

Seventh New Moon 2010



Please note ... this Rosh Chodesh marks the beginning of the fifth month according to the Biblical Hebrew calendar.

Dates to diarize:

- New moon,
 - *July 11*
- Total solar eclipse [death of Aaron the High Priest],
 - *July 12*
- First quarter moon,
 - *July 18*
- Ninth of Av,
 - *July 20*
- Full moon,
 - *July 26*
- Last quarter moon,
 - *August 3*

We trust the LORD of perfection will perfect many things that concern your lives and nations as we watch with Him our High Priest in the place of strategic prayer and warfare in this season.

We are entering into a time of "Dire Straits" ... there is much need to be in prayer and intercession for both our own nation, South Africa, and the nation of Israel.

During the new moon and solar eclipse, the moon will cast a shadow on the earth. Please pray against the book of shadows that will be brought forth for darkness, shadow, and crisis sorcery. Please pray against all manners of shadows and darkness. Proclaim Psalms 91 and 92 over you, your family, nation, and so forth.

Furthermore, the eclipse will pass through locations known for ancient rites, rituals, and mantras. Because of the strategic nature of this eclipse, it will be a time of intense spiritual contest and activities in the realm of the spirit.

Pray over the tides during this new moon. This type of alignment causes water spirits to go on spiritual rampage. Pray against all satanic flooding and edema. Pray Psalm 29 over all waters, including your own body fluid.

More information regarding the solar eclipse ...

The World Cup and the eclipse.

They are calling this the Capricorn lunar eclipse and the Grand Cross conjunction.

The total eclipse is at 19 degrees Cancer 19.33 GMT.

The FIFA world cup has been positioned right across the eclipse cycle from June 11 to July 11 – note the two number "11's"! The last day of the contest being on the last day of the solar eclipse. The number 11 is one of the principal keys to black occultism!

The Grand Cross ...

The significance of this eclipse is that it coincides with the "Grand Cross". This "Grand Cross" is in astrological terms a square. A square is a tense aspect formed between planets that are at an angle of ninety degrees from each other. Thus a Grand Cross is formed by four squares. They say it is a trial! This Grand Cross is a five planet alignment which is called the "pathway to the 10-10-10" in the year of 2010. Many stargazers are calling this alignment a "crossing over to a new age".

However, the Grand Cross is also the highest grade in many orders of knighthood, sometimes the holders are called "knights grand cross" or just "grand crosses".

In many cases the actual insignia is called the “grand cross”, including the Order of the Phoenix, a Greek Order, the Order of the Garter and the Knights of Jerusalem into which Mbeke was inaugurated. There is a whole connection to the Illuminati, Royalty, and the New World Order.

Note, the years from 2010 to 2012 are being called the “Cardinal Cross” years.

When the lunar eclipse falls in Capricorn it is in conjunct with Pluto, the god/ lord of the underworld. This Grand Cross is seen as a symbol of the “Lord of Darkness”.

On January 15th, 2010 there was an annular sun eclipse with the sun-moon conjunction at 25 degrees 01 Capricorn, where the path of visibility crossed Africa, dividing it into two. The effects of the January 15th eclipse is said to be felt between January and July 2010, and will influence Capricorn in particular.

In an article about the Capricorn eclipse, the writers described the “Lord of the Underworld”, Pluto, taking up residence and a “new power emerging, where the archetype of Capricorn will be torn open and it’s dark shadow contents erupting forcing all the world to see.”

A solar eclipse happens when the moon passes in front of the sun. The moon not only casts its shadow on the earth, but blocks out the light of the sun – it blocks out the light – this is prophetic!

During a solar eclipse the moon actually casts two shadows towards the earth, one is an inverted cone shaped called the “umbra” which becomes narrower as it reaches the earth – no direct sunlight penetrates this area and is called “the path of totality”. In this area there is a complete (total) blocking out of the sun. Note, the cone has always been a symbol of the goddess.

The second shadow is called the “penumbra” and is spread out over a large area. So, a solar eclipse is nothing but a shadow of the moon, leaving the ubiquitous “ring of fire” the annulus ring of the sun!

The word eclipse comes from the Greek and means “abandonment, a leaving or forsaking”. Quite literally meaning the sun abandoning the earth – again so prophetic in meaning! It means an interception of light from a luminous body – the sun, moon, and so forth, and the eye, a partial or complete obscuring, relative to the designated observer.

Capricorn is not only a zodiac sign, but is in fact the name of a geographical area of Limpopo stretching from the Ysterberg to the Tropic of Capricorn in the North from whence it gets its name.

Please pray over the points mentioned above! Pray also as the Holy Spirit leads and guides you.

Please pray for the 33rd hour of the new moon. At this time, the occult engage in satanic numerology, exploiting the number 33 in 33 degree-based occultic enchantments in accordance with the moon.

We need to counter this satanic onslaught. Pray:

Hebrews 2:14-15 ““14 Since, therefore, [these His] children share in flesh and blood [in the physical nature of human beings], He [Himself] in a similar manner partook of the same [nature], that by [going through] death He might bring to nought and make of no effect him who had the power of death—that is, the devil—15 And also that He might deliver and completely set free all those who through the [haunting] fear of death were held in bondage throughout the whole course of their lives.”

Let us enforce this finished destruction of the devil and his works at the cross as we pray.

Prayer points ...

1. Redeem all with the Blood of Y’shua.

Colossians 1:20 “20 And God purposed that through (by the service, the intervention of) Him [the Son] all things should be completely reconciled back to Himself, whether on earth or in heaven, as through Him, [the Father] made peace by means of the blood of His cross.”

2. Blow the trumpet to the LORD in this new season and ask the LORD to remember us against our enemies.

Numbers 10:9-10 “9 When you go to war in your land against the enemy that oppresses you, then blow an alarm with the trumpets, that you may be remembered before the Lord your God, and you shall be saved from your enemies. 10 Also in the day of rejoicing, and in your set feasts, and at the beginnings of your months, you shall blow the trumpets over your burnt offerings and your peace offerings; thus they may be a remembrance before your God. I am the Lord your God.”

Psalm 81:3-4 “3 Blow the trumpet at the New Moon, at the full moon, on our feast day. 4 For this is a statute for Israel, an ordinance of the God of Jacob.”

3. Apply the Blood of Y’shua on the sun and moon. Command the heavens to reject and vomit all satanic rituals and sacrifices.

4. Command the heavens to declare the GLORY of God.

Psalm 19:1-6 "THE HEAVENS declare the glory of God; and the firmament shows and proclaims His handiwork. 2 Day after day pours forth speech, and night after night shows forth knowledge. 3 There is no speech nor spoken word [from the stars]; their voice is not heard. 4 Yet their voice [in evidence] goes out through all the earth, their sayings to the end of the world. Of the heavens has God made a tent for the sun, 5 Which is as a bridegroom coming out of his chamber; and it rejoices as a strong man to run his course. 6 Its going forth is from the end of the heavens, and its circuit to the ends of it; and nothing [yes, no one] is hidden from the heat of it."

May the LORD bless you and KEEP you as you watch and pray ... may He guard with a hedge of protection and grant you SHALOM.

May we seek our Father and King and hear His Voice ... and SH'MA.

We are living in exciting times!

The Day of the LORD is approaching!

As God's People, we are called to be ALERT and watching the times and season, and to be on our knees in PRAYER. We must be hearing from the LORD and drawing closer to Him. It is only by knowing Him and being HIDDEN in Messiah, that we will endure.

June 29th [17th of Tammuz according to the Hebrew calendar] marked the beginning of what is called the "Dire Straits". This is a three week time of prayer and fasting for the nation of Israel and God's People, ending on the 9th of Av [July 20th].

The 17th of Tammuz is a fast day for observant Jews [this is the fast of the fourth month in Zechariah 8:19] commemorating the breaching of the walls of Jerusalem by the Babylonians in 586 B.C. The period between this day and the 9th of Av, when the Temple was destroyed, has come to be called "Bein HaMetzarim" or in English, "Between The [Dire] Straits". This name comes from Lamentations 1:3. Throughout history, this period of three weeks has been crucial and DIRE for the nation of Israel and God's People. It is during this time that both Temples were destroyed and that much calamities have befallen the Jewish people. The 9th of Av [July 20th] is particularly an important date during this period.

It is indeed a time calling for especial watchfulness over Israel and the Jews in the nations.

Please note too, that as the Wild Olive [the "church"] is supported by the Root, the Natural Olive, this time is crucial for us as well. We have been grafted in.

Below is an email article from "The Elijah Prayer Army" by Lars and Harriet Enarson, www.thewatchman.org] ...

We also want to encourage you to pray for our own nation, South Africa, amongst all the rumors and threats of Xenophobia and violence. Our nation needs much prayer ...

Note too, that on the 11th/12th of July there will be a total solar eclipse. We must watch and pray for these "signs in the heavenlies".

Additional prayer points ...

1. Pray for the nation of Israel and God's People, that they be protected from evil seeking occasion to be release during these three weeks.
2. Pray that the veil be lifted over the eyes of the Jews ... that they see and recognize their Messiah.
3. Pray Psalm 118:5.

Psalm 118:5 "5 Out of my distress I called upon the Lord; the Lord answered me and set me free and in a large place."

4. Pray that Israel, the people, be brought into the wilderness, the fullness that God as for them, and to survive the narrows She must traverse until then [Matthew 7:14]. Y'shua came that His People might come into fullness of JOY [John 15:11; 16:24].
5. Pray for Israel, the Land, to come into the wilderness which God has ordained. At present it is too narrow to adequately nurture the Jews God has brought from the nations thus far, and She is under constant pressure from the nations to become narrower still [Isaiah 54:2-3].
6. Pray for South Africa. Pray for our nation's relations with Israel.
7. Pray for America.
8. Pray for the saints of the LORD, for His Remnant.
9. Currently there is turmoil in the whole world – wars, rumors of war, scarcity of food, inflation, earthquakes, floods, fires, the oil spill, and so on. Pray that these shakings will cause God's People to return to and draw strength from our King and Father, to know Him deeper ... and that these will pave way for the unsaved to receive the Good News of Y'shua so that they can be incorporated into a Kingdom that cannot be moved.

Hebrews 12:28-29 "28 Let us therefore, receiving a kingdom that is firm and stable and cannot be shaken, offer to God pleasing service and acceptable worship, with modesty and pious care and godly fear and awe; 29 For our God [is indeed] a consuming fire."

The Elijah Prayer Army ...

• The Time of Jacob's Trouble

"This is what the Sovereign LORD says: This is Jerusalem, which I have set in the center of the nations, with countries all around her." (Ezekiel 5:5)

Jerusalem is more and more becoming the center of the world's attention. The conflict in the Middle East concerns all of us. God has made all of humanity dependent on the outcome. As believers in the Messiah of Israel, we must face up to our responsibilities regarding the Jewish people. The first step is to understand what is going on and why the conflict is so crucial. Fortunately, God has not left us in the dark. The words of the prophets, recorded in Scripture thousands of years in advance, give us the light that we need.

Chapter Four The Final Conflict

"So when you see standing in the holy place 'the abomination that causes desolation,' spoken of through the prophet Daniel - let the reader understand - then let those who are in Judea flee to the mountains ... Pray that your flight will not take place in the winter or on the Sabbath. For then there will be great distress, unequaled from the beginning of the world until now - and never to be equaled again." (Matthew 24:15-16, 20-21)

"Because of the signs he was given power to do on behalf of the first beast, he deceived the inhabitants of the earth. He ordered them to set up an image in honor of the beast who was wounded by the sword and yet lived. He was given power to give breath to the image of the first beast, so that it could speak and cause all who refused to worship the image to be killed." (Revelation 13:14-15)

The Backbone of Bible Prophecy

We have mentioned that when the Jewish people return to their own land in the last days, they will go through a time of great terror and distress leading up to their salvation.

"How awful that day will be! None will be like it. It will be a time of trouble for Jacob, but he will be saved out of it." (Jeremiah 31:7)

The return of Jacob back to his land and his struggle during the night at Peniel when his name was changed to Israel, are prophetic pictures of this difficult time. In this chapter we will relate the time of Jacob's trouble to "the great tribulation" and the anti-messiah.

This will be Satan's last and final attempt to abort God's plan of salvation for the Jewish people and the return of Y'shua the Messiah. The first issue that must be resolved is whether those who believe in Y'shua are still going to be on the earth during this time. Y'shua's most comprehensive teaching about his return is called the Olivet Discourse, and is found in Matthew 24, Mark 13 and Luke 21. This speech by Y'shua at the end of his ministry was in answer to a question by his disciples about his coming and the end of this age.

"Y'shua is talking about his disciples throughout the entire chapter."

Some Bible scholars call Matthew 24, which is the lengthiest of the three versions, "The Backbone of Bible Prophecy," because it gives the general blueprint or outline of all teaching in Scripture about the last days. If you are seeking understanding from God on this often-confused subject, it is advisable to begin with studying this chapter closely and then relate other portions of Scripture to this backbone" structure.

It is important to notice first of all that Y'shua is talking to his disciples throughout the entire chapter (see verse 3). The parallel passage in Mark 13 actually says that the disciples who came to him privately and asked the questions were his closest disciples, Peter, James, John and Andrew.

Notice also that the popular teaching of a secret rapture years before the physical return of Y'shua is not found anywhere in this chapter, neither in Mark 13 or Luke 21. With all due respect to the dear brothers and sisters in the Lord who hold this view, it is impossible to find this teaching clearly mentioned anywhere in the Bible.

The complicated construction and interpretation of Scripture surrounding this teaching on the rapture, actually originated first with a Catholic priest in Spain in order to fight against the Reformation and defend the Pope against accusations of being the antichrist. But it was primarily a "prophetic utterance" in 1828 by Margaret MacDonald, a young girl in England, which made the teaching popular. In essence, the so-called prophetic message was: "Before the antichrist appears and darkness comes upon the earth, I will secretly rapture my special chosen ones out of this world home to me."

Paul specifically warns us to beware of prophecies dealing with the rapture or the return of Christ.

*"Concerning the coming of our Lord Y'shua the Messiah and our being gathered to him, we ask you, brothers, **not to become easily unsettled or alarmed by some prophecy, report or letter supposed to have come from us, saying that the day of the Lord has already come. Don't let anyone deceive you in any way, for that day will not come until the rebellion occurs and the man of lawlessness is revealed, the man doomed to destruction. He will oppose and will exalt himself over everything that is called God or is worshiped, so that he sets himself up in God's temple, proclaiming himself to be God.**" (2 Thessalonians 2:1-4)*

It is very clear from Paul's teaching that we will not be gathered to be with the Lord until the anti-messiah, the man of lawlessness, first has appeared. How this passage can be interpreted to mean the opposite, as it is being taught in many circles, is very difficult to understand.

A Call to Discipleship

The doctrine of a secret rapture before the great tribulation could actually be labeled as a Western convenience prosperity gospel. It is based on the notion that God's perfect will for His people is a life of ease and blessing rather than trials and suffering.

Before the Communists took over the government in China, many of the Western missionaries told the Chinese believers, "Don't worry! Before the Communists take over, Jesus will rapture us all out of this world!" The only ones that disappeared were the missionaries who were forced to flee mainland China, leaving the believers completely unprepared for the persecution that followed.

It is very appealing to the flesh to think that God will spare all of His favorites the difficulties of the great tribulation and the anti-messiah, the man of lawlessness. But is it Biblical?

"People confuse the wrath of God with the time of great tribulation."

I have never met anyone who has seriously studied this subject in the Bible for himself, who was able to reach this conclusion. Neither has any spiritual leader in church history done so before 1828. None of the Church fathers, nor Martin Luther, John Calvin, John Wesley, George Whitfield, Jonathan Edwards, Charles Spurgeon, or A. B. Simpson to just name a few, ever taught any secret rapture before the great tribulation. In fact, George Muller reacted strongly against this teaching when his contemporary, J. N. Darby, began to spread it in England during the 1800s.

Some people try to defend this doctrine by quoting First Thessalonians 5:9, *"For God did not appoint us to suffer wrath but to receive salvation through our Lord Y'shua the Messiah."*

The problem is that people confuse the wrath of God with the time of great tribulation. When Y'shua returns, God's wrath will be poured out **upon the wicked** in a swift act of judgment. **God's people will not suffer this wrath.** But nowhere in the Bible are we ever told that we will completely escape the wrath **of the enemy**. Rather, Y'shua forewarns us in John 16:33, *"In this world you shall have tribulation,"* He also stated in the Sermon on the Mount, *"Blessed are those who are persecuted"* (Matthew 5:10).

The great tribulation is not the wrath of God against the wicked. It is the wrath of the anti-messiah against God's elect in a last attempt to destroy them! If we have escaped this earth through a secret rapture, why would there even be a tribulation? The devil will certainly not persecute his children. Why would he?

Paul explains in more detail how this will work in 2 Thessalonians 1:3-10,

*"We are bound to always give thanks to God for you, brothers, even as it is appropriate, because your faith grows exceedingly, and the love of each and every one of you towards one another abounds; so that **we ourselves boast about you in the assemblies of God for your patience and faith in all your persecutions and in the afflictions which you endure.** This is an obvious sign of the righteous judgment of God, to the end **that you may be counted worthy of the Kingdom of God,** for which you also suffer. Since it is a righteous thing with God **to repay affliction to those who afflict you, and to give relief to you who are afflicted with us, when the Lord Y'shua is revealed from heaven with his mighty angels in flaming fire,** giving vengeance to those who don't know God, and to those who don't obey the Good News of our Lord Y'shua, who will pay the penalty: eternal destruction from the face of the Lord and from the glory of his might, **when he comes to be glorified in his holy ones,** and to be admired among all those who have believed (because our testimony to you was believed) in that day." (HNV)*

The Apostolic teaching concerning the second coming of Messiah is very clear and consistent just as we see in this passage from 2 Thessalonians 1. It is always described as **one event** where Y'shua appears from heaven, Raptures his own to meet him in the air as they are being glorified with him, Pours out his wrath on the anti-messiah and the wicked (see Revelation 19:11-21).

"The rapture is God's protection from his wrath over the wicked."

The rapture is God's protection from his wrath over the wicked. We will be hid with him during this time, just as it is described in Isaiah 26:19-21,

"But your dead will live; their bodies will rise. You who dwell in the dust, wake up and shout for joy. Your dew is like the dew of the morning; the earth will give birth to her dead. Go, my people, enter your rooms and shut the doors behind you; hide yourselves for a little while until his wrath has passed by. See, the LORD is coming out of his dwelling to punish the people of the earth for their sins. The earth will disclose the blood shed upon her; she will conceal her slain no longer."

Here we find the exact same pattern. First comes the resurrection of the righteous and the rapture. We will meet Messiah in the air to be with him and then, God's wrath is poured out on the wicked.

Our Safety

The only safety for us in the last days during the time of the great tribulation is to learn to deny self, take up our cross and follow Y'shua. In Revelation 3:10, he promises us that if we keep his admonition to endure - not to escape! – he will preserve us during this difficult time.

*"Since you have kept my command **to endure patiently**, I will also keep you from the hour of trial that is going to come upon the whole world to test those who live on the earth."*

"The only safety is to learn to deny self, take up our cross and follow Y'shua"

Those who are hid in Messiah will go through this time of testing victoriously. Y'shua facing the cross in Gethsemane is a prophetic picture of the great tribulation. He said to those who arrested him, *"This is your hour - when darkness reigns."* (Luke 22:53) Speaking of this time, Y'shua said, *"Now my heart is troubled, and what shall I say? 'Father, save me from this hour'? No, it was for this very reason I came to this hour. Father, glorify your name!"* (John 12:27)

When we in the last days learn to yield to the cross, God will once again be glorified. We are not called to die for the sins of the world as Y'shua did, but we are called to walk in his footsteps, not loving our lives so much as to shrink from death.

"They overcame him by the blood of the Lamb and by the word of their testimony; they did not love their lives so much as to shrink from death." (Revelation 12:11)

"When he opened the fifth seal, I saw under the altar the souls of those who had been slain because of the word of God and the testimony they had maintained. They called out in a loud voice, 'How long, Sovereign Lord, holy and true, until you judge the inhabitants of the earth and avenge our blood?' Then each of them was given a white robe, and they were told to wait a little longer, until the number of their fellow servants and brothers who were to be killed as they had been was completed." (Revelation 6:9-11)

Peter describes the mind we must have, *"Therefore, since Messiah suffered in his body, arm yourselves also with the same attitude."* (1 Peter 4:1)

The Time between Dire Straights June 29 – July 20

June 29 began the difficult three-week time period for the Jewish people between the fasts of the fourth and the fifth months (see Zechariah 7:3; 8:19), known as the "The Time between Dire Straights." This is a time period when we need to watch in prayer for Israel in a special way. The second Lebanon war broke out during this time in 2006.

More ships are bound for Gaza, and Hezbollah has promised to defend them with military means. The whole region could explode into a war already this summer.

Also, more and more reports are coming in about a US and also Israeli military build up around Iran. Let us pray!

- **Pray that former Spanish Prime Minister Aznar's initiative to defend Israel will grow among politicians all over the world! Nations are hanging in the balance.**

"I will bless those who bless you, and whoever curses you I will curse; and all peoples on earth will be blessed through you." (Genesis 12:3)

- **Pray for increased intercession for Israel during "The Time between Dire Straights" June 29 – July 20!**

*"David built an altar to the LORD there and sacrificed burnt offerings and fellowship offerings. **Then the LORD answered prayer in behalf of the land, and the plague on Israel was stopped.**" (2 Samuel 24:25)*

- **Pray for Israel like Moses prayed!**

*"But Moses sought the favor of the LORD his God. 'O LORD,' he said, 'why should your anger burn against your people, whom you brought out of Egypt with great power and a mighty hand? **Why should the Egyptians say, 'It was with evil intent that he brought them out, to kill them in the mountains and to wipe them off the face of the earth'?** Turn from your fierce anger; relent and do not bring disaster on your people. **Remember your servants Abraham, Isaac and Israel, to whom you swore by your own self: 'I will make your descendants as numerous as the stars in the sky and I will give your descendants all this land I promised them, and it will be their inheritance forever.'**" Then the LORD relented and did not bring on his people the disaster he had threatened." (Exodus 32:11-14)*

- **Pray that the armies of heaven will be released to fight the battle against the Gog and Magog coalition that is now forming!**

"Praise be to the LORD, who rescued you from the hand of the Egyptians and of Pharaoh, and who rescued the people from the hand of the Egyptians. Now I know that the LORD is greater than all other gods, for he did this to those who had treated Israel arrogantly." (Exodus 18:11-12)

- **Pray for Prime Minister Netanyahu to stand strong and united against US and international threats, pressures and enticements in the peace negotiations!**

"On that day the LORD will shield those who live in Jerusalem, so that the feeblest among them will be like David, and the house of David will be like God, like the Angel of the LORD going before them. On that day I will set out to destroy all the nations that attack Jerusalem." (Zechariah 12:8-9)

• **Pray for the Jewish people begin to seek their God and the Messiah!**

"Afterward the Israelites will return and seek the LORD their God and David their king. They will come trembling to the LORD and to his blessings in the last days." (Hosea 3:5)

God bless you as watchmen on the walls of Jerusalem!

Breaking the Ninth of Av curse ...

By Robert Heidler

If you study the history of the Jews you discover something surprising. The Jews have experienced many calamities over the years, and most of those calamities have occurred on same day of the year. the 9th of AV. It was on this date that both temples were destroyed, and the final destruction of Jerusalem took place in 135. Many other catastrophes took place on this date, including the expulsion from Gaza in 2005.

Originally, the 9th of Av was intended by God to be a day of joy and celebration. It was to be the day Israel entered the land of promise at Kadish Barnea. Spies had been sent in to the land, and brought back the good fruit of the land for people to taste. But because of the negative report by 10 spies, they chose the path of unbelief, and refused to enter God's promise. Because of their unbelief, the entire nation came under a curse that persists to this day. Each year, as the 9th of Av comes, the entire nation fasts and prays for the curse to be broken. Yet true repentance has never taken place! How do we know that Israel has not repented of the sin of Kadish Barnea? It's because, when Jesus the Messiah came, they again repeated the same sin! They again tasted the fruit of God's promise. they saw the miracles and heard His teaching. but Israel's leaders again chose not to enter God's promise.

I believe that one day the 9th of Av curse will be broken. The curse will only break when the nation truly repents of unbelief, and their rejection of God's promise. When that happens, the fullness of God's blessing will be released, and the 9th of Av can be restored as a day of fulfillment and celebration.

I believe this day is fast approaching. The evidence is that many thousands of Jews ARE choosing to receive God's promised Messiah. They are rejecting the unbelief of many generations, and choosing to enter God's promise! Jew and gentile are becoming one in the Messiah as the promised "One New Man!" Let us pray that the day will soon come when all the people of Israel can truly experience every blessing God gives!

The sixth¹ Hebrew month ...

May You give us long life,
A life of peace – Shalom,
A life of goodness – Tovah,
A life of blessing – Bracha,
A life of sustenance – Parnassa,
A life of physical health – Hilutz Atzamat,
A life in which there is a fear of heaven and fear of sin
– Yirat Shamayim ve' Yirat Chet,
A life in which there is no humiliation – Ein Busha u'Chlimah,
A life of wealth and honor – Osher ve'Kavod,
A life in which we will have love of Torah and awe and
reverence of God
– Ahavat Torah ve'Yirat HaShem,
A life in which Adonai, the Lord, fulfills our heartfelt requests
for good.

Amen.

Selah.

There are a number of interesting and paradoxical details to note regarding the Hebrew month of Av.

1. The name of the month literally means “a father”. We see an example in Psalm 103:13, *K'rachem av al banim* ... “As a father is merciful to his children, so has YHVH shown mercy to those who fear Him.” We can rest in the knowledge that our lives are in the hands of a loving and faithful Father who has us securely in His care.

2. On the other hand, the 9th of Av – *Tisha b'Av* – is a day of deep mourning and fasting, which marks the destruction of both the First and Second Temples as well as the tragic exile of the majority of God's people from the Land. *Tisha b'Av* also commemorates the many persecutions and pogroms, Crusades and Inquisitions perpetrated against the Jews throughout the centuries that followed.

¹ Taken from the mailing list of Keren Hannah Pryor - “Appointments With God” - www.jcstudies.com

Interestingly, the ninth of Av always falls on the same day of the week as the first day of Passover of the same year. And yet, Passover is a festival of freedom and redemption while *Tisha b'Av* commemorates bondage and destruction. We can deduce that the *matzah* and bitter herbs of Passover, as well as representing the remembrance of slavery in Egypt, are also a reminder of the long and bitter exile from the Land of Israel.

It is only due to our Father's great mercy that the Jewish people have endured and survived much torment and persecution in foreign lands. In recent generations, God's people have heard the sound of His great trumpet, *shofar*, calling them back to His Land where they belong. *Tisha b'Av*, however, is still observed with mourning and fasting for the full Redemption has not yet come and Israel continues to suffer unrelenting and egregious attacks from the enemy. Nonetheless, the hope has been fulfilled and in that we rejoice. Through all the long years of exile, at the conclusion of every Passover Seder the prayer of hope has been proclaimed: *Le'Shana ha'ba'ah b'Yerushalayim!* "Next year in Jerusalem!" What added joy we experience as we now can say in Israel, "*This year in Jerusalem!*"

3. Although the first half of the month is marked with sadness, the second half is brightened with joy. The fifteenth of Av – *Tu b'Av* – was celebrated as a joyous festival hundreds of years before the First Temple was built.

An account in the book of Judges relates how certain men of the tribe of Benjamin, which was situated in the Jerusalem area, had committed acts of rape and murder against members of the other tribes. In response, the tribes gathered together and attacked and destroyed the small tribe of Benjamin. Only 600 men escaped the battle and fled to the cliffs of Rimmon, which are situated northeast of Jerusalem. Later the tribes repented of the severity of their action and they made peace with the Benjaminites. Realizing that the men now needed to find wives in order to build up the tribe once again, they advised them to go to Shiloh, where the Tabernacle with the Ark of the Covenant was housed, to attend the celebration of an annual agricultural feast. They advised, "Go and hide in the vineyards and watch; if the daughters of Shiloh come out to dance in the dances, then come out of the vineyards and seize each man his wife from the daughters of Shiloh, and return to the land of Benjamin (Judges 21:20-21).

It was the celebration of *Tu b'Av*, a grape harvest, and the time the white squill blooms all over Israel. The tall tapered stems, covered with small white flowers, stand out brightly against the yellow and brown fields at the end of a long, hot summer. They are a clear season marker, for *Tu b'Av* signals the summer solstice and there is a subtle change as the days begin to shorten and clouds start to appear in the sky, announcing the approaching rains of winter. The virgin maidens, to reflect the blossoming white squills, would don white dresses and dance in the vineyards of Shiloh, and wedding matches were made. To this day the fifteenth of Av is celebrated in Israel as "Sweetheart's Day"!

4. The actual date of death of only one person is recorded in the Torah, that of Aaron, the brother of Moses. We read that forty years after the Israelites left Egypt, the Lord called Aaron to Mount Hor and he died there "...in the fifth month on the first of the month" (Numbers 33:38) – the first of Av. Aaron, the High Priest, was deeply loved by the people and this was an occasion of deep mourning. The sadness of Aaron's death in the same month seems fused with the mourning of the destruction of the Temples.

Av, Shimon, and judgment ...

In keeping with the initial sadness of the month is the fact that the tribe of Shimon (Simeon), associated with Av, is the only tribe that was not blessed by Jacob on his deathbed or later by Moses. Jacob denounces both Shimon and Levi for their rage and murderous attack on the town of Shechem to avenge the rape of their sister Dinah (Genesis 49:5-7). Levi was redeemed and blessed by Moses, but Shimon forfeited this blessing due to the tribe's flagrant immoral conduct with the foreign women at Shittim (Numbers 25:1-6, 17). Later, once established in the Land, this behavior also cost the tribe the privilege of ever having a judge of Israel appointed from their ranks.

Ironically, in Jewish commentary it is considered that all Shimon's deeds were motivated by a standard of strict justice. He judged others and easily found them guilty. It is considered that it was he who "sentenced" his brother Joseph and threw him in the pit (Genesis 37:19-20). This is highlighted when the brothers first appear before Joseph, now Viceroy of Egypt and Shimon is the only one he keeps behind as a hostage. Also, in judging Shechem guilty, Shimon instigated the retaliation and attack in angry vengeance. Although he may have had a keen sense of justice, it is this trait of anger that precludes Shimon and his tribe from producing a true judge in Israel.

Anger will always distort any fair and balanced judgment. Anger also prevents a person from truly rejoicing in one's service and worship of the Lord, and eventually can cause one to become isolated from other people. Justice, to be true, must be tempered with mercy and weighed from a basis of trust and joy in the Lord. We can therefore appreciate the wisdom of Jacob when he cannot bless the judgmental anger of this tribe and he says: "I will separate them within Jacob, and I will disperse them in Israel" (Genesis 49:7). Their hope lay in mingling with the other tribes in order that their anger might be diffused and they might learn to interact with others in peace and to serve the Lord with joy!

The month of Av ultimately represents the balance of elements we deal with constantly on our journey through life – sadness and joy, justice and mercy, anger and grace, discord and unity, what is hidden and what is revealed. Undergirding it all is the knowledge that our Father, in His abundant love and mercy towards us, is in control and He is preparing the way before us.

He is bringing us to full Redemption, when, as foretold by the prophet Isaiah, “death will be swallowed up forever and the reproach of His people He will take away from all the earth” (25:8). His Kingdom will be established in the earth and the dwelling of God will rest in Jerusalem and He will be with those who are His, and “He will wipe away every tear from their eyes, and death shall be no more, neither shall there be mourning nor crying nor pain any more, for the former things have passed away” (Revelation 21:4).

Thus Av celebrates the constant truth of new life in the One who is the Source of all life. Interestingly, in rabbinic literature *Tisha b'Av*, the day of great mourning, is the date reckoned to be the birth date of the Messiah – the Savior-King who brings new life. We can indeed rejoice in “the Lamb in the midst of the throne” who is our Shepherd and who guides us to “springs of living water” that bring mercy, grace, hope and truth (Revelation 7:17).

Many blessings!