

The Role of the Jewish Calendar 2024

In Voltaire's book *Zadig; or, The Book of Fate*, the Grand Magi puts the following question to Zadig:

“What of all things in the world is longest and shortest, the swiftest and the slowest, the most divisible and the most extended, the most neglected and most regretted, without which nothing can be done, which devours all that is little, and enlivens all that is great?”

Zadig answers: “Time.”

Time is our most precious asset, a truth that enriches the fabric of our lives.

Jewish observance is about following rules and embracing a way of life that brings personal and spiritual growth and fills our lives with a sense of purpose and connection. The Jewish calendar is a tool for marking time and a guide that helps us incorporate the value of time into the structure of who we are and the rhythm of life. Through this connection, Jewish life becomes more meaningful and enriching.

Our connection to the Jewish calendar is deeply personal, yet it stretches far and wide, connecting us all no matter where we may be geographically. This calendar equally binds us with past and future generations, strengthening our interconnectedness through the passage of time and the marking of essential moments in our lives.

I have marveled at the reality that on Friday evenings, our family joins many Jews worldwide in lighting Sabbath candles, blessing our family members, and sitting down for a joyous meal. It has long brought me comfort to know that we have shared our observances with many Jews throughout time in addition to space. For example, on Shabbat evenings, as I hold the kiddush cup in the air, resting in the palm of my hand, I am reminded that almost 150 years ago, my great-great-grandparents, sitting around their table in Galicia, did just the same. This is the power of time and the importance of marking the special moments in our lives and days.

The Jewish calendar is not just a tool for marking time; it's a mirror reflecting our shared aspirations as a community. It reaffirms our history, future, and our collective goal for the year ahead. It's a unified hope that this year will be filled with blessings for *simchah* (joy), *shalom* (peace), *briut* (health), and *hatzlahah* (success), a hope that we all share and strive to bring to fruition.

B'Shalom,

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