

Agudas Yisroel Anshei Kielce



Zmanim

Candle Lighting: 5:14 pm
 Mincha/Kabbalas Shabbos: 5:15 pm
 Shacharis: 8:45 am
 Mincha/**SEUDAS SHLISHIS: 5:05 pm**
 Maariv/Motzei Shabbos: 6:18 pm
 Motzei Shabbos Rabbeinu Tam: 6:45 pm
Sunday Shacharis: 8:00 am

Parshas Bo

Adapted from Rabbi Yitzchok Adlerstein [www.torah.org]

The Moral High Road is a Two Lane Street [1]

Hashem said to Moshe and Aharon in the land of Egypt, saying: This month shall be for you the beginning of the months; it shall be for you the first of the months of the year.

The calendar described in this section, the first mitzvah given to the people about to become a nation, is a study in engineered inefficiency. And so it was meant to be. Efficiency, in the Torah's view, pales in comparison to the value of important instruction. In this case, the inefficiency of the calendar tells us volumes about human free will.

Calendars, we would think, ought to be linked to astronomical events that are known and predictable. We see great advantage in a calendar that would allow all people, in all places, to know in advance when the important events of the year will take place, so that they could plan accordingly, long in advance. Such a calendar, however, would leave in place an impression that the Torah insists on overturning. Were our holidays linked to fixed astronomical events, we might conclude, as so many others did, that all of us – Man, G-d, and the way we relate to each other – are equally fixed and constrained. If Rosh Chodesh were determined by the time of the earth receiving the first rays of sunlight reflected by the lunar mirror, we would be worshipping the dutiful periodicity of Nature. The Torah wants us to do nothing of the sort. We are not worshippers of Nature. It is not Nature and its regular ways that we celebrate each month. The waxing and the waning of the moon mean nothing to us, other than to act as symbols of the vicissitudes of life. We are required to pass through times of darkness and obscurity – but they will always be followed by glimpses of illumination. The moon and its phases are no more than a model to us, challenging and prodding us to rejuvenate ourselves periodically, to renew out

dedication to Him after a lapse of time in which the relationship may have become dulled.

It is not the astronomical Chadash – the first appearance of the new moon – that has us count the days till the moed – the special days of encounter. Rather, it is the Chidush, the newness, that takes place within ourselves that allows us to spend time with G-d on the special days of the year. Because we can change and move towards Him, we experience something powerful when He makes Himself available to us. Without that change, we would just be commemorating the past, but it would not be a moed, a meeting and encounter.

In other words, Rosh Chodesh is not determined so much by the moon as by the way it is noticed and perceived by us. Our calculation of the astronomical event does not fix the day of Rosh Chodesh. In the system that the Torah here describes, human beings must visually note the appearance of the moon. Their testimony has to be accepted by the court, which then formally proclaims the day as Rosh Chodesh. (Interestingly, this is only a requirement when the moon is cited by the witnesses on the day that it is expected to be seen by calculation, but not if the that day has already passed. It is only when the astronomical event coincides with the visual sighting that it is important to downplay the role of "natural" law, and treat it as unworthy of veneration in its own right.) It is Man that declares the New Moon – not the moon itself!

Halacha dictates that the visual sighting predominates over the "actual" occurrence in other ways as well. The court can artificially tamper with the calendar and delay Rosh Chodesh for human convenience. In this way, they can prevent Yom Kippur from falling on the day before or after Shabbos, which would be a hardship. It is thus the human court that determines when the Heavenly one will meet in judgment of the people! The decla-

ration of the court has finality, even when it is later learned that the testimony of the witnesses was inaccurate, whether by error or intentionally. In all these cases, human need trumps natural "fact." The occurrences of holidays that count from the beginning of the month depend entirely on human input. They are fixed by us, and recognized by Heaven only after our declaration. How foolish it is to cheer the establishment of the fixed calendar that we rely upon today as if it were a monumental achievement, an improvement upon the "primitive" method of the past. Our calendar is a sad concession to the realities of galus, of not having a court populated by judges with real semicha. Gone – until the restoration of the old system when the Redemption draws near – is our consciousness of being the ones who control time, rather than time controlling us.

One vestige of the old system remains enshrined in the fixed calendar, to remind us of what the calendar was supposed to be. When the moon was still sighted visually, distant communities often did not receive word of the decision of the High Court until a holy day was upon them. Not knowing when the festival was to begin, they had to observe two days, to remove any doubt. When the court of Hillel II gave us our fixed calendar, they sent a plea to the outlying communities not to abandon the old practice of observing two days, even though they would technically be able to follow the fixed system. The second day of Yom Tov, observed despite our knowledge of the "real" day of Yom Tov, serves as a constant reminder of the older, truer form of living the Jewish calendar. It is only this second day – disparaged by so many as a useless appendage from the past – that keeps alive the authentic character of the first day of Yom Tov!

According to Chazal, the musaf of Rosh Chodesh serves to atone for the unconscious violation of the taharah of the Mikdash and its holy articles. This is no small detail in the complex

laws of the beis hamikdash, but a truism about Jewish life in general. Unconscious contamination of the mikdash stems from drifting so distant in the course of time from a focus on holiness and holy ideas, that we lose some of the reverence we ought to have for them. Inevitably, we then mistreat and profane the holy. Left to our selves, the slow drifting would continue to the point that we would become – like Paroh – so coarse and unresponsive to Divine illumination that our hearts would remain hardened and resistant even in the presence of wondrous signs. It is precisely this drifting away that Rosh Chodesh addresses and cures. Once a month, we remind ourselves to look for the light and warmth of His spirit. In it, we are refreshed and renewed!

Within this monthly renewal is a strong repudiation of the fundamentals of paganism. In that universe, there is no renewal and no change – not in Man, not in the world, not in the ways of the gods. What is, needs to be. Every tomorrow follows inexorably from today. Everything new was already present within the old. There is no creation, no something coming into being out of nothing.

Just as there is no creation in the physical universe in the mind of the pagan, there is none in the moral one. From evil will flow only evil. Everything is fixed, determined. Egypt in particular was mired in this paganism. The perceived fixity of the universe reached into its social structure, producing fixed and immutable ranks and castes.

Precisely into this world view, "in the land of Egypt," Hashem showed Moshe the sliver of the new moon, and told him that it would serve as a model of a different order, a different view of life itself.

[1] Based on the Hirsch Chumash, Shemos 12:1-2

Good Shabbos

This week's kiddush is sponsored by: Rabbi & Mrs. Yuni in honour of the yahrzeit of Mrs. Yuni's father, Yaakov Yizchak ben Shmuel Moshe OB"M.		
The kids' program will take place downstairs beginning at 9:30 am.		
Seudas Shlishis is sponsored by the shul. The guest speaker for seudas shlishis is R' Shloimy Schwartz.		
The cholim list is being updated for Chodesh Teves. If you would like to submit a name to the cholim list please email gabbai@agudahsouth.com or contact one of the gabbaim.		
Shacharis Sunday: 8:00 am Tuesday, Wednesday & Friday: 7:00 am & 8:00 am Monday & Thursday: 7:00 am & 7:55 am	Weekday Schedule	Mincha 5:25 pm Maariv 5:45 pm

To sponsor Kiddush/Seudas Shlishis contact Baruch Klein (kiddush@agudahsouth.com.)
 All those wish to submit names to the cholim list can email gabbai@agudahsouth.com or contact one the gabbaim.
 Have a Simcha to announce? Email announcements to mailings@agudahsouth.com.
 To subscribe or unsubscribe to the email bulletin please email mailings@agudahsouth.com.

<p>Mishnayos Kids' Chaburah This week's Chaburah is CANCELLED. Refreshments will be served. For more information please email info@agudahsouth.com.</p>	<p>Friday Night Learning Program (FNL) Learning Seder: 8:00 pm Rabbi Kaufman's Parsha Shiur: CANCELLED This week's FNL is sponsored by: Baruch & Shaindy Klein. Kugel & Cholent will be served.</p>
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