

Rosh Chodesh



Aims:

- To learn about the significance of Rosh Chodesh (RC).
- To find out how the new month was declared before the Temple was destroyed.
- To see how Eretz Yisrael is crucial to this



Shalom Shalom

Firstly, I'd like to say a huge yashar Koach to Salford Madrichim on what can only be described as an amazing FFN!... the food was amazing, but more importantly the Ruach was out of this world!... lets take this positive energy that has been apparent all over the country to machane to make this one to go down in the ages!!!

This week on Tuesday and Wednesday it is/was Rosh Chodesh, which inspired me for this weeks choveret!

Hope you are all eating lots of Latkes and other oily products!! Chanuka Sameach!!!!!!

Davidoff



וַיֹּאמֶר ה' אֶל מֹשֶׁה וְאֶל אַהֲרֹן בְּאֶרֶץ מִצְרַיִם לֵאמֹר: הַחֹדֶשׁ
הַזֶּה לָכֶם רֹאשׁ חֳדָשִׁים רִאשׁוֹן הוּא לָכֶם לַחֲדָשֵׁי הַשָּׁנָה

"And Hashem said to Moshe and to Aharon in the land of Egypt saying: This month is to you the head of months; it's the first to you of the months of the year." – Shemot 12:1-2

Ladies and Gentlemen, boys and girls, "let me introduce you to" the first mitzvah given to the Jewish people.... ooooooooo..... Rosh Chodesh!!! We do learn mitzvot from Sefer Bereshit like Brit Mila – but here for the first time we have a mitzvah as a nation.



1 point for knowing why this picture is here!

Why is this the first mitzvah given to Am Yisrael?

Time governs our lives. We wake up, eat and sleep based around the time of day. Our appointments, meetings and holidays are all scheduled for a particular time.





Time is the sphere in which we play out our actions. Therefore if we are to be a people that bring Hashem into every part of our lives, we have to look at what we spend our time doing.

Rosh Chodesh is not just about having a festival once a month – it is the basis for the entire Jewish calendar.

The Jewish



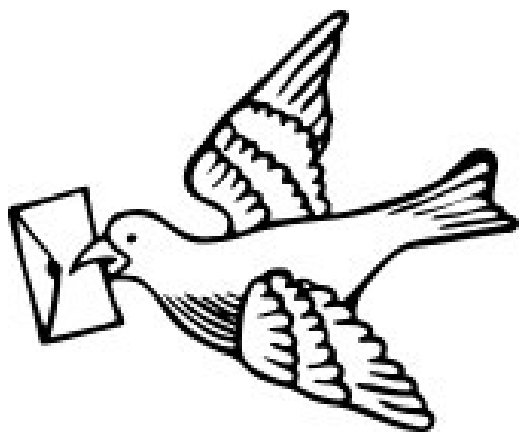
Calendar

We have so many mitzvot based around the concept of time – from Shabbat to Tefillin, Succah to Megilla and Chanukah candles to Seder Night. But the whole system only works if you have a calendar with dates and times – and for that you need Rosh Chodesh.

So let's find out more about the origins of how we work out when the new month is...

Back in the day

In ancient times, Rosh Chodesh was a significant festival day. At that time, the new months were determined by observation. Each month began when the first sliver of moon became visible after the dark of the moon. Observers would watch the sky at night for any sign of the moon. If they saw the moon, they would report their sightings to the Sanhedrin, who would interrogate them to make sure that they were not mistaken. Where in the sky did the moon appear? Which direction was it pointing? If two independent and reliable eyewitnesses confirmed that the new moon had appeared and described it consistently, the Sanhedrin would say 'Mekadesh'-sanctified. This process was called *Kiddush Hachodesh*, sanctification of the month.



This decision would then be communicated by messengers to all Jewish communities telling people when the month began. Essentially the decision of Sanhedrin could alter the date of the festivals, the day on which people testified and the New Moon was declared would decide whether any

The day after the moon appeared was a festival, announced with the sounding of the shofar, commemorated with solemn gathering, family festivities and special sacrifices. The importance of this holiday in ancient times should not be underestimated. The entire calendar was dependent upon these declarations; without the declarations, there would be no way of knowing when holidays were supposed to occur.

Points TO *Ponder*

- ✚ Why is there a commandment to *declare* Rosh Chodesh – why can't we just 'know' when it is, like Shabbat?
- ✚ Why did we make such a song and dance about the whole 'moon-spotting' phenomenon?
- ✚ What would happen if the witnesses got it wrong – weren't we a bit reliant on two people?

One of the most fascinating elements to Rosh Chodesh is that it is up to the Jewish people to keep the calendar going. Yes, there could be a mistake and the months could be wrong – but this mitzvah shows that *Hashem has faith in the Jewish people to be part of making halacha*. Judaism is not a one-way process, it is a



two-way one. As the previous Chief Rabbi may well say at some point,

“Judaism is not a monologue but a dialogue. It is the most divine of religions but also the most human. Judaism is the covenant of conversation.”



Hashem speaks to us through the Torah – and we speak to Him through our tefillot. Hashem took us out of Egypt – but we had to conquer Eretz Yisrael. Hashem decided when Shabbat would be – but we decide the dates of Rosh Chodesh and Chagim.

In other words, Rosh Chodesh shows the beautiful partnership between Hashem and the Jewish people, which has been made strong throughout a series of covenants, notably of course the giving of the Torah at Mount Sinai, which we’ll read about in a few weeks’ time.

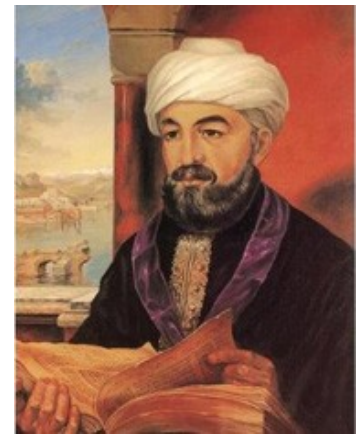
Rosh Chodesh and Eretz Yisrael

One lesser-known feature of Rosh Chodesh is that it is not just based on the Jewish people making it happen – it is very much linked to the land of Israel too. The idea is as follows:

Since we don't have a Sanhedrin unfortunately, we can't do the Mitzvah of Kiddush Hachodesh in full. Rather, we have a calendar, which we nowadays rely on. BUT this has one major condition, as will be explained by the Rambam (Maimonides)...

“If we assume, for example, that all Jews in Eretz Yisrael were to leave Eretz Yisrael (G-d forbid He should do this since He already promised not to erase or uproot the people completely); and we assume there is no Bet Din close to Eretz Yisrael – all our calculations would be not be useful in any way, because in Chutz La'aretz we cannot calculate the months, make leap years and establish months...”

The Rambam is saying something unbelievable – that our entire existence of Judaism is completely reliant on Jews being in the land of Israel! Without this, there can be no calendar, no Kiddush Hachodesh, no Chagim – basically, not much!



Basically, we need to have at least three males, representing a theoretical Bet Din, living in Israel to be able to give authority to our calendar. But why isn't a calendar good enough? Because unlike the counting process for Shabbat, the way this Mitzvah was designed was to be contingent on having a Bet Din in Eretz Yisrael. (Note: these limitations only took place once the Jews entered the land i.e. not when first commanded in Parashat Bo).

This is definitely food for thought in terms of how we view Eretz Yisrael – is it just another mitzvah or a nice dream...or is it none other than the life-force of the Jewish people?

Rosh Chodesh in Tanach:

In the past, Jews would not work at all on Rosh Chodesh. In a conversation with King David, for example, Jonathan (son of King Saul and David's best friend) refers to the day before Rosh Chodesh as the "day of work"—i.e. in contrast to the following day, Rosh Chodesh, when there would be no work.

Ancient Jews also used Rosh Chodesh as a day to make pilgrimage to the prophet of that day. Thus when the Shunamite woman tells her husband that she's going to visit the prophet Elisha, he says to her: "Why are you going to him today—it is neither a Sabbath nor Rosh Chodesh?" (She was going to ask him to heal her son.)



➤ **The Minute Game**

- A new game - **the Moonpig game!** Get into groups and each have to make an acted personalised Rosh Chodesh greeting card for a selected person (the Rosh), which has to include



the moonpig.com jingo! (We are not being paid by www.moonpig.com for this free publicity!)

- **Acting out** the process of Kiddush Hachodesh with witnesses to help understand what actually occurs.
- **Pairs** with months and images of festivals, once they get there pair, they then need to go round the circle naming as many laws or minhagim that we have on each of those festivals!
- **Create** a song about the months of the year and connect each to the festivals... (it might just make its way to Machane)
- **Song game** with different months
- **The PSC Game-** please ask me how to play this game, it's epic

Bnei Akiva 5774: Dates for your Diary

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-KVUTSAH PLANNING SHEET-

THEME		
<u>Aim 1:</u>	<u>Aim 2:</u>	<u>Aim 3:</u>
<u>Related Activities</u> <u>Activities</u>	<u>Related Activities</u>	<u>Related</u>
↓	↓	↓
Points to discuss:	Points to discuss:	Points to
↓	↓	↓
Conclusion:		
Tziud needed:		

