

15. Is There a “No Trade” Restriction on the Day of the New Moon?

Lunar Sabbatarians Claim That Verses Such as Amos 8:5 and Ezekiel 46:1 Establish the Day of the New Moon as a “Rest Day.” How valid is their claim?

If you have followed the progress of this study in chronological order, you may recall that lunar sabbatarians are on record as protesting our references to those extra days that follow the fourth Sabbath of their month, including the day of the New Moon, as “*extended Sabbaths*.” Although we produced testimony from the original modern-day lunar sabbatarian that those days are, to him, an “extension of the fourth sabbath period,”¹ it is nevertheless clear that our making the same reference draws the ire of some of the more prominent lunar sabbatarians out there. It is for this reason that we are making a special effort in this study to accommodate the preferences of these particular lunar sabbatarians by referring to the days following the fourth sabbath of the month (i.e., day #30 of the old month and day #1 of the new month) as “*extended worship days*.”²

Having thus appeased lunar sabbatarians’ semantic preference, another question is raised: *Does Scripture present the day of the New Moon as a special “worship day”?*

It goes without saying that we should worship the Almighty *every* day, so strictly-speaking, every day is a “worship day.” However, to put it in the popular vernacular, “You know what we mean!” To lunar sabbatarians, the day of the New Moon is a day of *special* worship – or as one lunar sabbatarian puts it, an “*extended rest day*.”³ One of my first reactions to the designation “*extended rest day*” was, “What’s the difference between a ‘rest’ day and the ‘Sabbath’?” Indeed, a careful study of the original meaning of the Hebrew word *Shabbat* validates the understanding of “rest.” The two designations are synonymous. Here is the listing of this Hebrew word as found in *Strong’s Hebrew and Chaldee Dictionary*:

7676. שַׁבָּת **shabbâth**, *shab-bawth'*, intens. from 7673; **intermission**, i.e. (spec.) the *Sabbath*:—(+ every) sabbath.

It should be obvious that by *intermission*, a “rest” is understood. However, just to be clear, let’s examine word #7673, the word from which, according to *Strong’s Exhaustive Concordance*, word #7676 is derived:

¹ Jonathan David Brown, *Keeping Yahweh’s Appointments*, Springfield, MO, 1998, p. 54. The actual quote reads, “This tends to draw attention to the statement therein as being something that the people during that period took for granted: **the new moon or chodesh was simply an extension of the fourth sabbath period**, the ‘disappearance’ of the moon, just as Langdon put it.” Isn’t an *extension of the sabbath period* the same thing as an “*extended sabbath*”? For more details, please read chapter 12, “*Extended Sabbath Days Or Extended Worship Days?*”

² This is a designation that we were first introduced to by Arnold Bowen. For example, in a posting submitted in 2004 to the “True Sabbath” forum at eliyah.com, he wrote, “Every month the 4 Sabbaths have six work days between each and the last Sabbath/worship day of the month is followed by an **extended worship day called the New Moon** and then the six day intervals begin anew with a Sabbath at the end of each.” (Submitted by Mr. Bowen under the screen name “Brother Arnold” on 08-20-2004 at 09:19 PM to the “**2 sabbaths in a row**” thread of the (now-defunct) True Sabbath forum.)

³ Lunar sabbatarian Arnold Bowen, in a posting submitted under the screen name “Brother Arnold” on 06-08-2004 at 01:32 PM to the “**Challenge To Anyone**” thread of the (now-defunct) True Sabbath forum, made reference to “extended rest days of the new moon each month, which breaks the cycle with ‘two’ rest days in a row before it starts over again with the six work days rest one.”

7673. שַׁבָּת *shâbath*, *shaw-bath'*; a prim. root; to repose, i.e. desist from exertion; used in many impl. relations (caus., fig. or spec.):— (cause to, let, make to) cease, celebrate, cause (make) to fail, keep (sabbath), suffer to be lacking, leave, put away (down), (make to) rest, rid, still, take away.

If we refer back to the Hebrew word commonly translated “Sabbath” (word #7676), we can see that it is, in reality, the same exact word as the word from which it is supposedly derived. The only difference lies in the vowel-pointing, which did not exist prior to the seventh century CE. It can therefore be readily determined that both words are, in fact, *the same word* and have essentially the same meaning: *rest*.

Lunar sabbatarian Arnold Bowen, apparently recognizing that his attempt to distinguish the New Moon Day from the weekly Sabbath by referring to it as an “extended *rest* day” only served to provide an acceptable translation or *synonym* for “Sabbath,” was eventually compelled to offer the following clarification:

Each month ends with a rest day on the weekly Sabbath for worship and rest and the new month begins with a worship day which is not a complete rest as the weekly Sabbath is, but is a day of worship.⁴

Many folks, upon reading the above explanation, will ask, “From where in Scripture does Arnold Bowen derive the explanation that the day of the New Moon is ‘not a complete rest’ (i.e., making it a *partial* rest day)?” If you read chapter 12 of this study, you know that this teaching is the result of an assimilation of two separate texts – Exodus chapter 40, where Moses constructed the tabernacle on the day of the New Moon (i.e., *worked* on that day), and Amos 8:4-5, a passage believed by many to validate the belief that the day of the New Moon is observed as a sabbath – or at the very least a day on which no business transactions are permitted. Certainly, if Amos 8:4-5 alludes to believing that the day of the New Moon was a day on which no buying or selling was to be done, yet Moses laboriously constructed the tabernacle on that same day, then *some* work must be permitted on the day of the New Moon, right? These two passages, then, serve as the lunar sabbatarian linchpin for treating the day of the New Moon as a *partial rest day*.

Lunar sabbatarians have not historically been very clear as to just exactly what types of work are permitted on the day of the New Moon. Perhaps they haven’t been forthcoming with this information because Scripture itself offers no instructions or approved examples. In 2003, lunar sabbatarian Matthew Janzen delivered a sermon addressing this very topic, which he recorded and later sent us for the purpose of helping us to better understand why the day of the New Moon is not a “work day.” At the completion of the sermon, Mr. Janzen devoted a few minutes to offering a personal testimony outlining how he and his family observe “New Moon Day.” Here is a transcript of an excerpt from that testimony:

In Amos 8, I do believe that we have an approved example, as well as a necessary inference, that the New Moon was a day on which buying and selling were

⁴ Arnold Bowen, from a posting submitted under the screen name “emjanzen” on 01-22-2006 at 01:38 PM to the “Pentecost/Shavuot Timing” thread of the (now-defunct) True Sabbath forum. This forum was located at www.elijah.com. For more details regarding “extended sabbaths,” please review ch. 10, “Extended Sabbath Days Or Extended *Worship* Days?”

prohibited. In that way, it is similar to the weekly Sabbath day. However, I don't find where there are any other restrictions on exactly what to do on New Moon. On the day of the New Moon, my wife and myself, we do stay at home. It is somewhat to us as a day of getting things straightened up around the house – in the household. If we've got something to do out in the yard, we may do – you know, cut grass or something along those lines. But we do have a worship service, and we teach our children that – according to the Scriptures I've given here on this tape. But we do not go out and buy and sell. We don't believe that is to be done.⁵

As we can see from Mr. Janzen's personal testimony, general labor on the day of the New Moon is sanctioned – with the stipulation that it cannot involve buying or selling.

We understand why lunar sabbatarians are persuaded that *some* work is permitted on the day of the New Moon. Certainly, the example of what Moses did in Exodus chapter 40 validates believing that *some* work must be allowed. But what about Amos 8:4-5? Does this passage prove that it is a sin to perform the work of a servant on the day of the New Moon? We read this passage back in chapter 12, but let's reread it to get some context:

⁴ Hear this, O ye that swallow up the needy, even to make the poor of the land to fail,

⁵ Saying, **When will the new moon be gone, that we may sell corn?** And the sabbath, that we may set forth wheat, making the ephah small, and the shekel great, and falsifying the balances by deceit?

When we read this passage, it is easy to understand the perception that it must be sinful to conduct business, such as the selling of crops, on the day of the New Moon. In fact, virtually every commentary that we've examined would validate such an understanding. However, there are two very important items of consideration that each of us must bear in mind before reaching any conclusions about the author's intent: (1) Is there a Torah mandate prohibiting any (or some) labor on the day of the New Moon? (2) Must waiting for the New Moon to be gone before selling corn infer that it was Scripturally unlawful to sell the corn on the day of the New Moon? As we are about to see, the answer to both questions is no.

There seems to be no shortage of commentaries on Amos 8:4-5 wherein the author attempts to trace the impatience for the New Moon to be gone in order to sell corn to a previous commandment in the Pentateuch. For example, the highly-regarded *Commentary on the Old Testament* by Keil & Delitzsch offers the following insight:

Vv. 5 and 6 show how they [the rich and powerful men of the nation] 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. *Chōdesh*, the new moon, was a holiday on which all trade was suspended, just as it was on the Sabbath (see at Num. 28:11 and 2 Kings 4:23). שָׁבַר, הַשֶּׁבֶר, to sell corn, as in Gen. 41:57. פָּתַח בָּר, to open up corn, i.e., to open the granaries (cf. Gen. 41:56). In doing so, they wanted to cheat the poor by small measure (ephah), and by making the shekel great, i.e., by increasing the price, which was to be weighed out to

⁵ Matthew Janzen, excerpt from audio taped sermon titled “The New Moon,” side 2, delivered on 06/08/2003.

them; also by false scales (*ivvēth*, to pervert, or falsify the scale of deceit, i.e., the scale used for cheating), and by bad corn (*mappal*, waste or refuse); that in this way they might make the poor man so poor, that he would either be obliged to sell himself to them from want and distress (Lev. 25:39), or be handed over to the creditor by the court of justice, because he was no longer able to pay for a pair of shoes, i.e., the very smallest debt (cf. ch. 2:6).⁶

Notice that the author of the above commentary, C. F. Keil, attributes his understanding that all trade was suspended on the day of the New Moon to Numbers 28:11 and 2 Kings 4:23. As we will see shortly, he is not the only commentator who uses these verses as “proof texts.” However, let’s review both verses and see if either of them consists of a mandate to not conduct regular business on the day of the New Moon. Shown below is Numbers 28:11-16:

11¶ And in the beginnings of your months ye shall offer a burnt offering unto Yahweh; two young bullocks, and one ram, seven lambs of the first year without spot;

12And three tenth deals of flour *for* a meat offering, mingled with oil, for one bullock; and two tenth deals of flour *for* a meat offering, mingled with oil, for one ram;

13And a several tenth deal of flour mingled with oil *for* a meat offering unto one lamb; *for* a burnt offering of a sweet savour, a sacrifice made by fire unto Yahweh.

14And their drink offerings shall be half an hin of wine unto a bullock, and the third *part* of an hin unto a ram, and a fourth *part* of an hin unto a lamb: this *is* the burnt offering of every month throughout the months of the year.

15And one kid of the goats for a sin offering unto Yahweh shall be offered, beside the continual burnt offering, and his drink offering.

16And in the fourteenth day of the first month *is* the passover of Yahweh.

Please keep in mind that C. F. Keil, in his commentary explaining that the day of the New Moon was a day on which all trade was suspended, only offered Numbers 28:11 as his “Torah” proof text. We supplied the entire passage in order to make a point: *Nowhere in the above passage is there a command to abstain from work on the day of the New Moon.* The above text consists of instructions for the priests to carry out on the day of the New Moon – but no information is provided with regard to what the *non-priests* could or couldn’t do on that day. In case you’re wondering why we included verse 16 (which obviously has nothing to do with a New Moon observance) with the above passage, it’s because we wanted to make certain that there is no question that we didn’t leave out anything!

We have just seen that Numbers 28:11 offers nothing in the way of a mandate to abstain from work on the day of the New Moon, and this verse is the only Torah passage cited by C. F. Keil in his commentary on Amos 8:5. The other “proof text” that he provided comes from 2 Kings 4:23, which is an excerpt from the story of the Shunammite woman, whose son had died. She had been promised this son by Elisha, and when he died, she determined to pay Elisha a visit. Let’s examine this passage as adapted from the New International Version translation:

⁶ From *Commentary on the Old Testament* by Keil & Delitzsch, Volume 10, “The Minor Prophets,” by C. F. Keil, Hendrickson Publishers, Peabody, MA, 2001, reprinted from the English edition originally published by T. & T. Clark, Edinburgh, 1866-91, p. 211.

¹⁸The child grew, and one day he went out to his father, who was with the reapers.

¹⁹“My head! My head!” he said to his father.

His father told a servant, “Carry him to his mother.”

²⁰After the servant had lifted him up and carried him to his mother, the boy sat on her lap until noon, and then he died.

²¹She went up and laid him on the bed of the man of the Almighty, then shut the door and went out.

²²She called her husband and said, “Please send me one of the servants and a donkey so I can go to the man of the Almighty quickly and return.”

²³“Why go to him today?” he asked. “It’s not the New Moon or the Sabbath.” “It’s all right,” she said.

In view of the Shunammite woman’s husband’s explanation that it was neither the New Moon nor the Sabbath, many view his association of the two observances as an implication that that both observances contain the same requirements. They reason that that since “New Moon” is thus associated with “Sabbath,” this means that they must both be observed the same way, including the “no work” requirement. However, even lunar sabbatarians know that this cannot *really* be true because they teach that the two observances actually have *different requirements*. Since we should all agree that the association between “New Moon” and “Sabbath” does not necessarily mean that they both have the same requirements, we should also recognize the possibility that the New Moon doesn’t have *any* restrictions other than those laid out in Torah (as we read earlier).

The New Moon is clearly a special day, and was highly regarded as a special time as evidenced not only by the ordinances attached to it by Yahweh, but also by historical accounts, such as the account of David and Jonathan in I Samuel 20, which we will address later in our study. As a special day, we can be certain that it was a day on which people gathered, if for no other reason than to celebrate the start of a new month. As special as the day was, though, we read nothing in Scripture, and certainly nothing in Torah, outlining an expectation that any trade be suspended on that day.

It should be clear, then, that the Shunammite woman’s husband’s comment that it was not the New Moon or the Sabbath cannot reasonably be used to indicate that the two observances had the same requirements. Why, then, do the authors of commentaries make this assumption? We have already seen that Keil & Delitzsch, in their *Commentary on the Old Testament*, assume that Numbers 28:11 and 2 Kings 4:23 validate believing that there is a legitimate Torah prohibition of conducting trade on the day of the New Moon. *The International Bible Commentary* also cites 2 Kings 4:23 as evidence that the day of the New Moon was regarded as a day on which work was suspended:

The oracle with the opening formula, **Hear this**, and its general context, seems to belong to the collection of 3: 1-4: 3. It is directed against the wealthy merchant classes who by their dishonest and corrupt practices **trample the needy** and **do away with the poor** (4). The two regular feast days of **the New Moon** and **the Sabbath** go back to the earliest period of Israel’s history. **It is not clear that the new moon was originally a day in which work was forbidden**, although it was a prominent festival (I Sam. 20:5, 24; **2 Kg. 4:23**; Isa. 1:13, 14; Hos. 2: 11). The implication here, however, is that at this time a ban on work existed on

both days and this proved extremely tiresome to the fraudulent traders who were concerned only in making money.⁷

The above commentator brings out something that lunar sabbatarians are generally reluctant to admit: Indeed, it is *not clear* that the New Moon was originally a day on which work was forbidden. In view of the fact that there is no Torah command prohibiting work on the day of the New Moon, we are persuaded that it is clear that no such mandate has ever existed. We can understand how some might derive an implication from Amos 8:5 that, by this time in history, trade was suspended on the day of the New Moon; however, as we shall see shortly, we believe it's a misunderstanding and misinterpretation of the text.

Although it seems that many scholars share the belief that, at least during Amos' day, the Sabbath and New Moon shared the same "no trade" restriction, some scholars lean in another direction. John H. Tullock, who contributed the "Sabbath" entry in the *Mercer Dictionary of the Bible*, asserts that the New Moon and the weekly Sabbath are "two separate and distinct religious holidays."

When Sabbath and new moon, furthermore, are mentioned together in the OT, there is no need to assume that the texts are speaking of anything other than two separate and distinct religious holidays.⁸

It is conceivable that lunar sabbatarians might agree with the above comment; however, if they believe the "separate and distinct holidays" shared the same trade restrictions, it is essential for them to produce the Torah mandate that would remove all doubt. From our perspective, the two separate and distinct religious holidays also have separate and distinct requirements for observance. Without the support of a Torah command, it is very premature to conclude that the Almighty has ever expected His people to understand a "no trade" restriction for the day of the New Moon.

As it is, author John H. Tullock, in his contribution to the *Mercer Dictionary of the Bible*, offers additional insight into how and why the Sabbath and New Moon would be mentioned together:

In an incident in the Elisha cycle, the Shunammite woman sets out to seek the prophet. Her husband asks her, "Why will you go to him today? It is neither new moon nor Sabbath" (2 Kgs 4:23). Such holy days were thought to be especially propitious for consulting holy men such as prophets.⁹

Lunar sabbatarians, once again, would likely agree with the above commentary, but would add that it was "just understood" that an additional restriction was shared by New Moon and Sabbath: *No business transactions were allowed*. Do they claim to have "proof texts" for this belief? Yes, they do! One thing we have found that lunar sabbatarians have in abundance is "proof texts." However weighty of an effect it may have for one's position to offer "proof texts," they are of no value if they are misinterpreted or, worse yet, subverted. This brings us to a study titled *Weekly Sabbath Days are Determined by the Moon*, by Arnold Bowen and Matthew Janzen, where we are given the opportunity to examine the verses cited

⁷ From *The International Bible Commentary*, F. F. Bruce, General Editor, Marshall Pickering/Zondervan, Grand Rapids, MI, 1986, p. 911.

⁸ From *Mercer Dictionary of the Bible*, "Sabbath," by John H. Tullock, General Editor: Watson E. Mills, Mercer University Press, Macon, GA, 1997, p. 779.

⁹ *Ibid*, p. 780.



by lunar sabbatarians as supportive of their view that no business transactions should occur on the day of the New Moon.

Examining Lunar Sabbatarian Proof Texts for Their New Moon Trade Prohibition

In our original study, June and I devoted a small amount of space towards explaining that Amos 8:5 does not support believing that business transactions were disallowed on the day of the New Moon. In our review of Amos 8:5, we explained that the only New Moon Day on which the Torah prohibits conducting trade is *Yom Teruah*, otherwise known as the Feast of Trumpets. Our commentary caught the watchful eye of Matthew Janzen, co-author of *Weekly Sabbath Days are Determined by the Moon*, and Mr. Janzen decided to incorporate his response into his study. You may recall that we have already cited an audio-cassette sermon delivered by Mr. Janzen in which he shares the unique manner in which he and his family observe the New Moon. It’s a day on which they do chores around the home, including mowing their yard, but they do not conduct any business transactions on that day. In his study, Matthew establishes that the day of the New Moon is indeed a day on which all manner of trade should be suspended. Let’s review his presentation and examine the merits of his arguments:

The Scripture then teaches that for the following month the new moon is a worship day. It is a day of no buying and selling and not one of the ordinary workdays.¹⁰

Mr. Janzen footnoted the above comment (as follows) with what he feels is supportive Scripture: Ezekiel 46:1; Isaiah 66:23; Amos 8:5; 2 Kings 4:23; Colossians 2:16. This collective array of proof texts may persuade a casual student of the Word that there is a "no trade restriction" on the day of the New Moon. However, when each verse is individually examined, it can be demonstrated that Mr. Janzen's case is not only wanting, but it is *non-existent*. Let's briefly examine each one:

Ezekiel 46:1

¹Thus saith Yahweh Almighty; The gate of the inner court that looketh toward the east shall be shut the six working days; but on the sabbath it shall be opened, and in the day of the new moon it shall be opened.

You may recall from chapter 12 (“Extended Sabbath Days Or Extended *Worship* Days?”) that we addressed the Ezekiel 46:1 “proof text” and found it to be woefully inadequate at best. Ezekiel 46:1 is the passage used by lunar sabbatarians to distinguish the New Moon and the Sabbath from the six working days. However, they omit the fact that Ezekiel chapter 46 makes no mention of another lunar sabbatarian “no trade day”—the 30th day of the month—which is neither the day of the New Moon nor the weekly Sabbath, yet lunar sabbatarians maintain that it has the same “no trade” restriction as New Moon day. Lunar sabbatarians may try to persuade others that day #30 is a “New Moon day,” but this would be an

¹⁰ From *Weekly Sabbath Days are Determined by the Moon* by Arnold Bowen and Matthew Janzen, published by Ministers of the New Covenant, Conyers, GA, 2008, p. 16. This study is available online at the following URL: <http://ministersnewcovenant.org/books/b-002.pdf>.



arbitrary and unreasonable declaration on their part, since the 30th day of the month is obviously *not* the day of the New Moon!

In summary, when Yahweh told Ezekiel that the East Gate of the inner court was to remain shut the six working days, but open on the day of the Sabbath and on the day of the New Moon, He was giving Ezekiel the “exceptions to the rule” of *closure*, not a distinction between “working days” and “day of the New Moon.” If the New Moon fell on one of the six working days, the gate was shut. It is that simple. It is a fact that the East Gate was opened on the Day of Atonement.¹¹ The Day of Atonement, not specified in Ezekiel 46:1, is not the Sabbath, it is not New Moon day, and it is not a work day. Just as the East Gate was opened on a day that would have otherwise been a work day (the Day of Atonement), so it was also opened on the day of the New Moon, a day on which work is not prohibited.

The Day of Atonement isn’t the only non-specified exception to the “six working days” rule of Ezekiel 46:1. Within this very same chapter we find yet another exception: *Voluntary burnt offerings prepared by the prince*. This exception is stipulated in verse 12:

¹²Now when the prince shall prepare a voluntary burnt offering or peace offerings voluntarily unto Yahweh, *one* shall then open him the gate that looketh toward the east, and he shall prepare his burnt offering and his peace offerings, as he did on the sabbath day: then he shall go forth; and after his going forth *one* shall shut the gate.

If we abide by lunar sabbatarian interpretation, the gate would not be opened for the prince unless it was the Sabbath or New Moon. Hopefully, we all know better. If we understand the days on which the East Gate was opened as *exceptions to the closure rule*, we can better understand that the New Moon is one of those exceptions. This does not necessarily make the New Moon a “no trade” day (unless it falls on a weekly Sabbath or Yom Teruah (the Feast of Trumpets)).

To use a modern-day analogy to the *exceptions to the closure rule* of Ezekiel 46:1, a Methodist church might have the following rule: "This door is to remain closed six days per week; however, it will be kept open on Sundays, as well as for weddings and funerals." No one in his or her right mind would understand that weddings and funerals can only take place on Sundays, nor would they expect a wedding day to be observed in the same manner as they observe Sunday! However, this is the reasoning exhibited by lunar sabbatarians. In our opinion, it is flawed reasoning. As with all verses cited by Matthew Janzen, it also lacks Torah support.

Isaiah 66:23

²³And it shall come to pass, *that* from one new moon to another, and from one sabbath to another, shall all flesh come to worship before me, saith Yahweh.

¹¹ Cf., *The Anchor Bible Dictionary*, Vol. 2, “East Gate,” by Dale C. Liid, David Noel Freedman, Editor-in-Chief, Doubleday, New York, NY, 1992, p. 249, where we read, “The Shushan Gate (‘the Eastern Gate whereon the Castle of Shushan was sculptured’ [*m. Middot* 1:3]) exited from the Temple Mount (Court of Gentiles) to the Kidron Valley. It was not a public entrance or exit but was for the ceremonial leading away of the scapegoat to the wilderness and the red heifer to the Mount of Olives via one or possibly two causeways built for that purpose (*m. Para* 3:6; *m. Šeqalim* 4:2).”



While I can understand why lunar sabbatarians might appeal to Isaiah 66:23 for validation of their belief that no business transactions are permitted on the day of the New Moon, at the same time, I am puzzled by their decision. Must coming before Yahweh to worship Him simultaneously infer that no business transactions are allowed on that day? Where do they come up with this definition of “coming before Yahweh to worship Him”? Certainly not from Torah.

It is Yahweh Himself who imposes a greater restriction on the day of the weekly Sabbath than He does on other days. If He had intended for us to understand that He expects the same manner of restriction be imposed on the day of the New Moon, it would have been a simple matter for Him to have specified as much. Please keep in mind that there are most certainly other days besides the weekly Sabbath and the New Moon that we come before Yahweh to worship Him. This would include the festivals and holy days. While we come before Yahweh during the feasts, this does not mean that we are prohibited from making purchases during those feasts (apart from the specified holy days).¹²

Isaiah 66:23 is thus invalidated as a “proof text” supporting the prohibition of business transactions on the day of the New Moon.

Colossians 2:16

We are once again somewhat puzzled that Matthew Janzen would appeal to a verse such as Colossians 2:16 for evidence supportive of his position. This is actually a verse that is cited by many Christians as proof that such days as the weekly Sabbath and New Moon observance were “done away.” Of course, we disagree with that interpretation, as covered in our study “Thinking About Keeping the Sabbath?”¹³ While we disagree with those who insist that Colossians 2:14-16 teaches the abolition of the weekly Sabbath and New Moon observances, how can this mean that we must consequently believe that the New Moon is a “no work” day? Let’s read Colossians 2:16:

¹⁶Let no man therefore judge you in meat, or in drink, or in respect of an holyday, or of the new moon, or of the sabbath *days*:

When we examine this verse in context, we understand that the word “judge” can also mean “condemn.” In other words, if we are found observing and celebrating the day of the New Moon, we should not allow anyone’s condemnation or judgment of our actions to bother us or otherwise deter us from continuing in our practice.

It is untenable that anyone could regard this verse as a “proof text” validating no buying or selling on the day of the New Moon. We would make this same statement even if this verse were to be found within Torah. Colossians 2:16 offers nothing in the way of guidance with regard to how one should properly observe a New Moon.

¹² Cf., Leviticus 23.

¹³ Our study is available online and may be read by accessing the following URL:
<http://www.ponderscripture.org/Sabbath.html>.



2 Kings 4:23

We have already dealt extensively with 2 Kings 4:23 in this chapter, and we have shown that this verse most certainly *does not* qualify as a “proof text” supportive of the day of the New Moon being a “no work” day. We need to emphasize that the Shunammite woman’s husband’s comment that it was neither the New Moon nor the Sabbath cannot reasonably be used to validate that the two observances had the same requirements. We demonstrated that even lunar sabbatarians concur with this understanding, since they obviously do not keep the New Moon day [*some* work allowed] as they do the weekly Sabbath [*no* work allowed]. If they can agree that *some* work is permitted on the day of the New Moon, then how can they use 2 Kings 4:23 to *prove* it? Couldn’t one just as easily use 2 Kings 4:23 to prove that both the New Moon and weekly Sabbath are to be kept in precisely the same way? Indeed, if it weren’t for passages such as Exodus chapter 40, where Moses erected the tabernacle on the day of the New Moon, lunar sabbatarians would most likely teach that *no work* is allowed on the day of the New Moon.

Amos 8:5

Mr. Janzen’s other proof text forms the foundation of this chapter: Amos 8:5. While we have certainly addressed Amos 8:5, we are by no means finished.

We mentioned earlier that our commentary on Amos 8:5 in our original study caught the watchful eye of Matthew Janzen, co-author of *Weekly Sabbath Days are Determined by the Moon*, and Mr. Janzen decided to incorporate his response to our commentary into his study. Here would be an appropriate place for us to provide a full response to Matthew’s commentary, and the best way to proceed is to also provide his exposé on the subject. Here is the pertinent excerpt from his study:

We might continue a bit further in this chapter by commenting on another profound passage of Scripture which lunar sabbatarians believe Saturday sabbatarians either overlook or explain in an unsatisfactory way. This passage is one found in the book of Amos 8:5 which states, "*Saying, When will the new moon be gone, that we may sell corn? and the Sabbath, that we may set forth wheat, making the ephah small, and the shekel great, and falsifying the balances by deceit?*" Here we have a very clear, concise Scripture showing that the day of the new moon was not one in which the Israelites bought, and thus a day in which they did not sell either. Interestingly enough, much like the Ezekiel passage, the new moon is mentioned in the exact same context of buying selling, trading, etc. with the weekly Sabbath. We can conclude that it is a complimentary (*sic*) Scripture to the passage in Ezekiel, further corroborating that the new moon was not one of the six ordinary working days in the ancient times. In spite of verses as these, there are still some who insist that no such interpretation should be sought for. One author writes:

This verse, on the surface, might seem to imply that each new moon day has the same force as the weekly Sabbath, as buying and selling, both of which involve the work of a servant, were apparently prohibited on that day, just as it is on the weekly Sabbath. However, what is mysteriously missing from Amos 8:5 is a *Torah precedent* outlawing work on each new moon day. In the Torah (the books of the law), there is a glaring absence of a directive to treat each and every new moon day as a Sabbath day. The *only* new moon day that is treated

as a Sabbath day is the first day of the seventh month, *Yom Teruah*, also known as the Feast of Trumpets.¹⁴

Once again, we see that instead of accepting the passage for what it says, this author has attempted to state something to the effect that the new moon in Amos is none other than the day of trumpets. While this is a noble effort on his part to understand the verse of Amos, he is incorrect because of the following points. First, the passage does not say nor imply that it was the day of trumpets, it simply states it as the new moon, much akin to Ezekiel 46:1-3 and Isaiah 66:23. Secondly, passages such as Leviticus 23:24, Numbers 29:1, Ezra 3:6, and Nehemiah 8:2 all refer to the day of trumpets by using the terminology, "the first day of the seventh month" or "in the seventh month on the first day of the month." Never is the day of trumpets identified by the simple phrase *rosh chodesh*, or in English, 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.¹⁵

Of course, we are the authors criticized above by Mr. Janzen. June and I have not reversed our understanding of the fact that the only New Moon day that Scripture sanctifies as a sabbath is *Yom Teruah*, better known as the Feast of Trumpets. This having been said, we nevertheless agree that Matthew makes some valid points about whether or not the Feast of Trumpets is what is being referenced by the author of Amos 8:5. If the Feast of Trumpets is the day of the New Moon that Amos had in mind, then why didn't he just say so? Why wasn't that specific day or observance mentioned *by name*?

Thus, we have the quandary: The day of the New Moon is nowhere in Torah sanctified as a day on which no trade is allowed, yet Amos seems to present the understanding that no buying or selling is permitted on that day. If it is indeed true that there is a “no trade” restriction imposed upon the day of the New Moon, then why didn't Yahweh clearly present this understanding in His Instruction Manual known as the Torah? Is there a piece to the puzzle that we've all been missing? Yes, there is definitely a piece missing! It is now time to cover an aspect of Amos 8:5 that lunar sabbatarians, it seems, would rather “sweep under the rug.”

¹⁴ Matthew Janzen borrowed this quote from our original study *Something Different: Lunar Sabbaths*, June 2003, p. 48. It is found on page 37 of our online version of the same study, which may be accessed at the following URL: http://www.ponderscripture.org/Lunar%20Sabbath/LA%2085%20Page%20Study/Lunar_Sabbaths_Study.pdf.

¹⁵ From *Weekly Sabbath Days are Determined by the Moon* by Arnold Bowen and Matthew Janzen, published by Ministers of the New Covenant, Conyers, GA, 2008, pp. 43-44. This study is available online at the following URL: <http://ministersnewcovenant.org/books/b-002.pdf>.

Did Ancient Hebrew Scholars Believe New Moon Day Had Trade Restrictions?

There is something about the Hebrew word translated “New Moon” that seems to go unnoticed by lunar sabbatarians. This Hebrew word, *chodesh*, as we are about to see, can be understood in more than one way, depending on context. It can either be used to mean “New Moon” or it can refer to the broader designation of “month.” An example of the broader use of the term *chodesh* can be observed by reading Numbers 33:3:

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

The Hebrew word translated “month” in the above verse is, of course, *chodesh* (חֹדֶשׁ). We can know that the word *chodesh*, in the above verse, must be a general reference to the 30-day period comprising what we understand as a month because it wouldn’t make any sense to say that something happened on the 15th day of New Moon day. If the word *chodesh* could only be used in reference to “New Moon,” as in the day of the New Moon, then it would not be a word that could have been used in Numbers 33:3. Anyone questioning whether or not *chodesh* can be used in reference to a general 30-day period needs to look no further than the Hebrew and Chaldee Dictionary found within *Strong’s Exhaustive Concordance*. This word is word #2320 in *Strong’s*, and here is the listing for this Hebrew word found in this reference:

2320. חֹדֶשׁ **chôdesh**, *kho'-desh*; from 2318; the new moon; by impl. a month:—**month** (-ly), new moon.

You may wonder what the fact that *chodesh* can mean “month” has to do with our interpretation of Amos 8:5. After all, *chodesh* can also mean “new moon”; so who’s to say that “new moon” wasn’t the original intent of the author of Amos 8:5? The answer: The Hebrew scholars who translated the Hebrew text of Amos 8:5 into Greek. As we are about to see, the scholars who translated the Septuagint in the first century BCE did not understand the word *chodesh*, as used in Amos 8:5, to be a reference to “New Moon.”

The Greek Language Has a Separate Word for “New Moon” vs. “Month”

The Greek language has some similarities to our English language that lunar sabbatarians, at least in this instance, prefer to overlook because one of those similarities disproves the lunar sabbath doctrine. In Amos 8:5, we read “new moon” in the King James Version because that’s the way the translators chose to translate the Hebrew word *chodesh*. They obviously felt that it made more sense for the text to read, “When will the new moon be gone” instead of “When will the month be gone.” Either translation would have been an accurate rendering of the Hebrew text in English. However, that is *not* the way 1st century BCE Hebrew scholars saw it! As we are about to see, the ancient Hebrew scholars, when choosing which Greek word to best fit the translation of *chodesh* in Amos 8:5, decided upon the Greek word that means



The impact of the Greek word for “month” instead of the Greek word for “new moon” appearing in Amos 8:5 is so huge that it appears likely that lunar sabbatarians deliberately avoid addressing it in their writings. Matthew Janzen, for example, in his study *Weekly Sabbath Days are Determined by the Moon*, addresses the Septuagint’s translation of the following verses: I Samuel 20: 27, 34, Exodus 16, Leviticus 23:11, Joshua 5:10-12 and Numbers 10:10. Why did he not offer his reading audience the Septuagint’s rendering of **Amos 8:5**? *Might it possibly be because the Greek word for “new moon” does not appear in that verse?* If the word for “New Moon” is not found in that verse, this would make it rather difficult for Matthew to use the Septuagint rendering as being supportive of his interpretation of Amos 8:5. Certainly, Mr. Janzen makes a “big deal” out of Amos 8:5, going so far as to attempt to refute our commentary on that verse. For some reason, however, he either didn’t think to check out the Septuagint’s rendering of Amos 8:5 or else he chose to not offer this ancient rendering to his reading audience. In view of the fact that Matthew consulted the Septuagint rendering on at least five other occasions, it seems strange that he would not have thought to examine its translation of Amos 8:5.

What are the ramifications of the Septuagint’s rendering of Amos 8:5? Quite frankly, it not only proves that the ancient Hebrew scholars who translated the Septuagint into Greek didn’t regard the day of the new moon to be a “worship day,” but for the sake of our study, it proves that they could not have been lunar sabbatarians.

Consider how vital the “New Moon Rest/Worship” day is to the lunar sabbatarian model. If the Hebrew scholars who translated the Septuagint were lunar sabbatarians, which in turn must mean that they kept the day of the New Moon as a day on which no business transactions were allowed, when they translated the word “chodesh” from Hebrew into Greek in Amos 8:5, they would most certainly have chosen the Greek word for New Moon, *noumenia*. To convey to their Greek-speaking audience that the merchants couldn’t wait for the day of the New Moon to be over so they could sell their grain, those Hebrew scholars would have chosen the Greek word for New Moon, *noumenia*. To ensure that their Greek-speaking audience understood the need to not conduct business on the day of the New Moon, they needed to select the Greek word that means “New Moon,” and that word was *noumenia*.

However, the Greek word that they chose was the word for month, the word *mane*.

In the lunar sabbatarian effort to depict the day of the new moon as a special “worship day” on which no buying or selling is permitted, Amos 8:5 is the only pillar they have. No other verse would imply that that buying or selling is prohibited on the day of the new moon (apart from the first day of the seventh month). In view of how lunar sabbatarians regard the day of the New Moon, a logical question is, “Where in Scripture do we find a command to rest on the day of the New Moon?” There is none.

Frankly, we find no commands in Scripture to rest on the day of the New Moon. As we have seen in this chapter, the best lunar sabbatarians can produce are interpretations of isolated verses that may be interpreted in more than one way ... and the way they interpret those verses is at variance with the way Judaism has understood them. The question is, whose interpretation best fits the intent of the Author of Scripture? We are persuaded that the ancient Hebrew scholars who translated the Septuagint are better qualified to discern the proper understanding of the Hebrew *chodesh* in Amos 8:5 than modern-day lunar sabbatarians are.



So What is Meant by Amos 8:5?

An obvious question that we can anticipate from lunar sabbatarians is, “If it wasn’t the ‘new moon’ that the merchants couldn’t wait to be over so they could sell their grain, then what was it? Surely you don’t expect us to believe that they couldn’t wait for the month to be over, do you?”

Well, presuming the above is a question that lunar sabbatarians would ask, our answer would be that maybe they should ask that same question to the ancient Hebrew scholars who translated the Septuagint into Greek. After all, according to those ancient scholars, the better understanding of *chodesh* was “month,” *not* “new moon.”

Nevertheless, there is a possible explanation that is worthy of our consideration. A non-lunar sabbatarian friend named Chuck Henry provided us with a translation of Amos 8:5 that we had not been previously aware of. This translation is *Today’s English Version*. This version is known as a translation that offers a “thought-for-thought” rendering instead of the more literal “word-for-word” presentation. According to the translators of *Today’s English Version*, the merchants of Amos 8:5 could hardly wait for the “holy days” to be over:

You say to yourselves, We can hardly wait for the holy days to be over so that we can sell our grain. When will the Sabbath end, so that we can start selling again? Then we can overcharge, use false measures, and fix the scales to cheat our customers.

Chuck also provided us the translation from *The Living Bible*, which follows the same basic understanding echoed by the translators of *Today’s English Version*. We’re not about to say that we agree with the translation, but it does appear that the translators grasped the general intent of the original author.

Upon presenting us with the alternate translations of Amos 8:5, Chuck Henry offered the following insight:

After taking a look at those translations, what comes to mind as a possibility is that the month they were referring to is the 7th month, with its several holy days and festive activities, and that they were anxious for all of this to be over with so that they could continue their fraudulent business activities without such distraction.¹⁸

We regard Chuck’s insight as expressed above as representing the most reasonable understanding of the original intent of the author of Amos 8:5. The Feast of Tabernacles, which falls during the seventh Scriptural month of the year, coincides with the ending of the harvest season. Since this feast ends within a week of the month’s end, by the time farmers were able to resume normal work activities, including selling their grain, the month would have been all but over. It would not have been surprising for unscrupulous merchants, who most likely didn’t care about observing the appointed feasts of Yahweh, to have expressed impatience for the month to come to an end so they could resume their trading.

¹⁸ From an e-mail that we received from Chuck Henry on 9/15/2010 at 2:17:34 P.M. Central Daylight Time.



For those who reject the above explanation, we can only say, “Regardless of what you may think this verse *does* mean, we can only tell you what it *doesn't* mean (according to ancient Hebrew scholars), and it *doesn't* mean ‘New Moon.’”