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

פרשת החודש

החֹדֶשׁ הַזֶּה לָכֶם רֵאשִׁי חֹדְשֵׁי שָׁנָה. (קריאה דפרשת החודש - 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. (Kriah Parshas HaChodesh – Shemos 12:2)

In Parshas HaChodesh, we learn about Hashem's command to Moshe that the month of Nissan should be designated as the first month of the year. Even though the new year begins in Tishrei, which was the time when the world was created, 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. According to the Ramban, by numbering all the months from Nissan, we are constantly reminded of the month of Yetzias Mitzrayim, which 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, גְּדוּלָה מִיֵּלָה שֶׁנִּכְרְתוּ עָלֶיהָ שְׁלֹשׁ עָשָׂר, בְּרִיתוֹת גְּדוּלָה, *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 בָּהֶן. He also undertook to believe in the י"ג עִיקָרֵי אֱמוּנָה. In return for his commitment, Hashem promised Avrohom that He would protect Klal Yisroel with the י"ג מִדּוֹת שֶׁל 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 Eizeik further notes that in Parshas Noach (9:8-17), by 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 alliance 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 guide us according to the Thirteen Tributes of Mercy was dependent on Avrohom (and his descendants) upholding their end of the agreement 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*.

May our *leining* of Parshah HaChodesh bring a greater understanding of what Nissan represents. Not only does it symbolise the month of Yetzias Mitzrayim, but it also recognises Nissan's role in helping our world achieve 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, direction, and protection, as He promised to Avrohom!

This Devar Torah is adapted from ספר וענפיה ארזי אל עה"ת 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 Hamishna end Perek Gid Hanosheh, Meshech Chochma Devarim 33:4.*)