

# *The Hebrew Months*

## *An Italian Kabbalistic Interpretation*

### *Sinagoga Ner Tamid del Sud* *“The Eternal Light of the South”*

**Nissan:** (from **“nissim” miracles**) The month when we think about Nature and rebirth. The month of Pesach, which commemorates our freedom as Jews. For Progressive Jews this is the month when we remember the 6 million martyrs of the Shoah. The remembrance day is called Yom HaShoah and marks the first day of the Warsaw Ghetto Uprising.

**Iyar:** (from **“ziv” radiance**) The month when the plants and crops begin to ripen. We remember that the reward of freedom brings duty... we must work for the health and stability of our Jewish communities. During this month we begin to count the Omer, the days between Passover and Shavuot.

**Sivan:** (from **“zeh” this, “This is the Prophecy of Moses**) The time of the harvest. We remember the gifts from G-d... the blessings of the earth (food) and the blessings of the heavens (Torah).

**Tammuz:** (from **“connect together”**) on the 17 day in the month of Tammuz the Babylonian armies conquered Jerusalem (586 BCE). The Jewish people had lost their faith, so this month reminds us of our failures as a people. This month asks us to renew our promise to live a life of Torah.

**Av:** (from **“father” and “to desire” and “to will” Mashiach will be as a father to us**) This is the month of deep mourning. On the 9th day of the Month of Av, both Temples were destroyed. But the 9th of Av is the day that the Messiah will be born.

**Elul:** (An acronym for the first words from Song of Songs... **I am my beloved and my beloved is mine... The divine expression of mercy and forgiveness**) No holy days. We prepare for the New Year and we review our life in the past year. We prepare to make our apologies.

**Tishrei:** (a form of **“resheet” beginning**) A New Year and a new beginning. The month of Rosh HaShanah and Yom Kippur. The holy day cycle includes Sukkot, where we focus on the relationship between the material and the spiritual things in our lives, and Simchat Torah, where we remember that each year begins and ends with Torah.

**Cheshvan:** (from **“Chodesh Mabul” the month of the flood**) We create new rhythms for the new year. We move forward into the new year with a new spirit of love for Shabbat and Jewish learning.

**Kislev:** (from **“kislah” faith/trust and madness/folly**) We rededicate ourselves to Jewish traditions and ideals (Chanukah means dedication and comes from the same root as the Hebrew word for education). We celebrate the blessing of religious freedom.

# rabbi barbara

Rabbi Barbara Aiello

**Tevet:** (from “**tekuvah**” **period of winter**) Babylon attacked Jerusalem and held the city under siege on the 10th of Tevet. We are reminded to defend our people, our heritage, and our traditions.

**Sh’vat:** (from “**tzadik**” **the righteous are the foundations of the world, like the roots of the trees**) We celebrate the birthday of the trees on Tu B’Shevat, the 15th day of this month. For modern Jews we study about our environment and do something to preserve the earth for our children and our children’s children.

**Adar I:** We add this month to the calendar during leap year. We do this so that our holy days and festivals will happen at the same season every year. The Muslims do not add a month. This is why Ramadan can occur any time during the year, and why Chanukah, for example, is always during the winter and never in the summer. Adar I asks us to be aware of how the seasons of the year affect us mentally and spiritually.

**Adar II:** (from “**adir**” **means strength**) The fast of Esther is on the 13th and Purim is on the 14th. Esther reminds us that any one of us can be a hero and that the actions of one person can make a difference.

*Rav Barbara Irit Aiello*  
*rabbi@rabbibarbara.com*

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