



The Torah records that the Mabul began on the 17th day of the second month and concluded on the 27th day of the second month. Although there is a disagreement as to whether the Flood began and ended in the month of Marcheshvan or Iyar (see Rashi to Beraishis 7:11), it is clear that the Mabul lasted 11 days longer than a Hebrew calendar year or the equivalent of a solar year.

The first Beis HaMikdash was completed by Shlomo HaMelech in MarCheshvan, "In the eleventh year, in the month of Bul, which is the eighth month" (Melachim I 6:38). According to the opinion that the Mabul happened in Iyar, the Radak explains that the word 'Bul' is derived from 'Yevul' or produce, as this month begins the process of plowing and planting with the coming of the early rains. According to the opinion that the Mabul occurred in MarCheshvan the relationship between Bul and Mabul is clear. It is interesting that the first letter of the word 'Mabul' has a numeric gematria value of 40. This could either allude to the first forty days of rains and flooding that occurred at the beginning of the 365-day Mabul period, or it could refer to the 40 days in Marcheshvan that the Mabul took place, the first 13 days of the Mabul and the last 27 days of the Mabul.

The word 'Mar' means bitter, like the word מרור, which are the bitter herbs that we are obligated to eat on Pesach. The month of Marcheshvan is 'bitter' since it has no festive days in it. Rather, there are several tragedies that also occurred on Cheshvan. For example, aside from the Mabul itself, Megilas Taanis records that on the 6th of Cheshvan, Tzidkiyahu HaMelech's sons were killed in front of him and then he was blinded and taken into captivity (see Melachim II 25:7).

Kislev and Tevet share Chanukah, Shevat has Tu B'Shvat, Adar has Purim, Nissan has Pesach, Iyar has Pesach Sheini and Sivan has Shavuos. Tamuz and Av have fast days, however, the Navi tells us that these fast days, along with the two additional fast days in Tishrei and Tevet, will turn into days of rejoicing when the Beis HaMikdash is rebuilt (see Zecharya 8:19). The first of Elul is one of the four New Years (see Rosh Hashana 1:1), but other than that there is no specific day of rejoicing in Elul, as we prepare for the Yamim Noraim.

However, there is a Midrash (Pesikta Rabti, Ish Shalom, Hosafa Alef, Pesikta Daled) on the Pasuk, "On the eighth day you will have an Atzeres (Bamidbar 29:35) referring to Shmini Atzeres. It is quoted in the name of R' Levi that originally Hashem wanted to give Klal Yisroel one festival in each month, however, because of the sin of the Chet HaAigel he withheld three festivals from Tamuz, Av and Elul and rewarded Tishrei with all three. Otherwise, Rosh Hashana would have been in Tamuz, Yom Kippur would have been in Av, Succos would have been in Elul and Shmini Atzeres would have been in Tishrei. Thus the intention was for only the month of MarCheshvan to be without any festivals.

This reminds me of a story I once heard from a Badchan about a non-Jew who became a Ger Tzedek in a Chassidic town at the very end of Shvat on a leap year. As soon as he joined the local Chassidic Kloyz he feasted at three festival meals in Adar on Rosh Chodesh, the 7th of Adar, Purim D'Prazim and Shushan Purim. This then repeated on Adar Bet. Nissan, Iyar and Sivan followed with Seudos on Rosh Chodesh and during Pesach, Pesach Sheini and Shavuos. Some time at the beginning of Tamuz he ran into one of his old non-Jewish friends who asked him how he was adjusting to the new religion. The Ger was telling him how great it was with all the festive meals multiple times each month. His friend was so impressed that he decided to convert to Yiddishkeit as well. As soon as the friend started attending the local Chassidic shul in his town, not only were there no festive meals, but there were three weeks in Tamuz, the nine days in Av, including the fast days of 17 Tamuz and 9 Av. After about a month and half of suffering, he went to see his friend and complained, "Liar, why did you convince me to convert to Judaism saying there were all these festive meals. It's been nothing but mourning and fasting since I converted". His friend acknowledged, "I also don't understand it. Ever since you joined the Jewish religion it's been nothing but suffering for me as well!"

After a meaningful Tishrei, with the festivals of Rosh Hashana, Yom Kippur, Succos, and Simchas Torah, with all the opportunities for spiritual growth and upliftment, we might feel let down as we enter the month of Marcheshvan and what we see as 'ordinary days'. However, every month has its unique character, its opportunities for spiritual growth, and its unique Parshiyos each Shabbos. One example is that soon, in the month of Marcheshvan we in Eretz Yisroel begin in earnest to ask for rain by adding 'V'Tayn Tal U'Matar L'vracha'. Rain is one of the few keys that Hashem retains exclusive possession of. The Gashmiyus that the rain represents both literally and figuratively is what we pray for in Marcheshvan and can make the difference between a plentiful year and a challenging one.

May it be His will that each of us should receive that which we daven for sincerely and in our best interest as we eagerly await the coming of the Go'el Tzedek and the Geulah Shlayma.