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A VORT FROM THE ROSH YESHIVA מורינו הרה"ג ר' אברהם גורביץ שליט"א

פרשת בא

הַחֹדֶשׁ הַזֶּה לָכֶם רֵאשִׁית חֳדָשִׁים רִאשׁוֹן הוּא לָכֶם לְחֹדֶשִׁי הַשָּׁנָה. (שמות יב, ב)

This month shall be for you the beginning of the months, it shall be for you the first of the months of the year. (Shemos 12:2)

In this week's *Sidrah*, Hashem commands Moshe that the month of Nissan should be designated as the first month of the year. Even though the new year begins in Tishrei, the months are numbered from the month of Nissan. Thus, the Torah refers to Rosh Hashanah as the first day of the *seventh* month, while Pesach is the fifteenth day of the *first* month.

The Ramban explains that by numbering all the months from Nissan, we are constantly reminded of the month of Yetzias Mitzrayim. This serves as a reminder of the tremendous awe-inspiring miracles Hashem did for us at that time. The Rosh Yeshiva *shlita* suggests another explanation as to the significance of Nissan, and its prominence as the first month of the year.

The Gemara (*Nedarim* 31b) notes that the word בְּרִית is mentioned thirteen times in the parshah of Bris Milah (*Bereishis* 17:2-21), prompting the Gemara to state: גְּדוֹלָה מִלֵּה שְׁנִכְרָתוֹ עָלֶיהָ שְׁלֹשׁ עָשָׂר בְּרִיתוֹת, *Great is circumcision for thirteen covenants were made concerning it*. What do these thirteen covenants signify? R' Yitzchok Eizeik Chover (in his Haggadah) explains that these were not a mere thirteen assurances from Hashem, but rather a covenant where two parties pledged to provide something to each other. He further explains that this covenant does not only refer to the specific *mitzvah* of Bris Milah but relates to the fulfilment of the entire Torah (due to Bris Milah's crucial role in enabling the Torah to be observed).

With this pact between Hashem and Avrohom, Avrohom obligated himself and his descendants to cleave and adhere to the Torah, which is derived and expounded with the י"ג מִדּוֹת שֶׁהַתּוֹרָה נִדְרָשֶׁת. He also undertook to believe in the י"ג עִיקָרֵי אֱמוּנָה. In return, Hashem promised Avrohom that He would protect Klal Yisroel with the י"ג מִדּוֹת נֶשֶׁל רַחֲמִים, which are exclusive for Klal Yisroel. He also pledged to act as our G-d and to grant us Eretz Yisroel, which is crucial to our spiritual life.

R' Yitzchok Eizek further notes that in Parshas Noach (9:8-17), regarding the covenant Hashem made with Noach after the Mabul that he would no longer destroy the world, the word בְּרִית is mentioned seven times. He explains that these correspond to the seven days of the week (and seven planets in the solar orbit), which Hashem guaranteed would never cease to exist. Noach, for his part, pledged allegiance to the ז' מִצְוֹת בְּנֵי נֹחַ, which all nations must abide by, and Hashem assured him and his future generations that He would never again destroy the universe.

These two covenants had different fundamental purposes. Noach's pledge to uphold the basic seven commandments allowed for the preservation of the physical world. On the other hand, Avrohom's agreement was related to a higher level of existence. Avrohom's commitment to keeping the Torah

and *mitzvos* facilitated a world full of spiritual purpose, a universe that transcends the physical world and is centred around fulfilling Hashem's will and coming closer to Him.

With this context, the Rosh Yeshiva explains a further dimension in Nissan, being the "first" month of the year. The month of Nissan saw the first two *mitzvos* given to Klal Yisroel as a nation. The first *mitzvah* was Rosh Chodesh (See Rashi *Bereishis* 1:1), followed by taking the lamb for the Korban Pesach, which was the first *mitzvah* they practically fulfilled.¹ Thus, the month of Nissan marked the beginning of the elevated state of existence that Hashem had promised to Avrohom. Hashem's covenant to act as our G-d and govern us according to the Thirteen Attributes of Mercy was dependent on Avrohom (and his descendants) upholding their end of the arrangement by following His *mitzvos*. This was only first fulfilled in the month of Nissan when Klal Yisroel, the nation as a whole, fulfilled a *mitzvah* commanded to them by Hashem.

Accordingly, to acknowledge this significance, we establish Nissan as the first month in the Jewish calendar. Nissan marks the time when the universe achieved its intended level as a result of Klal Yisroel collectively performing *mitzvos*. Therefore, although the physical world was created in Tishrei, this new level was only attained during Nissan, leading Hashem to govern and protect Klal Yisroel in the unique manner promised to Avrohom. By counting the months beginning with Nissan, we pay tribute to the fact that the ultimate form of our world was reached because of Klal Yisroel fulfilling *mitzvos*.

In Parshas Emor, the Torah lists all the Moadim. The Seforno questions why each Yom Tov is presented separately as a command from Hashem to Moshe, except for Pesach, which is mentioned together with Shabbos. While the Seforno provides an explanation for this, the Rosh Yeshiva offers additional insight, suggesting that this difficulty can be resolved by recognising a common theme that links Shabbos and Pesach. Shabbos acknowledges the creation of a new physical world, while Pesach signifies the formation of a new spiritual world, which begins with the *mitzvos* of Pesach.

This insight enhances our understanding of what Nissan represents. It symbolises not only the month of Yetzias Mitzrayim, but it also acknowledges Nissan's role in helping our world fulfil its elevated purpose through Klal Yisroel's observance of *mitzvos*. May we be *zoche*, through our commitment to fulfilling Hashem's *mitzvos*, to receive His merciful guidance and protection as He promised to Avrohom!

This Devar Torah is adapted from ספר וענפיה ארזי אל and is presented by the Gateshead Yeshiva Alumni Association. To receive by email, please register your interest by sending an email to parshasheet@gyalumni.org.

¹ Although there were other *mitzvos* instructed earlier, e.g. Bris Milah to Avrohom, and Gid Hanosheh to Yakov, these were not given to Klal Yisroel as a nation. Furthermore, the reason we keep these laws today is not based on the fact that they were commanded to the Avos, but because they were reaffirmed at Har Sinai. (See Rambam *Pirush Hamishnayos end Perek Gid Hanosheh*, Meshech Chochma *Devarim* 33:4)