

Reasons to declare a Leap Year

Ref: *Sefer Zemanim, Hilchot Kidush Hachodesh, Chapter 4*

LEAP YEAR WHEN SANHEDRIN PRESENT

In same way as New Moon is established in *Sanhedrin* in *Eretz Yisrael*, similarly the leap year is so established.

There are **3** main factors which would cause the *Bet Din* to declare a leap year, and other subsidiary factors.

The extra month in the year is always an extra *Adar* (so that *Pesach* in *Nissan* will always fall in spring – *Adar* is the month before *Nissan*)

Reasons Bet Din would declare a Leap Year	Extra month added	Explanation
Vernal spring equinox	✓	Main reason i.e. if the court calculates that vernal equinox will fall on or after 16th <i>Nissan</i>
Ripening of barley crop	✓	Main reason. So that the barley crop will be available to reap the <i>Omer</i> offering on 16th of <i>Nissan</i>
Blooming of fruits generally	✓	Also a main factor
Roads damaged	✓	Roads need to be in good repair for pilgrims to reach <i>Yerushalayim</i>
Bridges destroyed	✓	Similarly
Ovens for <i>Korban Pesach</i> destroyed	✓	People need to roast the <i>Korban Pesach</i> on <i>Pesach</i>
Diaspora Jews have left their homes but have been held up	✓	
Diaspora Jews have not yet left homes and are held up	×	
Cold or snow	×	They will still be able to reach <i>Yerushalayim</i>
Scarcity of goats, lambs and doves	×	But could be <i>contributory</i> factor to add a month
Year of famine	×	Cannot prevent people from eating from the new harvest (normally cannot eat new harvest until after <i>Omer</i> on 16th <i>Nissan</i>)

Minimum of **3** judges needed from High Court to establish a leap year and one of these must be *Nasi* (i.e. Head of the High Court)

There is a procedure for coming to a decision and it may be necessary to extend the court to **5** or **7** participants.

King or High Priest may not participate because they may have ulterior motives.

Leap year established only during the day.

Leap year established between *Rosh Hashanah* and end of *Adar*. It cannot be established once *Nissan* arrives. However, *Bet Din* can establish leap year also many years in advance and then it could be at any time of year.

LEAP YEAR WHEN NO SANHEDRIN PRESENT IN *ERETZ YISRAEL*

Here leap year is established only with the calendar.



Halachah of *Mosheh Misinai*. If there is *Sanhedrin* then *Rosh Chodesh* established with witnesses. If not then use calendar alone.

The Diaspora relies on the calculations of *Eretz Yisrael* for determining *Rosh Chodesh*.



Even though everyone uses fixed calendar we still follow the *minhag* (custom) of keeping *Yom Tov* two days in *chutz laaretz* (Diaspora).

With calendar calculations *Rosh Chodesh* usually falls on day when moon sighted but it could be that the sighting is a day before or a day after (this is rare). This is due to slight variations from the mean movement of moon and sun.



With *Rosh Hashanah*, even in *Eretz Yisrael* this is kept for 2 days.