

Once every 28 years a special event occurs on the Jewish calendar. According to tradition, on the 1st Wednesday after what the Rabbis understood to be the vernal equinox, the sun returns to the place where it was when the creation of the earth took place. This occurs once every 28 years and will occur on Wednesday morning, April 8, 2009.

The ceremony is known as the Blessing of the Sun, Birkat HaHammah, and is being celebrated throughout the Jewish world. Whether we think the science is correct or the astronomy is perfect, matters little. It reminds us of the majesty of the world in which we live and our need to recognize that fact on a daily basis. The occasion is being used to teach the importance that Judaism places on the environment and to highlight the need to be mindful of the natural resources with which we are blessed.

It so happens that this year, April 8, is Erev Pesach. It is traditional on the eve of Pesach for firstborns to fast in recognition of their being saved during the Exodus from Egypt. However, the custom arose that should a tractate of Talmud or a Seder of Mishna be completed, a Seudat Mitzvah, a celebratory meal, is held. I will be privileged to complete the Talmudic tractate of Yoma on Wednesday morning, April 8, and invite all those who join with us to a celebratory meal. This year we will also commemorate Birkat HaHammah, as well, as part of our erev Pesach events.

The order of the morning is as follows:

6:45am	morning Shacharit services
7:20am	Siyyum (the completion of the Talmudic tractate Yoma)
8:00am	breakfast served
8:15am	proceed outside, facing east towards Lake Michigan, to celebrate this once in 28 year event of Birkat HaHammah

I encourage you to be present for some or all of this special morning and to bring your families with you as well. If you have not sold your hametz, this will be your last opportunity to do so. Following Birkat HaHammah, we will all proceed to our final preparations for the holiday of Pesach and our individual Sedarim.

I look forward to seeing you over the entire Pesach holiday and I wish you and yours a healthy, happy, joyous and Kosher Pesach.

RABBI VERNON KURTZ