

The Month of Kislev:

The Month of Kislev: Rectifying the Sense of Sleep

By Rebbetzin Chana Bracha Siegelbaum

Introduction

As we ended daylight savings and entered Kislev – one of the darkest months of the year – we also received renewed light, hope and trust. Actually the name “Kislev” derives from the Hebrew word for “security,” “hope” and “trust” as Iyov exclaims: “If I have made gold my hope (*Kisli*) and have said to the fine gold You are my security.”¹ This *Rosh Chodesh* Kislev I really felt the shift of energy and experienced a special light of hope which made me want to plant new flowers. There is a certain “nesting” that takes place at this time of year, a focus on building our personal Temple, including within it our closest family and friends and our deepest values. This is the time to develop and strengthen trusting relationship, and no less to work on our *bitachon* – trust in Hashem. (It is interesting to note that the English word “castle” is composed of the same phonetics as the Hebrew root of the word Kislev: “Kesel.” This word is also related to the Hebrew word *kisuy* which means covering and guarding. כסלו/Kislev, thus could mean: “The covering of the thirty-six, if you break it up into כס/kis (from *kisui*) – covering and לו – the numerical value of 36. This alludes to the *Ohr Haganuz* – hidden light that was shining in the Garden of Eden for the duration of the thirty six hours when Adam and Eve lived there.² This light is reflected in the 36 candles that we light in total during the holiday of Chanukah.³ The entire month of Kislev is illuminated by its “Festival of Lights.” Even when I’m surrounded by darkness, I’m blessed with light, because Hashem is with me. In Kislev I can feel Hashem taking my hand and leading me to security.

The Spiritual Attributes of Kislev

המליך אות ס' בשינה וקשר לו כתר וצרפן זה בזה וצר בהם קשת בעולם, וכסלו בשנה, וקבה בנפש זכר ונקבה (ספר יצירה פרק ה משנה ט).

“He made the letter *samech* king over sleep and He tied a crown to it and He combined one with another and with them He formed Sagittarius in the Universe, *Kislev* in the Year, and the belly in the soul, male and female” (*Sefer Yetzirah* 5:9).

Kislev – The Month of Support

The letter of the month – *Samech* means “to support.” The experience of feeling supported corresponds to the trust and confidence in Divine providence associated with the month of *Kislev*, as expressed in *Tehillim*: “G-d supports (*somech*) all the fallen, and lifts up all those who are bent over.”⁴ The closed circle shape of the *samech* which represents the all-encompassing omnipresence of Hashem, moreover, symbolizes His providence and protection available to us

¹ Iyov 31:24.

² Talmud Yerushalmi, Berachot 60b.

³ 1+2+3+4+5+6+7+8 = 36. Rav Tzvi Elimelech of Dubno, *B'nai Yissaschar on the month of Kislev*.

⁴ Tehillim 145:14.

during the month of Kislev. Hashem is our “security net,” He is there for us when we stumble and feel insecure: “Even when he falls he will not be let to fall to the ground, for G-d supports (*somech*) his hand.”⁵ Whenever you feel you need spiritual protection, imagine yourself inside of the enclosure of the letter *samech* surrounding you. This is the time for us not only to feel supported but also to extend our support to others who need it.

Fixing Relationships in our Sleep

Although sleep isn't one of our five senses, *Sefer Yetzirah* extends the concept of “senses” to include different states of consciousness and energy. The sense of sleep is the tranquility and restfulness that comes with trust and security in Hashem and His Divine providence, as David proclaims in his *Tehillim*: “I lie me down and sleep, I awake, for Hashem protects me (*yismecheni*).”⁶ Sleep can accomplish that which is impossible to achieve while awake. Much healing takes place during sleep. Shlomo Carlebach teaches that you can do anything in the world outside your house, however, for sleeping, you need a house. During the month of Kislev – when the Temple was rededicated – we are called to rededicate our “G-d temple,” “people of Israel temple,” “husband and wife temple,” “parents and children temple.” Nothing brings parents and children closer, than when parents put their children to sleep. Why do children need their parents to put them to sleep? Because they need to know that there is someone watching who can and will perform miracles for them – someone whose love comes from a world of utmost purity and un-defilement. Chanukah is about fixing all our relationships – to love each other, and especially our family, with the utmost undefiled love.

The Weekly Torah Portions and our Dreams during Kislev

The sense of sleep entails the sense of dreaming. When we trust in G-d completely, we can dream good dreams of the future. According to Rav Tzaddok HaKohen, sleep symbolizes the vision and understanding that we may attain through dreams, just as King Solomon attained his great wisdom through a dream.⁷ It is not by coincidence that we find most of the biblical dreams in the Torah portions read during the month of Kislev. Throughout the Five Books of the Torah, there are ten explicit dreams dreamed by seven “dreamers” – all in the Book of *Bereishit*. The first dream of Avimelech, King of Gerar, appears in the Torah portion of *Vayera*, read in the month of Cheshvan. The other nine dreams appear in the Torah portions of *Vayetze*, *Vayeshev*, and *Miketz*, all read during the month of Kislev.⁸ According to the well-known Torah principle “to live with the times” (of the weekly Torah portion), the matter of dreams is an appropriate meditative subject.⁹ This “month of dreams” is, therefore, suitable for examining and clarifying in our soul the deeper meanings of our dreams. Allow yourself to lie in bed just a few extra minutes to remember and decode your dreams, you may even keep a dream journal. Try to actualize some of your dreams of visions at this time.

⁵ *Tehillim* 37:24.

⁶ *Tehillim* 3:6.

⁷ *Melachim I* 3:5-15.

⁸ *Vayetze*: 1. Ya'acov's ladder; 2. Ya'acov – Hashem's angel telling him to leave Lavan; 3. Lavan – warning against harming Ya'acov; *Vayeshev* 4. Yosef – the sheaves; 5. Yosef – the sun, moon stars; 6. The Baker – baskets of bread; 7. The Butler – the vine; *Miketz*; 8. Pharaoh – seven cows; 9. Pharaoh – seven sheaves.

⁹ Rav Yitzchak Ginsburgh <<http://www.inner.org/times/kislev/index.php>>



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Rectifying the Portions and Emotions of our Belly

The organ of the month of Kislev is קֵיבָה/*keiva* – belly, it includes the entire region of the abdomen, stomach, (large) intestines, and womb. It helps us to sleep calmly when our belly is satiated. Lacking the trust of Kislev, affects our belly first. Fear, nervousness and agitation can cause ulcers etc. (*lo aleinu!*) Therefore, Kislev is the time to heal our belly together with the negative emotions that affect the good health of our stomach. The word *keiva* derives from “*kav*,” which means “measure.” A tranquil belly knows its proper measure and “is happy with his portion.”¹⁰ Our sages teach us: “a person desires one measure [*kav*] of his own more than nine of his friend.”¹¹ In order to rectify our *keiva* (belly), we need to work on overcoming jealousy of others; this will also help us sleep better.

The Bow of Sagittarius Propelling us out of Darkness and Despair

The astrological sign of Kislev is Sagittarius, in Hebrew: *keshet* – bow. The time of Sagittarius carries with it the possibility of change, as was revealed during Chanukah, when the spiritual attitude of Israel changed from slumber and negative self-image to renewal and revitalization. After the flood which had wiped out almost the entire world, rays of hope and renewal shot forth in the month of Kislev. It was the rainbow with its shining hope which was given as a sign of G-d’s promise never to destroy the world again. *Teshuva* (repentance) is compared to being shot upwards like an arrow from the bow. This bow is the constellation of Kislev,¹² it connects darkness and light in a fast leap full of power. Just as the tension on the bow being pulled back makes its arrow sore even higher, so does the darkness bring out the greatness of light. Sagittarius, the bow, also symbolizes the power of prayer that issues from the depths of the heart and pierces the upper heavens.¹³ The tighter the arrow presses against the bow, the higher the arrow will travel when it is released. The Greeks oppressed the Jewish nation greatly. This ignited the inner sparks of the souls of the children of Israel to unite under the leadership of Matityahu and his Chasmonean Kingdom. The Greek oppression of the inner soul of Israel aroused the *pintele yid* – the essence point of our soul, the point of the *tzadik* – the righteous. The difference between the word צִיּוֹן/Tzion and the Hebrew word for Greece יָוָן/*Yavan* is only the letter *tzadik*. The planet of Sagittarius is Jupiter – *tzedek* (righteousness). The *tzadik* rules over *Yavan* especially during the month influenced by the planet *tzedek*.

Unifying the Fragments of our People in the *Samech*

The letter *Samech* is a circle, which includes all the different points within the space of her circumference. May we learn to reveal the one light that unifies all the fragments of our people, so we can achieve true shalom in the world as well as trust and security! Likewise the constellation *Keshet*- the bow includes all the colors and *haskafot* (outlook) of the rainbows; black hats, grey hats, knitted kippot, Chabadniks, Breslav, Rav Kookniks etc. Some are clear colors others are on the boundaries between different colors of the spectrum. All together we bring forth one unified light in all its glory. May this month of Kislev open us up to new possibilities and bring forth renewed hope, light, support and security!

¹⁰ *Pirkei Avot* 4:1.

¹¹ Rav Yitzchak Ginsburgh <<http://www.inner.org/times/kislev/index.php>>

¹² *Midrash Tanchuma, Ha'azinu*, chapter 1.

¹³ *Shem MiShmuel, Parashat Chayei Sarah*.



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