בס"ד

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Bo | Redemption from Egypt through Benevolence

Hameir La'aretz
Spreading Torah Worldwide

MESILOT

Pathways to the Soul

Illuminating teachings and insights on the weekly parasha
by **Rabbi Yoram Michael Abargel zt"l**

From the weekly lectures of his son,
Rabbi Israel Abargel shlita

פרשת בא | אנגלית

TABLE OF CONTENTS

What did Rachel see? 1
What did Rabbi Yochanan see? 3
Eleven Commandments 4
The Chronicles of Twilight 5
The Suffering of Body and Soul 8
Pharaoh's Leprosy 9
Who Am I That I Should Go? 10
Steps of Correction 11
The First Mitzvah of the Torah 12
The Sanctification of the Moon 15
Why This Commandment? 18
Two Types of 'Ibur' (gestation) 19
The Great Secret of 'Ibur' 20
Israel Compared to the Moon 21
Go Reveal to Israel! 23
Seek Positive Points 24
Days of Shovavim - Rectification of Vision . . . 24
Summary and Practical Conclusions 25

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Parshat Bo

What did Rachel see ?

For 420 years, the Second Temple stood in its place, radiating divine light from the Holy of Holies, illuminating the world...

One day in that time period, a gentile, a descendant of Sisra,[1] wandered the streets, searching for life's meaning. "What purpose do our aimless lives serve ? Without meaning, without a goal ?" And so, he embarked on a long journey, a quest to find meaning...

One bright day, he entered his home and exclaimed to the surprise of his family, "I found what I've been looking for !" He approached the rabbinical court, and a short time later converted to Judaism, assuming the name Joseph.

His life's details post-conversion are unknown, the little that we know it's that not long after, he found a fine and modest Jewish woman, married her, and together they had a son named

Wellsprings of Wisdom

1. Sisra was the general commander of the army of Yavin, the king of Canaan. He was known far and wide as the mightiest among warriors, and was unparalleled in history.

At the age of thirty, he conquered the entire world with his strength, and there was no fortress whose walls did not crumble at the sound of his mighty voice.

As he traversed fields and forests, he roared with a voice that struck fear into lions and forest animals. They would stand frozen in place, unable to move from sheer terror. His presence caused both humans and animals to tremble, even the sea creatures trembled in fear.

When he descended to bathe in the Kishon River, many fish would be caught in his beard, enough to feed him and his people.

Due to his colossal weight, his chariot was drawn by nine hundred horses...

'Otzar Agadot Nach' (vol 1, Page 27)

'Akiva' (who would later be known as Rabbi Akiva ben Yosef).

Akiva grew up, harboring hatred for scholars, elders, and wise students. Upon encountering them a fiery hatred burned within him, a desire to break their bones, shatter them to pieces, and scatter them to the winds...

Over time however, this animosity subsided, he began occupying himself with other affairs and began searching for employment. Around the same time, a wealthy family named 'Kalba Savua' was looking for a shepherd, and Akiva offered himself for the job... Every day, he led the flock to the surrounding fields, ensuring they were well-fed.

One of Kalba Savua's daughters was Rachel. She, with her keen spiritual insight and positive perspective, saw the goodness within Akiva. She observed that beneath his exterior, rivers of love flowed: genuine love for the Al-mighty, true love for Torah, and authentic love for the Jewish people...

She realized that his external behavior was a mere façade that concealed over his inner self, and she saw his soul through the pile of sand and dust.

She approached him and said, "Akiva, your personality is awesome and full of holiness. If you promise to study Torah, I will marry you !" Akiva agreed, and in due time, they got engaged to be married.

The rumor spread, and the mansion of Kalba Savua reverberated with the cries of distress. "What ? Our daughter wants to marry someone like him ?" A doctor was rushed to check on Kalba Savua, who suddenly had a great condition that needed to be checked.

Great pressure began to be exerted upon Rachel. All the influential family members attempted to dissuade her to get her off the tree she had climbed, but without success...

Kalba Savua disowned his daughter Rachel and cast her away.

Many years passed, and it eventually became clear that

Rachel, the young woman with the positive perception, was right !

The spiritual stature of Rabbi Akiva continued to grow and blossom, and from his heart radiated love, light, and vitality...

Rabbi Akiva became one of the great sages of the Mishnah, a renowned leader for all generations, a giant of the Torah academies, one of the greatest lovers of Israel, and a great martyr in the sanctification of God's name...

Many years passed...

What did Rabbi Yochanan see ?

A gang of ruthless bandits terrorized the region, capturing almost everyone who passed by.

Not many knew, but this gang was small in number, it consisted of merely three friends—Resh Lakish and two other robbers. However, despite their small size, they were a most successful gang. Each of their robbery raids would end in a resounding success.

One day, the ruthless Resh Lakish met a Jewish man who had been touched by spiritual insight and had positive perception. And following their encounter, he repented.

The Talmud recounts this incident (Baba Metzia 84a):

The holy Amora Rabbi Yochanan, who compiled the Jerusalem Talmud, was very handsome and good-looking. The Talmud adds that his beard did not grow, so his face was smooth and tender like that of a baby.

One day, Rabbi Yochanan was bathing in the Jordan River. Seeing Rabbi Yochanan, the fearsome bandit Resh Lakish mistook him for a woman and made a daring leap across the river to reach him...

Rabbi Yochanan observed Resh Lakish's personality and discerned much good hidden within him. He saw that beneath his rough exterior, there was a lot of integrity, loyalty, modesty, and purity...

He saw that the external behavior of Resh Lakish was a mere façade, an image he had created for himself. The holy fire within him, he had covered with a mound of sand and dust...

Therefore, Rabbi Yochanan approached him and said, "My dear, my sister is more beautiful than me. If you commit to studying Torah, I will give you my sister's hand in marriage." Resh Lakish agreed.

Rabbi Yochanan began studying Torah with him, gradually removing the pile of dirt and debris. The holy Torah refined Resh Lakish's dark and gloomy soul, and bright rays of spiritual light emerged...

Years passed, and it became evident that Rabbi Yochanan, with the positive perception, was right !

Resh Lakish became one of the great Amoraim, one of the great moral and upright figures of all generations, and his holy words were cited many times in the Talmud...

In our week's Torah portion, we learn about the commandment of sanctifying the new moon.

As usual, let us start from the beginning...

Eleven Commandments

"In six days, the Holy One, blessed be He, created His world, and on the sixth day, He created man.

Rabbi Hoshaiah said: 'When the Holy One, blessed be He, created the first man, the ministering angels erred regarding him and wanted to say before him, 'Holy.'

In the center of the Garden of Eden stood the first man and contemplated... and around him stood the ministering angels and gazed at him admiringly...

The angels who gazed at man were blinded by the intensity of the light emanating from him, and therefore, they erred and wanted to say before

him 'Holy' (as they say to the Holy One, blessed be He).

To elaborate: At the beginning of all, the Holy One, blessed be He, created a general soul, a soul that encompassed all of the souls of Israel that would be eventually born throughout the generations – the souls of all the prophets, the Tannaim, the Amoraim, the righteous, and the scholars, and all the souls of Israel !

The exalted and mighty soul, G-d took and blew into the body of Adam... and its divine light burst forth with tremendous force from within and dazzled the angels...

Our sages reveal to us that immediately upon his creation, man was commanded with six mitzvot, namely: idolatry, blasphemy, murder, forbidden relationships, theft, and establishing courts.

Noah was commanded the seventh mitzvah, which is the prohibition of eating a limb from a live animal, as it is said: 'But you shall not eat flesh with its blood.' (Genesis 9:4).

These seven commandments are called the 'Seven Noahide Laws.'

Abraham our father was commanded with the eighth mitzvah, which is the commandment of circumcision.

Isaac our father was commanded with the ninth mitzvah, the commandment of tithing.

Jacob our father was commanded with the tenth mitzvah – the prohibition of eating the sciatic nerve.

And Judah, the fourth son of Jacob, was commanded with the eleventh mitzvah – the mitzvah of levirate marriage.

And in the year 2238 to creation, the children of Israel descended to Egypt...

The Chronicles of Twilight

In the first period of their settlement in Egypt, they still held steadfast their ground – the holiness of the holy tribes, the sons of Jacob, was a fortress of protection for the people of Israel.

Parshat Bo - The Chronicles of Twilight

Those years when the holy tribes lived were days of light and radiance... divine light shone openly.

In every Torah and prayer, the sweet sensation of 'the closeness to God is good' (Psalms 73:28) was felt, the flowing light descending from the heavens permeated and infused everything...

The very they breathed was a spiritual air, a clear and pure air...

Their hearts surged with love to the divine, like waves of the sea, aspiring to rise and stand before G-d...

However, gradually, this era began to fade away; the figures of glory that influenced grace and holiness slowly disappeared... The first to pass away was Jacob, our forefather, and after him, his holy sons, the tribes of G-d, began to depart the world one after another...

And suddenly on one bright day, the bright and lofty generation was no longer; Levi, son of Jacob, the last figure to pass, was buried, and the children of Israel returned to their homes in Goshen with bowed heads.

A new era began – the twilight era...

The melodious prayer in the synagogues continued as usual; the study halls filled with Torah scholars as usual. And the forces of impurity started crafting their sinister net...

Let us imagine for a moment what a Jew who lived in this twilight era must have written in his diary:

Sunday, 1st of Shevat, year 2300 to creation. Today, after completing my regular Talmudic studies, I went home, and on the way, I erred and spoke ill of Shimon...

A feeling of disappointment filled my heart, 'How did I stumble, do I not have any self-control ?'

Yesterday in the evening, my wife sent me to buy groceries, but on the way, I stumbled upon forbidden sights, immodest sights...

I feel as if the air has been squeezed out of my lungs, a heavy weight rests upon my heart...

Parshat Bo - The Chronicles of Twilight

Today, I woke up with a feeling of distress, 'How did I sin, where is my fear of Heaven? How can such terrible flaws be corrected?'

I arrived at the synagogue and took my place; more precisely, my body sat there, I was no longer there... all my internal spiritual vitality has dissipated – as though a black hole took its stead...

The prayers somehow I recited, and I rose from my place heavily and went outside. On my way home I bought a drink, opened it, and intended to drink... but suddenly I stopped, thunderstruck, 'Did I make the blessing? Beforehand my lips mumbled something, was it a blessing?'

Ultimately, I decided to make a blessing again, to be on the safe side. Immediately upon finishing the blessing, I suddenly realized that indeed this was the second time I was reciting the blessing – oh, Master of the world, I committed the grave sin of uttering the name of G-d in vain...

My heart was stunned in astonishment, and I began to berate myself in all the self-deprecating reproaches in the world...

I arrived home to find it upside down and one big mess, and I seethed with anger

And I screamed as I had never screamed before...

When I calmed down a bit, I remembered the saying of our sages (Zohar, Genesis 27b): 'Anyone who gets angry is akin to idolatry worship'... my heart went cold – I felt that never had there been a wicked person like me. Never, in all of history, was there a person who sinned and faltered at every moment of his life, like me...

And my distress intensified, and my mind was lost somewhere underneath mounds of distress, pain, and self-hate...

The strength of the soul that characterizes free people was gone...

And then one day it happened. The door of our house burst open in a storm, and Egyptian soldiers with whips

entered led by German Shepherd dogs. They did not need to exert themselves much, and in an instant, I turned into their slave..."

The Suffering of Body and Soul

The Egyptian exile was the most severe exile, it was an exile that crushed the body and utterly decimated the spirit. Parents saw their children suffer, husbands their wives, and women their husbands, and no one could do anything ! The storm of sorrow engulfed everyone, no one was spared...

Long years passed in this way... And every now and then, the thought crossed their mind: "Oh, Master of the Universe ! When will these wicked Egyptians cease ?..." But, never did this wish cross their lips ! They all felt that they had no right to turn to the Holy One, blessed be He. 'Behold, someone wicked like me, full of sins and transgressions, has never existed before. With what right can I turn to the Al-mighty.'

The vicious cycle of sinful depression revolved on, dragging and sucking into it any hope of freedom... And a moment before the final despair a pure thought would emerge saying: 'Behold, the Al-mighty is a good and merciful Father, if I repent, He will surely accept my repentance'...

No sooner had that glimmer of hope taken its place... and immediately another thought pushed it away:

'You ? ! You wish to repent ? You know the sins you've committed, you know your darkened heart, you know that you are one of the great desecrators of G-d in this generation ! From where do you get the audacity to turn to the Creator asking for forgiveness ? Forget it. You have no chance ! G-d will never accept your repentance !'...

And the small, defiant tear that slid from the corner of the eye, marked the complete despair of any attempt to repent... and the Jew returned to his servitude and hardship...

And thus, 116 years passed over the people of Israel in bitter enslavement !...

Pharaoh's Leprosy

It was a day like any other day. Pharaoh rose from his royal chamber, stretched, and was horrified when he approached the mirror... A strange voice emanated from his throat...

His palace attendants rushed to him and stopped in their tracks thunderstruck with amazement: Pharaoh was afflicted, his entire flesh was covered with ugly red and white sores, ulcerated, and swollen.

The royal physician came laden with medical instruments, and scratched his forehead, he was speechless thinking: How can I heal this strange looking leper ? And suddenly a wicked and sinister idea flashed in his mind. I will find a scapegoat, I will enable him to vent his nerves on someone else, and thus, at least he will not punish me for being useless...

Pharaoh hollered, impatiently: Come on, already, what are you mumbling about - speak up clearly !

The physician replied: 'After careful thought and deliberation, the remedy for His Highness is to bathe twice a day in the blood of babies...

And don't waste a bit, down to the last drops of their blood...

At once, Pharaoh, the cruel and terrible monster, ordered his servants to slaughter 300 infants every day, 150 infants for the morning bath, and 150 for the evening bath...

The doors to the houses were pried open with a kick, and Egyptian soldiers entered with baskets to collect babies into them...

Their strength had run out. There was not even the tiniest bit of vitality left in the people of Israel, they were no longer attached to any reality...

Yet, finally, the long-awaited moment arrived. Israel lifting their faces upward to the Al-mighty, and cried out a loud and terrible cry, a cry that shook all of the creations in the universe, and caused tremors and quakes in all the worlds - "And the children

of Israel sighed from the labor, and cried out" (Exodus 2:23).

The cry that the people of Israel cried in the land of Egypt was a cry without a voice. Yet, despite this, it was a threatening and terrible cry, powerful in its strength, and heavy in its intensity...

It was a simple cry, a cry of the heart, a cry without words and without voice, yet in it all their strengths and emotions gathered and formed this terrible cry...

And it was this cry that was accepted on High,[2] "And God heard" (Exodus 2:24) and changed the course of history...

Who Am I That I Should Go ?

In the distant Midian, Moses walked about, surrounded by flames of holiness and sublime awe, tending Jethro's flock in the wilderness of Midian.

Wellsprings of Wisdom

2. Rabbi Shimson David Pinkus writes as follows (Shearim B'Tefillah - Page 43):

It is very common that a person, in their bitterness and despondency cannot open their mouth in prayer. Sometimes this is due to the overwhelming sorrow and brokenness of his heart, and yet at other times, it is because they feel distant from the Creator and unworthy of approaching Him. In all of these states, one ceases to pray.

But ponder upon the following analogy: it is like someone searching for a treasure of sapphires, digging into the earth here and there in the quest for the treasure. Suddenly, they reach a place where the earth is so hard that he cannot penetrate it in any way. They try and try, but are unsuccessful. What do they do ? They go to search and dig elsewhere...

But how foolish can one be !

They have reached the very sapphire, this is the very reason that it was so difficult to dig into. One would do well not to move from there until they know and find a way to bring the rare treasure home.

Similarly, when one experiences brokenness of the heart, and feel unable to open their mouth in prayer due to immense sorrow and spiritual distance from G-d, behold, the very desired treasure is before you, the sapphire of true prayer – the most beautiful prayer is a genuine cry. Cry to the L-rd from the depth of your heart...

Parshat Bo - Steps of Correction

On the 15th day of Nisan in the year 2447 to the creation of the world, a goat ran away from the flock. Moses set out to chase it... The pursuit ended, and Moses began to return with the goat to the flock. Suddenly, a burning bush appeared before him - "The bush was not consumed" (Exodus 3:2), and Moses approached to see...

Suddenly, the Al-mighty revealed Himself to Moses and said: Moses! I want to make you a messenger to redeem My children, the people of Israel!...

Moses lowers his eyes and says: Master of the Universe, "Who am I, that I should go to Pharaoh and that I should take the children of Israel out of Egypt" (Exodus 3:11)? Master of the Universe, I am not worthy -

I have not yet completely purified myself, I have not finished sanctifying myself... Master of the Universe, I am so far removed from You, I am not worthy...

Rabbi Benjamin Rabinowitz, in 'Mishnat Rabbi Benyamin,' explains as follows:

'Master of the Universe', argued Moses, 'the children of Israel have been enslaved for decades in a harsh and bitter servitude, in poverty, scarcity, pressure, and distress. Through the severity of their bondage, they have been cleansed of all their impurities and all their defilement has been cast off.

But I, Master of the Universe, have been spared, and have not been subjected to this slavery, and accordingly, the impurity has not ceased from me, and I am therefore not worthy to redeem them. They are in a higher and more exalted state than I am...

Eventually, after being persuaded and cajoled by G-d over the course of many hours of prophecy, Moses finally agreed to accept the mission...

Steps of Correction

Moses, on a mission from the Lord, arrives in Egypt and gathers the people of Israel. Before him stand wounded

and battered Jews, beaten and afflicted, missing limbs, crouching and groaning...

Moses says: Dear brothers, the Lord sent me to bring you good news: the time of your redemption has come !

Moses comes before Pharaoh, but Pharaoh refuses to let the people of Israel go and sends him away in shame...

The ten plagues descended upon Egypt within a year, but the Torah does not clearly specify when each plague occurred, nor how many days each of the plagues lasted.

There are various interpretations from our sages on this matter. We will present Rashi's approach (Exodus 7:25):

Moses was warned about the plague three weeks before it occurred, and in the fourth week, the plague would occur.

In the month of Tammuz, the Egyptians were smitten with the plague of blood. In Av - frogs. Elul - lice. Tishrei - wild beasts. Cheshvan - pestilence. Kislev - boils. Tevet - hail. Shevat - locusts. Adar - darkness.

The plague of darkness ended, and on the 29th of Adar, G-d revealed Himself to Moses and commanded him with the first mitzvah...

The First Mitzvah of the Torah

On the eve of Rosh Chodesh Nisan, 15 days before the exodus of the people of Israel from Egypt, in the evening, just before dusk, the L-rd revealed Himself to Moses and Aaron, and taught them the first commandment to Israel, the commandment of sanctifying the new moon.

Although, as we recounted, this was the twelfth commandment ever given to mankind, nevertheless, it was the first commandment which Israel was commanded.

Let's take a moment to explain the concept of this commandment.

Rabbi Pinchas Kehati, wrote (Introduction to Tractate Rosh Hashanah):

As is known, our calendar is based on the lunar months, according to the orbit of the moon around the Earth.

The moon, in its traverse across the sky, appears to us renewing itself from time to time. This time period between one renewal of the moon and the next is what we call a 'month.'

The renewal of the moon every month derives from the fact that, as we know, the moon does not have its own glow but rather 'receives' its light from the sun. Thus, only the part facing the sun illuminates, and it appears to us illuminated entirely or partially, depending on the moon's position relative to the sun. Every month leading up to the fifteenth of the month, since we see the side of the moon facing the sun, the moon's light increases and continues. However, from the middle of the month onwards, the side facing us starts darkening, not receiving light from the sun, and the moon's light begins to wane until the end of the month.

The moon is then not visible to us at all because it is directly between the Earth and the sun. When the moon begins its orbit again, we see once again a thin slimmer of light, and at that moment, the 'birth of the moon' takes place, as if it is born anew...

The Al-mighty entrusted the wisdom pertaining to the new moon to the sages of Israel, and with this secret, they knew how to sanctify the months. However, even though they knew to make all calculations necessary, it was forbidden for them to sanctify solely based on their knowledge. Instead, they had to sanctify the moon based on the testimony of two witnesses who saw the "birth of the moon," the thin sliver of light. Thus, they were commanded: "This month is for *you*" - meaning, see for yourselves and then sanctify, indicating the commandment to sanctify the month was based primarily upon observation.

To expand further:

Parshat Bo - The First Mitzvah of the Torah

There are two possible days for the new moon, either the thirtieth day of the month, the thirty-first day. If they sanctified the thirtieth day, it became the first day of the next month (1st of the month), and the previous month was automatically 29 days. If they sanctified the thirty-first day, that became the first day of the next month, and the previous month was 30 days. This depended on the testimony of the witnesses.

If the witnesses saw the moon renewed on the evening of the thirtieth, namely on the 29th at night, they came to the Great Court and testified that they saw the moon. The head of the court declared the thirtieth day sanctified as the first day of the next month.

But if the moon was not seen on the night of the thirtieth or the witnesses did not manage to come on the thirtieth day, the previous month completed 30 days, and the thirty-first day became the first day of the next month...[3]

This is the commandment of sanctifying the month, with which Moses was commanded. A thousand years (approximately) passed since then, and the members of the Great Assembly instituted a blessing to be said on the moon once a month...

To expand even further...

Wellsprings of Wisdom

3. Tumult in Jerusalem. In a large courtyard adjacent to the Holy Temple, called "Beit Ya'azek," tables were set, and grand, festive meals were prepared.

For what reason?

The moon, which gradually diminishes, signals the end of the current month. The Hebrew month approaches its conclusion, and already by the 29th day, the month has been completed. Now it is necessary to determine whether the next day, the 30th day, will be an extension of the current month (leap day) or the beginning of a new month.

In all of the land of Israel, in every city and beyond, the inhabitants waited for this crucial outcome. They needed to know when Yom Kippur will occur, when the festival of Sukkot will begin, or conversely, when to cease eating leavened bread and when to celebrate the Passover Seder.

The decision was pronounced by the Great Court in Jerusalem, for "out of Zion shall go forth the Torah, and the word of the Lord from Jerusalem" (Isaiah 2:3).

The Sanctification of the Moon

The members of the Great Assembly instituted the blessing on the moon every month when it renews.

Rabbi Ovadiah Yosef[4] wrote (Chazon Ovadia - Chanukah, page 316):

One who sees the moon in its renewal blesses the Kiddush Levanah blessing. Our sages said (Tractate Sofrim 12:1): We only bless the moon when it is pleasantly scented. This is explained to mean that the proper time for the blessing is when the moon shines beautifully, and has grown and illuminates its surroundings, as stated in Ecclesiastes: "And the light is sweet, and it is good for the eyes" (Ecclesiastes 11:7)...

The reason for this mitzvah is explained (Levush, Orach Chaim 426:1): In the lunar movements,

Wellsprings of Wisdom

Multitudes of people would cast their eyes to the skies, searching for a thin glimmer of light, to identify the moment of the renewal of the moon. Perhaps they would merit to discern the renewed moon and be able to testify to it before the court, and according to their testimony, the month would be sanctified.

However, this was not an easy task, as the moon's crescent was still extremely thin and difficult to discern. Sharp vision, coupled with good viewing conditions was necessary – clear skies and clean air. Nevertheless, the effort was worthwhile and very meaningful.

If they succeed in sighting the new moon today, they can hurry to "Beit Ya'azek," submit their testimony to the court, and partake in the grand occasion of sanctifying the new month!

Indeed, at "Beit Ya'azek," preparations had been made to welcome the witnesses. It was crucial to encourage their arrival so that the High Court could sanctify the month as required – based on eyewitness accounts. The large and lavish meals prepared only served to heighten the joy of the mitzvah that permeated the entire proceedings, inspiring numerous witnesses to come and participate in the celebration.

Although the testimony of merely two witnesses is sufficient to sanctify the month, nonetheless this great effort and festivity was done so as to accustom the people to come to the court to testify the sight of the new moon in its renewal. This also ensures that there will not be a situation where no witnesses come at all...

(Rosh Chodesh BeHalacha u'BAgadah, Page 17)

we observe the awesome work of G-d and His strength, more so than in all the other stars. Their movements are not as visible to everyone, like the movement of the moon, which everyone sees orbiting and encompassing the entire sky every month. It is akin to accepting the Divine Presence every month, as we see in it the greatness of His deeds, and the moon also symbolizes and hints to the Divine Presence. Therefore, we bless it standing and we raise our eyes toward it...

Our great sages greatly extolled the virtue of this sacred mitzvah...[5]

Rabbi Menachem Nachum of Chernobyl, said (Meor Einayim, Parashat Bereishit):

Even though the people of Israel are currently in the state of

Wellsprings of Wisdom

4. The congregation had just finished the evening prayers in the synagogue of Rabbi Rabbi Ovadia Yosef. The attendees, led by the Rabbi, exited, preparing to sanctify for the moon.

The assembled crowd raised their eyes to the sky and observed that the moon was covered by dark clouds. They couldn't make the blessing, and stood and waited for the clouds to part.

During the wait, they shared with Rabbi Ovadia the tales of the rabbis of the Abuchatzeira family, who could move the clouds with the gesture of their hands, suggesting that perhaps the Rabbi would do the same.

However, Rabbi Ovadia chuckled and said in humility, "I will do so, but it will prove to be ineffective."

And then, Rabbi Ovadia moved his hand, signaling at the clouds to part... and the clouds parted, and the moon was revealed in all its radiance !

(Yachid BeDoro - Page 129)

5. Once, the righteous Rabbi Shlomo of Karlin, traveled with his disciple, Rabbi Mordechai of Lechvitz. It was the last eve when they could perform Kiddush Levanah, the sanctification of the moon, and the moon appeared before them.

Rabbi Shlomo requested that the coachman halt the carriage so they could descend and bless the moon. The Jewish coachman, who was a simpleton, descended the carriage as well preparing to make the blessing. However, the coachmen quickly became involved in maintenance of the coach and horses, mumbling the blessing for the moon.

smallness and scarcity, at the time of Kiddush Levanah however, we enter the dimension of the unique connection that existed at the giving of the Torah, a connection that expands like the waxing of the new moon. At this time, one who is animated by the divine spirit, experiences great spiritual pleasure and closeness to the Creator to be sanctified in His Holiness...[6]

Now, let us return to the land of Egypt...

Wellsprings of Wisdom

At the sight of this blatant disrespect for the sacred prayer, a smirk of disdain appeared on the lips of the disciple Rabbi Mordechai. However, Rabbi Shlomo of Karlin looked on with a stern countenance at his disciple.

Rabbi Mordechai turned to his master and said, "I understand I have erred, and the Rabbi is displeased with me, however I request that he explain my mistake."

Rabbi Shlomo explained: "When, God forbid, accusations against man arise in the heavens, accusing angels build partitions and dividers to prevent the prayers of the righteous from ascending to the heavens to annul the decree.

However, prayers like these (the blessing for the moon) are considered small and insignificant by the accursed accuser, and he pays them no heed.

However, when they ascend and stand before the throne of glory, they have the power to overpower all accusers, bringing blessings of goodness to the people of Israel..." (Shema Shlomo page 49).

6. The Be'er Hetev (Orach Chaim 602:4) recounts the following tale:

A Jew was once apprehended by murderers at night, who intended to kill him. The Jew addressed his assailants, stating that as is the common custom, a condemned person is allowed one last request before execution, and expressed his desire to make a last request.

When asked what he wanted as a last wish, he informed them that he desired to fulfill the commandment of "Kiddush Levanah" (sanctification of the moon).

The criminals agreed.

It was at the beginning of the Hebrew month, when the moon had just been renewed. The Jew stood up and sanctified the moon with great intent. Following the blessing, he continued the prayer, springing up as is customary to the words: "Just as I leap against you yet cannot touch you, so too shall none of my enemies be able to harm me."

He repeated this ritual three times, jumping up and saying these prayers, and suddenly a great wind

Why This Commandment ?

The people of Israel were still enslaved in Egypt... the plague of darkness had just ended, and the hearts were filled with hope: perhaps now, after nine plagues, Pharaoh's stubborn heart would yield, and be freed ?

All talk and conversation among Jews revolved around redemption, the future - 'Have you heard ? Moses said that soon we will leave Egypt and receive the G-d's holy commandments.'

And it was then, on the 29th day of Adar, right before sunset, that Moses and Aaron were commanded the mitzvah of 'sanctifying the new month.'

The following two burning and pertinent questions are well known:

A. In another 65 days, the Israelites would stand at the foot of Mount Sinai and receive all 613 commandments, so why was the commandment of 'sanctifying the new month' singled out ? Why now ?

B. The timing of this command seems peculiar. The exile hadn't yet ended, hearts were anxious with worry and hope, all were wondering, 'When will we finally leave ?' And it is particularly at this time that God commands regarding 'sanctifying the new month ? !'

The answer to these two questions is based on an expression in the Talmud (Rosh Hashanah 20b): "Abba the father of Rav Samlai

Wellsprings of Wisdom

miraculously carried him up and far away from there. The murderers were left behind, bewildered and speechless.

The Be'er Hetev concludes by stating, "I have also heard that one who sanctifies the moon, from that day onward need not worry that they might die that month (from unnatural causes)."

Thus, from the day one sanctifies the moon until the end of the month, they are protected from thieves, enemies, and evildoers who may rise up against him seeking to kill him.

Similarly, if he engages in military operations, he will be spared death by virtue of the blessing of the moon (Kaf Hachayim 426:12).

said to Shmuel, does the master know the matter that was taught regarding the 'secret of Ibur' ?"...

Let's start with clarifying the simple meaning of these words...

Two Types of 'Ibur' (gestation)

The Torah commands us the two instructions: A. To sanctify the beginning of the month. B. To celebrate the festivals in their appropriate seasons: Passover - during the springtime, Shavuot - during the harvest season, and Sukkot - during the ingathering season.

Sanctifying the new month depends on the lunar cycle, and the festival dates rely on the solar year (the festivals correspond to the seasons of the year).

To fulfill these two commandments requires great wisdom. The solar year - the days that it takes the sun to circle the earth - totals 365 days.

Whereas the lunar year- the days of the monthly cycle when the moon circles the earth, multiplied by twelve months - amount to 355 days (numerically 355 spells out the word Shanah - a year).

Thus, the solar year is about 11 days and 6 hours longer than the lunar year, which eventually would cause the autumn festivals to slide back into the summer season, and the spring festival to fall out earlier in the next year's winter. Consequently, Passover wouldn't align with spring, and Sukkot wouldn't align with the ingathering season...

Moreover, each lunar month contains approximately 29 days, 12 hours, and 44 minutes (when the months are multiplied by 12, the lunar year consists of approximately 355 days).

Rosh Chodesh would be celebrated when the new moon was first sighted by witnesses, not when the actual renewal of the new moon took place, and would need to be applied to a full day, not parts of the day...

To solve these issues, and to cause the solar year and the lunar year to synchronize, our

sages instituted the two types of 'Ibur' - 'Ibur HaChodesh' and 'Ibur HaShanah'. As stated in the Mishnah (Sanhedrin 1:1), 'Ibur HaChodesh (augmentation of the month) and 'Ibur HaShanah (augmentation of the year) are done in the presence of three [judges]'

'Ibur HaChodesh' means we 'augment' the month, turning a 29.5-day month into a 30-day month.

'Ibur HaShanah' means we 'augment' the year. Every few years, we add the days that are surplus from the solar year over the lunar year, and together they constitute an extra month, called 'Adar Sheni' (Second Adar).

Out of every 19 years, 7 are 'leap years,' meaning they contain 13 lunar months. Consequently, Nissan returns to its proper place in the spring season, and Passover falls at its appointed time, followed thereafter by all the other festivals.

The intricate and astronomical knowledge of how to calculate the sanctification of the month and synchronize the sun with the moon is called 'the secret of Ibur.'

Moses and Aaron were commanded in Egypt about the sanctification of the new month, and likewise this commandment was the role of great sages and the righteous of Israel for generations...

The Great Secret of 'Ibur'

All that we have explained until now is the revealed part of the secret of 'Ibur'... However, gestation also has a concealed and hidden part, revealed only to the greats of the generation.

The Holy Torah extolled the great sages of Israel who knew the concealed and hidden part of the secret of gestation as it is said, "For it is your wisdom and understanding in the eyes of the nations" (Deuteronomy 4:6)...

Thus, it's understood that we know little of the lofty secrets.

Nevertheless, we have found an understandable explanation:

When it arised in the Divine will to create the world, it was

composed of three dimensions: space, soul, and time.

The dimension of space is the 'area' in which all creation exists in this world.

The dimension of soul is the divine 'life force' that descends into the world, entering every creation (each according to its level), granting it life.

Finally, the dimension of time is the 'period' in which each creation lives. It is the moment when the soul binds with the world, defining a specific time for the soul's mission in this world.

The dimension of time connects between the dimension of space and soul, and it dictates the quality of life and one's specific destiny.

The dimension of time was entrusted to the sages of Israel to use at their discretion. This also provided them the opportunity to elevate and unify between time and the level beyond and above time (the secret of 'gestation').

Certainly, the knowledge of how to control the dimension of time is immensely profound and lofty, and this then, is the secret of 'Ibur'...

Although this subject is endless, there's a relevant point worth sharing on this topic...

Israel Compared to the Moon

In the Midrash Tehillim, 'Shochar Tov' (Psalm 22, part 12), it is said that Israel is likened to the moon.

To explain the Midrash's words:

The moon has a fixed cyclical pattern - in the initial days of the month, it waxes and grows each day, until finally, in the middle of the month, it reaches its full power and strength.

Then, the days of its descent begin, and the moon starts to diminish until, ultimately, it completely disappears.

The phenomenon of the moon's disappearance from sight

is called 'Ibur,' or gestation, like a fetus in its mother's womb.

The Jewish people are compared to the moon. There are periods when a Jew feels like they are ascending and growing every second and moment, their soul becoming more and more established... and suddenly, days of descent begin, with failures and bitterness, until they feel they have completely vanished ! - They have no existence...

This sensation is called 'Ibur.'

In the words of Rabbi Eliezer Shlomo Shick ('Asher BeNachal,' Vol. 4, page 323):

When a Jew begins to serve the Lord with joy and enthusiasm, engaging in Torah and prayer, they connect the faculty of 'kingdom' with the higher faculties above them.

This unity fosters the connection between the Holy One, blessed be He and His Divine Presence.

Then, after the connection, they enter the secret of 'Ibur,' and during this gestational period, they experience various afflictions, pains, constraints, and bitterness until they merit the birthing process.

Upon completion of this process, a new inspiration of knowledge and piety overcomes a person. One can taste and feel the sweetness of G-d's infinite light, the light of the Eternal...

And in order to attain new intellects and revelation of the divine once again, one must go through the entire process again: connection and 'Ibur,' and birth.

This applies to anyone who enters into the holy service, who constantly engages in prayer and solitude, which elevates one to the state of unity.

Through this, one comes afterward to the state of 'Ibur,' which represents all the descents one will experience.

If one strengthens themselves no matter what the difficulties and trials are, then they will merit the birth of the divine powers.

If, however one does not strengthen themselves, but delays the hour, then they will miscarry - God forbid and will become 'fallen,' which is the descent from their level.'"

Go Reveal to Israel !

Fifteen days before the redemption from Egypt, the Al-mighty revealed to Moses and said to him: 'The cause of the exile was because the nation of Israel fell into despair - the children of Israel felt they were the worst, and the most sinful, and had no chance or hope left.

Due to the severity of their flaws and iniquities, they felt that they were lost from both worlds, from this world and from the world to come - and this despair crushed their souls.

And the Egyptians came and harvested the fruits of this despair...

I ask of you, Moses, go and teach them to learn from the monthly movement of the moon...

In the words of Rabbi Eliezer Shlomo Shick ('Asher BeNachal' Vol. 3, page 33):

The moon never despairs ! Even when its light completely disappears, it continues to progress until it successfully overcomes the descent, and it starts to shine and radiate, waxing once again...

So too, every Jew should know that even if they undergo difficulties, falling into the abyss and lower, they must not despair, it's forbidden to despair !

Because every descent holds within it the secret of gestation, known to the righteous ones, the chosen of the generations, who reveal to us time and again to never despair.

Even if one transgressed innumerous times the commandments of the Torah, they must start anew.

For there is the principle that everything will turn around for the good, we need only to clear our minds and flawed understanding, and fulfill that which the righteous reveal to us, and we must know that it's the truth...

We must also understand that there is a smooth and easy way to pass through these days of 'gestation' peacefully...

Seek Positive Points

Rabbi Nachman of Breslov wrote ('Likutei Halachot, Hashkamat Haboker 1:12):

When the new moon was in its infancy, people needed to search for it, and even though it was almost invisible, they searched for the thinnest glimmer of light breaking through it, and when they succeeded in finding it, the Jewish court would proclaim: Sanctified, Sanctified. And thus, they transformed an ordinary and dreary day into Rosh Chodesh !

Similarly, when a Jew looks at themselves positively and finds the good within themselves, they gain the strength to overcome any turmoil during the period of gestation !

When a Jew, during times of gestation, is aware of their goodness, the evil forces cannot convince them that they are lost and devoid of a backbone !...

Likewise, when one looks at every Jew positively, finding the good within them - this reveals their holiness, and as a result elevates and sanctifies them, and the proclamation can already be made regarding them: ‘Sanctified, Sanctified !’...

Now that we understand this, let us mention the days of 'Shovavim'...

Days of Shovavim - Rectification of Vision

6. As is well known and publicized, we are currently in the weeks called the days of 'Shovavim,' when the divine service is to correct the blemishes one affects to their faculty of sight.

During these days every Jew needs to correct three types of blemishes in one’s vision:

A. Blemishes of immodesty - with improper sights, with movies and the like.

B. Blemishes of evil glances - when looking at oneself negatively with evil eyes, not seeking 'points of merit' within themselves, which in itself caused them to descend further and cast them into the abyss.

C. Blemishes of evil glances - When looking at others negatively with evil eyes, instead of seeking their 'points of merit,' and the 'Jewish spark' within them, which itself caused the other to remain far and distant from God and His Torah."

May we merit that the Blessed One be He rectify our faculties of vision speedily.

Summary and Practical Conclusions

1. The holy sages of the Great Assembly enacted the sanctification of the moon every month when it renews. The time for this blessing is when the moon shines beautifully and its light is clear and bright, when it has waxed somewhat and already illuminates its surroundings.

2. During the sanctification of the moon, there is a spiritual union in Heaven, akin to what occurred during the giving of the Torah, a 'face to face' spiritual connection in which the moon is elevated and sustained.

One who possesses a sensitivity to the divine, feels then a great spiritual pleasure and closeness to the Creator, to merit to be sanctified with His blessed Holiness.

3. Our Rabbis wrote: one who sanctifies the moon, from that day of sanctification until the end of the month, will not die an unnatural death. Therefore, from the day of the moon's sanctification until the end of the month, they are protected from robbers, enemies, and attackers who may try to kill them. Similarly, if they go out to battle and perform military campaigns, they will be saved from death in the merit of the sanctification of the moon.

4. The elementary reason for this commandment is, because in the movement of the moon, one sees the work of the Blessed One and His might, even more than in the other stars, whose movements are not as visible to the eye.

The moon, which everyone sees encompassing the entire firmament every month, hints to the divine presence, and is to us, akin to accepting the Divine Presence every

month. Therefore, it's necessary to bless the moon while standing and to direct one's gaze toward it.

5. Another inner reason for this commandment according to Chassidut:

It's known and explained to all who are dedicated to Divine service, that there are always 'ascents and descents,' and after every ascent, a descent follows, which is itself essentially the means and preparation for an ascent to the next level.

When a person finds themselves in a descent, they are in great danger of falling into despondency and despair and ceasing to guard their sanctity. To prevent this, at such a time one must find within themselves 'points of merit.' Through these points of merit, they can begin a renewed ascent. This is the secret of the sanctification of the moon, for every time it 'disappears,' precisely then, we search for its 'point of merit', however small, to proclaim and sanctify the month over it.

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However, good and positive vision upon others, draws out and emphasizes their good and proper traits, and draws them nearer to G-d.

Shabbat Shalom!

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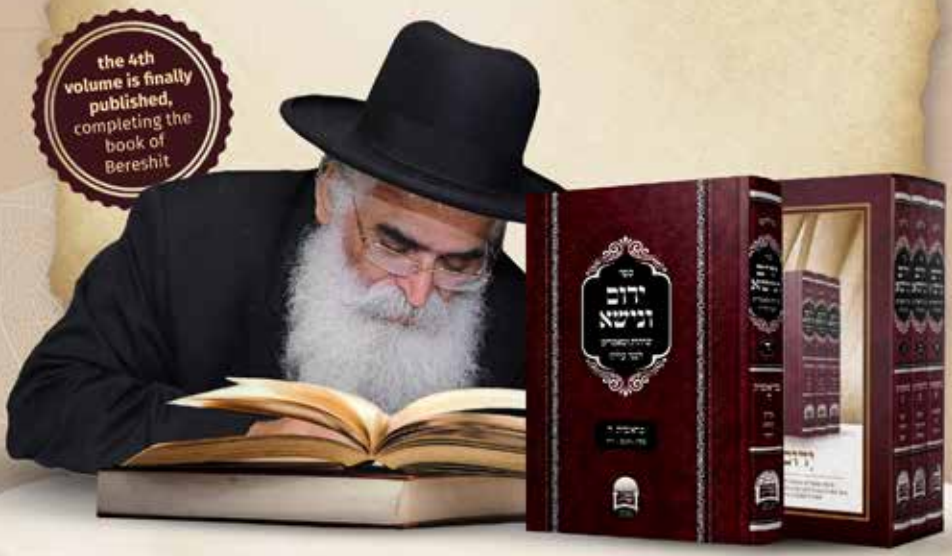

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Miami	5:36 pm	6:31 pm	7:07 pm
Los Angeles	4:53 pm	5:52 pm	6:24 pm
Montreal	4:24 pm	5:31 pm	5:55 pm
Toronto	4:53 pm	5:58 pm	6:24 pm
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Be'er Sheva	4:43 pm	5:34 pm	6:07 pm

Pathways to the Heart

From the Words of
HaRav Yoram Abargel zt"l

The Sefer HaChinuch writes that one should make an effort to follow in G-d's ways, and observe how G-d acts with the righteous, the humble, and with the wicked, the haughty, and thereby know how to behave as well.

It is for this reason that we came to the world, our various occupations and engagements are merely a means to this end, which is to follow and emulate G-d's wondrous ways. The more we do so the more we fulfill our mission in this world.

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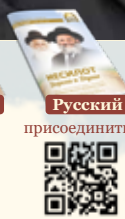

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