



## PhiloTorah D'var Torah

### How LACHEM is it?

There are two different elements to the concept of K'DUSHAT Z'MAN, sanctity of time - Shabbat and Chagim.

Aside from any halachic differences between Shabbat and Holy Days, a major distinction between them is who sanctifies them.

HaShem sanctifies Shabbat. VAYVA-REICH ELOKIM... VAYKADEISH OTO - And God blessed the seventh day and He made it holy... (B'reishit 2:3); ...AL KEIN BEIRACH... VAYKAD'SHEIHU - Therefore, God blessed the Shabbat day and sanctified it (Sh'mot 20:11).

He sanctified Shabbat and commanded us to keep it, observe it, and acknowledge its sanctity with Kiddush (in davening - our Sages added doing it again with wine) and Havdala. (And in other ways.)

But He sanctified Shabbat on His own (so to speak).

When it comes to Holy Days, even they are called - EILEH MO'ADEI HASHEM, These are God's appointed [holy days], holy occasions... (Vayikra 23:4), He 'desired' to involve us in the process of sanctifying time by declaring the first of each month holy.

Obviously, we're not talking about G-d sanctifying Shabbat on His own and we, the Jewish People, sanctifying Yom Tov on our own. Not the way it works.

As previously mentioned, we are dealing with MO'ADEI HASHEM, God's holidays. He took us out of Egypt. He set a seven-day Chag for us to observe (and enjoy) from the 15th of Nissan until the 21st. He declared the first and the seventh day KADOSH, He required us to eat Matza and to get rid of all chametz.

So where do we come in?

He gave us the mitzva of HACHODESH HAZEH LACHEM. He showed Moshe Rabeinu the form of the L'VANA B'CHIDUSHA (the first visibility of the Lunar Crescent) and said, When you see the Moon like this in the sky, sanctify Rosh Chodesh. So far, it is all HaShem (so to speak).

But He also said to us - if you sanctify the day of Rosh Chodesh, good. Then holy days that fall in that month will be sacred. But if you don't...

Example: When we (via the Sanhedrin) sanctify the first day of Nissan as Rosh Chodesh, then, come the 15th, we have Pesach. But if - CHAS V'SHALOM - we don't sanctify Rosh Chodesh Nissan, then come the 15th, it is a regular weekday, no prohibition of chametz, no Yom Tov, no Seder, no mitzva to eat matza.

God made Pesach (still for example) but we, the Jewish People, His People, must take the final step to making Pesach exist, to making it holy - by Kiddush HaChodesh.

Key word in God's command to make our calendar is LACHEM. For you (us). The pasuk says it twice. LACHEM. LACHEM. It is our act that invests the calendar with its KEDUSHA. We are HaShem's junior partners in the process. But we are essential. God has given this aspect of Sanctifying Time to us.

That's no small thing.

Picture the following:

Time of the Sanhedrin - past and future (may it happen soon in our time) - it's a Friday evening, the 29th of a month, and a Jew - let's call him Dov - in Kiryat Sh'moneh is in shul for Kabbalat Shabbat. Right before Maariv, the rav of the shul is giving a d'var Torah. Dov steps out of shul for a quick breather. He takes a deep breath and looks around the western horizon which is pink and purple because of the recently set Sun. He then notices a faint, short dash of white light in the sky not too far above the horizon and a bit to the left of where the Sun had set. He puts two and two together and thinks, hey, that might be the L'VANA B'CHIDUSHA. He's not sure, but maybe.

He opens the door of the shul and

discretely signals a friend to come out. But in that short piece of time, what he saw is no longer visible. No confirmation from his friend. No second potential witness.

Dov is OBLIGATED to travel to Yerushalayim by car, and appear at the Sanhedrin headquarters, which is half on and half off of Har HaBayit, to offer his testimony of his sighting.

His driving on Shabbat is justified by the fact that HKBH has allowed His Shabbat to step aside, to facilitate Kiddush HaChodesh. That's how much LACHEM is.

More: At the Sanhedrin, the panel of judges in charge of interviewing and questioning potential EIDIM (witnesses), have already determined that the Moon will be visible this particular night and exactly where it will be in the sky and at what time. They know and Dov isn't really sure. Yet Dov drives to Yerushalayim to testify to the judges what they already know. Sounds strange? This is part of the meaning of LACHEM.

Still more: If no potential witnesses show up on Friday night or most of Shabbat day, and the panel of judges in charge determine that this month's Rosh Chodesh must be declared on this Shabbat day, and should not be defaulted to Sunday (various reasons) - they have the authority to inform the NASI that he should announce the

day as KODESH on Shabbat day, even late in the afternoon.

Wait. You're (Phil) saying that Dov, who is not sure he saw the first visibility of the Moon should drive to Yerushalayim on Leil Shabbat, even though Rosh Chodesh can be declared (under certain conditions) without his testimony?

Yes, that's what I'm saying.

And in answer to the title of this PTDT - that's how LACHEM it is! **PTDT**