

# "KEEP YOUR OPINIONS TO YOURSELF"

How to speak in a way that others will listen.

TEACHER'S MANUAL



# JEWISH INSIGHTS

A TASTE OF THE REBBE'S TEACHINGS



**BLESSING THE NEW MONTH** 

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Founded in 2008 in memory of Rabbi Gabi and Rivky Holtzberg OB"M Shluchim of the Rebbe to Mumbai India

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Since the Exodus from Egypt, the declaration of the new month was based on eyewitness testimony. The Sanhedrin would examine the credibility of the witnesses to the appearance of the new moon and sanctify the month with the proclamation: "Sanctified!" to which the entire assembly would respond: "Sanctified! Sanctified!" (Source 1)

If no witnesses appeared on the 30th day, the 31st day was automatically set as the new month's start, without a special ceremony. (Source 2)

In the 4th century, Hillel the Nasi anticipated the dissolution of the Sanhedrin and established a fixed calendar that remains in use to this day. (Source 3)

Today, it is customary to announce during the "Shabbat Mevarchim" (the Shabbat preceding the new month) the day of the week on which the new month will occur, during the prayer "Mi SheAsah Nissim" ("He Who performed miracles"). This serves both to inform the public when Rosh Chodesh will be, and also to commemorate the Sanhedrin's sanctification of the month. (Source 4)

## B. Six Blessings or Twelve?.....7

Rabbi Yosef Rozin, the Rogatchover Gaon, asks: In the blessing of the new month, we express six phrases of blessing (Source 5), while in the *Musaf* prayer for Rosh Chodesh, we express twelve phrases of blessing (Source 6). What accounts for this difference?

The Rogatchover explains: In the *Musaf* prayer, we pray for the success of the month. Since all months require blessing, twelve blessings are said, corresponding to the twelve months of the year.

The blessing of the new month, however, commemorates the sanctification of the month. When the year follows its regular pattern, the months alternate between full and incomplete. Therefore, only six months are eligible to be sanctified and declared by the Beit Din. To commemorate these six sanctifications, we recite six phrases of blessing.

### C. When Is It Appropriate to Offer Reproof?.....10

Before his passing, on Rosh Chodesh Shevat, Moses rebuked the Jews for their sin with the Golden Calf (Source 7). However, before offering reproof, Moses bestowed many blessings upon them. He conquered the lands of Sihon and Og (at great personal risk, Source 8), distributed the Land of Israel, and only then delivered his admonishment.

This conduct of first blessing and bestowing good, and only then offering reproof originates in the Torah itself:

It is taught that the letter **Bet** was chosen to initiate the creation of the world ("Bereishit bara Elokim") because it symbolizes blessing, berachah, whereas the letter **Alef** is associated with cursing—Arur (cursed). The Rebbe asks: Why then do the Ten Commandments begin with the letter **Alef** ("Anochi Hashem Elokecha"), which represents cursing?

The Rebbe explains: The proper order is to begin with blessing, which is why the Torah opens with the letter **Bet**. Subsequently, negative matters can be addressed ("I am the Lord your G-d—you shall have no other gods"), represented by **Alef**. Moses followed this principle, bestowing good before admonishing the Jews.

The conduct of Moses, as well as the structure of the Torah itself, teaches us how to act. We must first bless those around us, and then, when necessary, offer reproof, ensuring it will be well received.

# Introduction

The rhythm of Jewish life revolves around the calendar. It determines when Yom Kippur falls, when Sukkot begins, and the exact day we gather around the table to celebrate Pesach. In this lesson, we will explore how the Jewish sages established the Jewish calendar through the sighting of the moon and the declaration of the new month, and how the mitzvah of sanctifying the new month during the era of the Sanhedrin is still remembered in our times.

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In our era, when everyone feels they have something to say, it is crucial to know how to offer critique in a way that will be accepted. This lesson will examine the proper approach, ensuring the listener is open to hearing and understanding. Drawing from Jewish tradition, and especially from Moses' example, we will learn how to extend blessings and do good before delivering critique, and how this approach can enrich our lives and strengthen our relationships.

### השיעור לשבת מברכים שבט

משיחת שיחת שבת פרשת שמות, כ"ה טבת, מבה"ח שבט, ה'תשל"ז הנחה בלתי מוגה

לחץ כאן להורדת הקונטרס



ההנחה באדיבות וועד הנחות בלה"ק. תודתנו נתונה להם.

# A. What Is the Blessing of the New Month?

### >> The Rebbe

Student's

Shabbat Mevarchim is associated with Rosh Chodesh, the new month. On Shabbat Mevarchim we bless the new month and announce the day of Rosh Chodesh. This announcement is similar to the way the new month would be consecrated in ancient times, when months were set based on visual sightings of the new moon.

The difference is that when months were consecrated based on sight there was an entire process of accepting testimony and making mathematical calendrical calculations. After all of this was done the court would announce: "Consecrated!"

שבת מברכים החודש קשורה עם ענינו של ראש חודש, שהרי בשבת מברכים מכריזים ומודיעים באיזה יום יחול ראש חודש<sup>1</sup>, דוגמת ענין קידוש החודש על פי הראיה<sup>2</sup>.

אלא שבזמן שהיו מקדשין על פי הראיה היה בזה סדר שלם - הן קבלת עדות והן קביעה על פי חשבון (כפי שיטת הרס"ג הידועה בזה<sup>3</sup>, וכן דעת כמה גאונים, ראשונים ואחרונים<sup>4</sup>), ולאחרי זה היתה ההכרזה "מקודש"<sup>5</sup> וכיוצא

### When is Rosh Chodesh?

The Jewish calendar is based on the lunar cycle. As the lunar cycle begins, the moon appears as a thin crescent. This marks the start of the Hebrew month. The moon grows until it becomes full in the middle of the month, then begins to wane until it is no longer visible. It remains unseen for approximately two days, and then the thin crescent reappears, starting the cycle anew.

The entire cycle takes about 29.5 days. Since a month must consist of whole days, a Hebrew month is either 29 days long (known as an "incomplete month") or 30 days long (a "full month").

In Judaism, knowing exactly when the month begins has always been important, as the dates of the holidays are determined by the day of the month.

## Source 1

Maimonides, Mishneh Torah, Laws of Sanctification of the New Month 1:3-6, 2:7-8

Student's

The moon becomes hidden and remains invisible for about two days-sometimes slightly less or slightly more-each month. This occurs approximately one day before its conjunction with the sun at the end of the month and one day after, before it is visible again in the western sky in the evening.

Student's The first evening the moon is sighted in the west after being hidden marks the beginning of the new month. From that day, 29 days are counted. If the moon is sighted on the evening of the 30th day, that day becomes Rosh Chodesh (the start of the next month).

הַלְבַנָה נִסְתֵּרֵת בַּכַל חֹדֵשׁ וְאֵינָה נָרְאֵית כָּמוֹ שָׁנֵי יָמִים אוֹ פַּחוֹת אוֹ יוֹתֵר מִעָט. כָּמוֹ יוֹם אָחָד קֹדֵם שַׁתִּדְבַּק בַשַּׁמֵשׁ בָּסוֹף הַחֹדֵשׁ, וּכְמוֹ שָׁתִדְבַּק יוֹם אָחַד אַחַר בַּמַּצֵרָב וָתַרַאֵה בַשַּׁמֵשׁ בַּעֵרֶב.

וּבַלַיִל שַׁתַּרַאָה בַּמַעַרַב אַחַר שַנְּסָתַרָה הוּא תַחַלַּת הַחֹדֵשׁ וּמוֹנִין מֵאוֹתוֹ הַיּוֹם תִּשְׁעַה וְעֵשָׂרִים יוֹם. וְאָם יֵרֵאָה הַיַרַחַ לֵיל שָׁלשִׁים – יִהְיֵה יום שלשים ראש החדש.

#### Who Decides?

Student's

The establishment of Rosh Chodesh based on the moon's sighting is not the responsibility of individuals. This is different from the observance of Shabbat, where everyone counts six days and rests on the seventh.

In contrast, the sanctification of the new month is entrusted to the court. The new month does not begin until the court officially sanctifies it, and the day they declare as Rosh Chodesh becomes Rosh Chodesh. This is derived from the verse, "This month will be for you..."—referring to the members of the court.

אֵין רָאִיַּת הַיָּרָחַ מִסוּרָה לְכָל אַדַם, כִּמוֹ שַׁבַּת בַּרֵאשִׁית אַחַד מוֹנֵה שִׁשַׁה וְשׁוֹבֵת בַּשִּׁבִיעִי.

אַלַא לָבֵית דִּין הַדַּבַר מַסוּר עַד שֶׁיְקַדְשׁוּהוּ בֵּית דִין וְיִקְבָּעוּ אוֹתוֹ הַיּוֹם רֹאשׁ חדש הוא שיהיה ראש חדש. שנאמר "החדש הזה לַכָם" עַדוּת זוֹ תַּהָיֵה מְסוּרַה

From the wording of the verse, "it will be for you...," our sages deduced that the responsibility for marking and sanctifying the new month—the recognition of the new moon—was entrusted to the nation's leaders, the Sanhedrin, the highest rabbinical court in each generation.

Originally, there was no fixed calendar. It was impossible to determine in advance which day of the week the upcoming holidays or events like a Bar Mitzvah would occur on, because the start of the month could not be known in advance. Each month, the Sanhedrin had to decide whether that month would end with 29 or 30 days, depending on when the new moon of the next month was first sighted. Only then would they sanctify the new month.

## **Astronomy and Witness Testimony**

Student's pq. 2

The High Court would conduct calculations like those of the astronomers who study the positions and movements of celestial bodies. They would carefully analyze whether it would be possible to sight the new moon at the appropriate time—the night of the thirtieth day.

If the judges determined that the moon could be sighted, they would remain on alert throughout the entire thirtieth day, waiting for witnesses to testify. If witnesses arrived, their testimony would be examined according to legal procedures, and if verified, the court would sanctify the new month. However, if the moon was not sighted and no witnesses came forward, the court would complete the thirtieth day, making the month a full 30 days.

The process for accepting testimony regarding the sighting of the moon involves the following steps:

Student's

Anyone who has seen the new moon and is eligible to testify comes before the court. The judges gather all the witnesses in one location and prepare a large feast for them in order to encourage regular participation.

The first pair of witnesses to arrive is given priority. The more distinguished of the two is brought into a private chamber first and asked the standard questions regarding the sighting. If his responses align with the court's calculations, his partner is then questioned. If their accounts match, their testimony is confirmed.

Subsequently, the other pairs of witnesses are asked general questions, even though their testimony is not needed. This is done to ensure they do not leave feeling discouraged. This way, they will be motivated to come forward in the future.

בֵּית דִּין מְחַשְּׁבִין בְּחָשְׁבּוֹנוֹת כְּדֶרֶךְ שֶׁמְחַשְׁבִים הָאִיצְטַּנְנִינִים שֶׁיּוֹדְעִין מְקוֹמוֹת הַכּוֹכָבִים וּמַהְלֶּכָם וְחוֹקְרִים וּמְדַקְדְּקִים עַד שֶׁיִדְעוּ אִם אֶפְשָׁר שֶׁיֵרָאֶה הַיָּרֶחַ בִּזְמַנּוֹ שֶׁהוּא לֵיל שְׁלשִׁים אוֹ אִי אֶפְשָׁר.

אָם יְדְעוּ שֶׁאָפְשָׁר שֶׁיּרְאָה,
יוֹשְׁכִין וּמְצַפִּין לָעֵדִים
כָּלוֹ שֶׁהוּא יוֹם
כָּלוֹ שֶׁהוּא יוֹם
שְׁלשִׁים. אִם בָּאוּ עֵדִים
וּדְרָשׁוּם וַחֲקָרוּם כַּהֲלָכָה
וְנָאֶמְנוּ דִּכְרֵיהֶם – מְקַדְּשִׁין
אותוֹ. וְאִם לֹא נְרָאָה וְלֹא
בָּאוּ עֵדִים, מַשְׁלִימִין
שָׁלשִׁים וְיִהְיֶה חֹדֶשׁ מְעָבָּר.

פֶּיצַד מִקַבְּלִין עֲדוּת הַחֹדֵשׁ?

פָל מִי שֶׁרָאוּי לְהָעִיד שֶׁרָאָה אֶת הַיָּרָחַ בָּא לְבֵית דִּין. וּבֵית דִּין מַכְנִיסִים אוֹתָן כָּלָּן לְמָקוֹם אֶחָד וְעוֹשִׁין לְהֶן סְעָדּוֹת גְּדוֹלוֹת כְּדֵי שֶׁיִּהְיוּ הַעֵּם רְגִילִין לַבוֹא.

וְזוּג שֶׁבַּא רָאשׁוֹן בּוֹדְקִין אוֹתָן בבדיקות ראשון את שאמרנו. מַכְנִיסִין אוֹתוֹ. ושואלין הַגַּדוֹל מכונים דָבַרִיו נמצאוּ לַחֶשָׁבּוֹן מַכָנִיסִים אַת חֲבֶרוֹ. מִכְנַנִין נִמִצְאוּ קימת. עדותן

וּשְאָר כָּל הַזּגּגוֹת שׁוֹאֲלִין אוֹתֶם רָאשֵׁי דְּכָרִים. לֹא שָׁצְרִיכִים לָהֶם אֶלָּא כְּדֵי שָׁלֹא יֵצְאוּ בְּפַחֵי נֶפֶשׁ, כְּדֵי שֵׁיָּהִיוּ רָגִילִין לַבוֹא.

## The Sanctification of the Month by the Sanhedrin

Below is a brief description of the process the Sanhedrin followed in ancient times to establish the start date of a new month.

On the 30th day of each month, the Sanhedrin would convene in the large courtyard in Jerusalem known as Beit Ya'azek. Witnesses who claimed to have seen the new moon the previous night would come forward to give testimony and be examined by the members of the Sanhedrin.

The members of the Sanhedrin were all well-versed in astronomy. They knew precisely when and where the new moon would appear. However, the sanctification of the new month depended on the actual sighting of the new crescent moon by two witnesses. The word "this" in the verse "This month will be for you the head of months..." implies something that must be physically visible.

The rabbis of the Sanhedrin would question the witnesses in the order of their arrival. Since they knew what the correct answers should be, they could easily identify false testimony. Starting with the elder of each pair of witnesses, they would ask:

- In what direction was the moon relative to the sun?
- Which direction did the dark side of the moon face relative to the sun?
- At what height in the sky did you see the moon?

Once the first witness was questioned, the second member of the pair was brought in and asked similar questions. If their testimonies matched, the evidence was accepted.

# **Announcing the Sanctification**

**Student's** After the witnesses' testimony is confirmed, the head of the court proclaims, "It has been sanctified." In response, all the people present repeat, "It has been sanctified. It has been sanctified."

וָאַחַר כַּךְ אַחַר שֻׁתִּתְקַיֵּם הַעַדוּת ראש בֵּית דִין אוֹמֵר "מְקָדָשׁ", וְכָל הָעָם עוֹנִים אַחַרַיו "מִקְדַשׁ, מָקַדַּשׁ".

That day, the 30th day, was now declared as day 1, Rosh Chodesh for the new month. The head of the Sanhedrin would proclaim, "It is sanctified!" and everyone would respond, "It is sanctified! It is sanctified!" This retroactively established that the previous month had only 29 days.

## The 30-day Month

# **Source 2** Talmud, Rosh Hashanah 24a

### Student's

The head of the court says: "It is sanctified!" and everyone responds, "It is sanctified! It is sanctified!" If the new moon was not sighted in time, it can no longer be sanctified, for it was already sanctified by Heaven.

ראש בֵּית דִּין אוֹמֵר: "מְקּוּדָשׁ", וְכָל הָעָם עוֹנִין אַחֲרָיו: "מְקּוּדָשׁ מְקוּדָשׁ"... אָם לא נְרָאָה בִּזְמַנּוֹ – אֵין מְקַדְּשִׁין אוֹתוֹ, שֶׁבָּבָר קִידְשׁוּהוּ שָׁמַיִם.

If no witnesses arrived on the thirtieth day—either because the moon had not yet "appeared" or because it could not be seen—the following day, the thirty-first day, was automatically declared as Rosh Chodesh. As a result, the previous month was retroactively considered a full month.

### The Fixed Calendar

**Source 3** Ramban, Sefer Hazechut, Gittin:

In the fourth century CE, the sage Hillel II foresaw the dissolution of the Sanhedrin and understood that it would no longer be possible to rely on them to determine the dates. Hillel and his court were the ones who established the fixed calendar that we continue to use to this day.

#### Student's

pg. 4

...In the days of Hillel the son of Rabbi Judah the Prince, the Sanhedrin was dissolved, and there were no longer any experts in the field. Hillel therefore created a fixed calendar that included leap years and sanctified the years for generations to come. מִשְּׁנַת תר"ע לִשְּׁטֶרוֹת, מִימֵי הַלֵּל בְּנוֹ שֶׁל ר' יְהוּדָה הַנְּשִּׁיא, בָּטְלָה סַנְהֶדְרִין מֵאֶרֶץ יִשְּׂרָאֵל וּבָטְלוּ מֻמְחִין מִמֶּנָה, וְהוּא שַׁתִּקֵן סֵדֶר הָעִבּוּר וּמָנָה שָׁנִים וְקָדֵשׁ חֲדָשִׁים לְדוֹרוֹת.

Hillel the Prince, also known as Hillel II or Hillel the Last, was the president of the Sanhedrin in the fifth generation of the Amoraim of the Land of Israel, in the fourth century CE. He lived and served in the Land of Israel during the time of Abaye and Rava in Babylonia, and shortly after them. He was a descendant of the family of princes which included Rabbi Gamliel and Rabbi Judah the Prince, part of the lineage of Hillel the Elder.

## >> The Rebbe

# Student's Like Consecrating the Month

Shabbat Mevarchim was enacted in order to evoke the original process of consecrating the new month. Even when the darkness of exile prevents us from fulfilling the mitzvah of consecrating the month on sight, and the months are established by a fixed calendar set up by Hillel, we announce on Shabbat, a day on which everyone gathers in the synagogue, the date of the upcoming new month.

ודוגמת זה נקבע הענין של "שבת מברכים"- שגם בזמן שמצד חושך הגלות אין מקיימים מצות קידוש החודש על פי הראיה, אלא קביעת החדשים היא על פי החשבון שיסד הלל, יכריזו בשבת קודש, שהוא "יום הכניסה" שבו הכל מתכנסים בבית הכנסת" ("בית הכנסת" במ מלשון כניסה"), באיזה יום יחול ראש חודש.

The Rebbe explains that the contemporary custom of reciting the Birkat Hachodesh blessing on every Shabbat Mevarchim and declaring on which day Rosh Chodesh will fall mirrors the process of sanctifying the new month that was observed during the time of the Sanhedrin.

# Student's Source 4 Magen Avraham, Orach Chaim 417

On the Shabbat preceding Rosh Chodesh, we bless the new month. The Sefer Yereim writes that this is not equivalent to the Sanhedrin's sanctification, rather it serves to notify the congregation of the upcoming Rosh Chodesh. Nevertheless, we rise for this prayer, in the same manner that they rose for the historical sanctification.

בְּשַׁבָּת שֶׁלְּפְנֵי רֹאִשׁ חֹדֶשׁ, מְבָרְכִין הַחֹדֶשׁ... וְכָתוּב בְּסֵפֶּר יְרֵאִים דְּאֵין זֶה קְדּוּשׁ בֵּית דִּין, אֶלְּא שָׁמּוֹדִיעִים לְהָעוֹלָם מָתֵי רֹאשׁ חֹדֶשׁ. וּמִכְּל מָקוֹם נְהֲגוּ לַצְמֹד בִּשְׁעַת אֲמִירַת "רֹאשׁ חֹדֶשׁ בְּיוֹם פְּלוֹנִי" דְּגְמַת קִדּוּשׁ הַחֹדֶשׁ שֶׁהָיָה מְעָמָד.

# **B. Six Blessings or Twelve?**

# $\begin{array}{lll} \text{Student's} & >> \text{The Rebbe} \\ & pg.5 & \end{array}$

The Rogatchover Gaon uses this concept to explain the difference we find between the wording of Birkat Hachodesh (the blessing of the new month) and the wording used in the musaf prayer for Rosh Chodesh.

In Birkat Hachodesh, after stating "Rosh Chodesh Shevat will be on Thursday" we recite a paragraph beginning yechadeshehu ("renew for us") in which we bless the month with six terms of blessing. In the musaf prayer recited on Rosh Chodesh we invoke twelve terms of blessing.

ועל פי זה מבאר הרוגצ'ובי? את השינוי שמצינו בין נוסח ברכת החודש לנוסח תפלת מוסף של ראש חודש":

בברכת החודש, לאחרי ההכרזה "ראש חודש שבט ביום החמישי כו"" (בחודש זה, ועל דרך זה בשאר החדשים) - אומרים נוסח "יחדשהו", שבו מברכים את החודש בשש לשונות של ברכה<sup>11</sup>; מה שאין כן בתפלת מוסף של ראש חודש - אומרים י"ב לשונות של ברכה.

Student's **Source 5** Birkat Hachodesh, prayer liturgy Student's pg. 6

May He who performed miracles for our fathers and redeemed them from slavery to freedom, speedily redeem us and gather our dispersed people from the four corners of the earth, uniting all of Israel, and let us say, Amen.

Rosh Chodesh (name of month) will be on (day(s) of week), which is coming to us for good.

May the Holy One, blessed be He, renew it for us and for all His people, the house of Israel, for life and peace, for gladness and for joy, for deliverance and for consolation, and let us say, Amen. מִי שֶׁעָשָׂה נְּסִּים לַאֲבוֹתֵינוּ, וְגָאַל אוֹתָם מֵעַבְדוּת לְחֵרוּת, הוּא יִגְאַל אוֹתָנוּ בְּקְרוֹב, וִיקַבֵּץ נִדְּחֵינוּ מֵאַרְבֵּע כַּנְפוֹת הָאָרֶץ, חֲבֵרִים כָּל יִשְׂרָאֵל, וְנֹאִמֵר אָמֵן:

ראש חדש (פלוני) בֵּיוֹם (פלוני) הַבָּא עַלֵינוּ לְטוֹבָה:

יְחַדְשׁהוּ הַקָּדוֹשׁ בָּרוּךְ הוּא עָלֵינוּ, וְעַל כָּל עַמוֹ בֵּית יִשְׂרָאֵל, לְחַיִּים וּלְשָׁלוֹם, לְשָׁשׁוֹן וּלְשִׁמְחָה, לִישׁוּעָה וּלְנָחָמָה וָנֹאמַר אָמֵן.

## >> The Rebbe

## 12 blessings, 12 months

Student's

The reason why we say twelve terms of blessing is because this number corresponds to the twelve months of the year. According to some traditions a thirteenth term, "to atone for sin," is added during a leap year, in which there is a thirteenth month. While the current request for blessing is for the upcoming month, we utilize the occasion to throw in blessing requests for the other months of the year as well.

We therefore need to explain why we only use six terms of blessing in the blessing of the new month on Shabbat Mevarchim, and not twelve as we do in the Rosh Chodesh *musaf*.

The Rogatchover Gaon explains the difference:

ובהקדים, שהטעם לאמירת י"ב לשונות של ברכה הוא כנגד י"ב חדשי השנה [ולכן לפי כמה נוסחאות מוסיפים בשנת העיבור "ולכפרת פשע"<sup>12</sup> - י"ג לשונות של ברכה, גם כנגד חודש העיבור]; ואף שבקשת הברכה עתה היא לחודש זה - הרי בדרך "גלגול" (בדוגמת ענין הגלגול שמצינו בתורה<sup>13</sup>) מבקשים ברכה גם עבור כל שאר החדשים.

ועל פי זה צריך ביאור - מדוע אומרים בברכת החודש (בשבת מברכים) רק שש לשונות של ברכה, ולא י"ב לשונות, כבמוסף של ראש חודש?

ומבאר הרוגצ'ובי בטעם החילוק:

Student's pq. 7

The function of *musaf* of Rosh Chodesh is prayer and requests for blessings for the month. Since all of the months need prayer and blessing, we use twelve terms of blessing, corresponding to the twelve months.

The *Birkat Hachodesh* of Shabbat Mevarchim, by contrast, is a commemoration of the sanctification of the new month. The new month only needed to be consecrated by the court when it was set to be "on time," meaning when the previous month had consisted of 29 days. In this case the court needed to actively pronounce the beginning of the new month on the 30th day, and not on the 31st. However, when the new month was supposed to begin on the 31st day, there was no process of official sanctification, as it is already automatically sanctified from Above, as Rosh Chodesh can only ever be on the 30th or 31st of the month, not later.

In a regular year on the fixed calendar that we use there are six "short months" of 29 days and six "full months" of 30 days. This means that there are only six months that would need the court to pronounce them (the "short months"). Therefore, in the *Birkat Hachodesh* on Shabbat Mevarchim, which commemorates the sanctification of the month, we only use six terms of blessing.

In addition, Shabbat Mevarchim contains the theme of blessing, as its name states. This blessing is given immediately following the announcement of the date of Rosh Chodesh, meaning that the blessing is primarily for the day of Rosh Chodesh, and by extension for the entire month.

תפלת מוסף של ראש חודש - ענינה תפלה ובקשה על החודש, וכיון שכל החדשים זקוקים לתפלה - אומרים בה כל י"ב לשונות של ברכה, כנגד י"ב החדשים.

מה שאין כן ברכת החודש בשבת מברכים - היא זכר לקידוש החודש והרי לא הוצרכו לקידוש החודש על ידי בית דין אלא כשקבעו ראש חודש "בזמנו" (דהיינו כשהחודש הקודם הוא חסר, בן כ"ט יום), שאז יש צורך בפעולת הבית דין, שיקבעו שראש חודש חל ביום ל' ולא ביום ל"א; מה שאין כן כאשר קובעים ראש חדש ביום ל"א - "אין מקדשין אותו, שכבר קידשוהו שמים" אותו, שכבר קידשוהו שמים" (שהרי ראש חודש אינו יכול לחול אלא ביום ל' או ל"א, ולא אחר כך).

ומאחר שסדר החדשים ב"שנה כסדרה" הוא אחד מלא ואחד חסר כסדרה" הוא אחד מלא ואחד חסרים, נמצא שישנם ששה חדשים חסרים, שבהם הוצרכו לקידוש החודש על ידי בית דין; ולכן אומרים בברכת החודש (בשבת מברכים), שהיא זכר לקידוש החודש, רק ששה לשונות של ברכה.

ונוסף לזה ישנו בשבת מברכים גם ענין הברכה (כשמה "שבת מברכים"), וכיון שברכה זו נאמרת (כאמור) בהמשך ובסמיכות לההכרזה אודות ר"ח - מובן שגם הברכה היא לכל-לראש בנוגע להיום דר"ח, ולאח"ז - גם בנוגע לכל החודש כולו.

# C. When Is It Appropriate to Offer Reproof?

## Moses's Sermon of Reproach

In the fortieth year since their exodus from Egypt, and just a few weeks before his passing, Moses began a lengthy recounting of the history of the Jewish people during their wanderings in the desert, preparing them for their imminent entry into the Promised Land.

This recounting began on Rosh Chodesh Shevat.

# **Source 7** Deuteronomy 1:3-5

# Student's pg. 8

It came to pass in the fortieth year, in the eleventh month, on the first of the month, that Moses spoke to the children of Israel according to all that the G-d had commanded him regarding them; After he had smitten Sihon, king of the Amorites, who dwelt in Heshbon, and Og, king of the Bashan, who dwelt in Ashtarot in Edrei.

On that side of the Jordan, in the land of Moab, Moses commenced and explained this Law, saying.

וַיְהִי בְּאַרְבָּעִים שָׁנָה בְּעַשְׁתֵּי עָשָּׁר חֹדֶשׁ בְּאָחָד לַחֹדֶשׁ דְּבֶּר מֹשֶׁה אֶל בְּנֵי יִשְּׂרְאֵל כְּכֹל אֲשֶׁר צִּנְּה ה' אֹתוֹ אֲלֵהֶם. אַחֲרֵי הַכּּתוֹ אַת סִיחֹן מֶלֶךְ הָאֱמֹרִי אֲשֶׁר יוֹשֵׁב בְּחֶשְׁבּוֹן וְאֵת עוֹג מֶלֶךְ הַבְּשָׁן אֲשֶׁר יוֹשֵׁב בְּעַשְׁתְּתֹת בְּאָדְרֶעִי.

פְּעֵבֶר הַיַּרְדֵּן פְּאֶרֶץ מוֹאָב הוֹאִיל משֶׁה בֵּאֵר אֶת הַתּוֹרָה הַזֹּאת לֵאמֹר.

#### Rashi

#### Student's pg. 8

After He had smitten Sihon: Moses said: If I rebuke them before they enter at least part of the land, they will say, "What claim has this man on us? What good has he ever done for us? He has come only to vex us and to find some pretext, for he does not have the power to bring us into the land." Therefore, he waited until he had defeated Sihon and Og before them and had given them possession of their land, and only afterward did he rebuke them.

אַחֲרֵי הַפּתוֹ. אָמַר מֹשֶׁה אָם אֲנִי מוֹכִיחָם קֹדֶם שֶׁיּכְּנְסוֹּ לִקְצֵה הָאָרֶץ, יאמְרוּ, "מַה לָּזֶה עֶלֵינוּ? מַה הֵיטִיב לְנוּ? אֵינוֹ כָא אֶלָּא לְקַנְּתֵּר וְלִמְצֹא עִלְּה, שָׁאֵין בּוֹ לְמִיכָךְ הִמְתִין עַד לְפִיכָךְ הִמְתִין עַד לְפִיכָךְ הִמְתִין עַד שֶׁהִפִּיל סִיחוֹן וְעוֹג שֶׁהְפִּיל סִיחוֹן וְעוֹג אַרְצָם וְאַחַר כָּךְ הוֹכִיחָן.

## >> The Rebbe

## **Blessings Before Reproach**

**Student's** pg. 9

To explain Moses's speech of rebuke that was delivered on Rosh Chodesh Shevat:

The speech was only delivered after Moses had defeated Sihon and Og, as Rashi states, "he waited until he had defeated Sihon and Og before them and had given them possession of their land."

We see that when Moses needed to rebuke the Jewish people—including those who had committed the sin of the Golden Calf—he only did so after bestowing many blessings on them.

Firstly, he had conquered the land of Sihon and Og for them, risking his life in the battle. Rashi notes that Moses fought Og personally, citing the story of Og's killing from the Talmud. Following the battle, he divided the land among the Jewish people, giving part to the tribe of Gad, part to the tribe of Reuben, and part to half of the tribe of Manasseh.

ביאור תוכן הענין של "דבר משה אל בני ישראל" שנעשה בראש חודש שבט<sup>15</sup>:

המאורע של "דבר משה אל בני ישראל" היה דוקא "אחרי הכותו את סיחון גו' ואת עוג גו'"<sup>16</sup>, "המתין עד שהפיל סיחון ועוג לפניהם והורישם את ארצם"<sup>17</sup>.

והיינו, שבשעה שהוצרך משה רבינו לומר דברי מוסר לישראל - אפילו לאלו שנכשלו בחטא העגל (כפי שפירש רש"י<sup>81</sup> ל"בן חמש למקרא": "ודי זהב - הוכיחן על העגל שעשו כו'") - לא עשה זאת אלא לאחר שהעניק להם ריבוי ברכות:

לכל לראש - כבש עבורם את ארץ סיחון ועוג, ולצורך זה העמיד עצמו בסכנה (כפירוש רש"יי שמשה עצמו הוא שנלחם בעוג, ומביא את סיפור הגמרא בברכות בנוגע לאופן הריגתו כו'), ולאחרי זה - חילקם בעצמו לבני ישראל, חלק פלוני לבני גד, חלק פלוני לבני ראובן וחלק פלוני לחצי שבט המנשה (כמסופר באריכות רבה בפרשיות שלפני זה בי).

## **Source 8** Talmud, Berachot 54b

Student's pg. 9

With regard to the rock that Og, King of Bashan, sought to throw upon Israel, there is no biblical reference, but rather a tradition was transmitted.

עַל הָאֶבֶן שָׁבָּקֵשׁ עוֹג מֶלֶךְ הַבָּשָׁן לְזְרוֹק עַל יִשְׂרָאֵל אֵין מִקְרָא כָּתוּב, אֶלָּא מְסֹרֶת מִסוּרָה הִיא. Student's pg. 10

The Gemara relates that Og said: How large is the camp of Israel? It is three parasangs. I will go and uproot a mountain three parasangs long and I will hurl it upon them and kill them. He went, uprooted a mountain three parasangs long, and brought it on his head. G-d brought grasshoppers upon it and they pierced the peak of the mountain and it fell on his neck.

Og wanted to remove it from his head; his teeth were extended from one side of his head to the other and he was unable to remove it. And that is what is written: "You break the teeth of the wicked" (Psalms 3:8). This is in accordance with the homiletic interpretation of Rabbi Shimon Ben Lakish, as Rabbi Shimon Ben Lakish said: What is the meaning of the verse: "You break the teeth of the wicked"? Do not read it as: You break [shibarta], but rather as: You lengthened [shirbavta].

The story concludes: How tall was Moses? He was ten cubits tall. He took an axe ten cubits long, jumped up ten cubits, and struck Og in the ankle and killed him.

מְסֻפֶּר שֶׁכֶּךְ אָמֵר עוֹג, "מַחֲנֵה יִשְּׂרָאֵל כַּמָּה הוּא? שָׁלוֹשׁ כַּּרְסָאוֹת. אֵלֵךְ וְאֶעֶקֹר הַר בֶּן שָׁלוֹשׁ פַּרְסָאוֹת וְאַשְׁלִיךְ עַל רֹאשוֹ, וְהַכִיא הַקָּדוֹשׁ עַל רֹאשוֹ, וְהַכִיא הַקָּדוֹשׁ כָּרוּךְ הוּא עָלִיו חֲגָכִים וּנְקָכוּהָ לְכִפַּת הָהָר, וְנָפַל הָהָר עַל צַנָּארוֹ.

הָיָה עוֹג רוֹצֶה לִשְׁלֹף אוֹתוֹ מֵעֵל רֹאשׁוֹ, נִמְשְׁכוּ שִׁנָּיוּ לְצֵד זֶה וּלְצֵד זֶה שֶׁל רֹאשׁוֹ וְלֹא יָכוֹל הָיָה לְשׁוֹלְפוֹ. וְזֶהוּ שְּנָּאֶמֵר, "שְׁנִי רְשָׁעִים שָׁבַרְתָּ". לְקִישׁ. שָׁאָמֵר רַבִּי שִׁמְעוֹן בֶּן לָקִישׁ. שֶׁאָמֵר רַבִּי שִׁמְעוֹן שֶׁנָאֶמֵר, "שְׁנִי רְשָׁעִים שְׁבַרְתָּ" אֶלָּא שַׁנָאָמֵר, "שְׁנִי רְשָׁעִים שְׁבַרְתָּ" אֶלָּא שׁלָּאָמַר, "שְׁנִי רְשָׁעִים שְׁבַרְתָּ" אֶלָּא "שָׁרְבַּבְתַּ".

וְסוֹף הַמַּצְשֶּׁה: מֹשֶׁה כַּמָּה הָיָה גָּבְהוֹ? עֶשֶּׁר אַמּוֹת. לְקַח גַּרְזֶן בֶּן עֶשֶׂר אַמּוֹת, קָפַּץ עֶשֶׁר אַמוֹת, וְהִבָּהוּ בִּקַרְסִלוֹ וַהַרָּגוֹ.

## >> The Rebbe

Student's pg. 10 Moses first did many great things for the Jewish people, and even placed himself in danger on their behalf. He even benefited their animals, as the lands of Sichon and Og were ideal for pasture. Only after doing all of this he gave them a rebuke for the sin of the golden calf. And even the rebuke was done with gentle allusions, to preserve the honor of the Jewish people.

ורק לאחר שעשה לבני ישראל [ולא רק להם, אלא גם לבהמותיהם, שהרי ארץ סיחון ועוג היתה "ארץ מקנה"<sup>22</sup>] ריבוי טובות, ואף העמיד עצמו בסכנה עבורם - רק אז אמר להם דברי מוסר על חטא העגל, וגם זאת - רק "ברמז, מפני כבודן של ישראל"<sup>23</sup>!

### Which Letter Should the Torah Have Started with?

Student's pq. 11

Moses represents Torah, as the verse states, "remember the Torah of my servant Moses." The Midrash explains, "the Torah is named for Moses because he risked his life for it." We therefore find that Moses's conduct—first achieving great blessings for the Jewish people, and only then rebuking them—is reflected in the Torah as well.

The Midrash and Zohar relate that when G-d wished to create the world all the letters of the Hebrew alphabet came to Him and asked to be the one with which the world will be created. G-d rebuffed them all, until the letter bet came. G-d created the world with the letter bet—bereshit barah—because the letter bet represents blessing, brachah. We are also told that the reason why G-d did not create the world with the first letter of the alphabet, alef, is because alef represents a curse, arur.

This raises the question: if the entire Torah starts with the letter bet rather than alef because bet represents blessing and alef represents curse, why do the Ten Commandments begin with the letter alef, anochi Hashem Elokecha?

### First Bereshit, then Anochi

Student's pq. 11

The meaning of Anochi Hashem Elokecha, "I am G-d your L-rd," is the negation of idolatry, as the Torah continues, "you shall

והנה, ענינו של משה הוא ענין התורה, כמו שכתוב<sup>24</sup> "זכרו תורת משה עבדי", וכמובא במדרש<sup>25</sup> "לפי שמסר נפשו עליה נקראת על שמו". ומזה מובן, שהנהגה זו של משה שבתחילה עשה לישראל טובות, ורק לאחרי זה הוכיחם ואמר להם דברי מוסר מצינו דוגמתה בכללות התורה.

#### והענין בזה:

איתא במדרש<sup>26</sup> ובזהר<sup>27</sup>, שבשעה שביקש הקב"ה לברוא את העולם, באו לפניו כל האותיות, וכל אות ביקשה שבה ייברא העולם, ולכולן אמר הקב"ה שאי אפשר שייברא בהן העולם, עד שבאה אות בי"ת שייברא בה הקב"ה את עולמו ("בראשית ברא גו""<sup>25</sup>), כיון שאות בי"ת מורה על ענין הברכה. וכן מצינו<sup>29</sup> שהטעם שלא ברא הקב"ה את עולמו באות אל"ף הוא לפי שאל"ף מורה על ענין הקללה.

אלא שלפי זה נשאלת השאלה<sup>30</sup>: אם אלא התורה כולה פותחת באות בי"ת ולא באות אל"ף, מאחר שבי"ת מורה על ענין הברכה ואילו אל"ף מורה על ענין הקללה ' איך יתכן שהתחלת עשרת הדברות היא דוקא באות אל"ף ("אנכי ה' אלקיך"<sup>13</sup>)?

והביאור בזה: הענין של "אנכי ה' אלקיך" הוא־שלילת הענין של עבודה זרה, כהמשך הכתוב "לא יהיה לך אלקים אחרים גו'"<sup>32</sup>

.29 ההר ויל"ש שם. ירושלמי חגיגה פ"ב ה"א (קרוב לסופה). תנחומא בראשית ה. ב"ר פ"א, יו"ד. תדבא"ר פל"א (קרוב לסופו). ועוד.

.30 ראה גם סה"מ תשי"ג ע' ריב. וש"נ.

31. יתרו כ. ב.

32. שם. ג.

24. מלאכי ג, כב.

25. ראה מכילתא בשלח טו, א. שמו״ר פ״ל, ד. וש״נ. וראה גם שבת פט. א.

> .26 אותיות דר"ע בתחלתו. יל"ש ר"פ בראשית. 27. ח"א רה, ב.

28. בראשית א. א.

Student's pg. 12 have no other gods." This is similar to the words of rebuke that Moses delivered to the Jewish people, the theme of which is negating the golden calf.

This is why the Ten Commandments begin with an *alef*, after the Torah as a whole begins with a *bet*. The order of the Torah is also instructive, and this particular sequence teaches us that blessing must come first, and only then can we proceed to "I am G-d your L-rd," the negation of idolatry.

Torah shows us the proper sequence, that first comes blessing, and only thereafter is there room for "curse," as represented by alef. This is why Moses acted similarly, first achieving great things for the Jewish people, and placing himself in danger on their behalf, and only then giving them rebuke (in a gentle way, preserving their honor).

[ועד שלדעת כמה פוסקים<sup>33</sup> "אנכי ה' אלקיך" ו"לא יהיה לך אלקים אחרים" הם ענין אחד], על דרך הנ"ל בענין דברי המוסר ש"דבר משה אל בני ישראל", שתוכנם - שלילת הענין של "ודי זהב", חטא העגל.

ועל זה היא ההוראה מפתיחת עשרת הדברות באות אל"ף, לאחר פתיחת כללות הדברות באות בי"ת - ללמדנו, שסדר התורה (כידוע שהסדר בתורה גם הוא תורה) הוא, שתחלה צ"ל ענין הברכה, ורק לאחרי זה יש מקום לענין של "אנכי הוי" אלקיך", שלילת עבודה זרה.

ומאחר שמצינו בכללות התורה סדר זה, שתחילה ישנו ענין הברכה, ורק לאחרי זה יש מקום לענין של אות אל"ף - היתה גם הנהגת משה רבינו באופן זה, שתחילה עשה לישראל טובות, והעמיד עצמו בסכנה עבורם, ורק לאחרי זה אמר להם דברי מוסר ("ברמז, מפני כבודן של ישראל").

Moses learned this tactic directly from the Creator Himself. Just as G-d began the Torah with the letter Bet, with a blessing, and only afterwards gave them the Ten Commandments, which begin with the letter Alef, warning them against idolatry, so too, Moses first gave them blessings, fought their wars, and bequeathed them the land. Only afterwards did he give them reproof.

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This explanation, that Moses represents Torah, and his conduct with the rebuke is based on the order of the Torah, teaches all of us a lesson. Every Jew possesses a spark of Moses's soul, so Moses's conduct has a practical lesson to teach all of us—not just a select few unique individuals.

על פי הנ"ל, שענינו של משה הוא ענין
התורה, והנהגתו בענין "דבר משה אל בני
ישראל" מיוסדת על סדר התורה - ניתוסף
עוד יותר בהאמור לעיל, שמאחר שבכל
אחד ואחד מישראל ישנו ניצוץ ממשה
רבינו, הרי גם ההנהגה של "דבר משה אל
בני ישראל" היא הוראה הנוגעת ושייכת
לכל אחד ואחד מישראל, ולא רק ליחידי

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The lesson is simple: we must all follow the order of first bringing blessing to all the Jews around us.

Acting in this way causes G-d to bless the Jewish people as well, and this blessing will start with us, as the verse states, "those who bless you will be blessed," bringing us success in all of our endeavors. This includes meriting success in offering gentle rebuke to our fellow Jews, that our words should be effective and reveal the spark of Moses that they possess, leading to the fulfillment of the promise "so that the banished will not be cast away."

והכוונה בזה בפשטות - שהנהגת כל אחד ואחד מישראל צריכה להיות באופן שלכל לראש מברך הוא את כל בני ישראל הנמצאים בסביבתו,

ועל ידי זה פועל שגם הקב"ה יברך את בני ישראל, החל מהמברך עצמו, כמו שכתוב<sup>35</sup> "ואברכה מברכך", שזוכה לברכתו של הקב"ה להצלחה בכל עניניו ובכל מעשי ידיו, ואזי זוכה גם להצלחה זו - שכאשר אומר דברי מוסר ("ברמז") לזולתו, הרי הוא פועל עליו ומגלה את ניצוץ משה שבו, שיבוא לידי גילוי, ויקויים בו "לבלתי<sup>36</sup> ידח ממנו נדח"<sup>37</sup>.

משיחת שיחת שבת פרשת שמות, כ"ה טבת, מבה"ח שבט, ה'תשל"ז הנחה בלתי מוגה

## **Key Points:**

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- The determination of Rosh Chodesh was done by the Sanhedrin, based on witnesses who saw the new moon's appearance. After receiving the testimony, the court would declare "Mekudash" (sanctified), and then the new month would begin.
- If no witnesses came to report the sighting of the moon, the previous month was retroactively established as full (30 days), and the new month would automatically begin on the 31st day from the beginning of the previous month.
- At some point, a calendar based on astronomical calculations, independent of moon sightings, was established, and this is the calendar we follow today.
- On Shabbat Mevarchim (the Shabbat before the new month), we recite the blessing for the new month to inform the public when Rosh Chodesh will be, and also as a reminder of the sanctification of the month by the Sanhedrin in ancient times.
- In the blessing for the new month, instituted as a reminder of the

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Sanhedrin's sanctification, six phrases of blessing are said, as the Sanhedrin would typically sanctify only six months each year. In the musaf prayer of Rosh Chodesh, we pray for a successful month, so we say twelve phrases of blessing, corresponding to the twelve months of the year (according to the explanation of the Rogatchover).

- Before his passing, Moses reproved the Children of Israel for the sin of the Golden Calf, but first, he blessed them and fought battles on their behalf.
- Moses learned this leadership approach from the Torah. The Midrash says that the Torah begins with the letter Bet, which represents "blessing," and not with the letter Alef, which represents curse. Why then do the Ten Commandments begin with the letter Alef? The explanation is that after opening the Torah with a blessing, it is possible to then open the Ten Commandments, which aim to forbid idolatry, with the letter Alef.
- We should bless the people around us, and this will bring us G-d's blessings, making our reproofs more likely to be accepted.

## Takeaway:

Before criticizing others, we must first do something for them. When we act with a positive approach, we create a good and pleasant atmosphere that will serve as a nurturing ground for constructive and positive criticism.