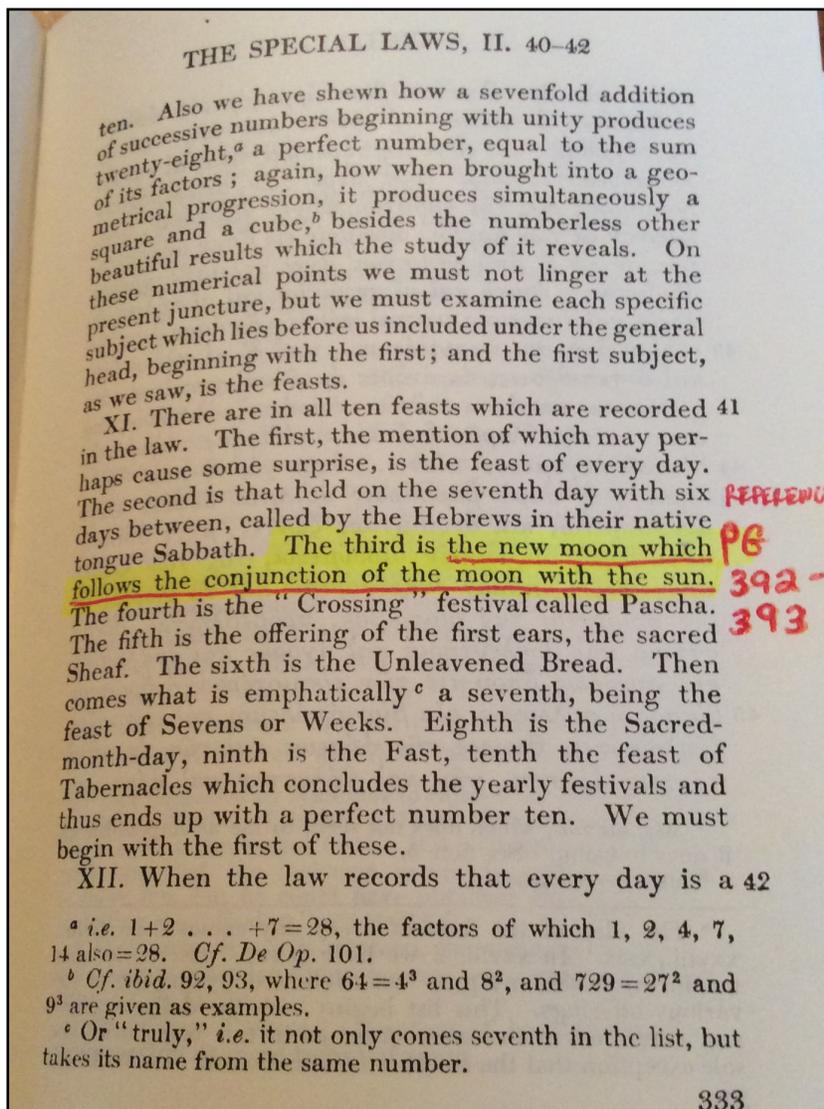


Understanding Philo (*on the New Moon*)

Philo is an important witness when it comes to the Israelite practice of keeping festivals at the time of Messiah. This is because he doesn't record his personal beliefs, instead he writes of what the Israelite people as a majority (during his time) were doing. If the nation of Israel was keeping festivals in Jerusalem (how Philo records), and Yeshua of Nazareth was there keeping those festivals, it stands to reason that we should take time to look at what Philo has recorded.

I'm all for looking at Philo's works in regards to when new moon is, but I believe we must consider *everything* Philo wrote about the new moon, and harmonizing the sum of it all. I'm also for using the most scholarly resource of Philo, which is the Colson-Whitaker interlinear translation put out by Harvard, based upon comparing all the available manuscripts of Philo. If we're going to study Philo (in regards to the new moon), let's do it properly.



First, Philo lists the new moon as third on the list of the 10 festivals (as he numbers them). He writes this in Special Laws 2.4, p. 333 (pictured to the left), "*The third [festival] is the new moon which follows the conjunction of the moon with the sun.*"

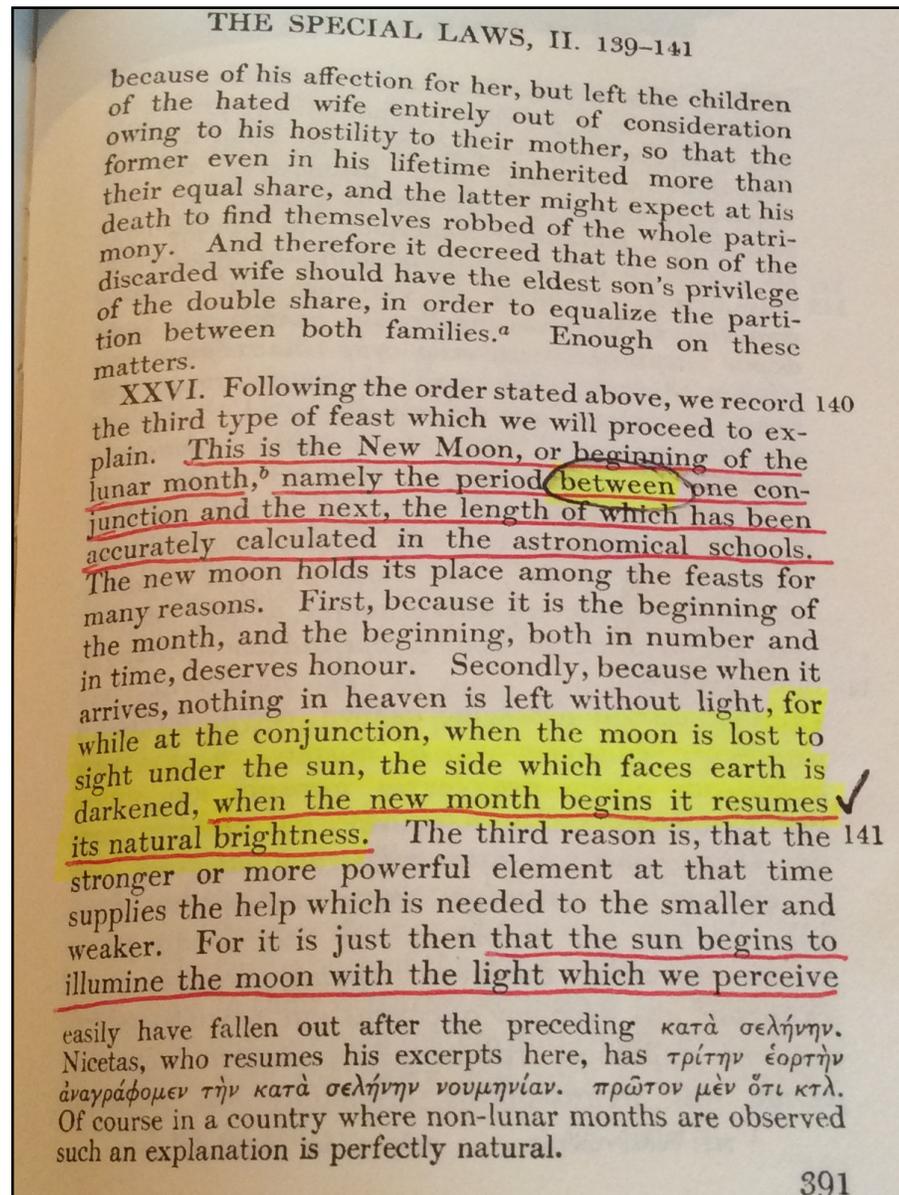
I honestly do not know how this could be any more clear. The new moon **follows** the conjunction. There is not one single place in all of Philo where he says that the new moon begins before the conjunction, yet that is what some brothers I know (I do consider them brothers) are doing. Each and every month they begin day 1 of the new month before the conjunction, in direct opposition to the first century witness Philo who says the new moon

follows the conjunction of the moon with the sun. From this text in Philo it is easy to reason that if the new moon **follows** the conjunction with the sun, the first **day** of the month begins the evening **following** conjunction. I say this because we know in Scripture that the day ends at evening, and by default a new day begins.

Philo proceeds to speak about this new moon in more detail in Special Laws 2.140, p. 391. (pictured below)

The first thing he says is that "*the new moon is the beginning of the lunar month, namely the period between one conjunction and the next.*" Again, this contradicts the position that the first day of the month begins before conjunction happens, seeing that one would always begin the first day of the month in a waning moon rather than a waxing moon.

I understand Philo to be speaking of the whole entire *technical* lunar month when he talks about the period between one conjunction and the next. The new moon is at the beginning of that lunar month, but *technically* the lunar monthly cycle starts immediately after conjunction and ends immediately before the next conjunction. Thus *between*.



It is important to see Philo is not saying the new moon is from one conjunction to the next, but instead that the lunar month (technically) is from one conjunction to the next.

Philo then starts giving his reasons why the new moon holds its place among the feasts. His first reason is simple: it's the beginning in number and time. Something to keep in mind here is that observed days, days we celebrate have points of origin. They begin and end at evening (Exodus 12:18; Leviticus 23:32; Nehemiah 13:19). The new moon in Scripture is always a day, never an event. This means we are not celebrating an event, but rather a day. Philo has already explained to us that the new moon (remember, the new moon is a day) **follows** the conjunction of the moon with the sun. This lets us know that the new moon beginning in both number and time begins **after** conjunction, when a new day begins. This day is the beginning in both number and time of the new month.

His second reason is very important. I quote from the before photo. He says that *"WHILE AT CONJUNCTION, when the moon is lost in sight under the sun, the side which faces earth is darkened, WHEN THE NEW MONTH BEGINNS it resumes its natural brightness."* This is very simple and plain. The new month does not begin while AT conjunction, but after conjunction, and at a time when the moon can resume its natural brightness. Philo specifically differentiates the time **at** conjunction with the time that follows: the new month beginning.

Remember this, Philo says:

1. While AT conjunction, the moon's side which faces earth is darkened.
2. When the new month begins (new moon) it resumes its natural brightness.

Some brethren have opted for beginning the new month before the conjunction ever happens. They say, "Well, it's the day *of, or belonging to* the conjunction, but the new moon still isn't until conjunction," but that won't work because **the new month begins when the first day of the month begins**. Remember that Philo just said the new month begins not at conjunction, but at a period of time AFTER conjunction when the moon can resume natural brightness, i.e. evening. When these brethren begin *their* first day of the month (at evening) before conjunction, they haven't even reached the pivot point from old to new, yet they have to call the **beginning** of this day "new moon" or "first day." You will **never** reach conjunction point when you begin day 1 of your month using this method. This directly contradicts Philo's writings here, as well as back on page 333.

The third reason Philo gives (see previous picture) is equally important as the second reason we just discussed. He says that the stronger element (the sun) supplies help to the weaker element (the moon). I believe he is speaking here of the moon being given reflective light from the sun, and this happens AFTER conjunction, not before. Each time the "conjunction day proponents" begin their month, the sun isn't giving fresh light to the moon, the moon is still waning down and hasn't even begun to wax.

Philo continues on this third point to speak of the sun beginning to illumine the moon with a light that we perceive and the moon reveals her beauty to the eye. This is important because this only happens this early on in the lunar cycle at the time period of

evening. You cannot see a fresh crescent moon during the day, but you can at dusk or *ereb* (evening). This let's us know (beyond a shadow of a doubt) that new moon, the first day of the month: (1) begins after conjunction, but (2) also begins at evening when the moon can receive beautiful light which can be perceived by us on the earth.

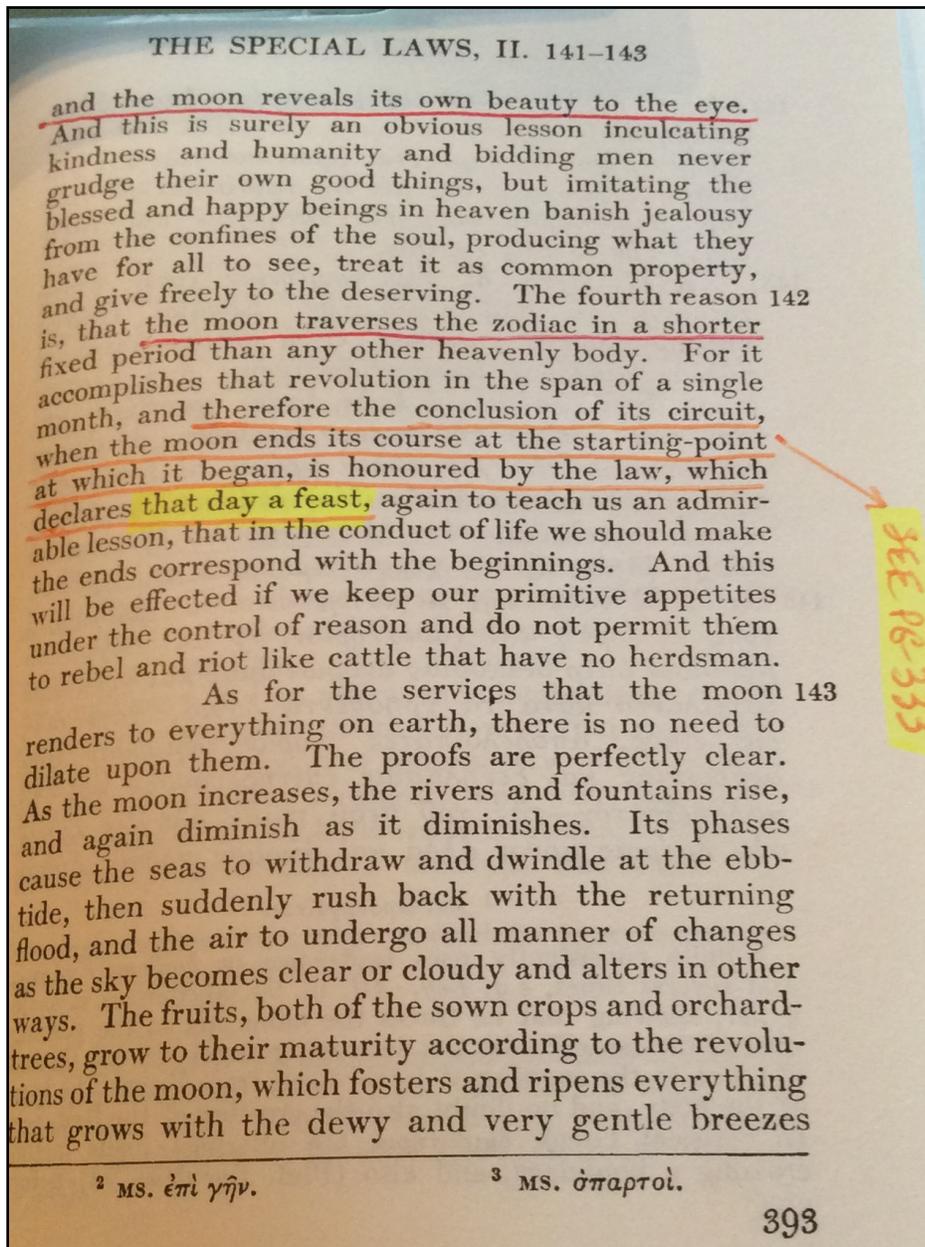
Now some brethren have taken this to mean that we MUST see a visual crescent in order for it to be new moon. I don't take that extreme a position. I believe it is the opposite extreme from the conjunction day position. The conjunction day position always starts the month before the new moon even happens, and the visual crescent view sometimes starts the month by skipping over an entire 24 hour period INSIDE of the rebuilding moon. Think about it. There are times when the conjunction of the moon happens, and then, let's say, 12 hours later the new day begins. That new day begins in a rebuilding moon, and ends in a rebuilding moon, yet the "visual crescent proponents" will skip entirely over this day and wait till the next day to declare new moon. This means they bypass a completely new 24 hour day. I believe both the conjunction day method and visual crescent method are faulty, and are arrived at by not taking **all** the available evidence from Philo into account.

That being said, I want to make sure and point out that using the "evening following conjunction method" often yields a visible crescent on the first day of the month during those months in which the moon has enough hours to rebuild before evening (17 to 23 1/2 hours). A visible crescent can happen on the first day of the month using the evening following conjunction method.

This must be what Philo was referring to, because we must harmonize EVERYTHING Philo wrote concerning new moon, and it's obvious from the texts we've already covered that he considered the moon to be rebuilding after conjunction (remember he defined the technical lunar month as being from one conjunction to the next). The key is to realize that although the moon begins to rebuild after conjunction, a new day doesn't begin until that upcoming evening. When that evening arrives, there will be times in the year that a visible crescent may be seen because the moon has waxed some 17 to 23 1/2 hours and is big enough to be viewed (just as Philo says in his third reason for the new moon holding it's place among the feasts).

Next comes the fourth and final reason that I will refuse to ignore. I have found that the conjunction day position tends to ignore or at least minimize the first 3 reasons Philo gives, as well as his initial statement on page 333 of the FH Colson translation of Philo. Diminishing all of that has led to a faulty understanding of Philo. Philo gives as the fourth reason the fact that the moon travels through the zodiac in a shorter fixed period than any other heavenly body. He then says that the conclusion of its circuit, when the moon ends its course at the starting point from which it began, is honored by the law which declares that day a feast. If one took this point **alone** from Philo, I can see how they could arrive at the "conjunction day" conclusion, but it's never wise to take one text (or one point) and ignore 3 others points that came before.

In this case I understand Philo to be speaking about both the conjunction and the evening that follows. I take this view based upon everything else I've read in Philo. The other points Philo brings up cannot be understood any other way. This one can.



Philo speaks of the moon ending its course, and while technically this does happen at conjunction, the next new day doesn't begin until the evening following conjunction. The evening following conjunction is thus the "that day" that Philo is recognizing. This harmonizes this last point with everything else in Philo and still holds onto the fact that the moon begins to rebuild after conjunction. The end of its course is when the evening after conjunction sets in and the new month begins at dusk, the beginning of a new day, the chief day.

I have personally taken (since 1999)

the position of keeping a "three day weekend" on 30 day months because I do not feel comfortable working (commerce, Amos 8:5) on the 30th day, the day of the conjunction. The day of the conjunction always falls on day 29 or day 30. It is a day of a special event, but it is to be differentiated from the day of the new moon. Let me reiterate. **The day of the conjunction is not the same as the day of the new moon.** In spite of this, I do believe it is special and I believe the Biblical evidence shows it was honored as part of the 2 or 3 day weekend at the end of each lunar month. Contact me for more detail.

With that being said, this last day of "full months" (conjunction day) always begins in the old month while the moon is still waning, thus I **number** it as the last day of the old month (29 or 30) but I also do not ignore the fact that the latter portion of the day is always inside a rebuilding moon. Conjunction day always works as a bridge from the last sabbath of the month into the new moon. You can find more info about this on my website, under "Articles" and then under "New Moon." I will explain in some of these articles about the last Sabbath of the lunar month which is then followed by a 1 or 2 day feast. When a month has 30 days, both the day of conjunction and the day of the new moon are celebrated.

Brother Matthew, 9.2014
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