

פרשת "החודש"  
**PORROSHAS "HACHODESH"**

*The Torah reading of Porroshas "HaChodesh" is taken from Sidra אָב in Sefer Shemos, Chapter 22, Pessukim 1—20 inclusive, and the Haftorah is from Sefer Yechezkel, Chapter 45, Possuk 16 to Chapter 46, Possuk 18 inclusive (Ashkenazzim) or from Chapter 45, Possuk 18 to Chapter 46, Possuk 15 inclusive (according to the custom of the Sefaraddim).*

*If Rosh Chodesh Nissan falls to be on a weekday, Porroshas "HaChodesh" is read on the Shabbos preceding Rosh Chodesh Nissan. If Rosh Chodesh Nissan falls to be on Shabbos, then Porroshas "HaChodesh" is read on that Shabbos. In that case, three Sifrei Torah are taken out: from the first, we read the Sidra of the Week; from the second, we read the special reading for Rosh Chodesh; and from the third we read Porroshas "HaChodesh." The special Haftorah for Porroshas "HaChodesh" is taken from Sefer Yechezkel and speaks about the Yom Tov of Pessach and this Haftorah takes the place of the special Haftorah that is usually read on a Shabbos Rosh Chodesh. Porroshas "HaChodesh" is always read on the Shabbos after Porroshas Porroh — there is never a "Shabbos Hafsokkoh" between these two.*

1. Our Chachommim, of blessed memory, instituted that we commemorate certain events, acts or Mitzvos by means of special readings from the Sefer Torah and special Haftorahs (readings from the נְבִיאִים, the Books of the Prophets). This week the Shabbos is called Shabbos Porroshas "HaChodesh" and it takes its name from the first key word of the special Maftir read on Shabbos morning.
2. Porroshas "HaChodesh" contains, amongst other Mitzvos, the very first Mitzvah that we were commanded as a People, namely, the Sanctification by the Beis Din of each new month following the testimony of witnesses who see the new moon. The fact that this is the first Mitzvah commanded to us as the People of HaShem gives us some indication of the importance that the Torah attaches to the lessons it teaches. This fact is even more remarkable when we consider how this Mitzvah is so bound up with the Laws of the celebration of Pessach, the Yom Tov which commemorates our becoming the People of HaShem, and also with the Laws of the Korban Pessach itself. The Torah, it seems, views these two Mitzvos as twin foundation-stones of our Nationhood, of such importance that they were commanded to us even before we left Egypt — indeed, even before Par'o the king of Egypt had given his permission that we should leave. It is as if our becoming the Chosen Nation of HaShem is conditional on our proper observance of these Mitzvos, and why this should be so perhaps becomes clearer to us when we study these special Mitzvos. (Of course, as with all the Mitzvos of the Torah, there are numerous aspects of these Mitzvos. We will here focus on but one of them.)

3. When HaShem commanded these Laws of Rosh Chodesh, He told Mosheh our Teacher: “When you see the moon at its stage of renewal like now, then shall you consecrate your new month.” In the same way as I, HaShem, created the sun and the moon, the one to give heat and light for the earth and the other to reflect that light upon the earth so that there should be light even in darkness, and in the same way that the moon that I created is not constant in its powers of reflection but waxes and wanes — even seeming to disappear completely but then re-appearing and growing in its powers of reflection of the light of the sun — so too shall you take the new moon as your model. For just as the moon shines upon the earth from the otherwise dark sky, so shall you, My People, make it your sacred task and duty to likewise reflect My Light upon the whole world. But there is this difference: whereas the moon’s renewal is an unceasing and natural occurrence, for you it shall signal the beginning of your months only when you, my People, through your Torah leaders and at their direction, shall yourselves choose to fix the beginning of the new month. Through this, it is you, My People, who themselves shall fix also the dates of the Yommim Tovim, those holy days which afford an opportunity for you to rejuvenate your spirit and renew your closeness to Me, for the Yommim Tovim are to be fixed according to the lunar calendar. Thus, just as the moon, bound by My Laws of Nature, renews itself, so too are you to rejuvenate and renew yourselves — but of your own free choice and volition. And you, My People, are to be the model to all Mankind. Taking your lesson from the moon, you are to cast your light upon the nations that are in darkness, to proclaim everywhere the lesson of rejuvenation and renewal. You, My People are to teach that in the same way that the moon renews itself, so too have I, HaShem, the Creator of the moon, given Man the possibility of always being able to renew himself. Know this, live this and proclaim this lesson: that Man is to know that his moral fate, no less than his physical, is in his own hands. As you stand at the threshold of deliverance and redemption from bondage and darkness, ready to be transformed from serfdom to freedom and noble nationhood, know that this is to be your mission as My Chosen People to all of Mankind and to all the Nations of the World.
  
4. The way the Torah commands us to commemorate our Redemption from Egypt is a further instruction to us in our mission as the People of HaShem. There are numerous lessons to be learned from the special regulations that the Torah lays down for the celebration of the Yom Tov of Pessach and for the observance of the Korban Pessach itself. But the fact that the Torah stipulates in such great detail how the Korban Pessach is to be eaten, and that these regulations follow on from the Laws of Rosh Chodesh without any break at all (in the Sefer Torah these two Mitzvos are in the same paragraph) shows us that there is a strong connexion between the two, for both these Mitzvos, Rosh Chodesh and Korban Pessach, are part of the same idea. For in the same way as the Mitzvah of Rosh Chodesh demonstrates how we are to function as the Nation of HaShem in the world at large, so do the regulations of Korban Pessach demonstrate how as individual members of that Nation we are to combine and blend together to form that Nation, as follows: Each individual, each home, each family group, centred around the Pascal lamb, symbolically joined together and represented in this Korban Pessach, demonstrates how they are all

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part of the Nation of HaShem (the whole Nation celebrates the Korban Pessach simultaneously) yet are not to give up their own individuality (each Korban Pessach can be eaten by the members of each group and by no-one else). As each family group thus recalls how it became part of the People of HaShem, and the Nation as a whole commemorates its Redemption by HaShem, its individual members view themselves as part of His flock and acknowledge HaShem as their Shepherd and King, and place themselves under His direction and His Sovereignty.

5. By reading Porroshas “HaChodesh” at this time of the year we give expression to the hope that we should once again — and soon — be able to fulfil this Mitzvah of the Sanctification of the New Month, with the Mitzvah of Korban Pessach, in the Beis HaMikdash — may it be rebuilt speedily and in our days.

**The Haftorah of Porroshas “HaChodesh” is in preparation.**