

Ha'Chazarah - החזרה



1

Rosh Chodesh KISLEV

May it be Your will, O LORD, our God and the God of our forefathers, that You inaugurate this month of *Kislev* upon us for goodness and for blessing.

Abba, Father, 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 walked more fully for Your glory in *Adoneinu Yeshua*, our Messiah and Lord.

Amen. *Selah*.

¹ Baruch Nachshon, Israel

A. The Hanukkah Womb

God sent the angel Gavri'el to Galil, to a certain town named Netzeret, to a virgin...

The virgin's name was Miryam... "You will conceive and give birth to a son,
and you shall name Him Yeshua..."

The Holy Spirit will come upon you, and the power of the Highest will overshadow you."²

The ability to nurture new life in the womb and then bring it forth into the world is something women have in common with God.³

The month of *Kislev* falls during the final days of Autumn. The surroundings are vibrant with the reds and golds of the season, but the days are shorter and the hours of darkness lengthen. The cold of Winter is beginning to set in. The historical festival of *Hanukkah* is celebrated at this time of the year, always on 25th Kislev, and it's flickering lights invite us into this sacred space of warmth and holiness.

A Talmudic⁴ story reflects a central theme of the season of Hanukkah:

When Adam and Eve first saw the sun go down, they were panic-stricken, thinking that the setting of the sun was a consequence of their sin, and that this new, intense darkness would spell their death. They spent that entire first night weeping, until dawn broke, and they realized, to their immense relief, that this was simply the way of the world -- day followed by night, and night followed by day.⁵

Sometimes we, like Adam and Eve, find ourselves in a confusing and painful "dark night of the soul" and can forget that morning follows night. We become anxious and even panic stricken at the thought that there is no end to the ominous darkness; then God, in His *chesed*, love and mercy, gradually brings the dawning of a new day.

The word *chesed* in Scripture is most commonly translated in English as mercy (loving-kindness). A more common word for mercy in Hebrew is *rachamim* (*resh*, *chet*, final *mem*), as

² Luke 1:26-35 *The Delitzsch Hebrew Gospels*

³ Quote from *The Velveteen Rabbi*

⁴ The Mishna and the rabbinic discussions (known as the Gemara), based on the study of Torah and its application, comprise the Talmud.

⁵ Rabbi Shai Held, *Babylonian Talmud*, Avodah Zarah 8a

in *Av Ha'Rachamim* - merciful Father. It also carries the meanings to love unconditionally, be compassionate, have tender affection. The Hebrew word for womb, *rechem*, is from the same root: *racham*.

The ancient Hebrew pictograph for *racham* draws a beautiful picture of the concept of a womb. The *resh* (ר) is a picture of the head of a person, the *chet* (ח) is a picture of a fence - illustrating protection, and the closed *mem* (מ) is a picture of a womb, symbolizing something hidden. The letter *mem* itself (מ) is connected with water, *mayim*, and pictures an open womb. It beautifully illustrates, therefore, how the womb is a place where one is protected, surrounded by water and hidden and is a place from which life can spring forth. In a sense, to live in God's compassion, in His mercy, *rachamim*, is to live in His womb.

Pause and Reflect 1.

- a) The womb is a safe, protected place, where one is nourished and also a place of transition and growth. How do we carry others in our womb?
- b) How can we compare a womb that cradles but also pushes out, to God's womb?
- c) As women we can fully appreciate our bodies' potential for being a home for new life and with the monthly cycle our body's ability to let that potential go. The workings of our bodies are a glory but, in the 'hush hush' of our culture our bodies can seem more a shame, our monthly cycles gross or in the least an inconvenience. How might talking more freely about our bodies bring about *tikkun olam*⁶?



⁶ Hebrew phrase meaning repairing or healing the world.

B. Birthing Light

*Yosef son of David! Do not be afraid to take Miryam, your wife, for what has been formed within her is from the Holy Spirit. She is giving birth to a son, and you are to name him Yeshua, because he will save his people from their sins.*⁷

A human being is created to light up this world.⁸

In Genesis God tells Abram, "Now look toward the heavens, and count the stars, if you are able to count them." And He said to him, "So shall your descendants be."⁹ We see the obvious fact that Abraham's descendants will be too numerous to count but Hassidic master R. Yehudah Leib Alter¹⁰ gives an interesting *midrash*¹¹ of this promise. He imaginatively says to look at God's promise as qualitative, not quantitative. Abraham's descendants should be like a star in the vast darkness of the night sky ...light up the darkness of the most depraved and immoral parts of the world. Do the impossible.

The spirit of man is the candle of the LORD.¹²

As women of God we have the potential to be lights in a world that grows darker every day. We don't bring an end to the darkness, we are stars, not the Sun, but we have the potential to birth light in a world that is dark. As any who may seem smaller and weaker in their own eyes, as well as in the eyes of the world, and yet who stand in the knowledge of the God of Israel and the truth of His Word, we can remember the miracle of God's intervention in the story of the Maccabees. A remembrance of which Yeshua himself celebrated in the Feast of Dedication (*Hanukkah*) in the Temple, the House of his Father, in Jerusalem when he hints at his Messiahship.¹³

⁷ Matthew 2:20-21 *The Delitzsch Hebrew Gospels*

⁸ *Sefas Emes*, Hanukkah, 1874; Matthew 5:14

⁹ Genesis 15:5

¹⁰ Yehudah Aryeh Leib Alter (1847–1905), was known by the title of his main work, the *Sefat Emet* (The True Language). He was a Hassidic Rabbi, and a renowned Torah scholar, who succeeded his grandfather, Rabbi Yitzchak Meir Alter, as the Av Beit Din (head of the rabbinical court) in Poland.

¹¹ Story or Interpretation

¹² Proverbs 20:27, KJV

¹³ John 10:22-24

In the second century BCE, the Syrian Greeks had invaded and were ruling over the land of Israel. The Greek ruler Antiochus IV forbade the Jews, on penalty of death, to observe *Shabbat*, to teach or study the Torah, to circumcise their sons or to follow the kosher food laws. The Holy Temple was taken over and desecrated, and the people of God now had to bow down to Caesar. The harshness of the persecution eventually led to a revolt by a Hasmonean family, *Mattit'yahu* (Matthew) and his five sons. Led by one of the sons, Judah Maccabee, a small army of faithful Jews succeeded in overthrowing the large Greek army. They reclaimed control of the Temple and were able to purify it and dedicate it once more to worship of the One God of Israel. The word Hanukkah means dedication. It is recorded that only one jar of pure oil for the Menorah was found intact in the Sanctuary, enough for one day's lighting. It would take eight days to prepare fresh oil, but the Maccabees believed they should consecrate the Temple as soon as possible and they lit the menorah in faith. Miraculously, the oil continued to burn for the required eight days. The light of God had triumphed over the darkness of the enemy.

*For God, who said, "Light shall shine out of darkness," is the One who has shone in our hearts to give the Light of the knowledge of the glory of God in the face of Messiah.*¹⁴

Pause and Reflect 2.

- a) We are familiar with the historical story of the miracle of the oil, but why did the Maccabees light the menorah on that first day of dedication? Why light it when you know it cannot fulfill its intended use and will only last for one day?
- b) Bearing in mind that it takes a woman nine months before she gives birth after conception, what significance do you see in there being a nine month period from the first month of *Nissan* (Feast of Passover) to the ninth month of *Kislev* (Festival of Lights)?



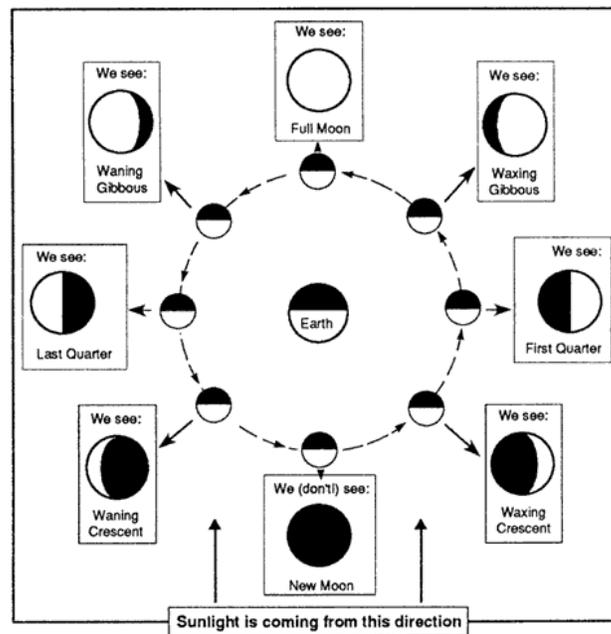
¹⁴ 2 Corinthians 4:6

C. Hanukkah's Moon

*My soul lifts up HaShem, and my spirit rejoices in the God of my salvation, who has seen the humility of his handmaid.*¹⁵

Darkness is not dismal. When we sit in the darkness, God is our light.¹⁶

Hanukkah, the Festival of Lights, falls toward the end of the month of Kislev, the time when the light of the moon is getting dimmer and dimmer. We all know that the moon does not have a light of it's own. The moon reflects the light of the sun, and the farther away the moon is from the sun, the fuller the moon appears. When the sliver of the new moon appears and it looks as though the moon is bathed in darkness, it is actually inhabiting a space closest to the source of light, and is really bathed in the essence of the sun.



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¹⁵ Luke 1:46-47 *The Delitzsch Hebrew Gospels*

¹⁶ Abraham Joshua Heschel, *The Prophets*, pg 129; Micah 7:8-9

¹⁷ <http://www.astrosociety.org>

Pause and Reflect 3.

Each day the sun of creation rose and left it's tabernacle of the morning, making it's circuit across the heavens. It's journey became a light-filled testimony of the Son - Bridegroom going forth from His chambers to the side of His beloved¹⁸... like a strong man running a race, the Son would leave His heaven and "for the joy set before Him"¹⁹ win the prize - His Bride.²⁰

The moon exhibits different phases dependent on its position relative to the sun. Understanding Yeshua as the sun and we, His followers, as the moon, what reflections can you draw from these different phases?



D. Hanukkah Lights²¹

*The Light shone in the darkness, and the darkness did not overtake it.*²²

"It's like a light going through a prism and being broken out into different colors. If it's coming through a holiday, a *mitzvah*²³, or lighting candles, it's the same light bouncing into the world and being refracted through a different means. We pick it up and experience it in different ways. But it's really all the same light."²⁴

¹⁸ Psalm 19:1-6

¹⁹ Hebrew 12:2

²⁰ Nancy Exley Morgan, *Created to Praise*, p 3

²¹ Menorah

²² John 1:5

²³ Commandment

²⁴ Simon Apisdorf, speaking of the light of God.

The deepest darkness sets the stage for the greatest light. And so in this month of Kislev, when the days are shorter and the nights longer, we will look at some women who allowed God to work through them and bring His light into a dark world.

As with the light that passed through the prism and broke into different colors, the work and expression of the Light of God in each woman's life is special and needed to fulfill His purposes in their specific place and time. And each woman's story carries with it a distinct message and lesson that will inspire and enable us to fulfill His purpose in our lives today.

1. "Not by might, not by power, but by My spirit." The sages interpreted this to mean that light is a gentle force.²⁵ And we saw that gentle force at work in and through Mary, *Miryam*, the mother of Yeshua and in Elizabeth, *Elisheva*, the mother of *Yochanan* the Immerser. Many believe that Yeshua was conceived on Hanukkah. There is no doubt that this Festival of Lights, speaks of Yeshua from start to finish.

"*We've come to chase away the darkness, carrying light and fire in our hands...*" goes a modern Israeli song.²⁶ The stories of two non-Biblical women are told during the season of Hanukkah.

2. Judith, *Yehudit*, a brave and pious Jewish widow who, it is said, saved the Jewish town of Bethulia. Though Judith's story is not a Hanukkah story, many medieval menorah's bear her image. Judith was a symbol of a light chasing away darkness. You can find her and Hannah's stories online at BibleGateways.com.
3. Hannah and her seven sons, a story told in II Maccabees chapter 7, where she is referred to as "the mother." Hannah is the name given her in Rabbinic midrash, connecting her with the prophet Samuel's mother.

Pause and Reflect 4.

"*I saw that wisdom is better than folly, just as light is better than darkness.*"²⁷ This verse, as interpreted in Hassidic teaching, describes how "...greater wisdom comes from folly, and greater light comes from darkness." Miryam, Elizabeth, Judith, and Hannah lived in dark times. What do the stories of their lives, teach us?

²⁵ Rabbanit Paula Goldberg

²⁶ *Banu Choshech I'Garesh* (We've Come to Drive Away Darkness)

²⁷ Ecclesiastes 2:13



The *hanukkiah*, the eight-branched Hanukkah menorah, is directly related to the beautiful, solid gold Menorah that stood in the Holy Place of the Temple and represented the Word of God that is fuelled with the pure oil of the *Ruach HaKodesh*, the Holy Spirit.

I saw a menorah of gold... with seven lamps on it, with seven moldings in the seven lamps.

There were two olive trees beside the menorah, one on each side of it.

Then I asked the angel, 'What do these things mean, my lord?' And the angel said to me, 'Do you not know?' And I said, 'No, my lord.' Then he said, 'This is the word of the Lord unto Zerubavel, *Not by might, nor by power, but by My spirit*, says the Lord.'²⁸

What are these seven moldings in the seven lamps of the menorah? The angel replies: "**Not [by] might, nor [by] power, but [by] My spirit.**" According to the explanation advanced by Dr. Ephraim Hareuveni, these seven words were revealed to Zechariah in his vision, molded in the seven lamps of the menorah. They showed Zechariah yet another meaning of the light of the menorah - "**My spirit** (the spirit of the Lord) overcoming "might and power."²⁹

The *hanukkiah* reminds us that the lights of the menorah, which represents the Olive tree of Israel and we who are grafted in, are not the only physical lights. The Land of Israel itself, the very hills and valleys on which the Maccabees fought, and where Yeshua walked and taught, is an integral part of the message of Hanukkah.

While the universal message of the Bible echoes around the world, the text, in all its hundreds of translations, always speaks in a particular idiom - that of Israel's land, vegetation and agriculture.³⁰

²⁸ Zechariah 4:2-6; This Scripture is read in the synagogues on the Sabbath of Hanukka week.

²⁹ Nogah Hareuveni, *Nature in Our Biblical Heritage*, p 140

³⁰ *ibid*, p 142

Pause and Reflect 5.

Search to see what plants of Israel are reflected in the design of the menorah. You might consider the fragrant *moriah* plants that resembles the shape of the menorah, the olive tree, oil, and leaf. What about the almond tree? What lessons do they have to teach us?



E. The Tribe of Benjamin

“According to the order of the encampments [of the tribes of Israel around the Tabernacle in the wilderness], *Tishrei* corresponds to Ephraim, *Cheshvan* to *Menashe* [Manasseh] and *Kislev* to *Binyamin* [Benjamin]...”³¹

There is a special connection between the tribes of Benjamin, Judah and Levi as they are each associated with the *Beit HaMikdash*, the Holy Temple in Jerusalem.³²

*At that time the Feast of Dedication took place at Jerusalem. It was winter, and Jesus was walking in the temple, in the colonnade of Solomon. So the Jews gathered around him and said to him, "How long will you keep us in suspense? If you are the Messiah, tell us plainly."*³³

Rabbi Samson Raphael Hirsch writes in his commentary³³ that Benjamin merited having the Temple stand in his allocated portion of the Land for three reasons:

³¹ Bnei Yissachar: *Maamarei Chodesh Tishrei* 1:2

³² John 10:22-24

³³ Rabbi Samson Raphael Hirsch, *The Pentateuch*, Devarim/Deuteronomy 33

1. He was the only one of Jacob's sons to be born in the Land of Israel.
2. He was the only brother who did not take part in the sale of Joseph.
3. He cared for his father Jacob in his old age.

These factors establish that Benjamin reflected the characteristics represented by the House of God. His Holy Temple was only built in the Land of Israel. It was intended to be a symbol of God's Presence – a place of His Divine Love that united His people as family in their love for Him and for one another. This love is expressed in the honoring of parents and in caring for the elderly and the weak and needy.

*For you were called to freedom, brethren, only do not turn your freedom into an opportunity for the flesh, but through love serve one another.*³⁴

One of the ways that Hebrew thinkers illuminate God's inspiration of the letters of the Aleph-Bet is to notice what happens when the consonants of a word are reversed. This often results in a new word that is connected to the old word in some important way. When Paul says that we are called to freedom, he doesn't have the Greek word in mind. He is thinking of the Hebrew word *chafash* whose consonants are CH - P - S [the CH sounds like the guttural "ch" in (C)Hanukkah, the P has a sound like "f" and the S has a "sh" sound].

But when we reverse the consonants (from CH-P-S to S-P-CH), we get the word *shafach*, a word that means "to serve". As a rabbinic Jew, Paul would certainly have been familiar with this reversal technique. So, when he points out that freedom means service, he is doing nothing more than illuminating the inspired character of the letters of the Hebrew Bible.

In other words, Paul is writing as a good Jew, not as a Hellenized Christian. From Paul's point of view, if you want to understand the true character of freedom, you must see that it is intimately connected with service to others. No one who serves only himself is really free.³⁵

³⁴ Galatians 5:13

³⁵ Skip Moen, *The Hebrew Connection*

Pause and Reflect 6.

Do you not know that you are a temple of God and that the Spirit of God dwells in you?³⁶

As the house of God we represent God's Presence to the world – a place of His Divine Love. We have a beautiful picture of 'love as service' in the *Shammash*³⁷, the Servant candle, Yeshua, who came to bring light to those whom He served.

a) How may we imitate Yeshua in bringing light in service?

Yeshua spoke to them once more, saying, *"I am the light of the world. Anyone who follows me will not walk in darkness, for he will have the light of life"*.³⁸

b) What does that mean to you as a follower of Yeshua in this dark world?



The Temple was also partially situated on a strip of land in Judah's territory. Judah, after all, had inherited the kingship of the Davidic dynasty, and from his line would come the King of kings, Messiah, who at the end of days will reign from that very place. The Levites and *kohanim* (priests) were included with Judah as they performed the worship and services in the Temple.³⁹

³⁶ 1 Corinthians 3:16

³⁷ The *shammash* (servant candle) is usually set apart and is lit first and then used to kindle the other candles. Yeshua is our Shammash - our Light who enables us to shine in a dark world as we carry the flame of Spirit and Truth.

³⁸ John 8:12

³⁹ Genesis 49:27

Zvi Ryzman points out that all three tribes displayed remarkable selfless devotion, to the extent that they would give their life to sanctify the Name of God.⁴⁰ Their devotion ideally demonstrated the heart and intent of Hanukkah.

The evidence of the 'selfless devotion' of **Benjamin** is recorded above. **Levi** was the tribe that immediately stepped forward at the incident of the Sin of the Golden Calf when Moses called out: "*Whoever is for the LORD, join me!*"⁴¹ It was *Pinchas*, of the tribe of Levi, who performed the zealous action necessary to end the plague on the Israelites and God conferred upon him a covenant of eternal priesthood.⁴²

The commitment of **Judah** was displayed when he bravely and publicly admitted his wrongdoing in order to vindicate his daughter-in-law Tamar.⁴³ One of Judah's descendants, *Nachshon ben Aminadav*, is considered to be the one who first stepped bravely into the waters of *Yam Suf*, the Sea of Reeds or the Red Sea, before they parted to allow the fleeing Israelites to pass through.

This month of Kislev, with its glowing Festival of Lights, Hanukkah, epitomizes dedication, wholehearted commitment, and devotion to God to the point of laying down one's life for His Name's sake, as did His Son and our Messiah, Yeshua. It is a perfect time to dedicate our lives afresh to our God and His Word, and to allow the Light of Messiah to shine more brightly through our lives to bring hope to those in darkness around us.

Pause and Reflect 7.

- a) Hanukkah means 'dedication' and it shares the root with the Hebrew word *chinukh*, meaning 'education.' How do you see the interplay of these two words as describing a weapon to be used to overcome the enemy of our souls?
- b) What promises can you see hidden and yet revealed in the little lights of Hanukkah?

⁴⁰ Zvi Ryzman, *The Wisdom in the Hebrew Months*, ArtScroll Series, 64

⁴¹ Exodus 32:26

⁴² Numbers 25:13

⁴³ Genesis 38:1-26



Life in the garden is restored; the garden is now a city. The Lamb reigns. The river of life flows from the throne of God. Sparkling like liquid diamonds, it dances to the voice of praise. The tree of life, standing as a holy sentinel, yields its new and diverse fruit each month. Its healing leaves dance and rejoice in Heaven's wind, beckoning every nation, "Come."

Like garments, righteousness, peace and joy clothe the servants of the LORD. Light rules. Righteousness has kissed peace.⁴⁴ It is unending day. Darkness is broken and is no more.⁴⁵

HalleluYah!

⁴⁴ Psalm 85:10

⁴⁵ Nancy Exley Morgan, *Created to Praise*, p 234; Revelation 21:1-3