

# *Reflections of Redemption*

Essays on the Weekly Torah Reading and Moshiach,  
Based on the talks of the  
Lubavitcher Rebbe,  
Rabbi Menachem M. Schneerson

Reprinted for Parshat Bo, 5781  
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**IN LOVING MEMORY OF**  
 Horav **Schneur Zalman Halevi** עי"ה  
 ben Horav **Yitzchok Elchonon Halevi** הי"ד  
**Shagalov**  
 Passed away on 21 Tamuz, 5766

Reb **Dovid Asniel** ben Reb **Eliyahu** עי"ה  
**Ekman**  
 Passed away on 5 Sivan - Erev Shavuot, 5765

Mrs. **Devora Rivka** bas Reb **Yosef Eliezer** עי"ה  
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 Passed away on the second day  
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 Passed away on the 24th day of Shevat, 5769  
 ת. נ. צ. ג. ה.

**AND IN HONOR OF**  
 Mrs. **Esther Shaindel** bas **Fraidel Chedva** שתח'ל  
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*of*  
*Redemption*

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by  
Dovid Yisroel Ber Kaufmann

# Bo

## THE INNOVATIVE MONTH

*The Hebrew words for “month” and “innovation” have the same root. Sanctifying the new month prepares for Redemption. Sanctification requires both calculation and testimony. Calculation depends on human reason and effort. Testimony simply clarifies the facts that already exist, reporting the spiritual dimension. There is thus a relationship between the chodesh, the month, of the Exodus and the chidush, the innovation, of Redemption.*

Much may turn on a word. The word Moshiach, for instance, conjures images of a new world, a transformation of existence, an innovation in the works of Creation. When Moshiach comes, the world will be filled with knowledge of G-dliness and the wolf shall lie with the lamb. Is it a coincidence, then, that the Hebrew word for month, *chodesh*, is closely related to the word for innovation, *chidush*? Is it also a coincidence that the first mitzvah of the Torah is the sanctification of the new month? Of course not – and more especially of course not when we consider the context of that mitzvah.

The sanctification of the month of Nissan, the month of the Exodus, began the preparations for the Redemption from Egypt. We are told that, “as in the days of your going forth from Egypt, I will show you wonders.” How we prepared for the first Redemption, the exodus from Egypt, teaches us how to prepare for the final Redemption, that of Moshiach. Clearly, there is a deep, inner connection between the sanctification of the month, the *chodesh*, and the innovation, the *chidush*, of Redemption.

What is a *chidush*, an innovation? That which transforms the “old world” into a “new world” we call an innovation. For example, the use of electricity has changed the way we live. Now, electricity existed before it was discovered and harnessed. The innovation, therefore, was not the invention of electricity, but the revelation of its existence and the realization of its potential.

The same is true of Moshiach. Currently, G-dliness is not visibly or obviously present in the physical world. The innovation of Moshiach will be a revelation of the G-dliness already within the world, actualizing the spiritual potential within the physical realm. Of course, each mitzvah is a step along the way. Each particular mitzvah reveals a new aspect of G-dliness within creation. What is true of every mitzvah is certainly true in a greater sense of the first mitzvah.

With this background, we can understand the deep, inner connection between *chidush*, innovation, and *chodesh*, the moon, specifically, the sanctification of the moon. As mentioned, the first mitzvah given to the Jewish people is the mitzvah to sanctify the new moon. In this week’s Torah reading it states: “G-d said to Moses and Aaron . . . this **month** shall be for you the beginning of months.” Practically speaking, the Jewish people had to know when was Rosh *Chodesh* Nissan – the first of the month of Nissan – in order to know when the tenth of the month would occur. For in the very next verse, G-d tells Moses and Aaron: “Speak to all the congregation of Israel, saying, ‘in the tenth day of this month they shall take for themselves, every man a lamb . . .’” Thus began the preparations for the Exodus and Redemption.

Now, we know that the Hebrew words for “month” and “innovation” are practically identical, differentiated by only a slight change in vocalization. And of course, the Torah is written without vowels. So the passage could just as easily be read not “this month

shall be for you,” but “this **innovation** shall be yours.” This means, simply, that with the first mitzvah G-d gave the Jewish people the ability to innovate, that is, to reveal the innate G-dliness within the world, to spiritually transform creation into a dwelling place for the Divine Presence.

Thus we see that there is something about sanctifying the moon, the *chodesh* of the Exodus, that parallels the revelation of G-dliness, the *chidush* of Redemption. We can go from one to the other. For this reason, sanctifying the moon is the first mitzvah, for it alludes to the Redemption, the ultimate revelation and actualization of the spiritual within the physical.

We determine the new moon in one of two ways: through the testimony of witnesses or through astronomical calculation. Currently, because of historical circumstances, we rely solely on the calendar. When Moshiach comes, the Sanhedrin, the Jewish supreme court, will be re-established, and we will again sanctify the moon based on the testimony of witnesses. However, even when the new month was declared based on witnesses, the Rabbis knew how to calculate the moon’s appearance – and thus logically verify the testimony.

Our first question, then, is why do we need both witnesses and calculation to determine the new moon? To answer this, we first need to look at the purpose of witnesses. Witnesses either *clarify* the facts, verifying what can be determined by other means, or they actually *establish* the facts, determining the law – what’s right or wrong – by their testimony.

In regard to sanctifying the new moon, since we can determine the facts by calculation, we only use the witnesses to verify what we already know. Here, the witnesses don’t establish but only clarify. However, this makes the witnesses seem irrelevant, since testimony that contradicted the astronomical calculations would

be discounted. So if the rabbis already knew when the new moon would appear, why bother with witnesses?

The Torah requires witnesses to determine the new moon, despite the advantage of calculation. We can thus actually turn the question around: since in just about every other situation, the Torah tells us to rely on witnesses to *determine* the facts, not just clarify them, why use any calculation at all? Why aren't witnesses alone good enough to establish the appearance of the new moon?

Since sanctifying the new moon is the first mitzvah, it not only sets the pattern for all subsequent mitzvos, but it also teaches us the inner path to preparing for and initiating the process of Redemption. As mentioned earlier, the Jews in Egypt were commanded to sanctify the new moon in order to begin preparing for the Exodus ten days later. The importance of sanctifying the new moon therefore requires it have the advantages of both calculation and witnesses. The value of calculation is that it relies on the power of the mind, the ability to think and reason. The conclusion results from our efforts and the use of our highest faculty, the mind. On the other hand, we accept the testimony of witnesses solely because the Torah tells us to. Testimony has the advantage of being a decree of the Torah. As such, our acceptance of it transcends logic. This also expresses itself as a submission to the Supernal Will, which is higher than our reason and understanding.

Sanctifying the new month – the *chodesh* – requires both our reason and our submission to G-d's Will; similarly, the innovation – the *chidush* – of Redemption requires both as well. Only in this way can there be a full and complete revelation of G-dliness.

As an aside, this also explains why in this passage, the Torah states that G-d spoke to both Moses and Aaron, whereas in most cases G-d speaks to Moses alone. Each represents one of the two methods of sanctification: Moses represents the innovation

of drawing G-dliness down from Above, self-nullification and acceptance of the heavenly yoke. Aaron represents the innovation of making the world receptive to revelation, using our logic and ability to reason to make the world a dwelling place for G-dliness. Thus, we ourselves bring about the Redemption when our approach to Torah and mitzvos combines both our powers of reasoning – the power of calculation – and a self-nullification, an acceptance of the yoke of heaven beyond logic – the power of testimony.

In this way the *chodesh*, the sanctified and just revealed new moon, foreshadows the *chidush*, the sanctified and imminently revealed innovation of the times of Moshiach.

(Based on *Likkutei Sichos 21*, pp. 62-67)

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