

KOL MEVASSER

Mastering Time

By Rabbi Ralph Tawil

One of the seeming “givens” of our life is time. The question of “who sets your agenda” is the main difference between the attitude of the slave and the free man. The slave’s agenda is set by his master; the free man’s agenda is (ostensibly) set by himself. Mastering time means controlling one’s life. Setting the time and the calendar involves molding our days, weeks, months and years towards values we stand for is essential for living a meaningful life.

Background: Our parasha contains what could be considered the first commandment given to the Children of Israel as a nation. That commandment concerns the mastery of time.

Pharaoh and his people have been pummeled by nine plagues, with the promise of the most devastating plague to come. At this moment of the narrative, the Torah shifts the topic to a discussion about the preparation of the lamb that eventually became known as “korban Pesah,” the Passover offering.

Before getting into the details of how to carry out that law, God commands Israel to change the calendar—to “master time.”

Exodus / Shemot 12:1

Hashem said to Moshe and Aharon in the land of Egypt: This month shall mark for you the beginning of the months; it shall be the first of the months of the year for you. Speak to the whole

community of Israel and say that on the tenth of this month each of them shall take a lamb to a family, a lamb to a household.

Analysis

This verse is seen as the first commandment given to the children of Israel. According to the Midrash quoted by the first comment of Rashi in Beresheet, the Torah should have begun with this verse.

Hashem, the creator of time, set the agenda for Israel by letting them know that this month ushers in for Israel a new era. In this era, Israel decides which month is first.

This commandment includes sanctifying the new month based on witnesses and adding an extra month every few years in order to ensure that the moon-based calendar would remain in alignment with the seasons, which, of course, are based on the sun.

Discussion

Why is the first commandment that God gives to Bne Yisrael to change the calendar? Changing the calendar means that a new stage of existence has begun. The event of the Exodus from Egypt was formative for the people of Israel, and meant that we start numbering our days and years from then.

According to the Torah, time is counted using months based on the moon. When there used to be a full Torah legal system, including its highest court, this high court would decree a new month

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KJ Schedule

Erev Shabbat

Friday, January 18, 2013

Shaharit/Morning Prayer	6:30 am
Shir Hashirim	4:36 pm
Shabbat Candle Lighting	4:51 pm
Minhah/Arbith	4:51 pm

Shabbat Bo

Saturday, January 19, 2013

Shaharit/Morning Prayer	8:30 am
Ladies Tehillim Group	after kiddush
Minha, Seudah Shlisheet, Arvit	4:00 pm
Motzei Shabbat / Havdallah	5:34 pm

Weekdays

Sunday, January 20, 2013

Shaharit	7:30 am
Talmud Torah	9:30 am
KJ Youth Choir	11:00 am

Monday to Friday, January 21-25, 2013

Shaharit	6:30 am
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Monday, January 21, 2013

Women’s Tehillim at KJ Library....	10:30 am
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Wednesday, January 23, 2013

KJ Women’s Group	10:00 am
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Erev Shabbat / Erev Tu B’Shvat

Friday, January 25, 2013

Shaharit/Morning Prayer	6:30 am
Shir Hashirim	4:43 pm
Shabbat Candle Lighting	4:58 pm
Minhah/Arbith	4:58 pm

SHABBAT READINGS

Torah 248-262, Haftara 263-264

Shabbat Kiddush

is sponsored
In memory of their mother
Rebecca Mizrahie, z"l
by
The Mizrahie & Jonah Families

A Car for Penina

Our amazing staff member, Penina Solomon, had the misfortune of losing her car in an accident last month. She is seeking a replacement vehicle. Penina is responsible for running errands for Kahal—preparing for Kiddush, cooking, shopping etc. If you have a car that you are willing to part with at low or no cost, please contact Sarah in the office at [310.474.0559](tel:310.474.0559). Your generosity will help both Penina and our community.

Refuah Shlemah

Gery Shapiro, Yocheved bat Rachel, Mazal bat Malika, Dan Herdoon, Mazal Tov bat Salha Matana, Moshe ben Ezra, Sasson ben Rahel / Sassoon Moses, Penina bat Henia, Dov Ber ben Sonia, Hanna bat Esther

Kol Messaver Newsletter Kahal Joseph Congregation Rabbi Hagay Batzri

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In Memoriam

We remember these yahrzeit anniversaries for January 19 to 26, 2013. It is customary to light a memorial candle, donate tzedaka, and attend services the preceding Shabbat.

8 Shevat / Shabbat, January 19th

Ezra Ekairab *Ezra Sion ben David*
F. Meyer Ellis *Eliyaboo Faraj ben Avraham Shalom*
Rebecca Mizrahie *Rivka bat Toba*
Edward Shashoua *Sion Edward ben Elisha*

9 Shevat / Sunday, January 20th

Saul Zakoo *Shaul Hai ben Ezra Zakoo Halery*

10 Shevat / Monday, January 21st

Naima Dabby *Naima bat Chabla*

11 Shevat / Tuesday, January 22nd

Malacj Khamani *Serah bat Simcha*

12 Shevat / Wednesday, January 23rd

Abraham M. Cohen *Abraham Shalom Mordechai*
Yitzhak Hacohen
Matthew Ellenhorn *Matityahu ben Shmuel*
Maurice Kadoorie *Moshe ben Saleh*
Rachel bat Masooda

13 Shevat / Thursday, January 24th

Sheila Cohen
Nanejan Davoudian *Nanejan bat Hacham Mola Rebbi*
Alex Sassoon

14 Shevat / Friday, January 25th

Shaul Saberi
Albert Harry Saltoun *Ardala ben Eliyahu*

15 Shevat / Shabbat, January 26th

Ezekiel Albert *Yehezkel ben Abdullah*
Joseph Mussry
David Sarraf *David ben Ezra*

KJ YOUTH CHOIR w/Rabbi Batzri
Sunday, January 20th@11 am

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only after they had heard astronomical testimony about the status of the moon. Every few years the court would decide to add another month to reconcile the 365-day solar year with the 354 days that comprise twelve lunar months. This is done to ensure that Pesah always occurs in the spring.

According to the current Jewish calendar, we are now in the year 5773. This answer reflects the convention of counting the years from the creation of the world. However, to harmonize religious and scientific knowledge, it is generally recognized that all of the years on our calendar did not necessarily have the same length.

While at present our years accord with the length of the lunar-solar year (354 to 365 days), the early years of the Jewish calendar did not necessarily correspond with the lunar-solar measure of time. The early years of creation were determined by Hashem, inasmuch as there was no sun or moon at first. As a result, we have no way of comprehending or measuring the length of those early years and time periods. One “early” year could have lasted for the equivalent of millions or even billions of current years.

In addition, the convention of counting Jewish years from creation is not found in Scripture, which generally numbers the years based on the reigns of different kings, or the years since the Exodus or the exile. In fact, during the Talmudic and Gaonic periods, the years were numbered based on the generally accepted convention in the Hellenistic world; they counted from the year 311 b.c.e.

Today, Western and Christian countries number their years from Jesus’ death. When we cite a year according to the Christian calendar

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we use the letters “c.e.” (“common era”), or b.c.e. (“before the common era”). This terminology reflects a recognition that this is not our calendar, but the one that is commonly used.

Similarly, Muslims number their years from the year 621 c.e., the year of the “hegira,” Mohammad’s trek to Mecca. The Shomroni community (the Samaritan community in Israel) to this day numbers its years from the Exodus from Egypt.

When the Jewish people left Egypt / Mitzrayim they transitioned from being slaves to being free individuals. As slaves, they did not control their own schedule or regulate time. Their masters and overlords controlled time. The Jewish people, as slaves, could not choose what to do or when to do it. So, upon their redemption, Hashem’s gift to the Jewish people as their first mitzvah, was returning control of time to them.

In Judaism, the calendar is not set by external events. Rather, the spiritual leaders of Israel set it. In Temple times, they would decide to sanctify a month, or add an extra month. The blessing that we say on the various festival days is “Blessed are you, Hashem, our God, who sanctifies Israel and the times.” This is explained, that Hashem sanctifies Israel who sanctifies the times. In other words, Hashem gives us the privilege of establishing our own temporal framework.

The rabbis spoke about this point as follows: *R. Hosh’aya learned: If the court below decreed that today is Rosh Hashanah, the Holy One, blessed be He, said to the ministering*

angels, set up the court, and let the advocates for the defense and scribes stand, because the court below has decreed and said that today is Rosh Hashanah.

If the witnesses delayed in coming or the court decided to add an extra day to the year, the Holy One, blessed be He, tells his ministering angels, take away the court and the advocates for the defense and the scribes since the court below has decreed and said that tomorrow is Rosh Hashanah.

What is the reason? “It is a law in Israel, a judgment for the God of Jacob,”—if it is not the law of Israel, then, as it were, it is not the judgment of the God of Jacob.

R. Pinehas and R. Hizqiyah said in the name of R. Simon: all the ministering angels gather near the Holy One, blessed be He, and say, “Master of the universe, when is Rosh Hashannah?”

He says: You are asking Me?! Let you and I ask the court below. (Pesikta Derab Kahana pp. 102-103; Hahhodesh 13).

This insight is expounded upon through poetry by Yehuda HaLevi, Spain, 11-12th century

From Slaves of Time

The slaves of Time are the slaves of a slave;
Only the slave of the Lord is free.
Therefore, while other men seek their portion,
“The Lord is my portion” says my soul.

What does Halevi mean by “the slaves of time”? He refers to people whose agenda is limited to increasing the ephemeral benefits of this world. This line parallels the line in which “other men seek their portion” which means to

increase their wealth. Time was meant to be our slave, especially following the Exodus. But, notwithstanding Hashem’s gift of freedom, time may still become our master, if we don’t assert ourselves and exercise good judgment. That is why those who serve time are “slaves of a slave.”

Why, and how, is the “slave of the Lord” really free? Someone devoted to Hashem and His teachings masters the human drives to increase one’s portion in this world. Such a person frees himself or herself from the shackles of fleeting pleasures and devotes life to higher ideals. Shabbat Shalom

**PURIM
at KJ**



Sunday, February 10th
Purim Baking for Baskets@10 am

Sunday February 17th
**Maurice Zekaria Backgammon
Tournament & Game Tables @ 2 pm**

Saturday, February 23rd
Megillah Reading@7:30 pm

Sunday, February 24th
KJ PURIM CARNIVAL@11 am



*Ronald Einy and the Board of Directors of
Kahal Joseph Congregation
invite our members to a*

Tu B'Shvat Members Luncheon

Saturday, January 26, 2013

following Shabbat Shira services

Rabbi Hagay Batzri will lead our Iraqi Tu B'Shvat Seder
direct our youth choir in beautiful songs &
talk on "How Fruits Enliven Our Lives"

*The luncheon is sponsored in memory of two pillars of our synagogue
whom we will always remember, Rebecca and Saul Mizrahie, z"l*



Share a traditional Iraqi Seder and luncheon for KJ members

Celebrate the annual rebirth and renewal of the trees

Bless a variety of fruits and nuts

Create blessings in our lives

Bring the year to fruition

Luncheon is for KJ Members ONLY
*There is no charge, but Member
RSVP is Required to 310.474.0559*