

## Class on Tevet – Lesson 1

### Tevet, Kabbalah and the Tree of Life

Tevet, which starts the last days of Chanukah, marks the end of the first part of the new year that we began back in the month of Tishrei, in the Fall, on Rosh Hashanah. During Tevet we finish reading Genesis – the first of the five Books of Moses. The energy of this month gives us the ability to work with a darkness that causes a whole lot of destruction in this world: anger. As we start the secular New Year, we begin our real work to rectify anger, bringing ourselves back to using anger in a healthy way. This is how we take the darkness and find the light in this cold month.

### Tevet – Chanukah, Purim, Torah, Temple

The month of Tevet/Teves begins with the last days of Chanukah (139 BCE) when the menorah fills with the most light. \*The 1<sup>st</sup> of Tevet is also the day when Esther (362 BCE) was taken to the King's palace to later become his queen. This connects the miracles of Chanukah with the miracle of Purim (the holiday that is found in the month after Tevet on the Jewish calendar).



**TEVET**  
**December - January**  
**Capricorn**

The new moon of Tevet coincides with the last day of Chanukah and marks the end of the beginning of the new year that started in the fall with Rosh Hashanah. In our weekly readings, we finish Genesis the same time as the Torah was translated into Greek, the 8th of Tevet of the year 246 BCE.

The 10th is a fast day commemorating Babylon's attack on Jerusalem, along with the martyrs of the Holocaust, and the passing of Ezra and Nechemiah, on the 9th. The 8th is the birthday of the Jewish man who was made into an idol. All these are mourned together on the 10th.

The energy of this month is associated with anger. We work through our anger as we start the secular new year by checking our speech and deed in relationships. Refine the inner critic/Gevurah in Tevet.

**There is a fast day in Tevet** instituted on the \*10<sup>th</sup> of the month, commemorating a tragic event surrounding the first Temple and, on this day, it has also become a custom to commemorate the martyrs of the Holocaust.

**Fast Days:** On the Jewish calendar, there are 6 Fasts through the year. Most of these are connected to the Temple destruction (from Chabad.org)

3 Tishrei—the [Fast of Gedaliah](#)

10 Tishrei—[Yom Kippur](#)

10 Tevet—[Asarah B'Tevet](#)

13 Adar—the [Fast of Esther](#)

17 Tammuz—[Shivah Asar B'Tammuz](#)

9 Av—[Tisha B'Av](#)

**Reason for Tevet Fast** The following about the reasons for the Tevet Fast, taken from an astrology/kabbalah page:

<http://shiratdevorah.blogspot.com/p/jewish-astrology.html>

\* On the 8th day of the month, Ptolemy, ruler of Greece, forced the Sages to translate the Torah into Greek (the Septuagint). This was part of the threat to Jewish identity that Yavan (Greece) represented. We are told that when this took place, three days of darkness descended on the world.

\* On the 9th of the month, Ezra and Nechemiah died. And also on this day, Jewish sources site the birth of {my words: the Jewish man who xtianity made into a god.} (Megillas Ta'anis, Tosafos Chadashim, citing Kol Bo)

\* On the 10th of the month, Yerushalayim (Jerusalem) was attacked by Nebuchadnetzar, king of Bavel (Babylonia). He laid a siege on the city, which resulted in the walls being breached on 17th of the month of Tamuz, three years later.

**The following is more on the historical events mentioned above. These were copied from the Chabad Calendar (Chabad.org).**

#### 1<sup>st</sup> of Tevet

[Esther made Queen \(362 BCE\)](#)

"And Esther was taken to King Achashverosh, to his palace, in the tenth month, which is the month of Tevet, in the seventh year of his reign. And the king loved Esther more than all the women, and she won his favor and kindness more than all the virgins; he placed the royal crown on her head and made her queen in Vashti's stead" (Book of Esther 2:16-17). This set the stage for the miracle of [Purim](#) six years later, on the 13th and 14th of Adar of the year 3405 from creation (356 BCE).

#### 8<sup>th</sup> of Tevet:

[Torah translated into Greek \(246 BCE\)](#)

In a second attempt to translate the Torah into Greek (after an unsuccessful attempt 61 years earlier), the ruling Greek-Egyptian emperor Ptolemy gathered 72 Torah sages, had them sequestered in 72 separate rooms, and ordered them to each produce a translation. On the 8th of Tevet of the year 3515 from creation (246 BCE) they produced 72 corresponding translations, including identical changes in 13 places (where they each felt that a literal translation would constitute a corruption of the Torah's true meaning). This Greek rendition became known as the Septuagint, "of the seventy" (though later versions that carry this name are not believed to be true to the originals). Greek became a significant second language among Jews as a result of this translation. During Talmudic times, Tevet 8 was observed by some as a fast day, expressing the fear of the detrimental effect of the translation.

#### 9<sup>th</sup> of Tevet:

[Passing of Ezra \(313 BCE\)](#)

Ezra, who led the return of the Jewish people to the Land of Israel after the Babylonian exile (423-353 BCE), oversaw the building of the Second Temple, canonized the 24 books of the Holy Scriptures ("bible") and, as head of the "Great Assembly" legislated a series of laws and practices (including formalized prayer) which left a strong imprint on Judaism to this very day, passed away on the 9th of Tevet of the year 3448 from creation (313 BCE -- exactly 1000 years after the [Giving of the Torah](#) on Mount Sinai). The passing of Ezra marked the end of the "Era of [Prophecy](#)."

### **23<sup>rd</sup> of Tevet:**

#### **Portuguese Expulsion (1496)**

Following the death of King Joao of Portugal in 1494, his son King Manuel I ascended the throne. When his legitimacy as heir to the throne was challenged, Manuel wished to marry Princess Isabel of Spain, daughter of Ferdinand and Isabella, in order to solidify his position. As a precondition to the marriage, the Spanish monarch demanded that Portugal expel its Jews—many of whom were refugees from the 1492 Spanish Expulsion who found refuge in the neighboring country of Portugal. Manuel agreed, and five days after the marriage agreement was signed, on Tevet 23 (5257), he issued a decree giving Portugal's Jews eleven months to leave the country.

Appreciating the Jews' economic value, Manuel was unhappy with the potential loss of this economic asset, and devised a way to have the Jews stay in Portugal—but as Christians. Initially, he instructed the Jews to leave from one of three ports, but soon he restricted them to leaving from Lisbon only. When October of 1497 arrived, thousands of Jews assembled there and were forcibly baptized. Many Jews stayed and kept their Jewish faith secret; they were called Marranos or Crypto-Jews. Over the next 350 years, the infamous Inquisition persecuted, tortured and burned at the stake thousands of hidden Jews throughout Spain, Portugal and their colonies for continuing to secretly practice the Jewish faith.

#### **Gevurah and Anger**

In the previous class/month, I introduced the Tree of Life, the primary mystical diagram in Kabbalah. I used the psychological concepts of Inner Parent and Inner Child to show how Gevurah can be seen as the Inner Critical Parent. We talked about how the Critical Inner Parent is really coming from a place of fear and need to protect. I showed how you can see Gevurah as being useful (when it's coming from a Geula mindset when it isn't separated from the rest of the sefirot, like Chesed for example). On the other hand, you can see Gevurah as being destructive (when it is separated from the rest of the sefirot, it can come from a Golus, exile consciousness). It is also associated with the realm where anger and fear can show up in destructive ways.

#### **Anti-Semitism & Anger**

Ancient Jewish texts allegorically state, 'When the Torah came down on Sinai, hatred (in Hebrew: 'Sina' similar to Sinai) accompanied it. Simply put, when the Nation of Israel was singled out to receive the Creator's will, hatred from the other nations quickly followed. <https://fb.watch/gDG40jgxnv/> It is very hard to be Jewish sometimes without getting incredibly angry about all of this hatred pointed towards us. It is especially difficult in the US during this time of year to be bombarded by a religious holiday that has been, in the recent past, a reason for anti-Semitism, lies about Jews and the wanton murder of Jewish people.

#### **Idolatry & Anger**

In Hasidic thought, anger is considered idolatry. When you are angry at someone or something, you give them power over you. At those times, G-d is hidden and you don't see the Hand behind the puppet. You only see the person who is hurting you. You believe that they are the cause of your unhappiness, when G-d is the only cause in the Universe! Anger is considered idolatry because you are giving power to something other than Hashem. But the most important thing to understand about anger is that it comes from a "victim" consciousness which ignores your own personal power as a co-creator with G-d. It also ignores the lessons that G-d is giving you through the actions of the person who is angering you. Sometimes the lessons are simply about communication.

In Hasidic thought, it is never OK to express anger. What I tell my clients is that communication needs to be done in a way that people can hear and take in – otherwise it accomplishes nothing. (See my handout on the Sandwich Technique below).

#### **Effective Communication/Establishing Boundaries**

Below I have copied the handout I created on Healthy Communication. Anger can be a sign that your boundaries have been crossed. It's NOT ok to lash out with your anger but you might need to communicate boundaries which can be done in a simple request couched in and surrounded by words of connection and love. The "Sandwich Technique", flushed out below, makes it easier for your loved ones to hear your boundaries.

The Sandwich Technique:  
**COMMUNICATING YOUR NEEDS IN A HEALTHY WAY**

By Allison Gilbert, LMFT  
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Do you find it hard to get your partner to hear you? Try the Sandwich Technique for every difficult conversation you need to have. You may find that you can get your point across easily without having to get into an argument.

**First Step:** Find a good time to talk. It's best not to try to communicate in the heat of the moment. Find a quiet, alone time when you are both calm and peaceful. Be considerate of the other person's ability to have a conversation: Ask if it's an ok time for the other person to talk. If it's not, table it for another time or reschedule it.

1. **Give a compliment** to the other person that has something to do with this issue – or give some kind of positive that generates a heartfelt connection. You can also look deeper at the other person's intention – it's usually coming from a good place even if the behavior/outcome is destructive. *"I ...(appreciate/admire/enjoy/love/believe in, etc.) your... (the other person's good quality in relationship to this issue).*
2. **Share your own feelings.** Your fears, anxieties, sadness, confusion, etc. in response to this issue. (Be careful here not to point a finger in blame but to only speak about your own feelings that come about in response to the situation. Try not to use the word, "you" at all.) *"I feel/felt ... (confused, angry, distraught, jealous, upset, sad, hurt, etc.) when... (such n such happened.)"*
3. **Make a request.** *"So, would you be willing to...(what you want/need to have happen) next time?"*
4. **Give another compliment.** *"Because I really enjoy..."(same as in Step 1)*

Here is an example from a client of mine: Her husband doesn't like it when she rewashes the dishes he thinks he's already washed well enough. Last night, when she went to rewash the dish in question, he got angry with her and called her "OCD". So, we worked on a sandwich. I encouraged her to talk to him at a time when they were both calm. She chose to do this at night when they were both in bed after the kids were asleep. She then asked if it was ok to talk about what happened at dinner the other night. He said, "what is it?" So she took that as "ok".

1. **Compliment:** She said, *"I really love how you make dinner for all of us so often."*
2. **Her feelings:** *"And I really can't stand it when we use a plate that the dog's licked off of. It just grosses me out."*
3. **Request:** *"So I need to be able to wash a plate that I think is dirty."*
4. **Compliment:** *"I really don't want to make you feel bad when I do that but I really need to do that sometimes."*  
 (This was not a compliment but it was a positive because it did show her good intention to not want to hurt him.)

His response was, "Ok."

So that's it. It's pretty simple but the hard part is figuring out how to say what you need to say without any hint of blame in it. You are not communicating anything about someone else's bad behavior. Instead, you are communicating your own desires and insecurities while at the same time, keeping the bond with the other person by affirming & expressing your good feelings about them.

I recommend you try this technique by rehearsing all of the steps both on paper and memorizing it before you try to use it.

**Assignment:** Try this technique with someone in your inner circle.

