



Vayakhel-Pekudei/HaChodesh

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**This issue of Toronto Torah is dedicated by Robert and Karyn Goldberger  
in memory of Robert's mother Judith Goldberger z"l on her eighth yaahrtzeit**  
לעילוי נשמת שרה בת שמואל זלמן ורחל ז"ל

**This issue of Toronto Torah is dedicated by Mark and Linda Saffer  
in honour of Rabbi Torczyner and his wonderful work**

## The "Bride" Side of the Moon

**Idan Rakovsky**

The Jewish calendar is based on the moon, and on *Shabbat HaChodesh* we read about the mitzvah of sanctifying the lunar month, declaring *Rosh Chodesh*. The month is determined by the moon's revolution around the earth, as Rashi (Shemot 12:2) mentions, "G-d showed Moshe the moon in the first stage of its renewal, and He said to him, 'The time when the moon renews itself thus, shall be for you the beginning of the month.'"

We should ask ourselves: what is so important about the moon that the entire Jewish calendar is based on its movement? I would like to offer a possible answer based on the connection between two different sanctifications: sanctifying the moon (*Kiddush Levanah*) and the betrothal of a husband and wife (*Kiddushei Ishah*).

One example of the link between these sanctifications is the idea of greeting the Divine at *Kiddush Levanah*. The Gemara (Sanhedrin 42a) states, "With regard to anyone who blesses the new month in its proper time, it is as if he greets the Face of the Divine Presence." A similar idea appears in different Jewish texts regarding the relationship of a married couple. The entire book of Shir HaShirim describes a relationship between a loving couple and is often interpreted as the relationship between Am Yisrael and the Divine Presence. The Gemara elsewhere (Sotah 17a) declares that a married couple that is blessed by G-d will

be entitled to feel the Divine Presence among them. Similarly, every Friday night, we welcome the presence of Shabbat by chanting the special poem written by Rabbi Shlomo HaLevi Elka-betz, *Lecha Dodi*: "Come, my Beloved, to greet the bride; let us welcome the Shabbat."

Another parallel between the two sanctifications is halachic. One cannot sanctify the moon until he sees it with his own eyes. Similarly, Halachah prohibits a man from betrothing a woman without seeing her first. (Kiddushin 12b) Furthermore, at a wedding it is customary for the couple to wear beautiful and white clothing for the special occasion. (Ta'anit 40b; Orchot Chaim, Kiddushin 21; Kol Bo 71) We can compare that to the custom of reciting Kiddush Levanah, especially after Shabbat, when one is still wearing their beautiful white clothing from Shabbat. (Tur Orach Chaim 426:2) Additionally, we usually postpone Kiddush Levanah for Tishrei until after the fast of Yom Kippur, so it can be said out of the joy of atonement. (Rama Orach Chaim 426:2) A widely accepted custom is for the engaged couple to enter their Chuppah after fasting that day, which is believed to be a personal day of atonement as well. (Rama Even HaEzer 61:1)

A midrash (Shemot Rabbah 15:31) describes the covenant between G-d and the people of Israel, using a parable that goes as follows: "There was a king who was engaged to a woman. During their

engagement, he gave her only a few gifts. However, after they got married, he showered her with many gifts. Similarly, this world is considered a time of 'engagement' between us and G-d, as He gave us the moon as a small gift. In the days of the Messiah, the relationship between us and G-d will be upgraded to the level of 'marriage', and He will give us an entire world."

This Midrash illustrates the idea that the moon is a symbol of the betrothal between the people of Israel and G-d. It represents G-d's small gift to us, and every time we observe the renewal of the moon in the sky, we renew ourselves. Likewise, the covenant between the people of Israel and G-d in this world is continually renewed. In the days of the Messiah, the moon will no longer stand alone, but will be joined by the heavens, stars, and the entire cosmic complex, which will constitute the wedding of the people of Israel and G-d.

This is the blessing of marriage - just like the moon, which renews itself every month even though it has existed since Creation, the ultimate married life is long and lasting but feels new and renewed all the time.

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### OUR BEIT MIDRASH

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## Journey Through Tanach: Yeshayahu 41

Rabbi Steven Gotlib

### Summary

This chapter begins with Hashem allowing the nations - who had rejected Him for their idols - to plead their case before Him in a trial of sorts. Hashem is then described as placing His reign over their kings, and turning their swords to dust. He pursues them, while staying personally whole, and no shackles can slow Him down. Yeshayahu asks: Who could possibly achieve this? And he immediately answers that it is He who called generations from the very beginning - "I, Hashem, who was first and will be last." (41:1-4)

The coastlands watch in fear and the ends of the earth itself tremble. The nations support each other, encouraging themselves to be strong. (5-7)

The nation of Israel, however, is assured to be different, as people chosen by Hashem as His servants. They have not been rejected and therefore have no reason to fear. On the contrary, Hashem will strengthen them and uphold Israel with His right hand. Those nations who continue to contend with Israel will be shamed and ultimately perish like dust, while the Jewish people have nothing to fear because Hashem will forever be our helper and redeemer. (8-16)

When the poor are in need of water, Hashem does not abandon them, opening new springs for them. Hashem will cause a range of types of trees to populate the land. The goal is that the vulnerable should see Hashem's majesty and rulership over the world. (17-20)

The nations are then invited to present their cases about the past and make predictions of the future as Hashem can, and to generally attempt to advert their fate, demonstrating that they were correct after all. But Hashem has roused the Persian king Cyrus, and his work of conquest has already begun, and not one of the nations was able to foretell this. (21-26, as explained in Rashi)

Yet that which was prophesied for the Jewish people has come true! A saviour is on the way for Jerusalem, while the idols and their service will be shown to be nothing. (27-29)

### Insight

This chapter emphasizes Hashem's role in control of the cosmos, as the first in existence and the last to ever exist. This description is codified in Halachah by the Rambam, who writes that "The foundation of all foundations and the pillar of wisdom is to know

that there is a Primary Being who brought into being all existence" and that "If one would imagine that none of the entities aside from Him exist, He alone would continue to exist, and the nullification of their [existence] would not nullify His existence, because all the [other] entities require Him and He, blessed be He, does not require them nor any one of them." (Mishneh Torah, Hilchot Yesodei HaTorah 1:1 and 1:3, Touger tr.). Because Hashem acts as the literal foundation for all else in existence, He is also referred to as *Chai ha-olamim*. (Guide for the Perplexed 1:69)

However, this chapter also emphasizes that despite Hashem being so infinite in nature, He still looks after the Jewish people, acting on our behalf through history. Hashem is not merely an aloof watchmaker, but genuinely assists His chosen people in reaching our destiny.

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## Siddur Insights: Birkat HaChodesh

Rabbi Jared Anstandig

On the Shabbat before almost every Rosh Chodesh we recite a special prayer known as *Birkat HaChodesh*. The exception is before the month of Tishrei, possibly due to a concern of drawing the Satan's attention to the upcoming Day of Judgment. [See Levush Orach Chaim 421:1.]

The Mishneh Berurah (417:1; see also Shaar HaTziyun 417:1) explains that the custom of reciting this prayer dates at least as far back as Rabbi Eliezer of Metz, in 12<sup>th</sup> century France. Regarding its development, at first glance *Birkat HaChodesh* appears reminiscent of *Kiddush HaChodesh*, the ritual when the Sanhedrin declares that the new month has begun. [See Toronto Torah Vayetze 5783: Sefer HaChinuch, Mitzvah 4, for a brief discussion of this mitzvah.] However, Mishneh Berurah (417:1) explains that this is not the case. Instead, he writes that *Birkat HaChodesh* is to inform the public of the upcoming Rosh Chodesh.

One can divide the text of *Birkat HaChodesh* into three sections. In the first section (from the words "Yehi ratzon" until "Amen selah") and in the third section (from "Yechadshehu" until "V'nomar amen"), we beseech G-d to grant us a month of physical and spiritual success and peace. In the middle section we do three things - we announce the approximate time when the new moon will occur above Jerusalem (the *molad*), we request that G-d bring the ultimate redemption, and we state which day(s) will be Rosh Chodesh in the upcoming week.

As with the rest of our liturgy, one could spend hours un-

packing the meaning of each of the lines of *Birkat HaChodesh*, uncovering deeper meaning and significance that can elevate our own prayers. For example, Rabbi Baruch Epstein (Baruch She'Amar: Tefillot HaShanah) observes seemingly unnecessary wording in the final stanza of the first section. The final stanza reads, "[May You grant us] lives in which the requests of our hearts are fulfilled **for good**." Rabbi Epstein asks: Why would it be necessary to add the words "for good"? Isn't it obvious that all our requests are for the good? That is why we are making the request in the first place!

Among his answers to this question, he notes that not everything that is good for us, do we first recognize as such. And the converse is true, as well - some things that we experience at first as good turn out to be detrimental in the end. This request, then, is for G-d to grant us only those things that are actually for our benefit, despite what we may desire. In that vein, perhaps this prayer is also a good time to reflect on our past month. We can ask ourselves: Were there things last month that we misjudged as good or bad that could be worth a reconsideration? This re-evaluation could help us grow in our awareness and appreciation for the blessings we've received from G-d.

As we enter the month of Nisan next week, may we grow from our contemplation of last month, and may all of our prayers for this upcoming month be granted... for good!

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**Biography**  
**Rabbi Moshe ben Yosef diTrani (Mabit)**  
**Rabbi Meir Lipschitz**

Rabbi Moshe ben Yosef di Trani ("the Mabit") was born in 1505 in Salonika. Son of Castilian Jews who left Spain in 1492 and Portugal in 1497, his family contained many illustrious Rabbis. His father, Rabbi Yosef, was a leading scholar in Salonika, and his uncle, Rabbi Aharon, was the leading Rabbi in Adrianople. His first cousin was Rabbi Avraham di Biton, author of the *Lechem Mishneh* commentary on the Rambam's *Mishneh Torah*.

As a child, young Moshe was sent to study in his uncle's yeshiva in Adrianople, and at the tender age of sixteen he moved to Tzfat to complete his studies under Rabbi Yaakov Berab.

It was in Tzfat that Rabbi Moshe truly flourished. At the time, Rabbi Yaakov Berab was attempting to re-establish *semichah*, the official rabbinic ordination that had not been practiced in over a millennium. Rabbi Moshe was among the first to receive *semichah*, along with such giants as Rabbi Yosef Caro, the author of the Shulchan Aruch; the kabbalist Rabbi Moshe Cordevero; and Rabbi Moshe Galanti.

As a leading scholar in both the revealed and hidden Torah of the day, Rabbi Moshe ben Yosef di Trani served on the rabbinical court of Tzfat. In 1525, he became the rabbi of Tzfat, until he moved to Jerusalem in 1535.

Rabbi Moshe ben Yosef di Trani is perhaps best known under the name "Mabit", an acronym using his initials; his responsa were published under the title "Responsa of the Mabit". The Mabit's son, Rabbi Yosef di Trani (Maharit), was one of the leading halachic authorities of the subsequent generation.

Most famous among the Mabit's writings are his commentary on the Rambam, entitled *Kiryat Sefer*, and his 842 published responsa. Rabbi Moshe passed away in 1585 in Jerusalem. He was interred in Tzfat.

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**Weekly Halachah**  
**Hallel in Shul on Pesach Night**  
**Rabbi Mordechai Torczyner**

**Must I say Hallel in shul on Pesach at night if my minhag is not to say Hallel, but the shul does it?**

Various reasons are brought to explain why many communities say Hallel in shul on Pesach at night. For example, some suggest this is meant to fulfill the mitzvah of Hallel at the Seder for those who are not expert, others suggest it is because we split Hallel into two parts in our Haggadah, with part before the meal and part after the meal. The practice is mentioned by major Sephardi authorities and some Ashkenazi authorities, although it is not universal.

One who personally does not recite Hallel, but is in a shul which does, should recite Hallel to avoid varying visibly from their practice. Some authorities even say this person should recite Hallel with a berachah, if the community would notice its omission.

One who personally recites Hallel, but is in a shul which does not, should recite Hallel quietly in private.

(Ran to Pesachim 118a; Tur Orach Chaim 473; Shulchan Aruch Orach Chaim 487:4; Birkei Yosef 487:9; Kaf haChaim 487:38-39; Igrot Moshe Orach Chaim 2:94; Moadim uZmanim 7:179; Piskei Teshuvot 487:5)

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**Sefer haChinuch: First-Born Animals, Part 2**  
**By Rabbi Mordechai Torczyner**

*(Continued from last week)*

If a firstborn animal develops a blemish which disqualifies it from being brought as a korban, anyone may eat it. This mitzvah applies even when there is no Beit haMikdash, biblically within Israel and rabbinically outside of Israel. [One version of Rambam's *Mishneh Torah*, Hilchot Bechorot 1:5 says that this mitzvah applies only in Israel, and Sefer haChinuch seems to adopt this view in mitzvah 393, but the consensus of authorities is that this edition of the Rambam's position is in error; see *Minchat Chinuch* 393:7.]

The Torah's special declaration that we may not redeem an unblemished firstborn animal is odd; we may not redeem any unblemished korban for money. Why might I have thought that the firstborn animal was any different? Sefer haChinuch (393) suggests that this lesson is necessary because we do redeem the firstborn donkey; one might have thought that the same would be true for a firstborn kosher animal. Therefore, the Torah takes the time to note that one may not do so.

In truth, even a blemished firstborn animal is never "redeemed", in the normal sense of the word; it may be sold, but its sanctity is not transferred to the money used for purchase. Because its holy status is a function of birth and not conferred upon it by the will of a human being, no human being can transfer the holiness to another entity. (Rabbi Samson Raphael Hirsch to Bamidbar 18:17)

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**A SHABBATON AT CLANTON PARK SYNAGOGUE & THE OR CHAIM MINYAN**

Friday night divrei torah at Clanton Park Synagogue and the Or Chaim Minyan

Shabbat morning after Hashkamah at Clanton Park, R' Steven Gotlib: Faith and Freedom

Shabbat morning Derashah at Clanton Park, R' Mordechai Torczyner: The Day After Liberation

Shabbat morning 7-minute dvar torah at Or Chaim Minyan, R' Yehuda Mann: The Freedom of Torah

Shabbat morning shiur after kiddush, Idan Rakovsky: The Purpose of Slavery in Egypt

**5:30 PM PANEL DISCUSSION AT YESHIVAT OR CHAIM: RELIGIOUS FREEDOM WITHIN ORTHODOXY?  
WITH RABBI STEVEN GOTLIB, IDAN RAKOVSKY, RABBI MORDECHAI TORCZYNER**

Seudah Shlishit Divrei Torah at Clanton Park Synagogue and the Or Chaim Minyan

**Sun. Mar. 19**

**9:00 AM R' Zev Spitz & R' Yehuda Mann, Hilchot Bishul, Clanton Park (men): Niddah**

**Mon. Mar. 20**

**2:00 PM Idan Rakovsky, Into the Haggadah, ZOOM: <http://tiny.cc/idanrak>**

**8:00 PM-8:45 PM HAGGADAH NIGHT AT BAYT**

Four ten-minute thoughts for your Seder!

**Rabbi Yehuda Mann, Idan Rakovsky, Prielle Rakovsky, Rabbi Mordechai Torczyner**

**8:30 PM R' Yehuda Mann, Weekly Halachah, Shomrai Shabbos *not this week***

**Tues. Mar. 21**

**9:00 AM Idan Rakovsky, Tzidkat haTzaddik, Yeshivat Or Chaim (university men)**

**1:30 PM R' Mordechai Torczyner, Wisdom of King Solomon, ZOOM: <http://tiny.cc/weeklymt>**

**8:00 PM R' Mordechai Torczyner, Shemuel (Chap. 18), ZOOM: <http://tiny.cc/weeklymt> (men) *note new time***

**8:15 PM R' Yehuda Mann, Post-Shovavim Shiur (Semichat Chaver Chazarah), Clanton Park (men)**

**8:30 PM R' Jared Anstandig, Women's Beit Midrash: Arvei Pesachim Shaarei Shomayim (university women)**

**Wed. Mar. 22**

**9:00 AM R' Jared Anstandig, Halachic Philosophy of the Rav, Yeshivat Or Chaim (university men)**

**10 AM R' Mordechai Torczyner, Zecharyah: Hope & Armageddon, 2 of 3 ZOOM: <http://tiny.cc/weeklymt>  
Register: <https://torontotorah.com/wednesdays> *There is a fee***

**8:00 PM Idan Rakovsky, Into the Haggadah, Shaarei Tefillah**

**8:15 PM R' Yehuda Mann, Contemporary Halachah, Clanton Park**

**Thurs. Mar. 23 Rosh Chodesh Nisan**

**1:30 PM R' Mordechai Torczyner, Shemuel (Chap. 31), ZOOM: <http://tiny.cc/weeklymt> (women)**

**8:00 PM R' Yehuda Mann, Beitzah (advanced), for location: [ymann@torontotorah.com](mailto:ymann@torontotorah.com)**

**8:30 PM Idan Rakovsky, Sefer haChinuch, Shaarei Tefillah Beit Midrash Night (men)**

**Fri. Mar. 24**

**9:00 AM R' Jared Anstandig, Parshah, Yeshivat Or Chaim (university)**

**10:30 AM R' Jared Anstandig, R' Mordechai Torczyner, R' Yehuda Mann, Ketuvot Perek 1 *advanced*  
In-person at Yeshivat Or Chaim, on ZOOM at <http://tiny.cc/frishiur>**

**COMING UP!**

**8:00 PM March 27 HAGGADAH NIGHT at SHAAREI SHOMAYIM**

Four 10-minute divrei torah for your Seder!

**With Rabbi Jared Anstandig, Mrs. Sarit Anstandig, Rabbi Steven Gotlib, Rabbi Mordechai Torczyner**

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