

5769 at a Glance: Facts and Figures about the **New Year**

5769 is a “*shanah peshutah*,” a “regular” year of twelve months (only one Adar).

■ The year 5769 will begin on a Tuesday (Rosh Hashanah will be Tuesday and Wednesday), which is the least common of the four possible starting days for the Jewish year. Because of the calendrical rule known as “*Lo A-D-U Rosh*”—meaning Rosh Hashanah cannot occur on the first (*alef*), fourth (*daled*) and sixth (*vav*) days of the week (Sunday, Wednesday and Friday)—a year can begin only on Monday, Tuesday, Thursday or Shabbat. The frequency of each of these possible starting days in our fixed calendar is 28 percent for Monday, 32 percent for Thursday and 28.5 percent for Shabbat, but only 11.5 percent for Tuesday—i.e., less than half as often as each of the other possible days. The year following one in which the first Seder falls on *Motzei Shabbat*, as happened in 5768, always begins on Tuesday.

■ Whenever a year begins on Tuesday, the number of its days is “normal” (*keseder*), that is, 354 days for a twelve-month year or 384 days for a “leap” year (a year with two Adars or thirteen months). So 5769 will have 354 days, and the following Rosh Hashanah (5770) will be on Shabbat. Also, as a “normal” year, the length of the

months alternates neatly between 30 and 29 days: Tishrei 30; Cheshvan 29; Kislev 30; Tevet 29; Shevat 30; Adar 29; Nissan 30; Iyar 29; Sivan 30; Tammuz 29; Av 30 and Elul 29.

■ Since 5768 was a *shemittah* year, 5769 is the first year of a new seven-year *shemittah* cycle.

■ The Jewish calendar works in both cycles of nineteen years, known as the lunar (or lesser) cycle, and in cycles of twenty-eight years, known

as the solar (or great) cycle. 5769 is the twelfth year of the 304th lunar cycle and the first year of the 207th solar cycle since Creation.

■ Every twenty-eight years, i.e., in the first year of the solar cycle, *Birkat Hachamah* is recited. This is because every twenty-eight years the sun returns to the position it occupied when it was created on the fourth day of Creation. Chazal used this opportunity to institute a special prayer acknowledging God’s might and His creation of the world. The date on which *Birkat Hachamah* will be said

this year, April 8, is *erev Pesach*. Not only is the recital of *Birkat Hachamah* a relatively rare occasion that we will experience only a few times in our lives, but its coincidence with *erev Pesach* is extremely unusual. (Some people suggest that this has happened only twice since Creation: on the *erev Pesach* of the Exodus and in the year that Haman was hanged. Therefore, they imply that the year 5769 will be very special because of this rare confluence. But through calculations we can determine that this theory is incorrect and it is, in fact, the fourteenth such occurrence.)

■ The first night of Chanukah in 5769 will be on Sunday night, so Chanukah will run from Monday to Monday. This is the most common arrangement for Chanukah, occurring 27.9 percent of the time.

■ The sixth day of Chanukah (the thirtieth of Kislev), which is Rosh Chodesh, is a Shabbat and so will be a “Three-Torah Shabbat”: the first for *parashat Miketz*, the second for Rosh Chodesh and the third for Shabbat Chanukah.

■ Since Shavuot will occur on Friday and Shabbat in the Diaspora, but only on Friday in Israel, synagogues there will read the *parashat hashavuah* on that Shabbat. This will result in the not-uncommon situation in which Israel and the Diaspora are out of sync with regard to the *parashat hashavuah* until the start of the Three Weeks.

■ The Hebrew letters that correspond to the year 5769 can be looked at as *rashei tevot* (a literary abbreviation) for “*Tehei Shenat Siman Tov—May This Be a Year of Good Fortune!*”

■ And finally, in *gematria* (the system of calculating the numerical equivalents of the Hebrew letters), (5)769 is equal to Eliyahu HaTishbi, Elijah the Prophet, whose reappearance will herald the arrival of the *Mashiach*. May this be the year he comes! ■



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