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# 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, 5785

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# *Reflections of Redemption*

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



by  
Rabbi Dovid Yisroel Ber Kaufmann, Ph.D

# 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.

...In terms of spiritual matters (including the "highest" levels of spirituality) there already is perfection, including also the most (spirituality) complete state of Redemption. Thus the spiritual eyes of the Jew can already see it. We must open our physical eyes that they too should see the Redemption in a way that is clearly visible to eyes of flesh in our time...

Of practical relevance, everyone should resolve that his study of the previous Rebbe's Torah should complete and compensate for that which was lacking in the dissemination and spreading of the wellsprings due to the speech impediment of my sainted father-in-law. One accomplishes this both through one's own learning **out loud** as well as spreading of the wellsprings to others.

*(From the talk of Wednesday, Parshas Bo, 3 Shvat, and Shabbos Parshas Bo, 6 Shvat, 5752)*

...We see in reality (as mentioned many times recently) how the nations of the world in many, many countries are assisting the Jewish people in their Divine service (to an even greater degree than it was during the exodus from Egypt). Even that country [Russia] which was closed and locked for many years, and which did not permit Jews to emigrate, etc. and did not allow the proper observance of the Torah and mitzvos, has recently changed from one extreme to the other. Now not only are Jews permitted to live there as they please, and even to emigrate, but even more, the country assists them.

Things have changed to such an extent that we can see today in reality that, in addition to the Jews being "Ready, all of you" for the Redemption, the nations of the world also stand "ready, all of you" for the Jews to go out already from exile and go into the land of Israel in the true and complete Redemption.

And with our souls in bodies without any interruption at all, we will come immediately to the full realization of "Come to Pharaoh" with the true and complete Redemption, the completion of the revelation of "all the lights will be revealed," "And you, O L-rd, will be a light for the world."<sup>8</sup>

...It has been mentioned many times that already "all the appointed times have passed"<sup>9</sup> and everything is concluded, and the Redemption should have come long ago. But for totally incomprehensible reasons, it has not yet come.

Therefore it follows, that now the Redemption must come imminently and immediately. To employ a colloquial expression: this is High time for the true and complete 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

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8. *Yeshayahu* 60:19.

9. *Sanhedrin* 97b.

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

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There is an innovation unique to our generation - the ninth [from the Baal Shem Tov]- over all preceding generations, including the previous one (the eighth). Since the Redemption had not actually occurred then, the "come to Pharaoh" (the "revelation of "all the lights"<sup>1</sup> to those below) was not completely perfect, as a soul in a healthy body. (The soul was detached from the body, and also the soul when it was in a body was in the situation of "[his] speech was in exile," etc.<sup>2</sup>). This is not the case with our generation - the last generation of exile and the first generation of Redemption - when imminently and immediately "the lights [sun and moon] will be hung." Not only is nothing lacking in the great lights (the revelation of the Written Torah and the Oral Torah<sup>3</sup>), but just the opposite; for this generation will realize a greater perfection [in the revelation of the Written and Oral Torah]. (There will no longer be the "speech impediments" in the [transmission of] the Oral and Written Torah.<sup>4</sup> Rather they will be transcended.) Even souls within bodies will internalize "the revelation of all the lights" that were "hung" now, by virtue of the imminent arrival of our righteous Moshiach ("Send now by the one You will send"<sup>5</sup>), who will teach Torah to the all the people,<sup>6</sup> including "a new Torah will go forth from Me."<sup>7</sup>

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1. *Zohar*, vol. 1 210a.

2. [A reference to the Previous Rebbe's inability to speak due to a stroke. Translator's note.]

3. See *Shaloh* in his introduction 16, end of first side. His tractate *Shavuos* 191a. See *Likkutei Torah Shir HaShirim* 11:d. Or *HaTorah* on *Bereishis* 14a, 36 end of second side. *Bamidbar* p. 46. *Megillas Esther* (in 5750, edition p. 149), Nach, p. 217 and in other sources. See *Likkutei Sichos* vol. 30, p. 10 ff.

4. *Zohar*, vol. 3, p. 28, beginning of first side.

5. *Shmos* 4:13.

6. See Rambam, Laws of Repentance, chapter 9, halacha 2. *Likkutei Torah Tzav*, 17a ff. And in several other places.

7. *Yeshayahu* 51:4. *Vayikra Rabba*, chapter 13:3.

There has been an increase in the above during these most recent days.

The events of these final days in the affair of "the kingdoms will struggle with each other" emphasize that we find ourselves in reality close to the Redemption, as explained in the midrashim of our Sages, may their memories be for a blessing,<sup>7</sup> that this<sup>8</sup> is one **of the signs of Redemption.**

In the language of the Midrash [it states<sup>9</sup>], "In the year the King Moshiach will be revealed... the king of Persia will provoke the king of Arabia... all the nations of the world will be in turmoil and terror... and (the Holy One, Blessed be He) will say to them (Israel), "My children, do not be afraid, all that I have done I have done only for your sake... **the time of your Redemption has arrived.**"

...And in regard to the activities of the enemies of Israel, which they try to injure, G-d forbid - there is no substance in them, and their efforts will not succeed,

...The connection of these events to the children of Israel is - the knowledge that **"the time of your Redemption has arrived"**; therefore, stand ready all of you to greet our righteous Moshiach, including and in particular through increasing in matters of Torah and mitzvos, since through "one mitzvah," one tips the scale for himself and the entire world to the side of merit, and causes for himself and them salvation and deliverance."<sup>10</sup>

*From the talk of Shabbos Parshas Bo, 4 Shvat, 5751*

7. *Bereishis Rabbah* ch. 42:4. *Midrash Lekach Tov*, Lech Lecha 14:1

8. [The struggle of the nations, particularly the Gulf War, prophetically described in the *Yalkut Shimoni* (see next paragraph). *Translator's note*]

9. *Yalkut Shimoni Yeshayahu* (Isaiah), *remez* 499.

10. Rambam, *Hilchos Teshuva*, (Laws of Repentance) Chapter 3, Halacha 4.

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)*

## The Announcement Of The Redemption

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*[This excerpt follows the Rebbe's instruction concerning the preparation for Yud Shvat (tenth of the month of Shvat), the anniversary of the passing of the Previous Rebbe. The Rebbe called for increases in Torah study and tzedekah. He then proceeds to call for extra emphasis on preparation for the Redemption. Translator's note.]*

The preparation for Redemption should be emphasized more, by strengthening faith and trust in, and expectation of, the Redemption, "I await him every day that he should come."<sup>1</sup> - In the language of the Previous Rebbe:<sup>2</sup> **"Stand ready all of you to greet our righteous Moshiach."**<sup>3</sup>

The above applies specifically in this year, "It will be a year in which I will show him wonders,"<sup>4</sup> and after they've already seen the miracles and wonders in this last period, including and particularly - the exodus of many Jews from that country [the Soviet Union] to the land of Israel, through which they also come closer to Judaism, Torah and its mitzvos. For subject<sup>5</sup> is a reflection and example of, and the immediate preparation to fulfill the promise, "a great congregation will return here."<sup>6</sup>

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1. The 12th principle of the 13 principles [of faith].

2. *[This talk was given the Shabbos before the yahrtzeit (anniversary) of the passing of the Previous Rebbe. Translator's note]*

3. *HaYom Yom* 15 Teves. And in many places.

4. *[In Hebrew, each letter has a numerical equivalent. The letters of the year 5751 (Hey, Tuf, Shin, Nun, Aleph) are an acronym of this phrase, based on Michah 7:15. Translator's note]*

5. *[The emigration from the Soviet Union. Translator's note]*

6. *Yirmiyahu* (Jeremiah) 31:7.