

Husbands And Wives, G-D And The Jews, And The Jewish Calendar

Category: Metzora, Tazria, Vayikra

Is G-d a he or a she, and how should that impact your marriage?

The Sun vs. the Moon

Should “The Holy One, Blessed Be He” really be “The Holy One, Blessed Be She”?

This is one of the things that get a lot of feminists angry. How can it be that we turn to G-d in the masculine form and say our blessings with “baruch atah”, “blessed are You” in the masculine form and not “baruch at”, “blessed are You” in the feminine form?

Today is Rosh Chodesh. Celebrating the new month is the first mitzvah G-d gave the Jewish People as a nation. (Mitzvos had been given before, such as circumcision, but those were to individuals; the first mitzvah given to the Jews as a nation, however, was the mitzvah of sanctifying the month—in essence, to create the yearlong Jewish calendar.

Now, what’s so important about this particular mitzvah to make it the first mitzvah? What exactly is the significance of the Jewish calendar?

Let’s take a look at society’s primary calendar, the Gregorian calendar that most Christian countries use. The Gregorian calendar is based on the solar year, which is 365 days. (Even though the calendar year is divided into 12 months, that’s only for convenience—it really has nothing to do with the moon since there’s no such thing as a 28-day or 31-day month.) The Gregorian calendar ultimately is based on the sun, which is why the Gregorian year contains 365 days - a full cycle of the sun.

On the other hand, you have the Muslim calendar. Muslims calculate strictly by the moon: 12 orbits of the moon around the earth constitute one year.

Now, every lunar orbit around Earth is 29.5 days. When you multiply 29.5 by 12, you get 354—a 354-day calendar year. Thus, the Muslim-calendar year ends 11 days before the Gregorian-calendar year. In other words, if the Muslim New Year were to begin on January 1, 12 months later would be December 20.

But the year after that, we'd been even more behind: the year would end on December 9. In that way, each year would lose 11 days—and after 33 years, a calendar based only on the moon would lose an entire year. In other words, when a Muslim says he's 34, he's really only 33.

That's also why Muslim holidays are never at the same time each year—each year they fall out earlier. Ramadan can be in the summer, in spring, in winter—it's always on the move.

And now, we arrive at the Jewish calendar.

The Jewish Calendar

Everything in Judaism is perfect, and we see it in our calendar too.

The Jewish calendar is actually based on the moon. The Torah instructs us to count months and set the holidays based upon it: Passover on the 15th of Nissan, Yom Kippur on the “tenth of the seventh month”—and that all depends on the moon.

At the same time, G-d instructs us to celebrate Passover specifically in the month of “spring”—it must be in the springtime. And that's where the problem starts: If the Jewish calendar is solely based on the moon, then every Jewish year slides back 11 days. Passover would be earlier every year, with Passover falling on the 20th of April this year, on the 9th of April next year, the year after that towards the end of March, and the following year in the middle of March, and so on. At that rate, we'd end up celebrating Passover in the thick of winter—and then it would get even earlier in the year! Thus, to ensure that Passover always falls in the springtime, there's the concept of the leap year: Every two or three years, when Passover would otherwise fall too early, we push the holiday up a month by adding a second month of Adar.

That's the reason we celebrated Passover at the end of April last year—since the

year was a leap year, we added a whole month and thus ensured that Passover would fall in spring, not winter. In other words, the Jewish calendar equates the moon and the sun. It may be a calendar based on the moon, but it adjusts itself to the sun too.

Who Runs the Schedule?

Now, why is this of such importance to the Jewish People to the point that reckoning the Jewish calendar is the first mitzvah given to the Jewish People?

The sun and the moon symbolize the relationships between G-d and the Jewish Nation. The sun represents G-d and the moon represents the Jews. Now, the moon's source of light is the sun itself—the moon itself has no light source and its entire existence is the fact that it is a reflector of the sun. That's why we need to listen and get in line with G-d — so that we can collect the light of the “sun.”

And that's why we address G-d in the masculine form.

Just as bringing a child into the world requires a male and a female, with the male being the giver and the female being the receiver, so too in our relationship with G-d, G-d is the male. He is the sun, the giver, the transmitter, the male, while we, the “Congregation of Israel,” are the moon, the taker, the receiver, the female.

That's why we are collectively referred to in the feminine form—including the men. And that's why the Jewish Nation is called “G-d's Wife”, upon which the entire Song of Songs is based.

And since G-d chose us as His “wife” at the Exodus from Egypt, the first thing He gave us was the daily schedule.

Every man knows that in the house, the wife runs the calendar—she tells him where they're going out at night, what time they're leaving and when they're coming back. It's all up to her.

In like manner, G-d gave the Jewish People the Mitzvah of determining Rosh Chodesh; “You decide when we'll meet, you decide when Passover and Yom Kippur will fall—you're the decision-makers.” Every holiday is an encounter between the Jewish Nation and G-d, with the “wife” the one controlling the social calendar.

As the Midrash tells us: “The Ministering Angels convene around G-d and say before Him: ‘Master of the Universe! When is Rosh Hashanah?’ And He says, ‘You ask Me?! Let’s you and I ask the Earthly Court.’”

This is Your Marriage Too

The sun and moon don’t just symbolize the relationship between the Jewish Nation and G-d, but also the relationship between husband and wife.

The husband is the sun, the transmitter, while the wife is the moon, the receiver. There’s an intrinsic difference that must be recognized so that we can successfully work together.

You have to admit that men and women are different. For example, a mom with a high fever will still get up in the morning, dress the kids, feed them, send them off to school and then go back to bed.

The guy, on the other hand—if he gets a drop of temperature above normal, let’s say 100 or 101, he immediately informs everyone not to touch him, he feels like he’s about to die, and calls into work right away that he won’t be in for a week. For him, the entire universe has ground to a halt.

Another example is shopping. When a guy goes shopping for shoes, he prays in his heart that the first pair he tries on will be the right one so he can pay right away and get out of there.

The wife, on the other hand, will sit in the store for hours measuring every shoe there is. Then, when she gets home, she measures some more, only to decide that she’s going back to the store to return the shoes because they weren’t the right ones in the first place.

Two different universes: The husband doesn’t remember what he ate yesterday, while the wife remembers the bad food they served at a wedding 20 years ago.

Now, marriage is like the calendar—built around the moon and only occasionally brought into line with the sun. So too in family life—the home is based on the woman, the anchor of the home and the manager of its spirit. Occasionally the sun and the moon must align!