

Between the Suns

There's an interesting Halakhic (Jewish legal) term called 'bein hash'mashim', literally, 'between the suns'. This term refers to the twilight period at sunset, when it is neither day nor night and time feels fluid and hard to define. In Jewish law, this is a tricky period since so many of our mitzvot (commandments) are either performed during the day or the night. This in-between category causes some confusion. We simply don't know where we are but we know that nightfall is coming.

This is an excellent metaphor for the current moment. We are all waiting to exhale, eager to release the tension in our belly. It seems very fitting for where we find ourselves in the year. In a way, November is a 'bein hash'mashim' writ large; the time between Fall and Winter, where the veil is stretched thin as the world tips towards darkness. It is no small wonder that in the Northern Hemisphere at least, we have festivals of harvest

exhale as we ready ourselves for the second wave of the pandemic, as the light dims and we feel our isolation more keenly. There is so much loss of control in our current predicament and I know that I've been struggling with eight months of pandemic isolation. We are emotionally fatigued by all the heaviness and sadness in our world.

Still, Cheshvan makes way for Kislev, a bitterly cold month. And then, oddly, on the 25th of Kislev, we start to bring back a glimmering of hope and light as we light our first Chanukkah candle. Chanukkah, the little holiday that could: minor in the grand sweep of big Jewish ideas; compelling in our *kishkes* (gut) as we seek to take back control, curl our fingers around the darkness and push it away.

This is the time to fold into ourselves a little. For coziness, simplicity and reflection. But also for allowing us to take back control. The Maccabees took back control. And the oil burned for eight days because a brave Kohen (Priest) had the audacity to