Shabbat, Rosh Hodesh, Hanukka and Barekh ‘alenu

Besides Hanukka, today we also celebrate Rosh Hodesh Tebet. Our prayers are longer than usual for a weekday. Today, same as yesterday, we say *ya’ale veyabo* and *‘al haNisim* in the ‘amida and in Birkat haMazon. In the morning we read the full Hallel and we took out two Sifre Tora. On the first one we read the Rosh Hodesh portion and in the second Sefer Tora we read the text corresponding to the 7th day of Hanukka. We also said Musaf for Rosh Hodesh, including ‘al haNisim.

Additionally, tonight in Tefilat ‘arbit we will switch from*barekhenu* to *barekh ‘alenu*. In other words, we will begin asking God for rain.

In Israel Jews start praying for rain two weeks after Shemini Atseret, on the evening of the seventh day of Heshvan.

The Jews who lived in the Babylonian diaspora did not need the rain so early in the year. The Rabbis established then that Babylonian Jews should begin praying for rain on the 60th day of the season of Tishri, or the Hebrew autumn.

The Hebrew calendar also has four seasons called *tequfot*(in singular: *tequfa*). The Rabbis gave an easy round number for determining the beginning of each Hebrew calendar season.

A season consists of 91 days 7 hours and 30 minutes. This makes each year exactly 365 days and 6 hours long, about 11 minutes longer than the actual astronomical calculation of a solar year.

Today, Jews who live outside of Israel, follow the ancient practice of the Jews of Babylonia. Therefore, it has become tradition for Jews who live in the Diaspora to start asking for rain in their prayers as the Babylonian Jews did.

Based on this calculation, this year 2013, we will switch to *Barekh ‘alenu* –the prayer for rain– tonight, December 4th, in our ‘arbit prayer.

Shabbat Shalom, Codesh Tob & Hanukka Sameach