

Laws & Customs

Jewish Calendar

The length of days and hours vary by the season, controlled by the times of sunset, nightfall, dawn and sunrise. The months and years of the Jewish calendar are established by the cycles of the moon and the sun.

Though the months follow the lunar cycle, the lunar months must always align themselves with the seasons of the year, which are governed by the sun. Thus, the Jewish calendar is "Luni-Solar." The discrepancy between the solar year (365 days) and the lunar year (354 days) was resolved by every so often adding a thirteenth month to the year, to form a "leap year."

In the early times of our history, the High Court (*Sanhedrin*) in Jerusalem was assigned the tasks of determining the beginning of each month and the balancing of the solar with the lunar years. They relied on direct observation of the New Moon, astronomical data, and other considerations.

After the Temple's destruction, however, a fixed calendar was instituted -- based on the *Sanhedrin's* closely guarded secrets of calendric calculation. This is the permanent calendar according to which the New Moons and festivals are calculated and celebrated today by Jews all over the world.



Passover in January

There is a unique and specific time that G-d designated for every holiday. For example, Rosh Hashana is always celebrated in September or October (Tishrei). We do not have a choice to change the timing of it as it is the date that G-d designated.

However, there is one holiday our Sages tell us that should be remembered every day of the year. That is the holiday of Passover. Since our Exodus from Egypt over 3,323 years ago we have been remembering that momentous event daily.

Passover celebrates how the Jewish people that were slaves in Egypt were miraculously redeemed. They had endured one of the most laborious and backbreaking enslavements in our history, but with faith and the help of G-d they were freed. We too have difficulties and challenges that confront us when we wish to serve G-d. These challenges are considered our personal Egypt, as they obstruct us from accomplishing our mission. It is our task to overcome the obstacles with absolute faith that if we do what G-d asks we will succeed in life.

Passover may have happened many years ago, but the lesson exists even in the month of January.

ב"ג" שבת
January 7-8, 2011
Candle Lighting
5:20
Shabbat Ends
6:18

**In honor of the
Schapiro Family**

Baba Sali:

Rabbi Yisroel Abuchatzera

The Tzaddik, Baba Sali revealed once that until the age of forty he was unable to grow a beard. By that time he worried perhaps he would never be able to do so, similar to his uncle who never grew a beard his entire life.

One night when Baba Sali was distressed about this issue he secluded himself in personal prayer, crying out and pleading before the Creator of the universe until morning!

"How can I fulfill the mitzvos dependent on the beard if I don't even have a beard?!"

Within that very week there were already signs of a beard sprouting, praise be to Hashem. Whenever the Baba Sali recounted the story, he tenderly held his beard in his hand, kissing it.

"Baruch Hashem, I am happy that I never blemished my beard in any form (through trimming), and it remained with its sanctity!"

Saying

"The world says that time is money and I say that time is life."

Rebbe