

SEASONS OF THE MOON

The Month of Kislev

Kislev 5759 / Nov. 20, 1998 - Dec. 19, 1998

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 Noach never again to destroy the world with water. The symbolism of the bow also echoes the military victory of

THIS MONTH'S SIGN KESHET / SAGITTARIUS

Chanuka — 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; so similarly, the deeper the source of a prayer, the higher it reaches into the

Little children find it very difficult to do things by themselves. They need a constant helping hand, constant encouragement. They can be bold, but only when Daddy is close by. When he's out of sight, tears quickly replace bravado until once again they feel the hand that comforts.

As babies, our first faltering steps are greeted by parental glee. Hands reach out to guide our every step. When we stumble, Mom and Dad are always there to stop us from falling.

There comes a day, however, when we stumble, but we find no helping hand. We fall to the ground. Tears fill our eyes and dismay fills our hearts. We look around in amazement. "Where are you?... Daddy? Are you still there?"

Only from the moment our parents let us fall,

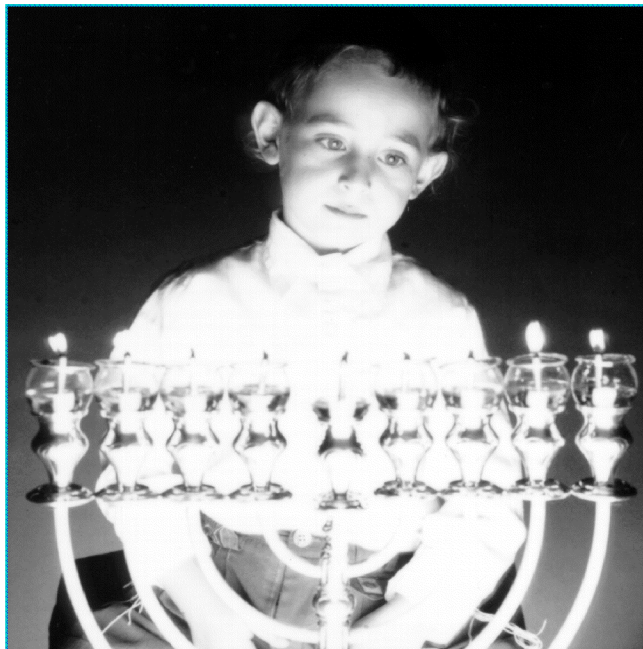
can we learn to walk by ourselves. Only from the moment that our parents are prepared to let

us become adults can we stop being children. If, as parents, we never give our children the possibility of falling down, they will never learn to stand by themselves. Of course, to everything there is a season. Everything has to be in its time. If a child is challenged beyond his capabilities he may assume that he will *never* be able to achieve what is being asked of him, and suffer from this negative programming for life.

A challenge in its correct time is always an opportunity to grow, an opportunity to get to know who we really are.

The festival of Chanuka celebrates two events: The defeat of the vast Selucid Greek army by a handful of Jews, and the miracle of the one flask of pure oil which burned for eight days in the

THE HELPING HAND



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THE HELPING HAND *continued*

Menorah. If you think about it, our joy at Chanuka should center on the deliverance from our enemies. However, our main focus is the miracle of the lights. Why should this be?

Chanuka took place after the last of the Prophets — Chagai, Zecharia and Malachi — had passed away. When the prophets passed from this world, G-d no longer communicated directly with Man. Suddenly, we were like children left alone in the dark. The Parental Hand had gone. With prophecy taken from the world, we would need to grow by ourselves, to become like adults. No longer could we depend on G-d reaching down to us. Now, we would need to stretch our arms upward to G-d. We had been given a chance to grow. To find out who we were. In the darkness of a world without prophecy, we would need to forge our connection with G-d in the furnace of our own hearts.

But it's difficult. Sometimes we feel "Daddy...where are you? Are you still there?" The heart grows a little cold with longing. Sometimes we need a little extra help.

The joy of Chanuka is not so much because

we got what we prayed for, that we were delivered from the Greeks, *but the fact that G-d let us know that He was still there.* He answered our prayers with a miracle. In a world where spiritual decay had tainted the holiest places, a light

burst forth in the center of the world to tell us that He was still there. A light that told us that darkness had not extinguished the light. It was only hiding it.

G-d communicated to us through the darkness of a world without prophecy. He let us know that He was still with us even in the dark. Even though the channel of prophecy had fallen silent, our Father was still there, watching over us. That little flask of oil would burn and burn. It would burn not just for eight days. It would burn for thousands of years. We would take those lights with us into the long, long night of exile, and we would know by the very fact of our survival against all odds that He was with us even in the darkest of nights. He was always there. He has always been there.

Sometimes it seems that the darkness cannot get any darker.

More Jews observe Chanuka than any other

MY CHILD

*My Child,
By the time you read this,
I may be well in a different world.
I wanted you to know
Of all the hopes
And all the prayers
that have ever left my lips.*

*But if the breath of time will allow
but one short message in a bottle,
you should know,
that of all the things I hope and pray
you should cherish the little candle
in your heart
and let it outshine all the darkness-*