

The Jewish Calendar

The Jewish calendar is different from our calendar in some important ways. First, our calendar is a solar calendar, based on the length of time it takes the earth to circle the sun. The Jewish calendar is a lunar calendar, so every month begins with the appearance of a new moon, called *Rosh Hodesh* (“the beginning of a month”). A month is either 29 or 30 days long. The 12-month lunar year is about 12 days shorter than the solar year. Therefore, every two or three years the Jewish calendar adds a “leap month,” an extra month to adjust the calendar so the holidays continue to fall in the proper season.

Second, the Jewish counting of years is based on the number of years since creation according to the Tanakh. For example, *Rosh Hashanah*, the Jewish new year, fell on September 21, 1998, which corresponded to the first day in the Jewish year of 5759.

Finally, each day on the Jewish calendar begins at sundown. That is why Rosh Hashanah of 5759 actually began at sundown on September 20, 1998.

Jewish Months

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| Tishri (Sept./Oct.) | Heshvan (Oct./Nov.) | Kislev (Nov./Dec.) | Tevet (Dec./Jan.) |
| Shebat (Jan./Feb.) | Adar (Feb./March) | Nisan (March/April) | Iyar (April/May) |
| Sivan (May/June) | Tammuz (June/July) | Ab (July/August) | Elul (August/Sept.) |

Some Significant Holidays and the Months in Which They Fall

Tishre: *Rosh Hashanah* (New Year), *Yom Kippur* (Day of Atonement), and *Sukkot* (the harvest Festival of Booths, a reminder of the huts in which the Israelites lived during the travels in the desert)

Kislev: *Chanukah* (The festival of the rededication of the Temple)

Adar: *Purim* (celebrating the story of Esther and the rescue of the Jews from Persia)

Nisan: *Pesach* (Passover, the Exodus from Egypt), *Yom Hashoah* (Holocaust Memorial Day), *Yom Ha'atzma'ut* (Israel Independence Day)

Sivan: *Shavuot* (festival celebrating the giving of the Torah)