Take a look at any secular horoscope and you’ll see that the astrological year always begins with Aries. Why? Logically, shouldn’t Capricorn — the sign in which the first of January falls — be the first sign of the year in the secular horoscope? From the Jewish perspective, the answer is simple: The Jewish People were born as a nation under the sign of Aries/Taleh. The first mitzvah that was given to the Jewish People while we were still in Egypt was the Sanctification of the Moon. Hashem showed Moshe the New Moon and told him “This month will be to you the first of months.”

It is for this reason that Aries is the first sign of the Jewish Year, because the month of Nissan was the first month when there was a Jewish People. But why does the secular world also start their lunar calendar in Aries? What does the sign of Taleh/Aries signify for them? The world was created for the Torah to be learned. It follows, therefore, that if there would ever be one moment where the Torah was not being learned by someone, somewhere, then the entire Creation would lose its ‘raison d’être’; it would literally lose its ‘reason
The Seeds of Doom

Hard pushed to discern why this fast is exceptional. For the fast of the Tenth of Tevet commemorates the surrounding of Jerusalem by the armies of the Babylonian king Nebuchadnezzar. No-one was killed. Nothing was burned.

Not even the most serious of the Rabbinic fasts — the Ninth of Av — is allowed to fall on a Friday, even though that day commemorates the most serious disasters in Jewish history.

What is so special about the Tenth of Tevet?

When you look at a seed, what do you see? Do you see the tree that will eventually grow? When you look at the seed of a plant, you’re really looking at a movie that’s being played out in front of your eyes right now.

For it’s not so much that the seed hints to what may be in the future, but in reality, everything that is needed for the tree exists now in the seed. What follows afterwards is no more than the dénouement of a reality which already exists now. It’s not that the seed holds the potential for the tree to grow, but that the tree is really here now.

Now we can understand why it should be that the Tenth of Tevet is so important; it is an event that is allowed to infringe on the pleasure of Shabbat itself.

For although the Tenth of Tevet was only the beginning of the siege of Jerusalem, in reality, it was as though the two Batei Mikdash (Holy Temples) and the other disasters that were to grow from that seed had already happened on the Tenth of Tevet — what followed was merely the playing out of a scenario that was already a fully-fledged reality.

The Return of the Sun

to be’ and would return to a vast untrammelled emptiness as at the dawn of Creation.

A frightening thought!

Could it be that this subliminal awareness of the importance of the Torah is what gears even the secular horoscope to begin in Nissan, with the creation of the Jewish People — the receivers of the Torah?

But even if this were to be the case, the question still remains, “Why does the secular solar calendar begin with January at all?”

Surely if the Astrological Calendar begins in March/April, then the solar calendar should also start from that time, and not, as it does, from the first of January.

When the First Man walked the Earth, there was no one but him. When he saw the days beginning to shorten, he thought that night was gradually conquering day. That the night was eating up the day, consuming it. But why was this happening?

Adam surmised that because he had brought sin into actuality, he had infected the environment, he had brought death to the world, and the world itself was slowly, slowly dying...

Thus for eight days he sat in fasting and prayer... Then he saw a day which was longer that the previous one. The light was coming back into the world!

With this first winter solstice, Adam realized then that the shortening of the days was no more than a natural occurrence — the way of the world. He then made a Yom Tov celebration which lasted for a further eight days. In subsequent years he observed a festival for both his eight days of fasting and prayer and the eight days of celebration.

Could it be that this celebration that Adam made is the reason that the secular calendar begins with January? Could it be that the mid-Winter celebrations of the non-Jewish world are no more than an ancient memory of a festival created by the First Man when he walked from darkness into light at the dawn of Time?

Sources: THE SEEDS OF DOOM - Chutam Sofer, Rabbi Dov Schwartzman, Rabbi Mendel Weinbach; THE RETURN OF THE SUN - Talmud Avoda Zara 8a, Maharal, Chidushei Haggadot; THIS MONTH’S SIGN - ‘Above the Zodiac’ by Rabbi Mattisyahu Gilezerson

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