

# Signs of the Jewish Zodiac and the 12 Tribes of Israel

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**Sefer Yetzirah – (Book of Creation)**, one of the first Jewish books ever written, reveals the secrets of *Jewish astrology*.

Throughout the Bible, **Talmud** and **Code of Jewish Law** there are fascinating descriptions of how G-d channels His life force into our world through heavenly bodies. At the same time, when one is connected to the **Torah** and observes its commandments, he or she is directly plugged into the Supernatural, surpassing the influences of astrological forces.

**Jacob's sons, who became the 12 tribes of Israel**, are actually **12 different soul roots** from which the Jewish people descend. These roots correspond with the **12 signs of the zodiac**, the **12 Jewish months**, **12 of the letters in the Hebrew alphabet** and **12 attributes of the soul**, such as sight, anger, speech and thought.

We have the ability to better ourselves at any time, but the **Kabbalah delineates (define)** certain times that are more auspicious to work on certain attributes. For example, Jewish holidays do not only commemorate (*mark by some ceremony or observation*) historical events, but are the result of heavenly forces and energies. In the month of Nissan, when we celebrate Passover (*a Jewish festival (traditionally 8 days from Nissan 15) celebrating the exodus of the Israelites from Egypt*), the attribute of speech is at its height—giving us the added strength to refine our attribute of communication.

According to the astrological chart, the month in which you are born indicates **a hidden strength you can develop, or a weakness you can overcome**; however, you are not locked into the "personality" of your month. Each of us is infused with these strengths and weaknesses. We can refine them, one by one, during the cycle of the Jewish year, as we strive for a life where the physical, mental and emotional are integrated into the spiritual.

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## Aries (Nissan)

This first month of the Jewish zodiac is governed by the letter hei (h), the breath of speech, from which all other sounds evolve. Human beings are distinguished from other creatures by their power of speech, their ability to communicate their inner thoughts to others. Thus, “correct talking” is the beginning of spiritual growth. The celebration of this month is Passover. During the Passover meal we employ our power of speech for its highest purpose: to communicate to our children (and the child within us) the experience of G-d’s miraculous presence in our lives and our history. The tribe of this month is Yehudah, the royal leader, from which Jewish monarchs descend. The Passover sacrifice in the Temple was a lamb, which reflects the sign Aries.

## Taurus (Iyar)

Iyar is the month between our yearly rebirth in Nissan and our new maturity—which we achieve by receiving the Torah—in Sivan. Accordingly, the letter of this month, vav (v), represents the straight line of truth. The sign of Taurus, the bull, signifies the individuality and stubborn devotion to this truth, the prerequisite for maturation. Iyar is thus the month of “correct thought,” the attribute on which we focus in preparation for receiving the Torah. The tribe of this month, Yissachar, excelled in their loving devotion to the study of the Torah.

## Gemini (Sivan)

This is the month of “correct movement,” of learning how to walk in the ways of the Torah that we receive anew on the holiday of Shavuot. The Torah is our weapon against evil; this month is governed by the letter zayin (z), which means “weapon.” Walking in the ways of the Torah is epitomized by this month’s tribe of Zevulun, the seafaring business people of Israel who supported the tribe Yissachar in their Torah study. These two brothers had different careers but worked together, symbolized by the astrological sign of Gemini, the twins. The concept of twins also evokes the image of the two tablets at Mt. Sinai and the coupling of G-d and the Jewish people through the Torah.

## Cancer (Tammuz)

This month is governed by the letter chet (ch), which means “fear.” Cancer, the crab, is a passive creature that tends to run and hide. The challenge of the summer months is to use our faculties of thought, speech and deed in a G-d-fearing way, and to retreat from situations that obstruct our Divine consciousness. The consequence of denying our Divine consciousness is the sad commemorations of the destruction of the Temple in this month and the next. The tribe of this month is Reuven, whose name comes from the word for “sight,” the faculty we seek to perfect this month. “Wrong seeing” leads to destruction and mourning; through “correct seeing,” we increase the world’s holiness by focusing on what is positive.

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## Leo (Menachem Av)

In this month, we cultivate “correct hearing,” alluded to in the name of the tribe of this month, Shimon, which comes from the word for “hearing.” On the ninth day of Av we mourn for the Holy Temple, destroyed by the lion-like nations of Babylon and Rome—hence the association with the sign of Leo. The letter governing this month, tet (t), has the negative meaning of “quicksand,” but is also the first letter of the word “good” (tov), since we can reach the highest levels by transforming the lowest levels into good.

## Virgo (Elul)

Correcting the attributes of the previous months leads us to the month of return, Elul, when we focus on “correct action.” We take stock and spiritually prepare for the High Holidays. The desire to achieve a new innocence in our relationship with G-d is expressed by the sign of this month, Virgo, the virgin. The letter governing this month, yud (y), means “hand,” reminding us that sincere regret for our misdeeds and resolutions for the future must be reflected in our actions. The tribe of this month, Gad, were the arch-warriors who perfected the faculty of action by challenging the forces of evil and conquering the Land of Israel.

## Libra (Tishrei)

In this month of “correct feeling,” G-d weighs and evaluates our past deeds, determining how He will distribute the blessings of life over the coming year. This is reflected by the sign Libra, scales. The new innocence we introduced into our relationship with G-d during the preceding month of Elul is now brought to fulfillment through a succession of holidays, beginning with Rosh Hashanah. Tishrei is therefore the month of marital union between G-d and Israel. This month of “correct feeling” is governed by the Hebrew letter lamed (l), the first letter of the word “heart” (lev). The name of this month’s tribe, Ephraim, means “fruitful,” expressing our wish that our union with G-d have positive repercussions throughout the coming year.

## Scorpio (Cheshvan)

In Cheshvan, we integrate the inspiration of Tishrei into real life. No holidays here, just day-to-day living. The numerical value of this month’s Hebrew letter—nun (n)—is 50, indicating the 50 levels of Divine consciousness we can attain when we are spiritually proactive, and the 50 levels of impurity we can sink into if we let life “just happen.” The poison of the Scorpion is cold, symbolizing the danger of approaching life without passion. The name of this month’s tribe, Menasheh, also spells “breath” (neshimah), connecting it to the sense we refine this month, smell. Smell is considered the most spiritual of the senses, indicating this month’s potential for heightened sense of spirituality.

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## Sagittarius (Kislev)

During this month, we work on “correct relaxation” or sleep, which results from our dedication to “correct action” during our active hours. The name of this month’s letter, samech (s), means “reliance.” Our true reliance on G-d gives us the confidence to assert our holiness and resist those who challenge it. This is reflected in the celebration of Chanukah and the astrological sign of Sagittarius, the archer. “Correct relaxation,” using rest as a means to proper action, helps us channel our efforts (“aim” our bow) in the right direction. Accordingly, this month’s tribe, Benyamin, possessed valiant warriors. Their territory contained the site of the Holy Temple, where our prayers and dreams are directed.

## Capricorn (Tevet)

In this month, we cultivate “correct anger.” The Talmud tells us to always regard others favorably, and that anger is almost always something to be avoided. But there is also a positive anger, the sense of what to reject. The name of this month’s tribe, Dan, means “to judge.” This month’s letter, ayin, means “eye.” We have two eyes in order to constantly discern what to accept in life, and what to reject. The ability to constantly reject the negative is symbolized by Capricorn, the goat, known for its steadfastness.

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## Aquarius (Shevat)

The holiday of this month, Tu B'Shevat, is celebrated by eating fruits of the tree, reflecting this month's attribute, “correct eating.” The letter of this month, Tzadik (tz), means “righteous,” reminding us of the verse, “the righteous eats to nourish his soul.” The true test of our spirituality is whether we make eating (and all our mundane activities) a spiritual experience, or a surrender to sensual gratification. By purifying our attitudes toward materiality, we become conduits for distributing G-d’s beneficence to the world. This is reflected in the sign Aquarius, the water distributor. The territory of Asher, this month’s tribe, produced an abundance of food.

## Pisces (Adar)

Pisces, the fish, lives in the hidden world of the sea. The central holiday of this month is Purim, which celebrates G-d’s hidden hand in history. This month’s letter, kuf (k), means “monkey.” We acknowledge G-d’s hiddenness by donning masks on Purim, imitating (aping) anyone we wish. The celebration of Purim sheds the inhibitions that conceal our inner essence. Normally, transforming evil into holiness is a methodical process. However, our Sages teach that “joy breaks all boundaries.” Through “correct laughter,” this month’s attribute, we transform obstacle into opportunity, a decree for destruction

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into a day of celebration. We effect this transformation with the speed of this month's tribe, Naftali, the swiftest of the sons of Jacob.<sup>1</sup>