



Birkat HaLevana (Kiddush Levana)

1. According to Ashkenazim, one may say the Bracha 3 days after the molad, however according to Sephardim, in general one should wait until 7 days after the molad. For this halacha, days are counted by 24 hour periods.¹ It's proper to wait until Motzei Shabbat to say Birkat HaLevana.²
2. One may say Birkat HaLevana until 15 days after the molad, however, on the 16th day one should say it without Shem UMalchut. Some say that one may only say it until 14^{3/4} days after the molad.³
3. One should look at the moon prior to saying the Bracha. Some hold that one should only look at the moon once and not look at it again, whereas others are lenient to allow looking at it anytime during the Seder of Birkat HaLevana except during the Bracha itself.⁴

Significance of the Bracha: The Gemara Sanhedrin 42a says that saying Birkat HaLevana is like greeting the Shechina. **Biur Halacha** 426:2 explains that by seeing the moon fulfill its mission consistently we recognize Hashem's might and control over nature. **Aruch HaShulchan** 426:2 adds that the Bracha is made on the moon because it's the closest heavenly body to Earth. Also, the moon is compared to Bnei Yisrael; just as the moon doesn't have any of its own light, so too Bnei Yisrael are only sustained through Hashem and his Torah; just as the moon is renewed, so too Bnei Yisrael are always renewed.

1. S"A 426:4 writes that one shouldn't say Birkat Halevana until 7 days have passed from the molad based on the Shaarei Orah. However, the Bach 426 rules like the Rabbenu Yonah who says that one may say it after 3 days. Taz 426:3, Magan Avraham 426:13, Aruch HaShulchan 426:13, and Mishna Brurah 426:20 agree with the Bach. Sh"t Yabea Omer 6:38(1) rules like Shulchan Aruch but adds that if Motzei Shabbat is a few hours less than 7 days one may say it and in places where majority of the month is cloudy one may say it after 3 days. Mishna Brurah 426:17 clarifies that for this halacha days are counted as 24 hour periods and not from sunset to sunset.

2. Maasechet Sofrim 19:10 (in some versions 20:1) writes that one should say Birkat HaLevana specifically on Motzei Shabbat. However, Rabbenu Yonah (Brachot 21a) quotes some who say this, rejects it, and concludes that one can say it anytime after 3 days. Bet Yosef 426:2 writes that probably Rabbenu Yonah didn't have this girsa in Maasechet Sofrim. S"A 426:2 rules that one should say Birkat HaLevana on Motzei Shabbat. However, the Biur HaGra 426:2 cites the Gemara Yevamot 39a which says that we don't delay performing Mitzvot. The Mishna Brurah 426:20 rules that it's proper to wait until Motzei Shabbat but there is what to rely on to say it earlier and in the winter and rainy months those

who are zealous to say it early are praiseworthy. Rama 426:2 writes that if Motzei Shabbat is the 11th night from the molad one doesn't have to wait until Motzei Shabbat because it's possible it will be cloudy the following 4 nights.

3. S"A 426:3 rules like the opinion of Nehardai in Gemara Sanhedrin 41b who say that one has 15 complete days. However, the Rama 426:3 writes that one may only say it up to half of 29 days, 12 hours, and 793 chalakim. Biur Halacha D"H VeLo writes that if one is in such a situation where half of 29 days, 12 hours, 793 chalakim passed and 15 days have not, there is what to rely on to say the Bracha. Biur Halacha adds that if it's the 16th day one should say it without Shem UMalchut. Sh"t Yabea Omer 6:38 agrees with the Biur Halacha.

4. S"A 426:2 writes that one should look at the moon prior to making the Bracha. Magan Avraham 426:8 quotes the Shlah who says that one should only look once and then it's forbidden to look again (for Kabbalistic reasons). Shaarei Knesset HaGedolah 426:5 quotes the Sefer Charedim that one may only look at the moon at the time of the Bracha.

However, Shaarei Knesset HaGedolah writes that the minhag is look at the moon during the entire Seder and it's supported by the language of Maasechet Sofrim quoted by the Tur and S"A. Birur Halacha (vol 5, pg 122) writes that if one is looking at the moon in order to recognize Hashem's wonders then it's permissible.

Mishna Brurah 426:13 quotes these three opinions and doesn't give a ruling. The Aruch HaShulchan 426:5 writes that the minhag is like the Shlah. The Yalkut Yosef (Birkat HaLevana pg 146) agrees.

Rav Schachter said that everyone agrees that one shouldn't look at the moon during the Bracha so it doesn't look like one is praying to the moon.