

SEASONS OF THE MOON

THE MONTH OF TAMMUZ

Tammuz 5759 / June 14, 1999 - July 13, 1999

People don't know what they like — they like what they know. Someone once insisted on playing a song to me.

He thought it was the best record he'd ever heard. After the first two seconds, I recognized it as a re-make of an old sixties hit. A pretty good re-make, but a re-make never the less. "Not bad," I said, "but you should hear the original!" After a little research, I came up with the first version of the song and proudly played it to him. He could hardly contain his apathy. "S'okay..." he said "But it's not as good as the real one."

Psychology recognizes a syndrome called "cognitive dissonance". CD is a kind of armor that we build up to ward off information that we don't want to hear. According to cognitive dissonance theory, we seek consistency among our beliefs. When there is dissonance between belief and behavior, we change something to eliminate the dissonance. We could change our behavior to accord with our beliefs, but usually, we change our attitude to accommodate our behavior. It's much less work.

For example: You buy an expensive car and take it for a drive up the coast. Even though the car looked great in the showroom and handled well in town, you discover that on long drives, it's about as comfortable as a wooden bench. Dissonance exists between your beliefs that you have a) bought a good car, and b) that a good car should be comfortable. Dissonance could be eliminated by deciding that it doesn't matter since the car is mainly used for short trips (reducing the importance of the dissonant belief) or focusing on the car's strengths such as safety, appearance, handling (thereby adding more consonant beliefs). The dissonance could also be eliminated by getting rid of the car, but

COGNITIVE DISSONANCE



that's a lot harder than changing beliefs.

EYE SPY

In the second year after the Jewish People left Egypt, Moshe sent out spies on a reconnaissance mission to the Land of Canaan. The Spies left on the 27th of Sivan and returned on the 9th of Av. When they returned, they brought with them a frightening and distorted picture of the Land.

This led to a national catastrophe: The Jewish People rejected the Land of Israel. G-d punished them severely, barring them from the Land for forty years until that generation had passed away. Most of the journey of the spies was during the month of Tammuz. What is the link between Tammuz and the spies?

TELL ME WHAT YOU SEE

Another question. How could the spies have made such a mistake? The question is compounded by the fact that these were no ordinary spies, but leaders of the tribes. How could *they* have made such a mistake?

In the desert, the Jewish People lived a miraculous existence. Their food descended from Heaven. Supernatural clouds flattened the terrain and shielded them from the elements. All this would cease with the crossing of the Jordan river.

When the spies looked at the Land of Israel, they didn't just see valleys and mountains, they didn't just see a Land flowing with milk and honey. They saw a way of life coming to an end. Maybe this new world would need new kinds of leaders? They started to see themselves as the *ancien regime*. Yesterday's Men. They looked at the Land and they saw in it much more than trees and shrubs and sky and lakes...

COGNITIVE DISSONANCE *continued*

The beginning of cognitive dissonance stirred within them: On the one hand, this was the Land that G-d had promised to their forefathers. And yet the promise of the Land spelled an end to everything that was familiar and comfortable to them. Faced with such a dilemma, they had two alternatives: Either to accept a change in their behavior that the new Land might mandate or to remove the dissonance between their fears and the virtues of the Land by minimizing the Land's virtues and fabricating its failings.

In the event, the power of habit proved too strong. They preferred to cling to their ingrained behavior patterns and change instead their opinions about the Land.

SEEING AND BEING

The month of Tammuz is connected to the power of sight. Each of the twelve months of the year correspond to one of the twelve tribes of Israel. Tammuz corresponds to the tribe of Reuven. Reuven comes from the same word in Hebrew as *sight*.

What is the connection between seeing and Tammuz?

Nothing can exist in this world unless G-d gives it enduring substance. He does this by "seeing": "And G-d *saw* the light, that it was good." Seeing is the way G-d creates reality. Man is created in the image of G-d. Thus, in a sense, our eyes are "like" G-d's, for we too can give enduring substance to that which we see. We can lift 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 disaster movie using our eyes as camera to create a fantasy world. This is what the spies did. They projected their own fears onto reality and made their nightmare world into reality.

They misused the power of sight.

CRABBED VISION

The month of Tammuz is symbolized by the Crab — *Cancer*. Crabs have compound eyes consisting of several thousand optical units. The crab perceives reality through thousands of different channels. Reality is fragmented into thousands of individual pictures. The eye of the crab is a symbol of the eye's ability to inter-

pret reality according to the bias of the viewer — where reality can be seen a thousand different ways.

The crab's eyes are on stalks which can be lowered for protection into sockets on the carapace. In other words, the crab can retract its power of sight. It can withdraw from the world of what exists and confine its sight to a dark interior world. A world where it sees only itself locked in blackness.

GOING WITH THE FLOW

Each of the months are connected to a planet or a star. The heavenly body that relates to *Tammuz* is the Moon. The Moon has a great influence on the waters of the earth. Water has no shape, flowing wherever it wants. It is the ultimate symbol of matter seeking form. Man's purpose is to take matter — the raw substance of nature — and give to it its correct shape. That is why the Jewish People are the People of the Moon. Our job is to take the great formless passion of nature — the mighty tides of the earth and all its yearning to overflow the land — and to make those waters dance with the Moon. The Moon is the great reflector of the sun's light. And the Jewish People are the great reflector of the light of G-d in this world.

Left to themselves, the waters will flow wherever they want. Desire without direction. Emotion devoid of intellect. The raw power of nature. This is the world we now live in. The nations of the world are likened to the sea. They have vast physical power. Theirs is the power of raw

matter which awaits its correct form. The job of the Jewish People is to give the shape to that raw matter. We live in a world, however, where matter perceives itself to be form. It isn't looking, and it isn't prepared, to accept that there exists a reality outside itself, a reality that requires matter to submit to form. Instead, raw energy masquerades as intellect — for it perceives itself to be the form.

The power of vision can lead us to lift our eyes and realize Who it is that creates this world; to connect to the source of all matter and form. But our eyes can also be used to fabricate a world in which matter trumpets its dominion over form, calling itself the New Order. Like the sea rising from its bed to overwhelm the land. For it is only the land which can give the sea its shape.

THE IVORY TOWER

My ivory tower
turns out to be
a concrete blockhouse.
Can I break down the walls
or will I just keep printing
the same old stationary?
The Ivory Tower.
The Ivory Tower.

Sources:

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