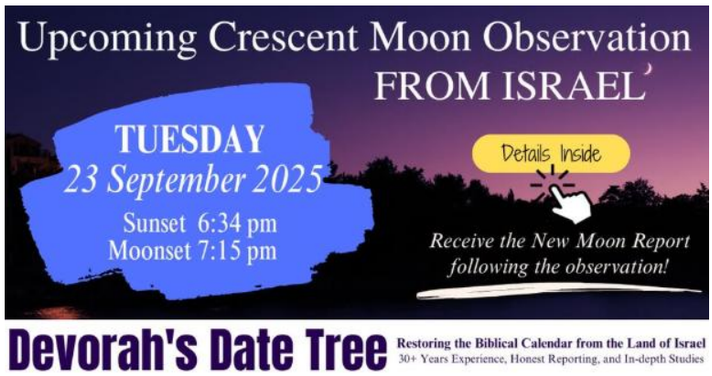
A Scriptural Month of 31 Days?

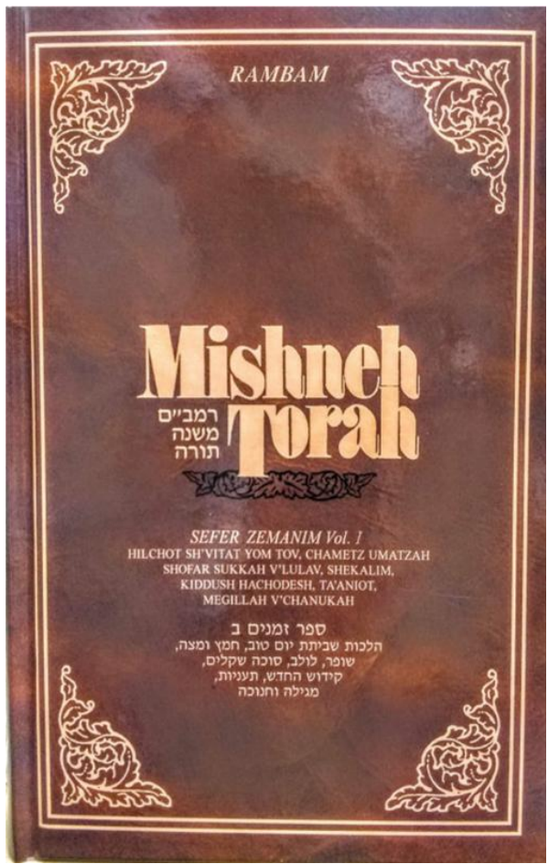
By Larry Acheson
09/28/2025, updated 10/08/2025, then again on 10/14/2025

For many Torah-practicing believers who begin each Scriptural month with the sighting of the crescent moon over Israel, the new moon sighting of September 23, 2025 was no big deal. It was, after all, day #30 of the sixth Scriptural month. By default, a Scriptural month cannot comprise more than 30 days, or so the claim goes. And if a month can't have any more than 30 days, then what's the point of even bothering to look for the new moon on the 30th day? Here's what new moon observer Devorah Gordon posted on her Facebook page:



When the moon is spotted at the end of the 29th day (24 August 2025), but was so early in its cycle that it had very low stats, it won't be far enough along to spot 29 days later (22 September 2025). Therefore, the upcoming 7th Biblical Month will begin on 23 September 2025 at sunset by default, as a lunar month is never more than 30 days.[1]

The above remark, on the surface, seems sound enough. In my 38-plus years of abiding by Yahweh's Scriptural calendar (or at least doing my best), it was infused in my brain that a Scriptural month is never more than 30 days long, just as specified by Devorah Gordon.



Maimonides, a.k.a. "Rambam," is one of the most respected and revered Jewish rabbis of all time. He lived during the 12th century (1138-1204 CE), and in his treatise "Sanctification of the New Moon," he plainly stated that no Scriptural month can comprise more than 30 days:

> The first night when the moon is sighted in the west after being hidden is the beginning of the month. Afterwards, 29 days are counted from that day. If the moon is sighted on the night of the thirtieth [day], the thirtieth day will be Rosh Chodesh [of the following month]. If it is not sighted, Rosh Chodesh will be on the thirty-first day, and the thirtieth day will be included in the previous month. There is no need [to sight] the moon on the thirty-first night; whether or not [the moon] is sighted [the new month begins that night]. For there are no lunar months longer than thirty days.[2]

So an ancient Jewish tradition dating back to at least the 12th century maintains that a Scriptural month cannot contain more than 30 days. Yet, the question begging to be answered is, "Where in Scripture do we read that a month cannot include more than 30 days?" It's simply not there. It's a tradition—a tradition that many are unwilling and will not let go of. Even I have been guilty of writing that a month cannot comprise more than 30 days. It's because we've been so conditioned that it's become a "no-brainer" for nearly all believers.

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[1] From Devorah's Date Tree, "Upcoming Crescent Moon Observation from Israel," by Devorah Gordon, facebook.com, September 19, 2025 at 2:22 PM.
[2] *Mishneh Torah*, Sefer Zemanim, "Sanctification of the New Month," by Maimonides ("Rambam"), translated by Eliyahu Touger, Moznaim Publishing. Maimonides lived from 1138–1204.

However, if you are like me and are determined that a month that *begins* with the sighting of a crescent new moon after sunset needs to *end* with the sighting of the subsequent crescent new moon,[3] another contingency needs to be considered: *What if a crescent new moon is sighted on day #29 of the previous month, then is not visible on either day #29 or 30 of the new month, despite clear weather conditions on both evenings?* Shouldn't it have been sighted on that 30th day under clear skies?

Scriptural Justification for Months Not Exceeding 30 Days?

As stated above, the fact of the matter is there are no verses of Scripture decreeing that a month cannot comprise more than 30 days. Torah does not establish the length of any given month. Scriptural months begin with the actual sighting of the crescent new moon; nowhere does Scripture specify the *length* of months. The only hint of when a month begins is found in Exodus 12:1-2:

> 1 And Yahweh spake unto Moses and Aaron in the land of Egypt, saying,
> 2 This month shall be unto you the beginning of months: it shall be the first month of the year to you.

The question that needs to be asked is, "What is 'this' month?" How did Moses and Aaron know what "this" meant? Were they looking at a set of calculations enabling them to know precisely when a new month begins without needing to look into the heavens? Or were they looking at a crescent new moon—the first visible crescent after each conjunction? Even the ancients understood that it's the latter option:

> החדש הזה — He [Yahweh] showed him the moon in the first stage of its renewal, and He said to him, "The time when the moon renews itself thus, shall be unto you the beginning of the month". (The translation therefore is: "This stage of renewal (חדש) shall be the moment of beginning the months"; cf. Mekhilta). But no Scriptural verse can lose its literal meaning, and He really spoke this in reference to the month Nisan: this month shall be the beginning in the order of counting the months, so that Iyar shall be called the second, Sivan the third.[4]

The ancient commentators, including medieval Jewish rabbis, understood that the month begins with a visible sighting of the moon, not a set of calculations, and they base their understanding on the plain and simple reasoning that when Yahweh told Moses and Aaron "this month," they were looking at a new moon in its beginning crescent stage. And I agree. If a month *begins* with the sighting of the crescent moon, then, conversely, it must *end* at the moment just prior to the next new moon's appearance.

The question many biased believers don't think to ask is, "Where in Scripture do we find the verse stating that a month cannot endure for more than 30 days?" Answer: It's not there. The question, then, is *not* how long a month must be, but rather, when is the moon renewed and then *made visible*? It is the moment *just prior* to that appearance—that's when the previous month ended, not when man dictates its duration.

Why Not Allow Optical Aids?

Many zealous new moon watchers use modern telescopic equipment to enhance their viewing experience. Binoculars are very popular and inexpensive, but they weren't invented until 1825 by J. P. Lemiere. The telescope was invented a century earlier. Suffice it to say these optical aids did not exist in the first century and beyond, and for that reason June and I do not accept reports in which optical aids were used to first sight the new moon crescent. Early believers did not have the luxury of being able to first sight a thin crescent moon with binoculars or telescopes. While those devices are wonderful and really *do* enhance our sighting experience, we *only* use them after *first* having sighted the crescent with the naked eye. More often than not, we leave our binoculars at home; in fact, it's been many years since we've used binoculars at all. We want to experience the same viewing opportunities our first century counterparts experienced, the only exception being that we make allowance for corrective lenses, such as eyeglasses.

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[3] The exception is when it's cloudy on either the 29th day or 30th day. If it's cloudy on day #29, it's an automatic 30-day month. If it's cloudy on day #30, the following day is automatically the first day of the new month because it's reasonable to assume the moon would have been seen had it not been cloudy. Our question is, "What if the skies are clear on day #30, yet the new moon crescent is not seen by two reliable witnesses after sunset?"

[4] Shlomo Yitzchaki ("Rashi"), Commentary on Exodus 12:1-2. Rashi lived from 1040 – 1105 CE.

Gadi Eidelheit of The Israeli New Moon Society obviously disagrees with our position, as he routinely posts sightings from individuals who *first* use optical aids to sight the new moon. While I appreciate his honesty, I am nevertheless disheartened by the report he sent on the evening of September 25, 2025 at 6:41 PM IDT (Israel Daylight Time), which was 2:41 AM Central Standard Time in the USA. First, his report was not only delayed, but was sent over seven hours after our *Yom Teruah* observance had concluded. His frequent delayed reports suggests he regards sighting the new moon crescent to be more of a hobby than a heartfelt desire to help believers know when to request time off from work for feast observance. Second, *all* of his witnesses used optical aids to first sight the new moon crescent. Here's an excerpt from the email he sent to his distribution list on September 25th. Please keep in mind the sun set over Israel at 6:34 PM IDT on September 23, 2025:

Most observers manage to see the new moon with binoculars but could not fine it wht the naked eye.
Yet we have one confirmed observation unaided.

					23/9/2025
observer(s)	location	ראייה באמצעי עזר aided seeing	ראייה בעין unaided seeing	מיקום	צופה
Binyamin Nissim	Ofra	18:42	18:50	עפרה	בנימין ניסים
Danny Levy	Jerusalem	18:44		ירושלים	דני לוי
Simcha Borer	Modiin Ilit	18:47		מודיעין עילית	שמחה בורר

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Israeli New Moon Society
https://moonsocil.blogspot.com/
moonsocil@gmail.com

Out of three observers who were able to sight the new moon crescent with optical aids, two of them were unable to locate it when attempting to do so without the assistance of modern technology. Would the other witness have been able to see it if he hadn't *first* used a telescope or binoculars? And would observers in ancient Israel have been able to see it? While many believers accepted such questionable reporting, June and I do not and did not in September 2025.

Frankly, there is only one reason I can think of for wanting to use optical aids to locate the new moon crescent: *The desire to be first*. Yeshua experienced this same basic mentality during His earthly ministry. Even His disciples argued amongst themselves about who was the greatest. People simply have this desire to be first and to be the greatest; both aspirations have the same underlying mentality, which is completely *contrary* to the approach Yeshua calls His followers to use:

> 25 But Yeshua called them *unto him*, and said, Ye know that the princes of the Gentiles exercise dominion over them [the general populace], and they that are great exercise authority upon them.
> 26 But it shall not be so among you: <u>but whosoever will be great among you, let him be your minister</u>;
> 27 <u>And whosoever will be chief</u> [Gr. *protos*] <u>among you, let him be your servant</u>.

As noted above, the Greek word translated "chief" is the word *protos*, which can <u>also</u> be translated "first."[5] As it was during the first century, so it is in the 21st century. People simply like to be first. A friend once told us of how he called a certain well-known Sacred Name group to report a local new moon sighting. Without asking him any questions apart from his name and location, the leader of the organization accepted the report and reported the sighting in their forthcoming newsletter. A seasoned observer who happened to be on their mailing list read about the sighting and immediately knew something "fishy" was going on. He remarked to his wife, "Only a <u>blind</u> man could have seen the new moon crescent on that date!"

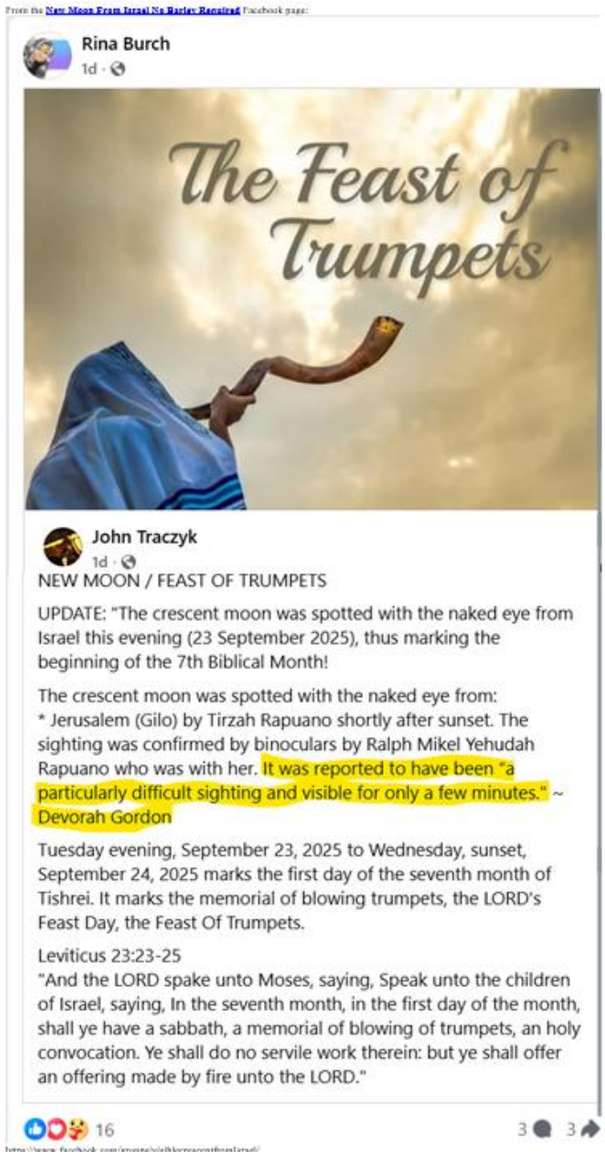
It turns out our friend, who called in to report the sighting, is indeed blind. It was his wife who reported having seen the moon to him before he placed the call to report the sighting. The seasoned observer obtained our friend's contact information and called him to find out how they were able to see a moon that was only a few degrees above the horizon at sunset. Upon closer examination, his wife confessed that she thought she may have seen the crescent moon, but she wasn't sure. And based on that

[5] See *Strong's* Greek Dictionary of the New Testament, word #4412.

highly questionable sighting, the Sacred Name assembly began their feast a day ahead of other organizations. *They got to be first!*

Oh what a tangled web we weave, When first we practice to deceive

We understand modern-day Jews operate under the premise that a month, by default, cannot comprise more than 30 days, and we have seen that such a belief can only be based on tradition, not Scripture, and certainly not Torah. In September 2025, this premise was masterfully orchestrated by new moon reporter Devorah Gordon. June and I are encouraged to know that Devorah, like us, only accepts reports from those who sight the new moon crescent with the naked eye. However, Devorah, like many believers, is persuaded that a month cannot extend beyond 30 days, and based on her report of 09/23/2025, it appears her bias carried over into a tainted report.



Having established her premise that "a lunar month is never more than 30 days," it appears she may have overzealously wanted her fellow new moon watchers in Israel to confirm new moon sightings on day #30 of the sixth month. I say this because she posted three "naked eye witness" reports, all of which were very dubious . Was she desperate to come up with *any* potential witnesses that may or may not have been properly vetted? I mean, it *does* look rather silly to declare that a month cannot contain more than 30 days when, at the end of that 30th day, no crescent is seen in spite of clear conditions. *You want it to be there for all to see!* And the weather conditions were indeed clear on that day, September 23, 2025. Devorah herself did not see it. Did she herself even bother looking? She didn't say.

One of Devorah's "witnesses," Tirzah Rapuano, reported seeing the new moon crescent "shortly after sunset." The form Devorah asked all Israel-sighters to use requires listing the date and time of the sighting. Why did Tirzah not record the time of her sighting? Also concerning is the fact that, with Devorah's initial posting, she included the fact that Tirzah mentioned the sighting was "a particularly difficult sighting and visible for only a few minutes." She later edited the post by removing this detail. Could it be because the other "witnesses" reported sighting the crescent nearly a half hour after sunset? I guess it all depends on how one defines "shortly after sunset"!

The other two "witnesses" referenced above only supplied the initials of their names. The form Devorah asked all Israel-based sighters to use requires including both first and last names. Why did the "witnesses" choose to not reveal their identities? And would an experienced new moon watcher consider 26 minutes after sunset to be "shortly after sunset"? They claimed to have spotted the new moon crescent at 7:00 PM IDT—26 minutes after sunset. Could this stretch of time explain why Devorah removed the phrase "a particularly difficult sighting and visible for only a few minutes" from her report?

Since June and I do not regard anonymous new moon sightings as valid, the only potentially valid sighting on her list is that of Tirzah Repuano. However, even *her* report is dubious because she didn't include the time of the sighting. Why did she ignore the requirements as posted on Devorah's form? *And why did Devorah accept a report from someone who didn't feel the need to comply with the form's requirement?* Might it have been from a dire need to receive reports from anyone and everyone to bolster her claim that a month cannot have more than 30 days? That is certainly the impression I got when I read her report. When all is said and done, June and I chose to reject the report from Devorah's Date Tree.

Why Two Or More Witnesses?

Many believers are content to accept the testimony of *one* eyewitness. June and I are not and neither was the Apostle Paul. Paul understood that the Scriptural command to only execute idolaters on the testimony of two witnesses extends to *all* matters. In Deuteronomy 17:6, we read:

> 6 At the mouth of two witnesses, or three witnesses, shall he that is worthy of death be put to death; *but* at the mouth of one witness he shall not be put to death.

This command is repeated in Deuteronomy 19:15 and Numbers 35:30. It would be so easy to say something like, "Well, that command only pertains to carrying out the death penalty! There's no need to carry it over to official new moon sightings!" It's so easy to say such a thing, and indeed this is the precise general understanding we've seen exhibited by modern-day new moon watchers living in the land of Israel. But that's *not* how the Apostle Paul saw it. Here's what he wrote in 2 Corinthians 13:1:

> 1 This is the third time I am coming to you. In the mouth of two or three witnesses shall <u>every word</u> be established.

That Paul understood the "two or three witnesses" principle to apply to every potentially controversial matter is settled in 1 Timothy 5:19, where he wrote the following:

> 19 Against an elder receive not an accusation, but before <u>two or three witnesses</u>.

There are even two witnesses against Israel. Yahweh forged a covenant with Israel, a covenant that includes obedience to His Torah (Ex. 24). In Deuteronomy, Moses expounded that there are two witnesses against Israel: heaven and earth. Not *one* witness, but *two* witnesses. Here's Deuteronomy 4:26:

> 26 I call <u>heaven and earth</u> to witness against you this day, that ye soon utterly perish from off the land whereunto ye go over Jordan to possess it; ye shall not prolong *your* days upon it, but shall utterly be destroyed.

The overall scope of Scripture requires understanding that having merely *one* eyewitness in matters of potential controversy is not sufficient. In John 5:31-32, Yeshua stated:

> 31 If I bear witness of myself, my witness is not true [valid].
> 32 There is <u>another</u> that beareth witness of me; and I know that the witness which he witnesseth of me is true [valid].

Finally, even in the book of Revelation we read of *two* witnesses who prophesy on Yahweh's behalf for a thousand two hundred and threescore days:

> 3 And I will give *power* unto my <u>two witnesses</u>, and they shall prophesy a thousand two hundred *and* threescore days, clothed in sackcloth. (Revelation 11:3)

We have already seen that Moses and Aaron were <u>two witnesses</u> to the new month of Abib in the critical verses of Exodus 12:1-2. Why should we accept the testimony of fewer witnesses in these modern times? In view of modern-day Judaism's biased, purposeful desire to never experience a month having more than 30 days, June and I needed clear reports of sightings from reliable witnesses, not contradictory reports, and certainly not reports from individuals who first sighted the moon with optical aids.

Displayed below is Devorah's initial new moon report of 09/23/2025, which I copied and pasted from her Facebook page:

Devorah's Date Tree - Restoring the Biblical Calendar
1d ·

Dear Friends,

The crescent moon was spotted with the naked eye from Israel this evening (23 September 2025), thus marking the beginning of the 7th Biblical Month!

The crescent moon was spotted with the naked eye from:

* Jerusalem (Gilo) by Tirzah Rapuano shortly after sunset. The sighting was confirmed by binoculars by Ralph Mikel Yehudah Rapuano who was with her. It was reported to have been “a particularly difficult sighting and visible for only a few minutes."

To remind you, the Biblical Calendar is a luni-solar calendar (Gen 1:14), with the Biblical months beginning the first evening the crescent moon is spotted by the naked eye from the Land of Israel, or 30 days have passed.

We don’t use optical aids, such as cameras, binoculars, or telescopes, to spot the crescent. Nor is a photo of the crescent proof that it’s the beginning of the Biblical Month. This because, the crescent can be spotted through a powerful enough optical aid any time after conjunction, whereas the criteria for beginning the Biblical Month at the end of the 29th day, is the crescent being spotted by the naked eye.

As days in the Biblical Calendar begin at sunset (i.e. the end of the agricultural day) (Gen 1:5,8,13,19,23,31), the Biblical Month begins the evening the crescent moon is spotted from Israel. Rosh Chodesh (the beginning of the month) is a celebratory day (Hosea 2:11), which was commemorated by blowing the shofar (Num 10:10; Psalm 81:4[3]), enjoying a festive meal (1 Samuel 20:5, 24), and worshiping at the Beit HaMikdash (Temple) (Isaiah 66:23, Ezekiel 46:1-3) with a special sacrifice (Num 28:11-15, 2Chronicles 2:3, Ezra 3:4-5, Ezekiel 45:17, Ezekiel 46:6). And for those that asked, the weekly sabbath has nothing to do with the lunar cycle. In the Biblical Calendar, the years are based on the solar cycle, the months are based on the lunar cycle, and the weeks are based on the daily cycle (Gen 1:14). We’re commanded to observe the sabbath every seventh day (Gen 2:2-3, Ex 16:26; Ex 20:8-11; Ex 23:12; Ex 31:12-17; Ex 34:21; Ex 35:2; Lev 23:3; Ez 46:1). Meaning that Shabbat begins every Friday evening at sunset and ends Saturday evening at sunset. And we know that Saturday is the seventh day, because we have an unbroken tradition of observing Shabbat on this day. Remember, the adjustments the Rabbinites made to the Biblical Calendar when we were in exile, are detailed in their writings, and they didn’t change the day of Shabbat.

On behalf of all of us who keep the Biblical Calendar, we want to thank everyone who looked for the crescent New Moon from Israel this evening, and sent us their observations in a timely manner, so it could be included in this report.

7th MONTH HOLIDAY DATES (graphic in the middle):
https://mailchi.mp/.../update-7th-biblical-month-report...
Subscribe to our newsletter and social media platforms, to receive important information on the Biblical Calendar, as soon as we publish it. ➪ **linktr.ee/devorahsdatetree**

Send us any questions you may have regarding the Biblical Calendar, and we’ll do our best to try and answer them in a future newsletter. All of our answers are based on relevant Bible verses, what we’ve seen in the Land over the past few decades, and much study and prayer.

We could really use your prayers and support to provide in-depth studies on the Biblical Calendar, reliable New Moon Observations, and honest Barley Inspections. Contributions (Ex 25:2) can be made easily and in any currency via Paypal **https://bit.ly/3QSSXZ2** (no need for an account), Patreon **https://www.patreon.com/datetree** , mailing a Check to Devorah’s Date Tree, POB 4263, Jerusalem 9104201, ISRAEL, or by sending a Wire Transfer (contact us for details in your currency).

ISRAEL
Together we can restore the Biblical Calendar!
Devorah Gordon
Jerusalem, Israel
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Devorah's Date Tree (Judges 4:4-5) is committed to restoring the Biblical Calendar, by providing in-depth Bible Studies, reliable New Moon Observations, and honest Barley Inspections. This important effort is headed by Devorah Gordon, who has been living in Israel and working on restoring the Biblical Calendar, for over 25 years. We are honored that the information we share, is considered the most reliable source for keeping the Biblical Calendar, and a blessing to countless people around the world. Thank you for partnering with us to restore the Biblical Calendar.

Displayed below is Devorah's "2nd Update" new moon report of 09/23/2025, which I copied and pasted from her Facebook page. Notice that she removed the key phrase "It was reported to have been 'a particularly difficult sighting and visible for only a few minutes'":

Devorah's Date Tree - Restoring the Biblical Calendar
1d ·
Dear Friends,

The crescent moon was spotted with the naked eye from Israel this evening (23 September 2025), thus marking the beginning of the 7th Biblical Month!

The crescent moon was spotted with the naked eye (corrective lenses are permissible) from:

* Jerusalem (Gilo) by Tirzah Rapuano shortly after sunset. The sighting was confirmed by binoculars by Ralph Mikel Yehudah Rapuano, who was with her.
* Ezuz by Y.M. and A.G. at 7:00pm.

To remind you, the Biblical Calendar is a luni-solar calendar (Gen 1:14), with the Biblical months beginning the first evening the crescent moon is spotted by the naked eye from the Land of Israel, or 30 days have passed.

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7th MONTH HOLIDAY DATES (graphic in the middle):
https://mailchi.mp/.../update-2-7th-biblical-month-report...
Subscribe to our newsletter and social media platforms, to receive important information on the Biblical Calendar, as soon as we publish it. ➪ **linktr.ee/devorahsdatetree**

Send us any questions you may have regarding the Biblical Calendar, and we'll do our best to try and answer them in a future newsletter. All of our answers are based on relevant Bible verses, what we've seen in the Land over the past few decades, and much study and prayer.

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ISRAEL
Together we can restore the Biblical Calendar!
Devorah Gordon
Jerusalem, Israel
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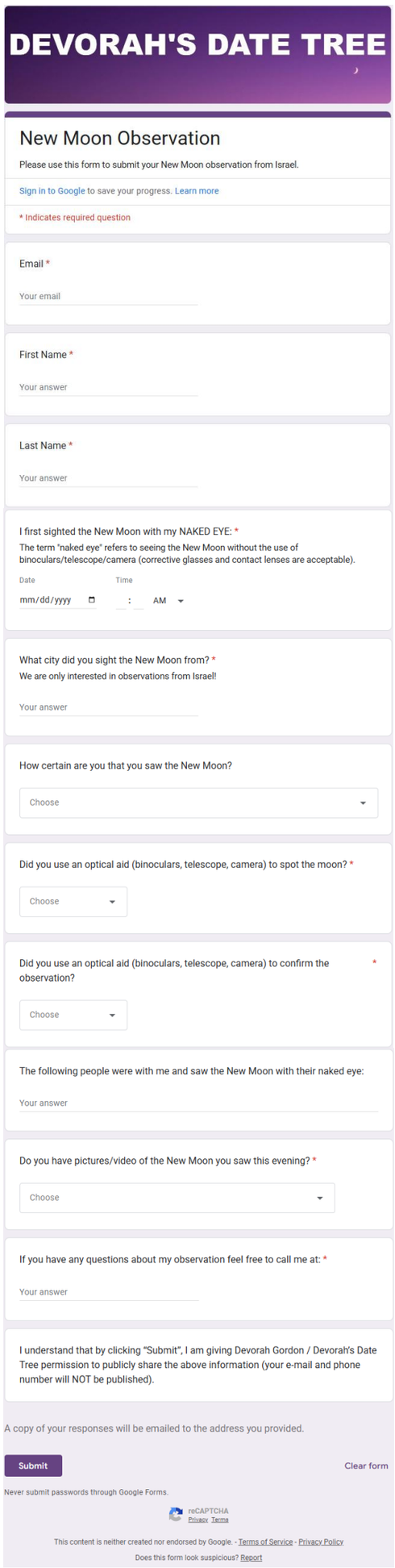
Devorah's Date Tree also provides the link to a "New Moon Observation" form that she requests all Israel-based observers to use for sending her their reports. The questions on the form seem straight-forward and easy to understand; however, as mentioned earlier, *none* of her reporters complied with the required information; nevertheless, Devorah gladly accepted their reports, a clear nullification of the standards as indicated on her form. Displayed below is a screen capture of the form:



DEVORAH'S DATE TREE

New Moon Observation

Please use this form to submit your New Moon observation from Israel.

Sign in to Google to save your progress. Learn more

* Indicates required question

Email *

Your email

First Name *

Your answer

Last Name *

Your answer

I first sighted the New Moon with my NAKED EYE: *

The term "naked eye" refers to seeing the New Moon without the use of binoculars/telescope/camera (corrective glasses and contact lenses are acceptable).

Date mm/dd/yyyy Time : AM

What city did you sight the New Moon from? *

We are only interested in observations from Israel!

Your answer

How certain are you that you saw the New Moon?

Choose

Did you use an optical aid (binoculars, telescope, camera) to spot the moon? *

Choose

Did you use an optical aid (binoculars, telescope, camera) to confirm the observation? *

Choose

The following people were with me and saw the New Moon with their naked eye:

Your answer

Do you have pictures/video of the New Moon you saw this evening? *

Choose

If you have any questions about my observation feel free to call me at: *

Your answer

I understand that by clicking "Submit", I am giving Devorah Gordon / Devorah's Date Tree permission to publicly share the above information (your e-mail and phone number will NOT be published).

A copy of your responses will be emailed to the address you provided.

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I'm including Devorah Gordon's entire form because I think it's terrific! A dedicated observer shouldn't have had any difficulty with completing it. I'm only saddened that Devorah didn't actually hold any of the observers accountable for completing it, resulting in what I believe is a tainted report. Her actual standards of acceptance most certainly do not align with the requisites as specified on her form. All in all, I am persuaded that the Israel new moon reporting of September 23, 2025 was lackadaisical and untrustworthy, with none of the reporters complying with the *basics* of new moon reporting, likely due to a fervent, biased desire to bolster their belief that a month cannot possibly include more than 30 days. Here's a chart summarizing my concerns:

Timeline of Israel New Moon Observation Reports

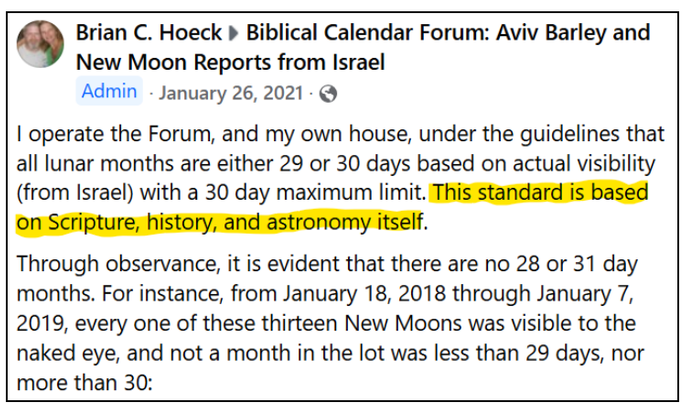
Observer Name	Time of Sighting	Initially Seen With Naked Eye?	Trust Concerns?
Tirzah Rapuano	Unknown ("Shortly after sunset")	Yes	**Yes** – No time given, as per form.
Binyamin Nissim	6:50 PM IDT	**No**	**Yes** – Optical Aid was used.
Danny Levy	6:44 PM IDT	**No**	**Yes** – Not seen with naked eye.
Simcha Borer	6:47 PM IDT	**No**	**Yes** – Not seen with naked eye.
Y. M.	7:00 PM IDT	Yes	**Yes** – Anonymous reporter.
A. G.	7:00 PM IDT	Yes	**Yes** – Anonymous reporter.

Please bear in mind that in Devorah Gordon's initial report, she included the phrase, "a particularly difficult sighting and visible for only a few minutes." She later removed this phrase, likely due to the fact that from 6:50 PM (the earliest reported naked eye sighting) to 7:00 PM (the latest reported naked eye sighting) is more than "a few minutes." A 10-minute lag time is significant—not something I would expect if the moon was only visible for a few minutes. Moreover, June and I have seen *many* new moon crescents "shortly after sunset," i.e., within as little as a minute after sunset. If Tirzah Rapuano sighted the crescent within, say, five minutes after sunset, this would mean it was visible for a whopping 21 minutes before "Y. M" and "A. G." were finally able to see it! In summary, if *any* of the reported sightings were legitimate, the observers, in my opinion, failed to do their due diligence with their reporting.

Update—October 14, 2025

Two and a half weeks after the September 23rd sighting, a friend informed us that she found an *additional* report on a Facebook page owned by a believer named Brian Hoeck. I had never heard of Brian Hoeck, possibly because he appears to be a reclusive, cavalier reporter who restricts new moon observation reports to his Facebook page, not sharing his information with other interested parties. I say this because his "second witness" isn't identified on any of the other reports I consulted—it would appear he keeps his reports to himself, either because he's stingy or because he's reclusive. Years ago, I had resolved to not obtain a Facebook account, and I have since heard from many that having a Facebook account can be a very time-consuming pastime if you're not careful. I prefer to spend my free time researching, working around the house, and spending time with our grandchildren, not spending hours on end reading and composing Facebook posts. The negative side of not having a Facebook account is that I'm only able to access very limited information from those who *do* have Facebook accounts. Sometimes I'm unable to access anything, depending on how they adjust their restriction settings.

Based on what little I'm able to see on Brian's Facebook page, he hasn't been looking for new moons very long—the earliest I can discern goes back to May 2016. June and I began looking for new moons back in 1987, before we knew of any reports going out from Israel. In the 1990's we began going with the Israel reports to begin Scriptural months. Possibly due to Jewish indoctrination, Brian says it's not possible for a month to consist of only 28 days, nor more than 30. If only he had begun his investigation a few months earlier in 2016, he might have discovered a rare Scriptural month consisting of only 28 days. Here's a link to our Abib 2016 calendar displaying this fact. We also experienced a 28-day month in early 2014. In May 2014, I composed a study titled "Can a Scriptural Month Have Only 28 Days?" explaining how and why such rare circumstances may occur. Here's a screen capture displaying Brian's denial that any month can include fewer than 29 days or more than 30:



Brian C. Hoeck ▸ Biblical Calendar Forum: Aviv Barley and New Moon Reports from Israel

Admin · January 26, 2021 ·

I operate the Forum, and my own house, under the guidelines that all lunar months are either 29 or 30 days based on actual visibility (from Israel) with a 30 day maximum limit. This standard is based on Scripture, history, and astronomy itself.

Through observance, it is evident that there are no 28 or 31 day months. For instance, from January 18, 2018 through January 7, 2019, every one of these thirteen New Moons was visible to the naked eye, and not a month in the lot was less than 29 days, nor more than 30:

Brian says the standard of lunar months consisting of only 29 or 30 days is based on Scripture, history and astronomy. Since I have already established that Scripture does *not* mandate any such thing, combined with the fact that Brian conveniently omitted a Scriptural reference that might have validated his claim, I can safely say he is *wrong* to base his standard on Scripture. I'll grant him the historical record going back to at least Maimonides' claim. Insofar as his claim about astronomy, there is no question the new moon was there, so the question is, "Was it visible to the naked eye under clear weather conditions?"

Anyway, I found it interesting that when I accessed Brian Hoeck's latest updated Facebook posting, which he submitted the following day, he included Tirzah Rapuano's *sister* as an additional, though much belated, "naked eye" eyewitness. Brian, although certainly aware that there are interested, invested individuals waiting for news (and details) of new moon sightings over Israel, nevertheless did not share this second eyewitness report with anyone, essentially limiting the report to those who follow his Facebook page. Of course, the same can be said of his source, Ralph Mikel Yehuday Rapuano. Neither individual exhibited any desire to share the report with believers outside of their circle. Here's a screenshot of Brian's updated posting:

Brian C. Hoeck
Admin · September 24 at 11:14 AM ·

7th NEW MOON REPORT UPDATES - Tuesday, September 23, 2025

UPDATE 1: I have received report of 1 naked eye witness of the New Moon from Gilo, Jerusalem:

Ralph Mikel Yehudah Rapuano reports: "my youngest daughter [Tirzah Rapuano] (28 years old) sighted the new moon tonight September 23 shortly after sunset from Gilo, Jerusalem, without glasses or any other optical aid. I was able to confirm the sighting with binoculars. It was a particularly difficult sighting and visible for only a few minutes."

UPDATE 2: A SECOND WITNESS Ralph Mikel Yehudah Rapuano further reported to me this morning that another daughter of his also sighted the New Moon Tuesday evening:

"Josa, Tirzah's sister is telling me that she also saw it but with difficulty even after she (Josa) removed her glasses. Tirzah does not wear glasses at all."

This said, as I noted in my previous post, the 7th month, and therewith Yom Teruah, is here by default of 30 days

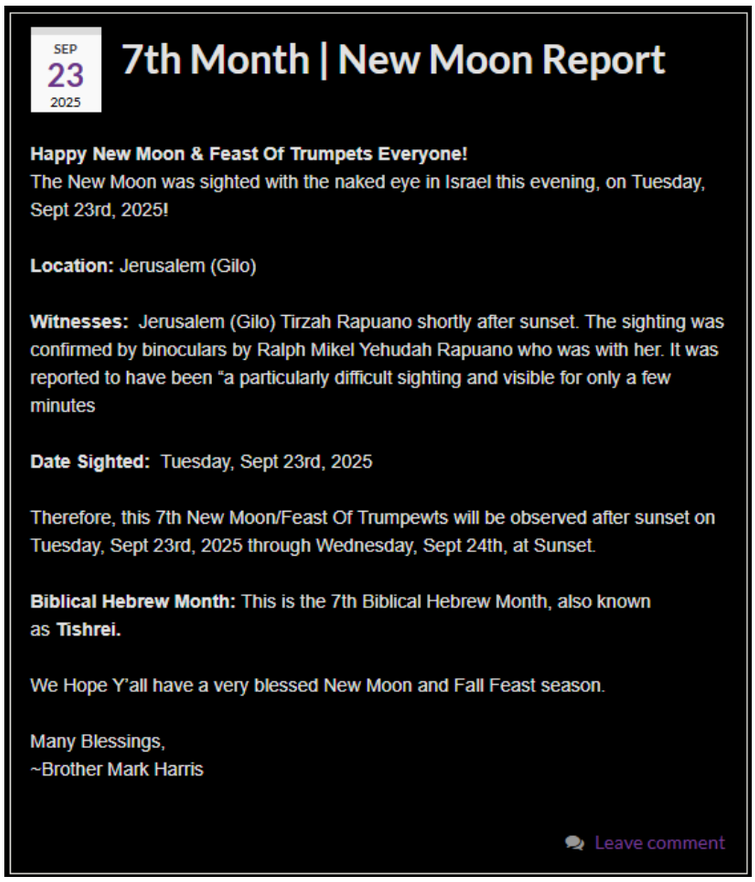
Yom Teruah sameach! Happy Day of Sounding!

We can now add Josa Rapuano's name to the list of questionable new moon sightings on September 23, 2025. Here's an updated chart that summarizes my concerns:

Timeline of Israel New Moon Observation Reports

Observer Name	Time of Sighting	Initially Seen With Naked Eye?	Trust Concerns?
Tirzah Rapuano	Unknown ("Shortly after sunset")	Yes	**Yes** – No time given, as per form.
Josa Rapuano	**Unknown**	Yes	**Yes – Late report that was not disseminated to others till the following day. Also, no time of sighting offered.**
Binyamin Nissim	6:50 PM IDT	**No**	**Yes** – Optical Aid was used.
Danny Levy	6:44 PM IDT	**No**	**Yes** – Not seen with naked eye.
Simcha Borer	6:47 PM IDT	**No**	**Yes** – Not seen with naked eye.
Y. M.	7:00 PM IDT	Yes	**Yes** – Anonymous reporter.
A. G.	7:00 PM IDT	Yes	**Yes** – Anonymous reporter.

In my own quest for reports of Israel new moon sightings, I not only check out Devorah Gordon's Facebook page, but I also turn to Mark Harris's "When Is the New Moon?" website. He apparently went with Devorah's initial report of Tirzah Rapuano's lone eyewitness sighting, and ran with it. Since he doesn't agree with my conviction that there needs to be *two* witnesses, he pursued the matter no further and "that was that." Here's a screen capture of his report:



SEP
23
2025

7th Month | New Moon Report

Happy New Moon & Feast Of Trumpets Everyone!
The New Moon was sighted with the naked eye in Israel this evening, on Tuesday, Sept 23rd, 2025!

Location: Jerusalem (Gilo)

Witnesses: Jerusalem (Gilo) Tirzah Rapuano shortly after sunset. The sighting was confirmed by binoculars by Ralph Mikel Yehudah Rapuano who was with her. It was reported to have been "a particularly difficult sighting and visible for only a few minutes

Date Sighted: Tuesday, Sept 23rd, 2025

Therefore, this 7th New Moon/Feast Of Trumpewts will be observed after sunset on Tuesday, Sept 23rd, 2025 through Wednesday, Sept 24th, at Sunset.

Biblical Hebrew Month: This is the 7th Biblical Hebrew Month, also known as **Tishrei.**

We Hope Y'all have a very blessed New Moon and Fall Feast season.

Many Blessings,
~Brother Mark Harris

Leave comment

For the record, I *do* find it unsettling that the only two possible eyewitnesses to have sighted the new moon on September 23, 2025 were siblings. Nevertheless, if Devorah Gordon would have sent a report of those two "naked eye" observations, including her assurance that the observers didn't first sight the new moon with optical aids, I would most likely have accepted her report, despite the fact that the second report came a day late. But for June and me to have already begun our Sukkot observance before learning of this second eyewitness only adds to the questionable and disorganized nature of the reports from Israel. I understand there's a lot of tension in Israel at this time, and I do not know the circumstances involved in their searches. I try to give others the "benefit of the doubt," but with this level of irresponsible reporting, including the fact that the woman who requested specifics, in the final analysis, caved and accepted incomplete reports, solidifies my perception of lackadaisical and even chaotic reporting.

Again, I do not question whether or not the new moon crescent was there or whether or not it was seen. The question is, "Was it seen by two eyewitnesses who didn't *first* use an optical aid to locate it?" And if so, why be so reticent about reporting it, including omitting the full names, as well as the date and time of the sighting? What I needed was a *timely* confirmation that it was sighted by at least two eyewitnesses who did not first locate it with optical aids. That did not happen.

Dedicated students of the Word who practice Torah observance should rightly question if we can henceforth trust the new moon reports from Israel, at least when pre-determined Jewish doctrinal views come into play. June and I only began relying on reports of sightings from Israel because we are persuaded that, just as a new day begins in Israel before it makes its way to our location here in the United States, in the same way, a new month shouldn't begin here until it first starts in Israel. But if we are only able to access reports from biased observers with an agenda to defend, maybe it's time to go back to local sightings. Our goal has always been to align with *Yahweh's* timing, even if it means not joining with others' feast observances.

I have several friends who went along with the reports from Israel. I am certainly willing to agree to disagree agreeably on this matter.

Truth Seekers