

FROM SEDER TO SHOFAR: A JOURNAL OF JEWISH CELEBRATIONS

Welcome to the 2025 issue of North Shore's reimagined interdisciplinary journal! Our first publication is dedicated to exploring the rich tapestry of Jewish holidays, traditions, and customs from a variety of viewpoints. In these pages, we invite you to embark on a journey of discovery, delving into the historical, cultural, theological, and sociological dimensions of Jewish life across a number of areas. This journal proudly showcases the diverse voices and insightful scholarship of both our students and staff, reflecting a vibrant academic community engaged in an appreciation for Jewish heritage. Through varied perspectives we aim to foster a deeper understanding and appreciation for the enduring legacy and dynamic evolution of Jewish culture and practice.

Naomi Nassimi & Talia Rabizadeh
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Biblical Insights On The Value of Pi

By Nora Greene

Students study Pi throughout different times in their educational career, and their experience with the irrational number varies. Students learn the typical rounded version: 3.14. They also learn an approximation of Pi in fraction form: $\frac{22}{7}$. Sometimes students are asked to round Pi to a certain digit. And furthermore, students are often asked to leave their answer in terms of Pi, using the symbol: π . So, what is the true value of Pi? Has there ever been a historical discrepancy in Pi's value?

Pi is an irrational number, which means that it cannot be expressed as a ratio of two integers. When calculated, its decimal length continues to an infinite number of digits, with no repeating pattern. Truthfully, there is no definitive value of Pi, since the digits infinitely continue.

A classic example of approximating the value of Pi is to divide a circle's circumference by its diameter. No matter the size of the circle, the ratio of the circumference to the diameter will consistently be Pi. Using any unit of measurement, whether it be inches, centimeters, miles, meters, or cubits - you should yield the same resulting ratio.

We are fortunate that our Tanach offers incredibly detailed descriptions of our history, including the construction of the First Temple. King Shlomo enlisted a man named Hiram, a skilled Phoenician architect. The text reads:

"And he [Hiram] made a molten sea, ten cubits from the one rim to the other it was round all about, and...a line of thirty cubits did compass it round about....And it was an hand breadth thick...." — First Kings, chapter 7, verses 23 and 26

According to these measurements, the circumference of this wash basin was 30 cubits long, and the diameter was 10 cubits long. When expressing these values in our ratio, they yield a value of Pi to equal 3!

We can highlight the following details, which are just three of many discussion points debated in Judaic circles:

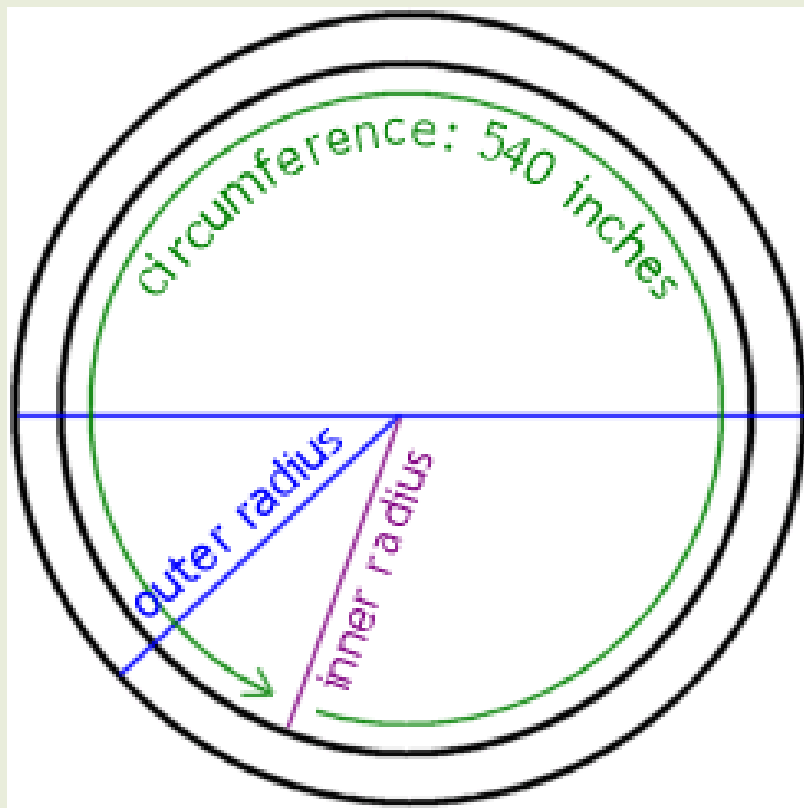
During the time of King Shlomo, measurements like cubits and handbreaths were often used. What are cubits and handbreaths? A cubit is the length of one's elbow to the tip of one's finger. A handbreath is the width of someone's palm, historically used to measure horses. Since these units cannot possibly be standardized, due to the varying size of people's arms, hands and fingers, then this measurement can't always be consistent.

The wash basin has a certain thickness, and this text doesn't specify if the diameter was taken from the inner rim or the outer rim of the wash basin. That small difference in measurement may account for the inconsistent value of Pi.

The Babylonians were a significant cultural force during this historical period. This ancient civilization approximated Pi to be 3.125. If converting the units in this text to other contemporary units of the time period, the value of Pi would be closer to 3.125 rather than 3, which justifies probable Babylonian influence in The Temple's construction.

The moral of the story is: DETAILS MATTER! "Attending To Precision" is one of our current Standards of Mathematical Practice. One small change, like using the diameter length or circumference taken from the inner measurement versus the outer measurement of the wash basin, or using different people to compute a cubit, or even converting between contemporary measurements of influential civilizations can alter the outcome of our measurements.

So, it's true that since the value of Pi is an irrational number, we don't quite know its exact value. Analyzing details from a variety of sources and time periods further emphasizes this slight ambiguity. Pi's true value remains a mystery in our past, present and future: no matter how you slice it!



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Sukkot

אני נהנת מכל החגים כי אני אוהבת לבלות עם המשפחה שלי, ללכת לבית כנסת ולאכול, אבל החג האהוב שלי הוא סוכות. ראשית ההיסטוריה של החג הזה לא עצובה כמו חגים אחרים. בהרבה חגים אחרים כמו פסח, פורים, וחנוכה עלינו לזכור את הקשיים שחוזה עם ישראל בעבר. היינו עבדים במצרים, היה פור להרוג אותנו בפרס, היוונים הרסו את הבית המקדש. אבל בסוכות, לבני ישראל לא היו מלחמות או אויבים, זהו חג של שמחה בלבד וכל בני ישראל עולים לרגל לבית המקדש. זהו חג שמזכיר לכל היהודים על השכינה של ה' ששמר עלינו במדבר. זה מזכיר לנו את הבתים הזמניים שבהם גרנו ששמרו עלינו בטוחים מאוד. בסוכות בימינו, בכל שמונת הימים אנו מצווים להיות שמחים בכל עת! אני אוהבת שאני מבלה כל כך הרבה זמן עם המשפחה והחברים שלי וגם מזג האוויר נעים, לא חם מדי או קר מדי. סיבה נוספת שסוכות הוא החג האהוב עליי היא שמצוות טלטול הלולב אינה מחויבת לנשים, אז אם אני מקיימת את המצווה זה מראה על השם שעשיתי את זה כי אני באמת רוצה לעשות מצוות! בשבילי, לא רק בגלל שצויתי לעשות את זה. סוכות הוא חג מדהים. מלא שמחה

-Talia Rabizadeh



My favorite Jewish holiday is Sukkot. Sukkot commemorates the Jewish people's journey through the desert after slavery from Pharaoh. As they were traveling, when it was time to rest, they built small shelters to live in until it was time to continue traveling. Because of this, every year we build sukkahs to remind ourselves of the Jewish people traveling through the desert. We also use materials similar to the ones they used when building sukkahs, such as bamboo. We must eat all our meals in the sukkah, especially the men. My favorite part of this holiday is the bonding time I get with my family. I really enjoy having meals in the sukkah because although we do that on any other holiday, there is a much safer and cozier feel to this. I also enjoy this holiday because I love decorating the sukkah and the creativity it comes with because you can decorate it with whatever feels right to you. One last thing I love about this holiday is the seasonal food that is made. We get to enjoy different types of food that we usually don't make during the rest of the year. - Liora Marenstein





Purim

Purim is a fun and exciting holiday that we celebrate once a year. During this time, we commemorate the story of Queen Esther, who saved the Jewish people from Haman. My Hebrew name is Esther!!!! We dress up covered in costumes, give gifts and mishloach manot to friends and family, and give charity and tzedakah to those in need. Overall, Purim is just a fun holiday filled with traditions and excitement! At Shul, we listen to the Megillah, which tells us all the story of Purim in Hebrew. We make noise with the groggers and yell and scream when we hear Haman's name, since he tried to kill all of the Jewish people during this time period. I love Purim because of all of the fun and joy everyone feels and the smiles people get when they get my mishloach manot. I enjoy dressing up and even seeing everyone's creativity with their own costumes! My family's tradition is making hamantaschen, which are triangle-shaped cookies filled with sweets like chocolate, jam, and peanut butter. Purim feels very special and exciting every single year, which is why Purim is without a doubt my favorite Jewish holiday!

- Lauren Kashi

Passover

Passover, or Pesach, is my favorite Jewish holiday. It's a more than an eight day holiday that remembers when the Jews were freed from slavery in Egypt. The story of Passover is told during the Seder, which is a special dinner held on the first two nights of the holiday. During the Seder, we read from a book called the Haggadah, which guides us through the story of how the Jewish people escaped slavery, along with prayers and special traditions. We eat symbolic foods like matzah, which represents the bread the Jews took with them when they left Egypt because there was no time for it to rise, and maror (bitter herbs) to remember the bitterness of slavery. What makes Passover so special for me is that my whole family goes to the Bahamas every year for a Passover program. The program is amazing because Jewish families from all over the world come together to celebrate. We have big Seders where my whole family sits at a long table in the dining room, with all my cousins and relatives gathered around. This year was even more special because my cousins from LA joined us, making it feel even more complete. It's so meaningful to share the Seder with all of them, doing the special customs we have together, like singing songs, reading the Four Questions, and finding the Afikoman. During the day, we get to hang out at the beach and go to the waterpark, enjoying the slides and lazy rivers. At night, there are fun activities like concerts, lectures, and big meals that are all kosher for Passover. Being on this vacation really makes me appreciate the freedom that the Jews got when they left Egypt. Celebrating Passover in such a beautiful and free place reminds me of how lucky I am to experience that freedom with my family. I love how Passover brings us all together and helps me feel connected to my Jewish roots. Being with my family in the Bahamas for Passover is something I look forward to every year. - Devorah Shabatian

My favorite holiday will have to be Pesach. Pesach is when we celebrate how the Jews were freed from Israel. During this time, families come together to retell the story of how our ancestors were freed from slavery. One reason why I love this holiday is because my family and I often go on Pesach programs. I love these programs because not only is it all-inclusive Kosher food for the entire hotel, but my family really gets to bond on these vacations. I love being with my family and hanging out with my cousins for 10 days straight. It's fun to meet new people on these trips, too - I always make the memories of a lifetime on these trips, ones that I know I will cherish forever. Another reason why I love Pesach is because I just love to eat matzah. We eat matzah on Pesach because when the Jews were leaving Egypt they didn't have enough time to make bread, so they cooked Matzah instead. Matzah is made by mixing flour and water and baking it very

quickly, usually within 18 minutes to prevent it from rising. For some, reason my sisters and I are obsessed with matzah and eat it year-round, even if it's not Pesach, so during Pesach I eat a ton! The whole vibe of Pesach from the Seders to the traditions to the memories made are ones I will cherish forever and for that is why it's my favorite holiday! - Alexa Nasrollahi

In Judaism and every other religious background, holidays are the time to be with family and to understand how your religion affects who you are. Some holidays are also about having a break from school or work to focus on the more important things, such as religion and family. My favorite Jewish holiday is Pesach, otherwise known as Passover. It is a special time when we remember how the Jewish people were freed from slavery in Egypt. During Pesach, we eat special foods like matzah and flatbread with no yeast. This is to remind us of when the Jewish people had to leave Egypt so fast that they couldn't wait for their bread to rise for their Journey in the desert. We have a big meal called the Seder, where we read from the Haggadah and tell the story of the Exodus. I love Pesach because it means I get to go on vacation with my family. We travel with my entire family to experience life outside of what we are used to. Being able to live with my grandparents, cousins, aunts, and uncles is so important to keep up with them and build a larger relationship with them. During Pesach, we eat meals together, play games, and spend quality time with each other. It feels very warm and joyful. Another reason I love Pesach is that we get a break from having to go to school every day. It gives me time to relax and enjoy being with the people I love most. Although every holiday is an amazing time to be with family and get away from your everyday life, Pesach truly is the most meaningful holiday to me. - Aiden Livi

My favorite Jewish holiday is Passover. Passover is a special time when we remember how the Jewish people were freed from slavery in Egypt a long time ago. It usually happens in the spring and lasts for about a week. One of the most important parts of Passover is the Seder, a big meal we have with family on the first two nights. During the Seder, we read a book called the Haggadah that tells the story of the Exodus. We also eat special foods like matzah, bitter herbs, and charoset. I like Passover because it brings my whole family together, and we all take part in the Seder in different ways. Another reason I enjoy it is because of the food; we only eat some of these things during this holiday, and I look forward to them every year. I also like learning about our history, thinking and feeling grateful about the freedom we attained, as we know it's not always that Jews are granted the privilege of freedom. Passover is a fun and meaningful time for me and my family. - Sophia Hajibai

If you were to ask me, what's your favorite Jewish holiday or celebration, I would tell you that I love them all because they all are so very special to me! However, if I have to pick one that speaks to me the most... it would have to be Pesach. Pesach is such a beautiful holiday that has a tremendous amount of meaning to it. Don't get me wrong, all holidays have a lot of meaning to them, but with Pesach, we go through so many steps of a Seder to show the meaning of why we do all these things. Most holidays, we would say some extra prayers, or say a different kind of kiddush; but Pesach has a whole guide on how to properly remember our exodus from Egypt, and so we feel the pain we once went through as a nation. Every single little part of the Seder has so much meaning! Don't even get me started on the songs! The whole vibe of Passover is special and nothing can ever compare. Especially now, with a war going on in our homeland, not only does it help us remember our tears, pain, and suffering then, it helps us remember the pain and suffering that we are going through now, and as a nation all throughout history all together. It really helps us realize how much we have gone through together as a people. I like to think of Pesach as a reminder of what we are fighting for. Pesach helps us realize and understand that we have to keep fighting together, to not let all the pain and suffering as well as all the sacrifices our ancestors made be in vein. Pesach truly demonstrates the epitome of the hardships the Jews have gone through, and how all of our trials and tribulations have made us the people we are today! - Jordan Sofiev

My favorite Jewish holiday is Pesach. On Pesach we celebrate the Jewish people leaving Egypt after around 400 years of being slaves. We celebrate Pesach by having a big meal the first two nights called a seder. Pesach goes on for eight days and we can't use any electricity or drive cars for 4-5 of those days; this is called chag. The other 2-3 days are called chol hamoed, where we can drive cars and use electricity. On Pesach we are also not allowed to eat chametz like bread or any food with wheat in it. The only exception is matzah, which is known as "the poor man's bread". I love Pesach because I go away every year. I also love Pesach because I get to spend it with my family, like my cousins and grandparents. My family and I usually go away somewhere new and exotic each year. One of my favorite things about this time is getting to spend quality time with my cousins who I usually see once every two weeks. I also love the Seders and not being able to use my phone. These are some examples that prove why Pesach is my favorite holiday. - Suri Shaer

Pesach is my favorite holiday for many reasons. It's all about remembering when the Jews were freed from slavery in Egypt. This week isn't just about going on vacation. It's a really meaningful time to remember the exodus of Egypt. The Seder meals are great because we get together with family, eat good food, and do ceremonies to remember what God did for us. During this week, I also try to do good deeds because it's a holy time. Studying the Torah is super important, too, because it shows we're still here despite what the Egyptians tried to do. We eat matzah and avoid chametz to remind us of the tough times our ancestors went through and how they got free. This week helps us to think about our faith and grow spiritually. It's also a time to reconnect with family and friends, celebrating our history and values together. Pesach brings joy and unity, making it really special to me. - Max Kule

My favorite Jewish holiday is Pesach/Passover. There are seven or eight days of Passover in total and one or two Sedars. One of the reasons I love Passover is because I get off from school and some years go to Miami. I get to spend quality time with my family and get closer with them. There is also chag, which means you can't touch electricity for a few day and I play board games with my brother. Another reason why I love Passover is because of matzah. Matzah is basically flat, crunchy bread we have only on Passover. The reason we eat it is because when the Jews were leaving Egypt they didn't have time to wait for the bread to rise. We have matzah pizza, matzah with Nutella and matzah with PBJ. Overall, Passover is a personal favorite of mine and is very memorable every year.

- Ben Ijadi

In the Jewish religion, there are many holidays, but my favorite holiday is Pesach. On Pesach, me, my friends, and family go to Miami. I look forward to going to Miami to spend quality time with them, have dinners with them, and of course have fun. The story of Pesach is so interesting! The Jewish people were slaves, and they would work long hours in the hot boiling sun, building blocks, pyramids, farming, and doing so with little to no water and food. Pharaoh (the Egyptian king) felt threatened by the Jewish people, so he made a decree to kill all of the baby Jewish boys, but baby Moshe was saved by his mom and siblings: they put him in a basket in the river and he was found by Pharaoh's daughter, (Batiyah). She ended up taking him as her own son. He was raised in the castle as an Egyptian prince (soon to be king), but he later finds out that he is Jewish. With the help of G-d, Moshe makes Pharaoh free the Jewish people by doing 10 harsh punishments, and then they would be led to the land of Israel. This is why Pesach is my favorite holiday. - Sara Hakimi

My favorite Jewish holiday is Pesach. Pesach is the holiday of freedom in the Jewish culture, a time when Jews celebrate their liberation from the Pharaoh of Egypt through a two-part dinner where they speak about the exodus of the Jews and its significance to Jewish history. Parents tell the story of Egypt to their kids in order to further the heritage of their Jewish culture and really tie the children into the experience. One aspect of Pesach that I admire a lot and am fond of is the way Jews re-live such an emotional and traumatic experience that occurred so that it is never forgotten. Another thing that holds great value to me about Pesach is how we Jews moved from being slaves to Pharaoh in Egypt to being the servants and children of Hashem. This is extremely relevant in my life because every day I'm constantly reminded of the obligation I have to serve Hashem like a master and love him like a father. An additional thing I like about Pesach and the story of leaving Egypt is that Rabbis say that even after Mashiach comes to save the Jews, we will still say shema everyday to acknowledge the miracle of the exiting of Egypt and how Hashem was the one to do it. Not even the miracle that Mashiach will bring will top how Hashem freed us. This once again ties back into my relationship with Hashem of serving him like a master but loving him like a father. - Yaakov Feder

Buenos días! Hoy les voy a contar algo de mi día festivo preferido del judaísmo! Mi preferida debe ser Pascua! Me encanta la comida que hacemos durante estos días porque siempre está deliciosa y muy especial. Nuestras casas siempre están limpias y se siente como si fueran nuevas. Siempre tenemos flores en la casa y siempre vimos a nuestra familia. Son unos días maravillosos porque podemos pasar tiempo con primos, tíos, abuelos, hermanos, y padres. Me encantan los sederes porque mi padre y mi abuelo cantan canciones viejas y especiales. Sus voces llenan nuestra casa con amor y felicidad. Durante estos días, el clima es maravilloso. Hay muchísimas flores y árboles bonitos por las calles y me gusta tanto verlos. Es un festival de primavera y de nuevos comienzos. - Ilona Zavulonov

Memunah

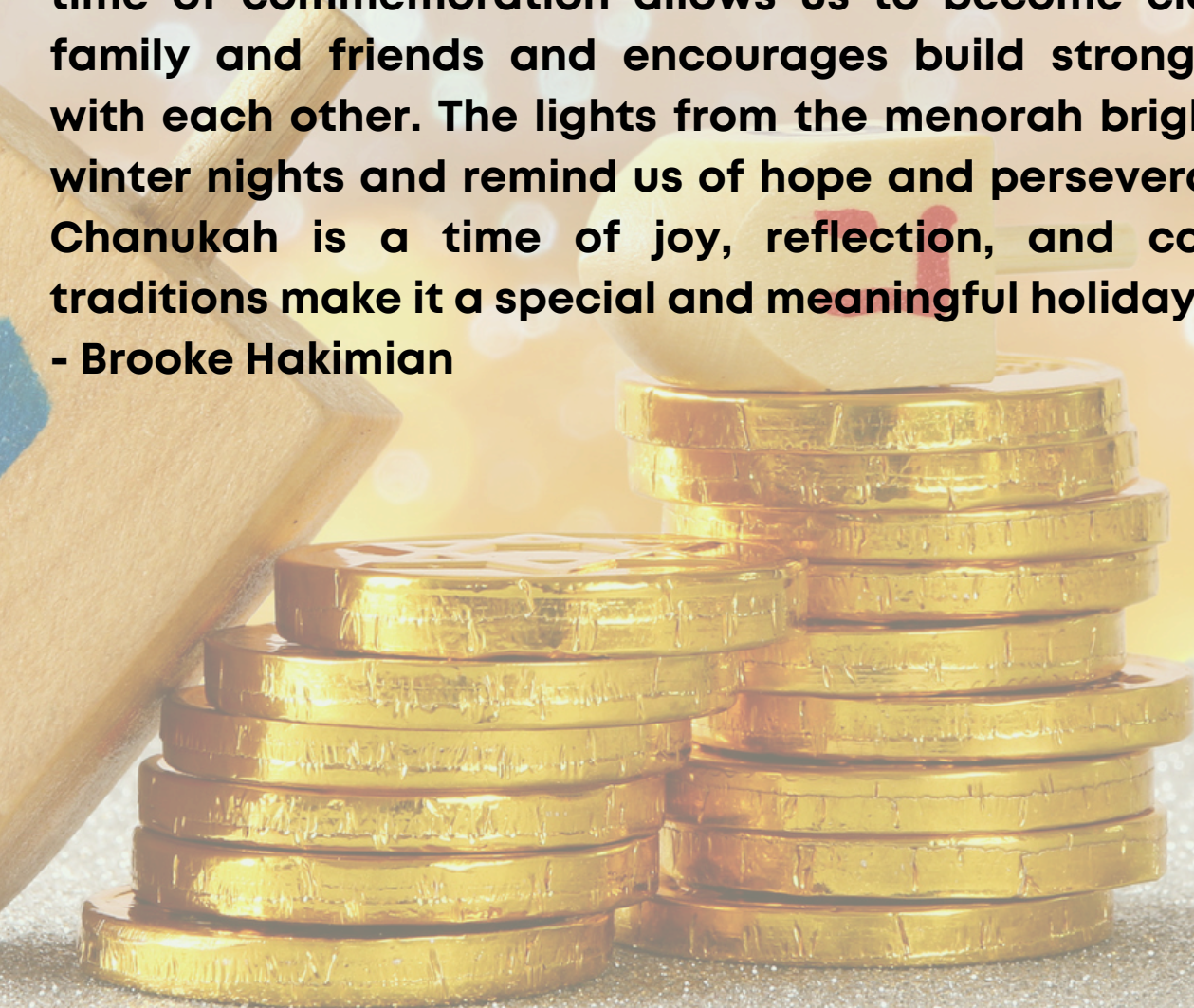
My favorite time of celebration in Judaism is called a memunah. A memunah is a special Moroccan party that takes place after Pesach when you can finally eat chametz after eight long days. In Morocco, the point of the party is for people in the neighborhood to go from house to house (or memunah to memunah) and try each other's mufleta. Mufleta is the main food at a memunah. It's a dough that is pressed really flat and then placed on the bottom of an upside down pan on the stove in order to maintain its flat shape. It is very similar to a crepe. My favorite part of the memunah are the mufletas and the guests. I like the mufleta because it can be eaten with anything from Nutella to honey. I specifically like the amount of guests because in America we don't have many Moroccan neighbors, so we can invite a lot of friends and family instead of each house inviting a few people like in Morocco. This celebration came from my grandfather who was born in Morocco. My grandmother, who learned what this party is from her husband, passed it down to her children. Unfortunately, my mother is the only one of her siblings to continue throwing these parties every year.

- Eyal Binyaminov

Chanukah

My favorite Jewish holiday is Chanukah, also known as the Festival of Lights. It celebrates a miracle that happened over 2,000 years ago when a small amount of oil burned for eight days in the rededicated Second Temple in Jerusalem. To honor this, Jewish families light a menorah, adding one candle each night until all eight are lit. One reason I love Chanukah is because of the delicious foods we eat, like latkes and sufganiyot, which are fried in oil to remember the miracle. Another fun tradition is playing dreidel, a spinning top game with Hebrew letters that stand for "A great miracle happened there." Families also exchange gifts and give gelt, which are chocolate coins. I enjoy these traditions because I get to receive a special gift each night of Chanukah and I get to spend time with my family. This time of commemoration allows us to become closer with our family and friends and encourages build strong connections with each other. The lights from the menorah brighten the dark winter nights and remind us of hope and perseverance. Overall, Chanukah is a time of joy, reflection, and community. Its traditions make it a special and meaningful holiday for many.

- Brooke Hakimian



My favorite Jewish holiday is Chanukah. Chanukah celebrates when we (the Jews) won the war and reclaimed Jerusalem from the Greek army. After we purified the temple, we found a tiny bit of oil to light the menorah for one night. God's miracle allowed that tiny bit of oil to last for eight nights instead of one. This is why we celebrate Chanukah for eight nights, and every night we light one more candle on our menorahs. I love Chanukah because it is about family and enjoying one another's company. I love being with my family and celebrating this special time together. I also enjoy getting thoughtful gifts from my relatives during Chanukah. One of my most favorite traditions during Chanukah is playing with the dreidel. I love how everyone can participate in it and the excitement it brings us. This is why I love this holiday which is filled with so much fun and family time. More importantly, it's a holiday that celebrates an important lesson: even when times are hard, miracles can happen. - Dann Rosenzweig

My favorite Jewish holiday would have to be Chanukah. Most people would say it's their favorite because you get presents, but there's more to it than just presents. Yes, you also eat donuts and latkes, but it's more than just materialistic stuff! It's about the history and passing down the story of Chanukah and celebrating the beliefs of our religion. Chanukah was when the Maccabees, a small army, fought the Greeks in a war. Not just that, but there was a miracle of the oil that lasted for 8 days. The reason why I like Chanukah so much is because even when we were vulnerable, we still stuck together as a nation and fought back. I'm saying this because we had a way smaller army than the Greeks but we stayed strong and fought as a nation and with Hashem's help we won the war. Another reason why I like Chanukah is because of the oil that lasted 8 days. The fact that there was so little oil... without Hashem's help it would have lasted only a day, but we believed and trusted in Hashem so he made a miracle and the oil lasted for exactly 8 days instead of 1. It's that miracle, that spark that has kept the Jews going till this day. We still have miracles that Hashem does everyday, we just don't see.

- Nachie Lubeck

My favorite Jewish holiday is Chanukah. Chanukah is also known as the Holiday of lights. It lasts eight days and takes place in December. This holiday reminds us of a miracle that happened a long time ago when the Jewish people won a battle and got the Beit Hamikdash back. Another reason we celebrate this holiday is because they only had enough oil to light the menorah for one night, but it lasted eight nights. That is why we light one candle on the menorah every night of Chanukah until the eighth day. One reason I love Chanukah is that my family gathers around the table every night to light candles and sing songs. Another reason is that we eat special foods like latkes and sufganiyot. We also play dreidel for chocolate coins and get gifts. Chanukah makes me happy because it brings my family closer together and helps us to remember an important part of Jewish history. - Aaron Kohansieh

Ma fête juive préférée est Hanouka. Elle dure huit jours. Tous les matins, ma famille allume la menorah. Nous ajoutons une bougie de plus chaque soir. J'aime manger des latkes et des beignets. On joue aussi au dreidel, c'est un petit jeu. Je reçois parfois des cadeaux ou de l'argent. Hanouka est une fête très joyeuse pour moi. - Dillan Haghightat



Traditions

My favorite Jewish tradition is הכנסת אורחים on Shabbat because of message and quality behind it.. As Jews, we believe that כל ישראל ערבים זה לזה, which means that every single Jew has the responsibility and duty to look after and care for one another. Whether you're religious or traditional, most Jews who know what Shabbat is, know what comes with it - people. In my opinion, one of the nicest things a Jew can do is invite a random person to their Shabbat dinner. To me, it's the sense of reassurance and comfort that no matter who you are, where you come from, or what you believe in, you will always have people who care about you because you are Jewish. הכנסת אורחים is a perfect example of this - taking in people, sometimes people you don't even know, into your home, arguably the place where you feel most vulnerable, and feeding them. This, to me, is where Judaism stems from. The connection. The togetherness. The feeling like you have people who will help you when you need it. As a Jew, many times I feel like people hate me just because I am Jewish, however הכנסת אורחים shines a light on a very different, more positive approach; People love and care for me just because I am a Jew. - Eden Geron

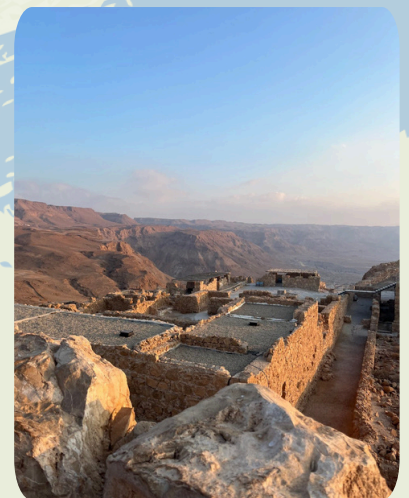
SPOTLIGHT: ISRAEL

Mon expérience en Israël

By: Chloe Hadid

L'été dernier, j'étais en Israël. Ce n'était pas la première fois, mais c'était mon voyage favori de ma vie. L'expérience, les amitiés et le groupe étaient tous parfaits. Le groupe s'appelle Machach, et ça fait partie de Bnei akiva. Je pense que tous les élèves de la dixième classe devraient le rejoindre. Ce n'est pas trop tard de rejoindre!! Pendant ce voyage, j'ai rencontré beaucoup d'ados juifs de mon âge de partout: New York, Florida, L.A, Canada et même le U.K!! Rencontrer, discuter et me lier d'amitié avec tous les ados a été une expérience incroyable. Je me suis fait beaucoup d'amis. Je leur parle tous les jours et je les aime tellement. L'autre aspect formidable de ce voyage, c'est l'expérience d'Israël. Pas seulement la visite au Kotel, qui est magnifique; c'était dans le pays juif. Partout où vous allez, vous êtes entouré de bonheur. Les gens sont incroyables et forts. La nourriture est DÉLICIEUSE. Être là-bas cet été m'a donné une véritable appréciation d'Israël. C'est le plus beau pays du monde. Dans chaque endroit où nous sommes allés, on pouvait ressentir un lien avec Hashem, pas seulement le Kotel ou Yerushalayim. J'espère que tout le monde aura la chance d'aller découvrir Israël!!

Voici quelques belles photos que j'ai prises cet été:



SPOTLIGHT: ISRAEL

Mi Primer Viaje a Israel
By: Matthew Radparvar

Mi primer viaje a Israel fue una experiencia muy especial y emocionante. Yo fui a Israel con mi familia. Viajamos en un avión grande. El vuelo fue muy largo, casi doce horas, pero yo estaba muy contento porque era mi primera vez en Israel.

Cuando llegamos, hacía mucho calor y sol. El cielo era muy azul. Nosotros fuimos primero a Tel Aviv. Tel Aviv es una ciudad muy moderna y tiene playas muy bonitas. Caminamos por la playa y comimos helado. También vimos tiendas y restaurantes. La gente en Tel Aviv es muy amable y alegre.

Después, viajamos a Jerusalén. Jerusalén es una ciudad muy importante para mi religión. Visitamos la Ciudad Vieja y fuimos al Kotel. El Kotel es muy especial. Yo puse una nota en el muro y recé. Sentí mucha emoción en mi corazón.

También fuimos al Mar Muerto. El Mar Muerto es muy salado. ¡Yo floté en el agua sin nadar! Fue una experiencia muy divertida. La vista del desierto alrededor del Mar Muerto es muy bonita.

Cada día, comimos mucha comida deliciosa. Probé falafel, shawarma, hummus y pita. Mi comida favorita fue el falafel porque estaba muy crujiente y sabroso. También bebí jugo de granada que venden en la calle.

Durante el viaje, aprendí mucho sobre la historia de Israel. Visitamos museos, sinagogas antiguas y lugares históricos. Vi soldados en las calles y entendí que Israel es un país muy especial para nosotros.

Este viaje fue muy importante para mí. Aprendí sobre mi cultura, mi religión y mi familia. Me sentí muy conectado con Israel. Yo quiero volver otra vez y explorar más lugares.

Israel ahora tiene un lugar muy especial en mi corazón.

The Count that Counts: The Math Behind the Jewish Calendar

By Ilana Greenberg

הַחֹדֶשׁ הַזֶּה לְכֶם רִאשׁ חֳדָשִׁים רִאשׁוֹן הוּא לְכֶם לְחֹדְשֵׁי הַשָּׁנָה: (שמות יב)

This month shall mark for you the beginning of the months; it shall be the first of the months of the year for you.

The establishment of Rosh Chodesh - and thereby the creation of a calendar- was the first commandment given to Bnei Yisrael as a nation.

The calculations involved in the original creation of our calendar are so precise that the inaccuracy is only approximately one day in 216 years.



In ancient times, the Sanhedrin would declare when a new month began based on the appearance of the new moon. This became complicated when witnesses were needed. By the time the Jews were exiled, a better calendar was formed. מר שמואל was known as the astronomer who calculated the length of a lunar month. Hillel Hanasi, his son, then developed the first version of what we now know as our modern calendar.

"מַעֲשֵׂה שֶׁבָּאוּ שְׁנַיִם וְאָמְרוּ: רְאִינוּהוּ שְׁחֲרִית בְּמִזְרַח, וְעֶרְבִית בְּמַעֲרָב. אָמַר רַבִּי יוֹחָנָן בֶּן נוּרִי: עֲדֵי שֶׁקָּרָהּ הֵם. כְּשֶׁבָּאוּ לִיבְנֵה קִיבְלָן רַבִּן גַּמְלִיאֵל." (ראש השנה כה, א)

There was an incident in which two witnesses came to testify about the new moon, and they said: We saw the waning moon in the morning in the east, and that same day we saw the new moon in the evening in the west. Rabbi Yoḥanan ben Nuri said: They are false witnesses, as it is impossible to see the new moon so soon after the last sighting of the waning moon. However, when they arrived in Yavne, Rabban Gamliel accepted them as witnesses without concern.

How did they know the length of a day?

- Ptolemy's *Almagest* (2nd century CE ,Greece) - Earliest astronomical calculations written
- Hipparchus (2nd century BCE, Babylonia) - Cited in *Almagest*
- Jews living in Mesopotamia likely based their Metonic calendar on the Babylonians’.

Rabban Gamliel said to them: This is the tradition that I received from the house of my father’s father: The monthly cycle of the renewal of the moon takes no less than twenty-nine and a half days, plus two-thirds of an hour, plus seventy-three of the 1,080 subsections of an hour.

One “Chelek” = 3.33 seconds

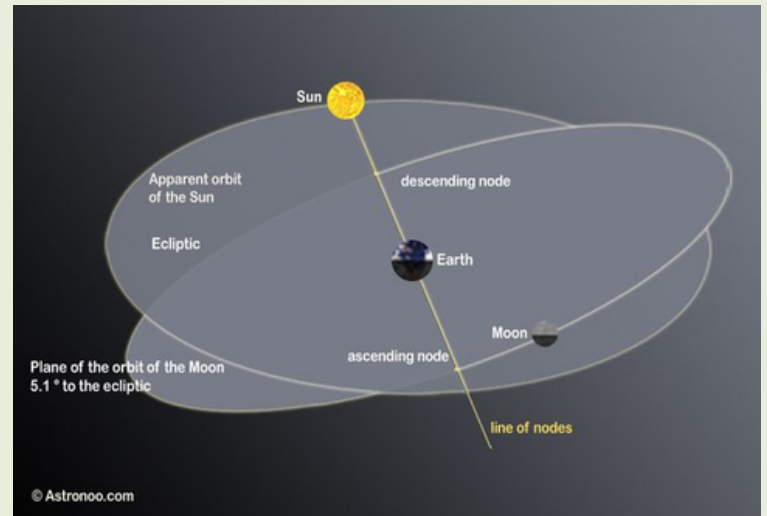
One hour= 1080 Chelakim

29.5 days + 2/3 hour + 73/1080 Chelakim = 29.530594 days in one lunar month

There is an 11 day difference between the lunar calendar and the solar calendar. This is a seventh month difference over 19 years.

(12 months/year for 19 years = 228, need an extra 7).

$$19 \times 12 + 7 = 235$$



שְׁמוֹר אֶת־חֹדֶשׁ הָאָבִיב וְעִשִׂית פֶּסַח לַיהוָה אֱלֹהֶיךָ כִּי בְחֹדֶשׁ הָאָבִיב הוֹצִיאֲךָ יְהוָה אֱלֹהֶיךָ מִמִּצְרַיִם לַיְלָה: (דברים טו)
Observe the month of spring and offer a Passover sacrifice to your God, for it was in the month of spring, at night, that your God freed you from Egypt.

The sophistication of analysis involved in such a seemingly simple commandment shows the Talmudic Jews’ remarkable ability to intertwine astronomical observations, mathematical calculations, and Halacha.

Our calendar has identified and united us as a people- from our beginnings as an early nation until today.

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