The Month of Kislev
Kislev 5756 / 24th November - 23rd December 1995

THIS MONTH’S SIGN
KESHEt/SAGITTAriUS

K islev’s sign is THe B ow. (Keshet in Hebrew). For it was at the beginning of Kislev that the first rainbow was seen after T he F lood. T he rainbow symbolizes the pact that G-d made with N oah never again to destroy the world with water. T he bow also echoes the military victory of C hanukah - the bow of purity of Is rael vanquishing the bow of impurity of G reece. M ystically, the bow symbolizes the power of prayer: J ust as the closer the bow-string is drawn down to the ground, the higher the arrow soars when it is released skyward, so similarly, the deeper the source of a prayer, the higher it reaches into the heavens.

T he lights of C hanukah celebrate a little miracle: A fter a small band of Jews had beaten the might of G reece, one small flask of oil for the M enorah was discovered in the H oly T emple - O ne small flask, un-defiled by the G reeks...

(Continued over)

Truth and Beauty

Peter Finch, the Oscar-winning Australian film actor, once remarked “W hen you move an eyebrow in Cinemascope it travels three feet...” O ur age is unique in the way we place importance on the way things look, on their external appearance. W hether that appearance 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. W e live in a world that is replacing substance...
**Just A Little Miracle...**

That flask contained enough oil to last just one short day. But it burned and burned for eight days... To commemorate that little miracle we kindle the lights of Chanukah for eight days.

But if you think about it - we should really only light the lights for **seven days**, because on that first day the lights burned completely naturally - there was enough oil for one day!

So why do we light candles for eight nights - one of those nights was no miracle at all!

**That eighth candle we light is for the little miracle called the Jewish People.** When Louis the XIV asked Voltaire for one piece of evidence of G-d’s presence in this world, he replied “The Jews, Your Majesty…”

The survival of the Jewish People is like that one pure flask of oil. It seems so frail. You think it will never survive. But it goes on burning and burning... And the reason it goes on burning is because it is pure.

It’s just a little miracle...

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**TRUTH AND BEAUTY**

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’s 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 that ideal can become an **idol**. If Beauty doesn’t dwell in the tents of Truth, then ‘Beauty’ may become the ‘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 its value is 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.

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**SEASONS OF THE MOON** is written by Rabbi Yaakov Asher Sinclair and edited by Rabbi Moshe Newman. Designed by Y.A. Sinclair, Kevin Berman, Lev Seltzer and Michael Treblow. Published by Ohr Somayach/Tanenbaum College, 22 Shimon HaTzadik Street, Jerusalem, Israel. tel: +972-2-810-315; fax:+972-2-810-890; E-mail: ohr@jer1.co.il WWW http://www.jer1.co.il/orgs/ohr

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