

Tazria 5771

BS"D Parashat Tazria and Shabbat ha'chodesh 5771

In HaShem's detailed instructions to Moshe in all the aspects of the Torah, there were several technical matters Moshe could not grasp, requiring HaShem to create a visual impression for Moshe to see.

Rabbinical sources list them as: the configuration of the golden Menora, the eight types of sheratzim (low creeping animals), the shekel coin, the five laws of shechita and the visible shape of the moon that heralds the beginning of a new month.

Moshe's difficulty in intellectually grasping the shape of the new moon is problematic. The difficulties that Moshe found in visualizing the other four issues are understandable, because they were not part of Moshe's life experiences. The new moon, however, was a different matter.

Moshe, having been brought up in Egyptian culture, was certainly well versed in the physics of cosmology. In his 80 years of life up to the time of the exodus, Moshe experienced 960 new lunar months, introduced by the reappearance of the moon, after being invisible on the last night of the preceding month. So why did he find such difficulty in understanding what HaShem meant by a "new moon"?

I suggest that Moshe certainly knew what a new moon looked like. His problem was that perhaps the slender, thin, barely visible, banana shaped moon was insufficient to establish such an essential halachic entity as the new month, which determines when Pesach, Shavuot, Rosh HaShana, Yom Kippur and Succot fall out. For such a crucial matter as determining which sacrifices are brought, as well as the dire punishments, such as karet for eating chametz on Pesach, the sighting of the nascent moon should logically be one that is beyond doubt,

like the size of the re-appearing moon after several days. Hashem then demonstrated to Moshe that the new moon begins with the initial sighting of its dim, faint light after being totally non-visible in the last night of the preceding month.

This experience of Moshe's depicts perfectly the dilemma religious Jewry finds itself in today. How much "light" is necessary to declare that a new age has begun?

Was the light that was released by the aliya of hundreds of the Vilna Gaon's students and various chassidic sects in the 18th and 19th centuries sufficient to usher in the new age of HaShem's relationship with His nation Israel?

Or perhaps it was the Zionist Congresses in the late 19th and early 20th centuries which declared the expressed aim to re-establish the national home of the Jewish nation in Eretz Yisrael?

Perhaps the new age was decided in shamayim by the efforts of the people living in Eretz Yisrael; both those who came to serve HaShem and to die and be buried here, and those who came to live and build – but died from malaria and Arab murderers?

Or was it the additional light, when the Medina was declared on the 5th of Iyar 5708, and the handful of Jews here had to fend off the onslaught of seven regular Arab armies, while absorbing over one million Jews who were escaping the cruelties of their "host" countries?

Or perhaps the 24/7 light of the batei kneset and yeshivot here, where the study of Torah has reached proportions unknown in Jewish life for the last 2000 years?

Or perhaps none of the above, because all is darkness, all is negative. Nothing has yet essentially changed in Jewish life, and the only light that will exist will be when the Mashiach will come with his huge projectors to light up the dismal, black, depressed, gloomy souls of those Jews still in the

galut?

There are, unfortunately, too many religious segments in the Jewish people who are capable of sensing HaShem's hand only when they are slapped by it.

People whose lips automatically express the words "yimach shemo" whenever anything relating to Eretz Yisrael is mentioned. People who would not offer praise to Hashem for anything that appears to be a hint of geula (redemption) short of HaShem appearing in their bet midrash in Williamsburgh, Boro Park or Lakewood, because to do so would require them to accept responsibility and leave the easy life in the land where they find God, not in the depths of their souls, but on the currency that says, "In God we trust".

I recall years ago when we lived in a newly developed area in Yerushalayim, where the only place to daven (pray) was in the local yeshiva. The conditions for granting us permission to use the upstairs room in the yeshiva was that on Yom Ha'Atzmaut (Israel Independence Day) we would leave the building and say Hallel in the street!

I was then young and naive. Had I known then what I know today, I would have politely told the Rosh Yeshiva that when WE say Hallel, YOU may leave the building. A building which by the way was paid for, to a great degree, by matching funds of the Medina and contributions of good Jews who, had they known to what they were contributing, would certainly have given their money to other causes.

This Shabbat, as we daven for the new month of Nisan, the month of transferring our servitude from serving Paro (Pharaoh) to serving HaShem, let us recall the 80 percent of the Jews who refused to recognize the hand of HaShem in their lives and subsequently died in Egypt during the plague of darkness.

Let us recall, that in total darkness, the thin sliver of the

new moon casts sufficient light to usher in a new month. In the physical and spiritual darkness of the galut, the huge light of Medinat Yisrael with our six million Jews and beautiful, holy land are the harbingers of the final redemption of our exiled nation.

I pray that within the context of freewill, HaShem will create the circumstances whereby our brothers and sisters who are still in the galut, will awaken to see the bright light shining from out of Eretz Yisrael. That our brothers and sisters in the galut, should no longer be as the nations to whom King David referred (and we recite in Hallel): "They have eyes, but do not see".

Shabbat Shalom

Nachman Kahana

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