

ספורנו פרשת בא

שמות פרק יב פסוק ב

הַחֹדֶשׁ הַזֶּה לָכֶם רֵאשׁ חֳדָשִׁים רֵאשׁוֹן הוּא לָכֶם לְחֹדֶשׁי הַשָּׁנָה:

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(ב) **הַחֹדֶשׁ הַזֶּה לָכֶם רֵאשׁ חֳדָשִׁים**. מכאן ואילך יהיו החדשים שלכם, לעשות בהם כרצונכם, אבל בימי השעבוד לא היו ימיכם שלכם, אבל היו לעבודת אחרים ורצונם, לפיכך **ראשון הוא לכם לחדשי השנה**. כי בו התחיל מציאותכם הבחירי:

Haggadah, Rav Yosef Zvi Rimon

How is one freed from oppression?

The editor of the haggadah mentions three types of oppression:

“And He saw our suffering” - this refers to the separation of husband and wife, because of the hard labor; “Our burden” – these are the sons, namely that the infant sons were to be thrown into the river; “And our oppression” – this refers to the pressure - the pressure of the hard labor which they were forced to do. It would appear that the common difficulty in these instances was that **all of them express the removal of freedom from the person. The person has no control over his relationship with his wife, has no control over the raising of his children, and also has no control over his time** - he is forced to work at a speed determined by others.

All of these were meant to remove freedom from the Nation of Israel, and to force them to have a slave mentality, a person with no independent decision-making process, dependent entirely on others.

How can one free oneself of this? Even after the Nation of Israel left Egypt, it needed to undergo a revolution in its thought processes, to leave the slave mentality and to adopt that of free men. How does one do this?

One of the ways to accomplish this was the commandment of **sanctifying the new month**. The determination of the Hebrew calendar, that (*Exodus* 12:2), “This month shall be to you the head of the months,” is the first commandment which Israel were commanded, while they were still in Egypt, on their way to freedom. How would this commandment help them to feel like free men? The first thing that must change for a nation which goes free is the return of the concept of one’s private time. Having an independent time system expresses - more than anything else - independence in the realm of time. They are no longer subject to the dictates of Pharaoh’s time - now they have their own time system.

However, the commandment of sanctifying the new moon teaches even more than that. This is not only a system of special dates for the Jewish People, but a system which is controlled by them. It is the Jewish People who determine when the new month begins, based on the moon, and that is not merely an astronomical determination. Even if astronomically today should be the beginning of the new month, the decision to proclaim a new month is left to Israel, and “if the *bet din* did not manage to proclaim the new month before it became dark, the month is prolonged” (*Rosh Hashanah* 25b).

Our Exodus from Egypt gave us the power to control the moon, rather than having the moon control us. “This month is for you’ - it is given over to you, and you are not given over to it (*Tanchuma Yashan, Bo*). Nowadays, too, **we still use the Hebrew date**, and we must ensure its centrality as an expression of our full freedom (on this topic, see *Responsa of Maharam Shick, Yoreh De’ah* 171; *Responsa Yabia Omer*, III, *Yoreh De’ah* 9; *Responsa Tzitz Eliezer*, VIII:8).

The Exodus from Egypt took us out to complete freedom. From that point on, the Nation of Israel is not enslaved to anyone or anything in the world - including even the time. We are servants only of God, and that is our freedom!