

On the new moon of Tamuz

Rabbi Jill Hammer writes:

The first of Tammuz is a day of exile, reminding us that from this point forward the sun will begin to creep from the sky, leaving the world in ever-greater darkness. Just as the first of Tevet (new moon after the winter solstice) is the beginning of the journey toward light, the first of Tammuz is the beginning of the journey into the dark.

Yet this is also a day of return. When Moses strikes the rock, water bursts forth, and the well of healing and life is reborn. This water, from the well of the prophet Miriam, will travel throughout the world from now on, passing through all the bodies of water on earth. It may sometimes hide underground, but it will continue to flow. It will revive our spirits even in far-flung places.

Rabbi Lynn Gottlieb teaches that the new moon of Tammuz is the moon of premonitions. "This is the moon when the first brick in the wall protecting the Temple in Jerusalem is removed from its foundations, which was the first step toward its destruction. We tell stories about someone's premonitions as a source of wisdom."

Jueli Garfinkle teaches that "The area of deep healing for Tammuz is inner seeing. Habitually, we focus our attention outward and see through a lens tinted by our life experiences. Without annual adjustment, our vision begins to warp into projections that see only what we most want to feel or avoid...It is the gift of Tammuz to wipe the shmutz from my glasses and to see clearly what is before me. To make the time and refresh my vision."

On the summer solstice

Rabbi Jill Hammer offers the following teachings:

- In Jubilees 6:26, in the story of Noah's flood, the summer solstice is the day the mouths of the great abyss are closed, so that water ceases pouring onto the earth.
- The book of Jubilees 3:32 also names the summer solstice as the day the Divine exiles Adam and Eve from Eden. This is the day the animals lose their power of speech.
- In Seder Olam 11:1, we learn that the day the sun stood still so that Joshua's warriors could win the battle of Gibeon was the summer solstice.
- In Genesis Rabbah 6:6, we learn that "on the summer solstice no creature has a shadow."
- The summer solstice is the day Moses strikes a rock in anger while seeking water for the people. The Eternal tells Moses he will never enter the land of Israel as a result of his actions. (Machzor Vitry)
- The summer solstice is the day animals receive protection from their predators. On that day "the Holy One puts strength in the Behemot and it becomes strong and raises its head and cries out, and its voice extends through all the settled land, and the wild animals hear and are afraid." (Otzar haMidrashim, Hashem beChachmah Yasad Aretz 6)
- In Jewish tradition, the summer solstice carries with it themes of closure (the mouth of the deep, the garden of Eden), exile (Adam and Eve, Moses), and loss (the animals' loss of speech), yet also the benevolence of nature and the Divine (the appearance of the water from the rock, the saving of the small animals, and the standing still of the sun). We meditate on grief, yet also on the world's abundance. Summer solstice is a day of paradox: maximum light, yet also a turn toward darkness.

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Rabbi T'mimah Ickovitz teaches:

The Northern Hemisphere experiences increased sunlight each and every day between the Winter Solstice to the Summer Solstice (Dec 21-June 21) . The Summer solstice marks the culmination, that is the maximum daylight hours.

It is a day where many experience Spirit's Presence through the expansiveness of the daylight.hours. This expansiveness impacts Earth's beings providing for crops. The warmth of the sun offers comfort, freedom, expansiveness and empowerment on many levels. People tend to spend time out of doors.

The 3 week Jewish mourning period between the 17th of Tammuz and the 9th of Av (*Beyn haMaytzarim*, "in the narrow straits") arrive shortly after the the sunlight hours begin to contract. *Beyn haMaytzarim* commemorates the capture of Jerusalem and the destruction of the sacred Temple. This was complete destruction of Jewish life at the time. The future was uncertain.

This shift propelled Judaism from a Temple focus, where community met Spirit in a holy designated space, to rabbinic Judaism, where community meets Spirit through the cycles of time still practiced today.

The move from increasing sunlight to decreasing sunlight is profound. This shift is like the shift a pendulum will make when changing directions - the in between moment, filled with stillness and potential.

This is mirrored in the movement from Temple based Judaism. It was unknown how and if Judaism would continue. Not knowing, that is, "flux", is dominant this season. It is OK not to know. It is useful and appropriate to "not know" some times. Not knowing allows change. This is a prelude to the High Holy days. Life as we know it may not be serving and it may move to a flux state and be allowed to reformat.

May this year's flux offer ample space and potential for nourishing transformation of our selves, communities, planet and beyond to serve the greater good of all.

Rabbi Yitzchak Ginsburgh teaches:

According to the Sefer Yetzirah (one of the oldest extant works of Jewish mysticism, authorship unknown), each month of the Jewish calendar corresponds with a letter of the Hebrew alphabet, a zodiac sign, one of the twelve tribes of Israel, a sense, and a controlling limb of the body.

The letter associated with Tammuz is *chet* (ח). The form of the letter *chet* is composed of the two previous letters of the Hebrew *alef-beit*, the *vav* ו and the *zayin* ז (corresponding to the two previous months of Iyar and Sivan) connected from above by a thin "bridge." In relation to the sense of sight, the form of the *chet* represents the dynamic of spiritual light emitted from the eyes (the *vav*) and physical light returning from the object observed, back to the eyes (the *zayin*).

The star sign of this month is Cancer. The sense associated with Tamuz is sight, specifically the ability to "see through" physical reality to behold its Divine source. The tribe associated with this month is Reuben; the name of this tribe comes from the root meaning "to see."

The summer (the period of Tamuz) is the time when one must guard one's eyes to see only that which is good (in the world in general and in our fellow human beings in particular). This is how we heal or "rectify" our sense of sight.

The limb of the body associated with this month is the right hand.