

Can We Know The Day?

By Rabbi Dr. Hillel ben David (Greg Killian)



In this [study](file:///D%3A%5CWord%5CTERUAH%5Cstudy.html) I would like to explain a [Hebrew](file:///D%3A%5CWord%5CTERUAH%5Chebrew.html) phrase, used in Matthew 22:36, that suggests that we do not [know](file:///D%3A%5CWord%5CTERUAH%5Cdaat.html) when [Mashiach](file:///D%3A%5CWord%5CTERUAH%5Cmashiach.html) ben David will be acknowledged as the King. There is no point in telling us something that we can not [know](file:///D%3A%5CWord%5CTERUAH%5Cdaat.html). Since the scriptures conserve words, and since Matthew is written as drash, we would expect that there is something we *can* [know](file:///D%3A%5CWord%5CTERUAH%5Cdaat.html) about this day.

To begin to understand this enigmatic phrase, we need to understand that the [calendar](file:///D%3A%5CWord%5CTERUAH%5Ccalendar.html) was controlled by the Sanhedrin, at the [command](file:///D%3A%5CWord%5CTERUAH%5Ccmds613.html) of [HaShem](file:///D%3A%5CWord%5CTERUAH%5Chashem.html). The Great Court was commanded to sanctify the [New](file:///D%3A%5CWord%5CTERUAH%5Cnew.html) Moons and to intercalate the year by adding an additional month [seven](file:///D%3A%5CWord%5CTERUAH%5Cseven.html) out of nineteen years. This meant that the Sanhedrin was responsible for setting the date for each of the [festivals](file:///D%3A%5CWord%5CTERUAH%5Cfestivals.html). [HaShem](file:///D%3A%5CWord%5CTERUAH%5Chashem.html) commanded, for example, that [Pesach](file:///D%3A%5CWord%5CTERUAH%5Cpassover.html) occurs on the [fifteenth](file:///D%3A%5CWord%5CTERUAH%5Cfifteen.html) day of the [first](file:///D%3A%5CWord%5CTERUAH%5Cone.html) month. However, the Sanhedrin determined when the [first](file:///D%3A%5CWord%5CTERUAH%5Cone.html) month began, thus they actually set the date for this [first](file:///D%3A%5CWord%5CTERUAH%5Cone.html) [festival](file:///D%3A%5CWord%5CTERUAH%5Cfestival.html).

The Sanhedrin of Yehuda HaNasi actually sanctified all of the [new](file:///D%3A%5CWord%5CTERUAH%5Cnew.html) moons until a greater court should arise. Thus, all of our [new](file:///D%3A%5CWord%5CTERUAH%5Cnew.html) moons are currently set on a fixed [calendar](file:///D%3A%5CWord%5CTERUAH%5Ccalendar.html).

Originally, however, the [New](file:///D%3A%5CWord%5CTERUAH%5Cnew.html) [Moon](file:///D%3A%5CWord%5CTERUAH%5Cchodesh.html) was not fixed by astronomical calculations, but was solemnly proclaimed after witnesses had testified to the reappearance of the crescent of the [moon](file:///D%3A%5CWord%5CTERUAH%5Cchodesh.html). On the 30th of each month, the members of the Sanhedrin assembled in a courtyard in [Jerusalem](file:///D%3A%5CWord%5CTERUAH%5Ccity.html), named Beit Ya'azek, where they waited to receive the testimony of [two](file:///D%3A%5CWord%5CTERUAH%5Ctwo.html) reliable witnesses; they then sanctified the [New](file:///D%3A%5CWord%5CTERUAH%5Cnew.html) [Moon](file:///D%3A%5CWord%5CTERUAH%5Cchodesh.html) based on their calculations and the testimony of these [two](file:///D%3A%5CWord%5CTERUAH%5Ctwo.html) witnesses. If the [moon](file:///D%3A%5CWord%5CTERUAH%5Cchodesh.html)'s crescent was not seen on the 30th day, the [New](file:///D%3A%5CWord%5CTERUAH%5Cnew.html) [Moon](file:///D%3A%5CWord%5CTERUAH%5Cchodesh.html) was automatically celebrated on the 31st day (which was the [first](file:///D%3A%5CWord%5CTERUAH%5Cone.html) day of the next month).

Normally we [know](file:///D%3A%5CWord%5CTERUAH%5Cdaat.html) several days in advance, the date of the next [festival](file:///D%3A%5CWord%5CTERUAH%5Cfestival.html). However, there is [one](file:///D%3A%5CWord%5CTERUAH%5Cone.html) [festival](file:///D%3A%5CWord%5CTERUAH%5Cfestival.html) which actually falls on the [new](file:///D%3A%5CWord%5CTERUAH%5Cnew.html) [moon](file:///D%3A%5CWord%5CTERUAH%5Cchodesh.html). The only [festival](file:///D%3A%5CWord%5CTERUAH%5Cfestival.html) that falls on a [new](file:///D%3A%5CWord%5CTERUAH%5Cnew.html) [moon](file:///D%3A%5CWord%5CTERUAH%5Cchodesh.html) is [Rosh HaShana](file:///D%3A%5CWord%5CTERUAH%5Cteruah.html)h, AKA [Yom Teruah](file:///D%3A%5CWord%5CTERUAH%5Cteruah.html).[[1]](#footnote-1)

[Yom Teruah](file:///D%3A%5CWord%5CTERUAH%5Cteruah.html), therefore, is the [festival](file:///D%3A%5CWord%5CTERUAH%5Cfestival.html) that, "No [one](file:///D%3A%5CWord%5CTERUAH%5Cone.html) knows the day or hour that it starts, not even the [angels](file:///D%3A%5CWord%5CTERUAH%5Cangels.html) in [heaven](file:///D%3A%5CWord%5CTERUAH%5Cheaven.html), nor the Son, but only the Father". Until the Sanhedrin sanctifies the [New](file:///D%3A%5CWord%5CTERUAH%5Cnew.html) [Moon](file:///D%3A%5CWord%5CTERUAH%5Cchodesh.html) of the seventh month, no [one](file:///D%3A%5CWord%5CTERUAH%5Cone.html) [know](file:///D%3A%5CWord%5CTERUAH%5Cdaat.html) when [Yom Teruah](file:///D%3A%5CWord%5CTERUAH%5Cteruah.html) will begin.

Now let's examine the scriptures:

***I Thessalonians 5:1-11*** *Now, brothers, about times and dates we do not need to write to you, For you* [*know*](file:///D%3A%5CWord%5CTERUAH%5Cdaat.html) *very well that the day of the Lord will come like a thief in the night. While people are saying, "Peace and safety," destruction will come on them suddenly, as labor pains on a pregnant woman, and they will not escape. But you, brothers, are not in darkness so that this day should surprise you like a thief. You are all sons of the light and sons of the day. We do not belong to the night or to the darkness. So then, let us not be like others, who are* [*asleep*](file:///D%3A%5CWord%5CTERUAH%5Cmashal.html)*, but let us be alert and self-controlled. For those who* [*sleep*](file:///D%3A%5CWord%5CTERUAH%5Cmashal.html)*,* [*sleep*](file:///D%3A%5CWord%5CTERUAH%5Cmashal.html) *at night, and those who get drunk, get drunk at night. But since we belong to the day, let us be self-controlled, putting on faith and love as a breastplate, and the hope of* [*salvation*](file:///D%3A%5CWord%5CTERUAH%5Csalvation.html) *as a helmet. For God did not appoint us to suffer wrath but to receive* [*salvation*](file:///D%3A%5CWord%5CTERUAH%5Csalvation.html) *through our Lord* [*Yeshua*](file:///D%3A%5CWord%5CTERUAH%5Cyeshua.html)[*Mashiach*](file:///D%3A%5CWord%5CTERUAH%5Cmashiach.html)*. He died for us so that, whether we are awake or* [*asleep*](file:///D%3A%5CWord%5CTERUAH%5Cmashal.html)*, we may live together with him. Therefore encourage* [*one*](file:///D%3A%5CWord%5CTERUAH%5Cone.html) *another and build each other up, just as in fact you are doing.*

So, the righteous are not to be surprised by that day. This implies that the righteous may not [know](file:///D%3A%5CWord%5CTERUAH%5Cdaat.html) the year, but, they will [know](file:///D%3A%5CWord%5CTERUAH%5Cdaat.html) that he will return on [Yom Teruah](file:///D%3A%5CWord%5CTERUAH%5Cteruah.html). They will, therefore, be looking for their [Messiah](file:///D%3A%5CWord%5CTERUAH%5Cmashiach.html) on the 30th and the 31st day of the [sixth](file:///D%3A%5CWord%5CTERUAH%5Csix.html) month, the month of [Elul](file:///D%3A%5CWord%5CTERUAH%5Celul.html).

Notice, in the following scriptures, that the righteous are to be awake, alert, and watching for the return of The [Messiah](file:///D%3A%5CWord%5CTERUAH%5Cmashiach.html):

***Matthew 24:36-44*** *"No* [*one*](file:///D%3A%5CWord%5CTERUAH%5Cone.html) *knows about that day or hour, not even the* [*angels*](file:///D%3A%5CWord%5CTERUAH%5Cangels.html) *in* [*heaven*](file:///D%3A%5CWord%5CTERUAH%5Cheaven.html)*, nor the Son, but only the Father. As it was in the days of* [*Noah*](file:///D%3A%5CWord%5CTERUAH%5Cnoachide.html)*, so it will be at the* [*coming*](file:///D%3A%5CWord%5CTERUAH%5Ccoming.html) *of the Son of Man. For in the days before the flood, people were* [*eating*](file:///D%3A%5CWord%5CTERUAH%5Ceating.html) *and drinking, marrying and giving in* [*marriage*](file:///D%3A%5CWord%5CTERUAH%5Cmashal.html)*, up to the day* [*Noah*](file:///D%3A%5CWord%5CTERUAH%5Cnoachide.html) *entered the ark; And they* [*knew*](file:///D%3A%5CWord%5CTERUAH%5Cdaat.html) *nothing about what would happen until the flood came and took them all away. That is how it will be at the* [*coming*](file:///D%3A%5CWord%5CTERUAH%5Ccoming.html) *of the Son of Man.* [*Two*](file:///D%3A%5CWord%5CTERUAH%5Ctwo.html) *men will be in the field;* [*one*](file:///D%3A%5CWord%5CTERUAH%5Cone.html) *will be taken and the other left.* [*Two*](file:///D%3A%5CWord%5CTERUAH%5Ctwo.html) *women will be grinding with a* [*hand*](file:///D%3A%5CWord%5CTERUAH%5Cfourteen.html) *mill;* [*one*](file:///D%3A%5CWord%5CTERUAH%5Cone.html) *will be taken and the other left. "Therefore keep watch, because you do not* [*know*](file:///D%3A%5CWord%5CTERUAH%5Cdaat.html) *on what day your Lord will come. But understand this: If the owner of the house had* [*known*](file:///D%3A%5CWord%5CTERUAH%5Cdaat.html) *at what* [*time*](file:///D%3A%5CWord%5CTERUAH%5Ctime.html) *of night the thief was* [*coming*](file:///D%3A%5CWord%5CTERUAH%5Ccoming.html)*, he would have kept watch and would not have let his house be broken into. So you also must be ready, because the Son of Man will come at an hour when you do not expect him.*

Wait a minute! If I read the above passage carefully, I see that I am actually supposed to stay awake LOOKING for The [Mashiach](file:///D%3A%5CWord%5CTERUAH%5Cmashiach.html) to return. I do not [know](file:///D%3A%5CWord%5CTERUAH%5Cdaat.html) about Y’all, but I can not stay awake for more than a couple of days at most. I need my beauty [sleep](file:///D%3A%5CWord%5CTERUAH%5Cmashal.html). If you think about the implications of [Mashiach](file:///D%3A%5CWord%5CTERUAH%5Cmashiach.html)’s [command](file:///D%3A%5CWord%5CTERUAH%5Ccmds613.html), then you can understand that we MUST [*know*](file:///D%3A%5CWord%5CTERUAH%5Cdaat.html) when to start looking.

***Mark 13:34-37*** *It's like a man going away: He leaves his house and puts his servants in charge, each with his assigned task, and tells the* [*one*](file:///D%3A%5CWord%5CTERUAH%5Cone.html) *at the door to keep watch. "Therefore keep watch because you do not* [*know*](file:///D%3A%5CWord%5CTERUAH%5Cdaat.html) *when the owner of the house will come back--whether in the evening, or at midnight, or when the rooster crows, or at dawn. If he comes suddenly, do not let him find you* [*sleeping*](file:///D%3A%5CWord%5CTERUAH%5Cmashal.html)*. What I say to you, I say to everyone: 'Watch!'"*

Again we notice that even in the peshat[[2]](#footnote-2), we must [know](file:///D%3A%5CWord%5CTERUAH%5Cdaat.html) when to start looking because we must stay awake and watch during this [time](file:///D%3A%5CWord%5CTERUAH%5Ctime.html). Notice how emphatic the [command](file:///D%3A%5CWord%5CTERUAH%5Ccmds613.html) is.

[***Luke***](file:///D%3A%5CWord%5CTERUAH%5Cluke.html) ***12:35-37*** *"Be dressed ready for service and keep your lamps burning, Like men waiting for their master to return from a* [*wedding*](file:///D%3A%5CWord%5CTERUAH%5Cwedding.html) *banquet, so that when he comes and knocks they can immediately open the door for him. It will be good for those servants whose master finds them watching when he comes. I tell you the truth, he will dress himself to serve, will have them recline at the table and will come and wait on them.*

In this [remez](file:///D%3A%5CWord%5CTERUAH%5Cremez.html) level passage we still see the requirement to stay awake. [Sleep](file:///D%3A%5CWord%5CTERUAH%5Cmashal.html) is an [experience](file:///D%3A%5CWord%5CTERUAH%5Cexperience.html) that [teaches](file:///D%3A%5CWord%5CTERUAH%5Cteacher.html) us something about death, as I have written elsewhere. [Sleep](file:///D%3A%5CWord%5CTERUAH%5Cmashal.html) is also an analogy for the [exile](file:///D%3A%5CWord%5CTERUAH%5Cgaluyot.html), as I have written elsewhere.

Solomon wrote:

***Kohelet (Ecclesiastes) 1:9*** *The thing that hath been, it is that which shall be; and that which is done is that which shall be done: and there is no* [*new*](file:///D%3A%5CWord%5CTERUAH%5Cnew.html) *thing under the* [*sun*](file:///D%3A%5CWord%5CTERUAH%5Chachama.html)*.*

This [teaches](file:///D%3A%5CWord%5CTERUAH%5Cteacher.html) us that [one](file:///D%3A%5CWord%5CTERUAH%5Cone.html) day a [new](file:///D%3A%5CWord%5CTERUAH%5Cnew.html) Sanhedrin will begin sanctifying the [New](file:///D%3A%5CWord%5CTERUAH%5Cnew.html) Moons based on the testimony of [two](file:///D%3A%5CWord%5CTERUAH%5Ctwo.html) witnesses. When this happens, then we will [experience](file:///D%3A%5CWord%5CTERUAH%5Cexperience.html) the uncertainty that [Yom Teruah](file:///D%3A%5CWord%5CTERUAH%5Cteruah.html) is the only [festival](file:///D%3A%5CWord%5CTERUAH%5Cfestival.html) that does not have a definite beginning point.

***Revelation 16:15*** *"Behold, I come like a thief! Blessed is he who stays awake and keeps his clothes with him, so that he may not go naked and be shamefully exposed."*

[Yom Teruah](file:///D%3A%5CWord%5CTERUAH%5Cteruah.html) is the ONLY [festival](file:///D%3A%5CWord%5CTERUAH%5Cfestival.html) (from the [Hebrew](file:///D%3A%5CWord%5CTERUAH%5Chebrew.html) '[moed](file:///D%3A%5CWord%5CTERUAH%5Csettimes.html)' literally [appointment](file:///D%3A%5CWord%5CTERUAH%5Cappointm.html)) that we do not [know](file:///D%3A%5CWord%5CTERUAH%5Cdaat.html) the day or the hour in which to keep it. Therefore, we have to be on the alert, we have to be awake, and we have to be watching for it. Do you want to be [asleep](file:///D%3A%5CWord%5CTERUAH%5Cmashal.html) when [Yeshua](file:///D%3A%5CWord%5CTERUAH%5Cyeshua.html) the King returns?

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As an aside:

How do we currently celebrate [Yom Teruah](file:///D%3A%5CWord%5CTERUAH%5Cteruah.html) if it has an uncertain start [time](file:///D%3A%5CWord%5CTERUAH%5Ctime.html)?

Since we [know](file:///D%3A%5CWord%5CTERUAH%5Cdaat.html) that it will begin on [one](file:///D%3A%5CWord%5CTERUAH%5Cone.html) of [two](file:///D%3A%5CWord%5CTERUAH%5Ctwo.html) possible days, the only sure way to celebrate is to start at the earliest possible [time](file:///D%3A%5CWord%5CTERUAH%5Ctime.html) and continue celebrating until the latest possible [time](file:///D%3A%5CWord%5CTERUAH%5Ctime.html). It is for this reason that [Yom Teruah](file:///D%3A%5CWord%5CTERUAH%5Cteruah.html) is always celebrated for 49 hours, as [one](file:///D%3A%5CWord%5CTERUAH%5Cone.html) long day. It is 49 hours, both in [Eretz Israel](file:///D%3A%5CWord%5CTERUAH%5Ccity.html) and in the Diaspora.

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1. Rosh HaShanah is also known as Yom Teruah and in English as The Feast of Trumpets. [↑](#footnote-ref-1)
2. The [Gospel](file:///D%3A%5CWord%5CTERUAH%5Cmishna1.html) of Mark is written at the peshat level of Torah interpretation, and has its own level of [hermeneutic rules](file:///D%3A%5CWord%5CTERUAH%5Crules.html). [↑](#footnote-ref-2)