

2 THE JEWISH CALENDAR: MAKING TIME HOLY

Student text: pages 12–15



Learning Objectives

Students will:

- ✓ Understand that a calendar helps us structure time as individuals, and that by structuring our time, a calendar allows us to share observance and tradition as a community.
- ✓ Achieve a greater understanding of how the lunar Jewish calendar works, and how it differs from the solar Gregorian calendar.
- ✓ Gain a deeper appreciation of the importance of calendars by imagining a world without them, a world where time is unstructured.



Vocabulary

Gregorian calendar the civil calendar shared by many around the world, starting with January 1 and ending on December 31

solar calendar a calendar based on the earth's rotation around the sun

lunar calendar a calendar based on the moon's rotation around the earth

leap year a calendar year adjusted, by either adding an additional day or month, for the actual time it takes the earth to rotate around the sun

Rosh Hodesh “Head (first day) of the (Hebrew) month”



Getting Started

Revisit the question posed in the previous chapter's “Looking Ahead”: Why do holidays—and Jewish days in general—begin at sunset instead of sunrise? (*According to the Torah, God said, “there was evening, and then there was morning” on each of the six days of Creation.*) Ask your students: How is beginning the day at sunset different from beginning after midnight? (*sunset times will vary throughout the year, early in winter and late in summer; sunset is determined by natural phenomena, rather than a set time established by people*) Ask students to keep these differences in mind as they compare the Gregorian and Jewish calendars.

The Days of Creation (page 13)

Have students read the days of Creation aloud in English and, if they can, in Hebrew. Next, have volunteers identify a holiday they would associate with one of the Creation events. Answers will vary but may include:

Hanukkah—Creation of Light יום אָחַד

Sukkot—Creation of fruit trees יום שְׁלִישִׁי

Shabbat—Day of Rest יום הַשְּׁבִיעִי



Q&A (pages 13–14)

Q: What is the origin of the names of the days of the week in the civil calendar?

A: Many of the days are named after deities (e.g., Thursday for the Teutonic god Thor, Saturday for the Roman god Saturn).

- Q:** What is a solar calendar based upon?
A: The earth's rotation around the sun.
- Q:** How long does it take the earth to revolve around the sun?
A: 365¼ days.
- Q:** How many days is the Gregorian calendar based on?
A: 365 days.
- Q:** What happens to the remaining ¼ day?
A: Every four years, one day is added to make up for the four quarter days that were lost.
- Q:** What is a lunar calendar based upon?
A: The moon's rotation around the earth.

Back to the Sources: What If?

(page 14)

To help students recognize the importance of having a calendar, write this question on the chalkboard: What would the world be like without a calendar? Ask students to cut a sheet of paper in thirds. On each third, have them write one answer to the question. Collect all three responses from each student, mix the responses together, and redistribute them to the class. Now each student should have three statements written by others. (It's all right if they receive back one of their own responses.)

Have each student choose one of the three responses to read aloud to the class. Have students explain what problems might arise from the choice being read, and how having a calendar would solve those problems.

Y2K Glitch

On December 31, 1999, the world celebrated the end of one millennium and the start of a new one with parties, ceremonies, and fireworks; however, the millennium and the century actually ended on December 31, 2000. Of course, for many of the world's people, the Gregorian calendar is not *their* calendar. At the time of the millennium celebrations, the Chinese were in their year 4697, about to start the Year of the Dragon. Muslims were in their year 1420, and the Jews of the world were celebrating 5760.



Q&A (pages 14–15)

- Q:** The lunar calendar is 11 days shorter than the solar calendar each year. What problems can this create?
- A:** Holidays would occur 11 days earlier each year than the year before, and seasons would wander around the year.
- Q:** What is done to accommodate this difference?
- A:** Instead of adding one day every four years as the solar calendar does, the lunar calendar is adjusted by adding a whole month.
- Q:** Which month is added?
- A:** Adar Bet (or Adar Sheni)—Adar 2 (or the second Adar).
- Q:** When does Adar Bet occur during a leap year?
- A:** After Adar, in the winter.
- Q:** How often does a lunar leap year occur?
- A:** Seven times in every 19-year lunar cycle.

Festival Dates (page 15)

Have students read “Festival Dates” on page 15. Discuss the reasons why there should be a second day of celebration in today’s world of modern technology and instant communication. Have students consider all possible reasons for celebrating for two days, and whether or not they agree with those reasons.

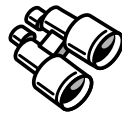


Build Your Own Calendar

Have students start their own Jewish calendar, which they will add to as they progress through the year. To begin, have each student take four blank sheets of 8½” x 11” paper, place the four sheets together, and fold the pile in half to create a packet that is 5½” tall by 8½” wide. Staple the packet along the folded seam. This will make one 5½” by 8½” page for each month. Or, you can duplicate the double-sided black-line masters at the end of this chapter and distribute those pages to students to use as their calendars.

Have students decorate the front of the packet as a calendar cover, including the number of the current year. (If you use the black-line master, you may wish to attach a blank sheet on top to serve as a cover.) Next, have them add the names of the months of the Jewish calendar, one page per month, starting with Tishre. (The months are listed on page 15 of the student text. Check a current Jewish calendar to see if there is a leap month—an Adar Bet—in the current year.)

As your students progress through the textbook’s chapters, have them fill in the days of each month and the holidays that occur. Collect their calendars to keep in your classroom. Look for the “Build Your Own Calendar” feature throughout this Teacher’s Guide for more activities for these calendars.



Looking Ahead

On the eve of the very first day of the Jewish calendar begins one of its most important holidays, Rosh Hashanah—the Jewish New Year. In preparation for the next chapter, ask students: How does Rosh Hashanah compare to the secular New Year? How is it different? How is it the same?

month: _____

----- FOLD ON DOTTED LINE -----

month: _____

_____ month:

----- FOLD ON DOTTED LINE -----

_____ month: