

# Mars Synodic Cycle – Simplified



## Synodic Cycle and Acronychal Rise

From the perspective of Earth, the planet Mars has a regular pattern that can be regularly seen as one of the visible planets in the night sky. This regular pattern is called a Synodic Cycle.

The Synodic Cycle of Mars begins and ends with its relationship with the Sun (as does the cycles of Venus and the asteroid Vesta). In the case of Mars, it starts when the red planet is at opposition with the Sun.

This is when Mars rises in the east as the Sun sets in

the west. From an astronomical perspective, this is called *acronychal rise*.

## Why Start at Acronychal Rise (Mars-Sun Opposition)?

The reason for beginning the Mars Synodic Cycle at acronychal rise is due to the planet being at its most dramatically bright and hence, closest to planet Earth in its orbit. Other reasons include the mythology and stories of Mars in various ancient cultures, including the Pawnee of North America and the Mesopotamian peoples of Sumer, Babylon and Akkad.

The astrology sign (not the constellation) that Mars is in when beginning the Synodic Cycle is called an *overtone*. The planet typically spends 7-8 months in the overtone sign before, during and after the acronychal rise.

## Length of Synodic Cycle

The Synodic Cycle of Mars lasts, on average, for 780 days and can vary as much as 24 months to over 26 months in length. Because Mars is the closest planet outside of Earth's orbit, it has a unique pattern and the rarest of times when it is retrograde as seen from Earth's skies.

In Shamanic Astrology, this pattern is divided into 6 distinct phases, which is outlined below. Daniel Giamario likens this Synodic Cycle to the birth, growth, maturation and journey's end of a human life.

## PHASE ONE

Begins at Mars – Sun Opposition, also called *Acronychal Rise*. Mars is retrograde for half of this phase and also at its brightest. Phase One ends when Mars returns back to the original point in the sky (astrology sign and degree) where it was at Acronychal Rise.

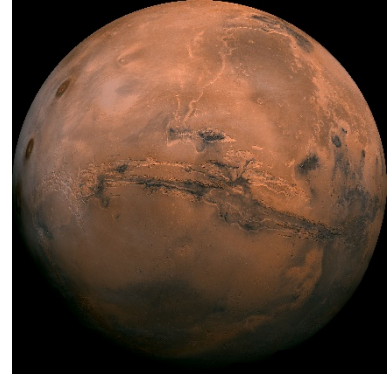
This phase is also highlighted by the concentration of time it spends in one area of the sky, typically in one sign though it can retrograde back into another sign for part of the time.

Shamanically, Phase One is like the Call to Adventure or the start of the Vision Quest. It is can also be seen as a birth and emergence as well as an early youthful period of time for the Masculine

## **PHASE TWO**

This is the longest phase of the Mars Synodic Cycle and is highlighted by 10-11 months of time in the evening sky where it meets the Moon on a monthly basis. These monthly conjunctions with the Moon are known in Shamanic Astrology as Labors / Challenges / Tasks.

The challenges represent specific areas of growth for the masculine varying greatly on the sign and constellation (including nearby stars) that Mars is in. Phase 2 ends when Mars disappears in the glare of the Sun (15 degrees from the Sun).



## **PHASE THREE**

This third phase of the Synodic Cycle can last 3-4 months of time and begins when Mars disappears in the glare of the Sun. This is known as the “underworld phase” and is a time of the masculine surrender. Mars is now on the other side of the Sun, from the perspective of Earth.

Shamanically, this can be seen as Native American Sundance/Humility or Okeepa initiation. Ultimately, it is a process of facing one’s fears and death/rebirth.

## **PHASE FOUR**

This phase begins when Mars first appears in the early morning sky, just prior to sunrise. This phase can last 4-5 months of time. It ends when Mars re-enters the astrological sign that it was in at the time of acronychal rise.

Shamanically, this is about a re-birth and growth of wisdom in the masculine from the potent underworld knowledge gained during Phase 3.

## **PHASE FIVE**

This phase begins as Mars enters the sign of its original acronychal rise. Shamanically, this is about receiving the gift of maturity and elder wisdom. This phase ends when Mars reaches the astrological sign of the next overtone.

## **PHASE ZERO**

This is a period of incubation and gestation in preparation for the next phase of the Mars cycle. It includes metamorphic shift from one sign/archetype to the next, carrying with it the wisdom of the previous cycle.

The cycle ends at the acronychal rise / Mars-Sun Opposition.