



Jewish Women's Center of Pittsburgh, Inc.
Rosh Chodesh Cheshvan

We gather to welcome the new moon and the new month of Cheshvan. As Jewish women, we understand Rosh Chodesh as a symbol of renewal, as a woman's covenant, as a reminder of the cycles of nature, and as a marking of time. Rosh Chodesh is a recurring opportunity for spiritual development and for healing, for learning and for sharing.

As is our custom, let us introduce ourselves by our names and the names of our mothers and grandmothers.

Together: בְּרוּכָה אַתְּ יְיָ, רוּחַ הַעוֹלָם, שֶׁעָשִׂתָּנִי אִשָּׁה.

B'ru'cha at Yah, ru'ach ha'o'lam she'as'ta'ni i'sha
Praised are you, Breath of Life, who made me a woman.

Gifts of the Month

Mat'not Hachodesh: Hodayah

As the new month approaches, we call to mind the gifts of the current month and give thanks.

Together:

Witnessing

Cypresses point to the night,
through clouds and beyond them.
We follow them up the mountain
to stake our site.

And now the blade of night
gleams through the briars.
We gather twigs for the fires:
New Moon, old light.

We wait. The air is still.
The leaf, the branch, the bark -
our signposts in the darkness
of the hill



Tonight we celebrate Cheshvan. This month is often referred to as *mar* Cheshvan, "bitter" Cheshvan, because it contains no holidays or festivals and because it often coincides with the arrival of colder weather. *Mar* can also mean a drop of water. According to a midrash, more rain falls in watery Cheshvan because it marks the beginning of the great flood during the time of Noah. We can also think of Cheshvan as a quiet time to reap the benefits of the spiritual growth of the preceding month of Tishrei.

May our hearts be lifted and our spirits refreshed as we light this candle to welcome Rosh Hodesh Cheshvan.

Together:

Yehi ratzon sheyitchadesh aleynu
Sheyitchadesh aleynu chodesh Cheshvan

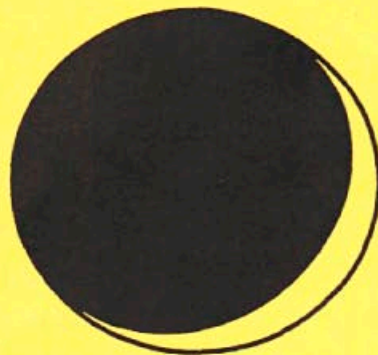
L'tovah v'livracha, l'sason ul'simcha, l'shalom v'achavah, rey'ut v'ahavah

La'avodah v'tzirah, parnasah v'chalkalah, l'shalvat hanefesh u'vrioot hagoof

L'chayim shel derech eretz v'ahavat torah, l'chayim sheyimalu bam
mishalot libeynu l'tovah

Yehi ratzon sheyitchadesh aleynu
Sheyitchadesh aleynu

Ken yehi ratzon



Together:

May the month of Cheshvan
be a month of blessings:

blessings of goodness,
blessings of joy,

peace and kindness,
friendship and love,

creativity, strength,
serenity,

fulfilling work
and dignity,

satisfaction, success,
and sustenance,

physical health
and radiance.

May truth and justice
guide our acts,

and compassion
temper our lives

that we may blossom
as we age

and become
our sweetest selves.

May it be so.

Meditation for the New Moon

A Poem for Cheshvan

There are as many ways to view the new moon
as there are days in our lives.

to view a moon, a poet's moon
you need only three things:
a silent spot inside you
a willingness to wait in the dark
and a wily nature that refuses to accept
the "Man-in-the-Moon"
as the ultimate authority.

here is one way to observe the new moon:
settle upon a path from which to grasp
the handle of white gold waiting above
find a quiet spot inside your sight.

in the darkness, close your eyes
and cover them, as if blessing the Shabbos candles

"Praised are You, O Shechinah
who parts the days of the month
calls attention to our covenant
and helps us to be a light upon the earth."

then, slowly open your eyes
and behold the beginning of time.

Cheshvan contains the *yahrzeits* of many important women in Jewish history, including Rachel *Imeynu* (according to tradition, Cheshvan 11), Emma Lazarus (Cheshvan 19), Hannah Senesh (Cheshvan 20), and Anzia Yezierska (Cheshvan 22).

We now honor the women in our lives whose *yahrzeits* are in the month of Cheshvan.

Together we recite Kiddush and Shehecheyanu:

נְבָרֵךְ אֶת עֵין הַסַּיִים מְצַמֵּיחַת פְּרֵי הַגֶּפֶן, וְנִקְדָּשׁ אֶת ראש הַחֹדֶשׁ בְּאַרְיֵגַת פְּתִילֵי חֲיֵינוּ לְתוֹךְ מִסְכַּת הַדּוֹרוֹת.

N'va-rech et ein ha-cha-yim matz-mi-chat p'ri ha-ge-fen, un-ka-deish et rosh ha-cho-desh ba-a-ri-gat p'ti-lei cha-yei-nu l'toch ma-se-chet ha-do-rot.

Let us bless the Source of life that ripens fruit on the vine, as we hallow the *Rosh Chodesh* festival, weaving new threads into the tapestry of tradition.

נְבָרֵךְ אֶת מַעַן חֲיֵינוּ, שֶׁחַחֲנֵנוּ וְקִיְמָנוּ וְהִגִּיעָנוּ לְזְמַן הַזֶּה.
N'va-rekh et ma-yan cha-yei-nu, she-he-chi-ya-nu, v'ki-a-ma-nu, v'hi-gi-a-nu laz-man ha-zeh.

Let us bless the flow of life that revives us, sustains us, and brings us to this joyous moment, this holy time.

On this Rosh Hodesh, we remember, and we seek to be remembered in the ongoing history of our people.

Personal Prayers

Your thoughts and hopes for the new month.

May the month of Cheshvan be

Together:

Ken y'hi ratzon.
May it be so.

Closing

Together:

Leisure

We had a hidden treasure of leisure
gentle as the morning air,
leisure of stories, kisses, tears,
leisure of holidays,
leisure of mama, grandma, and the aunts
gliding in a boat of light,
slowly floating
in the small boat of peace
with the moon and the heavenly bodies.

Zelda



We sing together:

אור חדש, מאור קדמון,
תנשה נפשי אליך
בשמי חדש חשוון.

Or chadash, ma'or kadmon,
Ti'na'sei naf'she ai'le'cha
Bish'mei chodesh, bish'mei chodesh
Bish'mei chodesh Cheshvan

New moon, ancient light
May my spirit rise to you
in Cheshvan's sky

Together:

Chodesh Tov! A Good Month
A Month of Health, Peace, and Fulfillment!



Sources

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Kolot: The Center for Jewish Women's and Gender Studies,
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Rachel Imeynu (our foremother), along with her sister, Leah, and their handmaidens, Bilhah and Zilpah, gave birth to the twelve sons who were to become the fathers of the twelve tribes of Israel. Deeply loved by her husband, Jacob, Rachel, like her son Joseph, is celebrated for her remarkable beauty. And like Sarah, Rachel was barren for many years. Ultimately she accomplished her goal of childbearing through her courage and persistence. Sadly, Rachel died in childbirth with her second son, Benjamin.

Tradition teaches that Rachel died on the 11th of Heshvan and that she is buried in *Kever Raḥel* (Rachel's Tomb), outside of Bethlehem, where she is said to weep for all of us, her children. In some communities, women make pilgrimages to Rachel's tomb and say special prayers for fertility and childbearing.

Our foremother Rachel is remembered for her compassion, perseverance, and devotion.



Poet **Emma Lazarus** (1849–1887) wrote the famous sonnet welcoming new immigrants to America that is engraved on the Statue of Liberty. Lazarus's paternal ancestors were among the first twenty-three Jews to settle in New York in 1654. Her *yahrzeit* is the 19th of Heshvan.

Emma Lazarus teaches us to welcome people from all backgrounds, to help those less fortunate than ourselves, and to pursue our artistic passions.

Author, Zionist, and war hero **Hannah Senesh** (1921–1944) was born in Hungary and made *aliyah* (immigrated) to Palestine. Senesh was captured and executed while courageously trying to save Hungarian Jews from the Nazis. Her numerous poems and stories are widely published. Her *yahrzeit* is the 20th of Heshvan.

Hannah Senesh's poem *Haliḥah Lekeysaryah* became popularized as the lyrics to the song *Eli, Eli*.

אֵלִי, אֵלִי, שְׁלֵא יִגְמַר לְעוֹלָם,
הַחֹל וְהַיָּם, רִשְׁרוּשׁ שֶׁל הַיָּמִים,
בְּרַק הַשָּׁמַיִם, תְּפִילַת הָאָדָם.

*Eli, Eli she lo yigamer le'olam—
haḥol vehayam, rishrush shel hamayim,
berak hashamayim, tefilat ha'adam.*



My God, my God, I pray that these things never end—
the sand and the sea, the rush of the waters,
the crash of the heavens, the prayer of the heart.

Hannah Senesh is a model of bravery and righteousness whose allegiance to the Jewish people and Israel surpassed everything else in her life.

Author **Anzia Yezierska** (1883–1970) wrote novels and short stories that vividly depict immigrant life in New York's Lower East Side. Her *yahrzeit* is the 22nd of Heshvan. Her most famous book, *The Bread Givers*, takes us inside an early twentieth-century American immigrant Jewish family in which Sarah, the narrator, struggles to find fulfillment through education, work, and love.

Anzia Yezierska teaches us about the power of observation and the joys of storytelling.