

**“Bring atonement for Me for minimizing the moon”**

## **The Sun Represents Torah She'b'chsav The Moon Represents Torah She'b'al Peh**

This Shabbas Kodesh, we will read from the Torah parshas Pinchas. We do so annually either during the three weeks of **בין** “**Bein HaMetzarim**”—or just before them. At this time of the year, every Jew should mourn the destruction (“churban”) of the Beis HaMikdash and our plight in galut. We can suggest that it is for this very reason that all of the korbanos that Yisrael are commanded to offer in the Beis HaMikdash throughout the year are mentioned in this parsha. They include the two daily “tamid” offerings, and the korbanos offered on Shabbas, Rosh Chodesh and all of the annual holidays. This reinforces our belief that the Supreme King, HKB”H, will redeem us from galut in the very near future and will rebuild the Temple for us. There, we will offer all of the korbanos mentioned in this parsha to Hashem.

Hence, it is only fitting that we examine the command to offer a he-goat on Rosh Chodesh as a “korban chatas.” This korban constitutes an atonement, so to speak, for the fact that HKB”H minimized the stature of the moon throughout the entire galut. At the time of the final and complete geulah, HKB”H will correct the defect in the moon, as it is written (Yeshayah 30, 26): **“ויהיה אור—the light of the moon will be like the light of the sun.** To this end, we pray in “Kiddush HaLevana”: **“ויהי רצון: מלפניך ה' אלוקי ואלוקי אבותי למלאות פגימת הלבנה, ולא יהיה בה שום מיעוט, ויהי אור הלבנה כאור החמה וכאור שבעת ימי בראשית כמו שהיתה קודם מיעוטה, שנאמר—May it be Your will Hashem, My G-d and the G-d of my fathers, to fill the flaw of the moon, that there not be any diminution in it; and may the light of the moon be like the light of the sun and like the light of the seven days of creation, as it was before its diminution, as it is said: “The two great luminaries.”**

Let us review the pesukim pertaining to the korbanos offered on Rosh Chodesh (Bamidbar 28, 11): **“וּבְרֵאשִׁי חֲדָשֵׁיכֶם תִּקְרִיבוּ עֹלָה לַה' : פְּרִים בְּנֵי בָקָר שְׁנַיִם וְאֵיל אֶחָד כְּבָשִׂים בְּנֵי שָׁנָה שִׁבְעָה תְּמִימִים... וְשַׁעִיר עִזִּים אֶחָד—on the first of your months, you shall bring an olah-offering to Hashem: two young bulls,**

**one ram, seven male lambs in their first year, unblemished . . and one he-goat for a chatas-offering to Hashem, in addition to the Tamid olah-offering, shall it be made, and its libation.**

Regarding this matter, we find a fascinating passage in the Gemara (Chullin 60b):

**“רבי שמעון בן פזי רמי, כתיב (בראשית א-טז) ויעש אלקים את שני המאורות הגדולים וכתב את המאור הגדול ואת המאור הקטן אמרה ירח לפני הקב”ה, רבונו של עולם, אפשר לשני מלכים שישתמשו בכתר אחד. אמר לה לך ומעטי את עצמך. אמרה לפני, רבונו של עולם, הואיל ואמרתי לפניך דבר הגון אמוצי את עצמי.**

**אמר לה לך ומשול ביום ובלילה... לימנו בך ישראל ימים ושנים... ליקרו צדיקי בשמך, יעקב הקטן, שמואל הקטן, דוד הקטן. חזייה דלא קא מיתבא דעתה, אמר הקב”ה, הביאו כפרה עלי שמייעטתי את הירח, והיינו דאמר רבי שמעון בן לקיש, מה נשתנה שעיר של ראש חודש שנאמר בו [ושעיר עזים אחד לחטאת] לה, אמר הקב”ה, שעיר זה יהא כפרה על שמייעטתי את הירח.”**

**Rabbi Shimon ben Pazi notes a contradiction.** The Torah initially states (Bereishis 1, 16) that G-d created two great lights — suggesting that they were created of equal size and stature. Subsequently (ibid.), it refers to the greater light and to the lesser light — indicating that they were no longer equal. **The moon addresses HKB”H: “Master of the Universe, can two kings utilize the same crown?” He responded to the moon: “Go and diminish yourself.”** The moon replies: **“Master of the Universe, since I presented a valid and proper argument, is it appropriate that I diminish myself?”**

To console her He says: **“Go and rule by day and by night . . . let Yisrael count the days and years in accordance with the moon . . . tzaddikim will be called by your name, such as Yaakov the Small, Shmuel the Small and David the Small. Seeing that she was not consoled, HKB”H said to Yisrael: “Bring an atonement on my behalf for having diminished the moon.”** Rabbi Shimon ben Lakish points out that this is why the he-goat of Rosh Chodesh differs from all of the other

**Mussaf he-goats; only regarding the he-goat of Rosh Chodesh does the Torah employ the description “for Hashem.” HKB”H is stating that this he-goat represents His atonement for diminishing the size and stature of the moon.**

We also find this statement from Rabbi Shimon ben Lakish mentioned elsewhere in the Gemara (Shevuos 9a): “אמר הקב”ה, “שעיר זה יהא כפרה על שמיעטתי את הירח”—**HKB”H said: This he-goat will serve as an atonement for the fact that I diminished the moon.** Apropos this statement, the brilliant Rabbi Yeshayah Pik, ztz”l, writes in Masoret HaShas, in a marginal gloss on the Gemara: “זהו סוד מסודות הקבלה, ואין להבינו כמשמעו ח”ו”—this statement has mystical implications and is not to be understood literally, chas v’shalom.

His meaning is clear. It is inappropriate to suggest that we are to bring an atonement for HKB”H! We are believers, the descendants of believers, who believe that He is a just King and all of His actions are just and proper, as it states (Devarim 32, 4): “הצור—**the Rock, perfect is His work, for all His ways are justice; a faithful G-d, without iniquity; He is righteous and proper.** Furthermore, if HKB”H truly felt that it was inappropriate to diminish the light and stature of the moon, who is preventing Him from enlarging it and restoring it to its original stature? Thus, we are forced to conclude that He understood, in His infinite wisdom, that the diminution of the moon was necessary and inevitable. That being the case, why does HKB”H say: **“Bring an atonement on My behalf for having diminished the moon”?**

Additionally, we must scrutinize the moon’s statement to HKB”H: **“Seeing as I presented before You a valid argument, is it appropriate that I should diminish myself?”** Due to the moon’s convincing argument, HKB”H attempted to appease her in several ways—that Yisrael should be named after her and that tzaddikim should be named after her. At first glance, the validity of the moon’s argument is not so apparent. Seeing as HKB”H originally created the sun and the moon such that their lights would be equal, who could dare claim that it is impossible for two kings to share a single crown, if that is what HKB”H, the King of Kings, intended?

It is these difficulties that prompted the author of the Masores HaShas to remark: “זהו סוד מסודות הקבלה, ואין להבינו כמשמעו ח”ו”—this statement has mystical implications and is not to be understood literally, chas v’shalom. Yet, we see that our blessed sages recorded this statement in the Gemara and not in the Zohar hakadosh, suggesting that this passage can also be understood

within the revealed, more accessible realm—not only within the realm of Kabbalah and mysticism. Indeed, many interpretations for this passage are presented in our sacred sefarim. So, as a loyal servant of the Almighty, I, too, will propose an interpretation of this passage based on several precious introductions from our holy teachers and luminaries. We pray that Hashem will guide us along the path of truth!

## Moshe’s Countenance Resembles the Sun Yehoshua’s Countenance Resembles the Moon

We shall begin our enlightening journey by addressing that which is written in our parsha (Bamidbar 27, 18): “ויאמר ה’ אל משה: קח לך את יהושע בן נון איש אשר רוח בו וסמכת את ידך עליו, והעמדת אותו לפני אלעזר הכהן ולפני כל העדה וצויתיה אותו לעיניהם, ונתתה מהודך עליו למען ישמעו”—**Hashem said to Moshe, “Take to yourself Yehoshua bin Nun, a man in whom there is spirit, and lean your hand upon him. You shall stand him before Elazar the Kohen and before the entire assembly, and command him before their eyes. You shall place of your majesty upon him, so that the entire assembly of Bnei Yisrael will pay heed.** Rashi comments: “ונתתה מהודך עליו, זה קירון עור פנים. מהודך, ולא כל הודך, נמצינו”—**“your majesty” refers to the radiance of the skin of the face.** The fact that the passuk says **“of your majesty” implies some but not all of your majesty.** We learn from here that Moshe’s face was like the sun, while Yehoshua’s face was like the moon.

Rashi’s source is the Gemara (B.B. 75a): “ונתתה מהודך עליו, ולא כל הודך, וקנים שבאותו הדור אמרו, פני משה כפני חמה, פני יהושע כפני לבנה, אוי”—**“You shall place some of your majesty upon him,” but not all of your majesty.** The elders of that generation said: **“The face of Moshe was like the sun, while the face of Yehoshua was like the moon.”** Woe, for that shame! Woe, for that disgrace! Let us endeavor to understand why, in fact, HKB”H commanded Moshe to only impart a portion of his splendor and majesty upon Yehoshua and not his entire splendor and majesty. Additionally, what is the significance of the analogy proposed by the elders of that generation: **“פני משה כפני חמה, פני יהושע כפני לבנה”** And why did they describe the situation as one of shame and disgrace?

We can suggest an explanation based on an explanation found in the teachings of the Kedushat Levi (Shelach) regarding the passuk (Bamidbar 13, 3): **“וישלח אותם משה ממדבר פארן על פי ה’—Moshe sent them forth from the Wilderness of Paran by the word of Hashem.** Here are his sacred words:

“כי משה ודורו דור המדבר היו דמיון תורה שבכתב, ויהושע ודורו שבאו לארץ היו דמיון תורה שבעל פה. וזהו הרמז במאי דאמרו חכמינו ז”ל, פני משה כפני חמה ופני יהושע כפני לבנה, כי תורה שבעל פה מקבלת מהתורה שבכתב כמו שלבנה מקבלת מחמה. וזהו הרמז וישלח אותם משה על פי ה’, והרמז, הדור שיבואו לארץ ישראל צריכין להיות דמיון תורה שבעל פה... ולכך ישראל אשר הם בדמיון תורה שבעל פה, מונין השנה ללבנה הרמז על תורה שבעל פה.”

Because Moshe and his generation, the generation of the “midbar” represented Torah She’b’chsav; whereas Yehoshua and his generation that entered the land represented Torah she’b’al peh. This is the allusion inherent in Chazal’s statement: “The face of Moshe was like the sun, while the face of Yehoshua was like the moon.” Because Torah she’b’al peh receives from Torah She’b’chsav just like the moon receives from the sun. This then is the allusion inherent in the words: “Moshe sent them forth . . . by the word (“pi” from the word “peh”) of Hashem.” The allusion is that the generation that will enter Eretz Yisrael must represent Torah she’b’al peh . . . Therefore, Yisrael, who resemble Torah she’b’al peh, count the year according to the moon, an allusion to Torah she’b’al peh.

Let us explain his sacred words. In truth, Moshe also received Torah she’b’al peh directly from HKB”H at Sinai, as indicated by the phrase frequently encountered in the Gemara: “הלכה למשה”—it is a halachah given to Moshe at Sinai. Yet, since Moshe received everything from HKB”H with such extreme clarity, it resembles Torah She’b’chsav. Hence: “פני משה כפני חמה”—Moshe’s countenance represented the source of the light itself. In contrast, however, Yehoshua did not hear the Torah directly from HKB”H but rather from Moshe. Thus, the concept of Torah she’b’al peh—that which receives the light of Torah She’b’chsav-- originated with him. This is the implication of the statement: “פני יהושע כפני לבנה”—Yehoshua’s countenance resembled the moon, which receives its light from the sun.

This idea is repeated over and over again in the writings of the great Rabbi Tzaddok Hakohen, zy”a. Here is what he presents in Pri Tzaddik (Bereishis 2) with substantiation from the Midrash Tanchuma (Ki Tisa 36) regarding the passuk (Shemos 34, 28):

“ויהי שם עם ה’ ארבעים יום וארבעים לילה, מנין היה יודע משה אימתי יום, אלא כשהקב”ה היה מלמדו תורה בכתב היה יודע שהוא יום, וכשהיה מלמדו על פה משנה ותלמוד היה יודע שהוא לילה.”

He was there with Hashem forty days and forty nights. How did Moshe know when it was daytime? In this manner: When HKB”H would teach him Torah She’b’chsav, he knew

that it was day; and when He would teach him the Oral Law, Mishnah and Talmud, he would know that it was night.

Let us explain based on what we have discussed. During the day, when the sun shines, HKB”H learned Torah She’b’chsav with him, which resembles the light of the sun. Whereas during the night, which is illuminated by the moon, HKB”H learned Torah she’b’al peh with him, which resembles the light of the moon, receiving it light from the sun. After all, the source for all of the halachot in Torah she’b’al peh is Torah She’b’chsav. This fact is expressed by the elucidation in the Gemara (Sanhedrin 24a) regarding the passuk (Eichah 3, 6): “במחשכים הושיבני כמתי עולם, אמר רבי ירמיה זה תלמודה של --בבל” “He has placed me in darkness like the eternally dead.” Rabbi Yirmiyah said: This alludes to the Talmud of Bavel. For, the study of Torah she’b’al peh resembles the light of the moon, which illuminates the darkness of the night.

### HKB”H Did Not Reveal Torah She’b’al Peh so that We Would Toil for It

Based on these valuable introductions, we can begin to comprehend the notion of the diminution of the moon. Note the tremendous difference between Torah She’b’chsav and Torah she’b’al peh. HKB”H gave us Torah She’b’chsav—signed, sealed and delivered—from the very first word “בראשית” to the final words “לעיני כל ישראל”. We are not allowed to add or detract even one iota. Torah she’b’al peh was given to Moshe at Sinai; he passed it on to Yehoshua; thus it was transferred from generation to generation by word of mouth. In contrast to Torah She’b’chsav, it was not delivered to us with exactitude and clarity. Instead, HKB”H conferred upon the Torah-scholars of each and every generation the power to clarify and refine the halachot as they arose and pertained to their respective generation. They accomplished this feat by immersing themselves and toiling in the study of Torah she’b’al peh.

This is the message conveyed by the following Gemara (Berachos 63b): “מנין שאין דברי תורה מתקיימין אלא במי שממית עצמו עליה, -- שנאמר (במדבר יט-יד) זאת התורה אדם כי ימות באהל” from where do we know that Torah-knowledge is only retained by someone who sacrifices himself on its behalf? For, it states: “This is the Torah concerning a man should he die in a tent.” Similarly, we learn elsewhere in the Gemara (Megillah 6b): “אם יאמר לך אדם, -- יגעתי ולא מצאתי אל תאמן, לא יגעתי ומצאתי אל תאמן, יגעתי ומצאתי תאמן” if a person claims: “I labored and did not succeed,” do not believe him; “I did not labor and I succeeded,” do not believe him; “I labored and I succeeded,” believe him.



We can explain the rationale underlying HKB”H’s desire that we expend effort and toil in the study of Torah she’b’al peh based on what we have learned in the Gemara (Kiddushin 30b): **כך הקב”ה אמר להם לישראל, בני, בראתי יצר הרע ובראתי לו תורה תכלין, ואם אתם --עוסקים בתורה אין אתם נמסרים בידו-- thus has HKB”H said to Yisrael: “My son, I have created the yetzer hara and I have created the Torah as its antidote. If you engage in Torah-study, you will not be delivered into its hand.”** Thus, we learn that Torah-study is extremely beneficial and effective in subduing the yetzer hara. However, this only holds true on the condition that one toils and exerts himself in his Torah-study. For, we have learned in the Mishnah (Avos 2, 2): **יפה תלמוד תורה עם דרך ארץ שיגיעת שניהם --משכחת עון-- Torah study combined with “derech erez” is good; for exertion in both eliminates wrongdoing.** It states that **“גייעה”**—exertion—specifically, eliminates wrongdoing. It is precisely for this reason that HKB”H did not reveal to us immediately all of Torah she’b’al peh with the same clarity with which he revealed Torah She’b’chsav. Otherwise, we would not have to toil in our Torah-study, and it would be impossible to overcome the yetzer hara.

This explains very nicely what we have learned elsewhere in the Gemara (Gittin 60b): **“לא כרת הקב”ה ברית עם ישראל אלא בשביל דברים שבעל פה, שנאמר (שמות לד-כז) כי על פי הדברים האלה כרתי אתך ברית --ואת ישראל-- HKB”H established a covenant with Yisrael solely for the sake of Torah she’b’al peh . . .** As we have learned, the only way to overcome the yetzer hara is to exert effort and toil in the study of Torah she’b’al peh. Hence, HKB”H only entered into a covenant with Yisrael on the basis of Torah she’b’al peh, so that they would be able to serve him wholeheartedly—without outside interference.

### Toil in Torah She’b’al Peh Was Necessitated by the Sin of Adam HaRishon

It appears that we can substantiate the fact that the purpose of toiling in the study of Torah is in order to overcome the yetzer hara, based on a tremendous chiddush from the Shela hakadosh. He teaches us that prior to the “cheit Eitz HaDa’as,” Adam HaRishon did not have to toil in the study of Torah she’b’al peh. By merely studying Torah She’b’chsav, he was able to ascertain even the secrets of Torah she’b’al peh alluded to in Torah She’b’chsav. After the “cheit Eitz HaDa’as,” however, HKB”H concealed the light of Torah she’b’al peh. Ever since then, it has been necessary to expend effort in order to attain it.

Let us explain based on what we have learned. We shall refer to a comment from Rashi (Bereishis 2, 25): **“ואף על פי שניתנה בו דעה לקרות לו שמות, לא נתן בו יצר הרע עד אכלו מן העץ, ונכנס בו יצר הרע וידע מה --even though he had been given the knowledge to assign names, the yetzer hara had not been placed in him until his eating from the tree; then the yetzer hara entered his being, and he knew to differentiate between good and bad.** Thus, we learn that prior to the “cheit Eitz HaDa’as,” the yetzer hara was not part of his being; hence, at that point in time, there was no need for him to toil in the study of Torah she’b’al peh; for, he did not need to overcome the yetzer hara. After the sin, however, everything changed. The yetzer hara entered his being and, as a consequence, he was forced to toil in the study of Torah she’b’al peh in order to overcome it. Therefore, HKB”H concealed the light of Torah she’b’al peh, so that man would have to toil for it.

This provides us with a very nice understanding of the navi’s prophecy concerning the method of attaining the Torah le’atid la’vo (Yirmiyah 31, 32): **“כי זאת הברית אשר אכרות את בית ישראל אחרי הימים ההם נאום ה’, נתתי את תורתי בקרבם ועל לבם אכתבנה והייתי להם לאלקים והמה יהיו לי לעם, ולא ילמדו עוד איש את רעהו ואיש את אחיו לאמר דעו את ה’, כי כולם ידעו אותי למקטנם ועד גדולם נאום ה’, כי אסלח לעוונם ולחטאתם לא --for this is the covenant that I shall seal with the House of Yisrael after those days—the word of Hashem—I will place My Torah within them and I will write it onto their heart; I will be a G-d for them and they will be a people for Me. They will no longer teach—each man his fellow, each man his brother—saying, “Know Hashem!” For all of them will know Me, from their smallest to their greatest—the word of Hashem—when I will forgive their iniquity and will no longer recall their sin.**

In the future, after the world has been purged of the influence of the “cheit Eitz HaDa’as,” the world will return to the circumstances of Adam HaRishon prior to the sin, and to an even higher spiritual level. All of Yisrael, from the lowest to the highest will be able to ascertain Torah she’b’al peh directly from Torah She’b’chsav. HKB”H alludes to this new reality with the statement: **“I will place My Torah within them and I will write it onto their heart.”** Torah she’b’al peh will be perceived as clearly as Torah She’b’chsav. The passuk proceeds to explain the reason why: **“For I will forgive their iniquity and will no longer recall their sin.”** The yetzer hara will be eradicated from the world, and it will no longer be necessary to toil in the study of Torah as we had to toil during galut.

## Impart Some of Your Majesty onto Him but Not All of Your Majesty

This sheds light for us on HKB”H’s command for Moshe to place his hands upon Yehoshua: **“וּסַמַּכְתָּ אֶת יָדָךְ עָלָיו... וְנָתַתָּה מִהוֹדָךְ עָלָיו”**. We discussed the Gemara’s elucidation: **“You shall place some of your majesty upon him,” but not all of your majesty. The elders of that generation said: “The face of Moshe was like the sun, while the face of Yehoshua was like the moon.”** The elders of that generation intended to explain why HKB”H admonished Moshe not to transfer all of his splendor and majesty to Yehoshua; because Moshe’s perception was on the level of Torah She’b’chsav, comparable to **“the light of the sun”**; whereas Yehoshua’s perception was on the level of Torah she’b’al peh, comparable to **“the light of the moon.”**

For this reason it was not feasible for Moshe to bestow upon Yehoshua all of his majesty; had he done so, Yehoshua would not have had to toil in the study of Torah she’b’al peh; for, everything would have been clear as day to him from his study of Torah She’b’chsav. Therefore, HKB”H warned Moshe: **“וְנָתַתָּה מִהוֹדָךְ עָלָיו”**—only confer upon him a portion of your splendor, but not all of it. Why? **“לִמְעַן יִשְׁמְעוּ כָל עַדְת בְּנֵי יִשְׂרָאֵל”**—so that it will be imperative for all of Yisrael to toil, and hear and receive the Torah she’b’al peh from Yehoshua.

This prompted the elders to exclaim: **“אֵי לָהּ לְאוֹתָהּ בּוֹשָׁה, אֵי לָהּ לְאוֹתָהּ כְּלִימָה”**—**Woe, for that shame! Woe, for that disgrace!** They did not mean to insult Yehoshua or to detract from his greatness, chas v’shalom, by comparing his countenance to that of the moon—**“פָּנֵי לְבָנָה”**. Rather, they meant to express their distress over the tragic consequences of the **“cheit Eitz HaDa’as”**—which every neshamah participated in while part of Adam HaRishon’s being. That caused them to lament: **“Woe, for that shame! Woe, for that disgrace!”** It was the shame and disgrace that resulted from the **“cheit Eitz HaDa’as”** that precluded Moshe from bestowing upon Yehoshua all of his majesty.

## The Deeper Significance of the Moon’s Argument

Continuing onward and upward with this line of thought, let us explain the sages’ enigmatic depiction regarding the diminution of the moon: **“Rabbi Shimon ben Pazi notes a contradiction. The Torah initially states (Bereishis 1, 16) that G-d created two great lights — suggesting that they were created of equal size and stature. Subsequently (ibid.), it refers to the greater light and to the lesser light — indicating that they were no longer**

**equal. The moon addresses HKB”H: ‘Master of the Universe, can two kings utilize the same crown?’”** Let us explain. At the beginning of creation, HKB”H created two great luminaries, the sun and the moon—representing the equality that existed between Torah She’b’chsav and Torah she’b’al peh. As explained above, prior to the **“cheit Eitz HaDa’as,”** it was possible to ascertain all of Torah she’b’al peh from Torah She’b’chsav—similar to the situation that will prevail le’atid la’vo.

Yet, the moon—representing Torah she’b’al peh—knew that Adam HaRishon was destined to sin, allowing the yetzer hara access to his being. As a consequence, Yisrael would depend on the toil and exertion involved in the study of Torah she’b’al peh in order to overcome the influence of the yetzer hara. Therefore, the moon protested cleverly: **“Master of the Universe, can two kings utilize the same crown?”** In other words, it would be beneficial for Yisrael to conceal and store some of the light of Torah she’b’al peh—to ensure that Yisrael will toil and expend effort in their Torah-study. HKB”H responds: **“Go and diminish yourself”**—your argument is valid; so long as the yetzer hara exists, it is imperative to limit the light of Torah she’b’al peh.

This gives the moon cause to object: **“Master of the Universe, seeing as I presented a valid argument, is it right that I should diminish myself?”** The moon recognizes the validity of her argument; it is appropriate to diminish the light of Torah she’b’al peh for Yisrael’s benefit. Nevertheless, if Yisrael fail to appreciate the need to toil in the study of Torah she’b’al peh, diminishing herself will be for naught. Therefore, the moon requested that HKB”H strengthen Yisrael’s resolve to engage in the study of Torah she’b’al peh, in order to replenish and restore her missing light.

In an attempt to appease the moon, HKB”H responds: **“Go and rule by day and by night . . . let Yisrael count the days and years in accordance with the moon . . . tzaddikim will be called by your name, such as Yaakov the Small, Shmuel the Small and David the Small.”** All of these things were intended to illustrate to Yisrael the amazing connection between the moon—representing Torah she’b’al peh—and Yisrael—with whom HKB”H entered into a covenant solely on the basis of Torah she’b’al peh. The objective was to convince them of their sacred obligation to engage in the study of Torah she’b’al peh in order to replenish the light of the moon.

HKB”H saw, however, that the moon was still not satisfied. She wanted one more thing to encourage Yisrael to engage in the study of Torah she’b’al peh: **“אָמַר הַקֹּבֶה, הִבִּיאוּ כִפְרָה עָלַי שְׁמִיעֵטְתִּי אֶת הִירָח, וְהִיגִינוּ דָאִמֶר רַבִּי שְׁמֻעֲזָן בֶּן לִקְיָשׁ, מֶה נִשְׁתַּנָּה שְׁעִיר שֶׁל רֹאשׁ חֹדֶשׁ שְׁנָאִמֶר**

בו [ושעיר עזים אחד לחטאת] לה, אמר הקב"ה, שעיר זה יהא כפרה על שמיטתו.  
HKB"Y responded by commanding Yisrael to bring a he-goat on Rosh Chodesh to serve as His atonement for diminishing the stature of the moon.

## Rosh Chodesh Celebrates the Union of the Sun and the Moon

To comprehend to some minor degree the depth of HKB"Y's response to the moon, to the best of our limited abilities, let us introduce the following from the Tur (O.C. 419): "ומצוה להרבות בסעודת ראש חודש... ואתקש נמי למועד דכתיב (במדבר י-י): 'וביום שמחתכם'—it is a mitzvah to make the meal on Rosh Chodesh more lavish... it is also compared to a 'moed' (festival), as it is written: 'On a day of your gladness, and on your festivals, and on your new moons (Rosh Chodesh days).' Similarly, the Gemara states explicitly (Pesachim 77a): 'דראש חודש'—Rosh Chodesh is referred to as a 'moed.' Let us endeavor to explain why HKB"Y established every Rosh Chodesh as a 'moed.'

Rabbi Tzaddok HaKohen, zy"a, provides us with a wonderful explanation in his Pri Tzaddik (Rosh Chodesh Kislev 1): 'דראש חודש הוא חיבור השמש והירח, שהירח מקבל מהשמש, והיינו תורה שבעל פה—Rosh Chodesh represents the union of the sun and the moon; the moon receives from the sun. It represents Torah she'b'al peh receiving from Torah She'b'chsav... On Rosh Chodesh, the light of Torah she'b'al peh shines.'

Here we learn why Rosh Chodesh is considered a Yom Tov. During the second half of a lunar month, the light of the moon diminishes gradually until—by the end of the month—it receives no light at all from the sun. This indicates a disconnection between Torah She'b'chsav and Torah she'b'al peh. Therefore, when Rosh Chodesh arrives, the connection is reestablished; the sun once again illuminates the moon. Thus, it is considered a Yom Tov celebrating the connection between Torah She'b'chsav—represented by the sun—and Torah she'b'al peh—represented by the moon.

With this in mind, note that we find a unique aspect of Rosh Chodesh, which we do not find in association with any other 'moed.' HKB"Y empowered the Sanhedrin to establish which day would be Rosh Chodesh. Here is an excerpt from the Rambam (Hilchos Kiddush HaChodesh 2, 10):

"בית דין שקידשו את החודש, בין שזגגין, בין מוטעין, בין אנוסים, הרי זה מקודש, וחייבין הכל לתקן המועדות על יום שקידשו בו, אף על פי שזה ידע שטעו חייב לסמוך עליהם, שאין הדבר מסור אלא להם, ומי שצוה לשמור המועדות הוא צוה לסמוך עליהם, שנאמר אשר תקראו אותם וכו'."

Once Beis Din sanctifies the month, their determination is final and authoritative—even if their determination was found to be lacking in some way. Everyone is then obligated to celebrate the holidays and festivals based on that determination. Even if someone knows that they erred, he is obligated to rely on their determination. They are the only body authorized to make this determination. He Who commanded us to observe the festivals, commanded us to rely on them...

The source for this unique empowerment is found in the Gemara based on an elucidation from Rabbi Akiva (R.H. 25a): "הרי הוא אומר אתם, אתם, אתם, שלש פעמים -- 'אשר תקראו אתם' -- אתם אפילו 'אתם' 'אתם' 'אתם'—indeed it states 'אתם' 'אתם' 'אתם' three times indicating that even if you err, even if you choose the wrong date deliberately, even if you are misled. In all of these events, Beis Din's determination remains valid. [Translator's note: In sefer Vayikra, Chapter 23, in the passage related to the 'moadim,' the word 'אתם' appears three times in the phrase 'אשר תקראו אתם'. It is read as if spelled with a 'vav' between the 'aleph' and the 'tav,' meaning 'them.' In the Torah, however, it appears all three times without a 'vav'--'אתם'—so that it can be elucidated as 'you (plural).' This is the basis of Rabbi Akiva's elucidation.]

Let us provide an explanation based on our current discussion. HKB"Y established the day of Rosh Chodesh as a day of atonement for having diminished the stature of the moon. He then assigned the Torah scholars of every generation the task of replenishing the light of the moon, representing Torah she'b'al peh. To do so, HKB"Y gave them the authority to determine the date of Rosh Chodesh (as the thirtieth day or the thirty-first day), in order to teach us that this day is sanctified and dedicated to the renewal of the study of Torah she'b'al peh.

This provides us with a wonderful understanding of what the Pri Tzaddik (Shoftim 1) writes concerning the passuk (Bamidbar 28, 14): "זאת עולת חודש בחדשו לחדשי השנה"—this is the olah-offering of a month in its month for the months of the year. He writes that on every Rosh Chodesh a new and abundant supply of perceptions related to Torah she'b'al peh is replenished. This coincides beautifully with what we have explained concerning the



union of the light of the sun with the light of the moon, which is renewed every Rosh Chodesh. That reunion alludes to the new abundance of illumination which HKB"H provides regarding Torah she'b'al peh from Torah She'b'chsav. For that reason, HKB"H established Rosh Chodesh as a "moed." Thus, we are able to express our jubilation regarding the new, abundance of insights regarding Torah she'b'al peh—in whose merit HKB"H established a covenant with Yisrael.

### The He-goat of Rosh Chodesh Provides Atonement for Yisrael

We can finally face the daunting task of explaining HKB"H's directive to Yisrael: **"הביאו כפרה עלי שמייעטני את הירח"—bring an atonement for Me for having diminished the moon.** This does not mean, chas v'shalom, as it seems to imply, that HKB"H requires atonement. For, without a doubt, HKB"H is: **"אל אמונה ואין עול, צדיק — a faithful G-d, without iniquity; He is righteous and proper.** The fact that He diminished the moon was just and appropriate for the benefit of Yisrael.

Furthermore, the he-goat brought as a korban "chatas" on Rosh Chodesh in truth provides atonement for Yisrael's transgressions, as we state in the Mussaf service on Rosh Chodesh: **"ראשי חדשים — לעמך נתת זמן כפרה לכל תולדותם"—You gave Your people the days of Rosh Chodesh as a time of atonement for all of their generations.** The Beis Yosef (O.C. 424) explains in the name of the Orchot Chaim that the term **"תולדותם"** refers back to the months. In other words, HKB"H provided Yisrael with atonement on Rosh Chodesh to atone for all that transpired throughout the entire month; thus, the **"generations"** of the month refers to the deeds of the past month.

So, when HKB"H instructs us: **"Bring an atonement for Me for having diminished the moon"**—He is requesting that we bring a he-goat as a "chatas" on Rosh Chodesh to atone for everything that we transgressed and corrupted during the past month. Thus, we will be worthy to receive the light of Torah she'b'al peh that is renewed and replenished on every Rosh Chodesh, and we will not be included among those described in the following passuk (Tehillim 50, 16): **"ולרשע אמר אלקים מה לך לספר חוקי ותשא בריתי עלי —but to the wicked, G-d said: "What advantage is there**

**to you to recount My statutes?"** This is the message conveyed by HKB"H with the directive: **"Bring an atonement for Me for having diminished the moon."** In other words, by bringing a he-goat for a "chatas" to atone for your transgressions of the past month, it will also serve as atonement for Me, so to speak, for having diminished the stature of the moon. For, the entire world will realize that I justifiably diminished the moon for the benefit of Yisrael; so that they would toil in the study of Torah she'b'al peh and would successfully subdue the yetzer hara.

In the spirit of the three weeks of "Bein HaMetzarim," it is fitting that we conclude this essay with an explanation of Chazal's statement that the future geulah is dependent on the merit of engaging in the study of Torah she'b'al peh. It states in the Midrash (V.R. 7, 3): **"אין כל הגלויות הללו מתכנסות אלא בזכות משניות, מאי טעמא (הושע ח — the ingathering of all these exiles depends solely on the merit of learning Mishnayot, because the passuk states (Hoshea 8, 10): "Although they pay tribute amongst the goyim, now I will gather them in." The Matnot Kehunah explains that the word "יתנו" in the passuk (translated as "pay tribute") refers to the study of Mishnah — based on the Aramaic translation of the word.**

Let us recall an amazing allusion apropos this subject presented by the great Rabbi Yosef Chaim Sonnenfeld, ztz"l. The passuk in Yeshayah reads (1, 27): **"ציון במשפט תפדה ושביה בצדקה" — Tziyon will be redeemed through justice, and those who return to her through tzedakah.** The words **"ציון במשפט תפדה"** possess the same numerical value as **"תלמוד ירושלמי"**; the conclusion of the passuk, **"ושביה בצדקה"** possesses the same numerical value as **"תלמוד בבלי"**. Thus, in the merit of the Talmud Yerushalmi and the Talmud Bavli—the essence of Torah she'b'al peh—the redemption will come and we will return to Tziyon.

As explained, the purpose of our strenuous efforts in the study of Torah she'b'al peh—representing the light of the moon—is to replenish the light of the Torah that was depleted by the diminution of the moon. In the merit of these efforts, we will be privileged to experience the total geulah and will fulfill the words of the passuk (Yeshayah 30, 26): **"והיה אור הלבנה כאור החמה"**—the light of the moon will once again be equal to the light of the sun—swiftly, in our times. Amen.

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