

Is the Full Moon the New Moon?

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There is a belief among some brethren involved in understanding Yahweh's correct calendar that the new moon is in actuality the full moon. They believe that both the conjunction and the first visible crescent of the moon have nothing to do with the beginning of a new month. This short article will examine the primary points I've seen them give, and show why this teaching is not scriptural. We ask all brethren to diligently consider our conclusions, and let the scriptures be your final authority.

The passage given most often by the "new-full moon" advocates can be found in the book of Psalm 81:3-6. In the American Standard Version of the Scriptures it reads as follows:

³Blow the trumpet at the new moon, At the full moon, on our feast-day.

⁴For it is a statute for Israel, An ordinance of the Almighty of Jacob.

⁵He appointed it in Joseph for a testimony, When he went out over the land of Egypt, *Where* I heard a language that I knew not.

⁶I removed his shoulder from the burden: His hands were freed from the basket.

The scriptural "evidence" they give from this passage is that:

1. There is no conjuncting "and" in between the phrases new moon and full moon.
2. Verse three closes by saying on our feast-day not days.
3. This plainly identifies the new moon as the full moon, thus the full moon is the first day of any given scriptural month.

First of all, is their a conjunction and between the phrases new moon and full moon? No, there is not. However, what has been overlooked is that the Hebrew word translated new moon can also be translated as month, and is many times in Scripture. The Hebrew word is defined by SEC (Strong's Exhaustive Concordance) as follows:

H2320 / *kho'-desh* / From H2318; the *new moon*; by implication a *month*:—month (-ly), new moon.

Also notice a few times in Scripture where the word *chodesh* has been translated month.

In the six hundredth year of Noah's life, **in the second month, the seventeenth day of the month**, the same day were all the fountains of the great deep broke up... [Genesis 7:11]

And the people came up out of Jordan **on the tenth day of the first month**, and encamped in Gilgal, in the east border of Jericho. [Joshua 4:19]

As you can see, both of these passages, along with a host of others, translate the Hebrew word *chodesh* as month. Notice also that these passages refer to the **17th day** of the *chodesh*, and the **10th day** of the *chodesh*. In further examination of Psalm 81:3-6 we

shall see that it refers to the 15th day of the *chodesh*. This is because the passage in Psalms 81:3 could be rendered as “blow the trumpet at the new month, at the full moon,” similar to the rendering of the New English Version of the Bible.

Blow the horn for the new month, for the full moon on the day of our pilgrim-feast,
this is a law for Israel, an ordinance for the Almighty of Jacob. [Psalm 81:3-4]

This would allow the passage to be understood as blowing a trumpet on the first day of the feast of unleavened bread, and this is further seen from the context of the passage. Psalm 81:5 shows that Yahweh went out through the land of Egypt, verse 6 shows that Yahweh removed **Israel's** shoulders from the burdens, and hands from the pots. What this is saying is that the full moon was the day when Israel was delivered from Egyptian bondage. What day was Israel delivered from bondage?

And they **departed from Rameses in the first month, on the fifteenth day of the first month**; on the morrow after the passover the children of Israel went out with an high hand in the sight of all the Egyptians. [Numbers 33:3]

Numbers 33:3 tells us that Israel was delivered from Rameses on the 15th day of the first month (*chodesh*); Psalm 81:3-6 tells us that Israel was delivered from Egypt on the day of the full moon. Thus the 15th day of the month has to be a full moon, and not a new moon. Psalm 81:3 is to be understood as saying to blow up the trumpet in the first month or feast month on the day of the full moon.

However, is the passage in Psalms merely speaking of a singular man named Joseph? Seeing that it plainly says that Yahweh appointed this in Joseph, one might conclude the children of Israel are not in the picture here. Let us notice the full context of the passage.

First I should point out that the previous chapter, chapter 80, uses the name Joseph in a similar fashion as Psalm 81:5.

Give ear, O Shepherd of Israel, **Thou that leadest Joseph like a flock**; Thou that sittest *above* the cherubim, shine forth. [Psalm 80:1]

The name Joseph here refers to the nation of Israel as seen by the statement directly before it. Yahweh is the Shepard of Israel or of Joseph. Thus Joseph is a name that can refer to the entire nation of Israel collectively. This is exactly the case in Psalm 81. In looking at the entire context we can be assured that the Israelites deliverance from Egypt on the 15th day of the month is what is being spoken of, and that the passage in no way refers to the singular man Joseph.

Thou calledst in trouble, **and I delivered thee** [*the same people he delivered in verse 6*]; I answered thee in the secret place of thunder; **I proved thee at the waters of Meribah** [*Israel was proved at Meribah – Ex. 17:1-7*]. Selah Hear, **O my people**, and I will testify unto thee: **O Israel**, if thou wouldst hearken unto me! There shall no strange mighty one be in thee; Neither shalt thou worship any foreign mighty one. **I am Yahweh thy Almighty, Who brought thee up out of the land of Egypt** [*This happened to Israel – Ex. 20:2*]: Open thy mouth wide, and I will fill it. But **my people** hearkened not to my voice; **And Israel** would none of me. So I let them go after the stubbornness of their heart, That they

might walk in their own counsels. Oh that **my people** would hearken unto me,
That Israel would walk in my ways! [Psalm 81:7-13]

The terms Israel (vs. 4), Jacob (vs. 4), Joseph (vs. 5), his (vs. 6), thou and thee (vs. 7), and my people (vs. 8), are all referring to the same subject: the nation or people of Israel. Yahweh's statute and law (of the full moon festival – unleavened bread and tabernacles) was ordained when he delivered them on the full moon; the 15th day of the first month (Num. 33:3) Let me briefly add that even if the passage is speaking dually about both the nation of Israel and the singular man Joseph it does not prove anything for the “new-full moon” advocates. The same exegesis of the text stands firm; that is, the full moon is the 15th day of any given month on Yahweh's calendar.

Even further evidence is found in consulting the word translated as feast or festival day in Psalms 81:3. The word is defined by SEC as follows:

H2282 / *khag, khawg* / A festival, or a victim therefor:—(solemn) feast (day), sacrifice, solemnity.

In studying the passages in the Scriptures which use the Hebrew word *chag*, you will find that in reference to Yahweh's appointed times, it refers to a pilgrimage festival. In Scripture there are three pilgrimage festivals (Exodus 23:14-17). These three pilgrimage festivals or *chag's* are identified as the feast of unleavened bread, the feast of weeks, and the feast of tabernacles. The first day of any given month is never identified as a pilgrimage feast or *chag*. Thus Psalm 81:3 is not referring to the first day of a month, but rather the 15th day of a festival month; specifically the 1st and 7th months of Yahweh's calendar. I might also add that the Companion Bible footnote on Psalms 81:3 under the heading day states that “*Some codices with two early printed editions, Aram. And Syr. read 'days' (pl.): i.e. festivals.*”

Psalm 81:3-6, the passage usually used to “prove” the new moon is the full moon, actually disproves the belief. The passage is easily understood when examined carefully, and in its entirety.