

Happy New Year

*“Now Adonai spoke to Moses and Aaron in the land of Egypt saying ²“This month will mark the beginning of months (*Rosh Chodesh*) for you; it is to be the first month of the year for you” (Ex 12:1-2)*

For the fourth time this century, Good Friday and Passover coincide (the other years were 5772/2012, 5775/2015, 5778/2018 and this year 5782/2022). While Christians are remembering the crucifixion of *Yeshua*/Jesus on Friday evening April 15, Jews will be sitting down for the (first) seder of Passover, the evening of Friday April 15, 2022 (on Aviv 15, 5782). “This coincidence adds significance for some Christians. “*Jesus himself celebrated Passover,*” said The Rev. John Murray, priest of Raynham’s St. Ann’s Catholic Church in Philadelphia as published in *The Enterprise*, on April 2, 2015, in Philadelphia, PA. “*These are days Jesus himself would have celebrated as a faithful Jewish man*” he added. The article continues: **On what is believed to be Thursday, April 2, of 33 A.D., Jesus had his last supper. The next day, Jesus was crucified. On Sunday, April 5, Christians believe he rose from the dead.** “*Ultimately, it does bespeak of the fact that toward the end of Jesus’ life, as Christians look at it, it’s intimately wound up in Passover,*” said Rabbi Jonathan Hausman of Stoughton’s Ahavath Torah Congregation. “*His last meal was a seder.*” The Rev. Richard Degagne, the priest of Easton’s Immaculate Conception Church, said the connection is not Good Friday and Passover but it is with Holy Thursday, the day that commemorates the Lord’s Supper. “*These are holy days,*” Murray said.”

In my March 13, 2021, message entitled *Mastery of Time* I shared: The first day of *Aviv* is a historic day for our Jewish people. It was the day when we received our first commandment as a nation: *sanctify the new moon*. The old monthly new moon declaration ritual had a profound spiritual and historic significance for Jews living all over the world because it sets or establishes when the Biblical Holy Days (*chagim*) fall, how many days they encompass and when they are celebrated in and out of Israel. By virtue of this commandment, the Jewish people were/are given *mastery* and *privilege* over the reckoning of time. From that moment on the calendar with its cycle of *Shabbatot*, High Holidays/Festivals (*chagim*) could exist only when human witnesses declared the new month. This signifies more than control over the determination of time and the everyday events of daily life. It represents the potential for change and renewal, for rebirth and growth, and for the waning and waxing of the moon each month.

The concept of *Rosh Chodesh* is one that connects holiness with time. Sanctifying and marking time are central to our lives as Messianic Jews. As Herschel states: “*Judaism is more concerned with time than space and Judaism is a religion of time aiming at the sanctification of time.*” The *Torah* tells us (Ex. 12:2) how to mark our time so we can keep our appointed times (our times of intimacy with Him). They are not based on the Catholic (Gregorian) calendar, nor on whenever we feel like it. He gave His Bride (Israel) instructions on these special dates, and we should be persuaded to keep them sacred. Last night’s new moon (usually the *first* new moon in the springtime) is to be unto us the beginning of months (moons). This is the start of *The Lord’s sacred year* – the first day of *Aviv*. Modern Jewish calendars refer to this month (*Nisan/Aviv*) as the *first* month of the year and not *Tishri 1/Yom Teruah*. If the sages believe the world was created in *Tishri*, then why is *Nisan/Aviv* considered the first month of the year? *Moshe Maimodenes (Rambam)* understood this in the following way: “*The children of Israel should mark this month as the first and should count months in relation to this one; the second, the third, to the 12th month. This is to ensure that we remember the great miracle (the Exodus) for whenever we mention the month; we will (effectively) be mentioning the miracle. That is why there are no names of months in the Torah, but the Torah will say (for example): ‘and it came to pass in the third month’ (Ex. 19:1) or ‘In the second month of the second year’ (Nu. 10:11). This is the same notion as our counting the days of the week in relation to Shabbat. And this is why it says in the verse ‘it shall be the first of the months of the year FOR YOU’. It is the first month for you as it is a remembrance of our redemption.*”

When encountering *Shabbat Hachodesh* in our modern Jewish calendars, we are not only reminded of the coming Passover season, but we are also reminded that it is within our power to sanctify (bless) and become sanctified (blessed) by coming closer to *Adonai*. We have the power, through our words (*b'rachot*), to connect to Him. All *b'rachot* (blessings) can be divided into three categories: blessings of pleasure; blessings of *Mitzvot*; and blessings of praise, thanksgiving, and supplication, so that one can be ever cognizant of our Creator and be in awe of Him.

Our divine gift of speech gives us the ability to sanctify and bring into reality both objective and subjective principles. Time, holidays, and historical events can be observed in both word and deed. By blessing the New Moon and establishing a calendar we are connecting the past to the present. Just as the new moon starts off small and gets visibly stronger each night, then slowly wanes only to renew itself again, so, too, do the Children of Israel have their cycles. It is one of the manifestations of our longevity and vitality. We are to be renewed daily: *"Therefore we do not lose heart. Though our outward man is decaying, yet our inward man is renewed day by day" (2 Cor. 4:16)* since *"they who wait for Adonai will renew their strength. They will soar up with wings as eagles..." (Isa. 40:31)*

May we all experience this Happy New Year as we consecrate ourselves for *Pesach* – the festival of freedom! May we all observe the historical aspects of our calendar and celebrate the renewal that it brings us individually and collectively. And may we all bless *Adonai* for the great bounty He provides for us and in the process, and may we become blessed. Are you experiencing freedom? Do you have a great sense of gratitude for the deliverance from this sinful world that you have received? May the joy and freedom of knowing the *Lamb of God*, strengthen you this Passover Season and let us look forward to our very own true freedom experience. Happy New Year! Today is *for us* the *beginning of months*. The days of *Auld Lang Syne* {roughly translated as *Times Gone By*, or *Days Gone By*} are to be treasured. *Shabbat Shalom!*

Play *Auld Lang Syne*, by Mitch Miller & the Gang, *Fireside Sing Along with Mitch*, Columbia Records, 1959 see https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=IG_CXmVkUJo