

## Haftorat HaChodesh

*Yechezkiel* 45:16-46:18

*I thought I'll never find anything interesting to share from this week's haftorah since it is mainly about the sacrifices, a topic I have not yet learned to appreciate. I thank Hashem for allowing me to notice a verse full of hidden mystical meanings, which holds the key to accessing the Garden of Eden even while living in this physical World.*

### The Connection between the Parasha and the Haftorah

The Shabbat prior to *Rosh Chodesh Nissan*, in addition to the regular weekly Torah portion, we read *Parashat HaChodesh* – the special Torah reading about the mitzvah to sanctify the new moon, and count the month of Nissan as the first of the months (*Shemot* 12:1-20). The *haftorah* includes a prophetic verse regarding Shabbat and *Rosh Chodesh*, reflecting the theme of *Parashat HaChodesh*: receiving the first mitzvah for the Jewish People – to sanctify *Rosh Chodesh*. Much of the *haftorah* is devoted to describing the various sacrifices during Pesach and other holidays. However, the *haftorah* also portrays the entry and exit from the Temple.

### The Inner Gate that Opens only on Shabbat and Rosh Chodesh

When I glanced through this week's special *haftorah* which is all about the sacrifices, one particular verse sparked my interest. As I looked for hidden meanings, Hashem sent me a fascinating kabbalistic commentary which I will share with you here almost word for word. "Thus said Hashem, G-d: "The gate of the inner court that looks toward the east shall be shut the six working days; but on the Shabbat it shall be opened, and on the day of the new moon it shall be opened" (*Yechezkiel* 46:1 ). I was intrigued about the gate of this "inner court that looks towards the east" and I asked myself "Which kind of inner secrets are only revealed on Shabbat and *Rosh Chodesh*?" The commentary of the Holy Rabbi Yesha'ya Horowitz (the *Shelah HaKodesh*) then caught my eye. He asked why the inner holiness is only revealed on *Rosh Chodesh* and Shabbat but not during the holidays. He explained that on Shabbat and *Rosh Chodesh* all the souls leave *gehinum* (purgatory). This is not the case on the holidays.

### Israel's Engagement to Hashem through the Mitzvah to Sanctify the New Moon

During the Exodus from Egypt, the relationship between Israel and Hashem was compared to that of a *kallah* (bride) and a *chatan* (bride-groom), as we read on Pesach in *Song of Songs*. While still in Egypt, with the giving of the first mitzvah to sanctify the new month, Hashem chose us among all the nations and brought us close to Him as a *chatan* chooses his *kallah*. Several weeks later on Shabbat (*Babylonian Talmud, Pesachim* 68b), He consummated the marriage by giving us His Torah. Since a marriage is can only be valid through direct contact between the bride and groom, the giving of the Torah was "face to face". It, moreover, took place on Shabbat, the time for marital intimacy.

### Receiving the Moon as an Engagement Gift

The engagement between the Jewish people and Hashem emphasizes the power of the Jewish people, whereas Hashem has "the upper hand during" the marriage. Therefore, regarding the

mitzvah to sanctify the new moon, it states, “This month is yours.” The Sanhedrin is in charge of deciding which day is *Rosh Chodesh*. This determines whether the moon will be full (30 days) or deficient (29 days). The holiness of Shabbat teaches us about the Hashem’s existence and power as it states “Shabbat to Hashem” (*Shemot 16:25*). Therefore, the holiness of Shabbat is eternal. The midrash brings the following parable: “This month is for you” This is compared to a king who became engaged to a woman and gave her some small gifts. When he came to take her as a wife, he showered her with much greater gifts. Similarly, when Hashem engaged the Jewish people in this world He only gave Israel the moon. However, in the messianic era, we will become married to Hashem. At that time He will give Israel endless light (*Shemot Rabah 15:31*).

### Consummating the Wedding to Hashem in the World to Come

When Israel became engaged through the mitzvah of sanctifying the moon, we received the gift of the moon. The moon symbolizes everything we go through in this world, both our “ups” compared to the full moon, and our “downs” corresponding to the diminished moon. The Torah is compared to an everlasting marriage contract between Israel and Hashem. It is impossible to fully grasp the deepest meaning of the Torah within the physical world. So, too, the holy wedding between Israel and Hashem is beyond this world, and only fully consummated in the World to Come.

### The Dark Side of the Moon Corresponds to Our Suffering

The Jewish calendar goes according to the moon because just as the moon is at times full and at other times deficient, so does Israel bless Hashem for both the good and the bad (*Babylonian Talmud, Berachot 48b*). One of our hardest challenges is to accept suffering with love. This ability distinguishes Israel from the other nations, as it states in the midrash, “This month is for you” – “Only you count according to the moon, not so the other nations”. Since they lack this capacity to bless Hashem for their suffering, therefore the Gregorian calendar goes according to the sun, which is always full.

### The Fire of the Sun for the Nations versus the Light of the Moon for Israel

The nations of the world calculate time according to the sun, which is a burning fire, whereas Israel counts according to the moon, which is compared to light. In the future, Hashem will remove the sun from its sheath and punish the nations through its fire, as it states “For behold, that day is coming, it burns like a furnace...it shall burn them up...” (*Malachi 3:19*). However, just as the moon consists of light, so will Israel inherit eternal light, as it states, “Light is sown to the righteous...” (*Tehillim 97:11*).... (Based on *The Shelah HaKodesh, Sefer Shemot, Parashat HaChodesh*).

### Entering the Garden of Eden through the Gates of Shabbat and Rosh Chodesh

I believe that “the gate of the inner court that looks toward the east...” alludes to the gate of the Garden of Eden that Hashem planted eastward (*Bereishit 2:9*). Likewise, the continuation of the verse, “...shall be shut the six working days...” (*Yechezkiel 46:1*), is parallel the verse that describes sending Adam out of the Garden: “G-d sent him out of the Garden of Eden to work the ground...” (*Bereishit 3:23*). According to Kabbalah, both the Temple and marital relations correspond to the Garden of Eden (*Kehallat Ya’acov 15*). When Hashem expelled humanity from the Garden, and “placed the *keruvim* (cherubs) to the east of the Garden of Eden, with the bright blade of a revolving sword to guard the way to the Tree of Life” (*Ibid. 3:24*), he shut the gates to the Garden of Eden. Yet,

he allowed these gates to be opened on Shabbat and *Rosh Chodesh*, as we learn from our *haftorah*: "...but on the Shabbat it shall be opened, and on the day of the new moon it shall be opened." With these prophetic words, Hashem gives us the key to re-accessing our lost Paradise. This also explains why all souls leave *gihennum* particularly on Shabbat and *Rosh Chodesh*.

### Accessing the Moon's Key to our Lost Paradise

Reconnecting with Hashem in the ultimate closest way is the embodiment of the Garden of Eden. Rejoicing in Hashem on Shabbat, which is compared to the World to Come, as well as through Torah learning, which was given on Shabbat, is one of the special ways to re-enter the gates of Paradise. We also have the opportunity to access the Garden by connecting with the waxing and waning message of the moon, through experiencing the unity with Hashem not only during our "ups", but also during the "downs" of our lives. The holiness of being engaged to Hashem by accepting suffering with love, even within these difficult times that we endure here in Israel, is an important key to unlock the Garden.