

Class for Cheshvan

Back to Reality

A month of absolutely no holidays comes after a month full of amazing holidays and celebrations, reconnecting with our community and our Source. It sometimes feels like we were on vacation for a month and now we have to come back to our mundane lives and face “reality”. It can be a real let down.

Scorpio – deeper reality

In the month of Scorpio, we’re being asked to look deep within and behind the outer surface of our day-to-day. It’s a time when the energy has us recommitting to the plan we had during the High Holy Days – to make this world a better place through our own effort. The individual lives that we have and the people who we interact with is the very place where we do the work of repairing the world.

Read Beginning of Torah – the plan

We begin reading the Torah from the opening lines of the Creation of the world during the month of Cheshvan. This seems to me to give us a reminder of why this world was created. What’s fascinating about the first stories of the bible is that they lay out the plan and the roles of the different nations for making this world a better place. We are given a family photo-album of sorts to uncover what each individual’s genealogy is and what their role is in bringing Moshiach.

Noah – Shem, Ham, Japheth & the land

We all are children of Noah. We are descendants from one family but each member of that family went down a different path. In the Stone edition of the Torah, they give the genealogies from Adam to Abraham. Noah’s children divided into different tribes and we can see that Abraham’s descendants came through Noah’s son, “Shem” which is where we get the term, “Semites”. And what is spelled out many times is the promise that was given to Abraham about the land and which blood line out of all of his sons will inherit the land.

Abraham – Ishmael & Isaac, Jacob & Esau

We are told that Abraham’s first son, Ishmael will be an ass of a man who will go against the other brothers and that his progeny will be numerous and will become the Arab nations we know of today. His son Isaac will be the father of the Israelites through his son, Jacob and will become slaves but will one day inherit the land of Canaan – which is occupied by the other son of Noah, named Canaan who goes down the wrong path. Lastly, we get a glimpse of what is to later become the nation of Rome (present-day Christians) – from the descendants of Jacob’s twin, Esau.

Noah = physical, Abraham thru Jacob = spiritual

So, the plot is laid out for us to remember during Cheshvan what our own purpose is among the family of man. Just like we all are able to access both the spiritual and the physical, specifically the sons of Noah are given the task of making the physical world habitable, civilized and welcoming to spirit. In contrast, the children of Abraham following the line of Jacob, are singled out for the spiritual task of bringing the awareness of the Divine into the world.

Cheshvan History

There are several major things that happened in Cheshvan historically. (Copied from Chabad.org)

1. The Flood of Noah began on the 17th and then a year later on the 27th, he found dry land.

[Great Flood Begins \(2105 BCE\)](#) Cheshvan 17th – 27th of following year

The rains began to fall on the 17th of Cheshvan of the year 1656 from creation (2105), flooding the earth and rising above the highest mountains. (The entire earth can be repaired through the flood of spirituality (water) but the promise is that no matter what, this planet will never be destroyed – the rainbow is a sign for us of this promise.)

2. This is the month that the first Bais Hamikdash was finished being built but it wasn't dedicated & used until the following Tishrei. We are told that the final 3rd Temple will be dedicated in Cheshvan.
(So, whatever we build during this time brings the final redemption.)
3. In the recent past, awful destruction has happened during Cheshvan.

Kristallnacht (1938) Cheshvan 15

On this night in 1938 and continuing into the next day -- November 9 on the secular calendar -- the Nazis coordinated vicious pogroms against the Jewish community of Germany. Encouraged by their leaders, rioters attacked and beat Jewish residents, burned and destroyed 267 synagogues, vandalized 7,500 Jewish businesses, and ransacked countless Jewish cemeteries, hospitals, schools, and homes, while police and firefighters stood by. Ninety-one Jews were killed and 20,000 others were deported to concentration camps.

These pogroms, which collectively came to be known as Kristallnacht ("night of broken glass," referring to the thousands of windows that were broken) were a turning point after which Nazi anti-Jewish policy intensified.

Assassination of Prime Minister Yitzhak Rabin (1995) Cheshvan 12

Yitzhak Rabin, Commander-in-Chief of the IDF during the Six Day War and later Prime Minister of Israel, was assassinated on this date in 5756 (1995).

Assassination of Meir Kahane Cheshvan 18

Born in 1932, Meir Kahane was a controversial American-Israeli rabbi and activist. In 1968, he founded the Jewish Defense League in New York. With the motto of "Never Again," the stated goal of the organization was to protect Jews from anti-Semitism in all its forms. In 1971, he moved his family to Israel, founding the Kach political party, and he was elected to the Knesset in 1984 (the Kach party was later outlawed in Israel). In 1990, after concluding a speech in a Manhattan hotel, Kahane was fatally shot by an Egyptian-born terrorist. While strangely acquitted of the murder, El Sayyid Nosair was later convicted in relation to the 1993 World Trade Center bombing.

Mumbai Terror Attacks (2008) Cheshvan 29

The city of Mumbai, India, was hit with a series of coordinated terror attacks, starting on Wednesday evening, the 29th of Cheshvan 5769, which left close to 200 dead and scores more injured.

One of the terrorists' chosen targets was the local Chabad House, known as the "Nariman House," operated by Chabad-Lubavitch emissaries Rabbi Gavriel Noach (Gabi) and Rivkah (Rivki) Holtzberg.

In the subsequent standoff, which continued until Friday afternoon, Gabi and Rivki and several other Jews in the Chabad House – Rabbis Bentzion Chroman and Leibish Teitelbaum, Norma Schwartzblatt-Rabinowitz and Yocheved Orpaz – were killed in cold blood. May G-d avenge their murders.

Miraculously, the Holtzbergs' two-year-old child, Moshe, was saved by his nanny.

"Mar" Bitter & rain drop

This month is often called, Mar-Cheshvan. Mar means bitter but it also means a rain drop. We are to see that whatever happens during Cheshvan and in our lives – even if what happens is "bitter", it is also nourishing like a rain drop. Even when there is destruction, we have to continually remember that there is a Divine Guide to what goes on here and that Guidance will never abandon us completely. We may go through destruction but it is for the ultimate redemption.

Golus vs Geula

We are here on earth to go into the darkest of corners and reveal the hidden Light. So with any bitterness we face, we can see it as a cleansing of sorts. This is how we move from an Exile Consciousness – "Golus" – where G-d is hidden and we feel separate from G-d, to a Redemption, "Geula" state of consciousness where we see the hand of G-d in everything, like a hand inside of a puppet. We go from bitterness to the rain drop which is the pot of gold at the end of the rainbow.

Alef

When adding an Alef-א to the word Golah גולה Exile, it spells Geula-גאולה, Redemption. Bringing G-dliness into exile hastens the redemption. We are needing to uncover the Alef-א that is hidden behind the mask of the world. Alef is the first letter of the Hebrew Alphabet and is a silent letter that refers to the Ain Sof ("Without End" or Limitless Potential) or Ain can be also pronounced, "Ayin" which means "nothingness" or no-thingness. The Ain Sof is another word for G-d.

The meaning of the word "alef" can also be spelled out: Aluf which means "master" as in the phrase, "Aluf shel HaOlam" which is translated, "Master of the Universe". In addition, the Alef is really two Yuds י connected by a Vav: ך G-d's name is abbreviated by using 2 Yuds: So the letter Alef, itself, represents connecting Heaven and earth.

Rav Ginsbergh writes: (a Kabbalist who lives in Israel) <http://www.inner.org/hebleter/alef.htm>

"The *alef* is formed by two *yuds*, one to the upper right and the other to the lower left, joined by a diagonal *vav*. These represent the higher and lower waters and the firmament between them, as taught by the *Ari z"l* ('Rabbi Isaac Luria of blessed memory,' who received and revealed new insights into the ancient wisdom of Kabbalah)

Water is first mentioned in the Torah in the account of the first day of Creation: 'And the spirit of God hovered over the surface of the water.' At this time the higher and the lower waters were indistinguishable; their state is referred to as 'water in water.' On the second day of Creation God separated the two waters by 'stretching' the firmament between them.

In the service of the soul, as taught in *Chassidut*, the higher water is water of joy, the experience of being close to God, while the lower water is water of bitterness, the experience of being far from God.'

Garments of the Soul

So how do we do this work of uncovering the Alef of this world? It is said that we are higher than the angels because we are the only ones who can do this work. We do it through our "Soul Garments", thought, speech, and action. This is how we make a Tikkun haNefesh (repair of our soul) and a Tikkun Olam (repair of the world).

Handout of Golus to Geulah

This diagram describes how we transform Golus into Geulah through our soul garments of thought, speech and deed. One side outlines where we are in our thoughts, feelings and behavior when we are in Golus and the other side shows the same when in Geulah. After going over this diagram, you'll get a chance to write out your own example of moving from a bitter place in your life to a redemptive place.

Soul Garments: Parent, Child, Grandchild

Kabbalah tells us that when we are balanced, our thoughts are like the parent of our inner world. Thoughts control the feelings which are like the children of the thoughts. Behavior then, is seen as the grandchild – given birth to by your feelings. On the Golus side, we have a dysfunctional family, where our feelings cause our thinking and our behavior.

Inner Critical Parent

The way to change that is to examine what the thoughts are that are behind the feeling that you have. I like to see these feelings as causing either an Inner Critical Parent voice in your head (Gevurah). "You are bad and wrong." What Shifra Hendrie says is that when we're coming from Golus, everything seems wrong. And then our behavior becomes defensive and ego-based, comparing ourselves to others, wanting to look good, blaming others and acting out in other ways. Another teacher of mine, Shimonah Tzukernik points out that the heart center, Tiferet, can also be inner desire and pleasure run wild which I see as the overly permissive voice in your head, "It doesn't matter what you do as long as it is pleasurable to you."

Loving Higher Power – Nurturing Inner Parent

On the Geulah side, we start with the belief in a Loving Higher Power who wants the very best for us and gives us experiences to help us become better people. The feelings are very different when the beliefs and the inner voice is like a Nurturing Inner Parent. The behavior too is not defensive, fear-based or overly permissive.

Hashem as All – Ain Od Milvado

Moving to the Geulah side though doesn't just involve being positive or repeating affirmations. Instead it's about not being alone in life, not needing to constantly be on guard, but knowing that everything in your life is a dance between you and G-d. When coming from the Geulah perspective, other people, circumstances, everything in your material life, is seen and experienced as coming from HaShem. Ain Od Milvado: There is nothing else but Him. Your relationship with G-d is the only important thing. Changing your behavior bit by bit toward doing what HaShem wants from you is how we change the world.

Links:

Text of Genesis: <http://www.chabadbythesea.com/parshah/TorahReading.asp?AID=7781&p=1>

Recommended Bible: Artscroll Chumash in 5 Books – all with both Hebrew and English, along with commentary, Haftorahs, etc. <https://www.artscroll.com/Books/9780899066004.html> or https://www.amazon.com/Mid-Size-Stone-Chumash-Slipcased/dp/0899066003/ref=sr_1_55?crd=94KJ16CKMKTY&dchild=1&keywords=artscroll+chumash&qid=1603049034&sprefix=artscroll+ch%2Caps%2C352&sr=8-55

Condensed version of Genesis from Adam's death through his descendants:

http://m.chabad.org/library/article_cdo/aid/246608/jewish/Adams-Descendants.htm

Shifra Hendrie on Genesis: http://www.chabadbythesea.com/theJewishWoman/article_cdo/aid/574228/jewish/The-Journey-Back.htm

Discussion & song of Ain Od Milvado (there is nothing besides Him): <http://jtf.org/forum/index.php?topic=63734.0>