



Rosh Chodesh Mazal - 011 Cheshvan | The Scorpion

Cheshvan\Scorpion - The “Bitterness” of The Month of Cheshvan

The *mazal* associated with the month of *Cheshvan* is “*akrav*”, the scorpion.

This bears a connection with the *mazal* of the previous month, *Tishrei*, which is *moznayim*, the scale. In the month of *Tishrei*, man is judged by the scale in Heaven, which weighs his deeds. If man is found to be guilty in judgment, he is subject to punishment in *Gehinnom*. The lowest place in *Gehinnom* is described by our Sages a place that is full of scorpions. If *chas v’shalom* the person was found guilty in the judgment of the month of *Tishrei*, he will be subject to the *Gehinnom* that is contained in the month of *Cheshvan* - the month of the “scorpion”.

Cheshvan is called *Mar Cheshvan*, “bitter *Cheshvan*”. One of the reasons why there is “bitterness” contained in *Cheshvan* is because it is a place full of scorpions that deliver the punishments of *Gehinnom* to those who were found guilty in the previous month.

What is the depth behind the concept of scorpion?

Serpent\Evil Heat and Scorpion\Evil Coldness

In the Torah, there are three creatures associated with causing harm to man: The serpent (snake), the *seraf*, and the scorpion. These three harmful creatures are also representations of three distinct evil forces in Creation [here we will analyze the differences specifically between the serpent and the scorpion, and how these are forces in Creation which manifest in our own souls].

We find that the serpent is associated with heat, whereas the scorpion is associated with coldness. The serpent represents a kind of evil that is awakened through the force of “heat” in Creation, when it is used for evil passions, whereas the scorpion is of a different nature of evil: it represents a kind of evil that is associated with coldness. The Hebrew word for scorpion, *akrav*, is from the word “*av kar*”, “father of coldness” – it represents the root of a force of “coldness” in Creation.

Thus, the scorpion is associated with coldness, and if the *mazal* of *Cheshvan* is scorpion, it must be that *Cheshvan* is a month where “coldness” is manifest. We can find a correlation to this: In the month of *Cheshvan*, we begin to ask for rain, which is cold water.

Coldness is also the evil trait of Amalek. Of Amalek the Torah writes, “They met you”, and the Hebrew word for this is “*korcha*”, from the word *kerirus*, “coldness.” [Amalek is the evil force in Creation that is at war with G-d. It induces “coldness” into Creation, which manifests in people as a cold and apathetic attitude towards holiness]. The *gematria* (numerical value in Hebrew) of the word “Amalek” is equal to the Hebrew word “*mar*”, which means “bitter”, [1] hinting to the Amalek\coldness that is in “bitter *Cheshvan*”.

This is why *Cheshvan* is called “*MarCheshvan*”, “bitter *Cheshvan*” – its bitterness is due to the “coldness” that is revealed in this month.

There is a *halachah* that if a snake is near one's heel as he is *davening Shemoneh Esrei*, he should not interrupt his *Shemoneh Esrei* to move away from the snake, because the danger is not definite, for it does not always bite. But if there is a scorpion at his heel, he must interrupt his *Shemoneh Esrei* and move away from the scorpion, because the danger is definite. A scorpion will definitely sting, its sting is life-endangering, so one is allowed to interrupt his *davening* to move away from it.

A snake will only bite if it is angered or bothered in some way; it is dangerous only when it becomes reactive to something, so as long as one doesn't bother the snake, there is no need to interrupt his *davening* and move away from it. But a scorpion will always sting, whether it is provoked or not.

This is really because the snake acts based upon the force of "heat" in Creation, which is the root of excitement; thus a snake will only be harmful and use its evil "heat" if it is provoked, where it will then react with excitement and it will then cause harm. But a scorpion is acting based upon the force of "coldness" in Creation. Coldness doesn't need anything to activate it in order for it to be cold. The scorpion is the manifestation of "coldness" in Creation, so it will always be harmful, regardless if it became excited or not.

The scorpion attacks even when it is not provoked and nothing caused it to act. It begins to act from itself, and not from any other factor that caused it to act. This is its coldness. The snake, however, will only attack if it is angered, which is heat.

So the difference between the forces of heat and coldness is that heat is activated only when there is a point that preceded it, whereas coldness begins from itself even when nothing precedes it. Heat is a result of something else before it, whereas coldness does not come as a result of something; it is activated on its own. Of course, sometimes coldness can also be a result. But coldness is mainly activated on its own, and not as a result of something else that came before it.

Joy - The Balance Between Heat and Coldness In The Soul

In regards to our own personal soul, the forces of heat and coldness need to be in balance with each other. In the ideal situation, heat and cold are harmonized, and then the soul can function properly.

In the month of *Tishrei*, we experienced *zman simchaseinu*, the time of our happiness. The truth is that in order for us to maintain *simcha* (joy), we need a balance between coldness and heat in the soul. The combined *gematria* (numerical value in Hebrew) of the words *kor* (cold) and *chom* (heat) is equal to the numerical value of the word *sam'each* (joy),^[2] which hints to us that *simcha* results only when there is a balance between cold and heat in the soul.

But when a person is drawn towards either of the two extremes – either too much coldness in the soul or too much heat in the soul – there cannot be *simcha*. If a person is drawn too much after the force of "heat" of the soul, that means he needs a feeling of warmth in his *Yiddishkeit* in order for him to survive, and as soon as he loses that feeling warmth, he loses all of his joy with it.

To illustrate, in the month of *Tishrei*, we had the mitzvos of *sukkah*, and the four species, and the *Simchas Beis HaShoeivah*. All of these mitzvos provide us with *simcha*. But as soon as these mitzvos are gone, when *Tishrei* has ended, a person who depended on this warmth will be left with no *simcha*.

True *simcha* is maintained only when there is a proper balance between heat and coldness of the soul. If a person is too dependent on the "heat" (or a warm feeling of excitement), he is not able to carry on when that "heat" is gone. The same is true vice versa: if a person is too cold and he does not have enough heat in the soul, he will also not be happy, because his soul lacks a balance.

The ability of "coldness" in the soul is the ability in a person to remain unfazed and be unaffected by

the surroundings.^[3] [This is a power that can be used for either holiness or evil, depending on how balanced it is.] If a person is too isolated from the others to the point that he doesn't react at all to others and he is too detached from others, he is too "cold", and he will not be happy. [But if he can separate himself from the influences of the surroundings yet he can also relate to others, he has the proper balance between his coldness and his heat, and then he can be happy.]

An In-Depth Understanding of The Serpent (Heat) and The Scorpion (Coldness)

The serpent represents an extreme pull towards heat. In fact, the very pull towards heat [or excitement] is already an effect of the Serpent upon mankind. The scorpion, however, is an extreme pull towards coldness. Besides for the fact that the scorpion's coldness is the roots of Amalek, it is in essence an extreme pull towards coldness. So whenever there is an extreme pull towards heat, it is connected with the evil caused by the Serpent, and whenever there is an extreme pull towards cold, it is connected with the scorpion.

These are two root evil forces in Creation: the serpent (too much 'heat'), and the scorpion (too much 'cold'). There is also a third evil force of Creation, the *seraph* (שרף).

The Hebrew word for serpent is *nachash* (נחש) and the Hebrew word for scorpion is *akrav*. (עקרב) The first letter of the words נחש and עקרב, and שרף are the letters נ, ע, and ש, which forms the acronym of the term עש"ן. The letter ע stands for עולם ("olam" - "world", or place), the letter ש standing for שנה ("shanah" - "year", or time), and the word נ standing for נפש ("nefesh" - the soul). Our Sages teach that every concept in Creation exists on three planes: in place, in time, and in the soul.^[4] The *akrav*\scorpion begins with the letter ע, so the scorpion is manifest particularly in "olam", in place. The *nachash*\serpent begins with the letter נ, so it is mainly manifest in "nefesh", in the soul. The *seraph* begins with the letter ש, so it is mainly manifest in "shanah", in time.

The serpent represents extreme heat, and the serpent is mainly manifest in the dimension of "nefesh\soul", so its extreme heat is mainly manifest in the dimension of "soul". The scorpion represents extreme cold, and the scorpion is mainly manifest in the dimension of *olam*\world\place, so its extreme cold mainly manifests in the world.

There is a verse, "A generation goes and a generation comes, but the earth stands forever." The generations that come and go represent *nefesh* (the souls of people), whereas the earth that stands forever represents *olam* (place).

The coldness of the scorpion, which is manifest in "place", lies in the dimension that came before the creation of the world, which began our souls. It represents the concept of the "nothingness that came before existence" (*heder kodem l'havayah*).^[5] This is because as we explained earlier, coldness is not a continuation of something that precedes it; it begins from itself. Coldness therefore represents a beginning point. When one begins from a beginning point, he is using the concept of coldness. This is a power that can be used for good or evil, as we will soon explain.

If a person begins from a point that is not a beginning point, this is heat. When we begin something based upon emotional reaction, this is heat. The differences between heat and cold are also known as the concepts known as *kedem* (before\beginning) and *achor* (after). The term *kedem* means "beginning", where a person begins from the beginning point of something. This is coldness. The term *achor* means "after", meaning when a person begins from a point that is "after" the beginning point. This is heat.

These are two root powers in our soul: coldness and heat.

The Serpent placed a spirit of impurity upon Chavah. Ever since then, mankind is drawn after "heat"

and less inclined after “cold”. It is usually heat which dominates man, and this is the effect of the Serpent upon mankind. It induced an excessive pull towards “heat” upon Creation [which is why man is very pulled after acting upon on emotion].

When we stood at Sinai, the Sages state that this spirit of impurity was removed from us. How, then, were we able to commit the sin with Golden Calf, when the Snake’s “heat” was now removed from us? It was because there was still another force of evil that had been around even before the Serpent: the scorpion. The scorpion’s coldness enabled the possibility of excessive “coldness”, an indifference to spirituality, which made it still possible for us to sin.

Before the sin, the Serpent told Chavah that if she eats from the *Eitz HaDaas*, she will “become like Hashem”. [This power exists both in the sides and in the sides of holiness. In the Snake’s argument, it was clearly evil, in that it is a desire to feel as if one is G-d. But in holiness, it exists as the desire to “resemble” the perfection of G-d].^[6] The idea of trying to become like Hashem stems from coldness, not from heat, because resembling Hashem means to resemble the very Beginning point of man, which is coldness, for coldness is a beginning point.

Thus, the coldness of the scorpion is the idea of a beginning point, whereas the serpent introduced heat. Ever since the sin, mankind can only pro-create if there is heat and passion in the desire to pro-create. This is all a result of the Serpent’s “heat”.

Coldness, though, is the key that reveals the beginning point that comes before any heat. It is the key that reveals Hashem Himself.

The Sages say that Amalek is a nation that “knows its Creator, yet rebels intentionally against Him”. Amalek is the evil manifestation of “coldness”, because it wants to be its own beginning point and replace Hashem. Amalek wants to begin from itself [as is well-known, Amalek is called *raishis goyim*, “the first of the nations”, because its essence is about being the “first” – and now we have a deeper understanding of this]. Amalek is at war with the very *havayah* (existence) of Hashem.

The depth behind *bris milah* (circumcision) is to remove the *orlah* (blockage) that is upon the skin. This *orlah* is essentially referring to the excessive heat in Creation which was introduced by the Serpent. When we remove that excessive “heat” by removing the *orlah*, we are resembling a return to the situation of before the sin, where there was nothing but holy “coldness” in Creation. Thus, the holiness that lies in the concept of the “scorpion” (coldness) is the fact that it has the power to remove *orlah* (spiritual blockages) – it can remove excessive heat from upon us, and return us to the situation of before the sin.

Rectifying The Effect of the Serpent Upon Procreation

The act of procreation (bearing children) can either come from passionate desire, which is heat, or it can come from a true desire to bring children into the world, which represents the desire to begin a new beginning, which is the truer desire to bear children. After the sin, woman was cursed with “*And to your husband, you shall desire*”, and this was the effect of the Snake, which induced desire\heat into the act of procreation. Thus, the very fact that procreation requires heat\passion is entirely an effect of the Serpent, and it is not the ideal state of mankind.

The way to rectify this effect of the Serpent is to utilize “coldness” – the power to begin from a new beginning. In other words, one should yearn for a very desire for what true life is. When one yearns for life in this way, his desire to bear children is stemming from this purer motive, and this rectifies the effect of the Serpent upon procreation.

The Current Era (‘Serpent’) Vs. The Future (‘Scorpion’)

The serpent challenged man. Its effect on mankind after the sin was that it causes us to understand something only when we are challenged. For example, in our current state, we can only understand something if we know what its opposite is (*dovor v'hipucho*).

The current state is known as "*shis alfin*", the "6,000 year era" which precedes the Next World. In the current state of affairs, we can only understand things based on the "six" sides or directions that we can view a matter, a reflection of the 6,000 year era we are in. This is all an effect of the Serpent upon mankind. Similarly, woman is called "*eizer k'negdo*" (a helpmate who is opposite) of man, who opposes and challenges the husband; this too is an effect of the Serpent upon mankind, which caused us to have opposition and challenges.

In the future, we will return to the holy kind of "scorpion", where we begin from a new beginning, and we are not opposed.

In the current state of affairs, the month of *Cheshvan* is known to us as "*Mar Cheshvan*", "bitter *Cheshvan*". The coldness in Creation is not yet rectified, due to the presence of Amalek, who prevents the revelation of Hashem upon the world. The coldness in the month of *Cheshvan* is currently an evil coldness, the coldness of Amalek, thus it is a "bitter" month to us.

But the Sages revealed that in the future, the third *Beis HaMikdash* will be built in the month of *Cheshvan*. The Sages guarantee us that it will never be destroyed, and the depth of this is because it will not be built in a state of opposition and challenges as our current era is in, for it will be built from a new beginning point.

This is the depth that lies behind the month of *Cheshvan*.

Applying This Concept To The Soul

In terms that apply to our own personal souls, the concept of the "scorpion" means that we have a power to use a holy kind of coldness: a deep, inner power to begin from an entirely new beginning point.

In the side of evil, this exists as a desire to commit idol worship, which declares a new beginning that is an act of heresy and a denial of Hashem. But in the side of holiness, the power of starting a new beginning is the root power of the soul that can reveal G-dliness.

In Conclusion

In every soul, there is "coldness" and "heat", and we need to balance out these two forces within us. We explained that when we attain a balance between coldness and heat in the soul, the result is *simcha*. We are then able to continue the *simcha* that was revealed to us in the month of *Tishrei*, into the rest of the year.

[1] The word עמלק is equal to 240 (ע equals 70, מ equals 40, ל equals 30, and ק equals 100. So it is 70+40+30+100, which equals 240. The word מר is also equal to 240 because מ equals 40 and ר is 200, and 40+200 equals 240.

[2] קר is equal to 300 (200=ר) ,100=ק and חן equals 48 (40=ח ,8=נ) which adds up to 348. The word שמח is equal to 348 (8=ח ,40=ח ,300=ש).

[3] To learn more about the power of “coldness” in the soul, refer to ***Understanding Your Middos_035_Cold Water In The Soul***. “Coldness” is also one of the 70 forces of the soul listed by the Vilna Gaon (*Gra, Yeshayahu 11:1*), and it is explained more in-depth by the Rav in the Hebrew audio files of **010_ ,09_ דע את כוחותיך**, and **_011**

[4] Sefer Yetzirah, III

[5] See ***Getting To Know Your 70 Forces of the Soul_01 and _02***

[6] Refer to ***Reaching Your Essence_02_Feeding The Jewish Soul***, and the series ***Getting To Know Your Imagination***

Source: <https://bilvavi.us/english/rosh-chodesh-mazal-011-cheshvan-scorpion?width=640&height=450&inline=true>