

Calendar review and Month of Tammuz

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Diagnosed – 9 days

I was diagnosed with breast cancer in 2008 between Rosh Hashanah and Yom Kippur – the holiest days in the Jewish calendar. The diagnosis brought with it the threat of death because I had been in denial for so long that the cancer was at a late stage. The timing of this event was one of the hardest parts of hearing this news: the diagnosis came within the 9 days when G-d decides whether you will be written in the Book of Life for the coming year – or not. Thankfully, it has been 8 years since my diagnosis and I am still living cancer free.

Background

I've always been a bit superstitious about these things. I dabbled in Astrology, wrote my master's thesis on using the Tarot as a self-help tool, and explored many different religions trying to find out how deal with life's worst-case scenarios. My favorite undergrad class was in Tibetan Buddhism taught by visiting monks. The Jewish calendar never really meant that much to me. I was raised Jewish but like most American Jews, didn't think Judaism had what I was searching for.

Hasidic family

It was around 15 years ago when we moved back to S Cruz that a Hasidic family moved here too. Their kids were my kids' ages and so we hung out together while the children played. I learned that there were times of the year that I couldn't call my friend because it was a holiday or the Sabbath and according to Jewish tradition and law, she couldn't answer the phone. My friends followed the Hebrew calendar and even celebrated birthdays accordingly, instead of the Gregorian calendar which made it seem to me like they were in this world but not of this world.

Why I Started this Class

After spending so much time with my rabbi and his wife, I began to see how the Jewish calendar mirrored whatever was going on in my life. This was especially evident when I was diagnosed with cancer and the entire treatment year following. It was during my fight for life that I decided to start this class. I felt that if I was going to live, I needed to put together all that I have learned and put it out there before I die. Perhaps I could make my life worth something more, guaranteeing that I would be granted to continue to live. It was like a bargain with G-d. So, I looked at where I'd been and put together ideas for what I still needed to give to this world. I'd always wanted to develop Kabbalah cards to use the same way I had used the Tarot. I got my Kabbalah Coaching certification and then I had the courage to start this class which I've been teaching it for 2 years.

What I will be covering in this class is an example for the rest of the classes.

1. History of the month 2. Explain the holiday of the month and a Kabbalah concept 3. Take a break 4. Work with the cards

Today I will be showing you how the Jewish calendar is unique and then give you an overview of the month we are in now, the history and the energies we are working with this month. Then we will take a break and when we come back, I will show you a layout with the cards that will help you to make the most out of the potential for your own growth during this month. At the end, I will tell you how to register for the monthly class.

About the Calendar

The ancient Hebrew calendar is like a spiritual calendar that starts at the beginning of the creation, nearly 6000 yrs ago.

The Gregorian calendar starts only 2000 years ago and wasn't really fully adopted until the 1600s. The ancient calendar is based on the moon – each month starts with the new moon and the year follows the sun and the beginning of the year starts in Aries, the first sign of the zodiac. In fact every month begins or ends in each of the zodiac signs, as contrasted to the modern calendar that follows only the sun and is divided up into 12 months simply to fit into that solar year. So the Hebrew calendar is a calendar that connects us to the Universe and universal bodies as well as a woman's bodily cycles with the moon. In fact, each new moon has always been a special Jewish holiday just for women, called, "Rosh Chodesh".

Inform & Transform

Following the ancient calendar can inform and mirror our lives. It can show us what we need to look at and focus on within our own minds and hearts. It follows the natural, spiritual energies available to us on a daily, seasonally and yearly basis. The year on this calendar is a cycle that repeats itself generation after generation. It assumes that once something happens on a particular day in the year, that same day will carry that same energy. Simon Jacobson writes in his book "60 Days",

"As we travel through each year, we revisit the energy of ancient days – energy of freedom, of destruction, of mourning, of forgiveness, of empowerment, of joy. We use that energy to uplift events from our lives that inevitably parallel the lives of those that came before us."

Parallels our Story

The cycle of the year parallels the story of our own lives, giving us a chance to revisit our personal challenges so we can find deeper and deeper resolution. The intention of my ongoing, monthly class is to enable you to use the spiritual energies available throughout the year. The energies are there despite your knowledge of them. Once you are aware of these energies, you will be able to apply them consciously and more constructively. My hope is that the Kabbalah cards can help you do this.

Image of Calendar

I used an image of the calendar (end of paper) that shows the ancient calendar in the form of a circle of months with the holidays in white.

2 New Years

6 months apart, the holidays of Passover and Rosh Hashanah, are considered the start of a new year. Just like a business may count one New Year and then also have a different fiscal new year, the ancient Hebrew calendar has 2 new years. The month of Nissan, in Aries, when we celebrate Passover, is one of the beginnings of the year. While 6 months later the other new beginning is in the month of Tishrei, in Libra. Rosh Hashanah is the first day of Libra where we celebrate the New Year & have an entire month of holy days, starting with the first 10 days, called the days of Repentance.

First New Year

The first New Year in the spring, is the time of new beginnings where we are letting go of the places where we are stuck and imprisoned by our faulty assumptions and destructive behavior. This includes being fixated on the easy way out, the superficial & material life, and addictions. It's the leaving of Egypt every year that takes us away from areas in our psyche where we are enslaved to things that aren't important in order to bring us again to our true purpose.

Second New Year

The second New Year is in the fall. It's called, Rosh Hashanah or "head of the year" and it is the anniversary of the creation of mankind. At this time the energy is one taking an account of where we have been the over the previous year. We make a commitment to do better the following year turning a new leaf and renewing our commitment to the mission of our lives. We are cleansed and renewed. And there are an entire month of holidays at this time of the year. **3**

Weeks, Cancer & Leo – The Three Weeks: Traditions

But I always start to feel the preparation for these High Holy Days 3 months earlier in the month of Tammuz. There are Three weeks that start this month – the one that we are in, where there is an energy of brokenness and a sense of trepidation. It starts on the Fast of the 17th of Tammuz.

- and continues through the 9th of Av, also a fast day
- no weddings, music is not listened to, new clothes are not bought and hair isn't cut.
- intensifies during the first 9 days of the month of Av

There is a fast day on the 17th of Tammuz commemorating the start of 3 weeks of the year when many different tragedies happened in the history of the world.

The following is a partial list of the tragedies (from Chabad.org, edited) that befell the Jewish people during the 3 weeks between the 17th of Tammuz and the 9th of Av.

1313 BCE– 1. Israelites build the golden calf a mere 40 days after the revelation on Mt. Sinai and so Moses breaks the first set of the 10 Commandments tablets. 2. Israelites are doomed to wander the desert for 40 years due to 10 spies who were sent to scout out the land of Israel and came back with a report that it was too dangerous to conquer.

422 BCE – The walls of Jerusalem are breached by Babylonians who destroyed the First Temple.

70 CE – Jerusalem was conquered by Rome and the 2nd Temple was destroyed. 2.5 million Jews are killed and 1 million are exiled. – Today we are still in the Roman exile.

(Both the first and second Temples were destroyed on the same day – the 9th of Av – the saddest day on the Jewish calendar.)

133 CE – The defeat of Bar Kochba in the revolt against the Romans.

1096 – The Crusades began which led to the murder of ½ the Jews of Europe and all of the Jews in Jerusalem.

1290 – The Jews were expelled from England.

1492 – The Jews were expelled from Spain or they had to convert or die.

1648 – The Chmielnicki Massacre where the Cossacks, led by Bohdan Chmielicki, began a series of campaigns against the Jews. The death toll reached approximately 100,000, and nearly 300 Jewish communities were destroyed.

1914 – World War I starts which brings to earth the beginning of mass murder through poison gas and the first genocide of a people (the Armenians) in 1915. Jay Winter, a Yale historian says,

“...was Hitler or the Nazi regime thinkable, or possible without the First World War? My view is, not. The first war opened the door. The first genocide of the 20th century was the Armenians. Hitler saw it and he did it again.”

1942 – Deportations from the Warsaw Ghetto to the death camp, Treblinka.

A Mourning Period

The 3 Weeks starting from Tammuz 17 through Av 9 are treated like a mourning period – we are mourning that the world is not where it needs to be – that we are not where we need to be. The mourning intensifies during the first 9 days of the month of Av with the new moon. There is a tradition of being on guard in the summertime during the entire 3 weeks but especially during the first 9 days of Av. One rabbi told me that during summer camp, they never allow children to go swimming within these 9 days. I try to remember to never take any risks during the first 9 days of Av. I totaled my car once during this time, so I plan our summer trips so that we are never traveling during this time.

Fear...

At this point I was to show you a quote from Rebbe Nachman of Breslov who started the Breslover Hasidim. He lived from 1772-1810. He said, “the essence of descent is ascent” (תְּרִידָה תְּכָלִית עֲלִיָּה), which means the descent is not a descent at all, it's a part of going up. Whenever a person rises from one level to the next, it necessitates that he first has a descent before the ascent. Because the purpose of any descent is always in order to ascend. He also wrote the famous song:

- כל העולם כולו גשר צר מאוד, והעיקר - לא לפחד כלל.
 - *Kol ha'olam kulo gesher tzar me'od, v'ha'ikar lo lefahed klal.* ○ All the world is a very narrow bridge, and the most important thing is not to fear at all.

Our Descent to Earth

This is a basic tenet of Kabbalah – that we descend to this earth in order to create a dwelling place for G-d. It is our job to descend into this lowest of all worlds to create an ascension that bridges heaven and earth. It's a nasty business we are in where many tragedies happen and many mistakes and falls but that is the plan. And it's always important to look at the dark days as just that – a way to ascend to a higher level. Look for the blessing in disguise. In fact the number 17 is equal to the word, Tov, which means good. There is only good – it's either revealed or concealed.

I'll end with this quote from the book, 60 days, by Rabbi Jacobson. It represents my own journey and I believe the journey of all of us as we go through the Hebrew calendar, year after year.

“Yes, there is hope. Yes, we can rebuild. Indeed, we can find an even greater love than the original one. Yes, we can marry heaven and earth. And yes, our entire world can unite in one magnificent symphony, each of us contributing our particular melody.”

Resources:

Books Recommended for this Class: Both books by Rabbi Simon Jacobson, “60 Days, A Spiritual Guide to the High Holy Days”, & “The Counting of the Omer” are found at <http://www.meaningfullife.com>

A **Hebrew calendar** that lets you know what occurred in Jewish history on each day:

<http://www.chabadbythesea.com/calendar/view/month.htm>

To find out which day on the Jewish calendar corresponds with a day on the modern calendar, go to

http://www.chabadbythesea.com/calendar/1000year_cdo/aid/6225/jewish/Jewish-Civil-Date-Converter.htm

Calculate which day is your birthday on the Jewish calendar:

http://www.chabadbythesea.com/calendar/birthday_cdo/aid/6228/jewish/Jewish-Birthday-Calculator.htm

Audio on 17th of Tammuz: http://www.chabadbythesea.com/multimedia/media_cdo/aid/297004/jewish/The-17th-ofTammuz.htm

Good article on 120 Days between 17 of Tammuz and High Holidays

http://www.chabadbythesea.com/parshah/article_cdo/aid/2508/jewish/The-120-Day-Version.htm

Two Articles on 17th of Tammuz: http://www.chabad.org/library/article_cdo/aid/703099/jewish/TammuzTime-forTransformation.htm http://www.chabad.org/theJewishWoman/article_cdo/aid/402215/jewish/Two-Kinds-of-Good.htm

Kabbalistic Astrology <http://livingwisdom.kabbalah.com/astrology>

<http://shiratdevorah.blogspot.com/p/jewishastrology.html>

Secrets of the Stars Revealed – Audio Class: http://www.torahcafe.com/rabbi-ari-sollish/secrets-of-the-stars-revealedvideo_e9138f894.html

