



The Special Lesson of the Levonoh



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Rashi in this week's parsha quotes the gemora in Chullin Daf 60b, which tells us that Hashem created the sun and moon as two equal sized planets and sources of light. However, after the moon complained that there couldn't be "two kings sharing one crown", Hashem reduced the size of the moon. As a direct result of this, every month the moon starts off as a slither and 'grows' until the whole face of the moon is visible, and then it reduces until it is no longer visible. The Pri Chodosh in סימן תכ"ו quotes a question: Why don't we say ברכת שהיינו on the new moon each month, as it begins to appear again? He answers that since it happens within 30 days from when we saw the moon last, it doesn't warrant a שהיינו.

However, we need to understand the question in the first place. Why should we make a ברכת שהיינו just because the moon becomes visible again? What does this have to do with us, and in what way should we feel a simcha over this event which would have warranted a שהיינו?

Maybe the answer can be found in the middle of the brocho which we make in Kidish Levonoh every month:

"ולבנה אמר שתתחדש עטרת תפארת לעמוטי בן
שהם עתידים להתחדש כמותה..."

"He said to the moon, that it should renew itself, as a crown of splendour for those born by Him from the womb, those who are destined to renew themselves like it."

This is quoted in the gemora Sanhedrin Daf 42a, and Rashi there explains that when Hashem renews the moon each month, He says it represents how Klal Yisroel will return to being exalted and elevated when Moshiach comes iy"H.

Rav Shimshon Refoel Hirsch expands on this idea. He says that when Klal Yisroel began their first steps as a nation in Egypt, the first mitzvah they were given was "Hachodesh Hazeh Lochem", the mitzvah of Kiddush Hachodesh-sanctifying the new moon. This

was to show them the small crescent of the new moon and say "Just as up there the moon always struggles out of darkness into light, so are you always to struggle up again out of every darkening of mind and spirit and out of every dark period of your history, up into fresh purity and clarity, into new life and brilliance!"

Furthermore, in the Jewish calendar the year follows the sun. This is in relation to certain Yamim Tovim which have to fall during particular seasons. However, the months are determined by the moon. If one studies how the months are fixed, at first glance it would seem to be very imprecise. The new moon needs to be seen by two witnesses who are required to testify in front of the Beis Din who in turn need to declare "Mekudash, Mekudash!" Until this declaration has been made, the new month doesn't start. This means that when it comes to the month of Tishri, once the witnesses have seen the new moon, it should really be the first of Tishri, and Yom Kippur 9 days later. However, if the witnesses or Beis Din get delayed, then the first of Tishri will only be on the following day and Yom Kippur will also be pushed off a day! Why doesn't the Torah rely on a more accurate system?

Rav Hirsch explains that the months, which determine on which days the Yamim Tovim fall,

are dependent on Beis Din fixing Rosh Chodesh, as opposed to Shabbos which falls every seventh day guaranteed, without requiring any human intervention. This is because the Yamim Tovim are times when Klal Yisrael and Hashem spend quality time together. Therefore, Hashem didn't want Klal Yisrael to feel they are forced to come to the 'meeting'. So he let Klal Yisrael have some input as to the exact day when Yom Tov will take place, by empowering them with the ability to fix Rosh Chodesh. (He adds that nowadays, since we were required to fix the Jewish calendar, we are a bit missing out on this point. However, in Chutz La'aretz where we have two days Yom Tov, in memory of those times, when they were unclear when Rosh Chodesh was, we still have a bit of a connection, to this special bond between us and Hashem!)

Hashem was worried that Klal Yisroel would get to a stage where they are doing the Torah and mitzvos by rote, without any feeling or connection. Therefore, once every month, He gave us the mitzvah of sanctifying the New Moon, so that we could get actively involved, and at the same time, learn the lessons from the moon, that we too might be small now, but we can grow and grow until we reach our full potential.

The pasuktells us "החודש הזה לכם ראש חדשים" to tell us, that this mitzvah of sanctifying the moon, is not some abstract thing; it is a mitzvah for our benefit. We need to learn from the moon that was changed in Sheishes Yemei Bereishis, into something which gives us a tremendous lesson, on a monthly basis. Although we have now finished the Yamim Tovim, and are about to begin the long winter, we still have a monthly boost, in the form of Rosh Chodesh. We may not say a bracha of Shehechiyanu, but we can still begin every month with new enthusiasm, determined to make the most of whatever opportunities life presents us with to be mekadesh shem shamayim!

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