

ROSH HODESH AV

The Jewish Women's Center will not be meeting for Rosh Hodesh Av which is July 22. In place of communally celebrating this new month, you are encouraged to observe and celebrate with this "do-it-for-yourself" ritual and Av information.

- Begin with the blessing for being a Woman:
B'ru'cha at Yah, ru'ach ha'o'lam she'as'ta'ni I'sha
Praised are you, Breath of Life, who has made me a Woman
- Recall the past month of Tammuz -
your encounters, your conversations, your deeds,
regrets or sadness, smiles and laughter
- Av is the 5th month of the Jewish calendar. It comes at the same time as the secular months of July/August. The mazal (astrological sign) for Av is Leo, Aryeh-lion. The prophet Isaiah named the Temple in Jerusalem Ariel, which is related to Aryeh. The majesty of the lion can be seen as a metaphor for the Temple. The lion is a fierce fighter, symbolizing the endurance of our people. In Hebrew, Av is spelled aleph, bet, the first two letters of the Hebrew alphabet. Legend says the letters of the Hebrew alphabet are indestructible, like Judaism itself.
- During Av, we commemorate the destructions of both Temples - the first by the Babylonians in 586 B.C.E. and the second by the Romans in 70 C.E. - on Tisha B'Av (the 9th of Av). This is a fast day when Eychah - The Book of Lamentations - is chanted and a series of poems - Kinot are read, which describe the destruction of the Temples. There is a tradition that the Messiah will be born on Tisha B'Av. Thus, out of destruction, redemption will be born.
This can be seen in another important date in Av -the 15th- Tu B'Av. In the Talmud, this is a festive day when "the young women of Israel used to dress in white and go out to the fields and the young men would follow after them." (Ta'anit 4:8) The origins and meaning of Tu B'Av customs are unknown. It may have been a midsummer festival filled with dancing and romancing. However, coming on the full moon and days after Tisha B'Av, it can be viewed as the cycle of life we experience when our mourning (both personal and national) turns to celebration, as we move from the sadness of loss in the past to the

hope of a brighter future.

The rabbis named this month Menachem Av- Av the Comforter because the Shabbat after Tisha B'Av begins seven weeks of special Haftarot that offer the mourning Israelites words of consolation.

- Light a scented candle in honor of the new month and give yourself blessings so that you can become your sweetest self.
- Pour for yourself a glass of your favorite wine or grapejuice and say:
Let me bless the Source of Life that ripens fruit on the vine, as I hallow the Rosh Hodesh festival, weaving new threads into the tapestry of tradition.
- And before you drink, say Shehecheyanu:
Let me bless the flow of life that revives me, sustains me, and brings me to this joyous moment, this holy time. L'Hayim!
- I link my life to the rhythms of the moon. . . forever becoming, appearing and disappearing. I shed my layers, like the moon. I who caretake life, I who am a healer, I who am a doer. It is time for me. This time is for me. I make a space for myself to be. The moon now glides toward darkness, toward rest. It is time to retreat in order to emerge whole. It is time to come home to myself, to laugh and sing, and stretch and renew . . . as does the moon.
- At this time, you may want to honor a loved one(s) whose yahrzeit is in the month of Av.
- Think about this new month. What are your thoughts, expectations, plans, hopes and fears?
- As you look outside at the thin crescent of the moon with wine glass in hand, say these lines
New moon, ancient light
May my spirit rise to you
In Av's sky

Hodesh Tov! A Good Month
A Month of Good Health, Peace, & Fulfillment

Sources

The Book of Blessings by Marcia Falk, Harper, 1996

Kolot's Rosh Hodesh: It's A Girl Thing!

By Barbra Berley-Mellits, MSW & Rabbi Rachel Gartner,
Kolot: The Center for Jewish Women's and Gender Studies,
Reconstructionist Rabbinical College, 2001-2003

Miriam's Well: Rituals for Jewish Women Around the Year
by Penina V. Adelman, Biblio Press, 1990