

A Resource for Rosh Chodesh Kislev

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הַמֶּלֶךְ אֹת ס' בְּשָׁנָה וְקָשָׁר לוֹ כֶּתֶר וְצִרְפָּן זֶה בְּזָה וְצִר בָּהֶם קִשְׁת בְּעוֹלָם, וְכִסְלוֹ
בְּשָׁנָה, וְקִבָּה בְּנֶפֶשׁ זָכָר וּנְקִבָּה

“[God] made the letter samech king over sleep and [God] tied a crown to it and [God] combined one with another and with them [God] formed Sagittarius in the Universe, Kislev in the Year, and the belly in the soul, male and female”

- [Sefer Yetzirah 5:9](#)

The Hebrew month of *Kislev* is most famous for *Hanukkah* - a holiday that many of us associate with delicious fried food, the dancing flames of the [hanukkiah](#), or perhaps presents (or, if you're a millennial...the iconic Rugrats special). However, as referenced above, the mystical Jewish tradition associates a variety of symbols, ideas, and themes with the month of *Kislev*. This program offers a variety of ways to connect with the month of *Kislev*, both individually and in community.

Connect with your dreams.

One predominant theme of *Kislev* is that of dreaming. The Torah features ten prominent stories about dreaming, and the majority are read during this month. Our patriarch Jacob dreams about seeing a ladder of angels ascending and descending heaven, while it is his ability to offer prophecy through his dreams that saves Joseph after he is sold into slavery in Egypt. The Talmud teaches that dreams are one-sixtieth of prophecy.

What are your dreams trying to teach you? Try keeping a dream journal for jotting down notes about what you dreamed about the previous night and see if there are any potential resonances with things you are working through or are curious about. For more information, check out Rabbi Jill Hammer's *Undertorah: An Earth-Based Kabbalah of Dreams*.



The *Gemara* says: There are five matters in our world which are one-sixtieth of their most extreme manifestations. They are: Fire, honey, Shabbat, sleep, and a dream. The *Gemara* elaborates: Our fire is one-sixtieth of the fire of Gehenna; honey is one-sixtieth of manna; Shabbat is one-sixtieth of the World-to-Come; sleep is one-sixtieth of death; and a dream is one-sixtieth of prophecy.

- *Talmud Brachot* 57b:13

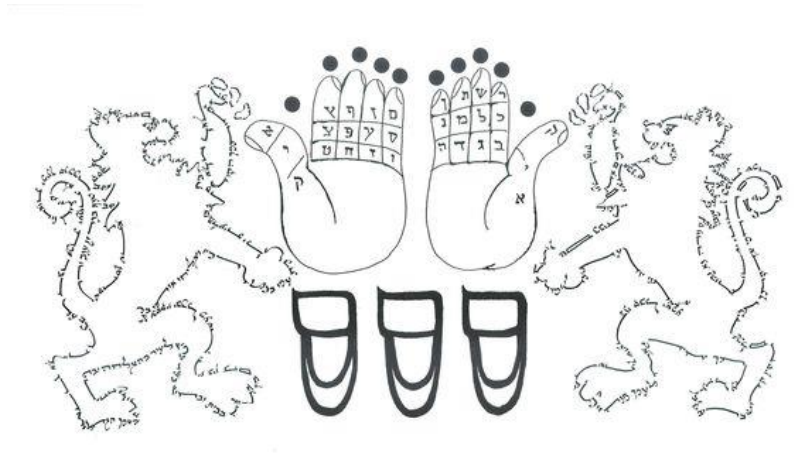
Find rest.

Jewish tradition already encourages us to find our rest, but what better time to re-evaluate our relationship to rest than during the month of dreams? Take an inventory of your [sleep hygiene](#) by trying to establish a consistent bedtime routine that limits your exposure to screens, as well. Another idea is to see if there are moments of rest you can sprinkle throughout your day. Maybe sometimes during a break at work or school you need a good Instagram scroll break, but is there something else that can be restful for your mind and body, too? Try coming up with a few and then incorporating those back into your day!

Invest in your support system.

In Jewish mysticism, every Hebrew month is associated with a different letter of the Hebrew alphabet. *Kislev* is associated with the letter *samech* (ס), a letter which is associated with the idea of support, like in the *Amidah* when we pray “*someich noflim*—You support those who fall.”

All of us are supported in many ways - by friends, family, partners, strangers. Take some extra time this month to reflect on who your support system is, and if there are ways you can support them, in turn.



Find the light.

Hanukkah starts during the month of *Kislev*. For many Jews, we celebrate this through lighting the *hanukkiyah*, but what would it look like to bring some light into the rest of our month? A literal way to do this could look like taking some time during the winter months to investigate the lighting in your home or thinking about what you could do to make your space feel warmer. Perhaps you want to think about this in the more metaphorical way. Our world can sometimes feel so broken, and choosing to find the light can be a spiritual practice of its own. This doesn't mean that we should turn ourselves away from the heartbreak that we see around us, but rather find ways to make - and be - light amidst the darkness.

Connect with the miraculous.

One idea that the rabbis talk about regarding *Hanukkah* is that of publicizing the miracle - *pirsumay nisa*. It's not enough to just experience the miracle, Judaism teaches us, but we need to be loud and proud about what we have lived through. Jewish tradition teaches us that we should live in such a state of gratitude that we should strive to say upwards of one hundred blessings a day.

Where is the miraculous hiding in your life, and where can you lift it up? Try publicizing some of your miracles by making art depicting a scene where someone was kind to you, posting an appreciative Instagram post about your bestie, going to a storytelling event, or sharing about a time that you survived, despite all the challenges.

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It is a *mitzvah* to place the *Hanukkah* lamp at the entrance to one's house on the outside, so that all can see it. If he lived upstairs, he places it at the window adjacent to the public domain. And in a time of danger [...] he places it on the table and that is sufficient to fulfill his obligation.

- *Talmud Shabbat 21b*

¹ <https://collections.artsmia.org/art/5513/improvised-menorah-robert-cap>