

SEASONS OF THE MOON

The Month of Tevet

Tevet / 5757 December 11, 1996 - January 8, 1997

THIS MONTH'S SIGN G'DEE / CAPRICORN

The Philistines are the nation associated with the sign of the Goat (*g'dee*). As the books of Joshua and Judges remind us, the Philistines were always a problem for the Jewish People. When

Israel forgot Who protects them, they were delivered into the hands of the Philistines. Samson gave his Philistine wife a goat as a gift, symbolically attempting to purify the negative influence of the Philistine at its root.

Even though Tevet has always seen events of hardship and evil for the People of Israel (Joseph Stalin was born in Tevet), nevertheless the planet that 'influences' Tevet, *Shabbtai* (Saturn), symbolizes the power of contemplation which characterizes the Shabbat experience: Refraining from the mundane, the world of the transcendent is revealed...



THE SEEDS OF DOOM

Only one fast in the Jewish year can ever fall on Friday. That fast is the Tenth of Tevet. When the Jewish calendar was fixed by Hillel II in 4110 CE, he set down a rule that none of the five Rabbinic fasts could

ever fall on a Friday or Shabbat. The reason was that the pleasure of Shabbat would be compromised if people were to enter Shabbat in a state of hunger, and all the more if they were to fast on Shabbat itself.

However the exception to that rule is the Tenth of Tevet. In rare circumstances, such as this year, we fast all day Friday and break our fasts with the wine of Kiddush on Friday night.

Why, of all the fasts, did our sages allow only the Tenth of Tevet to fall on a Friday?

When we look at the Tenth of Tevet itself, we would be

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Take a look at any secular horoscope and you'll see that the astrological year always begins with Aries. Why?

Logically, shouldn't Capricorn — the sign in which the first of January falls — be the first sign of the year in the secular horoscope?

From the Jewish perspective, the answer is simple: The Jewish People were born as a nation under the sign of *Aries/Taleh*. The first mitzvah that was given to the Jewish People while we were still in Egypt was the Sanctification of the Moon. Hashem showed Moshe the New Moon and told him "*This month will be to you the*

first of months."

It is for this reason that *Aries* is the first sign of the Jewish Year, because the month of Nissan was the first month when there was a Jewish People.

THE RETURN OF THE SUN

But why does the *secular* world also start their *lunar* calendar in Aries?

What does the sign of *Taleh/Aries* signify for them?

The world was created for the Torah to be learned. It follows, therefore, that if there would ever be one moment where the Torah was *not* being learned by someone, somewhere, then the entire Creation would lose its *raison d'être*; it would literally lose its 'reason

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THE SEEDS OF DOOM

hard pushed to discern why this fast is exceptional. For the fast of the Tenth of Tevet commemorates the surrounding of Jerusalem by the armies of the Babylonian king Nevuchadnetzar. No-one was killed. Nothing was burned.

Not even the most serious of the Rabbinic fasts — the Ninth of Av — is allowed to fall on a Friday, even though that day commemorates the greatest tragedies in Jewish history.

What is so special about the Tenth of Tevet?

When you look at a seed, what do you see? Do you see the tree that will eventually grow? When you look at the seed of a plant, you're really looking at a movie that's being played out in front of your eyes right now.

For it's not so much that the seed hints to what may be in the future, but

THE RETURN OF THE SUN

to be' and would return to a vast untrammled emptiness as at the dawn of Creation.

A frightening thought!

Could it be that this subliminal awareness of the importance of the Torah is what gears even the secular horoscope to begin in Nissan, with the creation of the Jewish People — the receivers of the Torah?

But even if this were to be the case, the question still remains, "Why does the secular *solar* calendar begin with January at all?" Surely if the Astrological Calendar begins in March/April, then the solar calendar should also start from that time, and not, as it does, from the first of January.

When the First Man walked the Earth, there was no-one but him. When he saw the days beginning to shorten, he thought that night was gradually conquering day. That the night was eating up the day, consuming it. But why was this happening?

Adam surmised that because he had brought sin into

in reality, *everything that is needed for the tree exists now in the seed*. What follows afterwards is no more than the dénouement of a reality which already exists now. It's not that the seed holds the *potential* for the tree to grow, but that **the tree is really here now**.

Now we can understand why it should be that the Tenth of Tevet is so important; why it is an event that is allowed to infringe on the pleasure of Shabbat itself.

For although the Tenth of Tevet was only the beginning of the siege of Jerusalem, in reality, it was as though the two *Batei Mikdash* (Holy Temples) and the other disasters that were to grow from that seed had already happened on the tenth of Tevet — what followed was merely the playing out of a scenario that was already a fully-fledged reality.

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actuality, he had infected the environment, he had brought death to the world, and the world itself was slowly, slowly dying...

Thus for eight days he sat in fasting and prayer... Then he saw a day which was longer than the previous one. The light was coming back into the world!

With this first winter solstice, Adam realized then that the shortening of the days was no more than a natural occurrence — the way of the world. He then made a Yom Tov celebration which lasted for a further eight days. In subsequent years he observed a festival for both his eight days of fasting and prayer

and the eight days of celebration.

Could it be that this celebration that Adam made is the reason that the secular calendar begins with January? Could it be that the mid-Winter celebrations of the non-Jewish world are no more than an ancient memory of a festival created by the First Man when he walked from darkness into light at the dawn of Time?

Sources: THE SEEDS OF DOOM - Chatam Sofer, Rabbi Dov Schwartzman, Rabbi Mendel Weinbach;
THE RETURN OF THE SUN - Talmud Avoda Zara 8a, Maharal, Chidushei Haggadol; THIS MONTH'S SIGN - 'Above the Zodiac' by Rabbi Mattisyahu Glazerson

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