

## The Month of Tamuz:

# The Month of Tamuz Rectifying the Sense of Vision

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.**

### Looking with G-d-Colored Glasses

Vision is the sense of the month of Tamuz. This is the time to tap into the knowledge that superficial reality does not necessarily reflect inner truth. The midrash teaches us that the Jewish people were tempted to make the golden calf on the 17<sup>th</sup> of Tamuz as a replacement for Moshe because Satan showed them a vision of Moshe hanging dead between heaven and earth.<sup>1</sup> The astrological sign of the month of Tamuz is סרטן/*Sartan* – Cancer. One of the meanings of the root of '*sartan*,' סרט/seret, is a visual strip. This word is used in Modern Hebrew to refer to a film strip or movie. By applying the spiritual sense of vision during Tamuz, we have the ability to see through physical reality and behold its Divine source. This way we can remove the outer 'shell' of reality and reveal its inner 'fruit' and life-force.<sup>2</sup> Perhaps television today can be compared to the vision of the Satan who made the Jewish people lose hope. The screen shows a vision, which is seemingly objective. However, often it is a product of a certain agenda, to destroy the Jewish people and our mission in the world. It may show a vision of Jews murdered and tortured, making Israel lose hope and scared to live here. It may also portray a false image of the Jews as perpetrators reacting excessively aggressive. This is destructive for the Divine Image of Israel, and can alienate people spiritually from the Holy Land. In this month we have to really work on purifying our vision and seeing beyond the mask of external physical reality by connecting with the Divine light behind the mask. What you see is not what you get. You can visit Israel and just see a lot of old rocks. You can walk on the Judean hills, and see nothing but trees and houses. If you look with G-d-colored glasses, you may see beyond the surface to get a sense of David Hamelech who walked these very hills with his flock as he composed the lyrics and tunes of the *Tehillim*.

### Closing our Eyes out of Love

On the eve of Rosh Chodesh Tamuz, Moshe sent out the twelve tribes to spy the Land of Israel,<sup>3</sup> to find out how to best conquer it. The spies traveled for forty days, during the entire month of Tamuz until the ninth of Av when they returned with their evil report that made everyone cry.<sup>4</sup> Rabbi Shlomo Carlebach explains that it is as if the spies said, "We don't like Israel so much. We have seen better ones." Likewise, if we come to Yerushalayim, and discuss with our friends, whether we like Paris, Amsterdam, or Yerushalayim better –forget it! We have never seen

<sup>1</sup> *Shemot Rabbah* 41:7.

<sup>2</sup> Rav Yitzchak Ginsburgh, Gal Einai, <<http://www.inner.org/times/tamuz/tamuz.htm>>.

<sup>3</sup> Rashi, *Devarim* 1:2.

<sup>4</sup> Rashi, *Eicha* 1:2.



Yerushalayim yet. Little babies look at their mother with their eyes fixed on her, like nothing else exists. The problem is that when we grow up, we see so much that we forget how really to look at the things we love the most. When we stand by the Holy Wall, let us allow ourselves to feel as if we haven't seen anything else. Our Madricha (student counselor) of last year just got married this week. She told me that when she stood under the Chupah she neither saw nor heard anything of what was going on. All she saw was her beloved *Chatan* (groom). "Why is it when we say, '*Sh'ma Yisrael, Hashem Elokeinu, Hashem echad!* – G-d is one – we put our hands over our eyes, and we close our eyes?" Rebbi Nachman says, when something is a little bit far away from our eyes, when we keep our eyes open, we can see it. When something is very close, we have to squint our eyes. But there is something which is so close, that in order to see it, we need to close our eyes completely. During Tamuz we were supposed to close our eyes and feel so close to *Eretz Yisrael*, and see every corner of the Holy Land, but sadly enough, we looked at *Eretz Yisrael*, and we thought, "Yeah, it's beautiful, but Paris is also not bad." Rebbe Nachman says that when we cry our eyes have to be closed the very split second when the tears emerge. If we don't close our eyes out of love, we may have to close our eyes out of pain." Oy how many tears have we shed because the spies didn't close their eyes. The fixing of Tamuz is to close our eyes, and to see only that which we love. On Tamuz the sun is shining the strongest. Sometimes the light is so strong it makes us close our eyes. When we stand by the Holy Wall, we close my eyes because we are so close, and when we hear *Birkat Kohanim* (the Priestly Blessing) we close our eyes because the light of the blessing is so strong.

### Spying for Good Points

"Do not go astray after your hearts and after your eyes..."<sup>5</sup> We should strive towards always being drawn towards the פנימיות/*penimiut* – inner aspect without being blinded by the exterior appearance limited by our physical eye. The spies were lacking Emunah (faith). According to the eyes of their intellect, they had no power to enter the land of Israel. Yet, if they would have believed and surrendered their way of looking to the will of G-d, that would have helped them rise above nature. This is what Avraham did when G-d told him "leave your astrological sign."<sup>6</sup> Therefore, the following verse testifies about him, "...he believed in G-d..."<sup>7</sup> We have the ability to see the Divine life-force in everything by nullifying ourselves to G-d, and look only at that which G-d directs us to look at.<sup>8</sup> When Shemuel came to crown one of Yishai's sons to be the next king, he was carried away by the stately appearance of David's elder brother Eliyav. "*Hashem said to Shemuel do not look at his appearance nor on the height of his stature, because I have refused him, for it is not as a man sees, for a man looks on the outward appearance, but Hashem looks on the heart.*"<sup>9</sup> No one expected David who was small and ruddy and always out with the flock, (perhaps even with dirt under his fingernails) to be the next king. Yet, Hashem made it clear not to judge the book by its cover. There are old bottles with new wine and new bottles filled with old wine.<sup>10</sup>

<sup>5</sup> *Bamidbar* 15:23, 15:40.

<sup>6</sup> *Bereishit* 15:5 with Rashi.

<sup>7</sup> *Bereishit* 15:6.

<sup>8</sup> *Sefat Emet, Bamidbar, Parashat B'Shalach*, Year 1871.

<sup>9</sup> *1 Shemuel* 16:7.

<sup>10</sup> *Pirkei Avot*, Chapter 4, *Mishna* 20.



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How do we look at the people we love? Are our husbands and children as our close friends? Do we look at the runny nose, the pimples and the wrinkles? Or do we look at the sparkle in their eyes, in their innate holiness and will to grow?

Let us try to always look at the soul within a person, to empathize and see the bigger picture of each situation. Especially during Tamuz is the time to work on judging others favorably and to learn to constantly stand in their shoes. To hear what someone is really telling us between the lines, what their heart is crying out to us.

### Seeing the Whole within the Broken

When we wear G-d colored glasses we learn to see on one hand the potential for true wholeness and rectification in every broken person and situation, while beneath the superficial veneer of reality there is a broken world all around us. "There is no vessel as whole as a broken heart."<sup>11</sup> We need to be just broken enough to feel and relate to the pain in others, but not too broken to act positively and forcefully to heal, mend and fix wherever we can. During the month of Tamuz, the world is so dark, we can't see anything. So our holy rabbis promised us, this is the fixing of seeing. May Hashem hear our prayers and give us His eyes!<sup>12</sup>

<sup>11</sup> A famous saying by the great Hasidic master – the Kotzker Rebbe.

<sup>12</sup> Rabbi Shlomo Carlebach blessing for the Month of Tamuz.

