

9. Messengers were sent out to verify the sanctification for the following six months: Nisan, on account of the Passover; Ab, on account of the Fastday; Elul, on account of the New Year—so that the people might look out on the 30th day of Elul and wait for a message: if they learned that the court had sanctified the 30th day, they observed this day alone as New Year's Day; if they received no message, they observed both the 30th and the 31st days as New Year's Days, until the messengers of Tishri reached them—; Tishri, on account of the proper observance of the Tishri holidays; Kislew, on account of Hānukkah; and Aḏar, on account of Purim. During the existence of the Temple, however, messengers were sent out also to verify the beginning of Iyyar, on account of the Lesser Passover.

10. The messengers sent out to verify the New Moon Day of Nisan and Tishri could leave only on the first day of the month, after sunrise, and after they had heard the court pronounce the Mēḡuddaš formula. If, however, the court had sanctified the new moon at the end of the 29th day, as we have explained above (II, 9), and the messengers had heard the court pronounce Mēḡuddaš, they could leave in the evening (of the same day).

The messengers, however, who were sent out to verify the sanctification for the other months could leave in the evening, after the new crescent had been observed, even if the court had not yet sanctified the new moon. Once the new phase had been observed, they were permitted to leave, inasmuch as the court was certain to sanctify the new moon the next day.

11. In places that the messengers could reach in good time, each of the (annual) holidays was observed one day only, as prescribed in the Law. In remote places, however, which the messengers could not reach in time, it was customary to observe the holidays for two days, since the people were in doubt as to the exact day (the 29th or the 30th) which the court had declared as New Moon Day.

12. There were places which the Nisan messengers could reach in time, while the Tishri messengers could not. By law the people

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of these places should have observed the Passover feast one day only, since the messengers had reached them in time and they knew which day was declared as New Moon Day; whereas they should have observed the feast of Tabernacles for two days, because the messengers had not reached them in good time. However, in order not to make a distinction between the festivals, a law was enacted by the Sages that in all places which could not be reached by the Tishri messengers, the people should observe all the holidays, including even the feast of Pentecost, for two days.

13. The difference in traveling time between the messengers of Nisan and those of Tishri is two days; for the messengers of Tishri could not travel on the first day of Tishri, because it is New Year's Day, nor on the tenth, because it is the Day of Atonement (above, Sec. 8).

14. It was not necessary to send out two messengers; even one was considered trustworthy. Nor did he have to be a messenger of the court; even an ordinary tradesman from among the people, who came along on his customary journey and said: "I have heard the court pronounce the sanctification of the new moon on such and such a day," was considered trustworthy, and the festivals were set on the strength of his testimony. For such a matter (as the announcement of the New Moon Day) was something that was certain to be divulged in public, and in a matter of this kind one worthy witness was sufficient.

15. If the court had been sitting the entire 30th day and no witnesses arrived, and the court then arose early in the morning and declared the old month to be full, as pointed out above in this chapter (Sec. 7), but after the lapse of four or five days witnesses came from a remote part of the country and testified that they had seen the new moon in its "proper time," which is the night of the 30th day, or they even came at the end of the month, the rule was as follows: The court tried to intimidate the witnesses by strong methods of intimidation, confuse them with questions, annoy them with investigations, and examine the testimony mi-

nutely; in short, the court did its utmost to avoid having to sanctify this new moon retrogressively, since the old month was now generally known to have been declared as a full one.

16. If, however, the witnesses persisted in their asseveration; and were found to be in complete agreement with one another; if, moreover, the witnesses were known to be reputable and intelligent men, and their testimony was tested by proper cross-examination—the court had no choice but to sanctify the 30th day retrogressively, and to readjust the counting of this month from the 30th day on, seeing that the moon had been observed on the night of that day.

17. If, however, the court, for reasons of expediency, preferred to leave the old month full, just as it was before the appearance of these witnesses, it could do so. And this is what the Sages mean in saying: "One may declare the month full for reasons of expediency." Some of the great Sages, however, disagreed and said that one must never make the month full for reasons of expediency, and that the court is obliged to sanctify the new moon if proper witnesses come forward, and that they must not be intimidated.

18. It occurs to me that this controversy among the Sages refers only to the months other than Nisan and Tishri, or even to witnesses of Nisan and Tishri if they came after the expiration of the holidays, so that the time of the sacrifices and other festival observances had already passed and everything had become an accomplished fact. If, however, witnesses came in Nisan and Tishri before the middle of the month, their testimony was accepted and they were not intimidated in any way; for the court was not allowed to intimidate witnesses who came to testify that they had observed the new moon in its "proper time," merely in order to keep the old month a full one.

19. The court, however, did intimidate witnesses in the following case: If their testimony had been impaired, and the evidence appeared doubtful, and if the court considered it a humiliation