

# ROSH CHODESH KISLEV

*by Rabbi Dr. Meir Tamari*

According to the Ari, the months are attributed to the Tribes according to the order of their encampment in the Wilderness, so that this month of Kislev refers to Binyamin. Binyamin was the 9th tribe in the sequence of encampment and journeying (Bamidbar, 2:22-24) and Kislev is the 9th month from Nissan. It was in his merit that in his month, Kislev, Israel was able to overcome their Greek enemies and rededicate the Bet HaMikdash.

Binyamin was blessed by Yaakov with having the Bet HaMikdash in his territory. The targum translates, 'In the morning he eats the prey and divides the spoil at evening', as referring to the Shechinah dwelling there (Bereishit 49:27), and in Devarim(33:12) we read ' Binyamin, is the friend of G-d who dwells on him all day and who resides between his shoulders [boundaries]'. While Yosef was the tzaddik who brought down spirituality from on high, Binyamin was the tzaddik who would cause spirituality to grow from down below. That tzaddik's role is to stimulate the heart of Israel to ecstasy in their Father in Heaven and to elevate their prayers and their divine service to the Heavens.

The very name Kislev is evidence of that since its root is the word 'kesel- kesalim' and the kelayot-kidneys are called kesalim. Strong desire is rooted in the kidneys; Ibn Ezra comments (VaYikra 3:4) that they are called kelayot because they are the seat of lust and desire and ' ' How I my soul pine and indeed my soul was consumed in yearning for Thy Courtyards, HaShem' (Tehillim, 84:3) or ' If I put kisli in gold' (Iyov 31) that Rashi sees as 'all my hope and thoughts', that is the desires and the lusts. This is the trait of Binyamin as they taught that he was concerned and thoughtful of HaShem all day; Rashi explains this like a person who is troubled that he hasn't satisfied his desires (Yoma, 12a).

This power of Binyamin to raise the ecstasy of Israel till they yearn and lust after HaShem with all their power and beings was the reason that the Maccabees were able to defeat the Greeks. The power of spiritual yearning is not possessed by the Gentile nations who have only the power of the intelligence and the mind, even as our Sages tell us, 'Wisdom is to be found among them, but Revelation is not'( Eicha Rabbah, 2). Their wisdom feeds from the Divine Wisdom but the power yearning and ecstatic cleaving to G-d is missing even from the best of them. 'I am my Beloved's and my Beloved is mine(Shir Hashirim,6:3) [and] I am my Beloved's and on Him is my desire[lust]'(op.cit.7:11). That is why we may not accept gifts from them for the upkeep of the Bet Hamikdash [while it is permissible to accept korbanot]; 'You have no portion, charity or memorials in Yerushalayim' (Nehemiah, 2) and 'Israel, Yerushalayim and the Beit HaMikdash are love and desire-

teshukah between Israel and their Father which is in Heaven' (Aracin5b). Therefore when this merit of ecstatic love and possessive yearning is present in Israel, the nations of the world are powerless before them and they are able to defeat all their enemies.

David the king also had this power of overflowing spiritual love and yearning for HaShem- 'My soul thirsts after You, my flesh yearns for You (Tehillim, 63:2). So too, of David it is written, 'The hand of My servant David shall redeem My nation Israel' ( 2 Samuel, 3). Since Binyamin and David [from Yehudah] both had this yearning and consuming powerful spiritual love, the Bet HaMikdash was situated in both their territories. That is why the fortunes of these two tribes were intertwined; when the Davidic kingdom split into 2, the tribe of Benjamin remained loyal to Yehudah.

We know that kingship in Israel is based on this same yearning and teshukah and because these two tribes shared this quality, the kings of Israel were drawn only from them; Saul from Benjamin and the Davidic dynasty from Yehudah. Furthermore, Rosh Chodesh is the time of the union of the moon and the sun, so it is an example for Jewish kingship. That is why we find the celebration and the festive Rosh Chodesh meal only by Saul and by David

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