

PTDT

PhiloTorah D'var Torah

Which is better? Plan A or Plan B

Shabbat Parshat HaChodesh

G-d created Time. Time is precious. Time is holy, as are all of G-d's creations.

At the end of G-d's creation of the world, he chose a 'piece of time' and sanctified it further. That piece of time is Shabbat. The KEDUSHAT Z'MAN of SHABBAT was G-d's doing, alone. He made Shabbat holy and commands us to keep the Shabbat, to remember the Shabbat, and to add our sanctity to it, so to speak, with Kiddush as Shabbat enters, with Havdala, as it ends (each in prayer and with wine).

And then, with the first mitzva that was commanded to the People of Israel - when we were still in Egypt, poised to be taken out by Him - we were charged to sanctify time and become partners with G-d in the process.

Plan A operates when we have a Sanhedrin. A vital component of Plan A for sanctifying time and creating our Calendar, is active participation on our part. That is, seeing and

testifying to the seeing of the first visibility of the lunar crescent - the L'VANA B'CHIDUSHAH.

The committee of Sanhedrin members in charge of Kiddush HaChodesh were required to know well the cycles of the heavenly bodies so that they could determine when and where in the sky the Moon would be visible for the first time after it 'disappeared' from sight for a night or two at the month's end.

Plan A has a few 'problems'. Eye-witness testimony requires a clear sky and good conditions. It requires the potential witnesses to travel to Jerusalem - even from far away. Other mistakes can be made.

Plan B, on the other hand, the system in use today, when we don't have a sitting Sanhedrin, is flawless. No human error. Cloudy skies and rain are not a problem. The mathematical calculations for each year and all of its months and holidays works well. And we can know what the calendar looks like for the whole year in advance (not so for Plan A). Even many years ahead.

HOWEVER, HKB"H wants our active participation in the process of setting up our calendar. For Plan B, we are observers. Plan A we are active partners with HaShem in this most special of tasks - Sanctifying Time.