

TRIBE TIME

TIKUN LEI'L SHAVUOT



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Dear Parents and Children,

The journey towards Kabalat HaTorah (receiving of the Torah) begins with the story of Pesach. As the Children of Israel emerged from a dark period of slavery, God commands us with our very first communal Mitzvah: the sanctification of the new moon. As we read through the book of Exodus, it's rather surprising to learn that the Torah suddenly pauses from the storyline and delves into the details of a rather complicated Mitzvah. Furthermore, one would presume that the Children of Israel were eager to leave Egypt and escape from their enslavers. Was this an appropriate time to teach them about the sanctity of the new moon?

The Torah comes to teach us that the purpose of our physical redemption is indeed spiritual redemption. Without our spiritual redemption, the physical is meaningless. The Mitzvah of Kiddush HaChodesh (sanctifying the new moon) teaches us about the sanctity of time. As slaves, we were unable to manage our own time but as free people we can decide how to use our time. The Torah is warning us that free people can also find themselves enslaved and we are therefore invited, as a nation, to sanctify our time and achieve spiritual redemption.

The Hebrew word for time is: **Zman**. When three people Bench together after a meal, they make a **Zimun**, which means "an invitation to Bench". A person who receives an invitation, in modern Hebrew, is a **Muzman**. The Hebrew word for cash is **Mezuman**, because it is ready to be used for purchasing. The Hebrew word for time refers to a state of readiness at a certain point in time. The Jewish calendar provides us with endless meaningful opportunities and the Torah is asking each and every one of us to prepare and make the most of our special sanctified times.

The festival of Shavuot is called: "**Zman** Matan Torah" (the time God gave us the Torah). The correct term should actually be "**Yom** Matan Torah" (the day God gave us the Torah). The name of this unique festival touches upon the very essence of Jewish life. We are not merely commemorating a historical event, we are preparing to receive the Torah as the Children of Israel did on Har Sinai 3330 years ago.

Chag Sameach and welcome to Tribe Time!

Rabbi Cobi Ebrahimoff
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TRIBE-TIME!

THE JEWISH DAY

When God created the world, He first created night and then day. For this reason, a Jewish calendar date begins on the night beforehand. While a day in the secular calendar begins and ends at midnight, a Jewish day goes from nightfall to nightfall. This is also the reason why Shabbat and Chaggim (Jewish festivals) begin at night.

This also applies to Jewish birthdays. If the 1st of Sivan falls on Tuesday, and a child is born Tuesday night, the child's birthday is the 2nd of Sivan.

The concept of the Jewish date beginning at night is based on the story of creation in Bereshit (Genesis), where at the end of each day the Passuk (verse) first mentions the evening and then the morning. By mentioning evening before morning, the Torah defines a day as beginning with the evening, followed by the morning. In general, Jewish Halachik time is not marked by the watch, but by sunrise and sunset.



Why does the Jewish day begin at night?
What does this teach us?



Do any events in the Jewish calendar start in the morning? Why?

"וַיִּקְרָא אֱלֹהִים לְאֹר יוֹם וְלַחֹשֶׁךְ קָרָא לַיְלָה וַיְהִי עֶרֶב וַיְהִי בֹקֶר יוֹם אֶחָד"

God called to the light: "Day" and to the darkness He called: "Night".
And there was evening and there was morning, one day.

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THE JEWISH WEEK

The Jewish week begins when Shabbat terminates. As the new week begins, we start preparing for the next Shabbat. The days of the week do not have names; they are numbered as a lead up to Shabbat. For example: Sunday is **Yom Rishon**, the first day leading up to Shabbat. It is a special Mitzvah to prepare for Shabbat and this can be done during any of the six days of the week before Shabbat.

Every day, at the end of Tefilat Shacharit, we recite the 'song of the day' which mentions the days of the week in relation to Shabbat.

For example, on Sundays we recite: "Hayom Yom Rishon BeShabbat" (today is the first day leading to Shabbat). On Shabbat the song of the day begins with the words: Hayom Yom Shabbat Kodesh!

As with all Jewish days, Shabbat Kodesh begins at dusk. However, the definition of dusk is unclear. The time between sunset and nightfall (the emergence of three stars) is considered 'a Safek' (doubtful). This period of twilight is called 'Bein Hashemashot'.



How could one prepare for Shabbat on a Sunday?



"יותר משישראל שמרו את השבת - שמרה השבת אותם"

"More than Israel has kept Shabbat, Shabbat has kept Israel."

(Asher Hirsch Ginsberg, primarily known by his pen name 'Ahad Ha'am')

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BEIN HASHEMASHOT

We do not know whether Bein Hashemashot is considered to be day or night. Shabbat is a Mitzvah Mideoraita (from the Torah) and we do not want to be doubtful when it comes to Torah commandments. For this reason, Bein Hashemashot will always be considered part of Shabbat. In fact, one should make every possible effort to bring in Shabbat a few minutes before Sunset and terminate Shabbat a few minutes after nightfall. The additional time of Shabbat observance is called 'Tossefet Shabbat' (an addition to Shabbat). The Tossefet Shabbat demonstrates how much we love Shabbat!

The Safek of Bein Hashemashot has many Halachik implications in different areas of Jewish life. For example: The Brit Milah (circumcision). Ideally, a Brit is performed on the eighth day from birth, even if the eighth day falls on Shabbat or Yom-Tov.



If a baby is born on Friday Bein Hashemashot, we cannot hold the Brit on the following Friday because this may be the seventh day from birth. Conversely, Shabbat may be the ninth day from birth so it is not possible to perform the Brit on Shabbat either. We are therefore left with no choice but to postpone the Brit to Sunday.

In the context of Shabbat, Bein Hashemashot is Safek Chol (weekday) and Safek Shabbat. The Torah teaches us that Hashem created the world during the six weekdays and rested on Shabbat. The Safek of Bein Hashemashot could potentially be resolved if we were to determine whether Hashem continued creating the world during this period of time.

"דורשי ה' זרע אברהם אוהבו: המאחרים לצאת מן השבת וממהרים לבוא"

"Seekers of the Lord, offspring of His beloved Abraham, who are slow to leave the Shabbat but hasten to enter it"

(Zemiroth for Shabbat evening)



A baby is born on Wednesday Bein Hashmashot, Rosh Hashana falls on the following Thursday and Friday, when should the baby have his Brit?



TRIBE 10 TIME!

TEN THINGS CREATED AT TWILIGHT

The fifth chapter of Pirkei Avot (Ethics of the Fathers) begins with lists which are structured by the number ten: The world was created with ten sayings; ten generations from Adam to Noah; ten generations from Noah to Abraham; ten trials by which Abraham was tested; ten miracles in Egypt; ten miracles on the Red Sea and ten miracles in the Temple. The last of the 'tens' are the ten things created on the eve of Shabbat Bein Hashemashot:

Ten things were created at twilight:

The mouth of the earth (that swallowed Korach), the mouth of the well (that provided water in the desert), the mouth of the donkey (that spoke to Bilam), the rainbow (which appeared after the flood), the manna (which descended from heaven to provide food in the desert), the staff (used by Moshe to perform miracles), the Shamir (a miraculous worm which had the power to cut through stone and diamond while building the Temple), the writing (on the Tablets), the inscription (on the Tablets) and the Tablets themselves.

עֲשָׂרָה דְּבָרִים נִבְרָאוּ
בְּעֶרְבַּ שַׁבָּת בֵּין הַשְּׁמָשׁוֹת

וְאֵלוֹ הֵן:

א. פִּי הָאָרֶץ

ב. פִּי הַבְּאֵר

ג. פִּי הָאֵתוֹן

ד. הַקֶּשֶׁת

ה. הַמָּן

ו. הַמָּטָה

ז. הַשְּׁמִיר

ח. הַכְּתָב

ט. הַמִּכְתָּב

י. הַלְּחוֹת



What was the Shamir used for and why?

What was special about the writing on the Tablets?

Why were these things created Bein Hashemashot?



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THE SHABBAT DEBATE

One who was walking in the desert, and he does not know when Shabbat occurs...

Rav Huna says: He counts six days from the day that he realised that he lost track of time and then observes one day as Shabbat.

Hiya Bar Rav says: He first observes one day as Shabbat and then he counts six weekdays.

The Gemara explains: Rav Huna holds that it's like the creation of the world, weekdays followed by Shabbat. Hiya bar Rav holds that its like Adam, the first man, who was created on the sixth day. He observed Shabbat followed by the six days of the week.

גמרא שבת סט:

היה מהלך במדבר ואינו יודע אימתי שבת

רב הונא אמר מונה ששה ימים ומשמר יום אחד

חייא בר רב אמר משמר יום אחד ומונה ששה

מר סבר כברייתו של עולם ומר סבר כאדם הראשון



Is it possible to make Kiddush with no wine in the desert?



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THE JEWISH MONTH

The Jewish calendar is based on lunar (moon) cycles. The entire cycle takes approximately 29½ days. Since a month needs to consist of complete days, a month is sometimes twenty-nine days long and sometimes thirty days long.

Towards the beginning of the moon's cycle, the moon appears as a thin crescent. That is the signal for a new Jewish month.



The moon grows until it is full in the middle of the month, and then it begins to disappear until it cannot be seen.



It remains invisible for approximately two days and then the thin crescent reappears, and the cycle begins again with Rosh Chodesh.



Does the Jewish calendar only follow the lunar cycle?



How many months are there in the Jewish calendar?

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DID YOU WITNESS A NEW MOON?

The dates of the Chagim are scheduled according to Rosh Chodesh. For example: Pesach will begin 14 days after Rosh Chodesh Nissan.

In the times of the Temple, Rosh Chodesh was decided and declared by the Rabbis. On the 30th day of every month, the Rabbis would assemble in a large courtyard in Jerusalem called Beit Ya'azek.

Witnesses who claimed to have seen the new moon on the previous night would come to give an Edut (testify) that the new moon had appeared. The witnesses were investigated to ensure that they genuinely saw the new moon and were not mistaken. An Edut of two witnesses was required.

The Rabbis usually knew exactly when the new moon would have appeared and where it would have been visible. Nevertheless, Rosh Chodesh cannot be declared until the new moon was actually seen by two witnesses!



Did the witnesses travel on Shabbat?

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THE INTERNATIONAL DATELINE

In the middle of the Pacific Ocean is an imaginary line that is called the International Dateline. It runs from the North Pole to the South Pole and is almost directly on the opposite side of earth from the UK. The International Dateline is officially the line that separates two different days on the calendar and this would be particularly relevant to us as Jews. For example: On one side of the line it's Friday and on the other side of the line, it's Shabbat. A person travelling from Sydney to Los Angeles could depart on Motzei Shabbat from Sydney and land in Los Angeles (after a 13 hour flight) while it is still Shabbat!

Rabbi Yechiel Michel Tucazinsky (Rosh Yeshivat Etz Chaim, Jerusalem 1871-1955) explored this matter in great depth, he ruled that the Jewish International Dateline is not halfway round the world (180 Degrees) from Greenwich, it is rather 180 Degrees measured from Jerusalem.

The
conventional
International
Dateline

Rabbi Yechiel's opinion would not affect Jews living in the UK but it would significantly affect Jewish residents of Alaska (see blue line on the map).

The
International
Dateline
according to
Rabbi Yechiel

While the conventional International Dateline passes through the mid-Pacific Ocean, Rabbi Yechiel's dateline would pass through mainland Alaska. This effectively means that a person would be able to cross the dateline from Shabbat to a weekday and vice versa. Given that this situation would be extremely confusing, we consider Alaska as part of the Eastern Hemisphere.



Would a person be permitted to avoid keeping Shabbat by crossing the International Dateline?



Why did Rabbi Yechiel consider Jerusalem to be the centre of the world?



Shabbat Kodesh

Sydney



Friday

Los Angeles



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