

The Month of Iyar: Connecting Physical with Spiritual Redemption

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Introduction

Iyar – Month of Great Beginnings

The month of Iyar is a month of great beginnings. In this month the erection of both the first and second Temple began,¹ in this month the beginning of the Third Temple Period was initiated with part of the Land of Israel returning to the hands of the Jewish people. This fits in with the astrological constellation of Iyar, the *שור/shor* – (Taurus-ox), known for its physical strength with which it plows the Land. The letters that spell out this month also connect to the Land of Israel. These letters *alef, yud, yud, reish* are the initials of the names of our holy fathers and mother: Avraham, Yitzchak, Ya'akov and Rachel. Avraham is our first father to whom the promise of the Land of Israel was given, Yitzchak never left the Holy Land, with Ya'acov the covenant of the Land was confirmed and Rachel is known in Kabbalah to be the embodiment of *Eretz Yisrael*.² The three Holy Forefathers represent the beginning of the Jewish people, while Rachel represents our completion as in her merit all the exiles will return to the land of Israel.³ Iyar is the month of connecting the beginning with its completion, the letter of this month is the connecting *vav*.

During the month of Iyar we connect the Exodus from Egypt with the reception of the Torah, physical with spiritual redemption. We, furthermore, must connect the return to the Land of Israel on the 5th of Iyar, with the holiness of Jerusalem, the 28th of Iyar to the giving of the Torah in the beginning of the following month. *Yom Yerushalayim* falls on the *yahrtzeit* (day of passing) of Shmuel the Prophet who anointed the conqueror of Jerusalem, King David. Together they planned the building of the Holy Temple, which unifies the Jerusalem of below with the Jerusalem of Above. It is interesting that *Yom Yerushalayim* falls exactly one week prior to the giving of the Torah. In this way the two days are linked like the first day of Sukkot is linked with *Shemini Atzeret*, as the prophet proclaims: *כִּי מִצִּיּוֹן תֵּצֵא תּוֹרָה וּדְבַר הַשֵּׁם מִירוּשָׁלַם – For out of Tzion shall go forth Torah, and the word of Hashem from Yerushalayim*.⁴ The sequence of going out of Egypt, receiving the Land of Israel, Yerushalayim, and the Torah makes amazingly sense. It's a process of moving from physical to spiritual redemption.

¹ The First Temple, I *Melachim* 6:1, The Second Temple, *Ezra* 3:8.

² Arizal, *Etz Chaim* 32:5.

³ *Yirmeyahu* 31:16.

⁴ *Yeshu'ahu* 2:3.



Month of Healing

The generation which emerged from Egypt was healed during this month from all their illnesses as they prepared to be a fit vessel to receive the Torah.⁵ To promote our healing in this month, we are given the healing spiritual practice of counting the Omer by which we meditate upon and attach ourselves to divine energies. We contemplate on being created in the image of G-d, with all the divine emanations that we can express.

Iyar: I am Hashem Your Healer

The letters spelling out the word Iyar in Hebrew are acronyms for אֲנִי יְהוָה רֹפְאֶךָ/Ani Hashem Rofecha – I am Hashem your Healer. The Torah itself brings about healing as Hashem promised us that keeping the Torah and Mitzvot will protect us from all the diseases of Egypt. *“If you diligently hear the voice of Hashem your G-d, and do what is right in His sight, and listen to His commandments, and keep all His statutes, I will put none of these diseases upon you, which I have brought upon Mitzrayim: for I am Hashem your Healer.”*⁶

Rashi explains that learning Torah and performing the mitzvot protects us from these diseases, like a doctor who tells his patient, ‘Don’t eat such and such because it will make you ill.’ And so it is written *“[The Torah] will be health to your navel and marrow to your bones.”*⁷ How do we explain that sometimes Torah-observant people become sick? The kind of sickness that Hashem brought upon Egypt which hardened the hearts of the Egyptians and prevented them from repenting; Hashem promises not to place on those who keep His Torah. Yet, there are other ways of getting sick which actually can be a blessing in disguise. Sometimes an illness realigns the person with the true values in their life and sometimes upon recovery b”H the illness inspires a lifestyle or career shift. In this way the illness comes in the way of healing. This is the meaning of *“I am Hashem your Healer”* – I will only send illnesses to you in a way of healing in order that you will remember to return in *teshuva* (repentance) before the Creator of the World. This will imbue within you the awareness that everything is from Him, nothing is by accident. Hashem supervises you continually and gives you the opportunity to turn any suffering into healing.⁸

Iyar is the time of letting go of anything toxic and false that doesn’t support our wellbeing. Through self-awareness and effort we can realign ourselves with ourselves and become true to ourselves in a real sense while opening up to what truly support our wellbeing. As spring begins to emerge more fully during Iyar, we also begin to bring ourselves to a new order, a new alignment.

⁵ *Yalkut Shimoni* chapter 19, allusion 675.

⁶ *Shemot* 15:26.

⁷ *Mishlei* 3:8, Rashi, *Shemot* 15:26.

⁸ *Be'er Mayim Chaim, Parashat Bo.*

Manna – The Bread of Heaven

The primary causes of illness are either due to the eating of improper food, or due to improper digestion and absorption.⁹ During Iyar, the Jewish people who wandered in the desert began eating the manna, the bread from heaven, food of angels that contains no waste and is completely absorbed by the body. Therefore, this month received the positive healing influence of the manna throughout the generations. Sincere thought and deep reflection were nourished by eating the manna, which brought lucidity to the mind, while drinking water from The *Well of Miriam* purified the heart to become attuned to the light of truth. The manna which started to fall for the generation wandering in the wilderness on the sixteenth of Iyar¹⁰ connects the physical with the spiritual. The lesson of the manna is to recognize that the source of all our physical nourishment is from Hashem, and we need to learn to trust that if we only carry out His will, He will sustain us and take care of all our needs. The manna was surely a test of *ביטחון/bitachon* – trust of how much we were able to trust in Hashem and not worry unnecessarily about the future. The manna literately taught us to turn to heaven for sustenance. Just as the exact portion of manna needed for that day fell daily, we can trust that each day Hashem blesses us anew with exactly the sustenance we need for that very day. The key to our *parnassa* (livelihood) is in the hand of G-d, although we don't always realize it. He is the only source of all the money we earn. In order to perpetuate the lesson of the manna, Hashem commanded Moshe to save some of the manna for future generations to teach us that we shouldn't be afraid to spend our money for charity and other mitzvot, as this will only make us richer, since the blessing of Hashem is proportionate to our trust in Him.¹¹ Likewise, if we truly learn Torah, Hashem will take care of our livelihood the same way as He supported the Israelites in the desert with the manna. Rashi explains that many generations later Yirmeyahu the Prophet rebuked the Jewish people, saying "Why do you not engage yourselves with Torah?" They answered him, "Shall we leave our work and engage ourselves with the Torah? From where shall we earn a living?" At this point Yirmeyahu brought out the jug of manna which had been preserved for generation, and said to them "O Generation, see you the thing of Hashem!"¹² He didn't say "Hear the word," but "See the thing!" This thing is what your fathers were fed with. The Omnipresent G-d has many messengers (many means) to provide food for those who fear Him.¹³ May we develop our trust in Hashem during this month of Iyar and may we merit realigning ourselves to achieve perfect healing!

⁹ Rambam, *Hilchot Deot* 4:17, 4:20.

¹⁰ *Shemot* 16:4.

¹¹ See *Shemot* 16:32.

¹² *Yirmeyahu* 2:31.

¹³ (Rashi, *Shemot* 16:32.

