

## Beneath the Pale Moon Light

There is a classic scene in the movie *An American Tale* where the small mouse, Fievel, is lost from his family. He's all alone at night, staring up into the bright moonlight and singing "Somewhere out there, beneath the pale moon light, someone's thinking of me, and loving me tonight." The moon not only lights the little mouse's way as he tries to find his family, but it offers a comfortable connection even when someone is far away.

As Jews, we also have a special connection to the moon. Our months and years are tied to the lunar cycle. This week we read *parshat Bo*, during which the Israelites finally make their way out of the oppression in Egypt and can almost taste freedom for the first time. In a way, this anticipation is like those months leading up to the birth of a child. Parents ponder their hopes and dreams for their new baby. They're already making wishes, listing wants and setting goals. Similarly, you can imagine God at this moment when His people, the Children of Israel, are nearing their birth into a new era, with new needs, desires and freedom. As the "parent," God's dreams include a calendar comprised of guidelines and instructions for daily living that were sure to enable the Israelites to live their lives through structure.

Chapter 12 begins to construct the Israelite calendar, which begins with *Pesach* and continues to build throughout the *Torah* narrative. The text reads, "This month shall mark for you the beginning of the months, it shall be the first of the months of the year for you." Knowing from the narrative of creation that our days begin with the evening, our months also follow the pattern of the moon. This is fitting as the moon waxes and wanes through the months just as the Israelites surely will change as they experience freedom. The *S'fat Emet*, a 19<sup>th</sup> century Torah commentary by Yehudah Aryeh Leib of Ger, suggests that the reason that our months are counted by the moon is because it waxes and wanes; it disappears and grows bright again. The Jewish people as a whole, throughout history, go through cycles of suffering and prosperity.

The light of the moon is helpful; when it is full we can sometimes see even without a flashlight. But, when the moon is a tiny sliver at the beginning or end of a month, it can be very difficult to see anything at all at night. Each of us as individuals may also find ourselves in this cycle of dark and light, but it's the cycle that reminds us that even in darkness there are brighter days ahead.

ללמוד **To Learn:** ללמד **To Teach:** Our parshah this week speaks of the commandment to tell the story of our people to the next generation. The Torah teaches us that our collective memory is what sustains us as a people as one generation teaches the text. There's no time like now to learn and share your family's story. Check out [www.ancestry.com](http://www.ancestry.com) for a start, or register and attend Dallas LearningFest 2012 and learn how to do the research through Meyer Denn's Class. [www.learningfest.org](http://www.learningfest.org)

לשמור **To Keep:** לעשות **To Do:** So often we see the pages of the calendar turn so quickly that we feel like time is racing by. Living according to a lunar calendar allows us the awareness to check the sky every night and be keenly aware of the passing time. Take a moment once each week with your family to track the moon's changes. Use this time to reflect on your week and make goals for the coming week.