

**Mar. 22**

## **The New Moon and the Full Moon in Jewish Observance**

Gen. 1:16; Num. 10:10 (Nu. 28:11, 14); Gen. 37:9 (Rev. 12:1); Ps. 81:3; Ps. 104:19

The first part of (spring) **festival cycle** (Pesach, Unleavened Bread, First Fruits and Pentecost) is geared to the first full moon of **spring** (Friday night) (Ex. 12:1) And the second part of the (fall) festival cycle is geared to the first full moon of **fall** (Rosh Hashanah, Yom Kippur and Sukkoth).

Both **Passover** and **Sukkoth** begin at the full moon and last seven days until the 2<sup>nd</sup> last or third phase of the moon. They are times of fullness and joy. Even in pagan religions the full moon (Harvest moon) was a time for celebrating, where people could celebrate at night by the greater light.

In Judaism, the relationship of the moon to the sun has been likened to our **relationship with G-d**. While we can never have His glory, we are constantly called **to recall or to reflect** His glory and to understand that **He is the L-rd of time** we are called to measure or to mark time daily, weekly, monthly and yearly. It is also a time when Jewish people think of the Messiah and of the **redemption** that He shall bring – that will mean that one day there will no longer be a waxing and a waning of light, but a constant, steady light under the reign of David's greater Son. That is why we celebrate the L-rd's Table at the new moon.

The Jewish calendar is **solar lunar** and the year begins and ends according to the cycles of the moon and 7 times every 19 years another month is added **so that the festivals stay aligned to the moon and the year stays aligned to the sun**. The new moon is a **solemn time** when Jewish people think of new birth, of the coming redemption of the growing light which will one day deliver us from darkness.

Once a month, the old moon, in a single night, shifts into the new moon and the light which was waning begins to wax. Thus we should understand that if our lives are aligned with the purposes of G-d, **it does not matter whether our fortunes wax or wane, they will continue to be regenerated and renewed by Him**. The full moon is a time of celebration.

The full moon is the beginning of the two greatest times of rejoicing in the festivals of the L-rd (Passover/Unleavened Bread and Sukkoth/Simchat Torah). It was a time when the festivities would last into the night and the full moonlight would guarantee both that people could see as they celebrated and also that they could find their way home, because we know that **light overcomes darkness**.

In Medieval folklore, witches and warlocks were more active at the **full moon**. This may have been due to the fact that many pagan religions of Europe held their wildest festivals at the full moon (and felt that it was a time when their **darkest magic powers** were at their height. It may also be because that was when the Jews, twice a year, were celebrating and meeting after dark (long into the night) and celebrating and seemed to be singing songs to the moon (**Kiddush Levanah**). There is also the question of the effect of the moon on mankind. Both the monthly cycle of women and the conduct of the mentally unbalanced were thought to be affected by the moon (hence the word lunatic).

Pagan peoples feared the full moon because they feel that when it is dark the powers of evil are greater and more active. We know the moon reflects the light of the sun and shines in the darkness to guide us through the dark. It is not affected by the dark, but overcomes the dark and we **should do the same**.

For us, the moon is one of two heavenly bodies He set in place to demonstrate His power over the **light of day** and the **darkness of night** and that His universe is full of **order and precision**, no matter what else is going on, He is in full and final control over all that is in the heavens and all that on earth.