear and plain statement of YHWH in Ezekiel is like ignoring the very clear and plain statement in John 3:16. We do not need to know the entire Bible in order to comprehend the truth of John 3:16. YHWH really did give His only begotten Son, and those who believe in him will not perish but live eternally. Other Scriptures can of a surety be coupled together with John 3:16 (for a more full understanding), but these Scriptures do not contradict the message of John 3:16. YHWH gave his Son as a means to eternal life, that verse is true. Likewise, Ezekiel 46:1 is just as true, and we can stand upon it knowing that it is inspired by the Holy Spirit and placed in the Scriptures for our benefit.

We might continue a bit further in this chapter by commenting on another profound passage of Scripture which Lunar Sabbatarians believe Saturday Sabbatarians either overlook or explain in an unsatisfactory way. This passage is one found in the book of

Amos 8:5 which states:

Saying, When will the New Moon be gone, that we may sell corn? and the Sabbath, that we may set forth wheat, making the ephah small, and the shekel great, and falsifying the balances by deceit?

Why was it that the wicked could not sell grain on the New Moon? Could it be because gainful employment or commerce was suspended on this day? I believe this to be the best possible interpretation. Those in Israel who observed the New Moons (monthly) and Sabbaths (weekly) would not purchase grain and wheat from the sly traders and markets on those days.¹ This is how the New Moon was understood by the prophets. Although people have attempted to bypass the meaning of this verse, their understanding in no way parallels the understanding of the prophets. So here is a question you can ask yourself: would the greedy and wicked traders have wondered when the New Moon would be over, if they wished to sell a product to you?

Here in the book of the prophet Amos (*remember Isaiah 8:20 and Matthew 5:17*) we have a very clear, concise Scripture showing that the day of the New Moon was not one in which the Israelites bought, and thus a day in which they did not sell either. Interestingly enough, much like the Ezekiel passage, the New Moon is mentioned in the exact same context of no buying, selling, trading, etc. with the weekly Sabbath. We can conclude that it is a complimentary Scripture to the passage in Ezekiel, further corroborating that the New Moon was not one of the six ordinary working days in ancient times. In spite of verses as these, there are still some who insist that no such interpretation should be sought for. They argue that Amos 8:5 is not sufficient to teach us that buying and selling are prohibited on the day of the New Moon. They believe that we must have a specific command in the first five books of Scripture (Torah) that commands against gainful or commercial employment on the New Moon. They reason that the only New Moon in the Torah on which buying and selling is prohibited is the 7th New Moon, known in Hebrew as Yom Teruah (Leviticus 23:23-25).

Once again, we see that instead of accepting the passage in Amos for what it says, many have attempted to state something to the effect that the New Moon in Amos is none other than the Day of Trumpet Blasts (Yom Teruah). While this is a noble effort on their part to understand the verse of Amos, they are incorrect because of the following points.

First, the passage does not say nor imply that it was Yom Teruah, it simply states it as the New Moon, much akin to Ezekiel 46:1-3 and Isaiah 66:22-23.² Secondly, passages

¹ For those who understand the weekly Sabbath to be regulated by the moon it makes perfect sense for the traders of the land to be anxiously waiting for the New Moon and Sabbath to be over. This is because the last Sabbath of the moon/month following the moon cycle is the 29th day of the moon which is then followed by the New Moon. This back-to-back day of no selling for the traders would have caused them to say or think, "When will these days be over with!"

² I once taught on Amos 8:5 in a congregational setting, and at the end of the sermon a brother approached me and asked me, "Could Amos 8:5 have been the 7th New Moon?" My answer was of course "yes," but I continued by explaining that such misses the point. The point is that Amos 8:5 says zero about the 7th New Moon. It simply mentions the New Moon just like Ezekiel 46:1, Isaiah 66:23, Colossians 2:16, etc. The point is

as Leviticus 23:24, Numbers 29:1, Ezra 3:6, and Nehemiah 8:2 all refer to the Day of Trumpet Blasts by using the terminology, "the first day of the seventh month" or "in the seventh month on the first day of the month." Never is the day of trumpets identified by the simple phrase *rosh chodesh*, or in English, New Moon. Those in opposition may point to Amos as the sole mentioning of the day in this way, but the Amos passage is not one in which to base this on, as it is the passage under consideration and debate. Notice the following chart in light of what we have just considered, and see which category the New Moon in the book of Amos falls best under without force fitting anything into the text.

In the seventh month, on the first day of the month... (Lev. 23:24)	Indeed tomorrow is the New Moon... (1 Sam. 20:5)
And in the seventh month, on the first day of the month... (Num. 29:1)	It is neither the New Moon nor the Sabbath. (2 Kings 4:23)
From the first day of the seventh month... (Ezra 3:6)	The New Moons, the Sabbaths, and the calling of assemblies... (Isa. 1:13)
...on the first day of the seventh month... (Neh. 8:2)	...at the feasts, the New Moons, the Sabbaths... (Eze. 45:17)
	...regarding a festival or a New Moon or Sabbaths... (Col. 2:16)

VERSE UNDER CONSIDERATION:

"...when will the New Moon be past, that we may sell grain?
And the Sabbath that we may trade wheat?" (Amos 8:5)

In examining the verses in the aforementioned chart, which column does the passage in Amos 8:5 fit best under?

Another objection that we must consider is that the New Moon in the book of Amos (8:5) should be translated as "month" based on the Septuagint text. This objection is rather new to me (I first heard it used in the spring of 2012) and it has even been insinuated by some that I may have purposefully ignored the Septuagint text of Amos 8:5 (in my previous studies) because I knew it did damage to my position on the New Moon. I cannot help it if someone thinks this about me or not, all I can say is that I did not consider consulting the Septuagint text of this verse until it was pointed out by someone who does not observe the New Moon in the same fashion as myself.

Both Isaiah 66:23 and Amos 8:5 in the Septuagint render the word as "month" rather than "New Moon." The actual Greek text of both passages have the Greek word *mane* (month) rather than the Greek word *noumenia* (New Moon). The Greek language does contain two different Greek words for month and New Moon while the Hebrew language uses one word (*chodesh*) that can either be understood as speaking of a whole month (and any day within that month) or specifically the first day of a month (New

that THE New Moon was in view in Amos 8:5, and not any particular New Moon like the 3rd, 5th, or even 7th.

Moon). However, what this argument fails to recognize is that the Greek language sometimes uses the words *mane* and *noumenia* *interchangeably*. Consider the following verses in the Septuagint:

And to be over all the whole burnt offerings that were offered up to [YHWH] on the Sabbaths, and at the **New Moons (*noumenia*)**, and at the feasts, by number, according to the order given to them, continually before [YHWH]. [1 Chronicles 23:31, LXX]

Behold, I also his son am building a house to the name of [YHWH] my Mighty One, to consecrate it to him, to burn incense before him, and to offer shewbread continually, and to offer up whole burnt offerings continually morning and evening, and on the Sabbaths, and at the **New Moons (*noumenia*)**, and at the feasts of [YHWH] our Mighty One: this is a perpetual statute for Israel. [2 Chronicles 2:4, LXX]

Both passages here are referring to the same basic subject, the offerings that take place on the Sabbaths, New Moons, and annual Festivals. Both of the above texts use the Greek word *noumenia* (or a variation thereof). Now notice a parallel passage:

According to the daily rate, to offer up sacrifices according to the commandments of Moses, on the Sabbaths, and at the **New Moons (*mane*)**, and at the feasts, three times in the year, at the feast of unleavened bread, and at the feast of weeks, and at the feast of tabernacles. [2 Chronicles 8:13, LXX]

Notice that the subject of all three passages is basically the same. The Sabbaths and the annual Festivals are mentioned, and the New Moons are sandwiched in between them. **However, in 2 Chronicles 8:13 the Greek word translated as *New Moons* is actually the Greek word *mane* rather than the Greek word *noumenia*.** This proves that the Greek Septuagint can use the word *mane* and still be referring to the special first day of a Scriptural month, and *not necessarily* to the entire month (such is also the case with Isaiah 66:23 as it pertains to worship).

Further evidence of these two words being interrelated is also seen in the fact that in the *Hebrew* calendar, **months were determined by the cycle of the moon**. Therefore every time the Greek Septuagint uses the word *mane* **it is still referencing a month that was regulated by the cycle of the moon**. We can even see this from the Greek New Testament writings. For example, James 5:17 speaks of Elijah praying earnestly that it would not rain, and for three years and six months (*mane*) it did not rain on the land. What kind of months was James referencing here? It would have to be months determined by the moon seeing that James was specifically referring to the time of Elijah, a pre-exilic period of time. Clearly the Greek words *mane* and *noumenia* are interrelated in Scripture even though they are different words in the Greek language.

Should we see the Amos 8:5 text as speaking of an entire month or a special day? I believe that the context of the passage forces us to believe that a particular day is under consideration. **The reason here is because there does not exist an entire month in the Hebrew calendar that suspends buying and selling, i.e. commercial, gainful activity.** Attempts have been made to say this is referring to the seventh month on Yahweh's calendar (by appealing to *Today's English Version of the Bible*, and *the Living Bible*) but

these attempts fall short at proving such **because the seventh Hebrew calendar month contains many days wherein buying and selling are allowed**. Counting all the Sabbaths and the New Moon of the seventh month gives us a total of 6 days that buying and selling are prohibited. This also gives us a total of 23 days (subtracting 6 from 29) where buying and selling would be lawfully allowed. There is nothing - *zero evidence* - in Scripture that would even begin to imply that the faithful Israelites in Amos' day ceased from buying from others for the entire seventh month of their calendar. The greedy traders in the land would have never asked the question, "When will this entire month be over with so we can sell grain?" because they could have sold grain on 23 days of that month! However, if they are asking about specific days (New Moon and Sabbath) it makes perfect sense because the Israelites would not have bought seeing such as a violation of the teachings of Yahweh throughout the Scriptures.³

Something we should also consider in closing this chapter is that (1) it is not entirely correct that the New Moon is not mentioned in the law (Numbers 10:1-10), and (2) something does not have to be specifically mentioned in the law in order for it to be binding or applicable for people to observe and do. No one should be able to deny the forcefulness of such passages as the ones we mentioned earlier in the "New Moon" column of Scripture. Clearly, the New Moon day was one of special observance. It was quite more than just declaring a New Moon and then going about your everyday mundane activities. It was rather a special day, one that was different from others. For those who state that prohibitions must specifically be mentioned in the first five books of the Bible in order for them to be binding, we point out the fact that there is no *commandment* to wear clothes in the first five books of the Bible. We should also point out that there is no *commandment* against either drunkenness or gluttony in the first five books of the Bible. "But those things are mentioned elsewhere!" one may respond, and that is the correct response and proves the point we are trying to get across in this portion of the book. We should learn from the passages we do have in the whole Bible concerning the New Moon, instead of insisting that we find something like, "Thou shalt not buy on the New Moon" or such. The passage in Amos is sufficient that such activity was simply not practiced by the faithful Israelites. It is because of passages like Amos 8:5, that one Bible dictionary made the following conclusion:

It is evident from the writings of the prophets and from post-exilic documents that the New Moon was an important national festival. It was often called a feast along with the Sabbath (Ps. 81:3; Isa. 1:13; Eze. 46:1; Hos. 2:11), on which all business ceased (Amos 8:5), the pious Israelites waited on the prophets for edification (2 Kings 4:23), many families and clans presented their annual thank offerings (1 Sam. 20:6, 29), social gatherings and feasting were indulged in (1 Sam. 20:5, 24)...⁴

We must learn to study the Bible not only for direct commands, but also from approved examples and necessary inferences. The Bible is its own best commentary,

³ For more information on the New Moon as well as many other topics in Scripture please visit the sermon and article section of this website --> ministersnewcovenant.org

⁴ *Unger's Bible Dictionary*, Merrill F. Unger, under "Festivals" p. 352.

and it has commented for us in the effect that those who disregard the New Moon as a day of worship or as a day to cease from commerce are in actuality taking away from the word of YHWH (Deuteronomy 12:32), something we do not want to be guilty of. This mentioning of Deuteronomy 12:32 has been aimed at Lunar Sabbatarians by those of the Saturday Sabbatarian persuasion at times, but you the reader must be the judge as to who is adding to or taking away from Scripture. We can speak for ourselves in saying that we in no way are trying to *take away* or *add to* the inspired word of the Almighty. We are doing our best to make logical sense out of the passages that clearly teach a difference between the day of the New Moon and the six working days. If a person chooses to ignore these passages, we can only wonder how they might one day answer YHWH when He calls all flesh to worship Him on the New Moon (Isaiah 66:22-23) - "But, YHWH, I can't find that in the first five books of Scripture!" Are you willing to *enlighten* the Creator of heaven and earth of this?