

No One Knows The Day Or Hour

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Subject: No One Knows The Day Or Hour

NO ONE KNOWS THE DAY OR THE HOUR?

At the Time of the End, the wise shall understand. Dan 12:10

Understanding the expression "No man knows the day or hour" is not possible by simply taking the English translation literally, because in the book of Daniel and the Book of Revelation, we are given EXACT descriptions of timing, relative to KEY events - such as the shutting down of the altar sacrifices in Jerusalem at the MID-POINT of the 70th week. Dan 9:27

Jesus was asked, "When shall these things be?" Matt 24:3

His answer ties us in to a very specific event (The Abomination of Desolation) which can be measured on our calendars: "When you therefore shall see the Abomination Of Desolation, spoken of by Daniel the prophet, stand in the holy place, (whoever reads, let him understand:)"... Matt 24:15.

It is now clear that "no man knows the day or hour" does NOT mean "no man knows the day or hour" as we read it from a modern-day English perspective.

>From his book "Signs In the Heavens" by Avi Ben Mordechai, he devotes a chapter to explaining what "no man knows the day or hour" truly means from a rabbinical Hebraic perspective. It is a figure of speech.

The following chapter contains edited excerpts from Avi Ben Mordechai's commentaries and builds on them aiming to explain that the Holy Bible does in fact reveal the "day and hour" or "exact timing" of our Lord's Return.

No One Knows the Day or the Hour?

Christians over the centuries have separated themselves from their Hebraic roots causing the misunderstanding of key Jewish biblical idioms. An idiom is also a figure of speech. When Y'shua (Jesus) uttered His famous words concerning the Messianic Era in Mattityahu (Matthew) 24:26, "No one knows about that day or hour, not even the angels in Heaven, nor the Son, but only the Father", He used a common Jewish figure of speech referring to a specific Jewish Festival. In essence He was saying, "I am coming for My Bride on such and such a day! Be watching!" What day could the Jewish idiom be referring to? Keep reading!

HEBRAIC ROOTS

Y'shua HaMashiach (Jesus the Messiah) was Jewish and lived a Torah-observant Jewish life. Evidence suggests that He communicated to His audience in the Hebrew language, in Hebraic ways. What does it mean to communicate in Hebraic ways? It means to think and talk like a Jew. In Y'shua's day it meant to speak in the language and idioms of the day. Those who heard the Lord speak knew what He was saying and usually what He was alluding to unless He was speaking in parables, which had their own analogies. Of course, today's generation of believers struggles to understand His words and concepts. Speaking, thinking and acting like the Jewish Rabbi He was helped His mission in bringing the gospel message to "the lost sheep of the house of Israel" (Matt 15:24).

Y'shua was quoted in Mattityahu (Matthew) 8:11 as saying: "I say to you that many will come from the east and the west, and will take their places at the feast with Abraham, Isaac and Jacob in the Kingdom of Heaven". Since we are talking about Jewish idioms, have you ever considered the meaning of these words? Specifically, our Lord used and confirmed common Jewish ideas about the Day of the Lord - the millennium - and its relation to the Feast of Sukkot (Tabernacles) in Z'kharyah 14. In speaking, Y'shua referred to the Festival and its traditional guests of honour, Avraham, Yitzchak and Ya'acov, called the ushpizin (uosh-piz-zin) or seven shepherds (exalted guests), invited into every succah (tabernacle) at the Feast of Sukkot in the fall of the year. The seven shepherds in descending order are 1. Avraham (Abraham), 2. Yitzchak (Isaac), 3. Ya'acov (Jacob), 4. Mosheh (Moses), 5. Aaron, 6. Yosef (Joseph) and 7. HaMelech David (King David). By mentioning the feast and three of the seven shepherds, His audience immediately understood the allusion to the Messianic age - "Millennium" or "Day" of the Lord.

"For the Son of Man came to seek and to save what was lost" (Luke 19:10). Again, in this simplistic phrase Y'shua, the Son of Miriyam and Yosef, spoke of two things: His Deity (by calling Himself the subject of the prophet Dani'el's vision) and His mission (by calling Himself the One God Who spoke to Mosheh on Mount Sinai) as it is written in Dani'el and Yechezk'el (Ezekiel):

In my vision at night I looked, and there before me was One like a Son of Man, coming with the clouds of Heaven. He approached the Ancient of Days and was led into His presence (Dani'el 7:13-14).

For this is what the Sovereign LORD says: I Myself will search for My sheep and look after them (Yechezk'el-Ezekiel 34:11ff).

In the Gospel narrative of Luke 23:31, Y'shua said: "For if men do these things when the tree is green, what will happen when it is dry?" In this verse Y'shua points His audience, who had portions of the writings of the Prophets memorized, to the verses in Yechezk'el (Ezekiel) 20:45 to 21:7. Without question, Y'shua's hearers knew He referred to Chevlei HaMashiach or Ya'acov's Trouble in the Great Tribulation and warned His audience that what they do to Him in hardness of heart now, God will do to the nation in judgement later.

Y'shua's encounter with Natan'el (Nathanael) is recorded in Yochanan (John) 1:47-48: When Jesus saw Nathanael approaching, He said of him, "Here is a true Israelite, in whom there is nothing false". "How do You know me?" Nathanael asked. Jesus answered, "I saw you while you were still under the fig tree before Philip called you".

Again, our Lord used a strong figure of speech pointing to a widely taught Jewish expectation concerning the resurrection and the millennium. In brief, He told Natan'el that he will be alive on the Last Day to inherit the land promised to Avraham (Bereshith-Genesis 17:8). From Y'shua's words, Natan'el understood he would participate in the resurrection since "that Day" was yet future. This is understood in the first century Jewish figure of speech, "I saw you while you were still under the fig tree", which refers to life and study of Torah in the millennium (Midrash Rabbah Genesis, Rabbah Song of Songs). Y'shua also told Natan'el that he is like righteous Avraham who received his reward for trusting God. This is understood because of the phrase, "Here is a true Israelite, in whom there is nothing false". The millennial concept of the fig tree is found throughout the Tanach including Z'kharyah 3:10: "In that day each of you will invite his neighbor to sit under his vine and fig tree", declares the LORD Almighty. For this reason Natan'el responded emphatically to Y'shua and His words, saying: "Rabbi, you are the Son of God; You are the King of Israel!"

God through HaMashiach Y'shua spoke to the Jews in many portions and in many ways (Hebrews 1:1-2) relying upon known figures of speech, common expectations and direct thoughts from Talmudic and Pharisaic teachings. The concepts I addressed only scratch the surface, so-to-speak. Every phrase and word from the mouth of the Lord meant something to His audience. He spoke with precision. With that as a basis, let us go on to one of the most interesting Jewish figures of speech misunderstood by the Church over the years. It concerns Y'shua's phrase, "No one knows about that day or hour, not even the angels in Heaven, nor the Son, but only the Father". In context, He refers to the home-taking of His bride, the beginning of the Messianic era and His millennial reign as King of kings over all the earth. To understand this concept, we begin by examining its foundation.

ROSH HASHANAH

Chapter Five described the annual Jewish Festival of Trumpets or Rosh HaShanah - the first day of the seventh month. A few themes linked to this Jewish festival are resurrection, repentance, kingship, coronation and a marriage feast. This chapter shows another theme and convincing proof that Rosh HaShanah is not only the start of "The Day of the Lord" (Millennium), but is also the day of the resurrection! It has to do with the moon and its 29-day cycle of renewal.

In this period of slightly less than 30 days, the moon goes from darkness to light and back to darkness again. This is not a haphazard occurrence attributed to evolution or science. God planned it for many reasons, one being as a picture of resurrection and renewal. With each cycle of nearly 30 days the ancient rabbis understood that the moon was being reborn or "born again" (Sefard siddur, Mussaf for Shabbat and Shabbat Rosh Chodesh, p. 509 and 646-648).

NEW MOON

In Y'shua's day, the moon was so important that a Jewish festival was proclaimed at the beginning of every month (Talmud Tractate Chaggigah 17b; Shavuot 10a; Arachin 10b). This was called the New Moon Festival and in the B'rit Chadashah, Rabbi Sha'ul (Paul) makes note of it (Colossians 2:16). Even in the Tanach, King David provoked King Sha'ul (Saul) over it (1 Shmu'el-Samuel 20:5). In the coming millennium the gate of the inner court of the Temple facing east shall be opened on the new moon (Yechezk'el-Ezekiel 46:1). And finally in the millennium all nations will celebrate the New Moon festival every month (Yeshayahu-Isaiah 66:23). It is obvious from the Hebrew Scriptures that in the millennium God has no plans to do away with His system.

Since it is so important, exactly what is a new moon? It is the opposite of a full moon. Every month the moon goes through a complete cycle of renewal called Rosh Chodesh, the head or beginning of the renewed month. Twelve times a year on Rosh Chodesh, the moon always starts off with its disk being very dark to the naked eye. Over the course of 15 days it gets brighter and brighter until it finally reaches a full white-faced disk or full moon. Over the next 15 days it becomes darker and darker and finally becomes invisible to the naked eye again.

The ancient rabbis saw a great lesson in this. Just as the moon has no light of its own but receives its light from the sun, so we too have no light of our own and must receive it from God. As the moon goes through a near 30-day cycle of dark to light to dark, so we need constant spiritual

renewal and repentance. Like the moon, we too must be reborn or "born again" into HaMashiach and constantly renewed through repentance. This is why God called it a faithful witness in the sky (Mizmor-Psalm 89:37).

If the moon is so important to God, why do we pay so little attention to it? We have lost touch with God's faithful witness in the sky. But Y'shua and the people of His day never lost touch with it. And as I previously noted, not only was the new moon necessary for the Jewish calendar, it was also a monthly festival celebrated with a feast fit for a king! So, when Y'shua said His famous words in Mattityahu-Matthew 24:36, it had far-reaching implications. Here are the words of Y'shua in a few different translations:

But of that day and hour knoweth no man, no, not the angels of heaven, but my Father only. (KJV)

No one knows about that day or hour, not even the angels in heaven, nor the Son, but only the Father. (NIV) But of that day and hour knoweth no one, not even the angels of heaven, neither the Son, but the Father only. (ASV) About the exact time, however, and the hour, none knows - not even the messengers of Heaven; but My Father alone. (Fenton Modern English Translation)

Failing to think like Y'shua and taking phrases out of Jewish context can lead one to misunderstand His words. For example, in many places of the B'rit Chadashah Y'shua knew the future and talked about it openly. In one instance He warned His talmidim (disciples) about their future saying, "See, I have told you ahead of time" (Mattityahu-Matthew 24:25). His context concerned the tribulation, the destruction of the Temple, the rise and fall of false messiahs (antichrists), etc. If He knew the future in Mattityahu 24:25, and the context concerns the Day of Trouble, why would He suddenly speak as though He did not know the future in the same context just 11 verses later in Mattityahu 24:36? Was He confused? Or was He making perfect sense in light of the customs of the Jews?

Since the subject of our discussion is the new moon and figures of speech, realize the phrase, "Of that day and hour no man knows" refers to the sanctification or setting apart of the new moon. Without this sanctification, the Jews had no way of determining God's "appointed times" or moedim.

Twelve times a year a new Jewish month (Rosh Chodesh) was announced to the people. We have no system like it today. We look at a calendar to determine the first of the month; the Jews, however, looked at the moon. This system of chronology was given to the Jews to know precisely when the Holy festivals (moedim) would fall (there are still eight of them; seven

appointed times and Shabbat). The moon was the faithful Jewish calendar or witness in the sky and 12 times a year was sanctified as the basis of the Jewish stellar calendar.

GOD'S APPOINTED TIMES

Because the moon was so important for Jewish date - setting, the authorities in charge of announcing the new moon in Y'rushalayim took great care to ensure the first day of the month was announced on time. To correctly announce the first day of the month, established by the new moon, was one of the Sanhedrin's greatest responsibilities. They had to ensure the people knew when the first of the month began 12 times a year! Therefore God said to the leaders of Israel:

These are the appointed times of the Lord, holy convocations which you shall proclaim at the times appointed for them (Vayikrah-Leviticus 23:4).

In other words, God gave the Sanhedrin authority to announce and sanctify the new moon to the people. Its proclamation on earth was supported by God in Heaven (c.f. Mattityahu 18:18-20 where the Jewish context supports a believers' Sanhedrin as seen in Acts 15). As soon as the new moon was announced, the first day of the month began. Once the beginning of the new month was established, the festivals and weekly Shabbats for the upcoming month were sanctified for observance. In Hebrew, those observances have always been called "appointed times" or moedim, literally "a sacred and set time". From God's perspective, the appointed times belong to Him (Midrash Rabbah Numbers, Vol 2.21.25, p. 852) and no one has the authority to change the celebration of an appointed time. To do so was a serious matter and great sin. Appointed times had to be kept because of their Messianic implications.

Further in Vayikrah (Leviticus) 23:4, notice the phrase, "holy convocation". The phrase in Hebrew is mikraw kodesh, better translated, "holy convocation and rehearsal". In other words, God's appointed times are actually "holy rehearsals" set apart to reflect events in the Messianic era. God said to the people, "Pay attention! On this day I am going to do something! Wake-up! The Jews were to know and practice all of God's mikraot or holy convocations. This is the essence of Rav Sha'ul's words that the Shabbat, new moons and festivals, "are a shadow of things to come; the body of Mashiach" (Colossians 2:17).

Twice a year, in the spring and fall, there were several appointed times and specific days of holy convocation dedicated to the Lord. The new moon was the key in being able to fulfill those set times, holy convocations and rehearsals. For example, when the new moon was announced on the first day of Nisan, also called Aviv, the people knew when to observe the holy

convocations and set times of the 10th (Shemot-Exodus 12:3), 14th and 15th (Shemot-Exodus 12:6; Bamidbar-Numbers 33:3), 16th (Vayikrah-Leviticus 23:15), and finally the 21st. In the same way, when the new moon was announced on the first day of Tishri also called Ethanim, the people knew when to observe the Holy convocations of the 1st (Vayikrah-Leviticus 23:23), 10th (Vayikrah-Leviticus 23:26), 15th (Vayikrah-Leviticus 23:39), and 22nd (Vayikrah-Leviticus 23:36). Thus from the announcement of the new moon to the festival dates which followed, it was only a matter of counting the right number of days. In a moment you will understand how this applies to the phrase that Y'shua spoke concerning His coming again.

THE SANHEDRIN AND THE TWO WITNESSES

The Mishnah, also referred to as the Oral Law, dealt with the legal elements of daily Jewish religious life, in Hebrew called halachah. In the treasure of the first and second century halachah we find many explanations to help us understand the Torah particularly in Y'shua's day since it was still oral then. In volume two called "moed" or festival, tractate Rosh HaShanah teaches us about the Sanhedrin and its selection process of two witnesses who would tell us when the new moon arrived. Once a month the Sanhedrin discussed when to proclaim the new moon. They did this through the agency of two witnesses, the element of all legal transactions in Judaism.

One witness shall not rise up against a man for any iniquity, or for any sin, in any sin that he sinneth: at the mouth of two witnesses, or at the mouth of three witnesses, shall the matter be established. Deut 19:15

The men were important because by their witness, Israel celebrated God's appointed times. They had to be of good character and were always treated with great honour. They had special privileges such as authorization to ride into Y'rushalayim on horseback on the Shabbat to bring the good news of the new moon festivities! The men had special status because they were the confirmation that Y'hudah (Judaea) depended on for the correct timing of the new month and the festivals.

Rosh HaShanah Chapter 2, Mishnah 5 reads: There was a large court in Jerusalem called Beth Ya'azek. There all the witnesses used to assemble and the Beth Din used to examine them. They used to entertain them lavishly there so that they should have an inducement to come. (The witnesses were allowed to break the Shabbat travel restrictions for this one purpose lest they might be reluctant to come and give the essential evidence of the sighting of the new moon).

Continuing in Chapter 2, Mishnah 6: How do they test the witnesses? The pair who arrive first are tested first. The senior of them is brought in and they say to him, tell us how you saw the moon - in front of the sun or behind the sun? To the north of it or the south? How big was it, and in which direction was it inclined? And how broad was it? If he says (he saw it) in front of the sun, his evidence is rejected. After that they would bring in the second and test him. If their accounts tallied, their evidence was accepted, and the other pairs were only questioned briefly, not because they were required at all, but so that they should not be disappointed, (and) so that they should not be dissuaded from coming.

In qualifying the witnesses, the Sanhedrin used the following criteria:

They never arrived at the same time.

They were never questioned at the same time.

There were always two new witnesses each month.

In short, the two qualified witnesses usually stood before the Nassi or President of the Sanhedrin (Jewish High Court) to give account of the moon's appearance prior to its becoming total dark (Moed Rosh HaShanah, Chapter 3, Mishnah 1). Just before the moon's disk enters total darkness, there are tiny slivers of white on the edges of the waning disk. These were called the "horns" of the moon. Correctly sighting the "horns" (on the waning crescent) determined the beginning of the new month. Once the two witnesses were qualified and questioned, if the President (who had knowledge of astronomy) was convinced their observation was accurate, he publicly sanctified the start of the new month.

After careful scrutiny to determine the official arrival of the new moon, the Nassi or President of the Sanhedrin proclaimed Rosh Chodesh with the words: "Sanctified", and all the people repeat after him, "Sanctified, sanctified". After the proclamation, the Sanhedrin ordered watchmen on the nearby hillsides to light fires and thus inform the Jews in all of Y'hudah (Judaea), Shomron (Samaria), Egypt, Babylon and the galut (diaspora) that the new month had begun. That started the festival of the New Moon and counting of the next 29- days to the next new month proclamation.

Again, once the Sanhedrin set Rosh Chodesh, or the beginning of the new month by sighting the new moon, the rest of the festivals were calculated. However, the seventh month, Tishri, was particularly important because it was the only month that had a holy convocation or appointed time on the first day of the month. This posed a unique problem. The first day of Tishri was the appointed time called Rosh HaShanah, the Feast of Trumpets (Vayikrah-Leviticus 23:24). Yet no one could begin observing the festival until they heard those famous words from the President of the Sanhedrin, "Sanctified!"

No one in Israel could plan for the first day of the seventh month Tishri, called Yom Teruah or the Feast of Trumpets (also called Rosh HaShanah). When they knew how many days to count to a festival, that would be easy. But:

HOW COULD THEY PLAN FOR A FESTIVAL THAT THEY DID NOT KNOW AT WHAT DAY OR HOUR IT WOULD PUBLICALLY BE ANNOUNCED AND THUS BEGIN?

This was unique to Rosh HaShanah and dependent upon the testimony of the two witnesses. Prophetically, we are informed of two important witnesses during the Great Tribulation:

And I will give power unto My Two Witnesses, and they will prophesy 1260 days, clothed in sackcloth.

Rev 11:3

Of course, anyone could look up into the twilight or early morning sky and, if they looked hard enough, see the new moon or at least its "horns". And certainly an astute observer knew when about 29- days were completed since the previous Rosh Chodesh. But recall, ONLY THE SANHEDRIN NASSI had the authority to proclaim the first of Tishri, which was already established as a technical procedure. Once proclaimed, the Feast of Trumpets (Rosh HaShanah) commenced. Until that public announcement by the Nassi, everyone had to wait before they could begin the observance of the festival. No one could begin the festival beforehand! Thus, we can more clearly see the analogy Jesus made with His words: "But of that day and hour knoweth no man, no, not the angels of heaven, but my Father only" was in regards to this important festival of Rosh HaShanah.

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