

SEASONS OF THE MOON

THE MONTHS OF TAMMUZ / AV 5760

Vol. 5 No. 10

Right now, as you are reading this, a million different things are happening in the world.

Millions of lives are beginning and millions ending. A vast cacophony called life in all its rawness and gentleness is being played out on this ball turning silently in space. It all seems so chaotic. Great evil is going unpunished. And great goodness is going unrewarded. Where is G-d? Has He thrown up His hands in despair and gone off for a ride with the top down?

AMERICAN BEAUTY

The basic credo of Judaism is that G-d is One. Not just that there is one G-d, but that He is One and that nothing else exists apart from Him. This is what we mean when we say the *Shema Yisrael: Hear O Israel, the Lord our G-d, the Lord is One*. One. Alone. Nothing else.

Let me ask you a question. If G-d is One, how come this world is so full of conflict, so full of contradictions to His Unity?

A few months ago, I was scanning through a magazine and my eye came to rest on one of the photo icons of our age — Ansel Adams' immortal "Moonrise over Hernandez." A beautiful full moon skirting a low bank of cloud, rising majestically from the horizon. The evening sky dark and brooding... All this in the exquisite detail that only an 8x10 inch negative and the genius of a master can produce. My eye traveled down to the caption and I started to read...

"Because of my unfortunate disregard for the dates of my negatives, I have caused considerable dismay among photographic historians, students, and museums — to say nothing of the trouble it has caused me. 'Moonrise' is a prime example of my anti-date complex. It has been listed as 1940, 1941, 1942, and even 1944. At the suggestion of the Beaumont Newhall, Dr. David Elmore of the High Altitude Observatory at Boulder, Colorado, put a computer to work on the problem. Using data from a visit to the site, analysis of the moon's position in the photograph, and lunar azimuth tables, he determined that the exposure was made at approximately 4:05PM on October 31 1941. That is now the official date..."

October 31st 1941. Here was the doyen of American photography making art in all the beauty of a warm New Mexico evening

A VANISHED WORLD

while, on the other side of the world, this same moon was witnessing the death sentence of a generation.

October 31st 1941. I wonder what was happening in Europe when Ansel Adams was making that photograph. Out of interest, I did some research on that date. The results made the hair on the back of my neck start to rise.

INTO THE WIRES OF EXISTENCE

On January 20 1942, at an idyllic lakeside house in Wannsee near Berlin, there was an intramural meeting attended by Heydrich, Eichmann, and other Nazi leaders. This is how the report begins:

Protocol of the Wannsee Conference, January 20, 1942
Reich Secret Document 30 Copies

Protocol of Conference

1. The following took part in the conference on the final solution (Endlösung) of the Jewish question held on January 20, 1942, in Berlin, Am Grossen Wannsee No. 56-58."

There it was in black and white "...the final solution..." I was reading the death warrant of the Jewish People.

On page 4 of the Wannsee Protocol, the following seemingly innocuous statement is made:

"...since the *Machtübernahme* (rise to power of the Nazi party), January 30, 1933, until the **accounting day, October 31, 1941**, a total of about 537,000 Jews had been brought to emigration..."

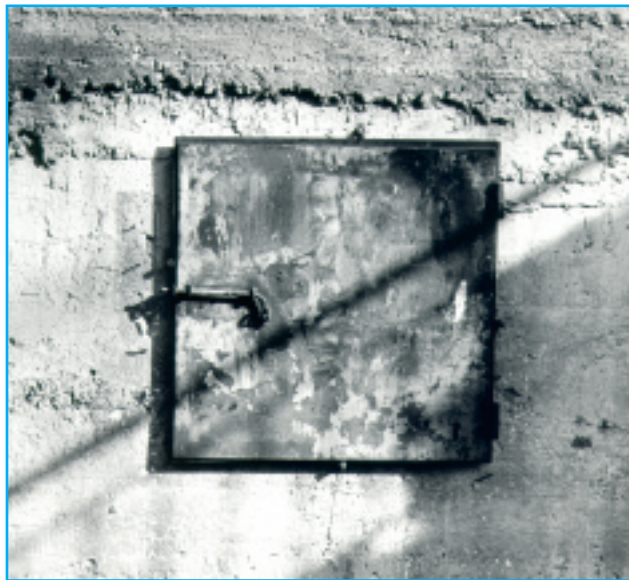
October 31, 1941. The day of accounting. While Ansel Adams was busy photographing a moonrise in New Mexico, the Germans had drawn a red line under the emigration of Jews from the Reich. There was to be no more emigration. The final phase had been reached. The death sentence of a generation had been sealed.

...And where was G-d?

THE DAY OF ACCOUNTING

If G-d created this world to reveal His Perfection and Completeness, logically nothing should emerge from this wish except that which is perfect and complete in every way.

Nothing in this world should exhibit any signs of lacking or defi-



Continued over

A VANISHED WORLD *continued*

ciency. There should be no room for evil. Since G-d's Will in creation was to reveal His Perfection to the world, what possible purpose could there be in His creations exhibiting deficiency?

So why should evil exist?

G-d chose to reveal His Perfection to man in a specific way — and in no other. He chose to reveal His Perfection by showing us His Unity. There's something unique about unity. We can understand it.

A NEGATIVE WORLD

None of the Creator's other qualities can be defined by their opposite. By saying that G-d is the opposite of evil gives us no clue as to the extent of His Goodness; to define His Wisdom by saying that He is the opposite of foolishness takes us nowhere in understanding the extent of His Wisdom. Expressing the negative doesn't define the positive. However, when we say that G-d isn't two — that defines exactly what it means that He is One. "Not being two" is the perfect negative image of what "being One" means. As it says in the poem *Adon Olam*, "And He is One — and there is no second."

G-d decided to reveal His Perfection to the world not through revealing His Wisdom nor His Goodness nor any other of His Qualities, but only through His Unity.

Which is why we see such dis-unity in the world...

We live in a world where evil seems to grow every day; where the Light is more and more hidden. This is truly a world of concealment. In the Hebrew language, the word for "world" is *olam*. *Olam* comes from the root *ne'elam*, which means "vanished." This is a vanished world. A world from which G-d seems to have vanished. Vanished, along with the six million...

THE DARKNESS AND THE LIGHT

You can look at this world as total chaos. You can look at it as being a machine gone berserk without a driver at the wheel. But then you will have to account for all the miracles of this world as well. You're going to have to posit near impossible odds for the unique existence of life in this universe. You will have to explain the totally anti-historical existence of the Jewish People and how a three thousand year-old document predicted that survival. There are going to be a lot of things that are not going to fit into your theory of chaos.

Or you can see that all the evil in the world, all the chaos, all the disunity, is no more than the world's largest audio-visual aid to portray the opposite — the Oneness of He Who is One.

THE HIDDEN LIGHT

Evil has only one purpose in this world — to be uprooted completely and totally removed from existence. One day, when G-d decides, He will show us His utter dominion over all that exists. He will reveal that everything in this world is part of His Unity. Our perception of this Unity in its total form will come from having known its reverse. We will have seen unchecked evil descending to its nadir. When G-d removes evil from this world, we will perceive His Unity and His Perfection like a blinding light.

In the months of Tammuz and Av, G-d's light seems most hidden. These are months of tragedy. Five tragedies occurred on the 17th of Tammuz, and five on the ninth of Av. On the 17th of Tammuz, Moshe broke the two tablets of stone after the incident of the golden calf. 17 Tammuz was the date of the suspension of the Daily Offering in the time of the First Temple. At the time of the Second Temple, on this day, the Romans breached the walls of Jerusalem. Titus and his armies then invaded the city. On the 17th of Tammuz, a Roman soldier — Apostumus — burned the Holy Torah. And finally, on the 17th of Tammuz, an idol was set up in the Sanctuary.

On the ninth of Av, we commemorate five more disasters: Just as the Jewish People were poised to enter the Land of Israel, they insisted on sending spies before them. The spies returned on the ninth of Av and brought with them a negative report. The Jewish People rejected the Land. This rejection provoked G-d to establish the ninth of Av as a day set aside for calamity: On Tisha B'Av — the ninth of Av — both Holy Temples were destroyed. On the ninth of Av, the

Romans destroyed Betar and massacred thousands of Jews. On the ninth of Av, Jerusalem was ploughed over, like a field.

In more recent times, on the 9th of Av 1492, the Jews were expelled from Spain. On the 9th of Av 1914, the First World War began.

But there's another ninth of Av that we probably can relate to more than all the others. In the early hours of July 23rd, the first transport of "deportees" left Malkinia, Poland. 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. That was the 9th of Av 1942. The day the first killings started at Treblinka.

I wonder what Ansel Adams was photographing in New Mexico?

STANDING
IN SILENCE

*The silence of someone
standing in silence
is not as loud
as two
is not as loud as
six
million
(silences)*

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