

SEASONS OF THE MOON

The Month of Av

Av / 5757 August 4, 1997 - September 2, 1997

The lion is the king of the jungle. He brooks no opposition. The lion demands to rule

THIS MONTH'S SIGN ARYEH / LEO

alone. He represents pride — the collective noun for a group of lions is a 'pride' of lions. Pride was the fatal flaw of the spies whom Moshe sent to investigate the Land of Israel. The spies returned on the ninth day of the month of Av.

Pride is rooted in the element of *fire* which seeks to rule at all costs. The spies' pride and their concern for maintaining their own ruling status distorted their vision of the Land.

If the spies erred in their perception, making self-fulfilling prophecies of doom, the Jewish People were also at fault by listening to their distorted report.

The month of Av is associated with the tribe of *Shimon* — from the same root in Hebrew as the word '*hearing*.' Thus, Av is a propitious time to correct mistakes in regard to hearing — listening to *lashon hara* (gossip) and *rechilus* (slander).

Fraught as it is with tragedy, Av is the saddest time of the year for the Jewish People: On the same date that the spies returned and spoke evil about the Land of Israel, the

destroyed Betar and massacred thousands of Jews. As the prophet Yirmiyahu predicted, Jerusalem was ploughed over — on the ninth of Av.

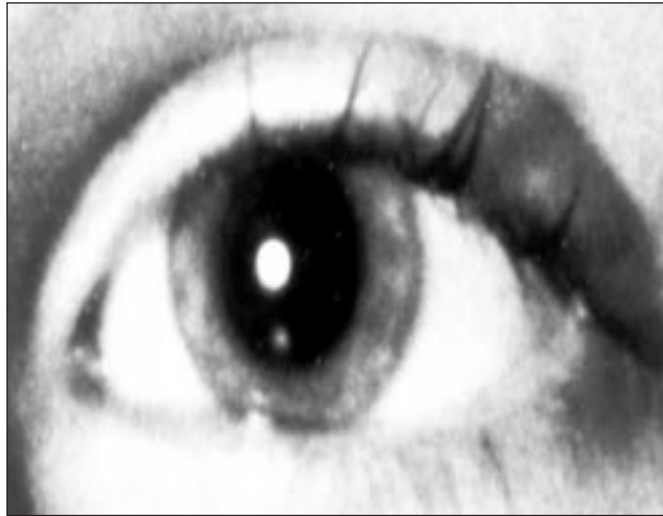
On the 9th of Av 1492, the Jews were expelled from Spain. On the 9th of Av 1914 — The First World War began. The insubstantial peace that concluded this war

First Temple was destroyed. It was on that same day, the ninth of Av, that the Second Temple was also destroyed. On the ninth of Av, the Romans

was a direct cause of the Second World War in which the six million perished. The 9th of Av 1942 — The first killings started at Treblinka: "The first transport of 'deportees' left Malkinia on July 23, 1942, in the morning hours. It was loaded with Jews from the Warsaw ghetto. The train was made up of sixty closed cars, crowded with people. The car doors were locked from the outside, and the air apertures barred with barbed wire."

In the future, to that same degree that the ninth of Av has been a day of tragedy, it will be a day of great happiness. For on the 9th of Av, the *Mashiach* will be born from the tribe of Yehuda (whose symbol is the lion).

His coming will wipe the tear from every eye.



When you look at a photograph, you are looking at unvarnished reality. Or are you?

It's a common misconception that 'the camera never lies,' that it always replicates reality with total fidelity. The camera can be made to 'tell lies' — digital technology now allows the manipulation of a photograph so that virtually anything is possible.

THE CREATIVE EYE

Long before today's technology, however, artists took up the camera as a tool of expression, knowing that it can be made to *comment* on reality as well as reproduce it.

The same is true of the human eye. "*Beauty is in the eye of the beholder*" runs the famous adage. Man has the ability to recognize reality — but he can also *create* his own reality. Creating one's own reality is called fantasy.

Continued over

THE CREATIVE EYE *continued*

When the Jewish People were poised to enter the Land of Israel, Moshe sent out spies to investigate the land. These spies returned with a negative report. They slandered the Land of Israel and said that G-d could not bequeath the Land to the Jewish People because its inhabitants were too strong.

That night the Jews cried.

The Midrash tells us that G-d said, "You cried for nothing. I will establish for you a crying for generations." That night was the night of the 9th of Av, the date of disaster in the Jewish calendar (*See this month's sign*).

SPYING IS BELIEVING

What was the mistake of the spies?

Hashem gives endurance to things by 'seeing' them: "And G-d saw the light that it was good." Man is created "in the image of G-d." Thus our eyes are 'like' G-d's: We too can give enduring substance to that which we see. We can lift up our eyes and recognize Who it is that creates Reality. We can see Reality as it is — or we can invent 'reality': We can 'film our own script,' using our eyes as a camera to create our own fantasy world.

This is what the spies did. They projected their own fantasy world onto reality, and made that fantasy into 'reality.' They wrote their own script in which G-d was unable to bequeath the Land to the Jewish People, and then they used their eyes to 'film' their fantasy and make it into 'reality.'

PUTTING THE MOUTH BEFORE THE EYE

On the ninth of Av, we read the Book of *Eicha* (Lamentations) in the Synagogue. Each verse in each chapter in *Eicha* is alphabetical. The first verse of each chapter begins with *aleph*, the second with *beis*, etc.

However, towards the end of the fourth chapter, there is a strange reversal of the alphabetical order. Instead of the letter *ayin* preceding the letter *peh*, the order is reversed. The *peh* precedes the *ayin*. Why?

Peh is a Hebrew letter — but it is also a word. *Peh* means 'mouth.' Similarly the letter *ayin* is not only a letter, it is a word also. *Ayin* means 'eye.'

In other words, the very structure of the Book of *Eicha* hints to the seminal error of the spies — **they put their mouths before their eyes!**

The spies reversed the alphabet of Reality. They put the *peh* — the mouth — before the *ayin* — the eye. They wrote their own false film script and then they saw what they had said.

When we cry on *Tisha B'Av* we are reversing the process that was the root of the evil of the spies: Tears wash the eye clean, purifying the perception of the world.

Just as tears purify the physical eye, expelling dust and foreign bodies,

so tears expel the detritus of false perception.

In a flood of tears, we release our constrained emotions, and in the clear calm after the storm, we can see reality.

I SPY

*I spy with my little eye.
It's just a little eye —
It doesn't see very far.
It wants to see confusion,
It wants to wish upon a star.
It sees no connection —
Just random threads of blue,
My little eye only wants to view
the other side
of life's rich tapestry.*

Who can cry anymore? On the ninth of Av we are supposed to cry over the destruction of the two Holy Temples and all the other tragedies that have befallen our people. But who can cry anymore? Our senses have become so dulled, our perceptions so

CRY ME A RIVER

blunted that we have no way to even begin to understand the loss of our *Beis Hamikdash* (Holy Temple). If the world only knew

what it has lost by destroying the House of G-d.

We cannot cry anymore, but maybe we can cry because we cannot cry.

Sources: Talmud Sanhedrin 104a; Talmud Succah 55b; Ramban on Bereishis 1:4; Ramban on Bamidbar 13:28; Rabbi Moshe Shapiro; Rabbi Nachman Bulman; Rabbi Yosef Brown; Rabbi Mattisyahu Glazerson; Rabbi Moshe Zauderer; <http://www.vslib.cz/pub/texts/Online-Book-Initiative/Holocaust/treblinka.new>

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