



Kislev, due to Hanukkah; and in Adar, due to Purim. And when the Temple was standing, messengers would also go out in the month of Iyyar due to small Passover, i.e., second Pesah, which occurs on the fourteenth of Iyyar. This holiday allowed those who were ritually impure or on a distant journey on the fourteenth of Nisan, and therefore incapable of bringing the Paschal lamb at that time, to bring their Paschal lamb a month later.

1:4 Only for the sake of two months may witnesses who saw the new moon desecrate Shabbat, should that be necessary in order for them to offer testimony before the court: For the month of Nisan and for the month of Tishrei, for in these months messengers are sent out to Syria, and by them, i.e., these months, the dates of the major Festivals are set: Yom Kippur, Sukkot, Passover, and Shavuot. And when the Temple was standing, the witnesses desecrated Shabbat for the fixing of the New Moon of all the months, due to the imperative of fixing the proper offering of the New Moon at the correct time.

1:5 Whether the new moon was seen clearly [ba'alil] by everyone or whether it was not clearly seen, one may desecrate Shabbat in order to testify before the court. Rabbi Yosei says: If the moon was clearly seen, they may not desecrate Shabbat for it, since other witnesses, located nearer to the court, will certainly testify. If these distant witnesses go to court to testify, they will desecrate Shabbat unnecessarily.

1:6 There was once an incident where more than forty pairs of witnesses were passing through on their way to Jerusalem to testify about the new moon, and Rabbi Akiva detained them in Lod, telling them that there was no need for them to desecrate Shabbat for this purpose. Rabban Gamliel sent a message to him: If you detain the many people who wish to testify about the new moon, you will cause them to stumble in the future. They will say: Why should we go, seeing that our testimony is unnecessary? At some point they will be needed, and no witnesses will come to the court.

1:7 If a father and his son saw the new moon, they should both go to the court in Jerusalem. It is not that they can join together to give testimony, for close relatives are disqualified from testifying together, but they both go so that if one of them is disqualified, the second may join together with another witness to testify about the new moon. Rabbi Shimon says: A father and his son and all their relatives are fit to combine together as witnesses for testimony to determine the start of the month. Rabbi Yosei said: There was an incident with Toviyya the doctor. When he saw the new moon in Jerusalem, he and his son and his freed slave all went to testify. The priests accepted him and his son as witnesses and disqualified his slave, for they ruled stringently that the month may be sanctified only on the basis of the testimony of those of Jewish lineage. And when they came before the court, they accepted him and his slave as witnesses and disqualified his son, due to the familial relationship.

1:8 The following are unfit to give testimony, as they are considered thieves and robbers: One who plays with dice [kubbiyya] or other games of chance for money; and those who lend money with interest; and those who race pigeons and place wagers on the outcome; and merchants who deal in produce of the Sabbatical Year, which may be eaten, but may not be an object of commerce; and slaves. This is the principle: Any testimony for which a woman is unfit, these

too are unfit. Although in certain cases a woman's testimony is accepted, e.g., to testify to the death of someone's husband, in the majority of cases her testimony is not valid.

1:9 With regard to one who saw the new moon but is unable to go to Jerusalem by foot because he is sick or has difficulty walking, others may bring him on a donkey or even in a bed, even on Shabbat if necessary. And if the witnesses are concerned that bandits may be lying in wait for them along the road, they may take clubs or other weapons in their hands, even on Shabbat. And if it was a long journey to Jerusalem, they may take sustenance with them, although it is ordinarily prohibited to carry on Shabbat, since for a distance of a walk of a night and a day, the witnesses may desecrate Shabbat and go out to give testimony to determine the start of the month. This is as it is stated:

“These are the Festivals of the Lord, sacred gatherings, which you shall declare in their seasons” (Leviticus 23:4). This teaches that, in all cases, the Festivals must be fixed at their proper times, even if it entails the transgression of Torah prohibitions.

2:1 If the members of the Great Sanhedrin in Jerusalem are not familiar with that one who saw the new moon, i.e., that he is a valid witness, the members of his local court of twenty-three send another with him to testify about him. The mishna adds: Initially, the court would accept testimony to determine the start of the month from any person, as all are presumed to be qualified witnesses, absent any disqualifying factors. However, when the Boethusians, a sect whose members had their own opinions with regard to the establishment of the Festivals, corrupted the process by sending false witnesses to testify about the new moon, the Sages instituted that they would accept this testimony only from those men familiar to the Sanhedrin as valid witnesses.

2:2 Initially, after the court sanctified the new month they would light torches on the mountaintops, from one peak to another, to signal to the community in Babylonia that the month had been sanctified. After the Samaritans [Kutim] corrupted and ruined this method by lighting torches at the wrong times to confuse the Jews, the Sages instituted that messengers should go out to the Diaspora and inform them of the start of the month.

2:3 The mishna asks: How would they light the torches during that earlier period? They would bring items that burn well, e.g., long poles of cedar, reeds, pinewood, and beaten flax, and tie them together with a string. And someone would then ascend to the top of the mountain and light the torch on fire with them, and wave it back and forth and up and down, until he would see his colleague doing likewise on the top of the second mountain. In this manner he would know that the next messenger had received the message and passed it on. And similarly, the second torchbearer would wait for a signal from the one on the top of the third mountain, and so on. In this manner the message would reach the Diaspora.

2:4 And from which mountains would they light the torches? They would transmit the message from the Mount of Olives in Jerusalem to Sartava, and from Sartava to Gerofina, and from Gerofina to Havran, and from Havran to Beit Baltin. And from Beit Baltin they would not move to light torches in any other predetermined location. Rather, the one who was appointed for this task would

wave the torch back and forth and up and down, until he would see the entire Diaspora before him alight like one large bonfire, as they would light torches to continue transmitting the message from place to place all the way to the farthest reaches of the Diaspora.

2:5 There was a large courtyard in Jerusalem, which was called Beit Ya'zek. And there all the witnesses coming to testify about the new moon would gather, and the court of seventy-one judges would examine them there. And they would prepare great feasts for them, so that they would be willing and accustomed to coming and submitting their testimony. Initially, when witnesses would arrive on Shabbat from a distant place, they would not move from there all day, as they had left their Shabbat limit, and it was consequently prohibited for them to walk more than four cubits in any direction once they had completed their mission. Concerned that this limitation would discourage witnesses from coming, Rabban Gamliel the Elder instituted that the witnesses be permitted to walk two thousand cubits in each direction. The mishna continues: And not only these witnesses are granted two thousand cubits from their new place, but this applies also to a midwife who comes to deliver a child, and one who comes to rescue Jews from a fire, from an invasion of gentile troops, from a flooding river, or from the collapse of a building. All these are considered like the inhabitants of the city where they arrive, and therefore they have two thousand cubits in each direction.

2:6 How do they examine the witnesses who come to testify about the new moon? They deal with them in order, as the pair of witnesses that arrives first they examine first. They bring in the greater of the two witnesses, and they say to him: Say how you saw the moon. Was it in front of the sun or behind the sun? To its north or to its south? How high was the moon over the horizon, and in which direction did it tilt? And how wide was it? If, for example, he said that he saw the moon in front of the sun, he has not said anything of substance, as this is impossible and therefore he is either mistaken or lying. And after they finish hearing the first witness's testimony, they would bring in the second witness and examine him in a similar manner. If their statements match, their testimony is accepted and the court sanctifies the New Moon. And the court then asks all the other pairs of witnesses certain general matters, without probing into all the details. They do this not because they require the additional testimony, but so that the witnesses should not leave disappointed, and so that the witnesses should be accustomed to coming to testify, and will not hesitate to come the next time, when they might be needed.

2:7 After the witnesses have been examined and their testimony accepted, the head of the court says: It is sanctified. And all the people respond after him: It is sanctified; it is sanctified. Whether the moon was seen at its anticipated time, on the thirtieth day of the previous month, or whether it was not seen at its anticipated time, in which case witnesses are not necessary to establish the following day as the New Moon, the court sanctifies it and formally proclaims the day as the New Moon. Rabbi Elazar, son of Rabbi Tzadok, says: If the new moon was not seen at its anticipated time, the court does not sanctify the New Moon on the following day, as the celestial court in Heaven has already sanctified it, precluding the need for the additional

sanctification by the earthly court.

2:8 Rabban Gamliel had a diagram of the different forms of the moon drawn on a tablet that hung on the wall of his attic, which he would show to the laymen who came to testify about the new moon but were unable to describe adequately what they had seen. And he would say to them: Did you see a form like this or like this? There was an incident in which two witnesses came to testify about the new moon, and they said: We saw the waning moon in the morning in the east, and that same day we saw the new moon in the evening in the west. Rabbi Yohanan ben Nuri said: They are false witnesses, as it is impossible to see the new moon so soon after the last sighting of the waning moon. However, when they arrived in Yavne, Rabban Gamliel accepted them as witnesses without concern. And there was another incident in which two witnesses came and said: We saw the new moon at its anticipated time, i.e., on the night of the thirtieth day of the previous month; however, on the following night, i.e., the start of the thirty-first, which is often the determinant of a full, thirty-day month, it was not seen. And nevertheless Rabban Gamliel accepted their testimony and established the New Moon on the thirtieth day. Rabbi Dosa ben Horkinas disagreed and said: They are false witnesses; how can witnesses testify that a woman gave birth and the next day her belly is between her teeth, i.e., she is obviously still pregnant? If the new moon was already visible at its anticipated time, how could it not be seen a day later? Rabbi Yehoshua said to him: I see the logic of your statement; the New Moon must be established a day later.

2:9 Upon hearing that Rabbi Yehoshua had challenged his ruling, Rabban Gamliel sent a message to him: I decree against you that you must appear before me with your staff and with your money on the day on which Yom Kippur occurs according to your calculation; according to my calculation, that day is the eleventh of Tishrei, the day after Yom Kippur. Rabbi Akiva went and found Rabbi Yehoshua distressed that the head of the Great Sanhedrin was forcing him to desecrate the day that he maintained was Yom Kippur. In an attempt to console him, Rabbi Akiva said to Rabbi Yehoshua: I can learn from a verse that everything that Rabban Gamliel did in sanctifying the month is done, i.e., it is valid. As it is stated: "These are the appointed seasons of the Lord, sacred convocations, which you shall proclaim in their season" (Leviticus 23:4). This verse indicates that whether you have proclaimed them at their proper time or whether you have declared them not at their proper time, I have only these Festivals as established by the representatives of the Jewish people. Rabbi Yehoshua then came to Rabbi Dosa ben Horkinas, who said to him: If we come to debate and question the rulings of the court of Rabban Gamliel, we must debate and question the rulings of every court that has stood from the days of Moses until now. As it is stated: "Then Moses went up, and Aaron, Nadav and Avihu, and seventy of the Elders of Israel" (Exodus 24:9). But why were the names of these seventy Elders not specified? Rather, this comes to teach that every set of three judges that stands as a court over the Jewish people has the same status as the court of Moses. Since it is not revealed who sat on that court, apparently it is enough that they were official judges in a Jewish court. When Rabbi Yehoshua heard that even Rabbi Dosa ben Horkinas maintained that they

must submit to Rabban Gamliel's decision, he took his staff and his money in his hand, and went to Yavne to Rabban Gamliel on the day on which Yom Kippur occurred according to his own calculation. Upon seeing him, Rabban Gamliel stood up and kissed him on his head. He said to him: Come in peace, my teacher and my student. You are my teacher in wisdom, as Rabbi Yehoshua was wiser than anyone else in his generation, and you are my student, as you accepted my statement, despite your disagreement.

3:1 If the court and all of the Jewish people saw the new moon, and the witnesses were interrogated, but the court did not manage to say: Sanctified, before nightfall, so that the thirtieth day already passed, the previous month is rendered a full, thirty-day month, and the following day is observed as the New Moon. If the court alone saw the new moon, two members of the court should stand and testify before the others, and the court should say: Sanctified, sanctified. If three people saw the new moon, and they are themselves members of a court for this purpose, two of them should stand and seat two of their colleagues next to the individual who remains of the three, thereby forming a new court of three. The two standing judges should then testify before the three seated judges that they saw the new moon and the seated judges say: Sanctified, sanctified. This procedure is necessary because an individual is not authorized to declare the month sanctified by himself. Rather, a court of three is required.

3:2 The mishna begins to discuss the primary mitzva of Rosh HaShana, sounding the shofar. All shofarot are fit for blowing except for the horn of a cow, because it is a horn [keren] and not a shofar. Rabbi Yosei said: But aren't all shofarot called horn, as it is stated: "And it shall come to pass, that when they sound a long blast with the horn [keren] of a ram [yovel]" (Joshua 6:5), and a ram's horn is a shofar fit for sounding on Rosh HaShana?

3:3 The shofar that was used on Rosh HaShana in the Temple was made from the straight horn of an ibex, and its mouth, the mouthpiece into which one blows, was plated with gold. And there were two trumpets, one on each of the two sides of the person sounding the shofar. The shofar would sound a long blast, whereas the trumpets would sound a short blast, because the mitzva of the day is with the shofar.

3:4 And in contrast, the shofarot used on public fast days were made from the curved horns of rams, and their mouths were plated with silver. There were two trumpets in the middle between the shofarot, and the shofar would sound a short blast, whereas the trumpets would sound a long blast, for the mitzva of the day is with the trumpets.

3:5 Yom Kippur of the Jubilee Year is the same as Rosh HaShana with regard to both the shofar blasts that are sounded and the additional blessings that are recited in the Amida prayer. Rabbi Yehuda disagrees and says: There is a difference between the two days: On Rosh HaShana one blows with horns of rams, whereas in Jubilee Years one blows with horns of ibexes.

3:6 A shofar that was cracked and then glued together, even though it appears to be whole, is unfit. Similarly, if one glued together broken fragments of shofarot to form a complete shofar, the shofar is unfit. If the shofar was punctured and the puncture was sealed, if it impedes the blowing, the shofar is

unfit, but if not, it is fit.

3:7 If one sounds a shofar into a pit, or into a cistern, or into a large jug, if he clearly heard the sound of the shofar, he has fulfilled his obligation; but if he heard the sound of an echo, he has not fulfilled his obligation. And similarly, if one was passing behind a synagogue, or his house was adjacent to the synagogue, and he heard the sound of the shofar or the sound of the Scroll of Esther being read, if he focused his heart, i.e. his intent, to fulfill his obligation, he has fulfilled his obligation; but if not, he has not fulfilled his obligation. It is therefore possible for two people to hear the shofar blasts, but only one of them fulfills his obligation. Even though this one heard and also the other one heard, nevertheless, this one focused his heart to fulfill his obligation and has therefore indeed fulfilled it, but the other one did not focus his heart, and so he has not fulfilled his obligation.

3:8 Incidental to the discussion of the required intent when sounding the shofar, the mishna cites the verse: “And it came to pass, when Moses held up his hand, that Israel prevailed; and when he let down his hand, Amalek prevailed” (Exodus 17:11). It may be asked: Did the hands of Moses make war when he raised them or break war when he lowered them? Rather, the verse comes to tell you that as long as the Jewish people turned their eyes upward and subjected their hearts to their Father in Heaven, they prevailed, but if not, they fell. Similarly, you can say: The verse states: “Make for yourself a fiery serpent, and set it upon a pole; and it shall come to pass, that everyone that is bitten, when he sees it, he shall live” (Numbers 21:8). Once again it may be asked: Did the serpent kill, or did the serpent preserve life? Rather, when the Jewish people turned their eyes upward and subjected their hearts to their Father in Heaven, they were healed, but if not, they rotted from their snakebites. Returning to its halakhic discussion, the mishna continues: A deaf-mute, an imbecile, or a minor who sounds the shofar cannot discharge the obligation on behalf of the community. This is the principle with regard to similar matters: Whoever is not obligated to do a certain matter cannot discharge the obligation on behalf of the community.

4:1 With regard to the Festival day of Rosh HaShana that occurs on Shabbat, in the Temple they would sound the shofar as usual. However, they would not sound it in the rest of the country outside the Temple. After the Temple was destroyed, Rabban Yohanan ben Zakkai instituted that the people should sound the shofar on Shabbat in every place where there is a court of twenty-three judges. Rabbi Elazar said: Rabban Yohanan ben Zakkai instituted this practice only in Yavne, where the Great Sanhedrin of seventy-one judges resided in his time, but nowhere else. They said to him: He instituted the practice both in Yavne and in any place where there is a court.

4:2 The mishna adds: And Jerusalem in earlier times had this additional superiority over Yavne after Rabban Yohanan ben Zakkai instituted this practice, for in any city whose residents could see Jerusalem and hear the sounding of the shofar from there, and which was near to Jerusalem and people could come to Jerusalem from there, they would sound the shofar there as well, as it was considered part of Jerusalem. But in Yavne they would sound the shofar only in the court itself, not in the surrounding cities.

4:3 After the previous mishna mentioned Rabban Yohanan ben Zakkai's ordinance that applies to the sounding of the shofar, this mishna records other ordinances instituted by the same Sage: At first, during the Temple era, the lulav was taken in the Temple all seven days of Sukkot, and in the rest of the country outside the Temple, it was taken only one day, on the first day of the Festival. After the Temple was destroyed, Rabban Yohanan ben Zakkai instituted that the lulav should be taken even in the rest of the country all seven days, in commemoration of the Temple. And for similar reasons, Rabban Yohanan ben Zakkai instituted that for the entire day of waving the omer offering, i.e., the sixteenth of Nisan, eating the grain of the new crop is prohibited. By Torah law, when the Temple is standing the new grain may not be eaten until after the omer offering is brought on the sixteenth of Nisan, usually early in the morning. When the Temple is not standing it may be eaten from the time that the eastern horizon is illuminated at daybreak. However, Rabban Yohanan ben Zakkai instituted a prohibition against eating the new grain throughout the entire sixteenth of Nisan, until the seventeenth, to commemorate the Temple.

4:4 Initially, they would accept testimony to determine the start of the month throughout the entire thirtieth day from the beginning of the month of Elul, before Rosh HaShana, and if witnesses arrived from afar and testified that they had sighted the New Moon the previous night, they would declare that day the Festival. Once, the witnesses tarried coming until the hour was late, and the Levites erred with regard to the song, i.e., the psalm that they were supposed to recite, as they did not know at the time whether it was a Festival or an ordinary weekday. From that point on, the Sages instituted that they would accept testimony to determine the start of the month only until minha time. If witnesses had not arrived by that hour, they would declare Elul a thirty-day month and calculate the dates of the Festivals accordingly. And if witnesses came from minha time onward, although the calculations for the dates of the Festivals would begin from the following day, the people would nevertheless observe that day, on which the witnesses arrived, as sacred, so that in future years they would not treat the entire day as a weekday and engage in labor from the morning on the assumption that the witnesses will arrive only after minha time. And they would also observe the following day as sacred. On the second day, they observed Rosh HaShana in full, both by sacrificing its offerings as well as by calculating the upcoming Festivals from that date. After the Temple was destroyed and there was no longer any reason for this ordinance, Rabban Yohanan ben Zakkai instituted that they would once again accept testimony to determine the start of the month the entire day. Rabbi Yehoshua ben Korha said: And this, too, Rabban Yohanan ben Zakkai instituted, that even if the head of the court of seventy-one is in any other place, not where the Great Sanhedrin is in session, the witnesses should nevertheless go only to the place where the Great Sanhedrin gathers to deliver testimony to determine the start of the month. Although the date of the month is dependent on the head of the Great Sanhedrin, as it is he who declares that the month is sanctified (see 24a), nevertheless, Rabban Yohanan ben Zakkai instituted that the members of the Great Sanhedrin may sanctify the month in the absence of the head of the

court.

4:5 The order of the blessings of the additional prayer on Rosh HaShana is as follows: One recites the blessing of the Patriarchs, the blessing of God's Mighty Deeds, and the blessing of the Sanctification of God's Name, all of which are recited all year long. And one includes the blessing of Kingship, containing many biblical verses on that theme, with them, i.e., in the blessing of the Sanctification of God's Name, and he does not sound the shofar after it. Next, one adds a special blessing for the Sanctification of the Day, and sounds the shofar after it; followed by the blessing of Remembrances, which contains many biblical verses addressing that theme, and sounds the shofar after it; and recites the blessing of Shofarot, which includes verses that mention the shofar, and sounds the shofar after it. And he then returns to the regular Amida prayer and recites the blessing of God's Service and the blessing of Thanksgiving and the Priestly Blessing. This is the statement of Rabbi Yohanan ben Nuri. Rabbi Akiva said to him: If one does not sound the shofar for the blessing of Kingship, why does he mention it? Rather, the order of the blessings is as follows: One recites the blessing of the Patriarchs and that of God's Mighty Deeds and that of the Sanctification of God's Name. He subsequently includes the blessing of Kingship in the blessing of the Sanctification of the Day, and sounds the shofar. Next he recites the blessing of Remembrances, and sounds the shofar after it, and the blessing of Shofarot and sounds the shofar after it. He then recites the blessing of God's Service and the blessing of Thanksgiving and the Priestly Blessing.

4:6 One does not recite fewer than ten verses in the blessing of Kingship, or fewer than ten verses in the blessing of Remembrances, or fewer than ten verses in the blessing of Shofarot. Rabbi Yohanan ben Nuri says: If one recited three from each of them, he has fulfilled his obligation. One does not mention verses of Remembrance, Kingship, and Shofar that have a theme of punishment. When reciting the ten verses, one begins with verses from the Torah and concludes with verses from the Prophets. Rabbi Yosei says: If he concluded with a verse from the Torah, he has fulfilled his obligation.

4:7 With regard to one who is passing before the ark, as prayer leader, on the festival of Rosh HaShana, it is the second prayer leader, i.e., the one who leads the additional prayer, who sounds the shofar on behalf of the congregation. And on a day when the hallel is recited, the first prayer leader, i.e., the one who leads the morning prayer, recites the hallel on behalf of the congregation.

4:8 With regard to the shofar of Rosh HaShana, one may not pass the Shabbat limit for it, i.e., to go and hear it, nor may one clear a pile of rubble to uncover a buried shofar. One may not climb a tree, nor may one ride on an animal, nor may one swim in water, in order to find a shofar to sound. And one may not cut the shofar to prepare it for use, neither with an object that is prohibited due to a rabbinic decree nor with an object that may not be used due to a prohibition by Torah law. However, if one wishes to place water or wine into the shofar on Rosh HaShana so that it emits a clear sound, he may place it, as this does not constitute a prohibited labor. One need not prevent children from sounding the shofar on Rosh HaShana, despite the fact that they

are not obligated in mitzvot. Rather, one occupies himself with them, encouraging and instructing them, until they learn how to sound it properly. The mishna adds: One who acts unawares and sounds the shofar without any intention to perform the mitzva has not fulfilled his obligation. And, similarly, one who hears the shofar blasts from one who acts unawares has not fulfilled his obligation.

4:9 The order of the blasts is three sets of three blasts each, which are: Tekia, terua, and tekia. The length of a tekia is equal to the length of three teruot, and the length of a terua is equal to the length of three whimpers. If one sounded the first tekia of the initial series of tekia, terua, tekia, and then extended the second tekia of that series to the length of two tekiot, so that it should count as both the second tekia of the first set and the first tekia of the second set, he has in his hand the fulfillment of only one tekia, and he must begin the second set with a new tekia. With regard to one who recited the blessings of the additional prayer, and only afterward a shofar became available to him, he sounds a tekia, sounds a terua, and sounds a tekia, an order he repeats three times. Just as the prayer leader is obligated in the prayer of Rosh HaShana, so too, each and every individual is obligated in these prayers. Rabban Gamliel disagrees and says: Individuals are not obligated, as the prayer leader fulfills the obligation on behalf of the many.