

QUOTE MINING RABBI NATHAN BUSHWICK'S TEXT

The previous example of contextomy, with Philo's translated text, was found in the United Church of God (UCG) doctrinal study paper, [*Should Christians Observe the New Moons?*](#). It is arguably the most confusion-filled doctrinal study paper written by UCG, even for those having a good understanding of calendar terms and lunar astronomy. The paper is poorly written, beginning with a change in the definition of "New Moon."

"In this paper," UCG writers have changed the meaning of the term "New Moon" (New Moon Day), *redefining* it in a vague and convoluted definition that doesn't appear in *any* known English dictionary, encyclopedia, or Wikipedia! Much as their attempt to rewrite Jewish history, this appears to be their attempt at redefining English words.

Confusing matters even more, UCG writers provide an authoritative quote, *openly contradicting* their own definition of "New Moon" ("New Moon Day" or "first day of the month"). There are also more examples of contextomy, *all on the very same study page!*

While the "level 3" contextomy, regarding Philo's text, is "quote mining at its best," the quote mining of Rabbi Nathan Bushwick's text is less obvious and poorly used. This quote mining is related to the broader sense of the term "New Moon" and how the very first two scholars referenced, by UCG, contradicted the paper's first major premise!

Some sources used in doctrinal study papers may be found on the Internet, many being in the public domain. Bushwick's *Understanding the Jewish Calendar* is not one of them. It is also not a big item in libraries and is difficult to find, without a purchase.

The Fundamental Problems

Concerning the art of contextomy, Bushwick's quote is poorly positioned within the doctrinal study paper. It falls *on the same page just before* UCG's selected quote from the Jewish scholar, Moses Maimonides, who clearly reveals the historical Jewish definition of the term "New Moon," within the second quote used by the UCG writers. This effectively renders UCG's definition of "New Moon" as unsound and illogical, having no support from scholars, dictionaries, or encyclopedias. The quote mining of Bushwick's text also becomes ineffective. How can this all be sorted out?

Analysis of Deception

Recall the doctrine committee writers wanted to convince the brethren to believe *their agenda*, which *falsely portrayed* the Jewish "religious" New Moon as that of the *invisible* lunar conjunction phase "*molad*," by quote mining Philo's mistranslated text in the previous section. We further discovered within Philo's writings that the practice of the Jewish leaders, *during the days of Jesus*, was to establish the first day ("New Moon" Day) of the religious month with the first visible crescent new moon, which comes *after* the invisible *molad* or conjunction. Quote mining of Rabbi Bushwick's text will now be analyzed. Page 2 of UCG's doctrinal paper, [*Should Christians Observe the New Moons?*](#), is replicated on the following page. (Click on the [link](#) to verify the page contents.)

SHOULD CHRISTIANS OBSERVE THE NEW MOONS?

Doctrinal Study Paper

One question that consistently comes up in the Church has to do with “New Moons.” The Bible mentions New Moons often in the context of the annual Holy Days and the Sabbath. What are the “New Moon” references found in the Old Testament all about? Should Christians observe New Moons today?

Introduction

There is the “astronomical” New Moon, and there is the “*molad*,” which means birth of the moon, and there is the “first crescent.” All three are slightly different and can actually occur on different days. The Bible simply does not tell us which method was used by Moses and the Israelites to determine the first day of each month. In this paper, when we use the term “New Moon” we are referring to the first day of the month as determined by the *molad*.[↓] Ancient astronomers were able to calculate the time it takes for the moon to advance through a complete cycle. This figure was used by the Jews to determine the timing of the *molad* and from that the declaration of the first day of the new month.

Molad is defined as the “birth” of the moon or month. There are eight phases to each cycle of the moon, and the *molad* falls during what is called the dark phase. This dark phase of the moon (when the moon’s dark side is facing the earth) can last between 1.5 days and 3 days, depending on the time of day that the conjunction occurs, before you will actually see a portion of the moon again. According to Rabbi Nathan Bushwick, “The *molad* is roughly in the middle of this period during which the Moon is not visible.”^{1↓}

The great Jewish writer from the 12th century, Maimonides, confirms the use of the calculations that have been used since ancient times to determine the date of the New Moon:

“...the Jewish court, too, used to study and investigate and perform mathematical operations, in order to find out whether or not it would be possible for the new crescent to be visible in its proper time, which is the night of the 30th day. If the members of the court found that the new moon might be visible, they were obliged to be in attendance at the court house for the whole 30th day and be on the watch for the arrival of witnesses. If witnesses did arrive, they were duly examined and tested, and if their testimony appeared trustworthy, this day was sanctified as New Moon Day. If the new crescent did not appear and no witnesses arrived, this day was counted as the 30th day of the old month...If, however, the members of the court found by calculation that the New Moon could not possibly be seen, they were not obliged to be in attendance on the 30th day or to wait for the arrival of witnesses. If witnesses nonetheless did appear and testified that they had seen the new crescent, it was certain that they were false witnesses, or that a phenomenon resembling the new moon had been seen by them through the clouds, while in reality it was not the new crescent at all.”²

¹ Bushwick, Rabbi Nathan, *Understanding the Jewish Calendar* (Moznaim Publishing Corporation: New York) 1989.

² *The Code of Maimonides*, Book Three, Treatise Eight, “Sanctification of the New Moon,” translated by Solomon Gandz. Edited by J. Oberman and O. Neugebauer (Yale University Press: New Haven, CT) 1956.

The UCG writers make a statement on the first page of the doctrinal study paper, in the middle of the second paragraph, “In this paper, when we use the term “New Moon” we are referring to the first day of the month as determined by the *molad*.”↑ This is their definition of “New Moon,” which is nothing like definitions cited by calendar scholars.

The doctrine writers then turned their focus to the subject of calendar *calculation* and the use of the invisible lunar reference point, the *molad*, as the determining factor for establishing the “New Moon” as the first day of the month. They subsequently used Rabbi Nathan Bushwick, another Jewish calendar authority, to introduce a critical piece of information. His *isolated quote*, “The molad is roughly in the middle of this period during which the Moon is not visible,”↑ found on the previous page (under subheading “**Introduction,**” second paragraph), *appears* to agree with UCG’s context and agenda.

UCG writers are attempting to convince the members to believe that the Jewish religious “New Moon” is the dark phase (conjunction) *molad*. However, when this quote is read in its original context, within Bushwick’s book, we find Bushwick disagrees with the UCG writers on their unique definition of “New Moon”!

There are a number of things involved within this first text page of the doctrinal paper. Firstly, notice the page number in the footnote given for Rabbi Bushwick’s quote? The writers did *not* include one! One clever tactic used in the art of contextomy is to give all details of the book, which is quoted, *but omit the page number of the quote!* Why would the page number be omitted from some references but not others? Who would buy this 114-page book and read all of it, simply to find and verify one short sentence quoted in a doctrinal study paper? No one would really go to these extremes! Well, *almost* no one. Would it not be an interesting study to compare those quotes involving contextomy to footnotes with *omitted* page numbers? *Learn their tactics well!* These doctrine writers can be *very* proficient in the black art of contextomy, but not so much in this section.

One provides the book title, while another provides the book title, the chapter, the page number, the paragraph, and even the sentence location within the text. Which one is likely attempting to deceive, and which one is attempting to provide the whole truth? Read the entire paragraph in Chapter Ten—“Molad Zoken,” page 79, beginning with sentence one of paragraph one in Rabbi Nathan Bushwick’s book, *Understanding the Jewish Calendar*. The text of the paragraph is located on the following page. A scan of the entire page may be found in [Appendix IV](#)↑. UCG writers chose only Bushwick’s third sentence (page 79), omitting the sentences, which clearly indicate that the *true* New Moon is actually the first visible crescent new moon.

Bushwick’s one-sentence quote, used within UCG’s “New Moons” doctrinal study paper, is underlined and highlighted in yellow, on the following page. *Carefully read the paragraph!*

In the time of the Sanhedrin, a new month began only after it was possible to actually see the new moon, which we know is many hours after the *molad*. That is because there is a period of about two days between the last possible sighting of the old moon and the first possible sighting of the new moon.¹ The *molad* is roughly in the middle of this period during which the moon is not visible. But the fixed calendar that we use when there is no Sanhedrin does not depend upon sighting the new moon. Instead, the new month begins on the day of the *molad* itself. If the *molad* occurred on Sabbos, for instance, the first day of the new month would be Sabbos even though the new moon would certainly not become visible until Saturday night and perhaps not until Sunday night. For this reason, Rosh Chodesh is usually a day earlier than it would have been were there a Sanhedrin.²

1 Rambam, KHC 1:3

2 Rambam, KHC 5:2

What does Rabbi Nathan Bushwick believe concerning the Jewish religious “New Moon”? He believes that the New Moon is the first *visible* crescent new moon—“the first possible sighting of the new moon.” This is stated *just before* the quote that the UCG doctrine writers used. Bushwick is actually *making a contrast between the molad and the new moon!* In *his is very first sentence*, he states, “... a new month began only after it was possible to actually see the new moon, which we know is many hours after the *molad*.” Bushwick is explaining that neither the “New Moon” *nor* the “New Moon Day” (start of the month) was determined by the *molad*. During the days of Jesus, when the Sanhedrin still existed, the first *visible* crescent of the moon *was* the “New Moon” that determined the beginning (New Moon Day) of the month, according to Rabbi Bushwick.

Just to be clear about what Bushwick understood to be the New Moon, the New Moon Day, *and* the beginning of a month, read the following *additional* quotes gathered from his book, *Understanding the Jewish Calendar*. The chapters, pages, paragraphs, and sentences in which these quotes appear are listed for *full* transparency.

- “The month is the cycle of the moon, appearing first as a thin crescent, gradually growing to a full moon, and finally shrinking and disappearing again” (Chapter One—“Time,” p. 3, para. 1, sent. 7).
- “A month is defined as the time between the appearance of one new moon and the appearance of the next. This is, on the average a little more than twenty-nine and a half days. But the month is not defined in terms of days just as the year is not. The month is defined only by the cycle of the moon” (Chapter One—“Time,” p. 5, para. 2).
- “A month is the period from the appearance of one new moon to the next. ... With the appearance of the new moon the new month begins” (Chapter Six—“Years and Months,” p. 47, para. 1, sent. 2 and 4).

- “In the time of the Sanhedrin there were no published calendars as there are today. The Sanhedrin declared the beginning of the month when the moon was actually sighted” (Chapter Six—“Years and Months,” p. 51, para. 2, sent. 1–2).
- “If the Sanhedrin determined that the reports were reliable and that the moon had actually been seen, they would declare that day to be first day of the new month” (Chapter Six—“Years and Months,” p. 51, para. 2, sent. 5).
- “In the time of the Sanhedrin, each month began when the new moon was actually sighted” (Chapter Eight—“The Months,” p. 65, para. 1, sent. 3).

The UCG doctrine writers did not select any quotes from Bushwick, as to what *he* understood to be the “New Moon.” To include Bushwick’s statement, “... a new month began only after it was possible to actually see the new moon, which we know is many hours after the *molad*,” would be at odds with UCG’s new and unique definition of “New Moon”—“In this paper, when we use the term “New Moon” we are referring to the first day of the month as determined by the *molad*.”

What Does Maimonides Believe to Be the “New Moon”?

The doctrine writers also quote Moses Maimonides, to “confirm” the use of calculations “since ancient times to determine the date of the New Moon.” This is where things begin to openly fall apart for the writers of the doctrine paper. In their zeal to show that calculations were used to determine the “New Moon,” they actually quote exactly what Maimonides believes to be the definition of the Jewish “New Moon” of Jesus’ day, when the “Jewish court” (Sanhedrin) still existed! In addition, Maimonides is referring to calculations that determined the time from one first visible crescent new moon to the next—not from one *molad* to the next *molad*! Look at the three sentences from Maimonides’ quote found on the replicated doctrinal study page.

1. “If the members of the court found that the new moon might be visible....”
2. “If witnesses did arrive, they were duly examined and tested, and if their testimony appeared trustworthy, this day was sanctified as New Moon Day.”
3. “If, however, the members of the court found by calculation that the New Moon could not possibly be seen, they were not obliged to be in attendance on the 30th day or to wait for the arrival of witnesses.”

In reading the three sentences, Maimonides clearly believes the “New Moon” to be visible and able to be sighted by witnesses—not an invisible “*molad*.” The first sentence of the doctrinal study paper “Introduction” clearly states, “There is the “astronomical” New Moon, and there is the “*molad*,” which means birth of the moon, and there is the “first crescent.” All three are slightly different and can actually occur on different days.” The doctrine writers clearly understand that the “*molad*” and the “first crescent” can actually occur on different days. Bushwick states, “many hours after the *molad*.”

SUMMARY OF QUOTE MINING BUSHWICK'S TEXT

Writers of the doctrinal study paper, *Should Christians Observe New the Moons?*, misrepresented Rabbi Nathan Bushwick's quote to support their agenda and to deceive the brethren. They would not print the whole context of what he actually believed, wrote, and taught in his book. The *isolated* quote gave the impression that he supported UCG's agenda that the dark-phase *molad* determined the "New Moon" and therefore the "New Moon Day" (beginning of the month). In fact he believed, "In the time of the Sanhedrin, each month began when the New Moon was actually sighted"—the first *visible* crescent new moon—not the dark phase invisible conjunction "*molad*."

There is one more interesting aspect of this book that supports "the dirty little secret" the UCG and other groups do not want their membership to know. In the "front matter" of Bushwick's book, Rabbi Schnaidman writes an "Approbation" found on page iv (page scan is found in Appendix IV). In the last paragraph he writes, "May G-d help him to continue his work, to write books that are needed by this generation, and merit the coming of the Moshiach and the establishment of th[e] calend[ar] by the Sanhedrin and witnesses." Rabbi Schnaidman is yet another Jewish expert on the subject of Jewish calendars, expecting the present calculated Hebrew Calendar to be replaced by the first visible crescent New Moon observation calendar using witnesses!

Maimonides:

The actual quote included in the doctrinal study paper by Maimonides *openly* contradicted what the doctrine writers defined as the term "New Moon." One can only surmise why the doctrine writers included Maimonides' openly contradictory statements on the same page as their new and unique definition of "New Moon," which disagreed with his quote.

Wikipedia covers most every definition of "New Moon." These entries are listed below, including links. None of these definitions agree with what the UCG writers chose for their unique definition—"In this paper, when we use the term "New Moon" we are referring to the first day of the month as determined by the molad." Compare the various definitions, below, to UCG's definition.

- "The original meaning of the term new moon, which is still sometimes used in non-astronomical contexts, is the first visible crescent of the Moon after conjunction with the Sun.³ This thin waxing crescent is briefly and faintly visible as the Moon gets lower in the westerly sky after sunset" (en.wikipedia.org/wiki/New_moon).
- "In calendric contexts, new moon refers to the first visible crescent of the Moon, after conjunction with the Sun¹⁶" ([en.wikipedia.org/wiki/New_moon - Lunar calendars](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/New_moon_-_Lunar_calendars)).
- "In astronomy, the new moon is the first lunar phase, when the Moon and Sun have the same ecliptic longitude.² At this phase, the lunar disk is not visible to the unaided eye, except when silhouetted during a solar eclipse" (en.wikipedia.org/wiki/New_moon).

APPENDIX IV

UNDERSTANDING THE JEWISH CALENDAR

by Rabbi Nathan Bushwick



MOZNAIM PUBLISHING CORPORATION
NEW YORK / JERUSALEM

Translation of Approbation of Rabbi Schnaidman

Rabbi Nathan Bushwick has shown me a book based upon the Laws of Kiddush HaChodesh of the Rambam. I saw that he explains clearly and correctly concepts that are otherwise unattainable to most people. In this book he also explains concepts that serve as an introduction to the calculations, including descriptions of the constellations and the motion of the sun and the moon.

There exist other books explaining these concepts, but most of them were written according to scientific theories of earlier generations. With the advent of modern science, there have arisen many doubts and questions. Even those books that were written in our own generation are generally written so concisely that it is difficult to completely understand them. The above mentioned author explains all of this in agreement with modern scientific theory, fully and clearly enough that anyone can learn it and understand these concepts without doubts or questions.

May G-d help him to continue his work, to write books that are needed by this generation, and merit the coming of the Moshiach and the establishment of the calendar by the Sanhedrin and witnesses.

Chapter Ten

Molad Zoken

In the time of the Sanhedrin, a new month began only after it was possible to actually see the new moon, which we know is many hours after the *molad*. That is because there is a period of about two days between the last possible sighting of the old moon and the first possible sighting of the new moon.¹ The *molad* is roughly in the middle of this period during which the moon is not visible. But the fixed calendar that we use when there is no Sanhedrin does not depend upon sighting the moon. Instead, the new month begins on the day of the *molad* itself. If the *molad* occurred on Shabbos, for instance, the first day of the new month would be Shabbos even though the new moon would certainly not become visible until Saturday night and perhaps not until Sunday night. For this reason, Rosh Chodesh is usually a day earlier than it would have been were there a Sanhedrin.²

The fixed calendar differs also in that it takes into account only the *molad* of Tishrei. The day of Rosh Hashanah is determined by the *molad* of Tishrei. For the rest of the months, even though the *molad* is announced on the Shabbos before Rosh Chodesh, the day of Rosh Chodesh is determined not by the

¹ Rambam, KHC 1:3

² Rambam, KHC 5:2