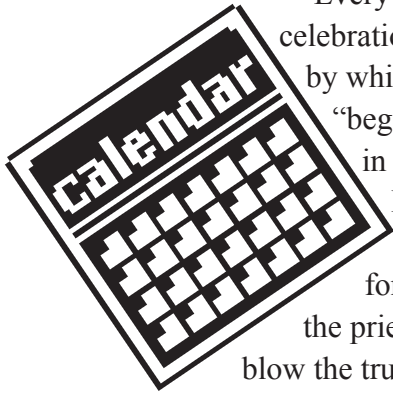


ראש חודש

Rosh Chodesh



Every month is a new gift from HaShem. “Rosh Chodesh” is the celebration of the “new moon” (when it is just a crescent in the sky) by which we make our calendars. “Rosh” (ראש) means “head” or “beginning” and “chodesh” (חודש) means “new month” or “moon” in Hebrew. The Jewish people were to thank HaShem for the time He had given them. On every Shabbat we thank HaShem for another week, and on every Rosh Chodesh we thank Him again for another month. The Torah teaches us that at every New Moon, the priests in the Tabernacle (and eventually in the Temple) were to blow the trumpets over the sacrifices (Num 10:10). In fact, in the Torah, all of the duties relating to the New Month are the responsibility of the priests. The Torah never calls Rosh Chodesh a sabbath, nor is it a "sacred assembly" requiring the gathering of the people. The fact that additional sacrifices were prescribed for Rosh Chodesh (Num 28:11) is most likely why it is linked with the Sabbath in Is. 1:13 and 66:23. Additional sacrifices were also required on the Sabbath (Num 28:9). The Rosh Chodesh in Amos 8:5 is probably referring to Yom Teruah, which is the only Rosh Chodesh that is also a Sabbath.

Since the time of the destruction of the Temple, it became the tradition to blow the shofar or trumpet in the synagogue to announce the new month. It's important to announce the beginning of new month in the Hebrew calendar since in our times, most people use a non-biblical calendar to mark time, so we have to work extra hard to remember God's calendar. Some people use Rosh Chodesh as a good time to empty out their Tzedekah box and give the money to someone who is in need. That would help us remember that all we have comes from HaShem as He takes us from month to month.

HaShem wants us to mark time according to His calendar. For instance, when we come to the month of Adar and celebrate Purim, we are reminded that the very next month is Nisan, the month that brings Pesach and Chag HaMatzot, “Passover” and the “Feast of Unleavened Bread.” HaShem instructed us to make Nisan our first month as we count our festivals, so that Pesach stands as the first festival in our year. Then, in the month of Sivan comes Shavuot, followed in the Fall by Rosh HaShannah, Yom HaKippurim, Sukkot, Shemini Atzeret, and Simchat Torah all in the month of Tishri. Hanukkah is in Kislev, and Purim in Adar. The New Year for trees is in the month of Shevat (Tu B'Shvat = 15th of Shevat). Our Temple was destroyed in the month of Av, on the ninth day (called Tisha B'Av). You can see that if we want to live our lives by God's calendar, we have to keep track of the months!

Did you know that some years we have 13 months rather than 12? Some years we add another Adar, called Adar II or Adar ב. We do this so that our months keep up with the seasons. After all, we are commanded to celebrate Pesach in the Spring!

Can you connect the festival with the month in which it falls? Draw a line from the festival to the month in which it occurs.

7 Nisan

Hanukkah

8 Iyar

Pesach

9 Sivan

Sukkot

10 Tammuz

Shemini Atzeret

11 Av

Shavuot

12 Elul

Rosh HaShanah

1 Tishri

Yom HaKippurim

2 Cheshvan

Purim

3 Kislev

Tu BiShvat

4 Tevet

Simchat Torah

5 Shevat

Tisha B'Av

6 Adar