

The Month of Adar: The Blessed Month of Transformation

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Introduction

During the month of *Adar*, I am usually on my go-around- annual North America tour, even though its often freezing especially in Montreal. I believe the reason Hashem sends me during *Adar* most years is because *Adar* is known to be the month of success and victory. The Talmud advises us to try to schedule any litigation with a gentile for the month of *Adar*, because the month of *Adar* is described as having a good fortune, literally a *בריא מזל/mazal bari* – healthy constellation, to give them hope for a good end.¹ Yet, in truth, the word *mazal* doesn't mean fortune or luck but rather 'that which flows down from Above' as the Hebrew word *mazal* shares the same root as the word 'nozel' – flowing. When I grew up in Denmark in an assimilated Jewish family, I was taught that Judaism does not believe in astrology. Later, after returning to the Torah path I learned that this was not really the case. However, it is understandable that in order to ensure that Jews distance themselves from worshipping the stars and constellations it became widespread to simplify and declare that Judaism is against astrology. In fact *עכו"ם/akum – oved kochavim u'mazalot* – a worshipper of stars and constellations is a way to describe a non-Jew in Torah commentaries. According to the *Shulchan Aruch* (Code of Jewish Law) "We do not consult astrological forecast or cast lots."² However, Rabbi Moshe Isserless adds that a person ought not to act against what he knows is the astrological influences, (*mazal*) because one must not rely on miracles.³ From here we learn that the Torah clearly gives credit to the power of astrology. So going out of the Holy Land to gentile countries seems to be appropriate, as well, for the month of *Adar*. These annual tours are like a cold shower for me, I need to muster up a lot of courage to jump in, but once I'm in its so refreshing. Baruch Hashem I have been so fortunate during most of my tours, being able to sustain my midrasha with overflowing blessings.

This year, however, I felt a huge spiritual blockage against planning my tour during the month of *Adar*, and it wasn't only because my new book *The Seven Fruits of the Land of Israel with their Mystical & Medicinal Properties* wasn't going to be published by then. Something just didn't feel right so I went with my intuition and rescheduled for right after Pesach, **April 27-May 14**, and it was amazing how everything opened up for this time. Meanwhile, I felt the urge to take advantage in some way of the double month of *Adar* this year and that's how I planned my South Africa travel for Feb 14-20. With Hashem's blessing my itinerary filled up quickly, and my tour was very successful. It was so exciting to travel to a new place and meet new people.

Please read on and learn more about Judaism & astrology and the spiritual attributes of the month of *Adar*...

¹ *Babylonian Talmud, Ta'anit* 29b.

² *Shulchan Aruch, Yoreh Deah* 179:1-2.

³ *The Rema* Ibid.

Judaism & Astrology

It is interesting to note that all the Hebrew months correspond to the astrological signs, for example the month of Tishrei corresponds to the symbol of the balanced scales of Libra, the month of Sivan when we received the two tablets of the Torah corresponds to Gemini with its symbol of twins, and the month of Elul when we work on repentance and purity corresponds to the Virgo. The Rabbis throughout the times believed in the wisdom of astrology and that Hashem appointed the stars and constellations over the earth. G-d didn't create any creation in vain; the heavenly lights were created in order to be **signs** and constellations for the world on earth.

G-d said: 'Let there be lights in the firmament of the heaven to divide the day from the night; and **let them be for signs**, and for seasons, and for days and years; and let them be for lights in the firmament of the heaven to give light upon the earth.' And it was so. G-d made the two great lights: the greater light to rule the day, and the lesser light to rule the night; and the stars.⁴ The fourteenth century commentator Rabbeinu Bachaya a student of the Ramban explained the importance of the wisdom of astrology thus:

Although it states, מזל לישראל / *Ein mazal l'Yisrael* – “There is no astrological sign for Israel,”⁵ it refers to the general community of Israel. However regarding the individuals, there is astrological influence for each person. Behold the wisdom of astrology is a very great and glorious wisdom, and our Rabbis do not at all deny it.⁶

There are many other references to astrology in the Torah for example our Sages teach, “There is no blade of grass in the world below that does not have a spiritual life-force (*mazal*) above striking it and telling it to grow.”⁷ *Mazal* means constellation, or more specifically, the spiritual influences associated with the signs of the Zodiac. The patriarch Avraham was expert in astrology and saw in his constellation that he was destined to remain childless. However, Hashem told him to leave his astrological sign.” Rashi explains “He took him outside...”⁸ meaning: “Dissociate yourself from your astrological predictions.”⁹ The Holy One raised him above the stars. Avraham's ability to be above the zodiac derived from the power of the letter “*heh*” added to his name, corresponding to the five books of the Torah. Every Jew inherits this power when he learns Torah in order to fulfill the mitzvot. He then nullifies the power and influence of the constellations, for the Torah itself transcends the world.

⁴ Bereishit 1:14-16.

⁵ Babylonian Talmud, Shabbat 156.

⁶ Rabbeinu Bachaya, Bereishit 15:5.

⁷ Bereishit Rabah 10:7; Cf. Zohar I:251a, Zohar Chadash 4b.

⁸ Bereishit 15:5.

⁹ Rashi, ibid.

The Spiritual Attributes of Adar

He made the letter **kuf** king over **laughter**, And He tied a crown to it and He combined one with another, and with them He formed **Pisces** in the Universe, **Adar** in the Year, and the **spleen** in the Soul male and female.¹⁰ During *Adar* spring is in the air, battling the remnant of the long dark winter month of *Tevet* and *Shevat*. “Just as when *Av* enters we decrease in happiness, likewise when *Adar* enters we increase in joy.”¹¹ This fits in with the sense of the month: ‘laughter.’ *Adar* is bubbling over with laughter, as the last month of the year, and the feeling of having reached completeness causes joy. Since *Nissan*, the month of Pesach, is considered the first of the Jewish months,¹² *Adar*, being the culmination of the Jewish year, gives us the opportunity to tie all the loose, hanging ends, and turn all possibilities of frustration and depression into joy. Spinning the loose ends together into a perfect pattern of accomplishments while gaining a greater perspective of the past, causes exhilaration for the future. Perhaps this is why it states about the woman of valor: “Glory and Majesty is her clothing and she laughs to the very last day.”¹³ *Adar* is the month of laughter as “the very last day,” the completion – bring joy and laughter, and ‘he who laughs last laughs longest.’ Laughter is also the expression of unbounded happiness, resulting from witnessing the unexpected light of the Purim miracle emerging from the spiritual darkness. Rabbi Yitzchak Ginsburg points out that it is said about Yitzchak – the archetype personification of laughter in the Torah – “the fear of Yitzchak.”¹⁴ This phrase *פחד יצחק/pachad yitzchak* can also be read as: ‘fear shall laugh’ – the essence of fear shall metamorphose into laughter. The fear of Haman transforms into the exuberant laughter of the festival of Purim. Laughter, joy, happiness breaks all borders; this month is the time to take advantage of this window of opportunity and increase in joy and happiness.

The Meaning of the Name *Adar*

The name *Adar* is connected to the Hebrew word *Adir*,¹⁵ meaning empowerment and strength.¹⁶ The word *Adar* can be broken into *A/Dar* -the Hebrew letter ‘alef’ representing the oneness of G-d ‘*dar*’ – dwells. G-d created the world “to make for Himself a dwelling place (*dura*) in the lower worlds. *Adar* represents the lowest of the worlds, but it is specifically here where G-d, the *Alef*, longs to reveal His presence and to dwell.

The phrase “*completely turn around*” (*Megillat Esther* 9:1), is the main key to connect with the energy of *Adar*, where we have the opportunity to transform our very lowest shadowy sides.

¹⁰ *Sefer Yetzirah* 5:2.

¹¹ *Babylonian Talmud, Ta’anit* 29a.

¹² *Shemot* 12:2.

¹³ *Mishlei* 31:25.

¹⁴ *Bereishit* 31:42.

¹⁵ *Tehillim* 8:2.

¹⁶ Rav Tzadok of Lublin, *Machshevet Charotz*, chapter 4.

The Long Letter *kuf* – Extending Into the Lower World

The shape of this month's letter *kuf* is like a *heh* the letter of the month of Nissan, which is the month of revealed miracles, yet the foot of the *kuf* extends downwards below the line. This indicates the ability of this month to complete G-d's creation and extend its power by means of human effort into the lower world. The foot of the *kuf* descending below the line symbolizes G-d's dwelling place below, enacted by our descent to transform all depression and sadness to pure delight. The letter *kuf* begins both the words *kedusha*, (holiness), and *klipah*, (shell). The spiritual work during *Adar* is the ongoing work of extracting sparks of holiness from their impure shells and transforming them into holiness. Therefore, the month of *Adar* receives the power to conquer and elevate our base desires.

The month of *Adar* marks the end of the six winter months, and corresponds to *Elul*, the sixth of summer months. This is mirrored in the letters that form the nature of these months; *Adar* was formed by the *kuf*, whose numerical value is 100, while *Elul* was formed by the *yud* whose numerical value is 10. Each represents completeness in their respective domain.

The letter *kuf* also means 'monkey' (*kof*). In accordance with the idiom "as a monkey in the face of man,"¹⁷ the *kuf* symbolizes the custom of masquerading on Purim. Before the miracle of Purim, G-d Himself "hid His face" and His name is not mentioned even once in the Scroll of Esther. By initially hiding our identity, pretending to be someone else, our innermost essence becomes revealed. This also explains the concept of modesty by concealing our body we reveal our Neshama (soul)

Before eating from the Tree of Knowledge our bodies were so refined and transparent that they reflected the light of our souls. Afterwards the body became a mask for the soul, concealing our true inner being. The purpose of garments is to conceal the mask of our body and through the choice of texture, style and color, express our inner essence and bring forth hidden sparks of our soul.

In Hebrew the word for body is '*guf*,' Rav Tzaddok of Lublin explains that the power of the letter *kuf* teaches us about the inherent holiness of even the physical body of a Jew, since it is known that the Hebrew letter *gimel* is exchangeable with *kuf* as they are both sounds from the palate.¹⁸

The Weekly Torah Portions of the Month of Adar

During *Adar* we complete the Book of Redemption (Exodus) by reading the Torah portions of *Truma*, *Tetzave*, *Kitisa* and *Vayakhel* and *Pekudei*. These Torah portions mainly describe the completion of the *mishkan* (tabernacle) which is the underlying theme of the holiday of Purim. The evil Queen Vashti refused to allow King Achasverus to give permission to rebuild the Temple in Jerusalem. The true victory of Purim took place when Darius, the son of Queen Esther began to

¹⁷ Babylonian Talmud, *Baba Batra* 58a.

¹⁸ Rav Tzadok of Lublin, *Divrei Sofrim*, *Likutei Amerim* 16.

rebuild the holy Temple. Except for during a leap year, on the Shabbat prior to the holiday of Purim we read the Torah portion *Tetzave* about the clothing of the *Kohen Gadol*, (High Priest). The purpose of these exquisite garments was to cover the mask of our body and return the original light of Adam the first man.

Permutation: *Hei/hei/yud/vav* ה/ה/יו/ו

In order to connect with the energy of the month it is good to visualize its permutation of Hashem's four lettered name. Each of the 12 months have a different permutation. The permutation of *Adar* alludes to the completion and full circle, which takes place at this time. We start with the first *heh* (daughter) referring to *malchut*, the lowest *sefira* (the *Shechina*) where G-d meets this world. This is followed by the next *heh* (mother) representing *bina*, the highest female *sefira* that receives and completes the light of *chachma* represented by the letter *yud* (father) the highest masculine *sefira*. From there we go back downwards into the lower world as represented by the *vav* (son) completing the higher point of *yud* encompassing the six middle *sefirot*, connecting it back with the lower *heh* representing *malchut*.

Protected Pisces Covered by the Waters of Torah

Adar is the month of good fortune for the Jewish people. During leap-years we have two months of *Adar*, just as the tribe Yosef, associated with the month of *Adar*, is sometimes considered two tribes. The two fish of Pisces represent Yosef's two sons. The main tribe Efraim, whose name is associated with fruitfulness,¹⁹ connects with the fruitfulness of the constellation of Pisces.²⁰ One of the definitions of Purim, celebrated this month, comes from the word *pru* – “be fruitful and multiply.” Therefore, this is the month most suited for pregnancy and birth.²¹ Ya'acov blessed both Efraim and Menashe “*To increase fishlike within the land.*”²² Just as the fish are covered by water and the evil eye cannot rule over them, likewise Yosef's descendants are protected from the enemy.²³ Just as fish live in the hidden world of the sea, the Divine souls swim in the waters of Torah; our true identity being invisible in this world. Fish- in Hebrew ‘*dag*’ represents the ‘*tikun*’ (rectification) of *da'ag* – ‘to worry.’ The strong (though initially hidden) *mazal* (fortune) of *Adar*, converts all our worries to ultimate joy of redemption and rebirth. The two fishes represent the Written and the Oral Torah. Since the spiritual power of the Jews climaxes in *Adar*, the process of the giving of the Torah was actually not completed until Purim. Only then did the Jewish people accept the authority of the sages and their oral Torah willingly,²⁴ when the sage Mordechai with the help of Queen Esther brought about the salvation of the Jewish people. “*For the Jews there was light and happiness*” – Light refers to the Oral Torah.²⁵ According to Kabbalah the Oral Torah is considered female because it receives from the Written Torah. The power of the female is to build, complete, and create wholeness, as the woman takes a tiny seed and builds it into a complete being within her.

¹⁹ *Bereishit* 41:52.

²⁰ Rav Tzaddok of Lublin, *Machshevet Charotz*, chapter 4.

²¹ Rav Tzaddok of Lublin, *Resisei Layla*, 58.

²² *Bereishit* 48:16.

²³ Rashi, *Bereishit* 48:16.

²⁴ *Babylonian Talmud, Shavuot* 39a.

²⁵ *Babylonian Talmud, Megillah* 16b.



The Humble Flexible Purity of the Piscean

Pisces is a water sign. For the sake of the purity and repentance associated with water, the Jews were saved at the time of Purim. Torah is compared to water, because you need to be humble to absorb it. Just like the fish cannot live without water, so the world (the Jewish people) cannot exist without Torah. The Torah is compared to water, because you need to be humble to absorb it. Water always flows downward, seeking the lowest level. Moshe, the giver of the Torah, was the most humble of all men.²⁶ He is closely linked to water and his name means, "From the water I have drawn him."²⁷ His only sin was bringing forth water by hitting rather than speaking to the rock. Moses was a Pisces; he was born and died on the 7th of *Adar*! The month of *Adar*, moreover receives the power of its tribe Yosef to conquer and elevate our base desires, as Yosef overcame the temptation of Potifar's wife. Pisces is opportune for both physical and spiritual blessing; one fish represents physical wholeness, the other fish represents the eternal soul. The Divine soul grows and develops through the twelve constellations of the zodiac; we reach our ultimate perfection in the last constellation of Pisces. "...They nurture him with pure water from Aquarius (in Hebrew water-container) and he grows with great joy like a fish which enjoys being in the water...He perpetually eats from the Tree of Life which is planted in the section of the righteous... and he lives forever."²⁸ The Piscean personality is very flexible and can easily adapt to change. Since Pisces is the last of the Jewish Zodiac and represents the highest stage of development, the Piscean personality is able to associate with various types of people, and has the power to bring about self-transformation.

Laughing from our Spleen

"The spleen laughs."²⁹ At first sight, this appears most paradoxical, for the spleen is considered the seat of the black humor, the source of depression and despair. Yet, all of the phenomena of *Adar* and Purim are essentially paradoxical, and represent states of existential metamorphosis. The spleen is connected to the immune system. Its purpose is to fight against infection of evil invaders. Laughter is an expression of overcoming evil. Strengthening our will power gives us the ability to overcome evil, and achieving completeness. Reaching this peak of wholeness through our own efforts is what engenders the greatest possible happiness. "Then our mouths will be filled with laughter,"³⁰ the ultimate expression of happiness without bounds.

Summary

Adar is a month filled with spiritual powers and potential for success, fruitfulness and joy. It is an opportune time to elevate our shadowy sides and transform ourselves to what we are meant to be. Use the power of joy to change your life and the world.

²⁶ *Bamidbar* 12:3.

²⁷ *Shemot* 2:10.

²⁸ *Midrash Tanchuma, Ha'azinu* 1.

²⁹ *Babylonian Talmud, Berachot* 51b.

³⁰ *Tehillim* 126:2.