

The Month of Sivan:

Squeezing out the Last Drops of the Light of Sivan

By Rebbetzin Chana Bracha Siegelbaum

May Hashem return all the captivities of Tzion speedily and safely to their respective families! Please continue to pray for Ya'acov Naftali ben Rachel Dvorah, Gilad Michael ben Bat Galim and Eyal ben Iris Teshura.

Introduction

We are now at the end of the month of Sivan, with one leg stepping forward into the month of Tamuz. I hope to squeeze out the last drops of the light of Sivan before entering the heavier months of Tamuz and Av. We would have expected the organ associated with Sivan to be the right leg with which we step forward through the power of Torah. The left side is often associated with the negative as it states, "The heart of the wise inclines him to his right, but the fool's heart to the left."¹ Yet, actually the organ of the month of Sivan is the left leg.² When we work hard in aligning ourselves to the Torah, we have the ability to transform even the left leg – connected to the exterior physical realm, into the right, leading us to Torah classes, *chevrutot* and prayer circles.³ It seems to me that whereas the right leg moves forward, the left leg is connected with back-stepping. Perhaps, as we move forward in the calendar leaving the month of Sivan behind, the left leg helps bring us back to our center – the Month of Sivan in which we received the Torah, as the Torah must always infuse our every step. Whereas the right leg – associated with Nissan represents jumping and skipping, the left leg is about walking in a steady orderly fashion, for we need two legs to walk properly. In this way the Torah of the month of Sivan completes the Exodus of the month of Nissan.⁴ We need both of these legs to maintain balance in our life. The inspirational right leg of jumping and skipping brings us to a higher place of surrounding lights through love, excitement and exhilaration. Yet, the left leg with which we stand in awe and make clear boundaries, allows us to climb the steep mountain without falling down, as our measured steps ensures that we don't lose grounding.⁵ "He who walks with sincerity shall walk with security."⁶ Sincerity (תמימות/*temimut*) is connected to the left leg; security (ביטחון/*bitachon*) is associated with the right leg. So in this way, actually the left leg is the leading leg, ensuring our full security.

Also the tribe of the month of Sivan – Zevulun is part of a pair that completes one another. Since Zevulun is connected to commerce and business, we are used to thinking of Yessashar – associated with Torah – as his superior partner.⁷ Yet, there is always something inherently higher in a cause,

¹ *Kohelet* 10:2.

² *Sefer Yetzirah* 5:7.

³ Based on Rav Tzaddok of Lublin, *Sefer P'ri Tzaddik*, for Rosh Chodesh Sivan, 1.

⁴ Rav Tzvi Elimelech of Dubno, *Sefer B'nei Yissaschar*, Article for the Month of Sivan 1.

⁵ *Ibid.* with my adaptations.

⁶ *Mishley*, 10:9.

⁷ See Rashi, *Bereishit* 49:13.



than in its result. Since Zevulun enables Yessachar to learn Torah by supporting him, he comes from a higher place. In accordance with this principle, the Arizal explains that the origin of the soul of Zevulun is in *כתר/Keter*, above that of the soul of Yissachar, in *חכמה/chochmah*.⁸ This can be applied to the role of the woman as an ‘enabler’ for the man’s Torah learning. Although many of us women spurn this role, we need to realize that this is how we create our crown to become “a woman of valor [who] is the crown of her husband.”⁹ It is all the little concessions in life that make the difference. For example, the other day, I had to schedule an appointment for both my husband and I. Since my weekly yoga class with our fantastic teacher at B’erot is so important to me, I would do anything not to miss it. Therefore, the only alternative was to schedule the appointment during one of my husband’s *chevruta* sessions, (when he learns with his study partner.) Then I thought about it again, and realized the challenge of my mitzvah as an enabler for my husband’s Torah learning in this dilemma. Clearly, it was Hashem’s will for me to reschedule the appointment to a time when he wouldn’t have to miss any of his Torah learning sessions, even if it would compromise my schedule greatly.

Going Out Versus Remaining Home

Ya’acov blessed Zevulun with a land which would reach all the way to the city of Zidon: “Zevulun towards the coast of the sea shall dwell; and he shall be for an haven of ships; and his border shall be unto Zidon.”¹⁰ Today this biblical city is occupied by Lebanon, as its third largest city, located a 40 km (25 miles) south of the capital Beirut. Zevulun is not only about going outwardly towards the coast, originally Leah in her naming of Zevulun associated him with “a house for dwelling,”¹¹ – i.e. a home: “Now my husband will reside with me, because I have born him six sons: and she called his name Zevulun.”¹² This seemingly contradiction between Leah’s naming and Ya’acov’s blessing, is further highlighted by Moshe who contrasts Zevulun’s going out with Yissacher’s remaining at home (in the tents). “Rejoice Zevulun in your going out and Yessacher in your tents.”¹³ However, a closer look at Ya’acov’s blessing reconciles the two different aspects of the tribe Zevulun. Rather than saying that Zevulun would travel the seas, Ya’acov stated that Zevulun should dwell near the coast of the seas. He was at home at the seashore as his abode extended to include the coast. Zevulun actually did not travel the seas. He only went as far as to the port, which is the connecting point between the outside world and the home. He did not go out in order to get away, but rather to bring merchandise back home. This world is like an extension of Hashem’s dwelling place. In the month of Sivan Hashem is coming very close to us. We simply have to “go out” toward Him in order to bring His blessings home. Just like Zevulun extended his home to include the realm of the seashore, we can extend our earthly abode to include the gate of heaven. Just as Zevulun brought material merchandise back home to sustain Torah learning, we too can transform our physical reality to serve Torah in every way.

⁸ Arizal, *Sha’ar Hapesukim, parashat vayetze*.

⁹ *Mishlei* 12:4.

¹⁰ *Bereishit* 49:13.

¹¹ The same word used to describe the Temple in *I Melachim* 8:13.

¹² *Bereishit* 30:20.

¹³ *Devarim* 33:18.



The Double Gemini Nature

The partnership between Zevulun and Yisaschar is symbolized by the sign of Gemini. The twins of Gemini also correspond to the “twin Torah” – the Oral and Written Torah. According to astrology, people born during the coupled months¹⁴ are drawn to the double character of introverted and extroverted. In the Torah path this refers to the unity of action with deep feeling and intention. Gemini also corresponds to the unity between both Mashiach bin Yosef and Mashiach bin David.¹⁵ People born in Gemini often have double natures, sometimes pulling them in opposite directions. Geminis are known to be free-spirited, always wanting to be lifted up and inspired. Both Sivan and Elul are symbolized by the human form, denoting that these months are suitable for the development of our spiritual inclinations. The planet Hashem appointed to rule the constellation of Sivan/Gemini (and also Elul/Virgo) is mercury. It’s interesting that Astrology recognizes Mercury, as set aside for repentance and return to Hashem. Communication, intellect and awareness are all within Mercury’s domain, as are logic and reasoning, our manner of thinking, and how we create and express our thought processes. It is about expressing ourselves often – and well, both in speech, writing books and online communications. While Sivan is a wonderful time to deepen existing relationships, and to open oneself to meeting new people, it is also prone to direct communication with the Divine through prayer and meditation.

Penetrating the *Klipah* of Tamuz through the Light of Sivan

The communicative month of Sivan gathers strength to overcome the challenges of the months of Tamuz and Av which’s light have been covered by a *klipah* (husk) since the making of the Golden Calf on the 17th of Tamuz. Through squeezing out the last drops of Sivan we will b”H be able to penetrate this *klipah* and reconnect with the light of Tamuz and Av. The month of Tamuz which follows Sivan is the time to attain the lost light by means of the vision of the Torah – the vision of Simcha (joy) which enlighten the eyes. The holiness of Tamuz is attaining the light of the Oral Torah.¹⁶ This gives us joy. May we be blessed with light to see beyond the surface, looking for the good points in each other, ourselves and all of reality, and may we enter the gate of the Month of Tamuz in Joy!

¹⁴ Pisces and Gemini.

¹⁵ Ramch”l (Rabbi Moshe Chaim Luzzatto), *Drushei “V’Samt Otam etc.”*

¹⁶ P’ri Tzaddik, for Rosh Chodesh Tamuz 1.

