Kidush Hachodesh (Sanctification of Lunar Month)
Ref: *Sefer Zemanim, Hilchot Kidush Hachodesh*, Chapters 1, 2, 3

Torah instructs us to make months in a year. These are lunar months making up a lunar year.

⛰️ Our Sages tell us 'The Holy One Blessed be He, showed Moses, in a vision of prophecy, an image of the moon and told him, 'When you see the moon like this, sanctify it'.

Torah also instructed to create a solar year i.e. that *Pesach* always falls in spring.

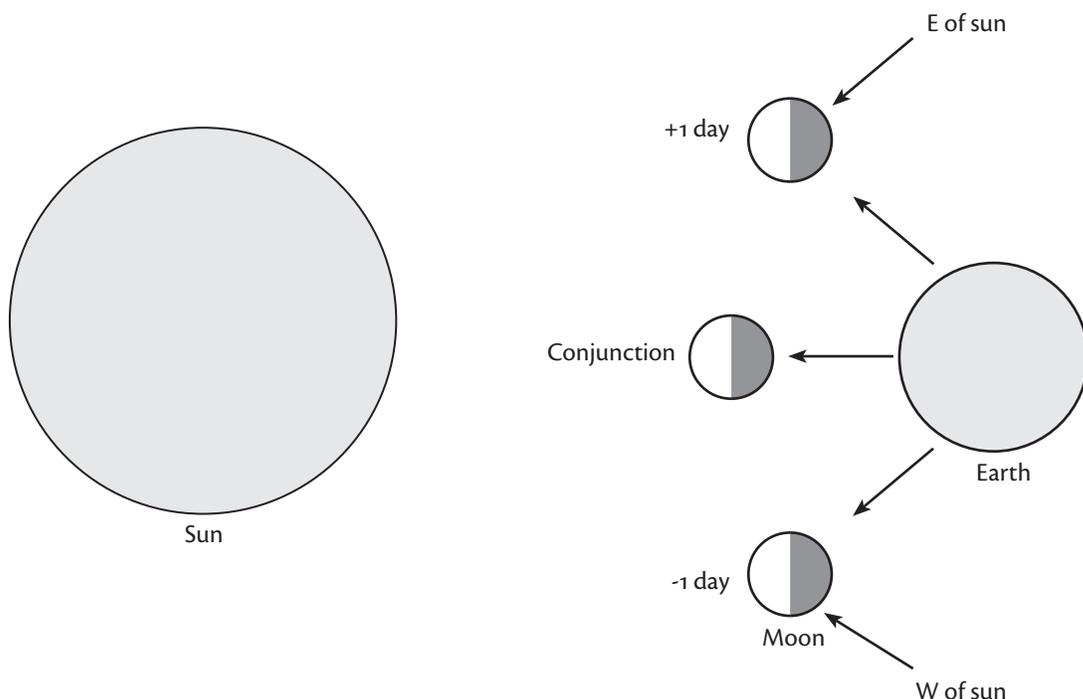*Lunar year* is **approximately 354** days (alternating months of **29** or **30** days)

Solar year is **approximately 365** days

There is an approximate discrepancy of **11** days.

One cannot have a year with **12** months and a few days. Therefore, when the extra days reach 30, an extra month is added. This is called *shanah meuberet* (pregnant / full / leap year).

When sun, moon and earth are exactly in line – *conjunction* – the moon cannot be seen. This occurs for approximately **2** days each month.

Rosh Chodesh is the first night when moon sighted in the west after being hidden.

Thereafter, either **29** or **30** days would be counted till next sighting.

Chodesh chaser (lacking) is **29** days.

Chodesh meubar / malei (full) is **30** days.

The *Bet Din* had the responsibility of

📐 Calculating, Knowing and Establishing the day of *Rosh Chodesh*[1].

The *Bet Din* (*Sanhedrin* in *Eretz Yisrael*) would make astronomical calculation to work out when and where the moon would appear.

They would then await the arrival of witnesses who claimed to have sighted the New Moon,

and investigate their statements.

Once verified, judges would declare *Rosh Chodesh* and inform the people.

The establishment of the months and calendar is only carried out in *Eretz Yisrael.*

WITNESSES

> ℓ **Reminder:**
> Witnesses who are Ineligible
> Ref: *Sefer Shoftim, Hilchot Edut,* Chapter 9
> Pack on Witnesses

Testimony only accepted from two adult males who are acceptable.

Witnesses needed to know:

- Position of moon in relation to sun (north or south)
- Crescent wide or narrow
- Direction to which points were facing

There was a procedure in the *Bet Din.* Witnesses gathered at a chosen place, large feast was prepared, one pair of witnesses were investigated. Other pairs were also there and were used if needed, but all were asked some general questions.

Minimum **3** judges needed to sanctify *Rosh Chodesh.*

After testimony verified, head of *Bet Din* says '*mekudash*'

Sanctification is only in the day.

Once court sanctified, the New Month becomes established, *even if they made a mistake.*

Arrival time of witnesses and *shluchim* announcing *Rosh Chodesh* date.

If distance to *Sanhedrin* allows witnesses enough time to deliver their sightings, then of course they should travel to the *Sanhedrin.*

Shabbat restrictions for travelling can only be over-ridden for

- *Rosh Chodesh Nissan* (regarding *Pesach*)
- *Rosh Chodesh Tishrei* (regarding its *Yamim Tovim*)
- *Musaf* Offering in Temple (i.e. every *Rosh Chodesh* when Temple was standing)

The *Sanhedrin* would automatically declare a full month if witnesses did not arrive on 30th day. (However, in rare circumstances, the Sages could retroactively change *Rosh Chodesh* if late delivered witness evidence was accurate)

📖 Because of complications caused by witnesses arriving after *minchah* on 30th day, the *Sanhedrin* (in time of Temple) announced that the testimony of witnesses would only be received until before *minchah* of 30th day i.e. **30th** day and **31st** day announced as *Rosh Chodesh.*

Now *shluchim* (messengers) would be sent to inform the people, but the messengers *cannot* violate *Shabbat,* nor *Yom Tov.*

They would depart after hearing *Sanhedrin* pronounce '*mekudash*'. If messengers arrived before the *Yom Tov* it would be kept for **1 day.** If they could not reach there before *Yom Tov,*

then that place kept *Yom Tov* for **2 days.**

Originally the court used to notify the people about *Rosh Chodesh* by lighting bonfires, but this was replaced later by sending messengers (due to the *kutim* lighting different fires to confuse the people).