



EKEV

The Night of Opportunity

The Magic of Evening Torah Study

PARSHAH OVERVIEW

Ekev

In the *parshah* of *Ekev* ("Because"), Moses continues his closing address to the Children of Israel, promising them that if they will fulfill the commandments (*mitzvot*) of the Torah, they will prosper in the Land they are about to conquer and settle, in keeping with G-d's promise to their forefathers.

Moses also rebukes them for their failings in their first generation as a people, recalling their worship of the Golden Calf; the rebellion of Korah; the sin of the spies; and their angering of G-d at Taberah, Massah, and Kibrot Hataavah ("The Graves of Lust"). "You have been rebellious against G-d," he says to them, "since the day I knew you." But he also speaks of G-d's forgiveness of their sins, and of

the second tablets that G-d inscribed and gave to them following their repentance.

Their forty years in the desert, says Moses to the people, during which G-d sustained them with daily manna from Heaven, was to teach them "that one does not live on bread alone, but by the utterance of G-d's mouth does one live."

Moses describes the Land they are about to enter as "flowing with milk and honey," blessed with the "seven kinds" (wheat, barley, grapevines, figs, pomegranates, olive oil, and dates), and as the place that is the focus of G-d's providence of His world. He commands them to destroy the idols of the Land's former masters and to beware

lest they become haughty and begin to believe that "my power and the might of my hand have gotten me this wealth."

A key passage in our *parshah* is the second chapter of the Shema. This passage repeats the fundamental *mitzvot* enumerated in Shema's first chapter and describes the rewards of fulfilling G-d's commandments and the adverse results (famine and exile) of their neglect. It is also the source of the precept of prayer and includes a reference to the Resurrection of the Dead in the messianic age.

QUESTION FOR DISCUSSION

When the night creates a different kind of quiet, what kinds of work or attention become possible that the day doesn't allow?

TEXT 1

Talmud, Taanit
30b–31a

אָמַר רַבָּה בֶּר בַּר כְּנָה, אָמַר רַבִּי יוֹחָנָן: יוֹם נִשְׁכְּלוּ בוֹ מֵתֵי
מִדְבָּר . . .

אָמַר רַב מְנַשִּׁיָּא: . . . מִכָּאן וְאֵילָף, דְּמוֹסִיף, יוֹסִיף.

Rabah, the grandson of Chanah, said in the name of Rabbi Yochanan, "This is the day when Jews in the desert stopped dying." . . .

Rabbi Menashia said, . . . "From the fifteenth of Av and onward, those who increase in their Torah studies increase in life."

We are told: there was no greater holiday in the Jewish calendar than the fifteenth of Av.

1. It was the day the Jews stopped dying.
2. Torah study was increased.





After the sin of the spies on the ninth of Av, the generation that left Egypt was condemned to die in the desert, and each year the oldest members prepared for their passing.

In the final year, however, they survived; assuming a miscalculation, they waited until the fifteenth of Av, when it became clear the decree had ended, transforming the day into one of celebration.



TEXT 2

Rabbi Shmuel ben
Meir on Bava Batra
121b

נְשֵׁה לַיְלֹת מֵאֲרִיכִין וְהַיָּמִים
מִתְקַצְרִין.

Because the nights grow longer and the
days grow shorter.

After the 15th of Av,
nights are longer, and
since nights are for
Torah study, we have
more time to learn, so
we **celebrate**.



QUESTION

Why does nighttime study increase life more than daytime study?

TEXT 3

Rabbi Chaim Vital,
Peri Etz Chayim,
Shaar Hashevu'ot;
Tu Be'Av

ט"ו בְּאָב . . . וְיִגִּיד עָלָיו רִיעוּ,
ט"ו בְּשֶׁבַט, נֶשְׁהוּא מִלּוֹי הַלְבָּנָה.

The potency of the fifteenth of Av . . . can be inferred from its parallel, the fifteenth of Shevat: the fact that the moon is whole.

QUESTION

If we are celebrating events that happen after the 15th, when the moon has already started shrinking, why celebrate them on the 15th, when the moon is full?

TEXT 4

Maimonides,
Mishneh Torah,
Laws of Torah
Study 3:13

אף על פי שְׁמִעוֹנָה לְלַמֵּד בַּיּוֹם וּבַלַּיְלָה - אֵין אָדָם לָמֵד רַב חֻכְמָתוֹ אֶלָּא בַּלַּיְלָה . . . לְפִיכָךְ מִי שֶׁרָצָה לְזַכּוֹת בְּכֶתֶר הַתּוֹרָה יִזְהַר בְּכָל לַיְלוֹתָיו וְלֹא יֵאָבֵד אֶפְלוֹ אֶחָד מֵהֶם בְּשֵׁנָה וּבְאֲכִילָה וּבְשִׁתָּה וּבְיֹצֵא בִהָן, אֶלָּא בְּתַלְמוּד תּוֹרָה וְדַבְּרֵי חֻכְמָה.

אָמְרוּ חֻכְמִים: אֵין רִנָּה שֶׁל תּוֹרָה אֶלָּא בַּלַּיְלָה, שֶׁנֶּאֱמַר, "קוּמִי רִנִּי בַּלַּיְלָה" (אֵיכָה ב, י).

Though it is a *mitzvah* to study during the day and at night, it is only at night that a person acquires most of their wisdom. . . . Therefore, if you seek to gain the crown of the Torah, be careful not to waste your nights sleeping, eating, drinking, talking, etc. Devote them only to studying the Torah and words of wisdom.

Our sages declared: "The song of Torah can [be heard] only at night, as the passage states: 'Arise; sing at night' (Lamentations 2:19)."

ANSWER

We can study Torah whenever, but we can only gain access to the *crown* of the Torah when **studying at night**.

QUESTION

What is the crown of Torah?

ANSWER

It is G-d's wisdom. By studying the Torah, we absorb His ideas and connect with Him, getting a glimpse of His Oneness through learning.

TEXT 5

Rabbi Yoel Sirkis,
Bayit Chadash,
Orach Chayim 47

דְּכֻנְתּוֹ יִתְבָּרַךְ מֵעוֹלָם הֵיטָה לְשִׁנְהִיָּה עוֹסְקִים בַּתּוֹרָה כְּדֵי לְשַׁתְּעֶצֶם נַשְׁמָתֵינוּ בְּעֲצָמוֹת
וְרוּחָנֵינוּ וּקְדוּשַׁת מְקוֹר מוֹצֵא הַתּוֹרָה . . . וְאִם הָיוּ עוֹסְקִים בַּתּוֹרָה עַל הַכּוֹנֵנָה הַזֹּאת
הָיוּ הִמָּה מְרַכְּבָה וְהֵיכָל לְשִׁכְנֵתוֹ יִתְבָּרַךְ, לְשִׁנְהִיָּה הַנְּשִׁכִּינָה מִמָּשׁ בְּקֶרְבָּם, כִּי הֵיכָל ה'
הִמָּה . . .

וְנִתֵּן לָנוּ תוֹרָתוֹ הַקְּדוּשָׁה, כָּלִי חֶמְדָּתוֹ לְשִׁנְהִיָּה מְשַׁתְּעֶשֶׁעַ בָּהּ בְּכָל יוֹם, כְּדֵי לְשַׁתְּדֹבֵק
נַשְׁמָתֵינוּ בְּעֲצָמוֹת קְדוּשַׁת הַתּוֹרָה וְרוּחָנֵינוּ, וּלְהוֹרִיד הַנְּשִׁכִּינָה בְּקֶרְבָּנוּ.

G-d's intention was always that we study the Torah to meld our souls with His powerful spiritual holiness—the Torah's source. . . . Studying the Torah with this mindset transforms us into a vehicle and chamber for the blessed Divine Presence. It means that G-d is literally within us, for we become the chamber in which G-d dwells. . . .

G-d gave us the sacred Torah—something He loves and in which He delights every day—so we could attach our souls to its spiritual sanctity and draw G-d into our midst.

TEXT 6

Talmud, Tamid 32b

תָּנָא רַבִּי חִיָּיא: כָּל הָעוֹסֵק בַּתּוֹרָה בַּלַּיְלָה, שְׂכִינָה
כְּנֻגָּדוֹ, שְׁנֵאֲמַר, "קוּמִי רוּנִי בַּלַּיְלָה לְרֹאשׁ אֲשֶׁמּוֹרוֹת,
שִׁפְכִי כַּמִּים לִבִּי נֹכַח פְּנֵי ה'" (אֵיכָה ב, יט).

Rabbi Chiya said, "G-d dwells among those who study the Torah at night. As the passage states, 'Arise; sing at night at the beginning of the watch; pour your heart out like water before G-d's countenance' (Lamentations 2:19)."

There is something about studying in the darkness that makes us yearn for g-d in a way we don't yearn for Him during the day.



רֹנֵי בַּלַּיְלָה — Sing at night

roni balaylah

שִׁפְכִי כַּמַּיִם לִבְךָ — pour your heart out like water

shifchi kamayim libeich

QUESTION

“Sing at night” refers to learning Torah, which is intellectual so why does it then say to “pour out your heart like water,” which is emotional? What does one have to do with the other?

TEXT 7

Rabbi Shneur
Zalman of Liadi,
Torah Or, p. 37a

המלאכים שְׂבָכָל עוֹלָם, עַד רוֹם הַמַּעְלוֹת, כּוֹלֵם
אוֹמְרִים שִׁירוֹת וְתִשְׁבָּחוֹת בְּרִנָּה וְזִמְרָה. וְעַנֵּן רִנָּה
זוֹ הִיא גִילּוֹי עוֹצֵם תִּשְׁוֹקָתָם לְהִיּוֹת נִכְסָפָה וְגַם
כָּלֶתָה נִפְשָׁם לְדַבָּקָה בּוֹ יִתְבָּרֵךְ, וּלְהִתְכַלֵּל בְּאוֹר
אֵין סוֹף בְּרוּךְ הוּא. וְתַמִּיד כָּל יְמֵיהֶם עוֹמְדִים
בְּתִשְׁוֹקָה זוֹ, בְּלִי הֶפְסֵק, מִחֲמַת שֶׁאֵין לָהֶם אֲהָבָה
וְתִשְׁוֹקָה אַחֲרָת.

וְגַם אֵין לָהֶם עֲבוּדָה אַחֲרָת, כְּמוֹ תוֹרָה וּמִצְוֹת,
שֶׁהֵם בְּחִינַת הַמִּשְׁכָּה מְלַמְעָלָה לְמַטָּה. רַק עֲבוּדָתָם
הִיא הַשְׁתַּוְקָאוֹת נִפְשָׁם מִמַּטָּה לְמַעְלָה . . .

וְזֶהוּ רִנָּנָה בְּרִמְשָׁא. רִמְשָׁא הִיא מַדַּת לֵילָה . . .
מִפְּנֵי שֶׁהַחַיּוֹת הַזֶּה הוּא מוֹסְתֵר בְּבְחִינַת לֵילָה
וְהָעֵלֶם, וּלְכַךְ תִּגְדֹּל הַתִּשְׁוֹקָה וְהַכּוֹסֵף לְהִיּוֹת
אוֹיְתִיד. וְכַנּוּדָע שֶׁלֹּא שִׁיף אֲהָבָה וְתִשְׁוֹקָה
לְהִתְאוֹת תְּאוּהָ אֵלָא בְּמִי שֶׁחָסַר לְנִפְשׁוֹ הַדְּבָר
שֶׁמִּתְאוּהָ אֵלָיו.

The angels of all worlds, even the most exalted worlds, sing songs of praise to G-d. These songs reveal their intense desire for a connection with G-d and their yearning and pining to be absorbed in His endless, blessed light. They are in a constant, uninterrupted state of longing because G-d is their only love.

They have no other outlet [to express this love]. They cannot study the Torah or observe the commandments to draw G-d to them from above. All they can do is desire Him from below.

. . . Accordingly, they sing their love song at night. . . . The Divine presence is concealed and hidden at night, which inflames their desire and yearning for G-d. For it is well known that we only desire what we don't have and crave what we can't get.



We don't appreciate what we have until it's gone. In daylight we feel G-d's presence, so we don't long for Him.

In darkness we feel apart from Him and turn to Torah, connecting to its Author and His wisdom.

ANSWER

Now we see why nighttime learning is called a song, it's our way of calling to G-d in longing, like the angels who sing through the night for His presence.

TEXT 8

The Rebbe, Rabbi
Menachem Mendel
Schneerson, *Likutei
Sichot* 32, pp. 45–46

זֶה שְׂזוּכִים לְכַתֵּר הַתּוֹרָה עַל יְדֵי לִימוּד הַתּוֹרָה בַּלַּיְלָה, אֵינוֹ (בְּרַק) מִפְּנֵי שְׂבִלְיָלָה אֶפְשָׁר
לְהִתְמַסֵּר יוֹתֵר לְלִימוּד בְּהִתְיַשְׁבוּת הָרְאוּיָה, שְׂאֵז מִתְיַשֵּׁב לִימוּדוֹ בְּתוֹכוֹ. אֲלָא גַם
וּבְעִיקָר לְפִי שְׂבִלְיָלָה יִשְׁנָה סְגוּלָה מְיֻחָדָת שְׁלִימוּדוֹ יִהְיֶה בְּאוֹפֶן שְׂמִתְקָשֶׁר (נוֹסֵף עַל
חֻכְמַת הַתּוֹרָה גַּם) לְשִׁכְנָתוֹ יִתְבָּרֵךְ . . .

וְהֵינּוּ לְפִי שְׂהֶדְבִּיקוֹת בְּנוֹתֵן הַתּוֹרָה קְשׁוּרָה עִם לִימוּד הַתּוֹרָה מִתּוֹךְ שְׂפָלוּת וּבִיטּוּל,
שְׁדוּקָא בְּלִימוּד כְּזֶה אֶפְשָׁרִית דְּבִיקוֹת אֲמִיתִית בְּקִדּוּשַׁת הַתּוֹרָה. וְהַלַּיְלָה הוּא זְמַן
מְסוּגָל לְעוֹרֵר בְּעֶצְמוֹ רָגֶשׁ שֶׁל שְׂפָלוּת וּנְמִיכוּת.

We merit the crown of the Torah through night learning not (only) because it's easier to devote ourselves without distraction at night, which allows our studies to settle in our mind. It's also, and primarily, because the night has a special energy that enables us to learn in a way that attaches us to G-d (not just His wisdom). . . .

Connecting with the Torah's Giver entails studying it with humility. Only then can we connect to its sanctity. And the night is a propitious time to arouse our sense of humility.

Life is increased through night time learning-not in years but a deeper kind of living that comes from connecting to G-d.



TEXT 9

Talmud, Chulin 60b

רבי שמעון בן פזי רמי: כתיב "וַיַּעַשׂ אֱלֹקִים אֶת שְׁנֵי הַמָּאֲרוֹת הַגְּדֹלִים"
(בְּרֵאשִׁית א, טז), וְכָתִיב "אֶת הַמָּאֹר הַגָּדוֹל וְאֶת הַמָּאֹר הַקָּטָן" (בְּרֵאשִׁית א, טז)?
אָמְרָה יְרַח לִפְנֵי הַקָּדוֹשׁ בָּרוּךְ הוּא, "רְבוּנוּ שֶׁל עוֹלָם, אֶפְשָׁר לְשְׁנֵי מְלָכִים
שִׁישְׁתַּמְּשׁוּ בְּכֶתֶר אֶחָד?"
אָמַר לָהּ, "לְכִי וּמַעֲטִי אֶת עֲצָמֶיךָ."

Rabbi Shimon the son of Pazi posed a contradiction: "On the one hand, it is written, 'And G-d made the two major luminaries' (Genesis 1:16). On the other hand, it is written, '... the major luminary to illuminate the day and the minor luminary to illuminate the night' (ibid.)."

The moon said to G-d, "Master of the universe, is it possible for two kings to share one crown?"

G-d replied, "Go diminish yourself."

The moon wanted all the attention.
Shrinking was not a punishment, but a **lesson**.



Humility is thinking about yourself less.
Being a recipient of G-d's greatness is true greatness.

TEXT 10

Talmud, Chulin 89a

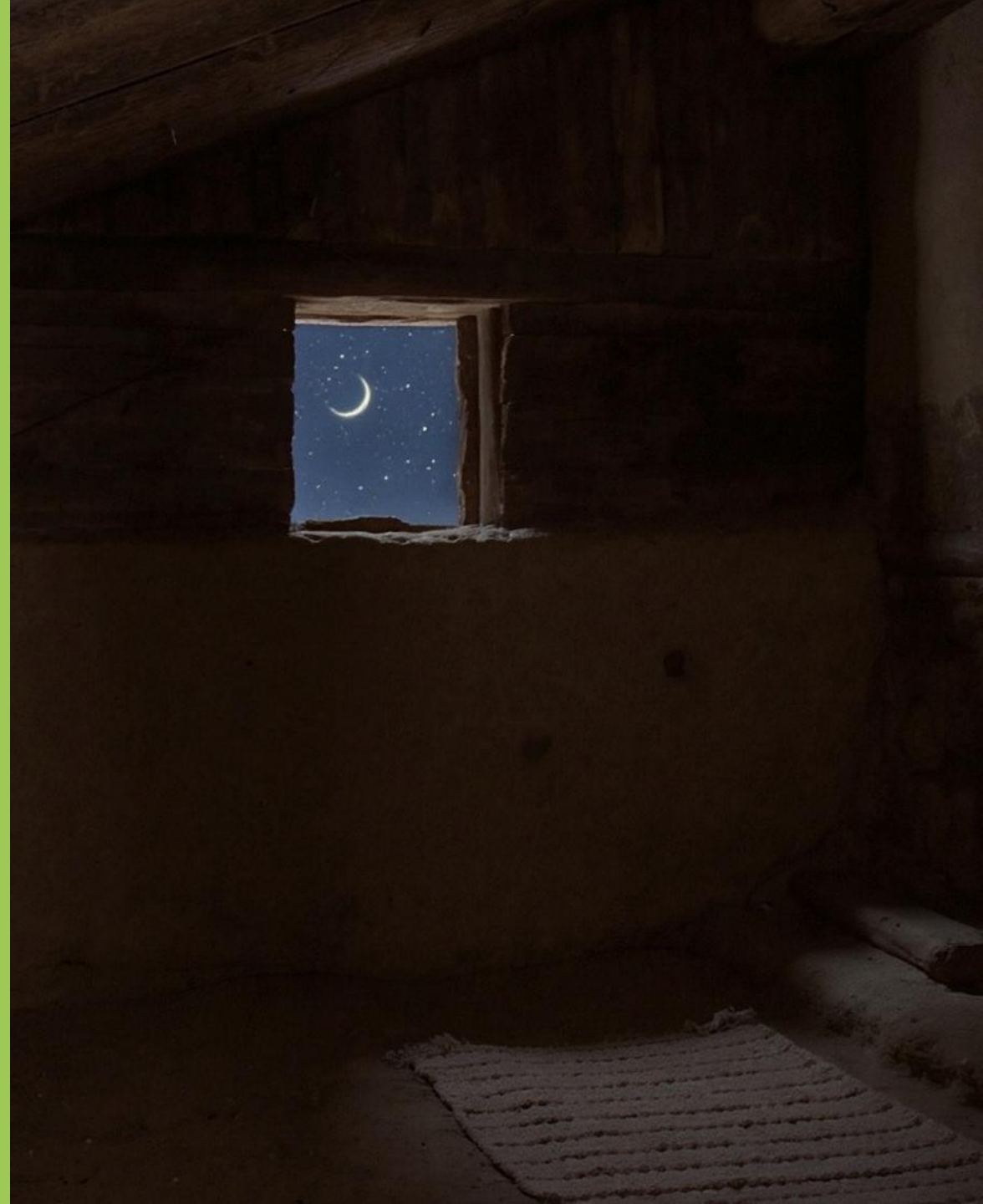
"לֹא מֵרַבְּכֶם מִכָּל הָעַמִּים חָשַׁק ה' בָּכֶם [כִּי אַתֶּם הַמְעַט מִכָּל הָעַמִּים] (דְּבָרִים ז, ז).

אָמַר לָהֶם הַקָּדוֹשׁ בְּרוּךְ הוּא לְיִשְׂרָאֵל: חוֹשֶׁק־נִי בָכֶם, וְשֹׂאֲפִילוֹ בַּשָּׂעָה
וְשֹׂאֲנִי מִשְׁפִּיעַ לָכֶם גְּדוּלָּה אַתֶּם מִמְעַטִּין עַצְמְכֶם לִפְנֵי.

"It was not because you were more numerous than all the other nations that G-d desired you [for you are the smallest of all the nations]" (Deuteronomy 7:7).

G-d said to the Jews, "I desire you because even when I make you exalted and powerful, you diminish yourselves before Me."

We set our calendar by
the moon because, like
the moon, we are
humble. Humility
brings us closer to G-d.





➡ First Half of the Month

As the moon grows and its light increases, it represents our accomplishments and growth, which can build ego and make us feel our own light.



➡ Second Half of the Month

As the moon shrinks, it is not becoming weaker but moving closer to the sun, symbolizing a deeper growth, less ego, more humility, and a stronger connection to G-d.

ANSWER

The fifteenth, the height of the full moon (achievement) is the start of the leap forward that happens on the days that follow (humility, shrinking, and transcendence of self).

Nighttime Torah study also catapults us to the deepest level of connection, and is therefore celebrated on the fifteenth when the nights begin to get longer.

TEXT 11

The Rebbe, Rabbi
Menachem Mendel
Schneerson, *Likutei
Sichot* 34, pp. 49-50

הַעֲבוּדָה בְּחֻצוֹ הָרִאשׁוֹן שֶׁל הַחֹדֶשׁ
הִיא הוֹסְפָה בְּעֵנִין הָאוֹר, וְהָרִי אוֹר הוּא
מְצִיאוֹת. וְלְעוֹמֶת זֹאת, הַעֲבוּדָה דְּחֻצוֹ
הַשֵּׁנִי שֶׁל הַחֹדֶשׁ הִיא הוֹסְפָה בְּהִיטוּל,
בְּשִׁלְיַת הַמְצִיאוֹת.

אֲשֶׁר עַל יְדֵי זֶה בָּאִים לְעִילוֹי שְׂבָאִין
עָרוֹף לְהָאוֹר — "אוֹתֵי אַתֶּם לוֹקְחִים",
לוֹקְחִים אֶת הַמָּאוֹר.

וְזֶהוּ עֵנִין מוֹלֵד הַלְבָנָה בְּרִאשׁ חֹדֶשׁ.
שְׂעַל יְדֵי עֲבוּדַת הִיטוּל בְּחֻצוֹ הַשֵּׁנִי
שֶׁל הַחֹדֶשׁ עַד לְתַכְלִית הִיטוּל וְהַעֲלָם
הַלְבָנָה לְגַמְרִי (בְּרִגְעַ שְׁלֹפְנֵי הַמוֹלֵד),
אִזִּי נִעְשְׂהָ הָעֵנִין דְּיַחּוּד שְׂיִמְנָשׁ
וְסִיהָרָא. הִיחּוּד עִם הַמָּאוֹר, שְׂמַעֲלָתוֹ
בָּאִין עָרוֹף לְגַבִּי מַעֲלַת הָאוֹר.

During the first fifteen days of the month, as the moon grows, our task is to increase light. That means expanding our presence and our influence in the world. During the second half of the month, as the moon diminishes, the task changes. Then, our work is to increase *bitul*—to contract our presence rather than expand it.

When we reach humility, we access a level that is far higher than the light reached in the first half of the month. Instead of engaging with the light itself, we connect to its Source.

The moon's rebirth conveys this idea. As the moon wanes to the point of complete disappearance, it reflects a state of total *bitul*. At that moment—just before the new moon—the sun and the moon are understood to unite. This represents a union with the source of light, a level that is incomparably deeper than light alone.

While many use nighttime to relax, we use it for learning and reflection. Even a few focused minutes can become a meaningful connection to G-d.



KEY POINTS

1. The first half of the month, as the moon expands, represents progressive growth in Torah and *mitzvot*. The second half, when the moon shrinks, represents drawing progressively closer to G-d.
2. The second half of the month is not a reversal of the first half; it is a step forward. This is because true greatness is not expressed by expanding our footprint but by diminishing it. We are focusing on G-d, not ourselves.
3. During the day, we are awash in light (a metaphor for G-d); thus, we don't pine for G-d. During the night, when G-d is hidden, we yearn for G-d.
4. Accordingly, we study Torah during the day to learn G-d's knowledge. We learn Torah during the night to draw closer to G-d.
5. The two cycles are a continuum. The pinnacle of achievement during the day and the first half of the month triggers our yearning for G-d in the night and the second half of the month.

