

“This month shall be for you the beginning of the months.” (12:2)

The first *mitzvah Klal Yisrael* received as a nation was the *mitzvah* of *Kiddush haChodesh*, sanctifying the new moon. Indeed, the moon is the constellation by which we reckon our *Yomim Tovim*, festivals; and *Klal Yisrael* is compared to the moon. Simply, this is due to the waxing and waning of the moon every month. As the moon goes through a process of monthly renewal, so, too, does *Klal Yisrael* have the opportunity and ability to rejuvenate themselves spiritually. Even if a person has feelings of rejection, when he senses within himself a sort of spiritual deterioration, he can reinvigorate himself and return to his original spiritual plateau.

Horav Mordechai Ilan, z.l., supplements this idea with the consideration that the moon returns to its original state as it appeared during Creation. Similarly, this is *Klal Yisrael's* attribute. Upon rejuvenating themselves, they revert to the state in which they had been when they became a nation. While renewal is important, and rejuvenation is essential for growth, there has to be a base level position from which one proceeds and to which one returns. The starting point of one's renewal should be the point designated by Hashem, the position/plateau upon which he stood when he began his journey. *Klal Yisrael* reached their zenith when they accepted the Torah. This is their starting point to which they revert upon their renewal. If a person goes through a period of spiritual decline, he can pick himself up and return. He has to know, however, to where he returns and what position he must seek to rejuvenate himself.

Horav Avraham Pam, z.l., cited in *The Pleasant Way*, derives another lesson from the moon. While the Torah refers to the sun and the moon as the *meoros ha'gedolim*, great luminaries, the moon hardly fits the description. The moon is actually tiny compared to the sun. *Ibn Ezra* and the *Malbim* explain that the appellation, *meor ha'gadol*, does not refer to the size of the luminary, but rather to what it accomplishes, to its function vis-à-vis the world. The sun gives light and heat to the earth – without which the world could not exist. The moon lights up the night, and, as such, it has a major role in illuminating the earth. While many of the stars are even larger than the sun, their power of illumination is relatively insignificant.

What is especially significant is the fact that the moon is referred to as a “great luminary”, even though it does not generate its own light. It only reflects the light it receives from the sun. We derive from here that the source of light is inconsequential; it is the actual manifest of light that counts. The moon illuminates the sky – that is important to us. The fact that this is reflected light has no bearing on the fact that the moon transmits this light to us.

Rav Pam explains that this may serve as an important lesson for *bnei Torah*, students of Torah, who feel shortchanged and unfulfilled because they are not *mechadesh*, do not produce novellae or original Torah thoughts. While it is true that in some *yeshivah* circles this is a barometer of success, it is regrettable that they overlook *havanah*, comprehension; *hasmadah*, diligence, and

emes, sincerity in learning *Torah lishmah*, Torah for its own sake. The moon, which does not have any light of its own, is not *mechadesh ohr*, does not originate light. Yet, since it reflects the light of the sun, it is still considered a *meor ha'gadol*, great luminary.

So, too, should a *ben Torah* feel success when he reflects the Torah of his *rebbeim*, their *middos tovos*, character refinement, and *chochmas ha'Torah*, wisdom inspired by the Torah. The fact that he represents everything that is good in Torah is in itself a mark of success.

When one reflects the light of a *mitzvah* – if through him the *mitzvah* has greater proliferation – he is considered a success. In other words, facilitating the fulfillment of a *mitzvah* is tantamount to performing it. There are people who are blessed with great wealth which they use wisely and share with others. Does that mean that one who is not wealthy is deprived of the *mitzvah* of *tzedakah*? No! If one reflects the light of *tzedakah* by motivating others to give, by encouraging others to fulfill this *mitzvah*, he is also performing the *mitzvah*. *Tzedakah* means charity – reaching out to others and giving assistance. Some fulfill this *mitzvah* with money; others with time; yet others lend their expertise to help another. It is all the same *mitzvah*. While it may not earn him a plaque in this world, the recognition he will receive in the Eternal World is what really matters.