



Shabbat HaHodesh – March 21, 2020 – 25 Adar 5780

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By agudasachim | March 19th, 2020 | Rabbi's Parasha Message | Comments Off

This Shabbat is called Shabbat HaHodesh. If we were in synagogue we would announce Rosh Hodesh Nisan. According to the special Torah reading for this Shabbat, the month of Nisan is the first month of the Hebrew year (Exodus 12:2). The implication is the Jewish New Year is this week, and not as we celebrate it post-biblically, 7 months later in the fall.

The New Year, of course, celebrates the “birthday” of all creation. The Talmudic debate over which is the true New Year seems to hinge on how we picture those early days depicted in the story of Adam & Eve leaving the Garden of Eden. The view which prevailed sees it as the season of harvest on the cusp of the dormant winter season. This view sets up the New Year as a time for reflecting upon the past year’s hard work and accomplishments, celebrating our bounty, and hunkering down for the winter. The view which appoints this Shabbat to herald the New Year sees Adam & Eve emerging into a springtime world of promise and potential. A New Year as a time of planting rather than of harvesting.

Spring is also a New Year which may be observed fully even in a moment of social distancing. Rather than convene en masse in the synagogue for communal prayer befitting sharing the harvest, we may individually explore the fresh new world emerging from winter all about us. There is even a blessing to say upon seeing the first fruit tree in bloom:

בְּרוּךְ אַתָּה יְיָ אֱלֹהֵינוּ מֶלֶךְ הָעוֹלָם, שֶׁלֹּא חָסַר בְּעוֹלָמוֹ כְּלוּם, וּבָרָא בּוֹ בְּרִיּוֹת טוֹבוֹת וְאֵילָנוֹת טוֹבוֹת, לְהַנּוֹת בָּהֶם בְּנֵי אָדָם:

Blessed art thou...who lacks nothing in God's world, and who created in it goodly creatures and trees, to confer benefit upon humanity.

I have a proposal: Let’s all try to discover a spring blossom this week. Extra credit for finding a fruit tree in bloom, but for this project any definitive sign of spring will do. Take a selfie of your discovery and send it to the Agudas office @ info@agudasachim.org. We will post pictures to the website on our *Staying Connected during COVID-19* page and to our Facebook.

Circumstances are rough now, but spring reminds us that better times lie ahead. Unfortunately we can’t pray together, but we certainly may share our moments of springtime optimism and delight.

B’Yedidut,
Rabbi Mitch Levine

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