

^{12:1}The LORD said to Moses and Aaron in Egypt (saying), ²"**This month is to be for you the first month, the first month of your year.** ³Tell the whole community of Israel that on the tenth day of this month each man is to take a lamb for his family, one for each household. ⁴If any household is too small for a whole lamb, they must share one with their nearest neighbor, having taken into account the number of people there are. **You are to determine the amount of lamb needed in accordance with what each person will eat.** ⁵The animals you choose must be year-old males without defect, and you may take them from the sheep or the goats. ⁶Take care of them until the fourteenth day of the month, when all the members of the community of Israel must slaughter them at twilight. ⁷Then they are to take some of the blood and put it on the sides and tops of the doorframes of the houses where they eat the lambs. ⁸That same night they are to eat the meat roasted over the fire, along with bitter herbs, and bread made without yeast. ⁹Do not eat the meat raw or boiled in water, but roast it over a fire—with the head, legs and internal organs. ¹⁰Do not leave any of it till morning; if some is left till morning, you must burn it. ¹¹This is how you are to eat it: with your cloak tucked into your belt, your sandals on your feet and your staff in your hand. Eat it in haste; it is the LORD's Passover. ¹²"On that same night I will pass through Egypt and strike down every firstborn of both people and animals, and **I will bring judgment on all the gods of Egypt.** I am the LORD. ¹³The blood will be a sign for you on the houses where you are, and when I see the blood, I will pass over you. No destructive plague will touch you when I strike Egypt.

1. (v. 1) דִּבֶּר אֶל-בְּנֵי יִשְׂרָאֵל—*Saying*. The commonly used expression דִּבֶּר אֶל-בְּנֵי יִשְׂרָאֵל, *say to the Children of Israel*, is not used here because the task of setting the Jewish calendar was reserved specifically for the leaders of the people, as stated in the Talmud (*Rosh Hashanah* 25b). Similarly, the word לֵאמֹר, *saying*, cannot have its usual meaning—to repeat the matter to the people—because this commandment was not addressed to the masses. Thus, the Midrash explains that in this context לֵאמֹר, *saying*, means *revealing to them* the secret of calculating and establishing the calendar (*Pirkei D'Rabbi Eliezer*,¹ ch 8).²

The secret of the calendar is referred to as סוֹד הַעֲיִבוֹר, *sode ha'ibur*

(*secret of the leap year*), because **it deals with the complexity of reconciling the solar and lunar years**. According to Rambam, some of the subtle rules and proofs which determine the time for the new moon were orally transmitted by the Sages and are not even found in highly technical works on this subject. However, the basic astronomical calculation which has been used to determine the time of the New Moon since the *beis din* [court] stopped the practice of relying on eyewitnesses is now accessible to any student (*Hil. Kiddush HaChodesh* 11:4).

According to the Kabbalists, the *sode ha'ibur* signifies the re-establishment of Divine Unity in relation to the masculine and feminine principles existing within Creation. The fertile and productive masculine principle, the source of energy, is represented in the heavens by the sun; the passive, receptive feminine factor, the agent of form, is represented by the moon. The Jewish calendar attempts to harmonize this dualistic system in the mystery of male and female union; it is a process which corresponds to that of human procreation and pregnancy [which is the literal meaning of the word *ibur*]. Thus, **the sun and the moon merge in the calendar, as the masculine seed and the feminine egg merge in the womb**. (See the commentary to *Genesis* 33:3 and *Numbers* 28:15) ...

2. (v. 2) הַחֹדֶשׁ הַזֶּה לָכֶם רִאשׁ חֳדָשִׁים—*This month shall be for you the beginning of the months*. On the surface this precept does not seem to be related to the deliverance from Egypt. If so, why was a *mitzvah* of such a technical nature accorded the honor of being the first law that the Torah revealed to the Jewish nation in Egypt?

A new historical era began on the day of freedom, the day on which all ties to the Egyptian exile and slavery were severed. Hence, the people of Israel were called on to remember the Exodus forever by calculating their calendar from the month of their deliverance. Furthermore, Israel recalled with gratitude the Divine mercy at this historic time by linking the cycles of its communal life to the same calendar.

Another reason for giving precedence to the Jewish calendar is that it contains an important ethical factor, being based on the moon and its constant renewal. Israel is also blessed with the ability to maintain an eternally youthful enthusiasm for ethical and spiritual purity. In *Deuteronomy*, **Moses warns us of the dangers of permitting our minds to become weakened through indulgence in material well-being**. Were Israel reduced to that, its special spiritual mission would no longer be justified. (See also the commentary to *Genesis* 1:14.)

- a. The saying "this month is to be for the first month ... of your year"—means **the "first month of the FESTIVAL CYCLE."**

1 *Pirkei de-Rabbi Eliezer* (Chapters of Rabbi Eliezer) is an aggadic-midrashic work on the Torah containing exegesis and retellings of biblical stories.

2 Rabbi Elie Munk, *The Call of the Torah, Shemos*, (Mesorah Publications, Ltd.), pp. 124-40.

1) It does not abrogate the observance of the “civil” (or “agricultural”) year that begins on the 1st of Tishrei.

2) Jeremiah 5:24 (NKJ) (Hos 6:3; Joel 2:23)

They do not say in their heart, "Let us now fear the LORD our God, Who gives rain, both **the former and the latter, in its season**. He reserves for us the appointed weeks of the harvest."

NIV—They do not say to themselves, 'Let us fear the LORD our God, **who gives autumn and spring rains in season**, who assures us of the regular weeks of harvest.'

a) Acts 14:17

Yet he has not left himself without testimony: He has shown kindness by giving you **rain from heaven** and crops **in their seasons**; he provides you with plenty of food and fills your hearts with joy."

3) Rosh HaShanah 2a

MISHNAH. **THERE ARE FOUR NEW YEARS.**⁽¹⁾ ON THE FIRST OF NISAN⁽²⁾ IS **NEW YEAR FOR KINGS⁽³⁾ AND FOR FESTIVALS.**⁽⁴⁾ ON THE FIRST OF ELUL⁽⁵⁾ IS **NEW YEAR FOR THE TITHE OF CATTLE.**⁽⁶⁾ R. ELEAZAR AND R. SIMEON, HOWEVER, PLACE THIS ON THE FIRST OF TISHRI.⁽⁷⁾ ON **THE FIRST OF TISHRI⁽⁸⁾ IS NEW YEAR FOR YEARS,** FOR RELEASE AND JUBILEE YEARS,⁽⁹⁾ FOR PLANTATION⁽¹⁰⁾ AND FOR [TITHE OF] VEGETABLES.⁽¹¹⁾ ON THE FIRST OF SHEVAT⁽¹²⁾ IS **NEW YEAR FOR TREES,**⁽¹³⁾ ACCORDING TO THE RULING OF BETH SHAMMAI; BETH HILLEL, HOWEVER, PLACE IT ON THE FIFTEENTH OF THAT MONTH.

(1) I.e., the year is reckoned to commence at different dates for different purposes, as the Mishnah goes on to specify.

(2) The first month of the Jewish calendar (in Biblical times known as 'the month of Aviv,' or the springing corn), commencing in the latter half of March or the earlier part of April.

(3) If a document is dated with a certain year in a king's reign, the year is reckoned to have commenced in Nisan, no matter in what month the king came to the throne.

(5) The sixth month of the Jewish calendar.

(6) For purposes of tithe it was necessary to specify the year in which cattle were born, because cattle born in one year could not be given as tithe for cattle born in another (Lev. XXVII, 32).

(7) So that according to these authorities there were only three New Years.

(8) The seventh month.

(9) I.e., from the first of Tishri in these years ploughing and similar operations were forbidden (Lev. XXV, 4, 11).

(10) For reckoning the number of years that the fruit of a newly-planted tree may be eaten (Lev. XIX, 23).

(11) I.e., those gathered after this date could not be used as tithe for those gathered before. Cf. n. 6.

(12) The eleventh month.

(13) For tithing the fruit. V. notes 6 and 11.

b. 2Corinthians 5:16-21 (CJB)

¹⁶So from now on, we do not look at anyone from a worldly viewpoint. Even if we once regarded the Messiah from a worldly viewpoint, we do so no longer. ¹⁷Therefore, **if anyone is united with the Messiah, he is a new creation**—the old has passed; look, what has come is fresh and new! ¹⁸And it is all from God, who through the Messiah has reconciled us to himself and has given us the work of that reconciliation, ¹⁹which is that God in the Messiah was reconciling mankind to himself, not counting their sins against them, and entrusting to us the message of reconciliation. ²⁰Therefore we are ambassadors of the Messiah; in effect, God is making his appeal through us. What we do is appeal on behalf of the Messiah, "Be reconciled to God! ²¹God made this sinless man be a sin offering on our behalf, so that in union with him we might fully share in God's righteousness."

1) Exodus 19:5-6

⁵Now if you obey me fully and keep my covenant, then out of all nations you will be my treasured possession. Although the whole earth is mine, **"you will be for me a kingdom of priests and a holy nation."** These are the words you are to speak to the Israelites."

c. 2Kings 17:34-41

³⁴To this day the (people that the King of Assyria settled in Samaria) persist in their former practices. They neither worship the LORD nor adhere to the decrees and regulations, the laws and commands that the LORD gave the descendants of Jacob, whom he named Israel. ³⁵When the LORD made a covenant with the Israelites, he commanded them: "Do not worship any other gods or bow down to them, serve them or sacrifice to them. ³⁶But the LORD, who brought you up out of Egypt with mighty power and outstretched arm, is the one you must worship. To him you shall bow down and to him offer sacrifices. ³⁷You must always be careful to keep the decrees and regulations, the laws and commands he wrote for you. Do not worship other gods. ³⁸Do not forget the covenant I have made with you, and do not worship other gods. ³⁹Rather, **worship the LORD your God**; it is he who will deliver you from the hand of all your enemies." ⁴⁰They would not listen, however, but persisted in their former practices.

⁴¹Even while these people were worshipping the LORD, they were serving their idols. To this day their children and grandchildren continue to do as their ancestors did.

1) 1Corinthians 10:14-21

¹⁴Therefore, my dear friends, flee from idolatry ... ²⁰the sacrifices of pagans are offered to demons, not to God, and I do not want you to be participants with demons. ²¹You cannot drink the cup of the Lord and the cup of demons too; you cannot have a part in both the Lord's table and the table of demons.

d. Matthew 6:24

²⁴"No one can serve two masters. Either you will hate the one and love the other, or you will be devoted to the one and despise the other. **You cannot serve both God and money.**

1) 1Kings 18:21

²¹Elijah went before the people and said, "How long will you waver between two opinions? If the LORD is God, follow him; but if Baal is God, follow him." But the people said nothing.

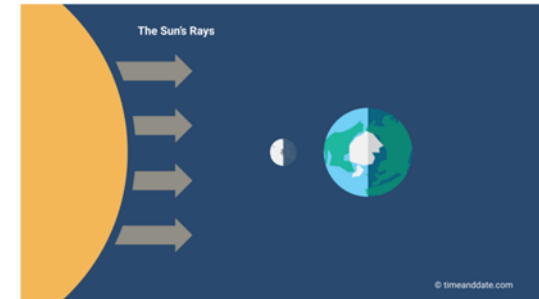
3. (v. 2) הַחֹדֶשׁ הַזֶּה—This month [lit. *this renewal of the moon*]. Rashi explains that Moses was uncertain as to the exact point at which the moon was considered to be a New Moon, marking the start of another month (*Rosh Chodesh*). **Hashem pointed to the moon in the sky and told him that when it is seen in this form the *beis din* [court] may consecrate it and declare *Rosh Chodesh*.** And so was originated the practice of consecrating the New Moon on the basis of observations by designated witnesses who then testified before *beis din* as to what they had seen. This practice continued until the Supreme *Beis Din* in the Holy Land was abolished, which occurred at the end of the Talmudic era. After that, the calendar was permanently established on the basis of astronomical calculations set in the year 4119 (359 CE) by Hillel and his *beis din*. These calculations were designed to regulate the calendar until the coming of the prophet Elijah to herald the Messianic era (*Rambam, Hil, Kiddush HaChodesh* 5:1-7).

a. In Western culture, the New Moon is when the Sun and Moon are aligned, with the Sun and Earth on opposite sides of the Moon. It is called **the "Invisible Phase."**

1) There are two reasons **why we can't see the New Moon:**³

a) The **alignment of the Sun, the Moon, and Earth** leaves the side of the Moon that faces Earth in **darkness**. This is called a conjunction or *syzygy*.

b) The **New Moon is up in the daytime sky**. It rises and sets around the same time as the Sun, bringing it **too close to the Sun's glare** to be seen with the naked eye.



b. In Judasim, the new moon is **the first visible "sliver" of the newly "waxing" moon.**



1) *Rosh Chodesh*—Hebrew for "head of the month"—is the monthly holiday that celebrates the arrival of the new moon, marking the start of a new month in the Jewish calendar. Because each lunar

³ <https://www.timeanddate.com/astronomy/moon/new-moon.html>

month is 29.5 days, the Jewish calendar “splits the difference”: some months are 29 days and others 30.⁴

4. (v. 2) לָכֵם—*For you*. Our Sages explain this as stating that the new month is for you and by you. The Supreme *Beis Din* had the responsibility of declaring each *Rosh Chodesh*.

A deeper meaning in this phrase points to Israel's sustained effort to continuously progress on the road to perfection, using all the reserves at its disposal. No mystery of heavenly grace comes to intervene in Judaism. Quite the contrary: *All is in the hands of Heaven, except the fear of Heaven*. We are the absolute masters of our moral condition. Thus, the symbol of the renewal of the month, a gesture made by the people with great solemnity, is a pointed means of encouraging us to work with a youthful spirit toward sanctification of the individual and the people (*Rabbi S.R. Hirsch*).

- a. Calvinism⁵ (also called Reformed theology) is based on the theological ideas of John Calvin (1509-1564). Two of the “five points” of Calvinism are:

- 1) Total depravity—every person born into the world is enslaved to the service of sin. **People are not by nature inclined to love God with their whole heart, mind, or strength**, but rather all are inclined to serve their own interests over those of their neighbor and to reject the rule of God. **All people** by their own faculties **are morally unable to choose to follow God** and be saved because they are unwilling to do so out of the necessity of their own natures.
- 2) Unconditional election—**God has chosen from eternity those whom he will bring to himself not based on foreseen virtue, merit, or faith in those people**; rather, it is unconditionally grounded in God's mercy alone. God has chosen from eternity to extend mercy to those He has chosen and to withhold mercy from those not chosen. Those chosen receive salvation through Messiah alone. Those not chosen receive the just wrath that is warranted for their sins against God.

- b. Deuteronomy 30:19

¹⁹This day I call the heavens and the earth as witnesses against you that I have set before you life and death, blessings and curses. Now **choose life, so that you and your children may live.**

- 1) Romans 10:10-13

¹⁰For **it is with your heart that you believe** and are justified, and it is with your mouth that you profess your faith and are saved. ¹¹As Scripture says, “Anyone who believes in him will never be put to shame” (Isa 28:16; Jer 17:7). ¹²For there is no difference between Jew and Gentile—the same Lord is Lord of all and richly blesses all who call on him, ¹³for, **“Everyone who calls on the name of the Lord will be saved”** (Joel 2:32).

5. (v. 2) לָכֵם הוּא רִאשׁוֹן—*It shall be for you the first*. The Midrash explains that the history of Israel as a nation begins with this proclamation, which is issued as a sign of affection from God to the Jewish people. It is compared to the story of a king who had several concubines, but did not offer any of them the legalities of marriage. However, once he met a woman from an illustrious family and said to her that she was the one for whom he had been keeping the marriage certificate and the announcement of the month and day of the marriage. In a similar manner, it was for Israel that Hashem had kept the Tablets of the Law [the marriage certificate] and the proclamation of the date of His alliance with them (*Tanchuma*).

Initially, **the months were called by numbers—i.e., the first month [Nissan]**, the second month [Iyar], and so on. Only after the exiles returned from Babylonia did our months receive their present names, which are of Babylonian and Persian origin, **as a remembrance of our deliverance from those lands**.

- a. Genesis 8:5-14

⁵The waters continued to recede until **the tenth month** (הַחֹדֶשׁ הָעֲשִׂירִי), and on the first day of the tenth month the tops of the mountains became visible ...

¹³By the first day of **the first month** (הַיּוֹם הָרִאשׁוֹן) of Noah's six hundred and first year, the water had dried up from the earth. Noah then removed the covering from the ark and saw that the surface of the ground was dry.

¹⁴By the twenty-seventh day of **the second month** (בַּחֹדֶשׁ הַשֵּׁנִי) the earth was completely dry.

- b. Zechariah 8:19

¹⁹This is what the LORD Almighty says: “The fasts of the **fourth, fifth, seventh and tenth months** will become joyful and glad occasions and happy festivals for Judah. Therefore love truth and peace.”

1) The fast of the “fourth” is 17Tammuz (June-July).

2) The fast of the “fifth” is the 9Av, **Tisha b'Av** (July-August).

4 <https://pjllibrary.org/beyond-books/pjblog/june-2021/what-is-rosh-chodesh#:~:text=Rosh%20Chodesh%20%E2%80%93%20Hebrew%20for%20%E2%80%9CHead,29%20days%20and%20others%2030.>

5 en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Calvinism

- 3) The fast of the “seventh” is the 10Tishrei, **Yom Kippur**.
- 4) The fast of the “tenth” is the 10Tevet (December-January).

5) 1Kings 6:37-38

³⁷The foundation of the temple of the LORD was laid in the fourth year, in the month of **Ziv (Iyar)**. ³⁸In the eleventh year in the month of **Bul (Cheshvan)**, **the eighth month**, the temple was finished in all its details according to its specifications. He had spent seven years building it.

6) Nehemiah 1:1-2 (cf., Zech 7:1)

¹The words of Nehemiah son of Hakaliah: In the month of **Kislev (9/3)** in the twentieth year, while I was in the citadel of Susa, ²Hanani, one of my brothers, came from Judah with some other men, and I questioned them about the Jewish remnant that had survived the exile, and also about Jerusalem ...

7) Esther 3:6-7, 13

⁶Yet having learned who Mordecai's people were, he scorned the idea of killing only Mordecai. Instead Haman looked for a way to destroy all Mordecai's people, the Jews, throughout the whole kingdom of Xerxes.

⁷In the twelfth year of King Xerxes, in **the first month, the month of Nisan**, the *pur* (that is, the lot) was cast in the presence of Haman to select a day and month. And the lot fell on **the twelfth month, the month of Adar**.

¹³Dispatches were sent by couriers to all the king's provinces with the order to destroy, kill and annihilate all the Jews—young and old, women and children—on a single day, **the thirteenth day of the twelfth month, the month of Adar**, and to plunder their goods.

6. (v. 2) **לְחֹדֶשִׁי הַשָּׁנָה ... רִאשׁוֹן**—*The first of the months of the year*. **The months are counted from Nissan, while the years themselves are counted from the month of Tishrei, which according to tradition is the anniversary of the creation of the world.** The Talmud states that the first of *Nissan* marks the beginning of the year for recording the history of Jewish kings and the calculating of the holy days, while the first of Tishrei commences the civil year for the purpose of contracts (*Rosh Hashanah* 2a). Thus, the Jewish year has a double cycle. The first cycle, relating to earthly and secular life, begins in autumn; the second cycle, spiritual and national, starts in the spring. The first follows the evolution of nature itself connected with the creation of the world. The second is introduced much later. It follows the unfolding of history and comes into being with the creation of Israel.

In a way, however, the two cycles can also be understood as having opposite roles. These two cycles also complement each other, just as the body and the soul maintain one another. Every year the month of *Nissan*, the anniversary of our freedom as a nation, releases us from our physical and material contamination, for the rebirth of the people as a whole coincided with the rebirth of nature, which is spring. The **חֶמֶץ**, *chometz* [leavened bread] which we destroy in the month of *Nissan* symbolizes this contamination and so the cleansing process is referred to as **בִּיעוּר חֶמֶץ גּוֹפָּנִי**, *the physical expulsion of chometz*. The month of Tishrei, on the other hand, invites us to rid ourselves of our moral shortcomings, so that we can properly prepare ourselves during the winter in achieving our mission as a people. This process is referred to as **בִּיעוּר חֶמֶץ נַפְשִׁי**, *the spiritual expulsion of chometz* (*Megaleh Amukos*⁶ [Reveals Depth]).

The Jewish year unfolds as a rejuvenation, alternatively involving our physical and spiritual strength, consecrated to serving God.

a. 1Corinthians 5:6-8 (CJB)

⁶Your boasting is not good. Don't you know the saying, "It takes only a little *hametz* to leaven a whole batch of dough?" ⁷**Get rid of the old hametz, so that you can be a new batch of dough, because in reality you are unleavened.** For our *Pesach* lamb, the Messiah, has been sacrificed. ⁸So let us celebrate the *Seder* not with leftover *hametz*, the *hametz* of wickedness and evil, but with the *matzah* of purity and truth.

NIV—⁶Your boasting is not good. Don't you know that a little yeast leavens the whole batch of dough? ⁷Get rid of the old yeast, so that you may be a new unleavened batch-- as you really are. For Messiah, our Passover lamb, has been sacrificed. ⁸Therefore let us keep the Festival, not with the old bread leavened with malice and wickedness, but with the unleavened bread of sincerity and truth.

⁶ *Megaleh Amukot* is a 1637 work by Rabbi Nathan Nata Spira who lived in Poland (1585-1633).