

# SEASONS OF THE MOON

The Month of Cheshvan

Cheshvan / 5757 October 14 - November 11, 1996

## THIS MONTH'S SIGN AKRAV / SCORPIO

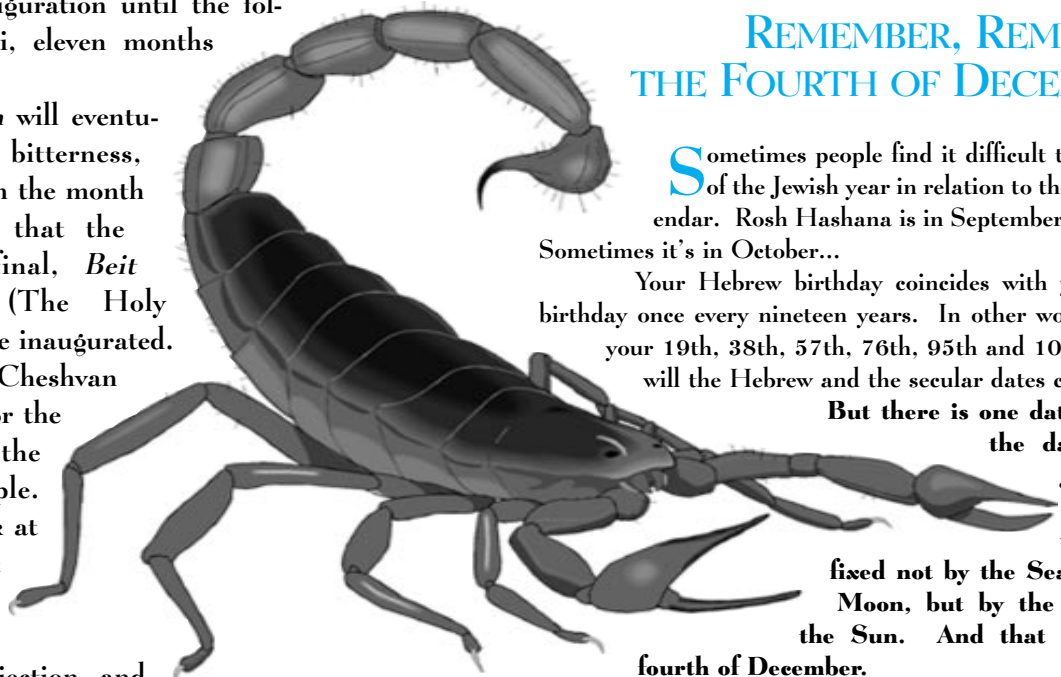
**A**krav is a water sign. It's the time of year when rain is plentiful in Israel. The connection to water is also clear in this month's association with the Great Flood, when water destroyed the earth.

For this reason, this month is called *Mar Cheshvan* — "bitter *Cheshvan*." Another reason for the 'bitterness' of *Cheshvan*: Out of all the months of the year, it alone has no Yom Tov, no festival of its own.

Really, there should have been a festival to inaugurate the First Temple, which King Solomon — Shlomo *Hamelech* — completed during this month after seven years of building. However, Hashem did not command its inauguration until the following Tishrei, eleven months later.

But *Cheshvan* will eventually lose its bitterness, because it is in the month of *Cheshvan* that the third, and final, *Beit Hamikdash* (The Holy Temple) will be inaugurated.

In a way, *Cheshvan* is a parable for the history of the Jewish People. When we look at our history, it seems fraught with bitterness, rejection and hardship. But in the end, the bitter sting of the scorpion will be transformed to the greatest sweetness, when all the nations will come to realize who the Jewish People are and who they have always been.



## A VEGETARIAN WORLD

**I**f you are a vegetarian, you'll be pleased to know that at one time the whole world was vegetarian!

Until the Great Flood in the time of Noah (which started in this month), no-one ate the flesh of animals. It was only when Hashem gave a 'new deal' to the sons of Noah — *the seven mitzvot of the Bnei Noah* — that Man was permitted to eat meat.

Why should this be? The answer to this question is intimately tied to the reasons for the Great Flood itself: The Torah teaches us that "...G-d saw the earth, and behold it was corrupted, for all flesh had corrupted its way upon the earth." (Genesis 6:12)

What started as private immorality and idolatry, had degenerated

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## REMEMBER, REMEMBER, THE FOURTH OF DECEMBER...

**S**ometimes people find it difficult to keep track of the Jewish year in relation to the secular calendar. Rosh Hashana is in September, sometimes. Sometimes it's in October...

Your Hebrew birthday coincides with your secular birthday once every nineteen years. In other words, only on your 19th, 38th, 57th, 76th, 95th and 104th birthday will the Hebrew and the secular dates coincide!

**But there is one date out of all the dates in the Jewish calendar, which is fixed not by the Seasons of the Moon, but by the Seasons of the Sun. And that date is the fourth of December.**

If you live outside the land of Israel, the fourth of December is the day that you start to pray for rain.

The Four Seasons — Spring, Summer, Autumn and Winter — are not related to the moon. They are a product of the inclination of the earth to the sun on its 365 day journey around the sun.

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*The Sting of Sweetness*

erated into public licentiousness. *The people of the generation of Noah had intimate relations even with animals.* This perversion in turn infected the animal kingdom itself, and animals of different species started to cohabit.

When Hashem saw this breach in the fundamental division between Man and the other species (and between the species themselves), He brought the flood upon the earth.

When Noah emerged from the Ark and civilization was re-established, Hashem permitted the eating of animals to prevent a re-occurrence of the bestiality which had occurred before the flood:

**By permitting the eating of animal flesh, Man necessarily saw himself as different than, and separate from, the animals.**

Never again would Man make the mistake of seeing himself as just another animal. For it was this world-view which ultimately had led to perversion with the animal world.

Which is *not* to say that if you don't like eating meat, that makes you an idol worshipping profligate!

**If you don't like the taste of meat, or you think its unhealthy, you are perfectly entitled to abstain from it.** If you hate the taste of meat, you have every right to feast on mango chowder on Shabbat instead of eating chicken soup.

However, Judaism and your vegetarianism may come into conflict if your misgivings about eating meat are because you believe that you and the cow have equally important roles in the creation.

There is a 'star part' in the 'movie' of the Creation, and it has been given to Man.

Everything in the universe is created to serve man. All the myriad species and

diversity of Nature is 'scenery,' elaborate stage props, so that Man may play out his star role **to recognize his Creator.**

This is the reason for Man's creation, and Man is responsible to use everything in the world to assist him to perfect himself and bring himself close to G-d.

This is what wins him the cosmic "Oscar."

Just as in a movie, where the teaboy and the 9th assistant director are at the bottom of the ladder, so too Nature has its hierarchy: The mineral world supports the vegetable world. By feeding from minerals, the vegetation *incorporates* the minerals into themselves, with the net result being that *the mineral has been elevated to a higher level than it began its existence.*

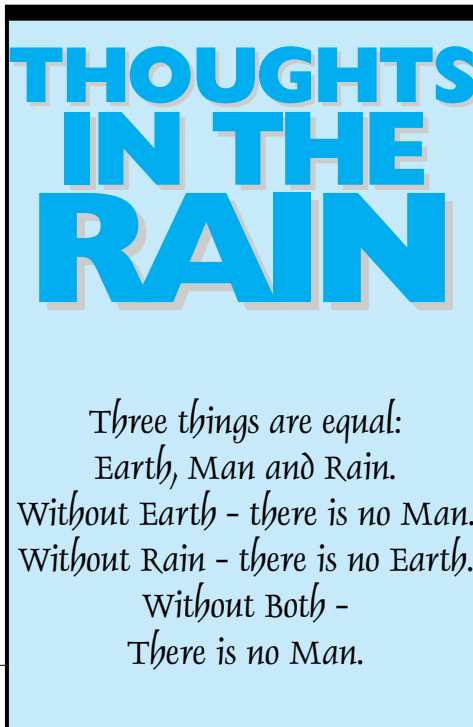
The same is true between the vegetable and the animal worlds.

When animals eat grass, they elevate the vegetable world to the animal world.

And likewise, when a human eats an animal, the animal becomes incorporated into Man, and the ascent of Nature's ladder is complete.

In this way, every element in Creation — inorganic, organic, and animal — finds its way into contributing to a 'star performance' — the drama of Man recognizing his Creator. **When a chicken ends up on someone's Shabbat table, it can become the means by which Man elevates the physical to the level of the spiritual — which is the essence of the Shabbat experience.**

So before you order another veggie-burger, don't write off that poor cow from *someone else's* Shabbat table. One day, in another world, you might meet up with a very irate heifer!



## REMEMBER, REMEMBER...

Thus the prayer for rain in Winter is really only relevant to the earth's relation to the sun, not the moon. In the Diaspora, where water is plentiful, we wait for 60 days after the beginning of the *Season of Tishrei* and then we start to pray for rain. (The four seasons are called in Hebrew based on the names of the months in which they commence.)

Seeing as the Four Seasons are solar events, the beginning of the prayer for rain has no fixed date in the Hebrew calendar. However, in the solar calendar it always falls on December the fourth, (or December 5th in the year before a civil leap year when February has 29 days.)

In the land of Israel, however, we begin to recite the prayer for rain on a Hebrew date — the seventh of *Cheshvan* — two weeks after *Shmini Atzeret* and the end of the Festival of

Succot. But if rain is vital to *Eretz Yisrael*, why do we wait for those two weeks?

Even though rain is precious to the land of Israel, we delay praying for it because in the time of the *Beit Hamikdash* (The Holy Temple) Jews would be returning home after coming up to Jerusalem for Succot. Until the seventh of Cheshvan, they might still be on the road home.

Our Sages decreed that we should delay praying for rain during their homeward journey so they would not have to contend with downpours of rain.

However, by the seventh of *Cheshvan*, two weeks after Succot, they had already reached the Euphrates, and thus, in the Land of Israel we start to pray for rain from that date.

SOURCES: THIS MONTH'S SIGN - Bnei Yissaschar; Sefer Ha'Toda'ah • THOUGHTS IN THE RAIN - Bereishit Rabba 13

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