

SEASONS OF THE MOON

The Month of Kislev

Kislev / 5757 November 12 - December 10, 1996

THIS MONTH'S SIGN KESHET / SAGITTARIUS

Kislev's sign is the Bow (*Keshet* in Hebrew). At the beginning of Kislev the first rainbow was seen after the Flood. The rainbow symbolizes the pact that G-d made with Noah never again to destroy the world with water. The symbolism of the bow also echoes the military victory of Chanukah — the bow of purity of Israel vanquishing the bow of impurity of Greece.

Mystically, the bow symbolizes the power of prayer: The closer the bow-string is drawn downward, the higher the arrow soars skyward; similarly, the deeper the source of a prayer, the higher it reaches into the heavens.

THE NINTH DAY OF CHANUKAH

Why don't we keep nine days of Chanukah outside the Land of Israel?

After all, if in London and New York we keep eight days of Pesach as opposed to seven days in Israel, why don't we also add a day onto Chanukah? Come to think of it, why don't we also keep two days of Purim?

The Land of Israel is like a giant dynamo, pumping the spiritual energy that keeps the whole world turning. When a person is in *Eretz Yisrael*, he absorbs spirituality much more easily than in the rest

TRUTH AND BEAUTY

At this point in the year, when time is measured by how many shopping days are left... the Jewish person often finds himself re-defining who he is in relationship to his Judaism. The festival of Chanukah — the most noticeable aspect of *Kislev*, is all about redefining and rededicating ourselves to the values and principles of Judaism. The word Chanukah itself means dedication.

Peter Finch, the Oscar-winning Australian film actor, once remarked "When you move an eyebrow in Cinemascope it travels three feet..." Our age is unique in the way we place importance on the way things look, on their external appearance: Whether that appearance

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THE LIGHT OF LIFE

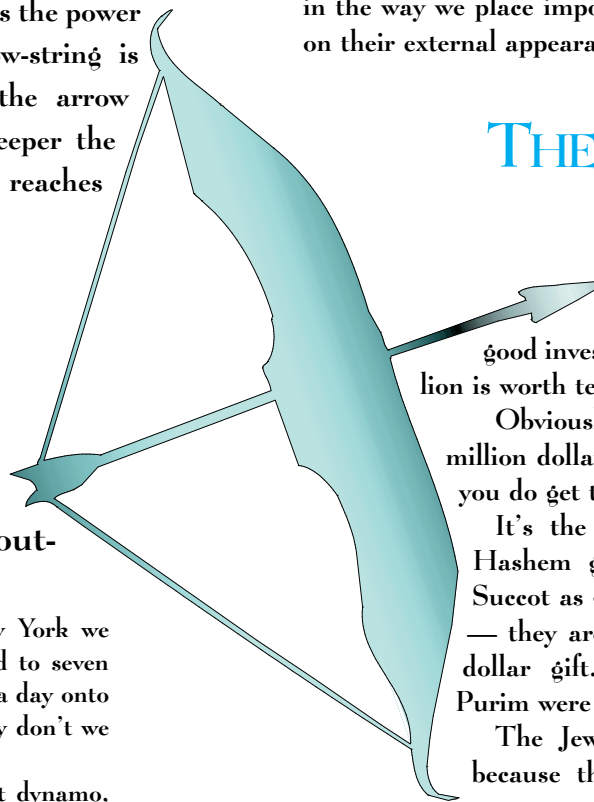
Imagine that someone gives you a million dollars to invest. You're pretty smart and make a few good investments, and very soon, the million is worth ten million.

Obviously you have to give the original million dollars back to your benefactor, but you do get to keep the other nine million.

It's the same way with the festivals: Hashem gave us Pesach, Shavuot and Succot as gifts — we didn't deserve them — they are a free hand-out — a million dollar gift. However, Chanukah and Purim were *earned* by the Jewish People.

The Jewish People earned Chanukah because they were prepared to give up their lives in battle to preserve the purity of the Torah. Purim was the reward for the voluntary acceptance of the Oral Law in the time of Mordechai and Esther.

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Peace, Prayer & Purity

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TRUTH AND BEAUTY

is the carefully groomed lines of a Lexus sedan, or the mandatory shape of the human anatomy painfully carved in sweat and toil of so many man-hours of aerobics. We live in a world that is replacing substance with form, reality with appearance.

In his Ode on a Grecian Urn, John Keats, the English Romantic poet, wrote “Beauty is Truth, Truth, Beauty.” Truth and Beauty — two values representing a historic and perpetual confrontation between the People of the Book and The “Beautiful People,” — between Jerusalem and Athens.

It is interesting that Keats chose to write his poem on a Grecian urn, for it was Greece that gave the world

the idea that Beauty is, in itself, a supreme ideal. Judaism says that this ideal can become an idol. If Beauty doesn't dwell in the tents of Truth, then ‘Beauty’ may become a ‘Beast’ — a pretext for hedonism and immorality.

But don't think that there is no place for Beauty in the Jewish world-view. The Torah states categorically that aesthetics has a value, but only to the extent that it serves Truth, and uplifts the soul. In other words, Truth is Beauty, but what is beautiful may not necessarily be true.

When you gaze into the light of your Chanukah candles, remember that their light shines out with the radiance of the Jewish love for Truth in all the ages.

THE LIGHT OF LIFE

There's an interesting parallel here: The ‘weapons’ that Israel employed to fight the threat of *physical* genocide at the time of Purim were *spiritual* — fasting, prayer and repentance. Whereas, at the time of Chanukah, the threat to Israel was *spiritual* genocide — the Greeks wanted to uproot the *faith* of Israel, to darken the eyes of the Jewish People by removing the light of Torah. What was the response to this spiritual assault? *Physical* warfare.

It's as though we say to Hashem “Your light is in our hands, and our light is Your hands.”

THE NINTH DAY OF CHANUKAH

of the world.

So, outside of the Land of Israel we are given a second festival day which helps us to absorb their holiness in a way that could not be achieved in one day alone.

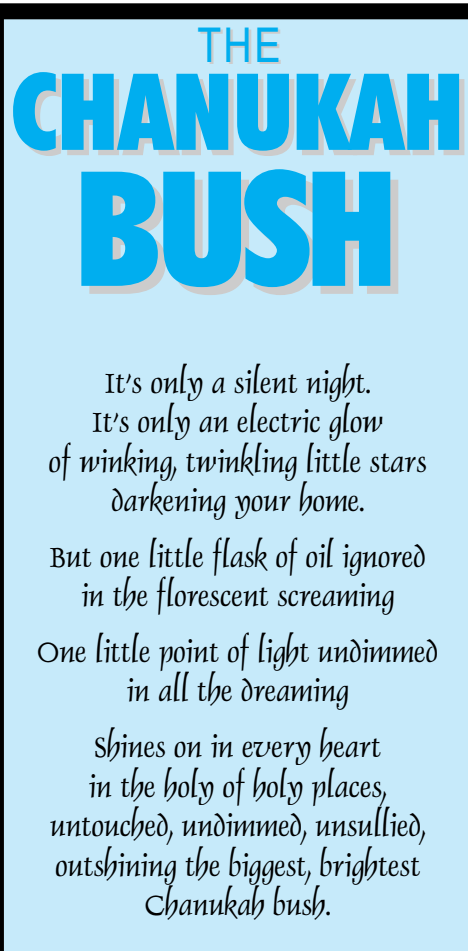
This is the case with the Torah festivals of Pesach, Shavuot and Succot, which Hashem gave us. On these festivals, the holiness comes from above and reaches downward to the earth.

But Chanukah and Purim represent Israel's aspiration to

lift itself out of this physical world toward the heavens — the striving from below upward.

Through our own deeds we earned the festivals of Chanukah and Purim. Thus, their sanctity is much more accessible to us. They are close to our inner soul and we are able to experience them equally, wherever we are in the world.

The lights of Chanukah are as bright for us in Los Angeles as they are in the Holy City of Jerusalem.



When we guard Hashem's light — the light of Torah — by showing that we are prepared to give the light of our lives for it, as was the case during the Maccabean war of Chanukah, Hashem guards the light of our lives.

Similarly, when our enemies seek to extinguish the light of our lives, as at the time of Purim, our salvation comes by way of guarding Hashem's light — Torah and *mitzvot* — and thus Hashem turns to our petition and guards the light of our lives.

“Your light is in our hands, and our light is Your hands.”

SOURCES: THIS MONTH'S SIGN - Shem MiShmuel, Rabbi M. Glazerson

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SEASONS OF THE MOON is written by Rabbi Yaakov Asher Sinclair and edited by Rabbi Moshe Newman. Bow Design: Yonah Roberts

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tel: 972-2-581-0315; fax: 972-2-581-2890; E-mail: ohr@virtual.co.il WWW: <http://www.ohr.org.il>

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