

Rabbi's Column – April 13, 2020

When I was back in Hebrew School Elementary grades, I once asked a question that indicated clearly I had misunderstood something. We were discussing paragraphs of the liturgy, and one of them is added in on Passover, Shavuot, Sukkot and Rosh Hodesh. I asked what happens when Rosh Hodesh happens at the same time as one of the other three.

Nobody at that time tried to figure out in what way that question made perfect sense to me. I did not know either, but when I began to teach, I would always be trying to figure out in what way something that seemed to be a wrong answer (based on facts or a book) could be a right answer - because that way I could see if the student's reasoning echoed my own or if they were just guessing.

This past week I did finally figure out how I made that mistake. Rosh Hodesh and Shabbat both happen more often than once during a year, and just as sometimes holydays can occur on Shabbat, I thought that holydays could also occur on Rosh Hodesh. The way I should have been thinking about it is that in this context, Rosh Hodesh and holydays are dated events, and their specific dates do not coincide.

Hopefully everyone is still safe and well. May this continue throughout the foreseeable future.