



*Yeshivat Ma'alot*  
*Parashat Hachodesh*  
*Rav Yehoshua Weitzman shlit"a*

ישיבת מעלות  
 פרשת החודש  
 הרב יהושע ויצמן שליט"א

### *Renewal of the Moon*

The Shabbat before Rosh Chodesh Nissan we read Parashat Hachodesh which tells of the first mitzvah given to Am Yisrael, the mitzvah of Kiddush Hachodesh (sanctifying the new month).

Rashi opens his commentary to the Torah with the famous question of Rabbi Yitzchak. He asks why the Torah does not begin with the first mitzvah given to Am Yisrael, the mitzvah of Kiddush Hachodesh. Why is it that Rabbi Yitzchak sees the mitzvah of Kiddush Hachodesh as the proper beginning of the Torah? The Zohar<sup>1</sup> asks this same question and answers that it is a worthy place to begin the Torah because it speaks of the renewal of the moon. The renewal of the moon symbolizes the renewal of Am Yisrael. Am Yisrael received the mitzvah of Kiddush Hachodesh while they were still in Egypt, as they were forming into a new nation. This mitzvah symbolizes the beginning point of Am Yisrael and the unique purpose of Am Yisrael among the nations.

The answer given in the Zohar is similar to Rabbi Yitzchak's answer found in Rashi<sup>2</sup>. Rabbi Yitzchak answers that the Torah begins from the creation of the world in order to publicize Hashem's supreme strength. This is learned from the pasuk<sup>3</sup> "כה" "מעשיו הגיד לעמו לתת להם נחלת גוים", "The strength of His actions He declared to His people, to give them the inheritance of the nations." Hashem showed His strength to Am Yisrael in order to give them the inheritance of the nations of the world, so that they can define their uniqueness from among the nations.

<sup>1</sup> Zohar, Parashat Bo, 39b

<sup>2</sup> See Midrash Tanchuma Yashan, Bereshit, ch. 11

<sup>3</sup> Tehillim 111, 6

Am Yisrael's distinctiveness is that they base their calendar on the moon where as the nations base their calendar on the sun<sup>4</sup>. This is understood from the opening pasuk of the mitzvah of Kiddush Hachodesh<sup>5</sup> "This month is for **you** the head of all months, it is the first for **you** for the months of the year." The months, the lunar calendar is something exclusive for Am Yisrael.

Reb Tzadok Hakohen of Lublin explains why Am Yisrael counts time based on the moon. He writes<sup>6</sup> that the nature of the moon is that it waxes and wanes, becomes full and then diminishes. So too, Bnei Yisrael understand that they are not complete on their own right. They only become whole because Hashem makes them whole. They long for Hashem to make them complete. Yet the nations are similar to the sun, which never changes. They *think* that they are complete, they *think* that they have attained perfection, yet they are mistaken. They do not make room for Hashem.

Parashat Hachodesh, the birth of Am Yisrael, is rooted in the moon. It reveals the true character of Am Yisrael- a nation, who like the moon, turns to Hashem to be made complete.

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<sup>4</sup> Mechilta D'rebbi Yishmael, Parashat Bo, ch. 1

<sup>5</sup> Shemot 12, 2

<sup>6</sup> Resisei Layla, 25