

Rav Chaim Shmuelelevitz, the Mirrer Rosh Yeshiva, once stood before a Holocaust survivor, a living testament to the atrocities of the past. "How did you hold out?" he asked. "How did you find the strength to not give up?"

The survivor replied, "In the camps, we were stripped of everything. We were denied the ability to fulfill any Mitzvos. Lulav, Sukkah, Chanukah, all were beyond our reach. But there was one Mitzvah we clung to, even at the cost of our lives. At night, we'd leave the barracks to perform it, determined to press on."

"In the darkest of times, there was still always a moon," recalled the survivor. "And there was still always the Mitzvah of Kiddush Levanah. We would look up at the moon and take to heart the words in Kiddush Levanah:

"They are destined to be renewed like the moon."

The mitzvah of Kiddush Levanah was a beacon of hope for this Holocaust survivor, a constant reminder that things can change, that there is always hope for renewal.

Rav Moshe Grunwald, famed Chassidic Master and author of the Sefer Arugas HaBosem asks:

The sun burns eternal, the forces of nature are unyielding, and gravity is unbreakable. But what of the moon? It waxes and wanes, grows and diminishes, disappears and reappears. Why would the Creator fashion a celestial body with such a cyclical nature?

He answers:

There's a fundamental truth embedded within the waxing and waning of the moon. The moon serves as a symbol, a reminder that in life, we all experience periods of growth and decline, moments of ascent and descent.

The Creator, in His infinite wisdom, commanded the moon to follow its cyclical patterns as a parable to the Jewish people, as indicated by the words in the Kiddush Levanah blessing:

“And to the moon He said, ‘Renew yourself!...to those who are destined to renew themselves like her.’”

In other words, *“HaChodesh HaZeh...”* (Shemos 12:2), the renewal of the moon, is *“Lachem”*, **for the benefit of the Jewish People.**

The moon reminds us, on a collective and individual level, that just as the moon waxes and wanes, so too will we experience periods of growth and decline.

But just like the moon that always reappears after it disappears, we, too, are destined to renew ourselves and rise again and again.

In the interim, Good Shabbos!

Rabbi Daniel Steinberg,

Interim Rabbi, Cong. Ahavas Sholom