

How Holy is the New Moon?

by Matthew Janzen | 7.2011; update 6.2022

Back in '98 I ran across a couple of Bible verses that mentioned the New Moon. At that time what I'm about to share with you was unknown territory for me. I had been a Sabbath-keeper beginning somewhere in '97, but I had never even heard of celebrating the New Moon.

I was scheduled for travel with my father-in-law to a meeting in Tennessee where he was speaking. I was in the driver's seat and he was sitting in the passenger seat with his little Franklin Bible computer. I told him I'd read a few things in the Bible about the New Moon and asked for his input. He pulled up Isaiah 66:22-23 and then Amos 8:1-5. After that he did a search on the words "new moon" in the KJV and up popped 10 occurrences. He searched for "new moons" and up popped another 11 occurrences. Later we found 2 more occurrences that speak of the "beginnings of your months," and another 22 occurrences where "first day of the month" was mentioned. This makes for a total of 45 times in the Holy Bible that the New Moon is mentioned. Some accounts or points in Scripture only get mentioned once or twice and we center on their importance. If something is mentioned 45 times I think we ought to listen up.

My father-in-law is somewhat of a mover and a shaker, lol. He doesn't mind doing something once he sees it and doing it immediately. Before we even made it up to the meeting there in Tennessee we had decided we would keep the New Moon holy. Our decision was to observe it as a "soft-sabbath." Not as strict as THE Sabbath, but not as loose as the six working days. If this is new to you, but you are a feast-keeper, think about the middle days during Sukkot. You travel somewhere to keep the Feast, but only the 1st and 8th days are strictly Sabbaths (Num. 28:12-35). However, you are there for the entire week, and while you may do some things throughout the week, you are usually studying Torah, singing, fellowshiping with the brothers and sisters, sitting around the campfire, etc. I think this would be even more pronounced if we went to Jerusalem like Yeshua did for the feasts (Lk. 2:41-42).

By the end of this study my hope is that you will see the same thing we saw that day driving in a car up to Tennessee. It took us about 3 hours of "drive-time Bible study" to see what I'm going to show you. You can probably read this study in 30 minutes. I pray that the New Moon will be as much of a blessing to your life as it has been to mine.

The Prophets

I'm going to start by looking at texts from the holy prophets. One might wonder why I'm not starting from what we commonly think of as Torah, the first five books of Scripture (sometimes called the Pentateuch). The reality here is that I am beginning with Torah, we just often have a faulty understanding of what Torah is. Let me share two points of clarification.

The first is that there is a stress in Scripture upon the law AND the prophets. One example is where our Messiah stated in Matthew 5:17, "Do not think I came to destroy the law or the prophets." Those of us in the pro-Torah camp often stress to others that Yeshua's mission was not

to abolish the law, but we sometimes miss the fact that He also mentions the prophets in the very same context, showing that the prophets of Yahweh held equal weight with the law of Moses, both speaking under the direction and inspiration of Yahweh. Comparison texts are Matthew 7:12; 22:40; Acts 13:15; 24:14; Romans 3:21.

Secondarily, one needs to be aware that the prophets and even the writings (Psalms, Proverbs, etc.) are also referred to as "the law" by both Yeshua and Paul in the Apostolic Scriptures. Yeshua tells some Jewish leaders "is it not written in your law" in John 10:34 and then he quotes from Psalm 82. In 1 Corinthians 14:21 Paul writes "in the law it is written," and goes on to cite a text from the prophet Isaiah (28:11-12).

In two of the texts we are about to read there is a "thus saith Yahweh." Torah refers to the teaching and instruction of Yahweh, so when Yahweh speaks - it's Torah. The prophet is there standing in the place of Yahweh on earth to bring His message to a group of people. The *pro* in the word pro-phet (a person in the place of Yahweh) functions in the same way as the *pro* in pronoun (a word in the place of a noun).

Ezekiel, Isaiah, and Amos

Let's begin in Ezekiel.

Thus says the Lord Yahweh: 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. (2) The prince shall enter by the way of the porch of the gate outside, and shall stand by the post of the gate; and the priests shall prepare his burnt offering and his peace offerings, and he shall worship at the threshold of the gate. Then he shall go out; but the gate shall not be shut until the evening. (3) The people of the land shall worship at the door of that gate before Yahweh on the Sabbaths and on the new moons. (Ezekiel 46:1-3, WEB)

The New Moon is specified as different from the six-working days and as different from the Sabbath(s). What we have here is three categories of days, not two. Every Sabbath keeper I'm aware of will have no problem reading this Scripture and coming away saying that the Sabbath is a holy-day and not one of the six working days. **I want to point out that the New Moon is mentioned here in the same breath as the Sabbath - *separate* from the six working days.** This gate is open on (1) the Sabbath, and (2) the day of the New Moon, but it is shut on (3) the six working days. Notice in verse 3 when worship is done: Sabbaths and New Moons. No worship is said to take place on the six working days. One might say we can worship Yahweh every day, and I understand the sentiment, but texts like this show us that there is a special type of worship that takes place at holy appointed times.

To dispute with the prophet is essentially disputing with Yahweh. We have Apostolic witness that the prophets spoke not by their own will, but by the inspiration of Yahweh's Spirit (2 Peter 1:19-21). Instead of leaning to our own understanding and saying, "I find nothing in the law

commanding us to keep the New Moon holy,” we should go with the inspired understanding of Ezekiel, because we certainly know that Yahweh gave him an accurate knowledge of the New Moon.

Let’s look at another prophet of Yahweh who speaks about New Moon celebration:

For as the new heavens and the new earth, which I will make, shall remain before me, says Yahweh, so your offspring and your name shall remain. It shall happen that from one new moon to another, and from one Sabbath to another, all flesh will come to worship before me, says Yahweh. (Isaiah 66:22-23, WEB)

Just as the new earth and the new heavens will endure by my power, so your descendants and your name will endure. On every New Moon Festival and every Sabbath people of every nation will come to worship me here in Jerusalem," says the LORD. (Isaiah 66:22-23, GNB)

The saved of Yahweh will worship before Him on every New Moon and Sabbath. These are special, out-of-the-ordinary days. The is not merely the New Moon of the seventh month, which the ancient Jewish historian Philo specifies as the sacred moon^[1] but this is each and every New Moon throughout the year. As it says, “from one new moon to another.” I believe we should take Yahweh’s word on the issue.

I’ve heard Sabbatarians use this verse to promote Sabbath-keeping, but when I started pointing out the New Moon in the same context, all the excuses started popping up. I posted this verse the other day on social media, with a brief comment of my own about not neglecting the Sabbath or the New Moon, and one person gave this response: “So now we have to accept New Moon festivals to accept the Gospel and be born again?” Notice how nothing was said against the Sabbath, because no Sabbatarian ever tries to come up with an excuse for the text saying to worship “from one Sabbath to another.” Consistency demands that we apply the same sacred worship to taking place on each New Moon in the year.

I’d like to point out one more mention of the New Moon by a prophet; this is the first text that caught my eye back in ‘98. I was a Sabbatarian back then, but after reading this I wondered why I just went about my own business when the New Moon rolled around. I did mark the New Moon during the major feast months (first and seventh) in the year, so I could count my days from it, but that was just about the only time I ever paid much attention to the moon. After looking at this text from Amos, even on the very first look, I knew there was something more I was missing. It’s found in Amos 8:4-6.

Hear this, you who desire to swallow up the needy, and cause the poor of the land to fail, Saying, ‘When will the new moon^[2] be gone, that we may sell grain? And the Sabbath, that we may market wheat, making the ephah small, and the shekel large, and dealing falsely with balances of deceit; that we may buy the poor for silver, and the needy for a pair of shoes, and sell the sweepings with the wheat?’” (Amos 8:4-6, WEB)

Listen to this, you who trample the needy, and do away with the destitute in the land. You say, "When will the new moon festival be over, so we can sell grain? When will the Sabbath end, so we can open up the grain bins? We're eager to sell less for a higher price, and to cheat the buyer with rigged scales! We're eager to trade silver for the poor, a pair of sandals for the needy! We want to mix in some chaff with the grain!" (Amos 8:4-6, NET)

We don't see a "thus saith Yahweh here," but we've gotta' remember to read above and below when we're studying a text. In Amos 8:1 the prophet says, "Thus the Sovereign Yahweh showed me," and in 8:2-3 we have "He said" and "says the Sovereign Yahweh." Verses 4-6 then are Yahweh speaking through the prophet, just like in Ezekiel and Isaiah. I realize Yahweh is quoting someone else when He says "You say" in verse 4, but the point is that He is citing their recognition of what He's established in the New Moons and Sabbaths.

What we have here is greedy traders seeking to sell grain and market wheat, and to do so by unjust weights and measures. They were restrained in their efforts, because the faithful in Israel who observed the New Moons and Sabbaths would not buy grain and wheat on the holy days.[3] This is a powerful text showing how seriously many Israelites took the New Moon. Here's a question I asked myself back in '98 after reading the Amos text: would the greedy traders have wondered when the New Moon would be over if they wanted to sell their product to me? Or would I be buying things on the New Moon in the first place? When it came to the Sabbath I wouldn't be buying, but I hadn't given much thought to the New Moon back then.

Nehemiah

Another passage which may indicate that the Israelites understood that Yahweh did not permit them to buy and sell on the New Moon can be found in Nehemiah 10:29-31.

They joined with their brothers, their nobles, and entered into a curse, and into an oath, to walk in God's law, which was given by Moses the servant of God, and to observe and do all the commandments of Yahweh our Lord, and his ordinances and his statutes; and that we would not give our daughters to the peoples of the land, nor take their daughters for our sons; and if the peoples of the land bring wares or any grain on the Sabbath day to sell, that we would not buy from them on the Sabbath, or on a holy day; and that we would forego the seventh year, and the exaction of every debt. (Nehemiah 10:29-31, WEB)

The people of Israel covenanted to cease from buying anything not only on the Sabbath, but also on the "holy-day." When looking at the Scriptures in their entirety, I believe we can conclude that the New Moon is a holy-day, a day which is set-apart or sanctified.

New Moon in the Pentateuch

In the book of Numbers (chapter 10) we find that Yahweh instructed Moses on the making of two silver trumpets. These trumpets were to be for the calling of the assembly and the journeying of the camps (Numbers 10:2). Yahweh tells Moses that when they sounded with *them* (both trumpets), the entire congregation was to gather together for an assembly, but if only one trumpet

was sounded, the elders or rulers alone were to approach Moses (Numbers 10:3-4). Both trumpets were to be blown on the day of the New Moon in addition to the burnt offerings that were commanded. This is seen in Numbers 10:10.

Also in the day of your gladness, and in your set feasts, and in the beginnings of your months, you 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 Yahweh your God. (Numbers 10:10, WEB)

Also on joyful occasions—at your New Moon Festivals and your other religious festivals—you are to blow the trumpets when you present your burnt offerings and your fellowship offerings. Then I will help you. I am the LORD your God. (Numbers 10:10, GNB)

Both trumpets were blown on the day of the New Moon thus an assembly was in order. I should point out here that special offerings were to be offered on the day of the New Moon in addition to the regular daily burnt offerings per Numbers 28:11-15. When you read Numbers 28-29 you see that the offerings that took place on the Sabbaths, New Moons, and Annual Festivals were different than the offerings that took place on the six working days. We can't leave out the New Moons here, grouping them in with the working days. There has to be something different about them.

There have been a few comments made concerning my interpretation of Numbers 10:10. It's been said that the sound of both trumpets on the New Moon was merely the command to blow them over the burnt offerings on that day, and not for the sake of calling the assembly. I do realize that the reference to the "day of your gladness" does not necessarily have to mean a festival occasion, but when it comes to the New Moon I believe this is the only way to understand it. The reason I choose to interpret this passage as a commanded assembly on the New Moon is because I see no other place in the Pentateuch where Ezekiel or Isaiah could have obtained the idea of worship on a New Moon. They must have gotten it from somewhere so if not here, where? Must we have a "thou shalt worship on the New Moon," or can we learn from the prophets, approved examples, and these texts in Numbers, that worship was commanded on the day of the New Moon?

"I must have a thou shalt or thou shalt not" has led people to make absurd conclusions on other biblical doctrines or teachings. There are certain people and groups who find nothing wrong going topless or wearing next to nothing on their body, because the Bible never comes right out and states, "Thou shalt wear clothes." The closest thing to a command is found in Exodus 28:42 which says, "And thou shalt make them linen breeches to cover their nakedness; from the loins even unto the thighs they shall reach." The same idea is found in Exodus 20:26, but the clothing there is only commanded for the breeches, not the upper body, and the breeches only covered from the loins to the thighs. What I am trying to press is this: we do learn from Scripture that

male and female should wear clothing and not show their nakedness (Genesis 3:21), but we don't learn this by direct, forceful command.

Because of my interpretation of Numbers 10:10 I've been accused of trying to add to the law of Yahweh, but I'm just trying to make logical sense out of the passages in the prophets which clearly indicate a worship service on the New Moon. If I choose to ignore these text, I can only wonder how I might one day answer Yahweh when He calls all flesh to worship Him on the New Moon, "But Yahweh, I can't find that in your Torah." Am I willing to "enlighten" Almighty Yahweh of this?

Association with Holy Times

We might also look to a few other passages which associate the New Moon with the annual festivals as well as the weekly festival. These can be found in the books of Isaiah and Hosea.

Bring no more vain offerings. Incense is an abomination to me; new moons, Sabbaths, and convocations: I can't stand evil assemblies. My soul hates your New Moons and your appointed feasts. They are a burden to me. I am weary of bearing them. (Isaiah 1:13-14, WEB)^[4]

I will also cause all her celebrations to cease: her feasts, her new moons, her Sabbaths, and all her solemn assemblies. (Hosea 2:11, WEB)

In my previous studies I had concluded that at least the passage in Isaiah was identifying the New Moon as one of the convocations. I felt that the phrase "the calling of assemblies" (KJV) served to identify the celebrations of the New Moon and Sabbath. Whether or not this is entirely accurate is not really the point. Regardless, the New Moon is associated with the annual feast days and the Sabbath. This gives greater implication to the New Moon as a festival, rather than merely a beginning point for each month of the year. We see this time and time again throughout Scripture (1 Chr. 23:31; 2 Chr. 2:4; 8:13; 31:3; Ezra 3:5; Neh. 10:33).

Let's look again to the book of Ezekiel show further how the New Moon is associated with other "commanded worship/no work" days.

It shall be the prince's part to give the burnt offerings, 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, the meal offering, the burnt offering, and the peace offerings, to make atonement for the house of Israel." (Ezekiel 45:17, WEB)

The phrase, "in all the appointed feasts of the house of Israel" could very well be identifying the feasts (yearly), New Moons (monthly) and Sabbaths (weekly). The phrase "appointed feasts" is taken from the Hebrew word *moedim* which is defined by various Hebrew lexicons as meaning "appointment, fixed time, season, festival, assembly."

Is there any reason why the phrase “in all the appointed feasts” could not be identifying the three sacred times just mentioned? What would be left? The words feasts, New Moons, and Sabbaths, as mentioned before, cover everything: yearly, monthly, and weekly appointments.[5]

Another overlooked passage concerning the holiness of the New Moon is found in the book of 2 Kings 4:18-23.

When the child was grown, one day he went out to his father to the reapers. (19) He said to his father, “My head! My head!” He said to his servant, “Carry him to his mother.” (20) When he had taken him, and brought him to his mother, he sat on her knees until noon, and then died. (21) She went up and laid him on the man of God’s bed, and shut the door on him, and went out. She called to her husband, and said, “Please send me one of your servants, and one of the donkeys, that I may run to the man of God, and come again.” He said, “Why would you want to go to him today? It is not a new moon or a Sabbath.” She said, “It’s alright.” (WEB)

Here the woman wanted to go and visit the man of Yahweh. Her husband asks why, seeing it was not the New Moon day or the Sabbath day. This shows that on New Moons and Sabbaths people generally consulted prophets or holy men. It wouldn’t be wrong to visit the man of Elohim on a working day, but it wasn’t a normal practice because you had to labor. On the Sabbath and New Moon that labor was suspended, which gave people time to go and visit holy men to receive teaching and instruction, or prayer and healing. This again shows what we know already from the rest of Scripture. The New Moon and Sabbath are separate from the six working days.

One final passage, associating the New Moon with the annual and weekly feasts, is found in the Apostolic Scriptures - Colossians 2:16.

Let no one therefore judge you in eating, or in drinking, or with respect to a feast day or a new moon or a Sabbath day. (WEB)

There is a digression of events mentioned here in regards to special times. We have the Feast-Day(s), these were to be observed yearly. We have the New Moon(s), these were to be observed monthly. Then we have the Sabbath(s), which of course were to be observed weekly. Notice how the new moon is sandwiched right in between feast days and sabbaths. That would make no sense if it’s just a regular day on which we are allowed to do all our own work. This passage teaches us not to let anyone outside the body of Messiah, judge or condemn us for our regard towards the special days of Yahweh. One of these special days is the day of the New Moon.

Back in 2005 I took place in a public, formal debate on a Scriptural topic, and after that debate everyone there kind of just mingled around and discussed Scripture. There was an older, British fellow that I was talking to about my observance of the law of Moses. He asked me if I kept the Sabbath and Feasts. I said yes. He then smirked a bit, and looked as though his next statement

was going to be a “gotcha question.” He asked, “Do you keep the new moons? You know they’re listed with the Sabbath and Feasts in Colossians.” At that time (2005) I had been keeping the new moons for about 7 years, so I was able to tell him my practice. He was astonished and replied, “Well, at least you’re consistent.”

The “How” of the New Moon

When studying Scripture we should be aware that we learn things not only by a direct “thou shalt” command, but also by approved Scriptural examples. In this study we have learned the following things by looking at all the passages in Scripture which speak of the New Moon.

- It is a day of worship, often mentioned right along with the Sabbath
- It is a day of special offerings to Yahweh
- It is a day to consult an elder or prophet for instruction or prayer
- It is a day to refrain from gainful employment (making money)
- Yahweh’s people will worship in the future on the New Moon

In addition to this we might add that a special meal may be in order on the New Moon, this is evident in the account of I Samuel 20. We usually prepare special meals for the annual Feasts and my wife will cook a big breakfast on many New Moons.

We should also point out that there is an approved example where Israel indeed did come together in convocation on the New Moon in the eleventh Scriptural month.

In the fortieth year, in the eleventh month, on the first day of the month, Moses spoke to the children of Israel, according to all that Yahweh had given him in commandment to them. (Deuteronomy 1:3, WEB)

If you continue to read Deuteronomy, you will find that the majority of this book was a New Moon message delivered by Moses.

The New Moon does not carry the exact same restrictions as the weekly Sabbath. We see this to be the case in finding certain actions which took place on the New Moon which were unlawful on Sabbath.

- Travel (Ezra 7:9)
- Taking of a Census (Numbers 1:1-2)
- Rearing up of the Tabernacle (Exodus 40:1-2)

While certain actions were permissible on the New Moon that were not be done on the Sabbath, this does not decrease the importance we have seen the Scriptures place on the day of the New Moon. All of Yahweh’s appointments do not have the exact same restrictions.

For example both the weekly Sabbath and the Day of Atonement are designated by the Hebrew word *shabbat* in Scripture (Exodus 16:23; Leviticus 23:32), but the Day of Atonement restricts eating (Leviticus 23:27, 32; Acts 27:9) whereas the Sabbath does not (Exodus 16). The different restrictions or requirements do not negate that *both* times are holy and are designated as sabbaths. All of Yahweh's appointments are by extension sabbaths, but there is technically a primary Sabbath, the weekly Sabbath. As we have seen, the New Moon does have certain requirements that are the same with the Sabbath. It can therefore fall under the category of sabbaths in the general sense.

Yahweh has blessed my family abundantly since we began to observe the New Moon according to Scripture. We have been ridiculed by some, but most response has been positive. We have also found that there are many students of Scripture who feel the same as us on this subject which is encouraging. I cannot with a clear conscience ignore the passages in Scripture indicating a distinction between the New Moon and the working days, and its association with the annual Feast Days and weekly Sabbath.

Reference Works

I believe the Scriptures speak for themselves, but I want to show you that I'm not some wild-eyed "Hebrew Roots" fella' who came up with something on my own. Based upon all of these Scriptures I've given, there are many reference works that conclude the same, even if they do not celebrate the New Moon themselves. Here's a sampling:

It is evident from the writings of the prophets and from post-Exilian documents that the New Moon was an important national festival. It was often called a feast along with the Sabbath (Psa. 81:3; Isa. 1:13; Ezek. 46:1; Hos. 2:11), on which all business ceased (Amos 8:5), the pious Israelites waited on the prophets for edification (II Kings 4:23), many families and clans presented their annual thank offerings (I Sam. 20:6,29), social gatherings and feasting were indulged in (I Sam. 20:5,24)... (*Unger's Bible Dictionary, page 352*)

The festive nature of the new moon is suggested by the two days of feasting hosted by Saul (1 Samuel 20:5, 18, 24-27), the rest from work (Amos 8:5, although not prescribed in the Pentateuch), and its description as a time of rejoicing (Num. 10:10). The common people seem to have regarded it as an occasion upon which to consult prophets (2 Kings 4:23). According to the latter prophets the day was subject to abuse (Isa. 1:13-14; Amos 8:5). In the eschaton the new moon and Sabbath would be redeemed to mark the times of universal praise (Isa. 66:23). (*Eerdmans Bible Dictionary, page 761*)

The first day of the lunar month was observed as a holy day. In addition to the daily sacrifice there were offered two young bullocks, a ram and seven lambs of the first year as a burnt offering, with the proper meat offerings and drink offerings, and a kid as a sin offering (Nu 28:11- 15). As on the Sabbath, trade and handicraft work were stopped (Am 8:5) and the temple was opened for public worship (Isa 66:23; Eze 46:3). The trumpets were blown at the offering of the special sacrifices for the day, as on the solemn festivals (Nu 10:10; Ps 81:3). It was an occasion for state banquets (1Sa 20:5-24). In later, if not in earlier times, fasting was intermitted at the new moons (Judith 8:6). The new moons are generally mentioned so as to show that they were regarded as a peculiar class of holy days, distinguished from the solemn feasts

and the Sabbaths (1Ch 29:30; 2Ch 2:4; 8:13; 31; 3; Ezr 3:5; Ne 10:33; Eze 45:17). The seventh new moon of the religious year, being that of Tisri, commenced the civil year, and had a significance and rites of its own. It was a day of holy convocation. The religious observance of the day of the new moon may plainly be regarded as the consecration of a natural division of time. (*Smith's Bible Dictionary, "New Moon"*)

In the beginning of your months — The third stated sacrifice was monthly, to be offered on the first day of every month. This sacrifice to God is thought to have been ordained in opposition to the idolatry of the Gentiles, who were wont to worship the new moon with great rejoicings. Besides the celebration of the new moon by sacrifices, and sound of trumpet, (Numbers 10:10,) the Jews were wont upon those days to assemble for receiving instruction from their prophets, (2 Kings 4:23,) and to feast together, 1 Samuel 20:5; 1 Samuel 20:18. And it was customary on those days to shut up their shops, and abstain from ordinary and servile labour, as is hinted Amos 8:5. (*Benson, note on Numbers 28:11*)

New Moon significance. Keyed to their use of a lunar calendar, ancient Israel marked the first day of the month, with its "new moon" phase, as a festival day (every twenty-nine or thirty days). As on the Sabbath, all work was to cease (see Amos 8:5), and there were sacrifices to be made (Num. 28:11-15)... The festival continued to be observed in the postexilic period (Ezra 3:5; Neh 10:33). New Moon festivals were also prominent in Mesopotamia from late in the third millennium down to the Neo-Babylonian period in the middle of the first millennium B.C. The cult of the moon was widespread throughout the ancient Near East, and the moon deities figured prominently in mythological texts. Although the Israelites were forbidden to worship any heavenly bodies (including the lunar cult: e.g., Deut 23:5, and Jer 8:2), they were allowed to celebrate the first of the month with trumpets and burnt offerings. (*The IVP Bible Background Commentary, note on Ezekiel 46:1*)

New moons and Sabbaths will still be celebrated therefore; and the difference is simply this, that just as all Israel once assembled in Jerusalem at the three great feasts, all flesh now journey to Jerusalem every new moon and every Sabbath. (*Keil and Delitzsch Commentary, note on Isaiah 66:23*)

New Moon - By the Law the first day of each month was to be kept holy. Offerings were appointed for such occasions Num. 28:11-15, and they were among the days on which the silver trumpets were to be blown Num 10:10; Ps. 81:3. Hence, "New Moons" are frequently joined with "Sabbaths" (see Isa. 1:13; Ezek. 45:17; Hos. 2:11; 1 Chr. 23:31). (*Barnes' Notes on the OT, 2 Kings 4:23*)

The first day of the month and the seventh day of the week were both marked with special religious observances and rest from work (cf. Numbers 28:9-15). The husband implied that only on such dates would a person visit a prophet. (*The MacArthur Study Bible, NKJV, 2 Kings 4:23*)

It is neither new moon, nor sabbath - These were the principal occasions of assembling for worship, and it is clear from this history that even in Israel, while the house of Ahab was still on the throne, religious services were regularly held by the prophets in the name of Jehovah... And for purposes of teaching and prayer they appear to have observed the days specially appointed in the Law. On the observance of the new moon cf. 1 Samuel 20:5; 1 Samuel 20:18; 1 Samuel 20:24. For its institution see Numbers 10:10; Numbers 28:11. In the latter passage is a description of the sacrifice to be offered; and we know from the Psalms (Psalm 81:3) that it was celebrated with the sound of the trumpet. On the observance when it came

to be without any spiritual reality, see Isaiah 1:14. (*Cambridge Bible for Schools and Colleges, note on 2 Kings 4:23*)

Based on a lunar calendar, Israel would celebrate the day with a festival. Like the Sabbath, no work was to be done (1 Sam. 20:5-6, 2 Kin. 4:23; Ezek. 46:3). The merchants eagerness for the day to end revealed their appetite for greed. (*The MacArthur Study Bible, note on Amos 8:5*)

The new moon, the first of the month, was observed as a popular holiday (2 Kings 4:23; cf. 1 Samuel 20:5; 1 Samuel 20:24), and marked by religious services Isaiah 1:13-14; Hosea 2:11; and often in later writings: cf. Numbers 28:11-15). From the present passage, it is apparent that, like the sabbath, it was a day on which trade was suspended, and which accordingly was viewed by the grasping Israelitish merchants with impatience, on account of the interruption which it occasioned in their unjust practices. (*Cambridge Bibles for Schools and Colleges, note on Amos 8:5*)

The rich and powerful of the land were the most guilty of oppression, as well as the foremost in idolatry. They were weary of the restraints of the sabbaths and the new moons, and wished them over, because no common work might be done therein. (*Matthew Henry, note on Amos 8:5*)

So greedy are they of unjust gain that they cannot spare a single day, however sacred, from pursuing it. They are strangers to God and enemies to themselves, who love market days better than sabbath days; and they who have lost piety will not long keep honesty. The new moons (Nu 10:10) and sabbaths were to be kept without working or trading (Ne 10:31). (*Jamieson-Fausset-Brown, note on Amos 8:5*)

When will the new moon be gone? ye that could wish there were nothing to interrupt your marketing, your irreligious impatience, and your eagerness after the world, look on solemn times of Divine worship as very burdensome; such was the first day of every month, and the weekly sabbath. (*Matthew Poole, note on Amos 8:5*)

Amos 8:5 and Amos 8:6 show how they expect to accomplish their purpose. Like covetous usurers, they cannot even wait for the end of the feast-days to pursue their trade still further. Chōdēsh, the new moon, was a holiday on which all trade was suspended, just as it was on the Sabbath (see at Numbers 28:11 and 2 Kings 4:23). (*Keil and Delitzsch, note on Amos 8:5*)

Answering Objections

No matter what you end up believing, there will always be people object to it. Sabbath-keepers have objections thrown at them from people who believe the Sabbath is no longer required, and Preterists and Futurists (in eschatology) object to one another's views while discussing back-and-forth. Don't let objections scare you away from believing something, but at the same time you should always genuinely listen to objections, and either let them change your view or consider how to best answer them.

Objection 1: No Recorded New Moon Celebrated Before Moses.

While this is a true statement, what does it prove? There is also no record of any person celebrating the weekly Sabbath day prior to Moses. The first instance where we have a concrete record of Sabbath observance *by people* is found in Exodus 16. One may argue that the Sabbath was kept by Yahweh in the book of Genesis 2:2-3, but this doesn't really prove much as to its observance by humans. The case remains that there is not a single record until Exodus 16 showing that the Sabbath was celebrated by people. For one to not celebrate the New Moon because of this argument would only be consistent if one also did not celebrate the weekly Sabbath.

What if the Sabbath and New Moon were not a part of Yahweh's law until the time of Moses, does this mean that they are not a part of Yahweh's law now?

Galatians 3:19 is sometimes incorrectly used to say that any law not in existence in the days prior to Moses has now been abolished under the New Covenant. However, the context of the third chapter of Galatians is teaching us that the law in question is the entire law written on tables of stone. Under the New Covenant of Yahweh, the law is not only written on tables of stone, but is also written upon Israel's hearts and minds (Hebrews 8:7-10). Then we have to wrestle with the fact that according to Jeremiah 31-33 the New Covenant hasn't even come into full being yet.

What we do know for sure is that both the Sabbath and the New Moon were kept by the early assembly according to Colossians 2:16-17. Paul would have never written "Let no man judge you in new moons and sabbaths," if no one was observing new moons and sabbaths. Paul here urges believers in the Messiah to not let any man judge them in their worship. It was the false teachers of verses 4, 8, 18, and 22 that were imposing their judgment and tradition upon the observances mentioned in verse 16. If the early believers in Messiah observed the Sabbath and New Moon as special days we ought to do the same today, even though we may not have a written record of the observance of these days prior to the time of Moses.

Objection 2: One New Moon to Another Just Means Month to Month.

I've talked with a few people over the years who've said they felt Isaiah 66:23 to just be referring to months and weeks. In other words, from month to month and from week to week all flesh will worship before Yahweh in the new heavens and new earth. I think they view it as on-going worship all the time, but that's the point that makes me lean in another direction. The text is specifically dealing with *worship*. It's true that our entire life is one of worship to Yahweh, so even when I go out on the six working days I'm "worshipping" in some sense with my life. Is that what we really think Yahweh is speaking of through Isaiah? I don't think anyone came up with that until the New Moon was specifically brought up. I've heard multiple Sabbatarians use this text to teach worship *on* each Sabbath.

Even if this passage was to be translated “from month to month” (as does the Septuagint) the understanding would still be “on each New Moon.” A similar construction is seen in Zechariah 14:16 where Scripture states, “Then all the survivors from the nations that came against Jerusalem will go up year after year to worship the King, Yahweh of Hosts, and to celebrate the Festival of Booths.” The nations here go up from “year to year,” but this does not mean they are constantly going up every day of the year. The meaning is that at a set time during the year (in this case the Feast of Booths) they are to go up to worship. The same holds true for Isaiah 66. At a set time each month and week (the New Moons and Sabbaths) all flesh comes to worship before Yahweh.

Objection 3: Amos 8:5 Speaks of a Month Based on the Septuagint.

This argument is related to the previous one on Isaiah 66:23; both Isaiah 66:23 and Amos 8:5 in the Septuagint render the word as "month" rather than "New Moon." The actual Greek texts of both passages have the Greek word *mane* (month) rather than *noumenia* (New Moon). The Greek language contains 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 month or specifically the first day of a month.

What this argument fails to recognize is that the Greek language sometimes uses the words *mane* and *noumenia* interchangeably. Look at these verses in the Septuagint:

And to be over all the whole burnt offerings that were offered up to the Lord on the sabbaths, and at the new moons (*noumenia*), and at the feasts, by number, according to the order given to them, continually before the Lord. (1 Chronicles 23:31, LXX)

Behold, I also his son am building a house to the name of the Lord my God, 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 the Lord our God: 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 look 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)

The three texts are basically the same. The Sabbaths and annual Festivals are mentioned and the New Moons are sandwiched in between them, but in 2 Chronicles 8:13 the Greek word translated as New Moons is the Greek word *mane* rather than *noumenia*. The Greek Septuagint can use the

word *mane* and still be referring to the special first day of a Scriptural month. Further evidence of these two words being interrelated is also seen in the fact that in the Hebrew calendar, months were/are 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 see this from the Greek New Testament as well, where in James 5:17 it 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? It would have to be months determined by the moon seeing that James was specifically referring to the time of Elijah; the pre-exilic period of time. Clearly the Greek words *mane* and *noumenia* are interrelated in Scripture even though they are different words.

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 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 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 give us a total of around 6 days that buying and selling are prohibited. This in turn gives us a total of around 23 days that buying and selling would be lawfully allowed. There is nothing 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!

If they are instead asking about specific days within the month - New Moon and Sabbath - it makes perfect sense because the Israelites would not have bought grain seeing such as a violation of the teachings of Yahweh throughout the Scriptures.

End Notes

[1] In The Works of Philo, (translated by C.D. Yonge, Hendrickson Publishers, 1993, Fifth Printing 2000) Philo writes in his book The Special Laws II – XI. (41) "The eighth [festival] is the festival of the sacred moon, or the feast of trumpets." He also states in The Special Laws II – XXXI. (188) "Immediately after comes the festival of the sacred moon; in which it is the custom to play the trumpet in the temple at the same moment that the sacrifices are offered. From which practice this is called the true feast of trumpets." In Philo's list of festivals this sacred moon is number eight in sequence. He distinguishes this festival from the ordinary festival of the New Moon in that he speaks of the festival of the New Moon as the third festival in The Special Laws II – XI. (41) paragraph 3 where he states: "The third [festival] is that which comes after the conjunction, which happens on the day of the New Moon in each month."

[2] Some have attempted to say that this was the 7th New Moon in the year, i.e. the Day of Shoutings (frequently referred to as the Feast of Trumpets). However, the passage does not say it was the Day of Shoutings, it simply states that it was “the New Moon.” Leviticus 23:24, Numbers 29:1, Ezra 3:6, and Nehemiah 8:2 all refer to the Day of Shoutings by using the terminology “the first day of the seventh month” or “in the seventh month, on the first day of the month.” The most logical way to understand the passage in Amos is by understanding it according to “the New Moon” mentioned in Ezekiel 46:1-3 and Isaiah 66:22-23. Never is the Day of Shoutings identified by the simple phrase “rosh chodesh” (Hebrew for 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.

[3] 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 “lunar” Sabbath of the month falls on the 29th day, and is followed by the New Moon. These back-to-back days of no one buying anything from these traders would’ve caused them to say, “When are these days gonna’ be over with?!”

[4] This passage is sometimes erroneously interpreted as meaning false New Moons and Sabbaths. In other words, the ones Israel concocted in opposition to Yahweh. The New Moons, Sabbaths, and Festivals mentioned here are indeed Yahweh’s feast, as even the phrase “**the** New Moons, and Sabbaths” is used. Verse 13 does not say YOUR New Moons, but only uses the terminology in the following verse (vs. 14). The context of the passage indicates that the people of Judah were transgressing many of Yahweh’s commandments but still attempting to appear before him at the appointed times and offer sacrifices. Verse 17 of chapter 1 informs us that at least a few of the areas they could improve upon was in seeking judgment, relieving the oppressed, and taking proper care of the fatherless, and widow. This may be compared to the instance where Saul recovered the animals that were to be slain with the wicked (1 Samuel 15:15). Saul thought that these fine animals could be used in sacrifice to Yahweh, but he had instead broken the commandment of Yahweh spoken through the prophet Samuel. Samuel told Saul that obedience was better than sacrifice. This did not mean sacrifice was a bad thing for Yahweh delighted in burnt offerings and sacrifices (Genesis 8:21), and even commanded them (Exodus 20:24). However, a life of obedience must be given to Yahweh first and foremost, instead of merely trying to gain His approval with a sacrifice.

[5] The Greek Septuagint reads slightly different in Ezekiel 45:17: "And through the prince shall be offered the whole-burnt-offerings and the meat-offerings, and the drink-offerings in the feasts, and at the New Moons, and on the Sabbaths, and in all the feasts of the house of Israel." The addition of the word “and” (*and* in all the feasts) leads one to believe that the phrase “all the appointed feasts (WEB)” may refer to other appointed times, but what would be left? Feasts, New Moons, and Sabbaths cover every appointed time in Israel.