



”החודש הזה לכם ראש חדשים”

## The Amazing Connection between the Month of Nissan and Rosh Chodesh Even if Our Sins Have Dimmed the Lights They Can Be Renewed via Teshuvah

Next Shabbas Kodesh, which happens to be Rosh Chodesh Nissan, is referred to as “**Shabbas HaChodesh.**” This designation indicates that for Maftir we read the following passage from parshas Bo (Shemos 12, 1): **”ויאמר ה' אל משה ואל אהרן בארץ מצרים לאמר, החודש הזה לכם ראש חדשים, ראשון הוא לכם לחדשי החדשים—Hashem said to Moshe and Aharon in the land of Mitzrayim, saying, “This month shall be the beginning of months for you; it shall be for you the first of the months of the year.”** It emphasizes the special status of the month of Nissan; it is the first of the months of the year.

Therefore, it is only fitting that we examine this important mitzvah, which was the first mitzvah given to Yisrael at the time of the exodus from Mitzrayim. In Rashi’s introduction to his commentary on the Torah, he cites the Midrash (Bereishis 1, 1): **”אמר רבי יצחק, לא היה צריך להתחיל את התורה אלא מהחודש הזה לכם, שהיא מצוה ראשונה שנצטוו בה ישראל—Rabbi Yitzchak said: In reality, the Torah should have begun from “החודש הזה לכם”; for it was the first mitzvah that Yisrael were commanded to perform.** Similarly, in parshas Bo, the Ramban comments (Shemos 12, 1): **”This is the first mitzvah that HKB”H commanded Yisrael through Moshe. Therefore, He said it in the land of Mitzrayim; because the rest of the mitzvos of the Torah were at Har Sinai.”** We must endeavor to comprehend the significance and impact of this mitzvah. This will enable us not only to fulfill the mitzvah, but also to understand the inherent lesson of this mitzvah.

We will begin by introducing two explanations provided by Rashi regarding this mitzvah: **“G-d showed Moshe the moon in its renewal and said to him, ‘When the moon renews itself, it will be the beginning of the month for you.’ Nevertheless, the simple meaning of the passuk cannot be disregarded. With regard to the month of Nissan, G-d said to Moshe: ‘This should be the beginning of the order of the counting of the**

**months; so that Iyar will be referred to as the second and Sivan the third.”** Rashi teaches us that in this passuk HKB”H gave us two distinct mitzvos. The first mitzvah, as indicated by the simple reading of the passuk, is to always count Nissan as the first of the twelve months of the year. As the Ramban explains, this serves as a constant reminder of the miracle HKB”H performed on our behalf at the time of the exodus from Mitzrayim, during the month of Nissan.

Additionally, with this passuk, HKB”H alludes to the mitzvah of “kiddush hachodesh”—sanctifying the new month. We sanctify each new month when the new moon becomes visible in the sky. Concerning this practice, we learned in the Mishnah (R.H. 24a) that after Beis Din questioned the witnesses who first saw the new moon: **”ראש בית דין אומר מקודש וכל העם עונים אחריו—מקודש מקודש—the Head of Beis Din says: “It is sanctified!” and all the people respond after him: “It is sanctified! It is sanctified!”** It now behooves us to understand and appreciate the connection between these two mitzvos and the exodus from Mitzrayim.

### You Shall Perform This Service in This Month

We will begin our journey with the illuminating explanation of the great Rabbi Baruch of Mezhibuzh, zy”a, regarding the passuk related to the Korban Pesach (Shemos 13, 5): **”ועבדת את ה'—העבודה הזאת בחודש הזה—you shall perform this service in this month.** He explains in his own inimitable way that the service of Hashem performed during the month of Tishrei is indicated by the term “זאת”. As an example, when Aharon HaKohen entered the Kodesh HaKodashim on Yom HaKippurim, it states (Vayikra 16, 3): **”בזאת יבא אהרן אל הקודש—(this) shall Aharon come into the Sanctuary.** On the other hand, the service of Hashem during the month of Nissan is indicated by the term “זה”. This is demonstrated in the following passuk: **”החודש הזה**

“**לכם ראש חדשים—this month will be the first of months for you**—here the term “זה” is used for the word “**this.**” Now, let us apply this principle to the passuk: “**ועבדת את העבודה הזאת**”—the service that you perform during the month of Tishrei, referred to as “זאת”, you shall perform “**בחדש הזה**”—during the month of Nissan, referred to as “זה”. This concludes his sacred remarks.

Let us suggest an explanation for his remarks based on a concept gleaned from the Zohar hakadosh in the Raiya Mehemna (Bo 40b). When HKB”H commands us to eliminate the “chametz” (leavened material) from our midst on the festival of Pesach (Shemos 13, 7): “**ולא יראה לך חמץ ולא יראה לך שאור בכל גבולך**”—**no chametz may be seen in your possession, nor may leaven be seen in your possession in all your borders**—He is also alluding to the yetzer hara, who leavens our hearts to perform transgressions. On Pesach, the time is ripe to extinguish it from our midst completely; not even a trace of leaven should remain in our hearts.

This fact reminds us that when HKB”H took us out of Mitzrayim on Pesach, He liberated us physically and spiritually. Not only were we freed from the physical servitude in Mitzrayim, but the souls of Yisrael that had sunk to the forty-ninth level of tumah were introduced to the forty-nine levels of kedushah. Therefore, when Nissan arrives annually, the opportunity arises to liberate ourselves from all the shackles of tumah by means of teshuvah.

In this manner, we can comprehend the insight provided by Rabbi Baruch, zy”a: “**ועבדת את העבודה הזאת**”—the service that you perform during the month of Tishrei, you shall perform “**בחדש הזה**”—during the month of Nissan. Just as it is imperative to perform teshuvah during the month of Tishrei, so, too, it is imperative to perform teshuvah during the month of Nissan, by extinguishing not only the physical but also the spiritual “chametz”—namely the yetzer hara, who incites us to transgress, G-d help us. This is the implication of the passuk: “**החדש הזה לכם ראש חדשים**”—during this month, it is incumbent upon every Jew to renew himself and cleanse himself of all impurities and blemishes.

Let us add a lovely thought concerning the following Mishnah (Avos 3, 16): “**החנות פתוחה, והחנוני מקיף, והפנקס פתוח, והיד כותבת, וכל הרוצה ללוות יבוא וילוה**—**the shop is open, the merchant extends credit, the ledger is open and the hand writes. Whoever wishes to borrow, may come and borrow.** The Megaleh Amukos on Vaeschanan (106) provides us with the

following allusion regarding this Mishnah: The word “חנו” is an abbreviation for “**ח'ודש ניסן ו'חודש תשרי**”—**the month of Nissan and the month of Tishrei.** Thus, the Mishnah is alluding to the fact that during these two months the gates of Gan Eden are open to the neshamos of the tzaddikim that descend to Olam HaZeh to observe the way Bnei Yisrael serve Hashem.

Now, let us apply this allusion to that which is stated in the Midrash (D.R. 2, 12): “**אבל שערי, תשובה לעולם פתוחים**—**the gates of tefilah, sometimes they are open and sometimes they are locked shut; however, the gates of teshuvah are forever open.** This then is the allusion inherent in the Mishnah: “**החנות פתוחה**”—the “חנו”-- **the month of Nissan and the month of Tishrei**—during these two months, the gates of teshuvah are open to accept Yisrael’s teshuvah. Hence: “**זה החנוני מקיף**”—**the merchant extends credit**—in other words, when a person accepts upon himself to improve his ways by means of teshuvah, HKB”H extends him credit and merit based on what he will do in the future, just as if he has already altered and improved his behavior; “**the ledger is open and the hand writes. Whoever wishes to borrow, may come and borrow**”—ultimately, however, he is accountable for all of it and must amend his ways.

### The Reason They Chose to Sanctify the Moon in a Place Called “עין טב”

Following this line of reasoning, let proceed to explain how the second mitzvah alluded to in the passuk: “**החדש הזה לכם**”—to sanctify the new month when the moon first appears in the sky—is also associated with the process of teshuvah of the month of Nissan. First, however, let us explain a fascinating statement in the Gemara related to “Kiddush HaChodesh” (R.H. 25a): “**אמר ליה רבי לרבי חייא, זיל לעין טב וקדשיה לירח, ושלח לי**” —**Rabeinu HaKadosh said to Rabbi Chiya, go to the place known as Ein Tav (literally: “good eye”) and sanctify the moon there; then send me a sign (via a messenger that you sanctified the month by saying): “David, the King of Yisrael is alive and well.”**

Rashi explains: “**David, the King of Yisrael, is compared to the moon, as it says of him (Tehillim 89, 37): ‘His throne shall be like the sun before Me; like the moon, it shall be established forever.’**” We find a wonderful allusion to this fact in Shaarei Ephraim, authored by the brilliant Rabbi Ephraim Margalioth, that was transmitted to him by his teacher and master, the holy Rabbi Yitzchak Isaac HaKohen of Koritz,

zy”a, the author of Bris Kehunas Olam. He notes that דוד מלך possesses the same numerical equivalent as ר.א.ש חודש. Tosafos explain that the reason Rabeinu HaKadosh instructed Rabbi Chiya to go to Ein Tav to sanctify the month was because a permanent Beis Din had been established in that location for that purpose.

It is fine and well that David, the King of Yisrael, is compared to the moon. Still, why did Rabeinu HaKadosh request that Rabbi Chiya inform him that he had sanctified the new month with the proclamation: “דוד מלך ישראל חי וקים”? Why didn’t he simply request that Rabbi Chiya tell him explicitly that he had sanctified the new month? Furthermore, what is the significance of the fact that the sages established a Beis Din for the sake of sanctifying the new month specifically in a place named Ein Tav?

### Bring an Atonement for Me for Having Diminished the Moon

I would like to explain the matter based on what Chazal reveal to us regarding the esoteric dialogue that took place between HKB”H and the moon, as described in the Gemara (Chullin 60b):

”רבי שמעון בן פזי רמי, כתיב (בראשית א-טז) ויעש אלקים את שני המאורות הגדולים [משמע שניהם נבראו שווים], וכתיב את המאור הגדול ואת המאור הקטן [משמע שאין שניהם שווים]. אמרה ירח לפני הקב”ה, רבוננו של עולם, אפשר לשני מלכים שישתמשו בכתר אחד. אמר לה [הקב”ה] לכי ומעטי את עצמך. אמרה לפניו, רבוננו של עולם, הואיל ואמרתי לפניך דבר הגון אמעיט את עצמי.

אמר לה [הקב”ה] לכי ומשול ביום ובלילה... לימנו כך 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 (במדבר כח-טו) 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 presented in another Gemara (Shevuos 9a): אמר הקב”ה, שעיר זה יהא כפרה על שמייעטתי 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 Masores 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. The Yismach Moshe expresses similar bewilderment regarding this statement (Bereishis): **“This statement is beyond comprehension. To whom did He sin, chas v’shalom? And to whom will they sacrifice? And who will offer atonement? . . . Furthermore, He is the Maker and He is the Creator. Hashem gave and Hashem took, and this does not constitute a wrongdoing. And who can tell Him what He should do?**

Notwithstanding, we find that our blessed sages presented this statement in the Gemara and not in the mystical Zohar hakadosh. This suggests that this statement can also be comprehended in non-mystical terms. Accordingly, the commentaries provide us with many interpretations of the Gemara’s statement. As we know, the Torah is open to a variety of interpretations. First, however, let us summarize briefly the difficulties with the statement in question:

1) It seems inappropriate to say that HKB”H diminished the moon and then regretted having done so, as His subsequent statement suggests: **“Bring an atonement on my behalf for having diminished the moon.”** After all, one of the fundamentals of our faith is that He is a just King and all of His actions are just and proper, as it states (Devarim 32, 4): **“הצור—the Rock, תמים בעלו, כל דרכיו משפט, אל אמונה ואין עול, צדיק וישר הוא”**

**perfect is His work, for all His ways are justice; a faithful G-d, without iniquity; He is righteous and proper.**

2) 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?

3) How did the moon have the audacity to say: **“Seeing as I presented before You a valid argument, is it appropriate that I should diminish myself?”** Is it proper to question and criticize the acts of the Almighty, Who created the sun and moon as equals?

### **The Moon Intended to Demonstrate to Yisrael that Teshuvah Can Rectify Everything**

We will begin to shed some light on the subject by introducing a wonderful idea from the Arugos HaBosem (Bereishis). He writes that the light of the moon was diminished for the purpose of teaching Yisrael that all defects can be corrected by means of teshuvah. Here is what he writes:

”על דרך שאנו אומרים בברכת הלבנה, פועל אמת שפעולתו אמת, וללבנה אמר שתתחדש עטרת תפארת לעמוסי בטן, שהם עתידים להתחדש כמותה. וביארתי בס”ד הכוונה, דמה שהשית ברא את הלבנה באופן זה שתתמעט אורה, עד שתגיע לתכלית המיעוט, באופן שמאפילה כל שטח פניה, ואחר כך מוספת והולכת להתחדש אורה ככראשונה, הוא לרמוז על ישראל שמונים ללבנה, ואם ישראל עושה לעצמו חשבון הנפש, ורואה איך נחשכו כל מעלות ומדות רוחניות שהטביע בו בורא כל עלמין יתברך שמו, על ידי מעשי תעתועים, אם כן יגיע ח”ו לקטנות הדעת, וידמה ח”ו פן אפסה כל תקוה.

על כן הטביע השי”ת כן בטבע הירח, דאף שכבר הגיעה לתכלית החשכות, עם כל זאת מתחדש אחר כך אורה ככראשונה, והיינו דאמרינן, פועל אמת שפעולתו אמת, ולא שייך להיקרא אמת אלא דבר המתקיים, על דרך (שבת קד.) קושטא קאי, אם כן איך אמר ללבנה שתתחדש, הלא היה ראוי שתהיה אור הלבנה בבחינת קיימות. אבל הטעם הוא שתהיה, עטרת תפארת לעמוסי בטן, שהם עתידים להתחדש כמותה, שישראל יקחו מוסר השכל להתחדש בבחינה זו.”

In the berachah recited over the new moon, we say: “The One Who does truth, Whose deed is truth. To the moon He said that it should renew itself, as a crown of splendor for those borne by Him from the womb, those who are destined to renew themselves like it.” HKB”H created the moon in such a manner as an example for Yisrael, who count time based on the cycle of the moon. Its light diminishes until it virtually disappears; then its light gradually returns until it achieves its original configuration. In similar fashion, if Yisrael take stock of their

actions and see that their spiritual level has deteriorated due to misdeeds, and they feel diminished, they should not despair, chas v’shalom. Just as the moon returns from total darkness to its original light, so, too, can Yisrael renew themselves.

We can suggest that this is why HKB”H will correct the moon’s defect and restore its light in the future, as it is written (Yeshayah 30, 26): **”והיה אור הלבנה כאור החמה”—the light of the moon will be like the light of the sun.** For, le’atid la’vo, the yetzer hara will cease to exist, as we are taught in the Gemara (Succah 52a): **”לעתיד לבוא מכיאו הקב”ה ליצר הרע ושוחטו בפני הצדיקים—le’atid la’vo, HKB”H will bring the yetzer hara and slaughter it in the presence of the tzaddikim and in the presence of the reshaim.** Therefore, it will no longer be necessary to learn the path of teshuvah from the moon. So, HKB”H will fill in the moon’s defect and its light will no longer be lacking. Instead, the light of the moon will be equivalent to the light of the sun; it will be full and perfect.

### **The Moon Wanted to Ensure that They Would Learn the Path of Teshuvah from Her**

We can now begin to comprehend our sages’ enigmatic words. When the sun and the moon were first created, the Torah says: **”ויעש אלקים את שני המאורות הגדולים”—G-d made the two great lights.** They were created equal; the illumination of the moon matched the illumination of the sun, without any defect. This is how it will be le’atid la’vo, when the yetzer hara will no longer exist. However, the moon was aware of the fact that Adam HaRishon and all of creation were destined to sin, and that they would need to learn the path of teshuvah from her. Therefore, she said to HKB”H: **“Master of the Universe, can two kings utilize the same crown?”** If I do not diminish my light, Yisrael will not be able to learn the path of teshuvah from me. HKB”H acknowledged the validity of her argument and responded: **“Go and diminish yourself.”**

The moon responded: **“Master of the Universe, since I presented a valid and proper argument, is it appropriate that I diminish myself?”** The moon suspected that perhaps Yisrael would not learn the path of teshuvah from her example. That being the case, her altruistic act would serve no purpose. The moon claimed that it was proper and valid to teach Yisrael the path of teshuvah; however, she questioned if it was appropriate to diminish herself without knowing that it would serve Yisrael any benefit.

Therefore, HKB”H did several things to appease the moon, so that Yisrael would learn from her the path of teshuvah: **“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 would demonstrate to Yisrael how much HKB”H valued the moon, who diminished herself for the sake of Yisrael.

**He saw that she was not consoled**—because the moon wanted something more definite to remind Yisrael to learn the path of teshuvah from her. Therefore, **HKB”H said to Yisrael: “Bring an atonement on my behalf for having diminished the moon.”** This does not mean, chas v’shalom, that they should bring a korban, so that HKB”H could atone for His action. For, He acted justly and appropriately for the benefit of Yisrael. Rather, it means that they should bring a korban to atone for their own sins on Rosh Chodesh—when the moon is renewing its light in the firmament. This will teach us the path of teshuvah—how to make amends for all of our wrongdoings and deficiencies. This will serve as an atonement for HKB”H, so to speak, by revealing to everyone on earth that he diminished the moon for the benefit of Yisrael.

This explains very nicely the formula we recite in Mussaf on Rosh Chodesh: **“ראשי חדשים לעמך נתת זמן כפרה לכל תולדותם, בהיותם: ושעיר חטאת לכפר בעדם—מקריבים לפני זבחי רצון, ושעיר חטאת לכפר בעדם—You have given Your people New Moons, a time of atonement for all of their offspring, when they would sacrifice offerings of favor before You, and goats of sin-offerings to atone on their behalf.** Thus, it states explicitly that Rosh Chodesh is a day of atonement for all Yisrael, and the purpose of offering the goat as a “korban chatas” is to atone for ourselves.

### David HaMelech Who Is Compared to the Moon Established the Benefit of Teshuvah

Following this line of reasoning, let us proceed to explain the deeper significance of Rabeinu HaKadosh’s instructions to his pupil, Rabbi Chiya: **Go to Ein Tav (literally: “good eye”) and sanctify the moon there; then send me a sign (that you have sanctified the month by saying): “David, the King of Yisrael is alive and well.”** Recall that Rashi comments that David HaMelech is compared to the moon. Let us suggest an explanation based on what we have learned in the following Gemara (A.Z. 4b):

“לא דוד ראוי לאותו מעשה [דבת שבע], דכתיב (תהלים קט-כב) ולכי חלל בקרבי... אלא לומר לך שאם חטא יחיד, אומרים לו כלך אצל יחיד... והיינו דרבי שמואל בר נחמני אמר רבי יונתן, מאי דכתיב (שמואל ב כג-א) נאום דוד בן ישי ונאום הגבר הוקם על, נאום דוד בן ישי שהקים עולה של תשובה.”

David was not suited to perform that deed (involving Bas Sheva), as it is written: **“And my heart (referring to the yetzer hara) has died within me.” . . . Rather, this is to teach you that if an individual sins, we tell him, “Go and reflect about another individual (namely David HaMelech)” . . . And this is consistent with that which Rabbi Shmuel said in the name of Rabbi Yonatan: What is the meaning of that which is written: “The words of David, the son of Yishai, the words of a man who was ‘hukam ol’”? The Gemara answers: “The words of David, the son of Yishai,” who established the benefit of teshuvah.**

We can suggest a reason as to why HKB”H specifically chose David, the King of Yisrael, to demonstrate the path of teshuvah for Yisrael based on what the Rambam writes concerning a king of Yisrael (Melachim 3, 6): **“על הסרת לבו הקפידה תורה שנאמר (דברים: יז-יז) ולא יסור לבבו, שלבו הוא לב כל קהל ישראל.”** The king is the heart of the entire people of Yisrael; his actions affect all of Yisrael, just as the heart affects all of the body’s limbs and organs. So, when David HaMelech, the heart of the people, performed teshuvah, in effect, he instilled the notion of teshuvah in all of Yisrael.

Thus, we can appreciate why Scriptures compares David HaMelech to the moon. The moon complained that two kings cannot utilize a single crown, just so that HKB”H would diminish her light, in order to teach Yisrael the path of teshuvah. Similarly, David HaMelech was not suited to fall prey to that sin; however, the event was orchestrated for the benefit of Yisrael, to demonstrate for them the path of teshuvah.

Based on what we have discussed, we can suggest an explanation regarding the declaration: **“דוד מלך ישראל חי וקים”—David, the King of Yisrael, is alive and well.** We have learned in the Gemara (B.B. 116b): **“מפני מה בדוד נאמרה בו שכיבה וביואב נאמרה: בן מיתה... אלא דוד שהניח בן כמותו נאמרה בו שכיבה, יואב שלא הניח בן כמותו—why regarding David does the text employ the term “שכיבה” (“reposing”), whereas regarding Yoav the text employs the term “מיתה” (“dying”)?. . . Regarding David, who left behind a son like himself, the term “reposing” is used; however, regarding Yoav, who did not leave behind a son like himself, “dying” is used.** We find a similar statement

in the Midrash (B.R. 49, 4): “תני רשב”י, כל מי שיש לו בן יגע בתורה כאילו: “לא מת—Rashbi teaches that anyone who has a son will have continued contact with the Torah, as if he didn’t die.

Elsewhere in the Gemara, we have learned (Sanhedrin 19b): “כל המלמד בן חבירו תורה מעלה עליו הכתוב כאלו ילדו”—**whoever teaches Torah to his friend’s son is regarded by Scriptures as if he had fathered him.** Accordingly, when all of Yisrael learn the benefit of teshuvah from David HaMelech, it is regarded as if they are David’s children. This then is implicit in the statement: “דוד מלך ישראל חי וקים”. As the King of Yisrael, he is the heart of the people, who established the pathway of teshuvah for Yisrael. Therefore, he is alive and well, because he has left behind children like himself.

### They Chose to Sanctify the Moon in Ein Tav Alluding to the Aspect of “Ayin Tovah”

Let us now delight in the wonders of the Torah. Based on what we have learned, we can now appreciate our sages’ profound intent. They chose to sanctify the month in a place called **Ein Tav**—which literally means “**ayin tovah**,” a generous eye. This name teaches us not to think erroneously that: (a) the diminution of the moon constituted a punishment for the moon and (b) the moon was selfish and did not want to share a crown with the sun. On the contrary, the moon demonstrated the quality of “ayin tovah”; it acted generously and selflessly, in order to demonstrate the path of teshuvah for Yisrael. Therefore, they chose to celebrate the renewal of the moon in **Ein Tav**—to remind us of the “ayin tovah” demonstrated by the moon. For this reason, we are obligated to perform teshuvah on Rosh Chodesh and to bring a korban to Hashem as atonement for our sins.

With great joy, we have achieved a better understanding of Rabeinu HaKadosh’s wisdom. He sent his pupil, Rabbi Chiya, to sanctify the new month with the instructions: “**Go to Ein Tav and sanctify the moon there; then send me a sign** (that you have sanctified the month by saying): “**David, the King of Yisrael is alive and well.**” Now, we have learned in the Gemara

(Shabbas 56a): “רבי דאתי מדוד מהפך ודריש בזכותיה דדוד”—Rabeinu HaKadosh, Rabbi Yehudah HaNasi, descended from the royal line of David; hence, he constantly sought elucidations to justify the actions of David HaMelech.

Therefore, to vindicate David HaMelech, who is compared to the moon, he instructed Rabbi Chiya: “**Go to Ein Tav and sanctify the moon.**” In other words, go to the place whose name means “ayin tovah,” in order to sanctify the new month. This will teach the good merit of the moon, who acted selflessly and generously, in order to teach Yisrael the path of teshuvah. Then he added: “**And send me a sign: דוד מלך ישראל חי וקים.**” This symbolic act will invoke the good merit of David HaMelech, who is compared to the moon. As a result of teaching Yisrael the path of teshuvah, he lives on forever.

At this point, we can comprehend the wonderful connection between the two mitzvos alluded to by HKB”H in the passuk: “החודש הזה לכם ראש חדשים”—(1) to count the month of Nissan as the first of the twelve months of the year and (2) to sanctify the new month when the moon first appears in the sky. As explained, both mitzvos are intended to teach us the path of teshuvah.

During the month of Nissan, it is imperative that we fulfill HKB”H’s request: “ועבדת את העבודה הזאת בחודש הזה”. As Rabbi Baruch explained, this passuk commands us to perform teshuvah in the month of Nissan just as we do in the month of Tishrei. We do so by eliminating all of the yetzer hara’s “chametz” in our possession. It is also imperative that we perform this procedure on every Rosh Chodesh; we must rectify all that we have damaged, sullied and cast into the darkness during the previous month. By learning the value of teshuvah from the moon, it is within our power to renew and restore the original light. As a result, we will fulfill the following maxim (Yoma 86b): “גדולה תשובה שמקרבת”—**great is teshuvah, for it hastens the geulah.** This is ever so true during the month of Nissan, which is designated for geulah, as we have learned (R.H. 11a): “בניסן נגאלו ובניסן עתידין: “ליגאל—**in Nissan, they were redeemed, and in Nissan, they are destined to be redeemed**—swiftly, in our times. Amen.

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