

## 9th HEBREW MONTH - KISLEV - FB LIVE Nov., 2017

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

1. The memory verse this month is: "LOVE the LORD your God with all your heart." (Deut. 6;5) and the memo is: *What is essential is invisible to the eye.*

## 2. KISLEV - THE LIGHT OF HANUKKAH

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 Talmudic<sup>1</sup> 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 was followed by night, and night was followed by day.<sup>2</sup>

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.

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."<sup>3</sup> If you read the text closely you discover that it is daytime and the stars cannot be seen, so God is asking Abraham, in accord with His word, to see them by faith.

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<sup>1</sup> The Mishna and the rabbinic discussions (known as the Gemara), based on the study of Torah and its application, comprise the Talmud.

<sup>2</sup> Rabbi Shai Held, *Babylonian Talmud*, Avodah Zarah 8a

<sup>3</sup> Genesis 15:5

We also understand the obvious fact that Abraham's descendants will be too numerous to count; however, Hassidic master R. Yehudah Leib Alter<sup>4</sup> gives an interesting *midrash*<sup>5</sup> of this promise. He says we can look upon God's promise as qualitative, not quantitative. Abraham's descendants should each be like a star in the vast darkness of the night sky and light up the darkness of the most depraved and immoral parts of the world. We should do the seemingly impossible, simply by shining and reflecting His light of truth.

*The spirit of man is the candle of the LORD. (Proverbs 20:27, KJV)*

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 into a world that is suffering in darkness.

*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. (2 Corinthians 4:6)*

The next verse tells us that we are but jars of clay, molded by the Potter for His purposes, and the treasures of His light, and truth, love and compassion are what He places within us as His children - that which we can pour out wherever He places us...for His glory.

What is this amazing, life-bearing light of God? The hidden, primordial light of His Presence ? Jewish author and teacher Simon Apisdorf, gives a description of this light:

"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*<sup>6</sup>, or lighting candles, it's the same light bouncing into the world and being refracted through different means.

We pick it up and experience it in different ways. But it's really all the same light."

The deepest darkness sets the stage for the greatest light. 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 fulfil 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 fulfil His purpose in our lives today.

What is the connection between this light and the Hanukkah menorah - the *hanukkiah*?

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<sup>4</sup> 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.

<sup>5</sup> Story or interpretation.

<sup>6</sup> Commandment

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.'*  
(Zechariah 4:2-6)<sup>7</sup>

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.”<sup>8</sup>



*“For with You is the source of life; by Your light we see light. Extend Your loving-kindness to those who know You, and Your righteousness to the upright of heart.”<sup>9</sup>*

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<sup>7</sup> This Scripture is read in the synagogues on the Sabbath of Hanukkah week.

<sup>8</sup> Nogah Hareuveni, *Nature in Our Biblical Heritage*, p 140

<sup>9</sup> Siddur, *Jewish Daily Prayer Book*

### 3. WOMAN of the Month - RACHEL

Rachel and Leah were two powerful women who, together with Sarah and Rebecca, became the mothers of Israel. The two sisters, Rachel and Leah, can hardly be separated. They are always featured together in the biblical narrative. Only at Rachel's death does physical separation come, when she is buried "...on the way to Ephrat (that is, *Beit Lechem*)" and Leah eventually is buried in the Cave of Machpelah in Hebron, together with Jacob and the other patriarchs and matriarchs. Leah, indeed, mothered half of the tribes of Israel and deserves the honor. However, in her solitary burial, Rachel was in a position to weep to Heaven for the children of Israel when they were led captive into exile along the very road beside which she was buried. The prophet Jeremiah, who foresaw and lamented the destruction of the Temple and the exile of the Jews to Babylonia, describes Rachel *Imeinu* - our mother Rachel, as a mother weeping for her children.



*"A voice is heard in Ramah, lamentation and bitter weeping. It is Rachel weeping for her children, she refuses to be comforted for her children, for they are gone...[from their Land]" (31:14). [Rachel's anguish is heard and God reassures and comforts her], "Refrain your voice from weeping and your eyes from tears: for your work shall be rewarded... there is hope for your future, and your children shall return again to their borders" (31:15-16).*

This prophetic account intimates at how Rachel was viewed as the mother of all the twelve tribes. She weeps for *her* children. We may consider that it was her compassion for her sister, and her sacrifice in allowing Leah to be married to Jacob in her place, that enabled Leah to bear his children. In her merit, Rachel's tomb is the one visited by women every Rosh Chodesh and many go there to pray in connection with issues involving family and children.



In the light of her role as *Imeinu*, Rachel is shown here as a shepherdess watching over her sheep. She is the matriarch who had a strong connection with the physical land of Israel. Her son, Benjamin, is the only one who is born in the Land. It was Moses, a descendent of Leah, who redeemed the Israelites from Egypt but it was Joshua, Rachel's descendent, who was able to lead the nation into the Promised Land.

It is Leah's son Judah who is destined for lasting kingship. From him would come King David and King-Messiah. Both Judah and King David, rather than charisma and self-ambition, epitomized humility and repentance. They were *ba'alei teshuvah* - sinners who repented. Rachel's son, Joseph, on the other hand, is known as *Yosef ha'Tzaddik* - Joseph the Righteous. He was a Servant-leader and lived a life totally committed to the God of his fathers.

We can compare *Mashiach ben Yosef* - Messiah son of Joseph (from Rachel) who has the mission of preparing the world for Redemption, and *Mashiach ben David* - Messiah the son of David (from Leah) who accomplishes the final Redemption for eternity when he reigns from Jerusalem as King of kings. Thus we see that the destinies of Rachel and Leah are in fact essentially united in the redemptive purposes of God.

Rachel saw that the children of Israel were *her* children and also the children of God, who in His eyes are worthy of His mercy and unconditional love. This view encompasses the three-stranded cord comprised of the God of Israel, His people and His Land. We have God's promise to Rachel that "...*your children will return to their borders.*" Then the Final Redemption will blossom forth.

#### 4. TRIBE: BENJAMIN - Rachel's second son

"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]..."<sup>10</sup>

<sup>10</sup> Bnei Yissachar: *Maamarei Chodesh Tishrei* 1:2

Rabbi Samson Raphael Hirsch writes in his commentary, *The Pentateuch*.<sup>11</sup> that Benjamin merited having the Temple stand in his allocated portion of the Land for three reasons:

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.

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 (Genesis 49:27).

The Hebrew word *hanukkah* means dedication. The celebration of the festival of Hanukkah was instituted in the Hebrew calendar when in a miraculous victory over the occupying Greco-Roman army, who had desecrated the Holy Temple in Jerusalem, the Maccabees cleansed and rededicated the Temple and relit the golden Menorah, whose light signified the Presence of God and the light of His Word of Truth.

We see that Jerusalem and 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.<sup>12</sup>

The reference 'hidden' in the gospels that tells us that Yeshua celebrated the festival of Hanukkah places him in the Temple and there is a hint of his Messiahship!

*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.*

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<sup>11</sup> Rabbi Samson Raphael Hirsch, *The Pentateuch*, Devarim/Deuteronomy 33

<sup>12</sup> *ibid*, p 142

*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." (John 10:22-24)*

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. 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.