



## Achieving Balance Chodesh Cheshvan

Based on a Naaleh.com shiur by Mrs. Shoshie Nissenbaum

The Bnei Yissachar writes that the month of Cheshvan is related to the tribe of Menashe. Its zodiac sign is a scorpion and it corresponds to the sense of smell. It is called *Mar Cheshvan* because emerging as we just did from the spiritually charged month of Tishrei, Cheshvan seems devoid of meaning. The sense of smell is less tainted than the other four senses, as it was not involved in the first sin of the *Eitz Hadaat*. If one rearranges the letters of Menashe one gets *neschama* (soul), which is connected to the sense of smell.

The Gemara in Brachot asks, how do we know that we need to make a blessing on a fragrance? We don't make a blessing on a beautiful song, but we have four different *brachot* related to the sense of smell. The

*pasuk* in Tehilim says, "*Kol haneshama tehalet kah.*" We must praise Hashem for every breath. When we smell the pleasant aroma of fruits and spices we should make a bracha.

Cheshvan is also called *Bul. Bet* is the first letter of the Torah, *vav* is the middle letter, and *lamed* is the last letter. *Bul* represents perfect balance, which is the latent energy found in Cheshvan. Everyone has a mental or written list to-do list for after the holidays. We feel an urge to get back on track and be more balanced. Cheshvan is the month closely related to Yaakov, who represents truth and *tiferet*, the perfect equilibrium between strength and kindness.

Let's explore the *akrav* (scorpion). The Midrash notes that Shlomo Hamelech completed building the first *Beit Hamikdash* in

Cheshvan. However, he was instructed to wait until Tishrei to dedicate it. Hashem consoled Cheshvan by telling her that the third *Beit Hamikdash* would be dedicated in her month. *Akrav* comes from the root word *ikar bayit*. This connects to *Rachel Imeinu*, who is called the *akeret habayit* (the mainstay of the home) of Yaakov. During the period of the first *Beit Hamikdash* there was a split in the kingdom. Most of the tribes rejected the kingdom of David and placed their loyalty with Yeravam ben Nevat, from the tribe of Efrayim, who formed his own kingdom in the north. Recharav, son of King Shlomo, remained king over Binyamin and Yehuda, some kohanim and part of the tribe of Shimon. Eventually, in the month of Cheshvan the two camps will unite once again and recognize King Mashiach, the descendant of David, as their leader.

## Money Matters: Selling To a Neighbor

Based on a Naaleh.com shiur by Dayan Shlomo Cohen

According to Jewish law, if someone wants to sell his house or field he can sell it to anyone. However, the Torah commends us to act beyond the letter of the law and, therefore, to first offer it to a neighbor who will have more benefit from it. This is based on the principle of, "*V'asisa hayashar v'hatov.* You shall do what is justified and good." *Chazal* teach us *dina d'bar metzra*, that a neighbor has the first right to buy. If the seller sold it to someone who not a neighbor, and subsequently the property value soared, the neighbor who wants to buy it can still pay the original market price. However, he cannot demand a lower price. The owner must not lose out by selling to his neighbor.

This *halacha* also applies to partners. If one of the partners wants to sell his share of the property, he should first offer it to his partner. Where there are several partners, it should be offered to all of them according to the percentage of their ownership. If the seller

only offered it to one partner, the other partners cannot force the buyer to sell to them. When there are several neighbors, one's property should be sold to them according to the percentage of land that borders on the property. However, if the seller only sold to one neighbor the other neighbors cannot force him out.

The law of *dina d'bar metzra* only applies to real estate. However, *beit din* does have the power to prevent a partner from selling his share of a business to someone who the existing partners do not want. A seller whose business includes land would have to offer his share for sale to his partners first. If the partner or neighbor does not have the capability to buy the property at the time of sale, the seller is not obligated to wait for him. Once the property is sold, the neighbor loses his rights. It's best to have witnesses and a *kinyan* that the neighbor forgoes his rights so that he doesn't come back later with complaints. If the neighbor only

heard about the sale after it was completed, he must go immediately to *beit din* and tell them that he would like to buy the property. If he waits, he forfeits his claim.

There are several exceptions to *dina d'bar metzra* in which the seller is permitted to sell to someone other than his neighbor. This includes circumstances where the prospective buyer doesn't have a home or field of his own; the seller is in a hurry and doesn't want to wait for his neighbor to organize cash; the neighbor doesn't need the property for his own use; the seller wants to donate his property to charity or give it to someone as a gift. If the seller sold the property to his partner in business, the neighbor cannot claim it. So too if he sold it to a woman, the neighbor cannot demand it. This is because it is generally difficult for a woman to do business. In our times this doesn't apply as women commonly engage in business.



## Luck of Life: Parshat Lech Lecha

Based on a Naaleh.com shiur by Mrs. Shira Smiles

In Parshat Lech Lecha, Hashem promises Avraham a great reward, to which Avraham answers that since he has no children his servant Eliezer will inherit it all. Hashem responds by taking him outside and telling him to look up at the heavens and count the stars. "And He said to him, 'So shall your offspring be.'" Could Hashem not have told this to Avraham while he was still in the tent? Why did he need to go outside?

Rashi cites a Medrash that says that when Hashem told Avraham to go outside, He was not only referring to leaving the tent, but also to leaving his astrology behind. Avraham had read the zodiac signs and understood that he was not destined to have children. Hashem would change his name to Avraham and his wife's name to Sarah, and these newly created people would not be constrained by their previous zodiac signs. It appears that Hashem gave credibility to Avraham's concern about his astrological fate, writes the Mikdash Halevi. If so, what do the *mazalot*, the stars and the zodiac signs, convey?

Rabbi Frand cites Rav M. Shapiro that Hashem told Avraham to go out and count the stars. Without questioning the logic behind this, Avraham did so. To this, Hashem responded, "This will be your offspring." They too will refuse to acknowledge the impossibility of any command, and will try again and again to fulfill Hashem's command. This is how we change our future, continues Rabbi Frand, for we find new strengths and capabilities within ourselves that help us go beyond our perceived limitations. Doing a physical act, notes Zos Yaakov, further concretizes an abstract idea.

Rabbi S. R. Hirsch notes that Hashem wanted to teach Avraham that he and his descendants would not be bound by natural law. Just as the stars are more numerous than anything on earth and their existence is directly under

Hashem's providence without intermediaries, so too would Avraham's offspring be directly under God's hand.

Nevertheless, the Gemara states that each Hebrew month has a different zodiac sign that contains a unique energy. For example, one shouldn't initiate a lawsuit with a gentile in the month of Av, but rather in the more propitious Adar. The Siftei Chaim, cites the Gemara that notes that before a child is born, Hashem contemplates the embryo and decides what strengths and challenges will be necessary for it to fulfill its mission on earth. Having children or earning an easy living, for example, are not based on merit but on one's *mazel*, like the word *nozel*, what flows down from above. *Mazel* is the potential within life's circumstances. It is up to each of us to use our gifts and challenges that flow from above, in a constructive way.

Rabbi A. Tatz in Living Inspired masterfully explains that the *mazalot* act as Hashem's emissaries and pipeline. They bring the energy of the upper world down into our world, but they act only under the direction of Hashem. Astrology is therefore not predicting the future, but reading the present energy and understanding how it can affect and influence the future. Mankind originally understood the difference between natural forces and the Source of it all, but reasoned that certainly the emissaries of the King also deserved honor and respect. Eventually however, they forgot about Hashem and worshipped only the messengers. Selfishness stood at the root of this mistake. Someone who values the King wishes to be of service to the King, while one who pays homage to the messengers wants something for himself. A God-fearing man understands that Hashem is the source of everything, and seeks to serve Him. An idolater's philosophy is that I am everything; let's see how the gods can serve me and what I can get. If Hashem counts and is the source of reality, then that is worship. But if I count

and all that matters is what I desire, that is idolatry.

When Hashem took Avraham outside, He indicated that even though the stars rule the natural order, but you Avraham and your progeny are above that. You can define your own destiny by making My will your will. Through the *mitzvo*t we can break through to the original Source without the need of the intervening *mazalot*. The Ohr Doniel explains that there is no "bad" *mazal*, for everything is part of God's plan for us. Nevertheless, we can change our perceived destiny, through prayer and good deeds. In fact, Avraham's stars predicted that he would remain childless, but through his work of bringing others closer to Hashem he merited to change his destiny. Rabbi S. Pincus asks, if Hashem has already determined our *mazal*, what's the point of wishing people *mazal* tov on momentous occasions? He explains that it is not so much a wish but a prayer for good *mazal*. If Hashem has determined that the child or the new couples' lives will be difficult, may our prayers help break through to the Source and change that.

Torah study, prayer, and acts of loving kindness connect us directly to the original Source without going through the conduit of the *mazal*. They can thereby redirect the *mazal* itself. We must also accept that sometimes Hashem's answer will be no. Chazal tell us, "The Nation of Israel has no *mazal*." Even though each of us has a personal *mazal*, our Nation and its history are not bound by nature, but by the hand of God only.