

# A Rabbinic Perspective *By Rabbi Seymour Rosenbloom*

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## **Here Comes The Blessing of the Sun**



"Here Comes the Sun" declares the George Harrison song that appeared on the Beatles' 1969 album "Abbey Road."

On Wednesday morning, April 8, the eve of Passover, we will say "Here comes the Blessing of the Sun!"

The sun rises every morning, but the ritual of the Blessing of the Sun takes place only once in a generation, every twenty-eight years. According to the Bible, the sun was created on the fourth day of creation. Through a combination of astronomical and spiritual calculations,

the ancient rabbis came to the conclusion that every twenty eight years, at the beginning of the fourth day of the week (Tuesday night, since according to the Jewish calendar every new day begins with the preceding night) the sun returns to the exact position in the sky that it occupied at the moment of its creation. And that is when the Blessing of the Sun takes place, although it is postponed until the morning so the blessing can be recited when one actually sees the sun and benefits from its light. Since those who are diligent in the performance of the *mitzvot* want to perform a *mitzvah* at the earliest possible moment, the blessing should ideally be recited at sunrise.

So we will be gathering on Wednesday morning, April 8, for a service of the "Blessing of the Sun" which will lead into an early morning *Shaharit* service and the *Siyum Bechorot*, the Study Session of the First Born which is traditionally held on *Erev Pesah*. Sunrise will be at 6:33 a.m., and we will begin our service at 6:15. It will be held at the synagogue, but the exact location will be determined based on weather conditions and where we will best be able to see the rising sun.

Hazzan Glantz and I will lead the service. I have prepared a special liturgy, based on the traditional texts used to bless the Sun, with contemporary additions. The *Siyum* study text will be from *Talmudic* sources dealing with the Blessing of the Sun.

On Sunday morning, April 5, I will lead a study session after *minyan* and breakfast, at 10:15 a.m., to speak in depth about the Blessing of the Sun ritual, and study the texts used in the service. I hope you will join me so that this can become a spiritually participatory ritual.

I must confess that I have never participated in the Blessing of the Sun, even though in my lifetime I have had two opportunities to do so. But the ritual was not widely known or publicized. In some circles, it was considered archaic, at best, or pagan, at worst.

But we live in a different time, and the Blessing of the Sun has become associated with our preeminent concern for our environment and for recognizing our responsibilities as Stewards of the Earth. The Sun is a necessary component of life on earth. Its light brings life. But human actions have also demonstrated to us how despoiling the environment of our planet can allow the Sun's rays to become destructive of the planet's ecosystem that supports life.

The Blessing of the Sun is a call to make the Sun a blessing. It reminds us that our actions can preserve the world, or destroy it; that for the Sun to be a blessing, now more than ever, we must recognize our responsibility to guard the environment.

The Blessing of the Sun comes on the eve of Passover, the festival of our liberation from the bondage of ancient Egypt. The ninth of the ten plagues that God brought against Pharaoh to win our freedom was the plague of darkness. The Bible records that "Thick darkness descended upon all the land of Egypt for three days. People could not see one another, and for three days no one could move about. But all the Israelites enjoyed light in their dwellings."

The darkness that afflicted Egypt was both spiritual and physical. It isolated people from one another. It paralyzed them. This is the plague that our responsible environmental stewardship must avoid. It is the "inconvenient truth" that our actions can bring about a global plague of darkness that will threaten the quality of human life on earth.

The Blessing of the Sun comes only once in twenty-eight years, only once in a generation, to remind us that we must never be short-sighted in matters of the environment. We must consider the consequences of our actions on the welfare of future generations, our descendants.

So let us bless the Sun, and resolve to be responsible stewards of the earth, to secure the Sun's blessings for us and all humanity, for this generation, and generations to come.

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