

SEASONS OF THE MOON

The Month of Shevat

Shevat 5759 / January 18, 1999 - February 16, 1999

Don't you sometimes feel like your life is written in stone — that you can't change? Sometimes, we want to go back to a more innocent time — a time when we were pure and our hearts unsullied. But we feel we can't break the mold we're stuck in. We've created a treadmill from past bad decisions, and now we seem doomed to run like a rat round and round ... visiting and re-visiting all the mistakes we've ever made.

Hopelessness is the feeling that things are forever frozen in stone.

When the world came into being, it first existed as primordial matter without form: "Darkness on the face of the deep; and the Divine Presence hovering on the face of the water." The world was then a world of water. Water is the ultimate symbol of matter without form. Water has no form; it flows where it may. It can take any shape at all. It waits for the vessel that holds it to give it shape, to give it true purpose.

There are times when we lose contact with our true purpose. Times when the form that we have made for ourselves is not what the Creator intended. We have become sealed and unresponsive to spiritual reality. In Hebrew this

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is called *tuma*. Impurity means to be cut off from the Source. Sealed. The landscape of that sealed existence is a world of hopelessness.

If only we could return to a world where things were not sealed in stone; where we could re-fashion ourselves in the form that the Creator intended for us!



A WORLD OF WATER

Every month the Jewish Woman, the Woman of the Moon, returns to the Waters of Eden. The waters of the *mikvah*. When she returns to those waters, she returns to a primordial world. A world of water. An amniotic world where existence has no shape. A world of formless matter where things have yet to be defined. It is there that she is renewed like the moon. Re-defined. The Woman of the Moon returns to the water, to an earlier stage of creation, to that primordial world

before definition and form. And in that water she is re-formed, as new.

The word *mikvah* comes from the same root as the word *tikvah* — Hope. The essence of hope is that we are not bounded and trapped by our present reality. Hope says that we can connect to that which is outside and beyond

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ourselves. To the Source. Every *mikvah* is like a little sea. The *gematria* of *yam* (sea) is 50. 50 represents the transcendent. The gateway to that which is beyond.

This is the essence of purity. Of *tahara*. Life is not frozen in stone. Hope tells us that we can return to the world of water to be become purified. This is the essence of hope: That things can be re-made. That we can change ourselves. That we can break the treadmill. The *mikvah* tells us that we can go back to the world of water, to that world of pure matter. The *mikvah* tells us that we can regress to a world before form, that we can re-make ourselves and become pure.

MOON-LIGHT

The moon has no light. All its light comes from the sun. The People of the Moon have no light of their own. All our light comes from the Creator. We are a glimmer of moonlight in a dark world. That is our purpose. To receive and reflect G-d's light. We measure our success in this world, individually and as a people, to the extent that we are reflectors of the Divine Light. If we want to light up the world with our own egos, we block the Divine Radiance. The ultimate aim and purpose of the People of the Moon is to be like the moon — that all its light comes from the sun.

This is the secret of the survival of the People of the Moon. This is what has baffled historians for millennia. Why are the Jewish People still here? The glory that was Rome is sipping cappuccino on the Via Veneto. The Greeks are eating calimari in the shadow of the ruins of the Parthenon. The Persians are weaving rugs. And the People of the Moon are what they have always been — one nation declaring that G-d is One

and His Name is One. Who is like Your people Israel, one nation in the world?

Every month the moon seems to die. It disappears from the sky and is no more. But at the very moment it seems to die, it is reborn. Many times in our long and difficult history, we have been written off as fossils. But just when we seem to have been gassed and burned into oblivion, the sounds of children's voices learning G-d's holy Torah

are heard in the suburbs of Jerusalem. Like the moon, we rise renewed and reborn. What is the secret of our eternity?

The classic nations of world history burn like a supernova. A hard fire that flames so brightly. The world is awash with their light. You would think that nothing else exists in the universe except them. In their glare, the People of the Moon look very shabby and forlorn. A little moonlight almost lost in the brash glare of a vaunting star. But, like some Hollywood epic, each great empire fizzles out, to be lost in the black holes of history while that little moonlight keeps on shining. Receiving. Reflecting.

Only one Light is eternal. Everything else turns out to be as dead and empty as a pack of used batteries. This is the secret of the People of the Moon. We have no light of our own, and therefore it can never run out. We are powered by He who creates reality, who contains the world and all that is in it. Only in His Light do we see light. This month's sign is Aquarius/The Water Carrier,

or in Hebrew, *D'li*. The Water Carrier is the astrological sign of the Jewish People. A water carrier has no purpose other than to be a vessel for the water. The Jewish People, too, have no purpose except to be the "water carrier" of the living waters of the Torah.

TAHARA

*I remember you
Before you were born
Distant drumming
In a waterworld
Hearts beating in hope
You and mommy and me
And all our hopes
That return one day
To the sea
In Purity*

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