

# SEASONS OF THE MOON

THE MONTHS OF SHEVAT - ADAR 5761

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## IN A DESERT LAND

Nearly four thousand years ago, the father of the Jewish People emerged from his tent and stood in a pristine desert, his eyes turned skyward. The constellations wheeled above him in their silent slow-motion dance. Avram could read the stars. He saw very clearly. He saw that he would be childless.

Then something took place which cannot be understood by the laws of nature. The Creator of the Universe took him outside. He lifted Avram beyond what the eye can see and the mind can grasp. He elevated him until Avram stood above the stars. Then, the Creator changed his name. He added just one letter to his name — from Avram to Avraham. The whole cosmos changed. The Creator of the world re-wrote the script of Creation. It was true that Avram would be childless, but Avraham would have progeny. With this action, G-d raised Avraham and his offspring — the Jewish People — above the Stars.

## MAZAL TOV!

Even if you know only a little about Jews and Judaism, you're probably familiar with the expression "Mazal Tov!" *Mazal Tov* is usually translated as "Congratulations!" or

## STARGAZING

"Good Luck!" Neither are accurate translations.

The Hebrew word *mazal* means a constellation. The

word itself is from the root meaning "to flow." When we say *Mazal Tov*, we are giving someone a blessing that their happiness should cause an influx — a flow — of good and blessing to the world.

So why are the constellations called *mazalot*? What do they have to do with "flowing?"

## GOING WITH THE FLOW

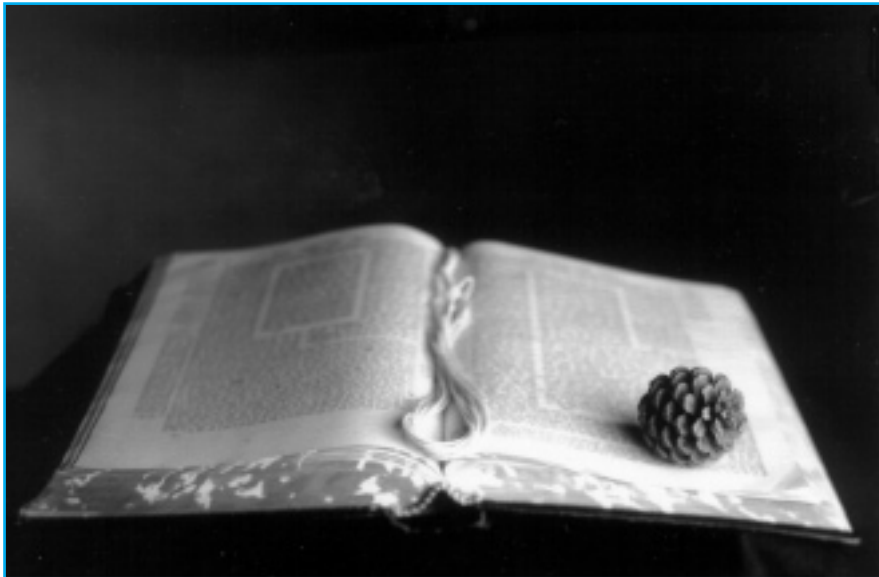
The mystics teach us that nothing can exist in this universe without an infusion of spiritual energy from Above.

The stars and the constellations are one level through which this energy flows. Astrology is not mere nonsense. It is indeed possible to intercept the transmissions that flow from the Creator through the celestial bodies. However, the Torah prohibits prognostication of all forms, including predictions based on the stars. If

these predictions were nonsense, there would be little need to prohibit them. Rather, it is possible to ascertain the future by astrology — but the Creator doesn't want us to do this.

## IDOL WORSHIP

However, there's another more potent mistake that we



Continued over

STAR GAZING *continued from page one*

might make when we gaze starward. At the dawn of history it was common knowledge that G-d created everything and that the stars and constellations were merely vassals obeying His Will. As time went on, the idea took hold that, seeing as the stars were G-d's emissaries, they too were deserving of respect. This innocent mistake is the root of idol worship. It's a small step from giving honor to the servants of the King to thinking that the servants have independent power themselves. Judaism defines idol worship as the idea that anything can have a power that is independent of the Creator.

### A WORLD OF LIGHT

When we look at the stars they seem full of light yet their light casts no shadow in our world. They shine very brightly, but in our world they illuminate nothing. The stars shine but they cannot illuminate, they cannot guide us. The stars cannot illuminate our lives. All they can do is reveal that they are the conduit of the light, the reflection of the light of the Creator, that they are the channel through which flows Divine energy from above.

### THE JEWS HAVE NO LUCK?

Every nation, every individual is governed by a constellation. Every nation, that is, except one. Our sages teach that "the Jewish People have no *mazal*." This doesn't mean the Jewish People have no luck. (Although a superficial examination of our history might leave you thinking this!) It means that the destiny of the Jewish People is not superintended by any star. We are literally above the stars.

### THE BUCKET AND THE WELL

Given all this, it is difficult to understand why the month of *Shevat*, the constellation of Aquarius, is called the sign of the Jewish People. Didn't we say that the Jewish People

are above the stars, that they have no constellation?

In Hebrew, the sign of Aquarius is called *D'lee*. *D'lee* means a water pitcher or bucket. The root of the word means "to draw up." The job of the Jewish People is to draw up spirituality and flow it to the world. A bucket has only one purpose — to hold the water. Its whole reason to be is to carry the water. The Jewish People are the water-carriers. Our entire existence is to learn, to celebrate and to transmit the holy waters of the Torah.

### THE WATERMAN

In Yiddish, the sign of Aquarius is known as *Der Wasserman* — the Waterman. Man is the ultimate purpose of creation. G-d created Man as the being that would recognize his Creator. Purpose is always recognizable through form. For example: A spoon. The purpose of a spoon is to stir. For this reason its form is that it has a slender handle which can be grasped and a spatulate end which will move food around effectively in a pot. The form of a spoon is its shape. However nothing can have a shape unless it has matter through which the shape can be expressed. A spoon without any metal is no more than an a bright idea. For things to exist physically, there must be a marriage of form and content, purpose and

## POLISHING THE STARS

When they take down the stars  
to the polishers  
The night will still shine  
The darkness still will glow

When they un-hinge the Moon  
from its Velcro  
and the Sun  
with over-large oven-gloves

When there's nothing left  
of the whisperers, Still,  
there will always  
be You.

matter.

Just as Man is the essence of purpose, of form in the world, water is the essence of matter seeking a form, a shape. Water has no form. It flows and assumes the shape of whatever vessel in which it finds itself.

The job of the Jewish People is to be "Man" — to fulfill G-d's purpose, to be the creation that recognizes his Creator. The job of the Jewish People is to take this "waterword", this world of myriad permutations, a world of matter which can so easily turn into materialism, and to reveal its purpose — to give it the shape of man.

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