

SEASONS OF THE MOON

THE MONTH OF ADAR II

Adar II 5760 / March 8, 2000 - April 5, 2000

Remember a photograph on the cover of a book. A photograph of a road. A very long, very straight

road. One of those long straight roads that you find in the heartland of America. A road that never seems to have any cars on it. The road goes up and down a little. The perspective is very compressed by the long telephoto lens. This road must go on forever.

When you move in a straight line, every step in that line is a product of the one that precedes it. Every step carries the sum of where you've come from. Every step, every moment in that straight line, demands the next step in that same line. Every moment in a straight line is both the product of every step until that moment and the map of its ultimate goal. By its very nature, a straight line must go on forever - unless of course it is opposed by an outside force. Without outside intervention, however, a straight line will never stop.

OFF THE STRAIGHT AND NARROW

What happens when the line leaves its straight path and wanders? A line that twists and turns must eventually falter and end. Its own deviance spells its eventual demise. For something that deviates to the side has lost its connection to what preceded it. It is no longer an expression of a continuum. Every move, every second in a line which isn't straight is disconnected from that which has gone before and from

THE LINE GOES ON FOREVER

that which is to come. It expresses neither history nor purpose. It is a cold frozen moment alone among another million odd frozen moments. When the line meanders and twists, nothing has any connection to anything else. The world is random. There is no purpose. No beginning. And no end.

The Talmud tells us that "*Jacob, our father, didn't die.*" It is for this reason that he was given the title *Yeshurun* - "the straight one." That which is totally straight doesn't stop. It doesn't die. It goes on and on. It connects to that which is beyond. It goes on forever.



THE MEASURE OF HAPPINESS

"When Adar comes in we increase in *Simcha*"

What is happiness? We are all familiar with it. But what is it? What is its essence?

Everyone knows what it's like to be happy. But what does happiness teach us about reality?

In the Talmud, there is a measurement known as a *tefach sameach*. A *tefach* is about ten centimeters. *Sameach* means happy. How can a measurement be happy? A laughing slide-rule? A smiling tape-measure? A *tefach sameach* is a large *tefach*. It's still a *tefach* - but it's a little more. Why did the Rabbis of the Talmud choose the term "happy" to describe a measurement which was slightly on the large side? Couldn't they have called it a

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THE LINE GOES ON FOREVER *continued*

“maxi” tefach or a “generous” tefach? Why a “happy” tefach?

THE LAST HORIZON

The *tefach sameach* is still a *tefach* but it connects, it extends to that which is beyond itself. It becomes more. This is the essence of all *simcha*. To perceive the self becoming more. Extending one's boundaries and visions. Growing.

The *tefach* is the same. It stays within its boundaries but it reaches out, connecting to that which is beyond itself. That's the essence of happiness. Staying within the definition of who we are, but reaching out. Expanding our horizons without abandoning our borders.

A MEASURE OF SADNESS

When we see ourselves confined within ourselves, defined solely by our physical parameters, that we are who we are and no more - that's the essence of sadness. When our definition of ourselves ends with our fingertips that is sadness in its essence. But when we perceive ourselves as being connected, reaching to that which is beyond ourselves, that point of connecting who we are to what is beyond is the epitome of happiness. The feeling that we can touch the most distant echo of the *Ein Sof* - The Endless - is the essence of happiness. Happiness itself.

When we broaden our existence - by getting married, by having children - we feel happy. For these are ways that we go beyond ourselves while still staying who we are.

WHODUNNIT?

The story of Purim is like a plot line of a thriller. A roller-coaster of sudden reversal. Twisting ways. You have to discern the straight line. The Unseen Hand guiding

events from above, overturning the twisting ways of Haman, the Amaleki.

The letters of *Amalek* spell *Me'ukal* which means 'twisting', 'meandering'. *Amalek* is the force that skews the straight line, turning it aside. *Amalek* is the force that wants to turn the line aside, to take order, history and purpose and turn them into a million frozen random moments. His is the power which tries to break the connection between cause and effect, between here and beyond. "Is

there Anyone out there?" says his voice. The *gematria* of *Amalek* is the same as the word 'doubt'. Doubt means where I've come from is irrelevant and where I'm going to is uncertain. All I know is now. The moment.

The essence of happiness is that things are important and I have a connection to them. Things can only be important if there is a connection between cause and effect, one thing and another. Relevance is a measure of connection. In a world of random events, nothing has importance. Nothing has relevance. Nothing has significance. Nothing is going anywhere.

FROM SADNESS TO SIMCHA

When Adar comes in, we increase our happiness. For this is the month when we can detect that faintest whisper of that straight line

leading to forever. At the time of Purim, in this month of Adar, events were turned from "sadness to *simcha* and from bereavement to *Yom Tov*." In this month, we celebrate the victory of *Yeshurun* - the straight one - who goes on and on. The Jewish People carve a straight line through the history books of the world and out of this world to that which is above and beyond this world.

To the extent that we embody that straight line, we are *Yeshurun*, the straight one. The happy one.

That's the essence of happiness.

LIFTING
MY EYES

*Sometimes my eyes comprise
the heaviest part of my body
Playing graylamp spotlights
on the lino*

*It will take an eyelift crane
But if I can only raise them
just a little
to the hills
they will fill like pools
waiting for the stone
to fall.*

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tel: 972-2-581-0315; fax: 972-2-581-2890; e-mail: ohr@virtual.co.il WWW: <http://www.ohmet.org>
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