

This Shabbat, March 13th, is Shabbat HaChodesh -- the next is Shabbat HaGadol (the Shabbat immediately preceding Passover)

For March 13th / Shabbat HaChodesh

Shabbat HaChodesh ("Sabbath [of the] month" שבת החודש) takes place on the Shabbat immediately preceding the first Shabbat of the Hebrew month of [Nisan](#).

- The Hebrew month of Nisan is the month in which [Passover](#) is celebrated. It was formerly known in the Torah as the month of Aviv and was renamed by it's Babylonian name when the Jews were in Babylonia during the first major exile of the Jewish people (either from 597BCE/586BCE to roughly 500ish BCE). Still it remains the month of Aviv, named originally for the time of 'maturing barley grains readying for harvest' = the name of 'Aviv.'
- Aviv/Nisan also roughly corresponds to an ancient Egyptian month of the 'Goat' (an eponymous and sacred symbol of ancient Egypt -- which if you take note the Zodiac, you will see this represented by the symbol and time period of Aries).

The special Torah reading of Exodus 12:1-20 (corresponding to the weekly *parshiyot* from *Parashat Bo*) which clearly spells out the original preparation and enactment of the original Passover Seder.

Important calendrical note: On the first day of the month of Nisan, the Israelites are presented with the first commandment of how to "sanctify the new moon" (also referred to as '*kiddush hachodesh*'). This formally signifies the beginning of the new moon of Aviv not only as a 'Rosh Chodesh' but also as the beginning month of the entire (Jewish) year. Yes, it was the first Rosh Hashanah!

For March 20th / Shabbat HaGadol

Shabbat HaGadol (roughly translated as the "Great Shabbat" or שבת הגדול) is the Shabbat immediately before Passover. The first *Shabbat HaGadol* took place in Egypt on the 10th day of Aviv/Nisan five days before the actual Israelite Exodus.

- On that day, the Israelites were given their first commandment which applied only to that Shabbat, "On the tenth day of this month (Nisan)... each man should take a lamb for the household, a lamb for each home (Exodus 12:3).
- There is a special Haftarah reading on this Shabbat of the book of Malachi.
- My favorite explanation for the naming of this Shabbat as 'Gadol' is because it is one of two days of the year known for a rather lengthy and expansive sermon given by the rabbi.
- i.e. "The rabbi spoke so briefly and beautifully, said no one ever."

A brief set of Jewish reasons are given for the naming of this Shabbat:

1. The lamb was the Egyptian deity. Many Jews, after 400/210 years of immersion within Egyptian civilization, had also adopted this animal as their god. When Gd commanded that a lamb be set aside and tethered for four days in anticipation of sacrifice, the Jewish people began to abandon the idolatrous practice of worship of this as a symbol/animal as a god. This is especially so in carrying out the selection, sacrifice and consumption of the Goat/Lamb before the eyes of the Egyptian people, thereby demonstrating their contempt for the god/symbol of Egypt and its civilization.
2. Nothing could have been more abominable to the Egyptians for their god/symbol to be slaughtered. The Egyptians were to watch as their god was being prepared for slaughter. In time, this was considered 'a great miracle' (or in Hebrew as a '*nes gadol*') and from that (*gadol*) given this Shabbat its name.
3. Here's my favorite: The customary lengthy *Shabbat HaGadol* speech makes the Shabbat feel long, drawn out, and '*gadol*'
4. In the *Haftara* (a selection of the Prophetic reading) reading of *Shabbat HaGadol* prior to Pesach we read the verse from Malachi 3:23:
 - "*Hinei Anochi Shole'ach Lachem Et Eliyahu Hanavi Lifnei Bo Yom H-shem HaGadol V'hanorah,*" or "Behold, I send you Elijah the prophet before the coming of the great and awesome day of the Lord."
 - This reason (above) places *Shabbat HaGadol* in the same category as *Shabbat Hazon*, *Shabbat Nahamu*, and *Shabbat Shuva* because their names are (all) derived also from the Haftara) Prophetic reading from Malachi).

Here are the ending verses of Malachi -- please note the following: a) The verses in Malachi are 'rearranged' -- not as they are here -- when read as a Haftara -- we will have a look at that. b) Malachi is used as the concluding book of the Old Testament by the various Christian bibles and communities. The Jewish Tanakh, the Bible does not. We will examine that idea as well. It is compelling . . .

<p>כב זָכְרוּ, תּוֹרַת מֹשֶׁה עֲבַדִּי, אֲשֶׁר צִוִּיתִי אוֹתוֹ בְּחֹרֵב עַל-כָּל-יִשְׂרָאֵל, חֻקִּים וּמִשְׁפָּטִים.</p>	<p>Malachi 3: 22 Remember ye the law of Moses My servant, which I commanded unto him in Horeb for all Israel, even statutes and ordinances.</p>
<p>כג הֲנֵה אֶנְכִּי שֹׁלֵחַ לָכֶם, אֶת אֱלֹהֵי הַנְּבִיא--לִפְנֵי, בּוֹא יוֹם יְהוָה, הַגָּדוֹל, וְהַנּוֹרָא.</p>	<p>23 Behold, I will send you Elijah the prophet before the coming of <u>the great</u> and terrible day of the LORD.</p>
<p>כד וְהָשִׁיב לִב-אֲבוֹת עַל-בָּנִים, וְלִב בָּנִים עַל-אֲבוֹתָם--פֶּן-אָבוּא, וְהִכִּיתִי אֶת-הָאָרֶץ חֲרָם. {ש}</p>	<p>24 And he shall turn the heart of the fathers to the children, and the heart of the children to their fathers; lest I come and smite the land with utter destruction. {P}</p>