



The first night of Cheshvan is Wednesday, October 26th, 2022.

Cheshvan: Faith. Follow through. Grounding.

Spiritual Energy of Cheshvan: Feel the Let-Down

Last month, we honored ourselves, our humanity, and our closeness to the Divine. Jewish teachings suggest that over the last month we ascended to receive life's gifts and take full advantage of elevated states and experiences. Together, we created a month's worth of energy that was deep, powerful, honest, emotional, and joyous.

And now... well, now, we have Cheshvan, the only month in the entire Hebrew calendar with no holidays. Building on the stillness of this month, there's even a tradition of foregoing celebrations such as weddings during Cheshvan. In essence, this month gives us room to experience the fullness of the let-down.

Feel the Let-Down

We all know that let-down feeling. At some point, transcendent highs turn to lows. They always go together. You spend a weekend visiting your best friends, laughing, connecting, being together... and then the weekend ends. You go home, back to the grind, and acutely feel the absence of that camaraderie and love.

This phenomenon was probably familiar to early Jews returning from Jerusalem after making sacrifices at the Temple, and for our ancestors returning from spiritual pilgrimages to visit their Rebbes. When that spiritual high was over and the people journeyed home, it would have felt like a shock, a time of mourning, or at least a little slump as they waded back into the "muck" of everyday life.

Our Hebrew calendar is thoughtfully designed. After an ecstatic Tishrei, Cheshvan asks us to land. We're invited to use this month as a spiritual tool to bring ourselves back down, planting our feet firmly on the earth.

Follow Your Intentions

Cheshvan is when the real work begins. On Rosh Hashanah and Yom Kippur, we made promises to do better this year. In Cheshvan, we honor those intentions and take the first steps toward making them real.

The ego, unfortunately, is not very accepting of change. This month, allow yourself space to notice any resistance you have to making the improvements you promised you'd make, and resistance you have to change in general. We must go beyond ourselves to be who we want to be.

It's important to stay clear and awake to your intentions during this time. Step forward even if you can't see clearly where exactly you're going — that's faith. And be generous with yourself as you gauge your progress.

It's Worth It

In Judaism, we believe every person and every moment has a chance to become holy. We believe what we do and experience can change the fabric of our lives and the world. Our work while on Earth is to elevate ourselves and bring goodness to our time while alive. Our job is to manifest love, justice, peace, and joy, and to know that what we say and how we act matters.

Bringing food to a sick friend is holy because it sparks the light. Avoiding gossip and negative speech is holy because we are choosing to stay clear of unkindness.

Cheshvan is all about figuring out what we can do to unite our everyday lives — the dirty dishes, daycare drop-offs, grumpy work meetings, and clogged toilets, all of it — with our imperative to live in alignment with our values. It's a life-long practice, and we can affirm: it's worth it.

This month was not designed to be easy or comfortable or even ecstatic in its discomfort, as Tishrei was. This month, have faith, and keep moving toward the light.

Activity: Lotus Lessons

The lotus flower is a Buddhist symbol and teaching that resonates deeply with the type of spiritual work we are doing this month. We hope this teaching helps you blossom this Cheshvan into reflection-fueled action.

"The lotus seed is planted and grows in muddy waters, below the surface of the lake, far from the light. Though the light is murky and unclear, the flower blossoms by drawing energy from within. As the bud passes through the muddy waters, it lifts its face to the sunlight and finally emerges. Miraculously, not a trace of soil remains on the flower. It lives in the mud yet is unaffected by it. This is an example for us to be in the world but not be adversely affected by it. The lotus flower teaches us that no matter how muddied the waters of our consciousness may become, clarity can always emerge from our spirit if the Divine Light guides us — even if it is only one tiny lotus blossom at a time."

— Excerpt from *The Secret Power of Yoga*

Jewish tradition believes deeply in the presentness of this life. We are not angels in heaven; we are humans living on land. We are earthy, fleshy beings, the lowest form of divinity, and designed to exist in this physical world... in the muck.

We have to work hard if we want to break the surface unaffected by the muck of life. Our inner worlds can be messy, and our minds are designed to keep a strong hold on to the negative. Which is to say it takes work, it takes commitment, and it takes intention to live the *derek* — "the way, the truth."

Hearing Your Own Wisdom: The Fertile Void

By Or Har-Gil



Or Har-Gil (she/her) is an Art Therapist, workshop facilitator, and rising Kohenet (Hebrew Priestess in training) who helps people connect to their intuition, creativity, and inner magic. She is Jewish, queer, and of mixed Ashkenazi and Sephardi/Mizrahi heritage. Learn more at orhargil.com, [@orhargil](https://www.instagram.com/orhargil) on Instagram, or [orhargilarttherapy](https://www.facebook.com/orhargilarttherapy) on Facebook.

After the soul searching of Elul and the fullness and intensity of Tishrei comes the stillness of Cheshvan. This month offers an opportunity for quiet integration – a chance to “rest and digest” as we process everything that emerged during the High Holy Day portal.

There is power, energy, and potential in stillness.

Picture a seed, planted in dark, rich earth. While its growth is imperceptible at first, there is so much happening beneath the surface. This is the Fertile Void. It is an in-between time of deep rest and integration, where the roots of our intentions slowly take hold.

Rabbi Jill Hammer, my teacher and founder of the Kohenet Hebrew Priestess Institute, calls Cheshvan “an underground time.” It is when we “seek our roots, merge with the earth, and give our strength to it, so that it may bloom again in the spring.”

In the spirit of Cheshvan, I offer a meditation, journal prompts, and a creative exercise to help you tend to yourself in this Fertile Void.

What you'll need:

- Paper

- A pen, pencils, crayons, markers, or oil pastels
- Optional: paint & brushes, collage supplies, any other art supplies you want to play with

Meditation

Begin by taking a few intentional breaths and getting grounded. Feel your feet or tailbone connected to the earth. As you breathe, imagine the shell of a seed growing around you, protecting and holding you. Imagine yourself as a seed. Dark, fertile earth holding you.

Your only task right now is to rest and integrate. To simply be. Knowing that all the work you have done to get to this moment has been enough. Let yourself be nourished by the soil around you, soaking in the autumn rains. Notice the deep web of interconnection in the soil around you – you are both alone in your seed pod and connected to all that is.

Feel the energy and power of this moment of stillness, an important step in your becoming. Spend as much time in this space as you need to feel nourished.

Journal Prompts

Write down anything you noticed during the meditation, then reflect on the following questions:

- *What does the Fertile Void mean to me? What does this image evoke?*
- *What is my relationship to stillness? Is it easy or challenging for me to prioritize rest?*
- *What seeds am I currently tending? What intentions, goals, or hopes did I set for 5782?*
- *What does my soil need to feel nourished? What does my body, heart, spirit and community need?*

Creative Exercise

Create an image of what the Fertile Void means to you. You can work with the image of a seed in the soil, find another image that works for you, or simply play with color, lines, and shapes as you reflect on the meditation or your answers to the questions above.

Focus more on your process than what your image looks like. Think of it as an extension of your journaling and release yourself from any hidden expectations of it to look beautiful. Like your seed growing beneath the surface, it's more about staying with the process than focusing on the outcome.

Circles and Cycles: Seeds and Rain

By Rabbi Robin Podolsky



Rabbi Robin Podolsky, Los Angeles Program Manager for At The Well, brings her extensive experience as a teacher, community organizer, and writer to this role. From teaching Spiritual Development at the Academy for Jewish Religion, CA to serving as a co-facilitator of an IOWA (Inside Out Wisdom for Activist) Mussar-oriented unlearning racism workshop, she is committed to helping people deepen their relationship to Jewish wisdom and ritual. She is passionate about conducting workshops, rituals, and study sessions that blend text study, personal work, small group sharing, writing, prayer and meditation. Rabbi Robin currently serves on the Board of Governors for the Sandra Caplan Community Bet Din, an organization founded on the premise that conversion to Judaism can and ought to be an experience that transcends Jewish denominations. You can find some of her articles at <https://tribeherald.com/> and jewishjournal.com.

"Cheshvan, the planting season, is also the rainy season. Some Jewish myths imagine the rain and the waters under the earth as lovers who long for one another...This season of air within earth reminds us to bring together sky and earth within ourselves...we too remember our longing to be one in body and spirit. Cheshvan, month of rain, helps us to achieve this union."

— RABBI JILL HAMMER, THE JEWISH BOOK OF DAYS

Cheshvan, the month which follows our intense High Holy Days journey, has no holiday of its own. It is a quiet time of gathering dark, of buried seeds and quickening rain. During the High Holy Days, especially during Yom Kippur,

we faced our deepest fears and regrets, and we set our intentions for a year of new beginnings. Throughout Sukkot week, we gloried in our autumn harvest of good deeds and strong relationships and we celebrated together.

In Cheshvan, we allow our High Holy Days intentions and our Sukkot harvest to manifest in the small doings of daily life. These are the seeds of new habits that we will nurture into vibrancy. After two months of intense spiritual activity, we return to the prosaic, the ordinary, and find holiness there. This is when our Teshuvah, our re-turning, is made real. In daily acts of courtesy and consideration with neighbors and strangers. In spontaneous expressions of gratitude, and hard, necessary work undertaken with resolve. In the public square, bringing the world of justice into being and with our loved ones, celebrating birthdays and remembering favorite foods. This is our earthy, concrete doing; what a sage called "duties of the limbs."

Similarly, we learn about the "duties of the heart" in Talmud Bavli Taanit/Fasting 2a, where it is noted: "This is the work of the heart—it is prayer." As creatures of flesh and spirit, we pray for both physical and spiritual nourishment. We do pray, gratefully, for the gift of Torah, of meaning and revelation and the instruction to figure out how to apply it for ourselves. We imagine our Torah as life-giving water.

The Rabbis give this teaching in a discussion of the prayers for rain which we begin after Sukkot. We learn further that, "The day when rain falls is as great as the day when the Torah was given, as it is said, "May my teaching come down as the rain," and by 'teaching' surely, Torah is meant as it is said, "For I give you good teaching, do not forsake my Torah."

That's because the rain we also pray for is not metaphorical—we need actual water to live. What's more, our Torah only comes to life through the work of human hands and minds. That is why Rabbi Judah teaches that the ordinary autumn day when the first rain falls is as great as the awesome day of revelation.

In my home city, Los Angeles, our prayer for rain has special poignancy. We had cause, especially during Rosh Hashanah, our celebration of creation, to reflect deeply on how we have or have not cared for the Earth. We have seen, in rising temperatures, drought, and virulent wildfires, the results of having fallen short; of how urgently we need to change our institutions and ourselves.

Those of us in the second half of our lives feel the call of this season in special ways. We watch leaves turn, giving the world a last gift of spectacular beauty before falling to nourish the soil. As we move closer to becoming elders—or claim that status now—we cherish and tend every seed we plant: every mitzvah accomplished, every lesson shared with the world. We snuggle into the sweet rest of long nights, conserving our energy for those daily tasks which we imbue with mindfulness and purpose.

This Cheshvan, we unite our inner sky and earth, our hearts and our limbs, the nourishing rain of Torah and the physical water our bodies need. Safe in the dark, we dream. And we set our bodies and minds to work, making our dreams into reality.

Meditation

Read the following meditation:

Please settle your body into a comfortable place, sitting or lying down. Allow your eyes to close. Bring your attention to your breath. Let it flow in and out. Slowly deepen your breath, filling your belly (holding) then your lungs (holding) with life-giving air then slowly release. Do this until all your attention is in your breath here and now. From the base of your spine, send roots down—past the furniture, the floor, the concrete, the soil, the underground water, the rock, all the way to the center of the earth. Gently draw the fire energy through your roots into your body: your limbs, your belly and heart, your throat up through the crown of your head. They make contact with other roots growing downward from a great celestial Tree. You are a tree. Your limbs are full of brilliant leaves. Loving their beauty, you let them drop and you feel each of them kiss the earth and feed it. You release seeds. You are a seed, a little ball of energy burrowing into the dark moist earth. You are safe in the dark. You feel, stirring within you, tendrils of new life which you will release when the time comes. What are those new shoots inside you; what are you creating?

You are a seed, safe in the dark, you are an old tree, bare of limb, you are the energy filling you with warmth.

Slowly, you release the roots with gratitude and return to your body, to your breath. When you are ready, open your eyes.

A Ritual to Connect: Red Thread

Tying a red thread around your wrist is an ancient kabbalistic ritual to ward off the evil eye — or, in the case of this month, deep-seated thoughts and beliefs that hold you back from becoming your truest self.

This ritual is connected to Rachel, whose death occurred in this month, and whose tomb was annually wound in red thread seven times.

In the spirit of staying grounded and true to Rosh Hashanah promises, bring a ball of red string and a pair of scissors to this month's Well Circle. (Meeting virtually? Perhaps you could mail a quick note to each member of your Circle and include a long piece of red string.)

Have each participant tie a length around her wrist and knot it seven times to ward off jealousy and any negative moments. Every time you look at it, allow the string to bring you back to your personal intentions for this month and the year ahead.

Monthly Meditation: Lech Lecha: Yalla, Adelantre

By Jessie Duke



Jessie is a ceremonialist who encourages others to cultivate deeper relationships with themselves and the Earth through Jewish rituals, connecting with the elements, and tending to the nervous system. She is the founder of "Bendichas Manos" ("blessed hands" in Ladino), a ceremonial cacao company, and the Director of Community for School of Living Jewishly, a virtual learning platform and community focused on lifelong Jewish learning.

Although I had a Bat Mitzvah, I didn't know much about the Torah or its annual cycle of reading. Where I went to Hebrew school, women didn't read from the Torah. Over the last five years of my growing devotion and intimacy with my Jewish identity, I've been curious to understand more about the Torah portion that I believe my soul is intimately and spiritually connected with. Since I (re)discovered that my Hebrew birth date is 8 Cheshvan, I've started to dig into the Torah portion, Lech Lecha. Realizing that the Torah portion of my Bat Mitzvah would have been Lech Lecha felt auspicious. The themes of leaving the comfort and discomfort of what's known—both internally and externally—have been so present for me, for what feels like my whole life. Is this energy imprinted in my neshama, my soul, more specifically than others? "Of course my soul would choose to incarnate with this energy!" my inner dialogue says. Or are these questions just so relevant for everyone?

In Lech Lecha, God tells Abraham to go—go forth from your land, leave home. This is essentially the message at the beginning of any archetypal (Hero)ine's journey. Perhaps it resonates with all people—of any faith, of no faith, people who are willing and up for the challenges and callings that their paths invite. And yet, I wonder if it's even more alive for those of us who are Jews.

This is a big invitation from the Divine, and I can't deny the connection that I feel with this path-expanding, open-ended call. I constantly feel as if I'm being called to leave what's comfortable to chart my own path, and not just when my birth date comes along in the fall, after doing some serious high holiday cheshbon hanefesh (soul accounting) work. And not just while I'm on ancestral pilgrimage, exploring my family's hometown where one side of my lineage lived for hundreds of years in the community of Tire, in Izmir, Turkey (where I went this summer, a life-changing story for another time!). And though I've always felt connected, this call has more acutely shaped my life over the past 8 years—after leaving New Jersey for college in California and getting sick with Crohn's Disease, my life has been transformed by the deep journeys I've been on. Since then, and with the help of a lot of therapy, tons of yoga, plant medicine journeys, and energy work, I have been able to integrate so much. I have seen and understood that I needed to get out, get going from my childhood home to set forth on the journey of recalibrating my nervous system. To, for the first time, try to find safety and a home within my body.

"I can handle the consequences of my choices." This statement, which was one of the strongest embodied knowings I came to after 6 months of undergoing EMDR sessions as a part of free therapy at the UCLA Rape Treatment Center, reminds me that I can handle noticing and allowing myself to feel exactly what I'm feeling, and notice what's happening on the inside. So much of my exploration over the last 8 years has shown me that (one of) my trauma responses has been to turn my eyes outward: to try to understand what's happening and ensure my safety. This statement reminds me I am safe, strong enough, and soft enough to handle the consequences of whichever choice(s) my intuition tells me to make. I am safe, strong enough, and soft enough to turn my eyes inward to see what my body is saying versus outward to discern what another person wants. And only when my eyes are inward can I actually feel my intuition to get going and move forward, both internally and externally.

I feel grateful for the support I've had, the relationships I've built with the elements, the many different plants, my friends and family, and for the other resources I've sought out: the comfort and rituals I've found within Judaism, and, especially, building relationships with my ancestors. Though I believe we are all called to individually 'get going', to journey outwards from our childhood homes and experiences and ultimately journey back in to ourselves, we are not alone. Finding that support and building relationships with these elements can anchor us to dive in deep, explore, and return home to ourselves each and every day with compassion and a broken-open heart that is resilient and, most importantly, open.

Wishing you all blessings on your journey, as we continue forward.

Meditation

What happens when we decide to turn our eyes inward?

Focus on the breath expanding and contracting, anchoring into your heart space. Noticing what arises.

As you expand, feel your energy move out of your heart space- where are you being called to go? Physically? Emotionally? Spiritually? What are you being drawn to explore?

Connect with each element- what messages do they have to give you about where you currently are and where you're headed?

Invite your ancestors in - do they have anything to say?

Journal any responses that come up.

Task: Continuing Ancestral Connection & Elemental Connection

1. Create an altar or space for any ancestors or elements that came through in your meditation to build relationship with them
2. Invite those you've lost to visit, or elements that stood out to you, to visit you in your dreams and offer guidance in present day challenges
3. When you wake up, write down your dreams.
4. Listen for messages in waking life as well

An Invitation to Create: Create a Vision Board

Create an altar or space for any ancestors or elements that came through in your meditation to build relationship with them

Invite those you've lost to visit, or elements that stood out to you, to visit you in your dreams and offer guidance in present day challenges

When you wake up, write down your dreams.

Listen for messages in waking life as well

Well Circle Activity: Create A Vision Board

Supplies:

- Poster board
- Glue
- Magazines, photographs, quotes
- Markers, colored pencils, glitter
- Any other inspiring art-making materials
- Optional: a picture of yourself, a vision boarding soundtrack to play while the group works

Directions:

1. Clearly define what you're envisioning. For example: new job, people or actions you want more of in your life, things you want to let go of, a theme for this new year, etc.
2. Open magazines, sift through old photos, and check out any other materials that might inspire you.
3. Start by ripping out images and words that catch your eye. Don't worry about whether your attractions make sense or whether some new word or image "fits." Just drift and pull out elements that call to you. Gather a big pile of interesting things. Have fun.
4. Sift through your images. Is an unexpected theme emerging? Let your creative momentum carry you in whatever direction it wants. Throw away anything that doesn't feel exciting.
5. Take your poster board and start playing with the images you chose. Pssst, this is when your intention for your vision board begins to take shape. Get in the flow of, and try laying out the pictures and words in different arrangements that inspire you.
6. Begin to glue the images down. With each paste, feel yourself reaching for that dream.
7. Adorn your vision board. Add glitter, elements from the natural world like leaves or small shells, more words, or a photo of yourself. Make your vision board beautiful.
8. When everyone has finished, pair off with someone else in your Well Circle to share boards. Perhaps explain the process of creating the board, as well as intentions and surprises you encountered. Agree on a time, and set a timer. One partner talks about her board and during that time, the other partner deeply listens. Save some time at the end and perhaps asks questions or offer reflections about what she sees in the board. After her time is up, the partners switch. Putting words to feelings and desires, and being witnessed as we express them, help us get clearer about what it is we truly want.
9. This last next step is very important. Hang your vision board in a place that you'll see it all the time. The more you're reminded of what you want to do, how you want to grow, and what you want to manifest in your life, the more likely you will make it happen.

A Holiday to Honor: Coming Out Of The Turmoil

By Vicky Ludmer



I am a Lawyer, a Life Coach, and an eternal scholar of Jewish studies. I always believed in the existence of a female view of our history that was carefully and conveniently hidden for years. Thus, I focus my studying and writing in putting the female view into light. I lead two Rosh Chodesh groups, one in person and one online, in which women from all over the world participate. You can contact me at vicky@mindfulcoaching.com.ar

We have just finished the emotional cocktail of Tishrei. Days of joy, connection, and commitment. Starting in Elul, we have been cultivating balance between our actions and omissions, and drafting a plan for the year that begins.

Up until a couple of days ago, we were still in the peak state, dancing with the Torah in Simchat Torah. All of a sudden with the New Moon, there seems to be a vacuum... Cheshvan has arrived, and with it, a deafening liturgical silence.

Cheshvan, AKA MarCheshvan, the bitter month of Cheshvan due to its lack of festive days, is here. And the question that comes to my mind is, what should we do with this supposed silence?

However, Cheshvan is the return to reality, to normal. Tishrei's turmoil is not real daily life. Tishrei is that unique moment of excitement from which we have to come down at some point. Cheshvan is the ground wire. It's the real beginning of the year. The time to put in motion and in action our dreams and new year resolutions.

Our sages say that Cheshvan is the month when the Universal Flood starts and ends one year later. Actually, this year the first parsha (Torah portion of the week) of the month is Noach, which describes the story of the flood.

So, since water is the main element of the month, maybe we can focus and jump into its majestic flow, to start the journey of the new year a little lighter and more flexible, as if navigating a river. That river that will eventually flow into the ocean of our projects if we dare look at it with loving wonder.

Understanding and accepting that the lack of activities is really an invitation to take those wishes and purposes we committed to in Rosh Hashanah and Yom Kippur to our daily actions, we're able to return to our activities either from a controlling space, which will probably bring bitterness and heaviness, or with a lighter movement, flowing like the river and getting around the stones that will certainly appear with confidence and wisdom.

Well Circle Activity: Flow Of Water Visualization

Materials:

- Candle

Instructions:

If you have the opportunity of getting close to a natural flow of water, like a river or a stream, do it. Another possibility is to find a fountain or any other element that would allow water to flow, and even use the imagination so that the sound of water accompanies you in this exercise.

- With your eyes closed, take two or three deep breaths, and from that place, visualize a running river that runs through the projects and wishes you planned in Rosh Hashanah for the upcoming year.
- Watch this river and its flexibility, imagining that you will face this new year with that same energy, allowing yourself to flow, rather than force, your way along the year.
- After a couple of minutes with this visualization, take 2 or 3 new deep breaths and give yourself thanks for having the courage to face your daily life with confidence. Even without the daze of one activity after another, it is possible to navigate in fresh and crystalline waters that will take you to your destination.
- If you'd like, you can share with the rest of the participants what your commitments are.
- Each participant can light a candle in testimony of the commitment.

Spanish Translation

Emergiendo Del Torbellino

Soy Abogada, Life Coach y una eterna estudiosa de las fuentes Judías. Siempre he creído en la existencia de una mirada femenina de nuestra historia que fue cuidadosa y convenientemente ocultada por años. Por ello he puesto el foco en mis estudios y escritos en traer la mirada femenina a la luz. Lidero dos grupos de Rosh Jodesh, uno presencial y otro online en el que participan mujeres de todo el mundo. Me puedes contactar en vicky@mindfulcoaching.com.ar.

Acabamos de terminar el cocktail emocional del mes de Tishrei. Días de fiesta, de conexión y compromiso. Comenzando en Elul hicimos un balance de nuestras acciones y omisiones y hemos esbozado un plan de acción para el nuevo año que comienza.

Hasta hace unos días nomás manteníamos el estado de euforia expresado en el baile con las Torot en Simjat Tora y de repente con el cambio de la luna parece haber un vacío... Ha llegado el mes de Jeshvan y con él un silencio litúrgico que aturde.

Jeshvan, también llamado MarJeshvan, el mes amargo de Jeshvan debido a la falta de festividades, ha arribado. Y me surge la pregunta. ¿Qué debemos hacer con este supuesto silencio?

Sin embargo, Jeshvan es el retorno a la realidad. El torbellino de Tishrei no es lo cotidiano. Tishrei es ese momento único de excitación del que en algún momento hay que salir. Jeshvan es el cable a tierra. Es el comienzo real del año, el tiempo para poner en acción los sueños y las proyecciones realizadas en Rosh Ha Shana.

Dicen los sabios que Jeshvan es el mes en que se inicia el Diluvio Universal y el mes en que concluye un año más tarde. De hecho, este año, este año la primer parashá (lectura semanal de la Tora) del mes de Jeshvan es Noaj, la que describe los eventos del Diluvio.

Siendo el agua el elemento primordial de este mes, quizás podemos enfocarnos en su fluir majestuoso y subirnos a su caudal, para comenzar el viaje de este nuevo año de proyectos de una manera más liviana y flexible como si estuviéramos navegando en un río. Ese río que desembocará en el océano de nuestros proyectos si nos permitimos mirarlo con asombro y amorosamente.

Entender y aceptar que el vacío de actividad es en realidad la invitación a llevar a la acción cotidiana los deseos y propósitos a los que nos comprometimos en Rosh Ha Shana y Iom Kipur, pudiendo hacerlo desde un lugar de control, y probablemente más amargo y pesado, o desde un espacio de liviandad fluyendo con el agua del río, sorteando los escollos, que ciertamente aparecerán, con confianza y sabiduría.

Actividad

Materiales:

- vela

Instrucciones:

Si tienes posibilidad de acercarte a un caudal de agua natural, como un río o arroyo hazlo.

Otra posibilidad es buscar una fuente o cualquier otro elemento que permita dejar el agua fluir, o incluso imaginarlo para que el sonido del agua te acompañe en este ejercicio.

- Con los ojos cerrados toma dos o tres respiraciones profundas, y desde ese lugar, visualiza un río caudaloso sobre el que corren los proyectos y deseos que te propusiste hacer en Rosh Ha Shana para este próximo año.
- Observa este río y su flexibilidad e imagina que con esa misma energía encararas el tránsito de este año, permitiéndote fluir en el desarrollo del mismo.
- Luego de unos minutos de esta visualización toma nuevamente dos o tres respiraciones y agradécete por el coraje de hacer frente a la cotidianeidad con confianza en que aun sin tener el aturdimiento de una actividad tras otra es posible navegar en las aguas frescas y cristalinas que te llevaran a destino.
- Si quieres puede compartir con el resto de las participantes cuáles son tus compromisos.
- Cada participante puede encender una vela en testimonio de su compromiso.

Biblical Babes: Rachel and Leah

This month in the Torah we read the story of two matriarchs, Rachel and Leah. Their story is about the forces of sisterly allegiance and female competition within the cramped quarters of a Biblical love triangle.

It's remarkable that a story 3,000 years old can hold so much wisdom for us today in our own struggles around rivalry, romance, and sisterly love.

Here's their story:

The sisters Rachel and Leah eventually married the same man, Jacob. To start, Rachel and Jacob were in love. Her father Laban promised the two could marry, but the couple suspected Laban might try to trick Jacob into marrying the elder daughter Leah instead. To prevent a sneaky switch, Rachel and Jacob decided on a secret sign Rachel would give from beneath the veil at their wedding.

Laban did indeed switch brides on the day of the wedding — and at the last minute, out of love for her sister, Rachel taught Leah the secret sign. Rachel didn't want her sister to lose face, even though it meant that Rachel and Jacob's plans were now in ruins. Rachel watched her sister embark on the life she herself had dreamed of.

Years later, Rachel and Jacob were allowed to marry too, which only intensified the resentment between the two sisters. Rachel, who was beautiful and dearly loved by Jacob, struggled in trying to conceive. Leah had many children, but was never known for her looks and was unloved by Jacob. As a result, the two sisters spent their lives locked in a grueling, painful competition to see who could bear the most children, and, by extension, win their husband's favor.

Rachel and Leah shared a complicated relationship rife with jealousy and turmoil, but laced also with fierce love.

Interpersonally, the women's envy destroyed them both. It almost destroyed their family too — their children internalized their mothers' jealousy and turned against each other.

Rachel and Leah's story warns us what can happen when women cut each other down rather than support each other, in solidarity, from love.

All of us struggle with jealousy at some point, and women's rivalry with each other is all too common. On one hand, jealousy can tell us something powerful about our own heart's true desires. However, without careful monitoring, jealousy can stifle our ability to practice unconditional love. From a jealous place, we inflict pain on others.

The truth is, jealousy is never about the other person; it is about ourselves.

The aim is to remember our sacred worth, to feel secure in ourselves, without comparison.

Perhaps what Rachel and Leah were missing was an honest conversation about jealousy: what it is, why it shows up, and how to let it go.

Let's Discuss

- In what instance do you find yourself feeling the most jealous of other women?
- Think back to an experience where you were envious and you missed your chance at being your best self. Can you share that story now, let it go, and forgive yourself?
- What does jealousy teach us?
- How can we move beyond jealousy?

Reading to Reflect: Invest in Rest

By Samia Mansour



Samia Mansour (she/her), Program Director of At The Well, is passionate about building sustainable communities and uplifting the voices and experiences of those who have been historically and systemically underrepresented. She has spent over a decade working in the Jewish professional world advocating for intentional and thoughtful representation of diverse Jewish identities and experiences. In her free time, Samia enjoys traveling to new places, reading, going on runs through Cleveland's many parks, and playing her ukulele.

We all know the feeling. You're looking forward to something exciting, feeling that energy building up inside you. You count down the days, knowing exactly how good you will feel when the day or moment of joy finally arrives. And then...it's over. That sinking feeling that comes after the excitement dies down, the pit in your stomach when you know that whatever it was that you were so looking forward to is finally over.

I have never been able to live in the finality of a moment for very long. As soon as a vacation comes to an end, the wheels in my brain are turning about planning my next adventure. At the end of a holiday gathering with friends or

family, I'm already planning the next celebration. It feels so bleak to not have something to look forward to. The Hebrew calendar helps facilitate this desire to look ahead. Every month there's another holiday or celebration in the pipeline, something to tie you to the flow of the seasons. Except for Cheshvan.

Cheshvan; the only month in the Hebrew calendar without a holiday or observance. Cheshvan; the month immediately following the month most filled with celebrations. Cheshvan is a gift, a time to rest after a year of planning ahead. It does seem counterintuitive. In January, after the Gregorian New Year, many people are focused and working hard to maintain the resolutions they made to improve their lives. But what if instead of focusing on all of the work we have yet to do, we focus on rest? We have made it through another year and accomplished so much! We have loved and lost, cried and laughed, and felt sorrow and joy. What if we took time to rest and invest in ourselves as we start the new year rather than feeling compelled to take immediate action?

Cheshvan is sometimes referred to as MarCheshvan, with the prefix 'mar' meaning "bitter," since this is the only month with no celebrations or holidays. This year, I challenge all of us to flip this interpretation on its head. There is nothing bitter or wrong about taking intentional time for rest. We are not obligated to make a plan for how we're going to follow through with all of our intentions from the previous month, Tishrei. It is not time-sensitive. Instead, I implore us to take the month of Cheshvan to be gentle with ourselves, to rest without guilt, and to feel gratitude for the moment we are in.

Well Circle Activity

In your Well Circle or with a friend, take some time to reflect on the following questions:

- What does "rest" mean to you?
- Do you ever feel guilty when you're resting? Examine that feeling. How can you let it go?
- When was the last time you really rested? What did that feel like for you?
- How can you support your friends and loved ones in taking time for rest?*

*It is important to note that many negative feelings we've internalized about rest come from the society we live in. There is a stigma around laziness coupled with the capitalistic urge to reframe rest as a luxury that we need to spend money on (i.e., go on vacation, get a massage, visit a spa, retail therapy, etc.). While we can do our best in our own lives to prioritize and destigmatize rest, we also need to work together to support each other in creating a judgment-free spaciousness for rest that does not necessitate money spent.

Monthly Nourishment: When The Doing Gets Tough

By Dani J. Berkowitz



Dani J. Berkowitz has worn many hats with At the Well since 2017, starting as a community volunteer to eventually facilitating and representing the ATW curriculum at various events. Dani is currently the Community Manager for a beauty software company called GlossGenius, outside of work she carries a true passion for the intersection of Wellness and Judaism, and is currently studying for her Adult Bat Mitzvah! Her hobbies include spending time with her partner, Ari, their puppy Winnie Cooper, and planting roots in their new city of Philadelphia, PA. Follow her on Instagram: @dani__berk

I am a Doer. I always have been and always will be—I like Doing because it allows me to enjoy the moments of Being later. When I can look back at a week and mentally take note of what I have accomplished, I feel good knowing that I put my all into it. I need to stop in order to appreciate what I've done. Lately I've noticed that the transition from Doing to Resting is getting harder, especially with the blurred boundaries of working-from-home during this pandemic.

In my moments of non-stop Doing I am periodically reminded of the Italian saying "dolce far niente" (meaning pleasant idleness). It is a reminder to flip a switch and remember the absolute gift and privilege of rest. Sometimes that switch happens for me in the form of burnout. When I can avoid that, it is gentle weekly restoration like the brilliance of Shabbat. This year, being a Shmita year of built-in rest for the land, I'm curious about digging deeper into other built-in restoration periods for Jewish people.

In the Hebrew calendar, a “break” comes in the form of Cheshvan—the month directly after Tishrei, the first month of the year. Tishrei is a busy and luminous time filled with major high holidays and rituals in contrast to Cheshvan, a month with none. It makes sense that our bodies halt after Simchat Torah and wonder how to adjust to the normal grind of daily life after the hubbub of meals, services, family, and spiritual heights of the holiday season. Some people even refer to Cheshvan as Marcheshvan, mar meaning “bitterness” because Cheshvan is the only month that does not have any holidays or special mitzvot (like fasting or ritual celebrations) and typically corresponds to the time of year when the leaves start to change and wilt. We are all in transition.

We are so often taught that non-stop action and achievements are the key to success. Yet, we come from a tradition that teaches us that stopping, pausing, and recharging must be a priority as well. So with that in mind, let's reinvent our relationship with Cheshvan together! We can take the resolutions we made in Tishrei and use this time to settle back into a routine that integrates these resolutions in preparation for the long, cold winter months ahead (seasonal depression is real, y'all!).

Here are a few ways I suggest you try to get some R&R during the month of Cheshvan, and some practices to incorporate while becoming a better Rester:

Try This With Your Well Circle (Online or In-Person)

Ahead of time, make a homemade face mask using the ingredients below and create a ritual moment by setting an intention together before you “cleanse”. Treat it like a dessert for your skin!

An oatmeal mask is great to soothe irritated skin, perfect for recovery from the Summer sun going into Winter. It's also effective in treating skin conditions, like eczema, pimples, breakouts, etc. when mixed with honey and yogurt. It has antibiotic and soothing properties as well, so it's a perfect relaxing mask after a hot day out!

Ingredients:

- 1/3 cup instant oatmeal
- ½ cup hot water
- 1-2 tbsp yogurt
- 1tbsp honey

Instructions:

Mix the oatmeal in hot water 'till it puffs up and turns soft. Now, add honey and yogurt and blend it. Make a spreadable paste and apply evenly on your face or eczema patches. Leave for 15-20 minutes while you relax. Wash off and dab dry. Can also be used for underarms, neck, etc.

Try This Solo

Spend time outdoors in complete stillness, movement, or anywhere in between!

Find some time to be in nature whether it's in your backyard, on a trail hike, or out and about to tune out the noise and reconnect with the earth. There's tons of apps and playlists out there with great instrumental music or meditations depending on your flavor of relaxation/mindfulness.

Try This Solo Or With An Accountability Buddy

Catch up on your personal To Do lists.

You know that list on your Notes app that you've been jotting down with things you need to do but haven't made time for yet? Yeah, it's time to pull out the schedules and lists, and everything that was pushed aside for summer vacation, and give them your full attention. Productivity can be personal!

Do Nothing, Together

Instead of your regular Well Circle routine with structure, why don't you take it easy this month (while still being together online or in person) and make a pillow fort, pop some popcorn, pick a movie and chill!

Catching up on Netflix, sleeping, writing in your journal, eating your favorite snack... these are all great examples of doing something simply for your own benefit and enjoying it!

Friends don't let friends burn out. Take care of yourself and remember that in order to DO, you have to REST!

A Ritual to Connect: The Originality of Silence

By Frima Enghelberg



Frima Enghelberg is a Jewtina from Venezuela that has lived in Miami and Shanghai, China. Frima energizes people by helping them connect to what makes them original and unique. You will also find Frima on the radio discussing originality and different wellness topics. Her latest project, originality popup experiences, invites people to connect with themselves, one another and brands to live a connected life. Instagram: @friways

I have always felt Jewishness is essential to who I am and has always been a part of my life. From conversations at home with my three holocaust surviving grandparents to my family living in Israel to the food from my Sephardic Nona, the connection was always there. Growing up in Venezuela, where being Jewish was not common, I always felt the curiosity to be able to explain my faith better to others. When I talked about the many Jewish holidays, people would say to me: "that's a lot of celebrations!"

It almost feels ironic that I am writing this contribution for one of the calmest months in the Jewish calendar. I find that moments of stillness are so rare for me. Between multiple jobs, social media, and daily life, I am always doing something at a very fast pace. I often buy into the idea that if I am not doing something, I feel absent or "lazy" by not responding immediately to someone by email, Whatsapp, or social media. We leave Tishrei- a month filled with holidays and meaning with this same feeling: fullness, businesses, and our cup filled with social gatherings.

The month of Cheshvan invites us to the holiness of calm and silence. To listen and connect to everything we learn and feel from those busy months. To find our pace in origin and leave some action from and for the upcoming months; an invitation to enjoy the calm of beginnings. I sometimes find it hard to make the time to turn off my thoughts and plans with everything that needs to get done, but in those "original moments of silence" that I schedule for myself, I find so much depth. I am not only able to relax but also to renew in purpose and energy. They don't need to be long; they just need to happen.

We need to embrace the invitations to shine our light and calmness from within, in silence, so when can better serve ourselves and others in action.

Solo/Intimate Group Activity

- Write down at least three things that are calming to you
- Schedule to practice at least one of those for each week of Cheshvan
- Pay attention to the sounds you can add to those activities to make the experience more worthwhile

Well Circle Activity

- Have each person draw themselves on a piece of paper
- Have each person take a few breaths and right down what sensations they feel to each of those parts they drew
- Have people right down calming actions for those sensations
- Everybody shares