

This week, in addition to the two *Parashot*, *Vayakhel* and *Pekudei*, we are scheduled to read *Parashat Ha'chodesh*, the additional passage usually read on the *Shabbat* immediately preceding the month of *Nissan*. There we read (*Shmot* 12:2), "This month [*Nissan*] shall be for you the beginning of the months, it shall be for you the first of the months of the year."

Commentaries ask: How can *Nissan* be the first month, when our tradition teaches that the world was created in *Tishrei*? Indeed, we call the first day of *Tishrei*, "*Rosh Hashanah*" / "the head of the year"!

R' Moshe ben Nachman z"l (*Ramban*; 1194-1270; Spain and *Eretz Yisrael*) explains that *Nissan* is not, in fact, the first month of the year. Nevertheless, because it is the month in which we were redeemed from Egypt, we can call it "first," *i.e.*, the "first month of our redemption."

R' Yitzchak Isaac Chaver z"l (1789-1852; rabbi of Suvalk, Lithuania) writes, however: Because *Nissan* is the month of the redemption, it actually is the first month. True, the world was created in *Tishrei*. But, for *Bnei Yisrael*, a new world began in *Nissan*. The world that was created in *Tishrei* is a world that operates according to the laws of nature. In *Nissan*, however, a new world order began -- a world in which the study of Torah and the performance of *Mitzvot* allow *Bnei Yisrael* to live outside of the laws of nature. "This month shall be for you the 'Rosh' / 'beginning' or 'head,'" *i.e.*, in this months our "heads" are elevated above the natural world. (*Si'ach Yitzchak* p.265)

## Thirty Days Before Pesach

The *Gemara* (*Ta'anit* 29a) states: "When *Adar* enters, joy increases." *Rashi* z"l explains: "They were days of miracles for the Jewish People -- *Purim* and *Pesach*."

R' Chaim Friedlander z"l (1923-1986; *Mashgiach Ruchani* of the *Ponovezh Yeshiva*) observes: Apparently, *Purim* and *Pesach* have something in common, and that commonality is a source of joy. What is it? Also, asks R' Friedlander, we read in the Torah sections describing the Ten Plagues that *Hashem* wanted Pharaoh to acknowledge Him. Why was that important to Him?

R' Friedlander explains: One of the most foundational "Ways of *Hashem*" is that His Honor will be revealed in this world no matter what man does. Indeed, at times, His Honor is revealed as a result of the actions of the wicked -- not merely despite their actions. This occurred, for example, when Haman was hanged on the very same gallows that he had made for Mordechai. This teaches that, not only can the wicked not foil *Hashem's* plans, they themselves are tools in His hands.

The very same lesson is demonstrated by the story of the Exodus. Pharaoh hoped to prevent *Bnei Yisrael's* savior from growing to adulthood by decreeing that all newborn boys be drowned. As it turned out, that very decree resulted in the savior, Moshe, growing up in Pharaoh's own palace. Moreover, continues R' Friedlander, classical commentaries say that it was in Pharaoh's palace that Moshe learned leadership skills.

*Hashem* was not trying to make a religious man out of Pharaoh, R' Friedlander explains. But, if Pharaoh would acknowledge *Hashem*, it would teach us that *Hashem* always "gets His way," no matter how much the wicked try to resist. That is the shared message of *Purim* and *Pesach*. And, the more clarity we have about this point, the more joy it will bring us.

(*Siftei Chaim: Mo'adim* p.249)

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**“The hundred talents of silver were to cast the sockets of the Sanctuary and the sockets of the Partition; a hundred sockets for a hundred talents, a talent per socket.” (38:27)**

The *Gemara* (*Menachot* 43b) teaches that one is obligated to recite 100 *Berachot* every day. R' Michel Zilber *shlita* (*Rosh Yeshiva* of the *Zvhilyeshiva* in Yerushalayim) quotes R' Menachem Recanati *z"l* (1223-1290; Italian *Kabbalist*), who writes that the “secret” of the 100 *Berachot* is connected with the 100 *Adanim* / sockets that held the posts making up the walls of the *Mishkan*. Thus, if one recites 100 *Berachot*, it is as if he assembled the *Mishkan*. [Until here from R' Recanati]

R' Zilber explains: We read (*Devarim* 10:12), “Now, *Yisrael*, *Mah* / what does *Hashem*, your *Elokim*, ask of you? Only *Le'yir'ah* / to fear *Hashem* . . .” The *Gemara* cited above states that “*Mah*” can be read as “*Me'ah*” / “one hundred” -- a hint that one should recite 100 *Berachot* a day. Further, notes R' Zilber, since the subject of the verse is having *Yir'ah* / fear or awe of *Hashem*, we can infer that reciting 100 *Berachot* a day is a means to develop that trait. This, he notes further, may answer the question that the *Gemara* asks elsewhere (*Berachot* 33b), “How can the verse say, ‘What does *Hashem*, your *Elokim*, ask of you? Only to fear *Hashem*’? Is that a small request?” The answer is: Yes! If one recites 100 *Berachot* a day, *Yir'ah* of *Hashem* will come easily.

R' Zilber continues: In this light, we see a connection between 100 *Berachot* and the 100 *Adanim*. The word “*Adanim*” (sockets) hints to the Divine Name *Aleph-Dalet-Nun-Yud*, which is associated with the Divine Attribute of Justice; hence, with *Yir'ah*. We read, for example (*Malachi* 1:6), “If I [G-d] am a Father, where is My honor, and if I am *Adonim* / a Master, where is *Yir'ah* of Me?”

R' Yaakov ben Asher *z"l* (the “*Ba'al HaTurim*”; 14<sup>th</sup> century) writes that King David established the recitation of 100 *Berachot* daily in response to a plague that was killing 100 of his subjects each day. It follows, writes R' Zilber, that reciting 100 *Berachot* a day has a life-giving force. This, again, connects the 100 *Berachot* with the 100 *Adanim*, for our Sages teach that during the entire time that the *Mishkan* was under construction, not one of *Bnei Yisrael* passed away. This was, in particular, in the merit of the *Adanim*, which, say our Sages, were made from the half-*Shekel* coins that *Bnei Yisrael* donated. [The Torah says about the half-*Shekel* donations (*Shmot* 30:12), “So that there will not be a plague among them.”] The *Mishkan* was given as an atonement for the sin of the Golden Calf, which brought death back to the world (after it briefly was abolished when the Torah was given). When one recites 100 *Berachot* daily, it is as if he lays down the 100 *Adanim* and stands up the posts of the *Mishkan*, thus bringing life to the world. (*Ba'yam Darech: Ma'amarei Ha'mishkan* No. 36)

**“On six days, work may be done, but the seventh day shall be holy for you, a day of complete rest for *Hashem* . . . Moshe said to the entire assembly of *Bnei Yisrael*, saying: ‘This is the word that *Hashem* has commanded, saying: . . . Every wise-hearted person among you shall come and make everything that *Hashem* has commanded: the *Mishkan* . . .” (35:2, 4, 10-11)**

The *Gemara* (*Shabbat* 31b) teaches that the *Melachot* / labors or activities that are prohibited on *Shabbat* are those that were necessary for the construction or functioning of the *Mishkan* / Tabernacle in the desert. *Rashi z"l* writes (in his commentary to *Shabbat* 5a) that this connection is learned from the juxtaposition of *Shabbat* and the *Mishkan* in our *Parashah* [as seen in the above verses].

Why should the *Melachot* prohibited on *Shabbat* be learned from the *Mishkan*? Moreover, the *Zohar* teaches that those same *Melachot* were used by *Hashem* to create the world. How should we understand that, since *Hashem* obviously does not perform physical labor?

R' Avraham Zvi Kluger *shlita* (*Chassidic Mashpia* in Bet Shemesh, Israel) explains: *Hashem* implanted in Creation the possibility that we can find His Presence within it. Indeed, that was the purpose of Creation. And, while *Hashem*'s Presence could be sensed most intensely in the *Mishkan* (and, later, the *Bet Hamikdash*), it also can be found throughout His Creation. The possibility of “finding” *Hashem* in Creation and in the *Mishkan* is the common denominator between them to which the *Zohar* alludes.

R' Kluger continues: It is clear from our Sages' teachings that they did not look down on “work.” To the contrary, they valued work, because, when a person performs his work in accordance with *Halachah*, he is bringing spirituality into Creation. He is, quite literally, building a “*Mishkan*,” a place where *Hashem* is revealed. Notably, the word “*Melachah*” / “labor” or “work” shares a root with “*Mal'ach*” / “angel.”

On *Shabbat*, however, we are instructed not to work, not even in order to build the *Bet Hamikdash*. On *Shabbat*, explains R' Kluger, *Hashem* reveals His Presence to us (referred to as an “awakening from Above”); we do not need to go searching for Him using our own labors (an “awakening from below”). Moreover, the revelation on *Shabbat* takes place in the realm of “*Machshavah*” / “thought” or “intellect,” not in the realm of “*Ma'aseh*” / “deed.” Creation and the building of the *Mishkan* / *Bet Hamikdash* both “rested” on *Shabbat*, because that is not how the revelation is meant to occur on that day. In line with this, the Torah prohibits only “*Melecheth Machshevet*” / “thoughtful work” on *Shabbat* (as defined by *Halachah*). (*Yichud Ha'Shabbat* III p.61)