

Rabbi's Column

This past Shabbat was known as Shabbat Vayikra Rosh Hodesh HaHodesh (The new month, namely "the month" (which is Nisan) when the Torah Portion is the first section of Leviticus). Besides being a Shabbat with portions read from three different sections of the Torah, another peculiarity struck me, which has some resonances for other things in our lives.

When I see these words written in Hebrew, I automatically pronounce them as above, with the meanings that are attached. Yet in most of the places where I see these words, there is no vocalization (no vowel markings) to indicate which word it should be. Many consonant combinations in Hebrew can differ only by their vowels. So this phrase could have been (and poetically, might simultaneously be) read as Rosh Hadash HeHadash (a beginning of the newest newness), which reminds us that as every month begins, there is an opportunity to start afresh - and when Pesach begins and we have cleaned a lot of things up in preparation, we have a very auspicious moment to start our spiritual preparations for Rosh HaShanah.

The part of this that I think we can take into the rest of our lives is our propensity to see things as we normally have seen them. Perhaps this year we can look anew at what we see, to see the other messages hidden in plain sight.

May your preparations for Pesach go smoothly.