



# Likkutei Sichos

Volume 16 | HaChodesh

## Rising Above Time

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## 1.

### DAY OF THE WEEK VS. DAY OF THE MONTH

We have discussed many times that “days of the week” and “days of the month” are calculated using different, independent methods.

Accordingly, whenever a festival, which is {always} on a specific day of the **month** (e.g., Pesach is always on the 15th of Nissan), occurs on Shabbos, one might assume that when these two holy occasions coincide — the holiness of Shabbos (determined by the day of the **week**) and the holiness of the festival (determined by the day of the **month**) — are two distinct, unrelated concepts.

Nevertheless, since everything (in the world, and especially) in Torah is precise by Divine providence, clearly, the mere fact that **this** day of the month occurs on **this** day of the week, is indicative of (or rather, engenders) a relationship between them.

[As known, proof of this relationship can be found in the *Talmud*: The *Gemara* in tractate *Zevachim* says,<sup>1</sup> “Does Rosh Chodesh only affect {the sanctity of} its own *musaf* offering but not {the sanctity of} the Shabbos offering?” Meaning, the Shabbos *musaf* (sacrifices) that are offered, when Rosh Chodesh occurs on Shabbos, also possess the sanctity of (the *musaf* offerings of) **Rosh Chodesh** (since the Rosh Chodesh *musaf* offerings are “holier than those of Shabbos”).<sup>2</sup> Therefore, the relationship and impact (“affect”) of Rosh Chodesh is not only {on a day} as that day is a particular unit of the month. But that day is Rosh Chodesh also as that day is a particular unit of the week — in this case Shabbos. Consequently, the day of Shabbos is transformed into {something special, Shabbos imbued with the character of} **Rosh Chodesh**.

This also applies to our discussion: The reading of *parshas HaChodesh*<sup>3</sup> is always associated (not with a specific day of the month but) with Shabbos.

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<sup>1</sup> *Zevachim* 91a.

<sup>2</sup> Rashi, ad. loc.

<sup>3</sup> {The special Torah reading for the Shabbos before the beginning of the month of Nissan.}

Nonetheless, we can still learn something unique (about the theme of “**HaChodesh**”) from the specific day of the month on which *parshas HaChodesh* falls.

For example, something special can be derived when *parshas HaChodesh* falls on the 25<sup>th</sup> of Adar (as it does this year),<sup>4</sup> which is, according to Rabbi Yehoshua<sup>5</sup> (who maintains that) “the world was created in Nissan”), the “first day” of the six days of Creation.<sup>6</sup>

## 2.

### MAKE IT NEW

The *Midrash* states,<sup>7</sup> “The Torah should have begun with the verse,<sup>8</sup> “This month shall be for you.” In light of this teaching, we can posit that since the Torah’s order is precise and also considered part of Torah, “This month shall be for you” serves as a foundation and an exemplar for the entire Torah. Meaning, the starting point and foundation of all *mitzvos* is, “This month....”

This will be clarified in light of the statement of our Sages<sup>9</sup> on the verse, “This month shall be for you the head of the months” — referring to the month of Nissan, the month of redemption from the Egyptian exile: “When Hashem chose Yaakov and his sons, He designated in the world a (Rosh) Chodesh of redemption.” Meaning, the *avodah*<sup>10</sup> of “Yaakov and his sons” — the performance of *mitzvos* — is intended to bring “redemption” to the world (“Hashem chose His world”):

The world as it stands is in a state of exile. Since “*olam*” {world} is etymologically related to “*he’elem*” {concealment} — G-dliness is concealed within the world. Even when a person comes to recognize that this world has a

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<sup>4</sup> {5739/1979, the year this *sichah* was originally published.}

<sup>5</sup> In tractate Rosh Hashanah 11a.

<sup>6</sup> {The 1st of Nissan being the day that Adam and Chava were created.}

<sup>7</sup> *Tanchuma* “*Bereishis*,” par. 11; Yalkut Shimoni ad loc.; Rashi and *Midrash Lekach Tov* beginning of *Bereishis*.

<sup>8</sup> *Shemos* 12:2 {the commandment given to the Jews before leaving Egypt, regarding the Jewish calendar}.

<sup>9</sup> *Shemos Rabbah* 15:11.

<sup>10</sup> {Divine service.}

Master, this recognition is only to the degree that the **world** itself compels him to see that it has a Master. In other words: He only recognizes that Divine *light*<sup>11</sup> is invested within the world (a limited *light*). But when Jews study Torah and fulfil *mitzvos*, they bring “redemption” — leaving the “*Mitzrayim*”<sup>12</sup> and concealment, and drawing down a G-dly *light* from beyond the world.

Since a Jew’s *avodah* achieves redemption, it must be carried out in a “redemption-like” manner:

A Jew ought to observe Torah and *mitzvos* in a manner of “liberation,” feeling his own redemption as a free person, and not as one who is subservient to the world’s concealment. Nothing disturbs him, or distracts him from studying Torah and observing *mitzvos*. On a deeper level, the concept of “liberation” means that a person escapes from the limitations of **his own personality**. His engagement in divine service is not limited to areas for which he has a natural affinity; he doesn’t exert himself only to the extent demanded by his own personality. Rather, he performs all *mitzvos* with his soul’s unbounded energy.

This way of observing Torah and *mitzvos* is alluded to in the name of the *parshah* — “*HaChodesh*” (meaning, **new** {*chadash*}): We are to fulfill Torah and *mitzvos* not as if they were “old” and routine, but rather, like something new — “Every day, you shall regard them {the *mitzvos*} as if they were **new**.”<sup>13</sup> They should be performed with vigor and devotion, expressed by observing Torah and *mitzvos* in the most meticulous manner possible.

How can we expect a Jew to perform Torah and *mitzvos* “as if they were new” when he has already accustomed himself to daily Torah study and *mitzvah* observance?

As long as a person remains restricted by his own existence, liberating himself from the sense that Torah and *mitzvos* are “habitual” is indeed not possible. However, once he “leaps out” of his own existence, internally

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<sup>11</sup> {In Chassidic terminology, “light” connotes revelation.}

<sup>12</sup> {Which is etymologically related to “*meitzarim*,” boundaries, connoting concealment.}

<sup>13</sup> Rashi’s commentary on *Devarim* 26:16.

undergoing an “exodus from Egypt” — escaping the boundaries and parameters of his nature — his performance of Torah and *mitzvos* can be **novel**.

### 3.

#### ORIGINALITY WITHIN NATURE

However, one might {erroneously} think that this {internal “exodus”} only applies to the type Torah and *mitzvah* observance that relate to the soul. For Torah and *mitzvos* apply more to the soul than to the body, despite being enclothed in physical objects and worldly matters.<sup>14</sup> From **this** perspective, we can understand how a person can achieve a personal “exodus from Egypt” by escaping his body’s natural boundaries and limitations, and by performing *avodah* in a manner alluded to by “*HaChodesh...*” {with novelty — “*chadash*”}.

But regarding the kind of *avodah* described as,<sup>15</sup> “all **your deeds** should be for the sake of Heaven” and,<sup>16</sup> “know Him in all **your ways**,” referring to the *avodah* of a person engaged in **worldly** matters — even if he does so “for the sake of Heaven,” and so on — his deeds have the appearance and feeling of being “**your** deeds” and “**your** ways.” They are activities involving one’s physical **body**. As such, how can a person be expected to **rise above** his bodily nature, given that at the same time he is ensconced in bodily matters?

To address this dilemma, we can learn from the calendrical pattern of a year in which Shabbos *parshas HaChodesh* falls on the 25<sup>th</sup> of Adar — the first day of Creation: Even within **Creation** (the 25<sup>th</sup> of Adar)<sup>17</sup> there can and must be an element of “*HaChodesh*” {novelty}, reaching beyond measure and limitation.

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<sup>14</sup> *Tanya*, ch. 4; see *ibid.*, ch. 37.

<sup>15</sup> *Pirkei Avos* 2:12.

<sup>16</sup> *Mishlei* 3:6.

<sup>17</sup> {The first day of Creation, according to Rabbi Yehoshua.}

## 4.

### THE SOUL'S PERSPECTIVE

How is it **possible** for these opposing paradigms to coexist — even while immersed in bodily matters, the person can concurrently rise above his body's nature? He can do so because Jews are connected to the world as it was created {in thought, rather than in actuality} (not as Rabbi Eliezer maintains,<sup>18</sup> on the 25<sup>th</sup> of Elul (“The world was created in Tishrei”), but rather) on the **25<sup>th</sup> of Adar** (as Rabbi Yehoshua maintains):

As known,<sup>19</sup> both of these opinions — those of Rabbi Yehoshua and Rabbi Eliezer — are true: In Nissan, Hashem **thought** to create the world, while actual Creation happened in Tishrei. This corresponds to the teaching in *Kabbalah*<sup>20</sup> that the dictum “the world was created in Nissan” refers to the inner dimension of the universe, and, “the world was created in Tishrei” refers to its external dimension.

The external side of the universe is the way the world presents itself to the outside, to the human eye, as an independent entity, distinct from G-dliness. **This** creation resulted from Hashem's speech (for Hashem's speech is on par with action), since speech is articulated in a way that makes Hashem's “speech” appear (to us) to be an entity independent of Hashem.<sup>21</sup> The inner aspect of the universe corresponds to the way the world is internally — fused with G-dliness — a level of existence that stems from Hashem's thought, similar to human thought, which always remains fused with the person thinking those thoughts.

This is the connection and relationship between these two types of Creation and the months of Tishrei and Nissan:

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<sup>18</sup> *Rosh Hashanah*, end of 10b ff.; *Tosfos*, ad. cit., c.v. “*litkufos*”; *Ran*, “*Rosh Hashanah*,” 16a.

<sup>19</sup> *Tosfos*, “*Rosh Hashanah 27a*,” c.v. “*keman metzalinan*”; *Shaar HaKavanos*, “*Inyan Rosh Hashanah*,” *derush 1*; *Pri Eitz Chaim*, “*Shaar Rosh Hashanah*,” ch. 4 (in some eds., ch. 6).

<sup>20</sup> *Nahar Shalom*, “*Seder Tefillos Rosh Hashanah*,” near the end; *Shemen Sasson* on *Shaar HaKavanos*, loc. cit.

<sup>21</sup> *Tanya*, ch. 21-22.

The *avodah* of Tishrei is bottom-up {i.e., it is initiated by our effort} — the *avodah* of *teshuvah*.<sup>22</sup> The fact that we need to **return** to Hashem implies that we were previously **distant** from G-dliness. From this perspective, the world has real existence; we need evidence and proof that the world has a Master.

The *avodah* of Nissan — the *avodah* of *tzaddikim* — is top-down {i.e., it is initiated by Hashem}: Since from the outset a *tzaddik* was already close to, and united with, G-dliness, the opposite is therefore true for him: He feels the reality of G-dliness as a given, while he supports his acceptance of the reality of Creation by a proof from **Torah** — “In the beginning Hashem created.” From his perspective, the world’s existence is a novelty; it’s scope is limited to that given to it by Torah.

Since souls relate to the inner aspect of the universe, {Hashem’s} thought,<sup>23</sup> clearly, each Jew has the ability to recognize “G-dliness as a given and the world as novel,”<sup>24</sup> so that his proof that the world exists is based exclusively on the Torah’s statement, “In the beginning Hashem created.” Thus, everything he does will be only according to the reality **of Torah**. He engages with corporeal and worldly matters because **Torah** instructs him to do so — in accord with the dictum, “all your deeds should be for the sake of Heaven,” and, “know Him in all your ways.” As a result, this *avodah* is also performed in a manner of “*HaChodesh*” — novelty — reaching beyond the finite limitations of his environs and nature.

## 5.

### TRANSFORMATION AT THE FOUNDATION

We can posit that this fusion of “*HaChodesh*” and “the 25<sup>th</sup> of Adar” is alluded to in Rashi’s commentary on the Torah’s first verse, “In the beginning Hashem created...”: “The Torah should have begun with the verse, “This month shall be for you....” This seems unclear:

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<sup>22</sup> {Lit., “returning” to Hashem.}

<sup>23</sup> As our Sages teach, “The Jewish people arose in Hashem’s thought.” *Bereishis Rabbah*, ch. 1, sec. 4; *Tanya*, beg. of ch. 2; and *Hemshech* 5666, p. 447 ff., at length.

<sup>24</sup> See at length *Hemshech* 5672, s.v. “*Vayehi He’anan* 5675.”

- a) As known, Rashi's practice is not to point out the difficulty in the verse and then to resolve it. Rather, he usually launches directly into his commentary and explanation (and the difficulty is automatically eliminated). As such, why here does Rashi first mention the difficulty, "The Torah should have begun with the verse,<sup>25</sup> "This month shall be for you," instead of commencing directly with his explanation? Namely, "the Torah begins with 'in the beginning' because {to teach us that} 'The strength of His works He related to His people, to give them the inheritance of the nations.'<sup>26</sup> For if the nations of the world should say to Israel..."<sup>27</sup>
- b) Even if we were to assume that in our case, the difficulty as to why the "Torah began with 'In the beginning'" would not have been understood without first explaining that the **Torah** (which belongs to the Jewish nation) had to begin with<sup>28</sup> "This month shall be for you" — the first *mitzvah* the Jews were commanded — several points in Rashi's remarks remain unclear:

(a) Why was it necessary for Rashi to explain here {in *Bereishis*} that "the first *mitzvah* the Jews were commanded" was "this month shall be for you"? Seemingly, Rashi should have said more concisely, "the Torah should have begun with the (first) *mitzvah* the Jews were commanded."

(b) Since, as the commentators explain, the difficulty Rashi addresses is that all the *parshiyos* until "*HaChodesh*" need not have been included in the **Written** Torah<sup>29</sup> {yet they are}, why does Rashi say, "The Torah should have **begun**" (implying that the only issue is

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<sup>25</sup> *Shemos* 12:2 {the commandment given to the Jews before leaving Egypt, regarding the Jewish calendar}.

<sup>26</sup> *Tehillim* 111:6.

<sup>27</sup> See also *Likkutei Sichos*, vol. 10, p. 6. {The conclusion of Rashi's commentary: ..."You are robbers, for you conquered by force the lands of the seven nations," they will reply, "The entire earth belongs to Hashem; He created it and gave it to whomever He deemed proper. When He wished, He gave it to them, and when He wished, He took it away from them and gave it to us.}

<sup>28</sup> See *Likkutei Sichos*, vol. 5, p. 7, which discusses this at length.

<sup>29</sup> {"Torah" means "teaching" or "instruction." Since the *parshiyos* prior to *HaChodesh* do not contain *mitzvos* that were *taught* to the Jewish people, they seemingly need not have been included in the Written Torah.}



that the Torah should not have opened this way)?<sup>30</sup> It would have been more appropriate for Rashi to have written (**as the *Midrash* writes**),<sup>31</sup> “The Torah should have been **written** only from ‘this month shall be for you.’”<sup>32</sup>

The explanation (based on the “wine of Torah”<sup>33</sup> in Rashi’s commentary):

The statement, “The Torah should have begun with, ‘this month shall be for you,’” is more than just an initial supposition. Even according to the **conclusion**, the statement remains true: Since “this month” is “the **first mitzvah** the Jews were commanded,” we must say that it truly is the foundation and beginning of the entire Torah (as mentioned earlier in section 2).

Rashi alludes to this in his remark, “*In the beginning* — The Torah should have begun with, ‘This month shall be for you.’” Since, “In the beginning Hashem created...” is (also) part of Torah, we must say that “This month shall be for you...” is also the beginning (and foundation) of “In the beginning Hashem created...” Meaning, the *avodah* of the Jewish people conducted in the manner symbolized by “*HaChodesh...*” {i.e., novelty} must (also) serve as the basis and foundation of all worldly matters, in order to bring about redemption within the world itself.

As Rashi explains in the continuation of his comment: “The Torah commences with ‘In the beginning’ because {it wants to teach us that} “The strength of His works He related to His people, to give them the inheritance of the nations.” A Jew’s *avodah* requires that even “**the inheritance of the nations**” — the world — be redeemed and transferred to the Jews’ domain, who will then transform the world into a place infused with {acts done for} “the sake of Heaven,” as a way to “know Him.”

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<sup>30</sup> See *Likkutei Sichos*, vol. 5, p. 3, fn. 9; vol. 20, p. 1, ff.

<sup>31</sup> *Tanchuma*, Buber ed., “*Bereishis*,” sec. 11; *Midrash Lekach Tov*, beg. of “*parshas Bereishis*.”

<sup>32</sup> {And everything until the first *mitzvah* should have been omitted.}

<sup>33</sup> {The deeper ideas in Torah.}

## 6.

### PAST AND FUTURE AS ONE

An additional point regarding the connection between “*HaChodesh*” and the 25<sup>th</sup> of Adar:

When the Torah says, “This month shall be for you the head of the months,” it refers to Rosh Chodesh Nissan, the sixth day of Creation (according to Rabbi Yehoshua), the day on which mankind was created. This also relates to the abovementioned teaching of our Sages’ on the verse, “This month...”: “When Hashem chose Yaakov and his sons, He established in the world a Rosh Chodesh of redemption.” For mankind was created on this day, initiating **mankind’s *avodah*** (“He chose Yaakov and his sons”), in a manner of “novelty” and “redemption,” as mentioned. In contrast, Creation as it was on the 25<sup>th</sup> of Adar, before mankind was created and his *avodah* was initiated, was brought into existence and sustained from Above, a consequence of Hashem’s desire to manifest His kindness.

The lesson we learn from *parshas HaChodesh* falling on the 25<sup>th</sup> of Adar is that even the beginning of Creation, which seemingly was only a result of Hashem’s kindness, is truly and deeply interlinked with “*HaChodesh...*” — mankind’s *avodah*. This accords with our Sages teaching regarding Creation in general:<sup>34</sup> “With whom did Hashem consult? With the souls of *tzaddikim*.” Meaning, the entirety of Creation came about because “Hashem imagined the pleasure He would derive, so to speak, from from the service of *tzaddikim*.”<sup>35</sup>

To explain: We say that Creation came about as a result of Hashem’s desire to demonstrate His kindness because prior to Creation — when the Divine Light was still removed from the worlds and His creations — mankind’s *avodah* in the future had no bearing at all. Consequently, Creation could only be initiated from Above, on account of Hashem desire to show kindness. On the other hand, Hashem’s desire for kindness is what caused mankind’s *avodah* to **indeed** be

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<sup>34</sup> *Bereishis Rabbah* ch. 8, par. 7; *Rus Rabbah* ch. 2, par. 3.

<sup>35</sup> Quoting the Previous Rebbe’s *maamar*, “*Rosh Hashanah 5703*,” ch. 3, 6.

taken into divine consideration. Thus, the motivation for Creation is connected (because of Hashem's "desire for kindness") to Hashem's consideration of the {future} service of *tzaddikim*.

[This is one of the teachings of Maggid of Mezritch — that the world was created “so that the righteous Jewish people would be in every generation.”<sup>36</sup> Since from Hashem's perspective the “past and future are the same,” because “Hashem derived pleasure from the service of *tzaddikim*, He contracted Himself {and created the world}.”<sup>37</sup> The same applies to the Jewish people, regarding whom it says that “Israel had arisen in {Hashem's} thought.”<sup>38</sup> As the Maggid explains,<sup>39</sup> a human being “who never had a child cannot visualize a child that he will have in the future.... But regarding Hashem... the image of the Jewish people was engraved in His thought even before they were created... because from His perspective, the past and future are one.”

But how is this teaching novel? Obviously, Hashem is beyond time, and from His perspective, past and future are “the same”! The explanation: Since we are dealing with the Divine Light that preceded *tzimtzum* {Hashem's contraction} which was beyond any sort of relationship — even a potential<sup>40</sup> relationship — with Creation, we might have presumed that on this level the service of *tzaddikim* (or the “image of the child” in the {above} analogy) could not have been visualized. Accordingly it could not have been Hashem's **motive** for the *tzimtzum* and Creation.

This is the novelty {of the Maggid's teaching}: Because “the past and present are the same,” the service of *tzaddikim* and the “child's image” were indeed<sup>41</sup> already engraved within “Hashem's desire for kindness” (which is altogether higher than created entities, etc.), to the extent that **this** was Hashem's **motive** for *tzimtzum* and Creation.]

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<sup>36</sup> Beg. of *Or Torah* and *Likkutei Amarim* by the Maggid of Mezritch.

<sup>37</sup> {Meaning, even before the *tzaddikim*'s service actually occurred, Hashem already derived pleasure from it, because from His perspective the past and the future are the same, and thus He decided to create the world.}

<sup>38</sup> *Bereishis Rabbah*, ch. 1, sec. 4; *Tanya*, beg. Of ch. 2; and *Hemshech 5666*, p. 447 ff., at length.

<sup>39</sup> *Or Torah*, s.v. “*Naaseh Adam*,” p. 2c; *Kesser Shem Tov*, ch. 241; see *Or Torah*, p. 2d, s.v. “*Vayivra*,” “*Inyan Acher*.”

<sup>40</sup> See *Hemshech 5666*, p. 5 ff.

<sup>41</sup> See *Or HaTorah*, “*Mishpatim*,” p. 1267, 1278; *Hemshech 5672*, vol. 2, beg. of s.v. “*Vayakhel 5675*.”

## PAST AND FUTURE AT CREATION

This also serves as a practical lesson in *avodah*. Even matters that are initiated from Above, which are, seemingly, beyond a person's ability to influence through his own *avodah*, are also, in fact, connected to the person's *avodah*.<sup>42</sup>

This is also, possibly, the deeper rationale for Rashi quoting the teaching, "The Torah should have begun with the verse, "This month shall be for you,"" immediately, in his comments on the verse, "In the beginning Hashem created..." {the first verse of the Torah}. By doing so, Rashi intimates to us the following:

When a Jew studies the Torah verse, "In the beginning Hashem created..." this itself is a form of "*avodah*." Consequently, upon encountering the passage, "In the beginning Hashem created..." and the Supernal initiative it alludes to, as discussed, — the Jew, by studying the verse, {validates and bolsters this Supernal initiative, having} engaged in the *avodah* of "Yaakov and his sons," which is alluded to by the verse, "This month shall be for you.""

-Based on talks delivered on Shabbos *parshas HaChodesh* 5736 (1976) and 5737 (1977), and Shabbos *parshas Nitzavim*, 5734 (1974)

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<sup>42</sup> See also *Likkutei Sichos*, vol. 4, end of p. 1353 ff.; vol. 9, p. 191.